

SPOTLIGHT SERIES: ALUMNI, WHERE ARE THEY NOW

AN INTERVIEW WITH IAN TOMCHO

BY ALEXANDRA PURITZ



Ian Tomcho

Track: Exploration Science (ESC)

Graduated: May 2016

What is your current job and main responsibilities?

Currently, I am an Expedition Equipment Specialist for Lindblad Expeditions-National Geographic. I am in charge of inventory and sourcing our “tools for exploration” for each of our seven ships around the world. Examples of these “tools” are paddleboards, kayaks, skiing equipment, Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs), hydrophones, etc.. In addition to inventory duties, I help oversee the revamping of dive operations, which includes streamlining the ordering process for new gear and working with a third-party dive auditor to establish a ‘Dive-Safety’ program. Under this program, we will: have emergency procedure guidelines, assess how we hire new Undersea Specialists, and examine how to safely dive in extreme places in order to deliver on our promise to guests, “a view into the underwater world.”

Tell us about your MPS internship, and in what ways did it help you develop professional skills and connections?

I did two internships, one in Dry Tortugas National Park, and one on the M/V National Geographic Explorer. My internship in the Dry Tortugas helped me to understand the complexities of running dive operations in remote locations and become familiar with some of the equipment the United States government uses in dive operations. My time aboard the M/V Explorer was the pinnacle of internships, providing me with polar diving experience and exposure to extremely successful people in the world of exploration, including Dr. Joe MacInnis, Peter Hillary, and a slew of National Geographic photographers. Both of these internships helped tremendously in networking efforts.

What were your favorite classes at RSMAS and why?

Scientific Diving. The atmosphere that course instructors Rick Riera-Gomez, Jr. and Robbie

Christian create is both fun and very in-depth. Having a background in scientific diving and knowledge of diving beyond the scope of recreational activities is extremely helpful in my daily communications with our (Linblad) divers in the field. Another favorite class was Tech and Media in the Field. I really enjoyed Dr. Keene Haywood's course on technology and media applications.

What is your favorite RSMAS memory?

A weekend class trip with Dr. Keene Haywood to UM's Research Station at Broad Key. I spent my 24th birthday on the island that weekend and it was the perfect way to tune-out and have some fun.

What piece of advice would you give to current or incoming MPS students?

Join in on as much as you can as early as you can. Allowing yourself to network and make contacts will help in setting up possible internships and employment following your time at RSMAS. Definitely visit the Wetlab every Thursday and Friday, and restart a sand volleyball league.

Thanks for your advice Ian, and for sharing these responses with us!

