

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BOB IVERSEN WAS BORN IN Brooklyn, New York in 1927. He attended high school in Pennsylvania (USA), and while at high school, he became an expert touch typist at a professional level. This skill played a major role during his enlisted service in the U.S. Navy that started at age 17 from 1945 to 1946 and 1950 to 1952 both as a Petty Officer Third Class. During his 1945 to 1946 Naval service, when post boot-camp assignments were made, his typing ability resulted in him being assigned to an office ashore and not to a ship in the Okinawa area. When released from active duty in 1946, he opted to join the U.S. Naval Reserves as he liked the Navy. This fundamentally changed his life.

From 1946 to 1950 Bob attended Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. and graduated from Georgetown on June 12, 1950 with a bachelor's degree in liberal arts. After a few weeks' search for employment, the Korean War started on June 25, 1950, and a few weeks after that he received a letter from the U.S. Navy telling him to report within 30 days to the Brooklyn Navy Yard for further transfer. This he did. His costs were minimal as his uniforms from his 1945 to 1946 service still fit. Two weeks after reporting to the Brooklyn Navy Yard, he was sent to a Naval base outside San Francisco with orders to be transferred to Hawaii where he arrived in September 1950.

In Hawaii he was told he would go to Korea, but this did not eventuate and instead he was assigned shore duty at the office of CinCPacFleet (Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet), which also covered Naval operations in Korea. Bob's job was to answer the Admiral's telephone between midnight and 5 a.m. To pass the time, he searched

for something interesting to read and found a book in the Admiral's library titled *Kon-Tiki* by Norwegian anthropologist Thor Heyerdahl. This book described Heyerdahl's 105-day drift in a 30-foot long balsa wood raft from Peru to the Polynesian island of Raroria. Heyerdahl's theory was that Polynesians originally came from South America and not from the Southeast and Western Pacific. Heyerdahl's drift turned Pacific anthropology upside down, although some think Heyerdahl was partially correct.

Bob said he read the entire book *Kon-Tiki* in one night's watch, and when he finished reading about what Heyerdahl and his four fellow explorers did in discovering the many facets of the marine environment and the multitude of marine animals, he had decided that being a marine biologist would be a fascinating occupation. Later, he was told that instead of answering the Admiral's telephone during mid-watch, he would be transferred to the Pearl Harbor Receiving Station, an organization with about 50 officers and men. Its commanding officer was a 'mustang' lieutenant commander, an officer who was commissioned from enlisted ranks. When Bob's commanding officer was confronted by a petty officer third class with a fresh bachelor's degree under his arm from Georgetown University, he did not know what to do with him. When Bob told his skipper that his rate (job specialty) had been changed from Specialist "X" (a miscellaneous category) to "Journalist" (without any training in this rate), the commanding officer decided to make him the editor of a Navy newspaper that did not exist, but would cover the Fourteenth Naval District headquarters and related units inside Pearl Harbor (but not Submarine Headquarters and related units). Bob produced a four-page newspaper until he was released from active duty in November 1952. What happened next in Bob's fisheries career and why it happened is described in the preface to this memoir — to which the reader is directed.

P R E F A C E

THIS MEMOIR HAS BEEN WRITTEN for two reasons. The first is that by telling how I entered the field of marine biology, young individuals seeking a career in the oceans may be guided into marine biology as a rewarding field of endeavor. The second is that describing my modest progression as a Fishery Biologist at the Biological Laboratory of the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service in Hawaii may be of interest to young people contemplating a career in fisheries where unusual things might happen to them as they did to me over a 40-year Pacific fisheries career. I have enjoyed writing a book that is a little out of the ordinary and that I hope may be of interest to the public at large. I would not recommend that a young person follow my example and wait until they were 25, or in my case 27, to embark on a career in marine biology. Instead, the sooner the better, and if these short descriptions of some aspects of marine biology attract a young person, they will have served their purpose. All of the odd or unusual things described in the episodes of this memoir are true.

After the Navy released me from active duty in 1952, I got a job as a news writer from 1952 to 1954 at the Hawaii Visitors Bureau. I spent as much time as possible at the Waikiki Aquarium watching fish and learning about them. I also spent as much time as I could skin diving and scuba diving. I visited the office of Vernon Brock, Director of the Hawaii Division of Fish and Game, and sought his advice on becoming a marine biologist at age 27 with no scientific background whatsoever. Vernon Brock told me I could if I worked hard. He suggested I visit the Chairman of the Department of Zoology at the University of Hawaii, Dr. Robert Hiatt, who told me that if I doubled up on some courses — such as taking General Zoology

and Embryology at the same time — perhaps I could get a Master's degree in several years. I then enrolled in 1954 as a special category graduate student and took courses for about 18 months until I got a job as a laboratory technician at the Biological Laboratory of the U.S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries (now National Marine Fisheries Service). Two of the episodes described in this memoir, with fellow graduate students Shirley Trefz (1954) and Dr. Don Strasberg (1955), occurred in those years. I was taken under the wing of Philip Helfrich, a doctoral candidate who taught me almost everything I learned at the University of Hawaii about marine biology. We remain close friends in 2019.

My courses at the university ended in 1956 when I started to go to sea on the Bureau's Research Vessel *Hugh M. Smith*, a wooden 120-foot long general-purpose biological and oceanographic research vessel. I must admit I was not the best graduate student as I did not follow through enough to get a master's degree. Overall, however, I think I was a B+ student, but in ichthyology I got an A in each semester. My career time at sea was on three U.S. Government research vessels. Besides the R/V *Hugh M. Smith*, the other two were on the Research Vessels *Charles H. Gilbert* and *Townsend Cromwell*. Cruises on these three vessels provided the basis for many of the episodes of this memoir. A high point was being appointed Regional Fisheries Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo in 1980. One of the episodes is about my job at the Embassy and how I got the best of two Japanese diplomats.

By the time I retired I had a modest publication record. Two reports that I believe are best are on "Hearing Thresholds of Yellowfin Tuna and Little Tuna" and "Native Hawaiian Fishing Rights." I wrote another report in 2010 titled "How do Sperm Whales Locate Giant Squid?" But it was rejected by two scholarly journals. The basis for the whale vs. giant squid paper was another paper titled "An Indication of Underwater Sounds by Squid" which was published in the journal *Nature*. My theory

is that sperm whales listen for sounds made by giant squid. A version of this paper is one of the episodes in this memoir. Events described in this memoir's episodes fall into two categories: one broad and the other very narrow. Ten episodes take place on board the three fishery research vessels, or other ships or U.S. Coast Guard fisheries flights (broad). Two episodes involve nudity of persons involved (narrow). One is about a man I interviewed about a stranded porpoise at Haleiwa Beach Park, Oahu, Hawaii, and the other involves two young ladies in Kodiak, Alaska in 1979 who interrupted my business day when I was between appointments (see the episode on "Plump Alaskan Ladies"). I have decided to give the technical citations to these three papers in one listing in an Appendix at the end of this memoir.

Note to readers: Because my post-retirement activities involving research and writing on the mental health of seafarers resulted in two technical papers that were very well received, I have also listed their citations in Appendix 6.

SWIMMING WITH FISHES

BOB IVERSEN

Swimming With Fishes

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Cover Photo: Oceanic whitetip shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*) & Pilot fish (*Naucrater ductor*). Brian Skerry/National Geographic magazine

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