



Journey Beneath a Coral Sea

Twentyfive years ago I made a film called the *Ocean's Daughter*, that tried, in my own small way, to add a voice to the growing calls to protect our planetary future. It was a film that tried to express the sacredness of life and the magical beauty of nature and the fact that we, as humans, were in danger of destroying ourselves, before we had the chance to evolve into mature adulthood as a species.

It would be tragic indeed, if future genera-

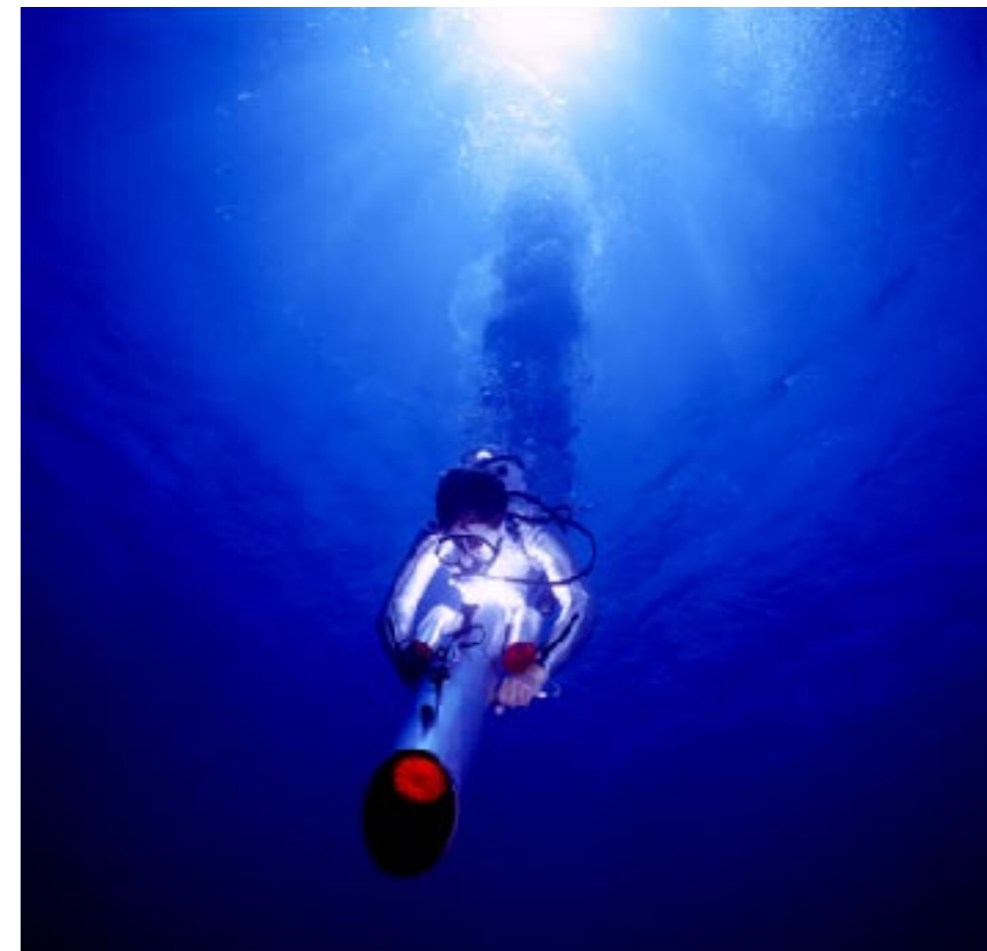
tions were forced to live under inhospitable planetary conditions and never witness the wonders of nature we have experienced, except by watching the films from our era. They would be like the visual fossil record of what once was but is forever gone.

If we look at the big picture, all across the world, development and environmental organizations are underfunded. In a world where on the same day we celebrate record highs in the stock market, 40,000 chil-

Text and Photos by Michael Portelly

I have been an underwater photographer and filmmaker for more than 25 years. I share the grave concerns of many who fear that our generation will bequeath future generations the legacy of a planet, poisoned and stripped of its assets and its beauty.

Michael Portelly



Deep Ocean



Womb of the World

dren die from hunger, at a time when governments do not have the resources to meet the urgent needs in their own country much less the rest of the world. Species extinction is reaching epidemic proportions as ecosystems are rapidly disappearing from insensitive development and pollution. We are caught in the clutches of an economic system that operates beyond the control of even the president of the United States, and is at the present time crushing life from us and from this planet.

I once looked out at the world with despair, until one day, quite by chance I woke up to an idea that makes it financially viable for

business to help fund solutions to global problems, in a way that will reward their investors, increase their profit and liberate new resources for the task of global regeneration. As one who has made a living from the ocean, I feel a deep sense of responsibility to do everything I can to make a difference. Though the hour is late, there is still time for us to turn things around.

In Antibes, three years ago, I voiced an idea to marine architect Jacques Rougerie and Andre Laban, the famous diving legend, about an idea that could really make a difference.

It is called the Blu Revolution and is designed to breath life back into



Dreamscape

the ocean, create new habitats, and revitalize fishing communities around the globe, in an attempt to preserve our ocean heritage and restore it as a source of food to feed the hungry.

As things stand, many fish species are becoming toxic with pollutants, fish stocks are declining from overfishing and destructive industrial fishing techniques, and across the planet spawning grounds and habitats are being destroyed by trawl nets. This is turning the ecosystems on the continental shelf into a desert.

Imagine the public response if the United Nations, or other such body, guided by a scientific council, were to initiate a global program to restore life to the ocean; Imagine that we were to construct artificial reefs in suitable

materials that could provide work for idle fishing fleets, and create a new global industry designed to reverse the destruction and provide a haven for wildlife to flourish.

Imagine business leaders got involved as they realized that to do so would be rewarded with public recognition, respect and an increase in profit.

Imagine too, that plastic manufacturers were to recognize that they could take responsibility for their plastic, at present is either buried in rapidly filling landfill sites or being burned, and instead recycle it in an exciting and life-creating way.

Plastic manufacturers could work alongside marine architects to develop the technology to convert waste plastic into nontoxic re-moldable forms. These could be created as large

structures of great intrinsic beauty that would soon become covered in marine life, and the nonbiodegradable quality of the plastic would become an asset. It could support the habitat indefinitely, instead of rusting away as ships do when they are sunk for the same purpose.

It would mobilize fishing fleets and breathe new life into fishing communities around the world, as they set to the task of restoring the ecosystems of the continental shelf, where each year an area the size of the United States is destroyed by trawl nets dragging the bottom, crushing the marine habitat.

It the creation of floating architecture might even augur a new epoch of oceanic exploration where



Place of the Great Secret



Ocean's Daughter

Michael Portelly



Samantha



Sacred Pool

the concerns raised by Jacques Yves Cousteau are finally addressed and the visions of great men, like Commander Phillippe Taillez's Archipelago, become a reality.

For this to occur, a new level of international cooperation will have to be forged, where people set aside their differences and work together for the common good. I know that across all nations of the world, divers are united by their love of life and the ocean. They work in corporations and government and come from every walk of life. It is to them that I now speak because they have within them the power to make a positive difference for the

benefit of everybody.

I ask you to go to www.BluRevolution.com and hear about The Genesis Project in a talk I gave at the open university in the United Kingdom. I ask you to listen to the idea with an open mind.

This strategy makes it viable for companies to save lives, protect nature, initiate necessary technology to end pollution and cancel their carbon dioxide debt to the world. The Genesis Project involves funding global reforestation or preserving huge tracts of rainforest to prevent it being cut down. I am informed that 90% of the coral reefs are dying from rising sea temperatures. This strategy

can at least slow that process down and give us all a chance to breathe again. It can create the space for a coordinated global effort that will bring us all closer together as we heal this world before we destroy it and ourselves along with it.

Research shows that people will support companies willing to help the world when they witness the good that is being achieved. The involvement of business leaders will help focus political will where it is needed. Perhaps we might even discover that we need a new concept for what constitutes global security in the 21st century, in the form of a world that works together for the

common good, and the concept of the family of Man can then become a practical working reality.

If you agree with what is said please share The Genesis Project and the Blu Revolution with everyone you know, so that a focussed dialogue can finally be opened that will result in the implementation of the necessary remedial measures before we go past the point of no return. Once that point is reached it is over!

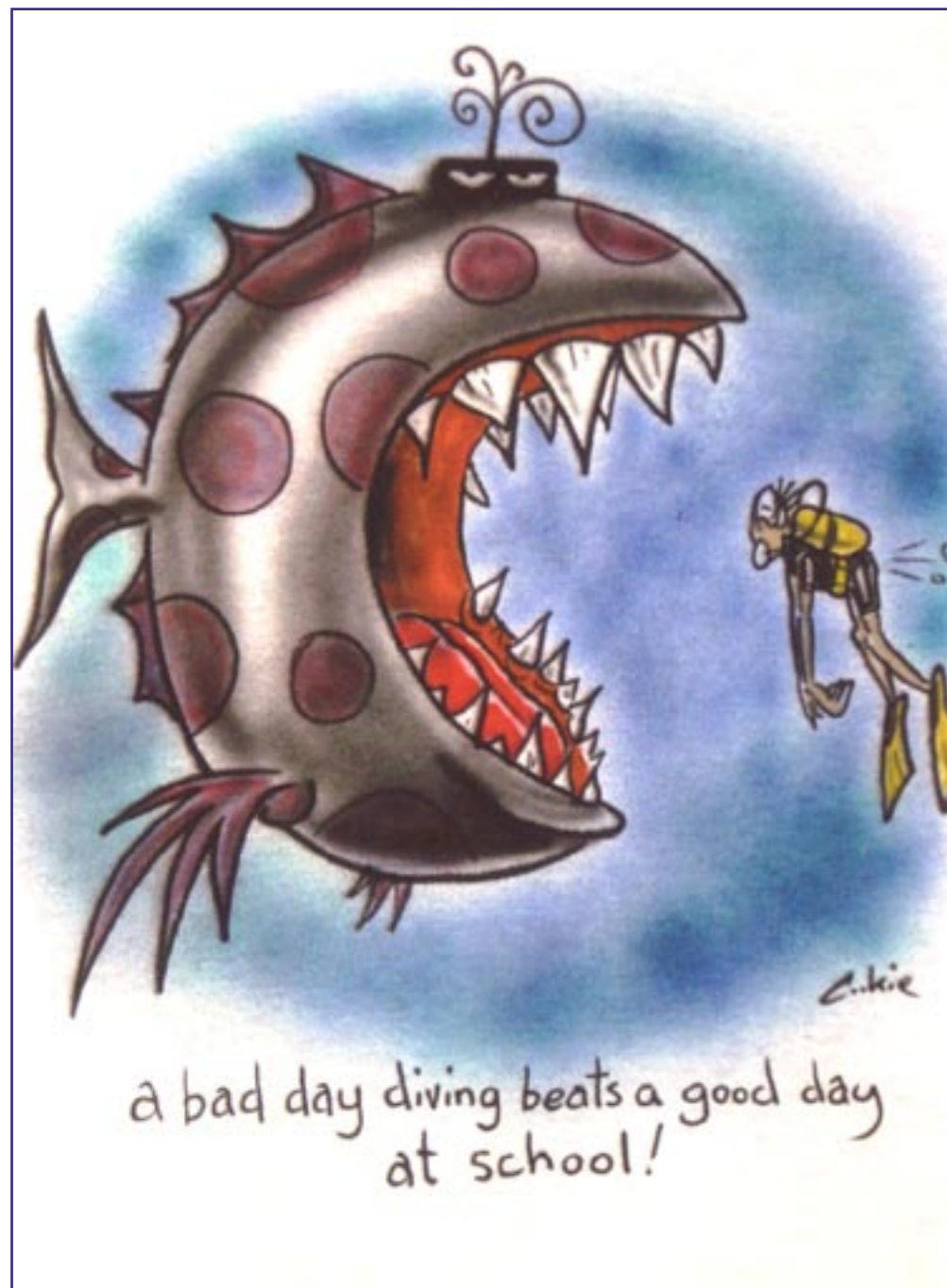
Portelly will be honoured at this year's Festival of Underwater Images in Antibes, France, to mark 25 years since his ground-breaking film hit the silver screen. ■

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