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Wise Up. Listen to the Voice of the Big Blue.

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360° Immersive
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'Tis the season of giving - and giving back. A time to reflect and feel more, as I write this right before the very special [Ocean Gala](#) that's about to take place in San Francisco, December 3. The hosts, two nonprofits, two hearts that beat as one for the Ocean - [MaiTaiGlobal](#) and [Ocean Elders](#). They are big blue heroes, marshalling the energy, resources and community to do good. Together they urge us to think Blue.

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IMAGE BY OCEAN GALA

Ocean Elders, Sir Richard Branson and **Dr Sylvia A Earle** at the inaugural Ocean Gala in San Francisco

How did it all begin? Unravelling the golden thread that makes up this unique community of philanthropists, scientists, VCs, entrepreneurs, kites, artists and glitterati starts over 20 years ago. **Bill Tai** (tech financier), met **Gigi Brisson** (public fund manager). They were betting on startups and taking them public. Bill would let loose after working stock market hours by windsurfing in Crissy Field in SF, and on summer weekends he'd fly to Hawaii to hit stronger winds, which ultimately led to his interest in the oceans and kiteboarding. Enter, kiting queen, **Susi Mai**, whom he met in Maui over 10 years ago. A



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IMAGE BY JOHN DILL

MaiTaiGlobal co-founders, **Bill Tai** and **Susi Mai** at MaiTaiCabarete, Freestyle Invitational 2016

Big Blue Heroes Now

As a kitesurfer, we are already ocean junkies. We will be the strongest army of ocean supporters, says Susi Mai, MaiTaiGlobal President & co-founder.

I love being immersed in **Susi Mai's** (pro-kiting champion, MaiTai Global President & co-founder) world. She is MaiTai's user interface and truly captures the essence of being a Big Blue Hero. We caught up in her San Francisco home base, on November 18. She'd just got back from [BLUE](#), an ocean film festival, waving the award for Best Ocean Sports film, 'Chapter One,' (mega congratulations). She also shared her top 5 watchlist from the Festival; #1 *Sonic Sea* #2 *You're not Hallucinating* #3 *That's Just Squid Skin* #4 *The Legacy* #5 *A Fish Full of Dollars*. **Greg** and **Barbara MacGillivray**, founders of **IMAX** have inspired Susi. She's returned keenly saying, "I want to add more Ocean Conservation to MaiTai." She praises the examples of more public leadership and **David E Shaw's** Second Century Stewardship initiative for National Parks. This experience opened Susi's eyes to something she'd never seen before saying,

*"I had my first interaction with the **Richard Bransons** and the **Elon Musks** of Ocean conservation. After having spent time with tech and sports heavy hitters I realised the importance and urgency. We have to pay attention. I was inspired by the general audience and conversation. It forces you to think about the topic, we have to start doing a lot more. Right now, it's the end*



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*that is used to track terrorists can be used to track illegal fishing. The defence industry has a lot of codes. The open ocean is really the last place on earth that's international waters. Bill, Elon, a baby born in India – it's one place we can come together. That's our utopia. It's the last place on earth that belongs to everyone. The Ocean Connects us all. The Open Ocean, it's so forgiving. Regardless of what's happening in your country. MaiTai in the non-profit world is a startup. It's like beta testing, we're finding our identity. **We can be the horn.** Everything's connected to the ocean."*

We ended with Susi talking about **Dr Sylvia Earle**, "she's the godmother, our guiding leader. We're very honoured to be able to follow her lead. She knows the ocean better than all of us. **She represents the Ocean.**"



SUSI MAI AND MISSION BLUE

left **Susi Mai** receiving Best Ocean Sports Film Award, right **Dr Sylvia A Earle**, in her natural habitat

Blue Hope

Not long after meeting Susi, it was my distinct privilege to interview 'Her Deepness,' **Dr Sylvia A Earle**, in person, in Alameda, on the silver jubilee of Deep Ocean Exploration Research (DOER), renaming 'Black Friday,' '**Blue Friday**' for the occasion. There are no titles left to do justice to what Sylvia Earle's gift to our blue planet and humanity is. She's the reason the **Ocean Elders** was formed, she's **National Geographic's** explorer-in-residence, **Ted** prize winner, founder of **Mission Blue** and **DOER** (which one of her two daughters, Liz Taylor now owns and operates together with her husband Ian Griffith). She's been the recipient of countless awards, and there's even a Sylvia Earle film award. It's beyond humbling, inspiring, a true honour to be in the presence of this gracious



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developed that have made access to the sea possible. “We’ve only explored 10%. We’ve depleted the ocean of wildlife at an unprecedented scale. What we put into the oceans, toxic materials and plastics, did not exist when I started exploring (in the 1950s). We have better maps of the moon and Mars. We need to get to know our own planet, it’s where we live. Priorities. Earth is in trouble. Global warming’s at an unprecedented scale, a lot of people, and I’m one of them, are concerned about climate change. With technologies that didn’t exist when I was a child, we’re able to alter the nature of nature. Our blue planet is affected by what we do. And in some cases what we fail to do.”

Q&A What keeps us alive? If you like to breathe you’ll listen up.

As an octogenarian, with over 7,000 hours of underwater exploration Sylvia’s calm voice reminds me of the ocean. Deep and knowing and underlying an urgency warning us to pay attention. Listen up to all her words of wisdom - the long and short of it.

- **How can we reboot the planet? Short answer – HOPE SPOTS.**

***Sylvia A Earle:** Our life depends upon knowing and what to do to address the problems. We fail to recognise the importance of natural systems that underpin our existence. We have clear evidence that it does matter, what we do to nature. We’ve taken 90% of fish that are part of our life support system. We’ve poisoned water, we’ve poisoned the atmosphere. Once we know, we have the capacity to care. I started [Mission Blue](#), a nonprofit. It is devoted to exploration and embracing special places in the ocean with care. Blue Parks, hope spots. Hope spots are places that in some cases already have some measure of protection. But there are also areas that need to be protected and by inspiring people to take action, understand places that they love, and to nominate hope spots, to work with Mission Blue, and to work with anyone who’s willing to cooperate, to have them formally establish these as marine protected areas. Some places are called sanctuaries, some places are called marine reserves. By whatever name, have real protection, where even the fish, and lobsters and shrimp, all forms of life are protected and safe. It’s an insurance policy for us to have areas in the ocean that are fully protected. So that life can not only prosper, but to restore areas where life has been depleted, or that have been poisoned through toxins that we put into the oceans.*

- **What do you say to heads of state to act? Short answer –**



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Sylvia A Earle: *As a scientist, as an explorer, as a conservationist, I've been privileged to have the opportunities to meet with a number of world leaders, CEOs of corporations, heads of state, and other people of influence, and just to share the view and try to find the common ground with what is of concern to them and really, the state of the world. I think I come to be a voice for the Ocean, a voice for Nature. I'm not alone in this. That's what the Ocean Elders generally represent. A voice for those who have no voice of their own. Jane Goodall speaks for Nature. Ed Wilson who's a famous scientist and conservationist has come to the understanding, given the rapid loss of the natural system that underpins our existence, we must hurry and save at least half the world where the wild creatures that make our lives possible, where they're safe, where they give us the most important thing of all. Our existence. It depends on a healthy ocean, healthy forest, healthy deserts, land, healthy water, fresh water and in the sea. Ocean Elders come in with being able to articulate to those who have influence, those who have power, the urgency of taking care of natural systems, the natural world that takes care of us and to behave ourselves as global citizens. Doing what we can do to work with nature to find an enduring place for ourselves within the natural systems that make our lives possible. A strong motivation for all of us first of all, is appreciating those in the past who have taken actions that have made a difference. So, we have policies for clean air, policies for clean water, policies to protect species and ecosystems. In the United States going back to 100 years ago, national parks, some say the best idea America ever had, an idea that's been taken up and other countries have originated their own ideas. How do you take care of the planet that takes care of us? But today about 14% of the land out of 100% we need, that you need to maintain a stewardship approach, of not killing so much of the natural systems that the world becomes destabilised. As I say, if you like to breathe you'll listen up, it's important to have the basic systems function in our favour. Think of Earth as an ecosystem. Our spacecraft. We have to do everything we can to understand it.*

- **What's your method to raise empathy for the Ocean? What helps people care? Short Answer – No child left dry. Go out there and Get Wet.**

Sylvia A Earle: *Words, Music, Poetry, Art, Films, Stories are important. Science is fundamentally, critically important because we have to know. The technology that makes our understanding of the universe and our place within that universe, I love it. I love the fact that Bertrand Piccard has joined the Ocean Elders, who has addressed the energy issue with his partner flying around the world years ago, with a balloon, successfully. And more recently Impulse, the solar powered aircraft, just pointing the way toward the ability to enjoy the prosperity that we have finding alternative means of powering our civilization and really inspiring people to take action*



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of our Ocean Elders was sailing around the world with a traditional Polynesian Voyager, Nainoa Thompson, with young men and women who are learning the stars, learning navigation. There's a symbolic as well as a practical aspect to this. We all must become navigators. Using the powers that we can each of us in our own way to explore, to use whatever talents we have, at this sweet spot in time when there's never before been more urgent. To use the knowledge that is more powerful than any other time in history. Now we know what we could not know when I was a child or even ten years ago. The children of today are the most important generation coming along. Because they have access to information, knowledge. And it's getting better all the time. With satellites in the sky, with those of us who have the opportunity to explore the depths below. The new mysteries that are being revealed in forests. Even in the soil beneath our feet we're finding a universe of life. Even a mile beneath the surface where we stand on the land, there are organisms that can live in the dark, with little or if any oxygen, live in anoxic circumstances. But there's water. Water is key. I say with respect to kids, children of today – no child left dry. You mentioned having Virtual Reality experiences to transfer people, whether it's to the depths of the ocean or to Mars or the moon, I really applaud those efforts. But even more. Go out there and get wet. You don't have to be a child, it can be any age. Find the child within you. Pictures are worth a thousand words they say, an experience has got to be worth a thousand pictures. Go out, walk, get wet, swim, fly, dive, whatever it is. GO!

Blue Wise



OCEAN GALA

Gigi Brisson, Ocean Elders Founder and CEO at the inaugural Ocean Gala in San Francisco

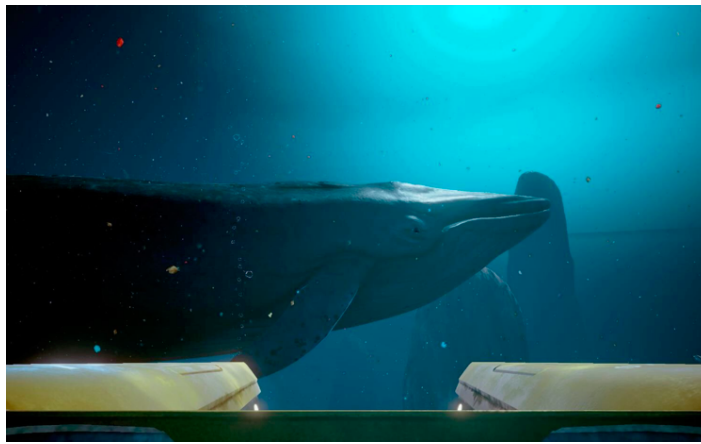


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Over a year ago I'd asked **Gigi Brisson** (Founder and CEO of Ocean Elders), how the idea for **Ocean Elders** was born. We were chatting and watching the kitesurfing on the beach, at a MaiTai event in Maui. The shock of not knowing and "why hadn't I heard about this," was the catalyst that instigated Gigi to present Dr. Sylvia Earle with a plan for the **Ocean Elders**. It had become Gigi Brisson's passion after joining over 100 scientists, business leaders, philanthropists and entertainment icons on the **Mission Blue Voyage** with, TED prize winner Dr Sylvia Earle, to the Galapagos islands in 2010. She sought out global leaders who had a personal passion for the ocean and its wildlife. Dr Sylvia Earle embraced the plan as its first Ocean Elder in June 2010 and everyone followed. "Truly sincere as a collective – this is the best place that can make a difference," were Gigi's words. It was my great honour to follow up on our initial conversation and talk about the second Ocean Gala on the phone early in November. Gigi is operational and shared links showing the alignment to **UN's [Life Below Water](#)**, Goal 14 sustainable development for the oceans. We talked about how the largest [National Monument](#) in Hawaii happened this summer. "Ocean Elders and a lot of NGOs have been pushing long and hard. The Big Papa monument by **President Barack Obama** was a big deal." Long term thinking, seven generations and thinking about tomorrow's children is paramount. Gigi would love to see all of Antarctica and keep it as a [CCAMLR](#) place for 35 more years. "In order to keep the weather system and climate change at bay, we're giving scientists and the Ocean a voice."

I was curious to find out what makes an Ocean Elder? We talked a bit about indigenous elders, who are initiated. Ocean Elders aren't the same, "Each one of them has a personal passion for the protection of Earth as we know it. Elders is not about age, it's about wisdom, we are all related to and respect leaving the world a better place." More Ocean Elders were added this year; **Dr Frederik Paulsen**, **Gerry Lopez** (surfing), **Dr Bertrand Piccard** and **Dame Jane Goodall**. Ocean Elders provides, "high level access to get that door open into that room. Whatever it takes at those levels, we are the network of networks."





3D LIVE AND DELL

Cry Out: The Lonely Whale

Blue Benefit

Virtual Reality adds a different dimension to The Ocean Gala.

Chris Crescitelli (Director of Extreme VR challenge), calls it “**the empathy machine.**” **VR FEST**, the world’s first and largest Virtual Reality Festival has partnered with **MaiTai Global**, **OceanElders**, and the **Extreme Tech Challenge** to present a new oceanic conservation themed virtual and augmented reality filmmaker competition. The competition will be judged by virtual reality pioneer Greg Passmore (PassmoreVR) along with the XTC VR Ambassadors including Chris Crescitelli (Director of the Extreme VR Challenge), Gregg Katano (Unofficial Cardboard), Nitin Gupta (Google) and Ryan Pulliam (Specular Theory).

*“I am honoured to be the Head Judge for the Extreme VR Challenge to support oceanic conservation and look forward to meeting all of the talented filmmakers who were officially selected for this exciting and meaningful event,” said virtual reality pioneer **Greg Passmore**.*

You can join and follow the [Virtual Reality Festival](#) online and on [Social Media](#). There will be a blue carpet VIP cocktail with a mix of hobnobbing and a ton of awareness for Ocean Conservation to start. No seafood will be served to honour ocean wildlife, but plenty of bubbly and fun. A performance by star of the San Francisco Ballet, Yuan Yuan Tan and Tiit Helimets. Featured Keynotes include **Sir Richard Branson** and newest Ocean Elder and friendly competitor solar impulse pilot, **Dr Bertrand Piccard**.

A live and silent auction will help boost funds for the cause.



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the movement for blue parks through expeditions and public outreach.

*"As an Ocean Elder, and one of the most prominent global leaders in conservation, we are proud to support Dr. Earle's Mission Blue **Hope Spot** Initiative," said The Ocean Gala Chair **Maria Stermer**.*

The [Live Auction](#), (you can join till Gala night), includes high brow items and once in a lifetime experiences from **Sir Richard Branson, Oliver Stone, Josh Groban** and **The Fray**. After the night's reception, everyone will be dancing to the beats of Amsterdam DJ **Alex Cruz** at the after party. This is the Ocean Gala reality.

As an avid wish collector, Ocean Elder, **Dr Sylvia Earle** and our Ocean Gala hosts **Susi Mai** and **Gigi Brisson** shared theirs:

Sylvia's wishes: *Thank the world for actions already taken and inspire them go that giant step we need and take care of nature as if our lives depend on it. Hope Spots, find a place that you're willing to dedicate your energy, your life, your talent, whether it's land or sea, whether it's already protected as a park or a reserve, or a sanctuary, or if it's a place you say, this place needs help. If we take care of it, it can be improved. Maybe it's your backyard. Our big blue backyard, the ocean, is in serious trouble. You can make a difference. Work with your neighbours, work with your communities, work with your country, work with international efforts to protect our global commons, the high seas. That's half the world. And if you don't take care of it, who will? It's currently being exploited by a handful of countries and a handful of corporations, whether it's looking at deep sea mining, or deep sea fishing or skinning the plankton out of the ocean, whatever it is. Your interests are being effected and if you like to breathe, you'll listen up. Taking care of the planet is something that everyone has a stake in doing. And, if you think you are powerless, if you think that you're just one person in seven billion. No one can do it all. But everyone can do something. And it's always somebody, an individual, who gets things going. Who can, and in the end do change the world. Might as well be you.*

Susi's wishes: **#Personal:** *Get more time on the water* **#Work:** *Activation in the Dominican Republic, shark tagging, coral reefs, hump back whales* **#Ocean Gala:** *For everyone to leave with a little bit more awareness and most importantly, have a good time*

Gigi's wishes: **#Personal:** *Capture and killing of all octopuses*



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