

IN MEMORIAM

MIA JEAN TEGNER 1947–2001

On 7 January 2001 Mia Jean Tegner died in a scuba-diving accident while working in the kelp forests off San Diego, California. She died at the height of her career, doing what she loved best. We lost not only a good friend and colleague but also a powerful champion for marine conservation.

Mia had a genuine, abiding passion for marine ecology, so it may come as a surprise that she received her Ph.D. in molecular biology. She traded a postdoc in molecular biology for another one to study sea urchin ecology with Paul Dayton. It was, like so much of what she did, a gutsy move. Lucky for us she did change fields and was so very good at marine ecology. Her scientific excellence was apparent early in her career when she published in such prestigious journals as *Nature* and *Science*.



Mia Tegner, 1975.

Mia's research focused on abalone, sea urchins, and the kelp forest communities off southern California. She examined the role of environmental variability on fisheries and kelp forest productivity. Through her creativity and scientific rigor, she was able to detect the impacts of interdecadal shifts in ocean climate. She helped to convince us all of the importance of episodic El Niño events on the structure of kelp communities. Mia did not distinguish between basic and applied research. She studied what she thought was important and made sure it met the most rigorous scientific standards. Her research highlighted the importance of the health of nearshore kelp forests. During her 30 years at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, Mia developed a strong research program, publishing more than 70 papers, symposia contributions, and book chapters. Her work helped us change our perspective on the marine environment; what we once thought of as a vast, boundless ocean has now become recognized as a fragile ecosystem in need of conservation.

Mia's work gave us a framework for restoring populations and ecosystems. It is an exceptionally difficult task to determine just how many lobsters the kelp forest once harbored. Mia, in collaboration with Paul, produced seminal work in historical ecology, quantifying how baseline abundances have changed over time. She then took the first steps toward abalone restoration when she co-authored the federal status review of white abalone. As a result of these efforts, white abalone became the first marine invertebrate to be listed as an endangered species. Her work earned her fellowships in the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the prestigious Pew Marine Conservation Program. The fact that she was in the middle of her Pew research examining the impacts of ocean conditions on abalone productivity when she died is one of the many reasons we have taken her death so hard.

Mia was an academic, though no one considered her meek or cloistered away in an ivory tower. She worked closely with natural resource managers and policymakers to sustain California's marine resources and was often quoted by the press. She had a grittiness to her core, and a fierce determination that served her well when dealing with controversial issues such as San Diego wastewater treatment, abalone conservation, and marine reserves. With over 4,000 hours of bottom time she was



Baja Wreck, 1976. Photo by Eric Hanauer.

an exceptional diver, some might say (I would say) a macho diver. Perhaps as a consequence of her extensive first-hand experience underwater, her abilities as a scientist, and her love of people, she could converse with anyone interested in the ocean, whether scientist, politician, or fisher. Mia's passion for her work was contagious, and often whatever Mia thought was important became the central topic of the panel discussions she participated in. Her work gained her worldwide attention, and her love of travel meant that she and her husband Eric were frequently invited to wonderful and exotic places. Such a blend of passion, courage, scientific excellence, honesty, and integrity is extremely rare and will be sorely missed.

Over the years Mia and I became friends. We first met in 1986 when I was a graduate student. I had read all her papers and we began to correspond about our overlapping interests in sea urchins, abalone, diving, and

marine conservation. Over the years I would stop in on her whenever I was in La Jolla, asking her advice, dropping off copies of my latest papers, or inviting her to give seminars. I spent a week with Mia in South Africa, listening to abalone talks during the day and eating and talking with friends in the evenings. What could be better? We visited the diverse intertidal zone where the Indian and Atlantic Oceans meet. We had a standing invitation to dive each others' sites: hers in the Point Loma kelp beds and mine in the Bodega Marine Life Refuge. But in the end we never got the chance. I know that when I do finally get to dive with her, she will have figured out all the best dive spots and will reveal the secrets of the kelp beds. I only hope that in the meantime, we will be wise enough to take Mia's advice and protect our ocean's treasures.

Laura Rogers-Bennett

The Abalone Song

The poet George Sterling and his wife, Carrie Sterling, wrote *The Abalone Song* in the early 1900s while they were living in the artist colony of Carmel. The Sterlings, with the likes of Jack London and Jimmy Hopper, feasted on California's prime delicacy around a roaring fire on the beach at Point Lobos or at the Café Ernest at the foot of Fisherman's Wharf. Adding verses to the abalone song, sung to the tune of "Yankee Doodle Dandy," has become a tradition among the family of researchers who ply abalone symposia around the world. There are few rules to the tradition save these two: verses may be composed only when in high spirits and good company, and all verses must end in the word *abalone*.

*OH! Some folks boast of quail on toast
Because they think its tony
But I'm content to owe my rent
And live on abalone!*

*OH! Mission point's a friendly joint
Where every crab's a crony
And true and kind you'll ever find
The clinging abalone.*

*He wanders free beneath the sea
Where 'ere the coast is stony
He flaps his wings and madly sings
The plaintive abalone.*

*On Carmel Bay the people say
We feed the Lazzaroni
On Boston beans and fresh sardines
And tender abalone.*

*Some live on hope and some on dope
And some on alimony
But my tomcat, he lives on fat
and tender abalone.*

*OH! Some drink rain and some champagne
Or brandy by the pony
But I will try a little rye
With a dash of abalone.*

*OH! Some like ham and some like jam
And some like macaroni
But bring me in a pail of gin
And a tub of abalone.*

*He hides in caves beneath the waves
His ancient patrimony
And so 'tis shown that faith alone
Reveals the abalone.*

*The more we take the more they make
In deep sea matrimony
Race suicide cannot abide
The fertile abalone.*

*I telegraph my better half
By Morse or by Marconi
But if the need arises for speed
I send an abalone.*

*They came to hear from far and near
To meat in Californee
Scoresby, David, Martin, and Kit
To save the abalone.*

*We came to Canada to meet
Nanaimo was so homely
Where DFO, First Nations tried
To save the abalone.*

*To Africa in Capetown clear
Where Mia broke her bony
Came eighteen nations' scientists
To talk of abalone.*

*Oh Sweijd and Peter were belayed
By calls from China to Omani
To help their native perlemon [par-la-mon]
another abalone.*