

HYDRO INTERNATIONAL INTERVIEWS CAPT US NAVY DON WALSH (RETD), PHD

Oceanography from Space and by Diving Autonomously

Don Walsh, who recently gave a presentation at the conference “Catch the Next Wave”™ in London, UK, has extensive experience in oceanology and prefers to call himself “explorer”™. This results in an impressive resumé. He was in the US Navy, was the first US Navy submersible pilot and has been a member of the Board of Directors of many oceanographic and offshore organisations and businesses. A summary of honours and awards includes the Legion of Merit awarded by President Eisenhower. Hydro International talked to Don Walsh on space remote sensing, ocean mapping, underwater vehicles and the new generation of young ocean professionals.

How did you become the first oceanographer to work with remote sensing? What was most interesting in doing this?

I was a graduate student at Texas A&M as a lieutenant commander in the Navy and senior naval officer. Rear Admiral Odale D. Water, the Oceanographer of the US Navy, visited A&M in late 1965. He told me about a meeting that NASA had sponsored at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution on what could be understood about our planet using earth-orbiting spacecraft, manned and unmanned – ‘A mission to Planet Earth’. NASA wanted to fund the Navy to look into ocean applications for these capabilities. This was the beginning of ‘remote sensing oceanography’. He asked me to go down to Houston Space Center and find out what was being done and how the Navy could participate. [NASA would fund the project through the Office of Naval Research.](#) (continue)