

ROBERT BALLARD

Deep-Sea Explorer

“I grew up wanting to be Captain Nemo from 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea.”

Best known for his 1985 discovery of the Titanic, Dr. Robert D. Ballard has succeeded in tracking down numerous other significant shipwrecks, including the German battleship Bismarck, the lost fleet of Guadalcanal, the U.S. aircraft carrier Yorktown (sunk in the World War II Battle of Midway), and John F. Kennedy’s boat, PT 109. In addition to being a National Geographic Society explorer in residence and a commissioner on the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, Ballard is the founder and head of the Institute for Exploration at Mystic Marinelife Aquarium in Mystic, Connecticut. Specializing in deep-ocean archaeology, IFE’s goal is to establish this new field of research utilizing evolving technology such as advanced mapping and imaging systems, underwater robotics and manned submersibles.

Born June 30, 1942, in Wichita, Kansas, Ballard grew up in San Diego. Ballard has a Ph.D. in marine geology and geophysics from the University of Rhode Island. He spent 30 years at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, where he helped develop manned submersibles and remotely operated vehicles for marine research. He went on to develop telecommunications technology to create “telepresence” for his JASON Project, which allows hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren to accompany him from afar on undersea explorations around the globe.

Ballard has 13 honorary degrees and six military awards. He is also a commander in the U.S. Naval Reserve. He received the National Geographic Society’s prestigious Hubbard Medal in 1996 for “extraordinary accomplishments in coaxing secrets from the world’s oceans and engaging students in the wonder of science.” Ballard has published numerous books, scientific papers, and a dozen articles in *National Geographic* magazine. Ballard also has been featured in several *National Geographic* television programs, including the record breaking “Secrets of the Titanic.”

His discoveries also include the Mediterranean Sea finds of sunken remains of ships along ancient trade routes, two ancient Phoenician ships off Israel, the oldest shipwrecks ever found in deep water, and four 1,500 year-old wooden ships, one almost perfectly preserved in the Black Sea. Ballard’s Black Sea project seeks evidence of a great flood possibly linked to Noah’s Ark that may have struck the region thousands of years ago.

His 1997 best-selling book, *Lost Liners*, tells the story of the great transatlantic liners through memorable wrecks he has visited. Ballard has also acted as a special adviser on Steven Spielberg’s futuristic *Sea Quest* television show. Each year, he takes thousands of schoolchildren on an interactive expedition through the innovative JASON program. He is also the president of the Sea Research Foundation’s Institute for Exploration in Mystic, Connecticut.

An explorer, a discoverer, and a historian, Robert Ballard’s fascinating journeys can teach us a great deal about our past, and have encouraged taking tremendous strides in the survey of the undiscovered countries under the sea.

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