

# From Navy to Gucci

## This DAN Diver Has Photographed U.S. Navy Undersea Projects for Almost 50 Years

By Hillary Vidars, Ph.D.

Since 1964, diving with armfuls of cameras, strobe lights and accessories has been second nature to Bernie Campoli.

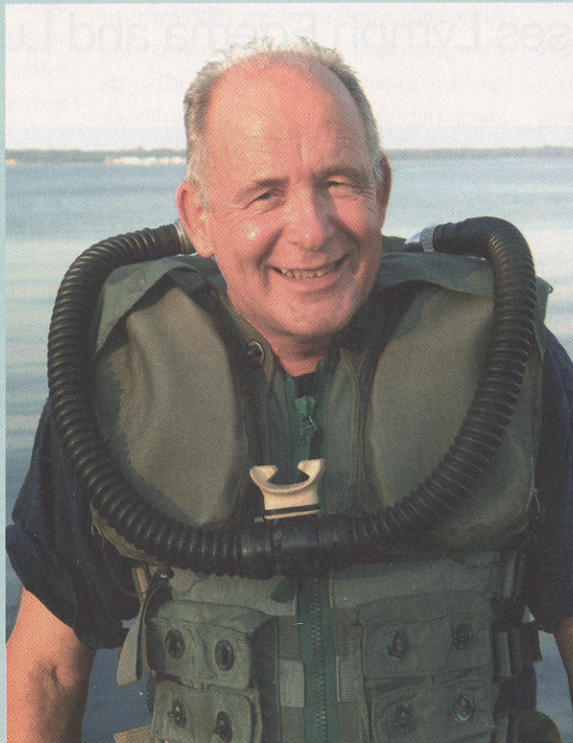
That's when he began his career as a member of the U.S. Navy's Underwater Photographic Team. His first assignments have included photographing the U.S. Navy's first Man in the Sea Program Special Project Sea-Lab in Panama City, Fla., and at the Argus Island, Bermuda, dive site.

Since then, Campoli has photographed, filmed and been part of many U.S. Navy, commercial and scientific saturation and deep-diving programs. He has published images worldwide.

Campoli lives in Panama Beach, Fla., near the U.S. Navy's largest dive training facility; he has always enjoyed diving locally and in the Florida Keys. He's also made numerous technical dives with notable dive industry friends.

"My most challenging dives were on the *Andrea Doria* during the summer of 1973, when I worked with Jack McKenny, Bob Hollis, John Clark and Tom Kelly on an article for *Skin Diving Magazine* and on a film," Campoli said. "We also shot footage for Jack McKenny's book, *Diving to Adventure*.

"I still vividly recalled these treacherous dives to a depth of 240 feet (73 meters) in



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the North Atlantic years later as Bob Hollis and I scattered Jack McKenny's ashes."

As a Navy civilian diver and photographer, Campoli provided photographic and video support to the Navy's Naval Special Warfare's Dry Deck Shelter Development program from 1982 to 2000, receiving the Department of the Navy's Superior Civilian Service Award for exceptional value to the program.

When Campoli retired in March 2000, he began diving for fun. "After being paid to

do underwater film and photography since I was 19, I became a 'Gucci diver' and started visiting all the Gucci dive/underwater photo sites my friends had visited while I was busy with a job," he said.

"The first dive site on my list was Cocos Islands. It was incredible!

"Then I spent 16 days in the Red Sea. I arrived home Sept. 1, 2001, totally unaware of how the world would soon change." (The attacks on the World Trade Centers in New York City took place 10 days later.)

In retirement, Campoli plans to focus on wildlife photography. He also provides topside and underwater digital photographs to the University of North Carolina Wilmington (NURC)/U.S. Navy's Specialized Research Diving Detachment (SRDD) dives in the Aquarius Undersea laboratory at Key Largo, Fla.

Campoli remains focused on the challenges of modern underwater photography. "The basics of good photography

are still the same, but whereas digital has made things easier, now you must carry more gear," Campoli said. "The big problem is that with modern air travel, your gear may not arrive at the chance-of-a-lifetime dive spot!"



HILLARY VIDARS, Ph.D., is an EMT and diving educator. She has worked as a hyperbaric chamber technician and has taught numerous Dive Accident Management programs to professional rescue teams, including the FBI. Vidars is the president of the Academy of Underwater Arts and Sciences and a founder of the Women Divers Hall of Fame.

About The Author