

Longtime Catalina Island biologist receives Poseidon Award

Dr. Bill Bushing given award for commitment to ocean health

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FOR THE ISLANDER

Dr. Bill Bushing was given the Poseidon Award by Reef Check on Sept. 28 at the Save the Reefs, Save the Oceans Gala. Dr. Bushing was given the award "in appreciation of his ongoing commitment to the health of our oceans as a resident marine biologist on Santa Catalina Island for almost 50 years," states the Reef Check website. He received the award to a standing ovation full of happy and warm tears from attendees at the gala, which took place at the Jonathan Beach Club in Santa Monica.

Dr. Bushing, or Dr. Bill as he is known in the scuba world, has been a resident marine biologist

on Santa Catalina Island for almost 50 years. Upon graduation from Harvard College in 1969, he became head of the science and math departments at the Catalina Island School, teaching there until it closed in 1979.

He has logged thousands of dives mostly in southern California waters for research and educational purposes. He is a well-known presence both at Catalina's Casino Point Dive Park; and, formerly, on SCUBA Luv's King Neptune dive boat where he served as the marine life specialist for thousands of divers each year. Dr. Bill has worked, dived and filmed with the likes of Jean-Michel Cousteau, Dr. Richard C. Murphy, Dr. Sylvia Earle, Dr. Milton Love, Dr. Guy Harvey, marine artist Wyland and others.

Dr. Bill worked with Jean-Michel and his father, Jacques Yves Cousteau, as a consultant and facilitator during the filming of a two-hour Channel Islands episode in the "Cousteau's Rediscovery



Dr. Bill Bushing, in the blue shirt, along with family and friends during the evening at the Jonathan Beach Club in Santa Monica.

Photo by Debbie Lefever

of the World" series for Turner Broadcasting, at which point he was introduced to the use of video to document natural history.

Later, Bill was instrumental in helping Jean-Michel to establish a Catalina location for Cousteau Family Camp and other educational programs. Over the decades Bill has worked on a number of educational projects for Jean-Michel's Ocean Futures organization, most recently on the filming of Jean-Michel Cousteau's Secret Ocean 3D.



Despite ongoing cancer treatment, Dr. Bill Bushing graciously accepted the Poseidon Award alongside his son, Reef Check Board Chair Helen Brierley and Reef Check Board Member Linden Wolbert. Photo by Debbie Lefever

Dr. Bill's Ph.D. research at the University of California Santa Barbara in the use of satellite remote sensing and geographic information systems to study giant kelp forests (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) around Santa Catalina Island led to a methodology for creating a network of marine reserves based on ecological factors including disturbance regimes.

In the 1990s, Dr. Bushing instituted a number of important conservation programs for the Santa Catalina Island Conservancy and also worked on implementing California's Marine Life Protection Act to establish marine reserves in southern California.

In June of 2000, Dr. Bushing left the Conservancy to focus on the ecology of Catalina's kelp forests. He continues to conduct scientific research, and to create educational



Guests enjoy a gorgeous evening at the Jonathan Beach Club in Santa Monica Photo by Debbie Lefever

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programs to better inform the general public about our underwater world and the need to preserve it for future generations.

He has also dived on five continents and published more than 750 newspaper columns and peer-reviewed scientific papers including his weekly column "Dive Dry with Dr. Bill" about marine life, ecology and diving.

He also produced two regional cable television programs, one with the same name and another, "Munching and Mating in the *Macrocystis*," about the ecology of kelp forests. Dr. Bill has also produced 30 educational videos about the marine life in southern California as well as dive travelogues to various destinations. He is the recipient of the 2011 California SCUBA Service Award and this year was designated as the second SCUBA Legend by SCUBABoard.com.

Bill views himself as a marine ecologist and educator first, and sees SCUBA diving as the most important tool for observing and interpreting marine life. He is actually shocked that people seem to consider him as a legend, hero or icon, when all he is doing is what he loves... being a dive bum and sharing his knowledge with others.

For more information visit <http://reefcheck.org/events/gala2017/>.

The Reef Check website states "founded in 1996, the Reef Check Foundation exists to help preserve the oceans and reefs which are critical to our survival, yet are being destroyed. With headquarters in Los Angeles and volunteer teams in more than 90 countries and territories, Reef Check works to protect tropical coral reefs and California rocky reefs through education, research and conservation."