

Bond/Siiteri

Papa Topside

The Sealab Chronicles of Capt. George F. Bond, USN



EDITED BY HELEN A. SIITERI

A pioneer in the field of deep-sea diving, George F. Bond helped develop the theory of saturation diving and the techniques and dive tables used by divers around the world. In this edited journal—made public for the first time—Bond offers a lively account of his work with the U.S. Navy's first manned undersea habitats, the Sealab experiments of the 1960s. Dubbed "Papa Topside" by the media who followed his work with Navy aquanauts, Bond gives a colorful eyewitness account of what today are considered benchmarks in the history of diving.

This is a candid, personal record of Sealabs I, II, and III, and the FISSH experiment, the finale of Bond's career. The picture that emerges is one of a brilliant, larger-than-life figure who, though often difficult to get along with, earned the respect and affection of his peers.

The book draws on the editor's interviews with Bond's fellow researchers and divers as well as Bond's daily logs and correspondence. Always frank and to the point, he describes his frustrations with the Navy brass, his friendly competition with Jacques Cousteau, and his spirited relationship with aquanaut/astronaut Scott Carpenter. As the only full-length book written about U.S. aquanauts and their undersea exploits, it is an important historical document. It is also an entertaining read.

Jacket design: Pamela Lewis Schnitter

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NAVAL INSTITUTE PRESS

Papa Topside

George Foote Bond, Captain (MC), USN, retired from the U.S. Navy on 1 December 1975. As a founding member of the Institute of Diving in Panama City, Florida, he served it as president emeritus and edited a newsletter for deep-sea divers until his death on 3 January 1983. Captain Bond rests alongside his wife, Marjorie, on a bluff overlooking the Church of the Transfiguration in Hickory Nut Gorge, Bat Cave, North Carolina.

On 17 May 1991, the Ocean Simulation Facility at the Naval Coastal Systems Laboratory, Panama City Beach, Florida, which Captain Bond had praised as "the finest hyperbaric complex I shall see in my lifetime," honored him by emblazoning his name above its entrance.

Helen A. Siiteri, the editor, became familiar with Captain Bond's work while researching the history of ship salvage in the U.S. Navy. She resides in Rockville, Maryland.

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"This edited journal of George F. Bond's offers a fascinating look into the mind and motives of one of our great underwater explorers. It is a compelling read for anyone who ever strapped on a scuba tank, or dreamed of doing so. While others may have gotten more publicity during those pioneering years, it was Dr. Bond who developed the techniques that allowed a generation of aquanauts to explore deep space. Make no mistake, Papa Topside was an opinionated, complex, and determined man who was willing to fight anyone who tried to divert him from his passionate quest to make long-duration undersea exploration possible. He was loved by many, resented by some, but respected by all. He was a man with the good fortune for us as well as for him to be at exactly the right time and right place to bring his talents to bear on a great technological problem—how to go into the sea and stay. No diver's library will be complete without a copy of his journal."

—HOMER HICKAM

Author of *Torpedo Junction: U-Boat War Off America's East Coast, 1942*

Published by the Naval Institute Press

ISBN 1-55750-795-3



Printed in the U.S.A.

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