

Diving in the Aleutian Islands

As told by Roberta W.
Boston, Massachusetts

Story Narrative:

Submitted by Roberta to the [Women Mind the Water](#) digital stories project, in conjunction with the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street storytelling website and traveling exhibition "Water/Ways."

This story was recorded at the School for the Environment, UMASS Boston.

"The water in the Aleutians is cold and we were in wet suits. And, I remember one occasion we were way out in the Aleutians. We were near Dutch Harbor and to do some of the work that the scientists wanted us to do. You know when you jump into cold water with a wet suit you kind of go in screaming because it was so cold. We always had this image of bubbles coming up from the water with screams inside of them. (Laughs) So that they would burst on the surface with a big scream coming out, because we were underwater by that time and just starting to warm up from the water that had seeped into our wet suits. But on one of those trips my wet suit split. We were diving, they were fairly shallow dives actually, maybe 30 feet or maybe 35 feet which are tough dives because the pressure changes so dramatically at those short levels. But my wet suit split, and I couldn't figure out what was going on.

As I got colder and colder, I thought I was either running out of oxygen or I was in a colder spot in the water or what it was. At some point I realized that I just had really cold water coming in my wet suit. I jumped up out of the water as fast as I could to get back to the boat where, of course, I was the laughing stock for having a wet suit that had split.

The thing about doing that kind of diving was the beauty of that water and the remarkable difference between being on land, even out in those remote ocean islands, and seeing the life that was underneath the sea that was invisible to the people on the land."

Asset ID: 8021

Smithsonian Institution
Museum on Main Street