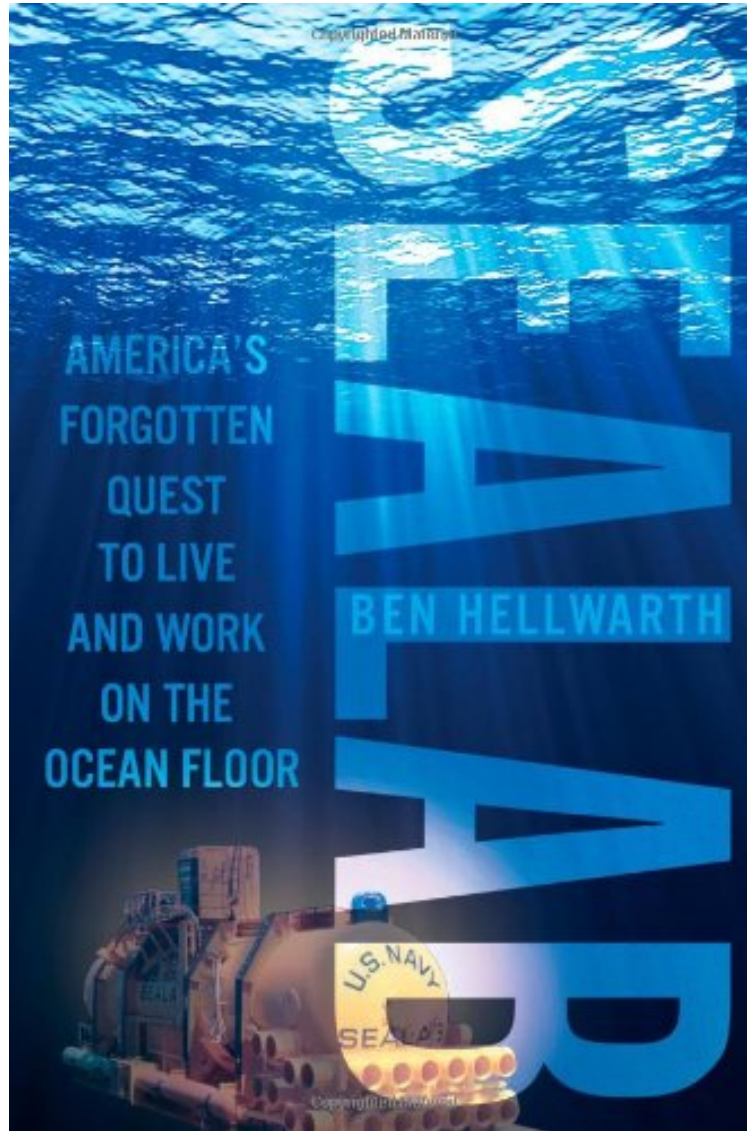


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Sealab: America's Forgotten Quest to Live and Work on the Ocean Floor

Ben Hellwarth

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Ben Hellwarth : Sealab: America's Forgotten Quest to Live and Work on the Ocean Floor before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sealab: America's Forgotten Quest to Live and Work on the Ocean Floor:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating - I thought I knew much of this story until I read this bookBy Gadget WispererClearly written, good story arc - priceless real-life characters. I thought I knew much of this

story before reading this book, but was surprised and delighted to read about so many of the personalities and connections behind the scenes. Excellent historical account in an accessible, easy to read style. As a recreational PADI SCUBA Diver, I would go further than saying it's recommended reading for all divers - I would say SEALAB should be REQUIRED reading for anyone diving today. Not only for the historical appreciation of your diving pleasures, but more importantly, for 'grokking' the importance of bottom time calculations and the importance of decompression stops! It is so ironic that these pioneers of diving and these visionaries of undersea living have gotten so little attention (until this book). The space race was certainly made more accessible by TV, but this story is likely much more important to mankind - our Ocean is so much more important to us all than we realize. Between this book and "The World is Blue" by Sylvia Earle, anyone can gain a fresh and necessary appreciation for the Ocean in our daily lives - even if you live in Kansas - or some other landlocked state. Enjoy! Amended Dec. 12, 2014 - I was so moved by the contributions documented in this book, I visited George F. Bond, MD grave today - here is my travel log... <http://bit.ly/1xdZNvQ22> of 23 people found the following review helpful. Very well-written, very comprehensive account. By CJ This is a very good book for several reasons:- The writing style is excellent. The author tells a story with a good balance between the personalities, the challenges, and the science/physiology of underwater habitats. The story-telling is first-class. There are some larger-than-life personalities involved like Jacques Cousteau and astronaut Scott Carpenter, and this history is set in an interesting environment of exploration and competition.- The detail is amazing. The author leaves no stone unturned, and covers every aspect from the design of the habitats to the medical science of saturation diving and decompression. The book covers every step in the process of bringing the idea of underwater living to reality, including all of the pressure chamber tests conducted prior to the first Sealab deployment. Overall: I gave this rating 4-stars because it is so detailed, so exhaustive, that it will probably only satisfy readers with a very strong interest in underwater habitats. There are a lot of non-fiction books out there that take a subject and make it available to the average reader. "Sealab" is too detailed and its coverage of the subject too thorough to qualify as a book to capture the interest of an average reader. That is not necessarily a bad thing, it just depends what you're looking for. I thought the account got bogged down by the details, but other readers may object to a broader survey of events that are just not covered in other works. NOTE: I put a lot of effort in capturing the strengths and weaknesses of this book as I perceived them and I welcome comments and feedback on this review. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Reviving a Truly Deep Tale. By Whizzo Ben Hellwarth offers us something that is often quite tough to achieve for writers of living history: reviving a truly forgotten story. Except for some groups of hardcore undersea enthusiasts, this period is largely unremembered - as the author notes, even by its U.S. Navy sponsor. Like so many of the 1960s-70s great adventures, many of the participants are a dwindling group. Fortunately, Hellwarth was able to interview and coax the details from a surprisingly great number of those who are still among us. It's always enjoyable to hear long quiet voices, especially those who have experienced the hardships of pioneering work. The story is told with deliberate focus on the complexities and the technical challenges, an amazingly thorough accounting of the mechanical and philosophical problems faced. This level of detail may not resonate as well with mainstream readers, but it helps frame, then enhances the drama and dangers of deep ocean work. Anyone who dives, or has tried a scuba experience, will certainly have a better first person empathy than those who have never stuck their heads underwater. Notably, two other major undersea habitation efforts were taking place simultaneously, those of Cousteau and Link, and the author weaves the oddly competitive yet supportive groups together. After a few decades, the utopian sounding "living in the sea" rhetoric comes across as sincere, though certainly inflated. But it captures the feel of the period, to include the major letdowns that plagued the Navy efforts. One aspect I enjoyed were his characterizations of the various players, using a sort of 1960's period language to describe the countenance and bearing of seasoned divers and key supporters, many of whom were military men. I've briefly spoken with astronaut/aquanaut Scott Carpenter about his Sealab experiences, and Hellwarth accurately portrays the trying existence of pressurized, cramped, and exhausted deep divers. If you want a well-chronicled accounting of something you may have only heard of as a science fiction story or animated parody, the real Sealab is a worthwhile ride.

Sealab is the underwater Right Stuff: the compelling story of how a US Navy program sought to develop the marine equivalent of the space station—and forever changed man's relationship to the sea. While NASA was trying to put a man on the moon, the US Navy launched a series of daring experiments to prove that divers could live and work from a sea-floor base. When the first underwater "habitat" called Sealab was tested in the early 1960s, conventional dives had strict depth limits and lasted for only minutes, not the hours and even days that the visionaries behind Sealab wanted to achieve—for purposes of exploration, scientific research, and to recover submarines and aircraft that had sunk along the continental shelf. The unlikely father of Sealab, George Bond, was a colorful former country doctor who joined the Navy later in life and became obsessed with these unanswered questions: How long can a diver stay underwater? How deep can a diver go? Sealab never received the attention it deserved, yet the program inspired explorers like Jacques Cousteau, broke age-old depth barriers, and revolutionized deep-sea diving by demonstrating that living on the seabed was not science fiction. Today divers on commercial oil rigs and Navy divers engaged in classified missions rely on methods pioneered during Sealab. Sealab is a true story of heroism and discovery: men

unafraid to test the limits of physical endurance to conquer a hostile undersea frontier. It is also a story of frustration and a government unwilling to take the same risks underwater that it did in space. Ben Hellwarth, a veteran journalist, interviewed many surviving participants from the three Sealab experiments and conducted extensive documentary research to write the first comprehensive account of one of the most important and least known experiments in US history.

From Booklist In the 1950s, naval medical doctor George Bond evangelized a vision of submarine habitats that was realized in the 1960s in three successive projects called Sealab. A deadly accident with Sealab III, however, terminated a program that journalist Hellwarth reconstructs. Sealab's genesis lay in Bond's research into the physiology of diving, though Hellwarth underscores that Bond's imagination ranged far beyond devising safe procedures. To Bond, "inner space" was as significant a frontier of exploration as outer space, an idea supported by the addition of Mercury astronaut Scott Carpenter to his team. Dozens of others completed the Sealab rosters, many of whom Hellwarth interviewed. With details of their submersible activities, Hellwarth strives to animate a narrative about the Sealabs—stationary, pressurized vessels that were lowered by crane to the seafloor and ran in place until something went wrong. Such perilous incidents supply Hellwarth's dramatic peaks, while, overall, his assemblage of living memory about Sealab constitutes important historical preservation of its place, possibly as cover for deep-sea espionage activities, in the annals of the U.S. Navy. --Gilbert Taylor "During the same period that NASA was working toward putting a man on the moon, the U.S. Navy was testing ways for people to thrive underwater. This tale of the ill-fated Sealab project (whose impact is still felt in deep-sea diving) is as captivating as an adventure novel." —Parade "It's Hellwarth's eye for anecdote—pranks the aquanauts played on their commanding officers, the sparkling wine they drank at 200 feet below sea level even though the high pressure forced out the fizz—that brings this long-shuttered program back to life." —Discover "A thrilling, true-life adventure that transports the reader to a place as foreboding, exciting, and dangerous as outer space. Ben Hellwarth's Sealab is more than a great history of unsung American explorers. It is a tale of man's deepest desires and grandest ambitions, and his willingness to risk it all for dreams as vast as the ocean floor itself." —Robert Kurson, author of *Shadow Divers* "[Hellwarth] combines the work of a diligent investigative reporter with that of a feature writer . . . Ben Hellwarth has produced a fascinating history of man in the sea. It is a book well worth reading, whether you are an aficionado of undersea operations or a casual reader who likes a great sea story." —Naval History "Sealab is a must read for anyone who wants to know the true story behind America's Man-in-the-Sea Program, complete with all of its triumphs and tragedies." —Dr. Robert D. Ballard, *Deep Sea Explorer* and author of *The Discovery of the Titanic* "I grew up with Sealab and Conshelf. Our decisionmakers need to focus on the importance of one of our vital life support systems—the ocean, 70% of our planet. This incredibly detailed, precise book should be read by those who care about our future so they can start planning by basing their passion and decisions on solid foundations." —Jean-Michel Cousteau, founder and president, *Ocean Futures Society* "A remarkably stirring narrative filled with an awe-inducing cast of scientific adventurers who risked life and limb to not only explore the ocean's depths, but to make them their own. What Tom Wolfe revealed in such riveting detail of the space program in *The Right Stuff*, Ben Hellwarth matches here for underwater discovery." —Neal Bascomb, author of *The Perfect Mile* and *Hunting Eichmann* "Ben Hellwarth's engrossing, meticulously researched chronicle of America's quest to live underwater doesn't merely recount a forgotten chapter in contemporary history. It reminds us of a time when the country had big, larger-than-life ideas—and the *Right Stuff*-sized characters to plunge into them." —David Browne, author of *Fire and Rain: The Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, James Taylor, CSNY, and the Lost Story of 1970* "Painstakingly reported and beautifully written, Sealab is proof that American literary journalism is alive and well. How deep under the water can man go, and how long can he stay there? Sealab is Ben Hellwarth's fascinating answer." —Robert S. Boynton, Director of Literary Reportage Concentration, Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute, New York University, and author of *The New New Journalism* "Intelligently and accurately recorded, Ben Hellwarth's Sealab finally brings the historically significant story of America's daring aquanauts out of the long shadow of the nation's astronauts. Jules Verne himself would have been proud to tell this tale of teamwork and raw courage, with its colorful cast of divers boldly attempting to go far deeper into a hostile ocean and stay down far longer than ever before. Sealab is a magnificent book that honors those who risked all for science and their country. —Leslie Leaney, Founder and Publisher, *The Journal of Diving History*

About the Author Ben Hellwarth grew up in Los Angeles and began reporting, writing, and editing for papers in the Bay Area after graduating from the University of California, Berkeley. He won a number of notable journalism awards in the 1990s as a staff writer for the Santa Barbara News-Press, then part of The New York Times Regional Newspaper Group. He divides his time between southern California and western Pennsylvania. Sealab is his first book. Visit him at www.benhellwarth.com.