

Ocean Sports Journal

Ricky Grigg

Grigg's Accomplishments

Education

- 1958 — Bachelor of Arts, Stanford University
- 1963 — Master of Science, University of Hawaii (Marine Zoology)
- 1970 — Ph.D. Scripps Institution of Oceanography

Experience

- 1961-62 — Math and Science teacher, Punahou High School
- 1965-66 — Aquanaut, Sealab II, Office of Naval Research Special Projects Office
- 1984-Present — Marine Biologist, University of Hawaii

Notable Published Works

- 1977 — "Hawaii's Precious Corals", Island Heritage Pub.
- 1979 — "Precious Corals: Hawaii's Deep Sea Jewels", National Geographic Magazine.

Activities and Awards

- 1965 — Meritorious Public Service Award presented for Sealab II.
- 1967 — Winner, Duke Kahanamoku International Surfing Championships, Sunset Beach, Hawaii.
- 1987 — Kanaka O' Ke Kai Ocean Recognition Award (for research on undersea evolution)



Ricky Grigg (third from right) stands with his daughter beside Aquanaut Sealab II in 1965.

Studying the ocean has made life all worthwhile for Grigg

University of Hawaii oceanographer Richard "Ricky" Grigg describes himself as "just an average person," but the former aquanaut is anything but.

Just mention his name to any ocean sports enthusiast, and you'll find that he's one of the most highly respected persons in the ocean sports community. Ask any of the present big-wave surfers (who seem to rarely agree on anything) and they'll say they unabashedly regard Grigg (pronounced Gregg) as a hero.

Grigg, 52, considers such compliments as one of his reasons for living. He feels being an inspiration to others as the ultimate purpose in his life. That, and his two daughters.



Warren Bolster

Special to the Advertiser

Not only is Grigg known for his inspirational big-wave riding and competitive victories (most notably as a regular finalist and champion of the Duke Kahanamoku International Surfing Championships), but he's done it all while achieving a top-notch education and making a variety of oceanographic contributions.

Consider a tiny sampling of his background:

- Aquanaut on Sealab II in 1965.
- Ph.D. Scripps Institute of Oceanography in 1970.
- Kanaka O' Ke Kai Ocean Recognition Award (for research on undersea evolution) in 1987.

Says TV personality Mike Buck, who has known Grigg for 30 years: "I think he's one of the most misunderstood of all true watermen. . . . He cares about the environment to the point that he's spending his life studying things that happened millions of years ago and what will happen millions of years from now, so that he can help the rest of us put today in perspective. The guy's a

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Ocean is Grigg's love of life

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gift." It was in the early '60s that Grigg, hard-pressed to decide whether to enter medical school or marine biology, decided to go to Hawaii for a couple of years of diving and surfing "to try to get a handle on my life."

A few months later he ended up in Tahiti, where he met a pearl diver. He became hooked on diving. He started out at 25-foot depths and in three months, he was diving to 120 feet. That three-month experience not only left him broke, but helped him decide on graduate studies in marine biology (1960). It took him almost four years to get his master's.

"That must be some kind of record, but by then I knew that I wanted to go to Scripps



Grigg

(La Jolla, Calif.) and get my Ph.D. I really buckled down and worked, yet still came to Hawaii and surfed," Grigg said.

While at Scripps, the Navy conducted Sealab II, off the institute's deep water trench. He applied and got picked because he had a research proposal they liked.

Sealab II was equipped with lights and generators. They took it to the 205-foot trench edge, although the trench goes much deeper. Grigg's proposal pointed out that lights and sound (from the generators) and the flat ocean bottom had all the elements of an artificial reef, which was known to attract fish.

"We were going to take these three factors and to see to what extent it changed the marine life," Grigg said. "It turned out it attracted about 45,000 different species of fish before the experiment was over from about a couple hundred fish normally."

Grigg was one of only three civilians chosen; the rest were from the Navy. Astronaut Scott Carpenter had been cho-

sen not only for space, but to train the Sealab program, which was inner-space. The idea was to turn the nation's attention from space to the earth, where problems of resource limitations and the environment were mounting.

"We were guinea pigs. We lost a man and the project was terminated. What we found was that there's better ways to do it — submersibles and robots," Grigg said. "It's interesting that we're now discovering the same thing in outer space that we did in the ocean 20 years ago."

After the Sealab, Grigg went back to Scripps, got his doctorate degree and came back to Hawaii. He's been here ever since, teaching and doing research in oceanography at UH. He says he enjoys going over the weather charts and predicting the surf, then going out and checking the ocean to verify theories.

"That's such a thrilling thing — to have that mass of information to go over; it's really a fabulous opportunity. An average day does not exist."