

Jacques-Yves Cousteau Encyclopedia Article

Jacques-Yves Cousteau

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Jacques-Yves Cousteau

1910-1997

French diver who spent 60 years exploring the world's oceans. Jacques-Yves Cousteau was born in a small town near Bordeaux, France, in 1910. Although he was a sickly child, he loved to swim and often spent hours at the beach. His first dive was in Lake Harvey, Vermont, in the summer of 1920. From that point on, the sea truly became his passion. He joined France's Naval Academy and served in World War II, assisting the French Resistance. It was during the war that he made his first underwater films, with the help of the Aqualung, which he invented with engineer Emile Gagnan. Their invention freed divers from having to use unwieldy diving helmets, and allowed divers to stay underwater for longer periods of time by providing them with pressurized air while submerged. In 1950, with money given to him by a millionaire, Cousteau bought his now-famous boat—the *Calypso*—and turned it into a floating oceanic laboratory. He authored several books and produced numerous documentaries on the sea, which garnered him 40 Emmy nominations.