

Sea Stories 101

By: Hugo Marrero SBCC Marine Tech Class of 1991

In 1989, I was working as a Field Service Engineer for a semiconductor equipment manufacturer in the Silicon Valley in San Jose, California. While I enjoyed the work I was doing, my mind was always drifting towards the sea. Having been raised in Puerto Rico, the ocean was very much a part of my life.

After reading an article about the Santa Barbara City College in a diving magazine, I decided to visit the campus to check out the curriculum. Little I knew that this trip was to change my life forever.

At SBCC I met with Jerry Clouser, Mike Von-Alvensleben, and Don Barthelmess. They were very helpful and provided lots of information about the program. However it was their enthusiasm what really got me hooked. I could feel their passion and respect for the sea, and the pride they took in their jobs. Right there and then, I made the decision; I went back home, quit my job, sold everything and on New Years Eve 1990 I moved to Santa Barbara.



My parents and friends were all in shock when I broke the news to them. They all said I was crazy! I knew I had to follow my heart, and I am glad I did. Since I graduated in 1991, I have never looked back! My first job was with Atlantis Submarines, LP (now Atlantis Adventures, LP) the largest tourist submarine operator in the World. During the six years I worked for Atlantis I progressed from co-pilot to pilot, and worked in Hawaii, the Bahamas and the Cayman Islands. In the Cayman Islands I got my first deep dive experience and I was hooked up. After Atlantis, I was fortunate to land a position in 1997 with the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution in Fort Pierce, Florida where I currently work as pilot for the Johnson Sea-Link submersibles. These submersibles are capable to dive to depths of up to 3000 feet. After 14 years in the field, I still love what I do and consider myself very fortunate to be where I am now.

Without a doubt, the quality of education I received at SBCC was the best, however, it the character and determination of my instructors, and their personal experiences that we fondly called "sea stories" was what brought the reality of work to the classroom, and what I consider was at times of greater value.

Following the tradition, I titled this article Sea Stories 101. I hope that this becomes a section in this web site where all the SBCC graduates share their sea stories with those who are currently at SBCC and with those who may be considering a career at sea.

I hope that all of all the students in the Marine Technology program are in it because you love the ocean and have a passion for what you do. May you follow your dreams!

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