I am dedicating this lecture to Santa Barbara’s own Bob Christensen, in recognition of his lifetime of service to diving and education. Bob was one of the early pioneers of deep mixed-gas commercial diving that evolved in Santa Barbara in the early 1960s. In 1969, he left a booming commercial diving field to help establish the Marine Technology Program here at SBCC as one of the original instructors. He succeeded the late Ramsey Parks as Program Director from 1980 to 1985 and then retired. Bob later returned to work at Kelly-Morgan Dive Systems of Santa Barbara, where he still works in research and development.

Bob has always been a friend and mentor to me throughout my teaching career. Widely regarded by commercial, recreational and military divers alike, Bob has always shared his knowledge and expertise for the benefit of others. Additionally, Bob is a father, husband and true gentleman. I have never met a more humble, yet accomplished man. After graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy with a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering, Bob entered the U.S. Navy, where he served in the U.S. Navy, where he served in the U.S. Navy and then retired. Bob later returned to work for the U.S. Parks as Program Director from 1980 to 1985 and then retired. Bob later returned to work at Kirby Morgan Dive Systems of Santa Barbara in the early 1960s. In 1969, he left a booming commercial diving field to help establish the Marine Technology Program here at SBCC as one of the original instructors. 

I have had the pleasure of working with two great SBCC Presidents and a dedicated Board of Trustees in my tenure. Dr. Peter MacDougall and John Romo have been steadfast supporters of technical-vocational education and learning to guide them to answers, enabling them to structure their knowledge and skills that made sense to them.

Our students are what make our institution a true community college. They bring the campus a unique perspective and backgrounds, while collectively improving society and the disciplines they study. Lastly, I want to acknowledge my colleagues who have gone before me in presenting the Annual Faculty Lecture over the last 28 years. I am deeply honored by this award.
ABOUT THE LECTURE

Santa Barbara is widely regarded as a hub for diving technology. The discipline of Marine Technology is a public necessity. It is extremely broad, yet often outside the public eye. Santa Barbara has many unique and diverse relationships with the marine environment. At the very core of it is commercial diving, an entire industry with its roots embedded in the local community.

Don's lecture will focus on the progression of early diving techniques, equipment and the American entrepreneurial spirit that emerged in Santa Barbara with the advent of the 1960s 'Santa Barbara Helen Rush', as he terms it. His talk reflects his pride and respect for Santa Barbara's diving heritage. The subject is presented through the perspective of several local diving pioneers, historians and community members who each played a role in the evolution of commercial diving.

As a technologist, Don believes that, in order for us to know where we are going, it is instructive to reflect on where we have been. He hopes the audience will add to their appreciation for the ocean and those who make their living through it. Don Barthelmess was born and raised in Long Island, New York, by Doris and Donald Barthelmess, Sr. Growing up in the coastal town of Patchogue, his family members were avid boaters and baymen. Don spent his youth on the waters surrounding Long Island, gaining an early appreciation for the ocean and those who made their living through it. In 1973, at age thirteen, Don made his first SCUBA dive while visiting the Florida Keys. This experience influenced his decision to learn more about diving and make a career of it.

Don attended Florida Institute of Technology in 1979, after graduation from high school. He received an Associate in Science Degree in Underwater Technology, with distinction, from FIT.

After college, Don worked for Taylor Diving and Salvage of Belle Chase, Louisiana, and Solus Ocean Systems of Houston, Texas. He later joined International Underwater Contractors, Inc. of City Island, N.Y. At the time, IUC was expanding services in deep water using advanced diving technology and manned submarines. IUC sent Don to Great Yarmouth, England, where he was trained and certified as a pilot for their new Mantis class advanced diving systems (ADS).

With IUC, Don worked in the Gulf of Mexico and off Santa Barbara, using submarines and surface-supplied diving. In 1983, IUC established a U.S. depth record for working dives with an ADS, by diving Mantis 011 to 1,797 feet aboard the drilling rig Penelope 75. IUC and Jet Research Corp. later successfully placed and detonated the deepest shaped explosive charge, an 1,050 feet of water, to sever a wellhead. Don was the sub pilot during both these record-setting dives.

Later that year, he established another record in the Santa Barbara Channel by piloting Mantis 011 to 1,450 feet during a live-boat environment. IUC later joined International Underwater Contractors, Inc. of City Island, Chasse, Louisiana, and Solus Ocean Systems of Houston, Texas. He was Director of the Marine Technology Program to return to the classroom. In 2003, Don completed an undergraduate degree in Occupational Studies at California State University, Long Beach. He stepped down from Director of the Marine Technology Program to return to the classroom. In 1996, Don was tasked with redesigning the traditional academic structure of the Marine Technology Program to meet the rapid technological changes taking place in higher education. In 1998, the newly re-structured program received the Raymonp Program Award from The Chancellor of the California Community Colleges.

Don's educational philosophy embraces constructionism. He believes that knowledge is not transferred from teacher to student, but built collaboratively in phases, through rich and meaningful experiences. He believes long-term learning is embedded in social contexts supported by a dynamic community of practice.