

## Two join first team of female aquanauts

**June 19, 1970**

Two San Diego members of the first team of female aquanauts selected to live and work below the ocean surface have left for the Virgin Islands for briefing sessions prior to spending two weeks in July in an underwater habitat.

They are Mrs. Ann Hartline, 23, a graduate student in marine ecology at UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and Miss Alina Szmant, 24, who this month (June 1970) received her Master's degree in marine biology from Scripps.

The four-room habitat will be moored in 50 feet of water off Great Lameshur Bay, St. John Island.

The female aquanauts, scheduled to enter the habitat July 5, are participating in Tektite II, a seven-month underwater research program directed by the U. S. Department of the Interior to learn more fully how man can perform useful work on the seafloor for extended periods.

Also participating with Ann and Alina will be Ann's husband, Dr. Peter Hartline, a neurophysiologist at UCSD, and Arthur O. Flechsig, associate specialist in oceanography at Scripps. Flechsig was one of five aquanauts from Scripps who took part in the U.S. Navy's Sealab II Man-in-the-Sea program off the Scripps campus in 1965.

Dr. Hartline and Flechsig will serve ashore as members of a Tektite II support team while the female aquanauts are on the seafloor. They will be available to assist with any conceptual experimental problems that might arise during the girls' work. Dr. Hartline was instrumental in preparing the scientific proposal of their project to Tektite officials.

Ann and Alina will study the escape behavior of coral reef fish to learn what types of stimuli cause them to flee from objects approaching them. This is being done to relate the fish's underlying neural mechanism to the behavioral adaptations which keep fish safe from predators.

Ann and Alina's companions in the habitat will be Dr. Sylvia Earl Mead, 34, Harvard University research fellow; Margaret Lucas, 22, University of Delaware graduate student; and Dr. Renate Schlenz True, 33, a Brazilian scientist on the Tulane University faculty. Each will pursue her own specialized research during the two weeks.

Ann is studying for her doctorate in marine ecology at Scripps. Her main interests are community structure and the mechanisms that control the distribution and abundance of animals in nature.

Alina's primary interests are in the ecology and physiology of coelenterates; that is, jellyfish, corals, anemones, sea fans, and hydras. Her studies at Scripps have dealt mainly with invertebrate zoology.

The projected work of the female aquanauts is one of 17 missions scheduled during Tektite II, which began in early April when a team of four male scientists and an engineer lived in the habitat and conducted investigations in its vicinity for two weeks.

In all, more than 60 scientist-aquanauts, engineers, and doctors are taking part in Tektite II, a program involving government, private industry, and universities.

Tektite II is designed to add further proof that man can function safely and effectively in an undersea environment. In Tektite I, four scientists began their two-month mission on the ocean floor on February 15, 1969, also off St. John Island.

The Tektite program was named after the mysterious glassy objects (tektites) sometimes found on the seafloor and believed to be the meteoric debris from the moon that has survived a fiery entry through the earth's atmosphere.