



Alumni



DAVID MEARNES *MS, MARINE SCIENCE '86*

U.S.-born marine scientist, author, and deep-sea wreck hunter David Mearns has found and filmed some of the world's most famous and controversial shipwrecks. Among them are: HMS *Hood*, beloved flagship of the Royal Navy sunk by the *Bismarck* in 1941; *Lucona*, a cargo ship at the center of a sensational European murder trial; and *Esmeralda*, a Portuguese nau from the 1503 fleet of Vasco da Gama. David has led the discovery of more than two dozen major shipwrecks and has been awarded three Guinness World records,

including one for locating the deepest shipwreck (at 5,762 meters) ever found, the German World War II blockade runner *Rio Grande*.

In 2010 David was awarded an honorary Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for finding and filming the wrecks of Australia's two worst maritime disasters. In praising David's work, the Award Citation reads, in part: "Mr. Mearns, in locating the wreckage of HMAS *Sydney II* and AHS *Centaur*, has solved these long-time Australian mysteries and provided solace to the families of those lost on both vessels."

As Director of Blue Water Recoveries Ltd, David incorporates his skills as detective, engineer, navigator and marine scientist. He has worked in all of the world's oceans and has travelled to 47 countries. David is a long-standing fellow of the Explorer's Club and the Royal Geographical Society. In 2011 he received the USF Distinguished Alumnus Award.

David's tenacity as a hands-on marine scientist was clearly evident in his years at USFSP. As the fearless goalkeeper for the men's soccer team, he prowled the goal with the finesse of a wily cat. David was that plucky goaltender who dared his opponent to shoot! He is still a "football" fan, living in a small country village in West Sussex with his wife Sarah and their three children, Sarah, Alexandra and Isabella.

"Al Hine was my major Professor so I would pick him every time, but I also had special relationships with Bob Garrels and Peter Betzer. I have many great memories from my time at USF, but one that sticks out and best encapsulates special relationships with friends was when a group of us went on a short cruise on the SUNCOASTER. It was the first student trip out on the vessel after USF had just been given the ship and after her conversion into a research vessel. We worked 12-hour days but had nights off and would play cards around a table and eat all the ice cream and cake the cook brought for the trip. One night a storm hit and the ship was rolling so badly that the kitchen units broke from the bulkhead and were about to topple over so we all had to brace our backs against the units to hold them in place. It was madness and slightly dangerous but we laughed till we cried. In fact, nearly all my best memories from USF were times spent at sea – this was one of the reasons I pursued a career working on the oceans."

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