

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 09 August 2016 12:56 - Last Updated Wednesday, 10 August 2016 06:34



Legendary Explorer & Discoverer of Titanic to Visit the Lowcountry: A Conversation with Dr. Robert Ballard

By Mark Shaffer

Photos provided by National Geographic

"There's more history in the deep sea than all the museums of the world combined."

—Dr. Robert Ballard

60 years ago young Bob Ballard read Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea* and it changed his life. The enigmatic Capt. Nemo captured his imagination and he dreamed of roaming the ocean's uncharted depths in a Nautilus of his own. Over more than five decades Dr. Robert Ballard has led more than 150 expeditions leading to discoveries of which Nemo himself would be proud.

Discoveries like the hydrothermal vents in the Galápagos Rift and submarine volcanoes on the Pacific Rise have pushed the boundaries of modern science. But the shipwrecks made his

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reputation. From ancient mariners in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, to John Kennedy's PT-109 and Hitler's juggernaut Bismarck to the most famous of all: Titanic.

Ballard's career of deepwater exploration began aboard the HOV (human occupied vehicle) Alvin out of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. He still refers to his time aboard such vessels as "riding the elevator." Each dive to maximum depth meant a frigid, cramped 12-hour roundtrip. The payoff was measured in precious minutes at the bottom of the sea. In the decades since, Ballard's led the development of ROV technology. These "remotely operated vehicles" dive deeper, faster and stay longer than any human operated vehicle currently conceivable. And he finally got his own Nautilus, a state-of-the-art research vessel on a continuing mission to "go where no one has gone before." Nautilus may be named after Nemo's submarine, but the ship and her Captain recall James T. Kirk and his Enterprise. At least that's the impression via satellite hook up from 3000 miles away. And to drive home the point, it's a safe bet that within the innerspace of our watery world Bob Ballard has boldly gone where no man has gone before more often than anyone else. Ever.

This fall Ballard visits the Lowcountry as guest of honor for the Port Royal Sound Foundation's second annual Night on the Sound event. I recently sat down with PRSF Marketing Director Alicia Taylor in her office to talk to the man often referred to as the world's greatest explorer. Ballard, aboard the Nautilus, calls in via satellite phone as we pull up a live feed of the ship at nautiluslive.org. We begin part two of the conversation, as we watch the crew deploy the ROV (remote operated vehicle) Hercules for a deepwater dive into a canyon off Point Conception near Santa Barbara. Even over the satphone, 3000 miles away, we can hear the excitement in Ballard's voice.

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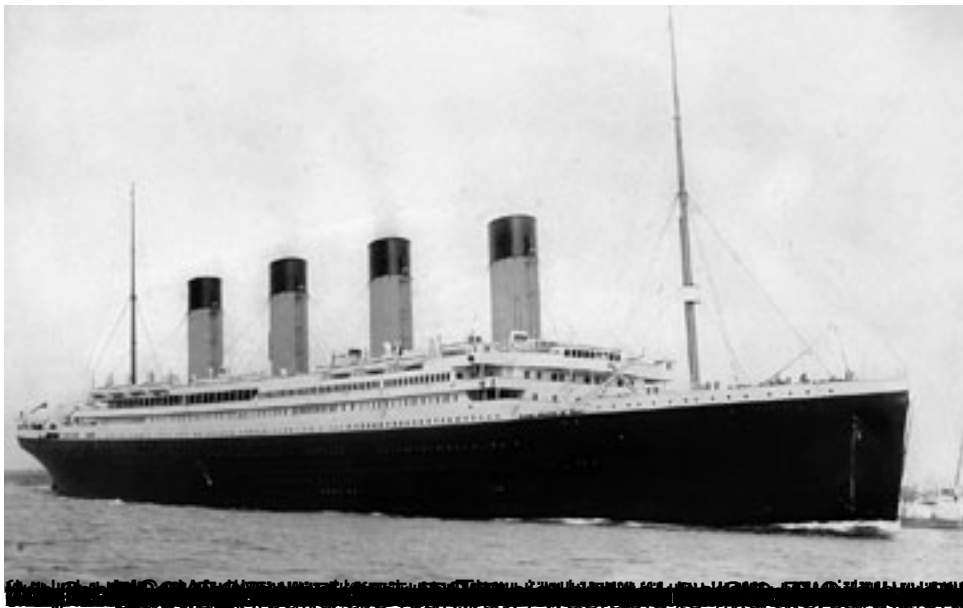


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GET MORE

The 2nd Annual Port Royal Sound Foundation Night on the Sound is October 22 featuring guest of honor and speaker Dr. Robert Ballard and honoring local Environmental Steward, Nancy

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Schilling. For tickets and information visit
(843) 645-7774.

www.portroyalsoundfoundation.org or call

[Read Part One of this Interview](#)

Follow Dr. Ballard's adventures aboard the Nautilus, watch the missions live and interact with the explorers at www.nautiluslive.org , also on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.