



Keith Addis swims with a giant whale shark.



A commercial fisherman sorts a recent catch of cod off the coast of Massachusetts.

TURNING THE TIDE

ON THE HEELS OF PUBLISHING HIS FIRST BOOK, *OCEANA: OUR ENDANGERED OCEANS AND WHAT WE CAN DO TO SAVE THEM*, EMMY AWARD-WINNING ACTOR **TED DANSON** AND HOLLYWOOD INSIDER **KEITH ADDIS** DISCUSS HOW TO SAVE OUR OCEANS—NOW.

BY DEBORAH L. MARTIN



Ted Danson

Two-time Emmy winner Ted Danson has spent the past 25 years fighting the good fight to save our oceans. The 63-year-old LA-based actor—who has played such lovable characters as Sam Malone in *Cheers* and Dr. John Becker in *Becker*, and who is taking the lead in *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* this fall—started this journey when he joined a campaign to stop offshore drilling near Will Rogers State Beach in Pacific Palisades in the early 1980s. The small group of concerned residents managed to halt the drilling, and flushed with success, Danson helped found the American Oceans Campaign (AOC). Keith Addis, cofounder of Industry Entertainment and Danson's agent and longtime friend, served on the board of AOC with Danson. Then, in 2002, AOC merged with Oceana (formed in 2001 by several leading foundations and headquartered in Washington, DC), making it the largest international organization dedicated solely to saving the world's oceans. Oceana's current board president, Addis is a powerful voice in support of conservation efforts worldwide, while in March of this year, Danson

PHOTOGRAPH BY KATE DANSON



Ted Danson, Jeff Bridges, Keith Addis, Andy Sharpless and Valarie Van Cleave at last year's SeaChange Summer Party in Orange County. The celebrity-studded event is one of Oceana's largest fundraisers.



A fisherman unloads a bluefin tuna in Malta.



Addis prepares for a dive in Belize.

published his first book, *Oceana: Our Endangered Oceans and What We Can Do to Save Them*, coauthored with journalist Michael D'Orso. "People are getting more and more receptive to ocean conservation," says Danson. "Since the release of *Oceana* I've been touring around and people are so ready to ask questions and get involved." In that spirit, we asked a few questions of our own of the two ocean-saving warriors.

Ted, you have said that seeing a sign on a beach in Santa Monica that read BEACH CLOSED, WATER POLLUTED inspired you to become an environmental activist. Did growing up with an archaeologist father and a spiritual mother also influence this decision?

Ted Danson: In many ways my parents laid the foundation for the environmental work I do today. By instilling in me a respect for science and an appreciation of the spiritual connectedness between people and the environment, they gave me the tools I needed to begin this journey. Science and spirituality go hand in hand, and I was lucky enough to learn this lesson at a very young age.

Keith, how did you get involved with this crusade?

Keith Addis: I grew up in Southern California. The beach and ocean have been in my life from my earliest memories, but the truth is I was laser-focused on my business when I met Ted and hadn't given any thought at all to conservation

work. I joined Ted's ocean team only because he was an incredibly important new client—the biggest TV star in the world—and I wanted to become as valuable to him as possible. My motive was completely Machiavellian. I've always rooted for underdogs, and it became crystal clear to me right away the oceans were under siege and almost no one was paying attention. Even now only about half a cent out of every dollar spent on conservation in the US goes to deal with critical ocean problems. We're in the trenches fighting to protect one of the great miracles of our world—the one from which all life has evolved. I'm hopeful we'll all wake up and get involved in whatever way each of us can, with the best tools each of us has.

Ted, you have been actively fighting to protect the oceans for 25 years. What made you decide to write the book now?

TD: The oceans are really at a tipping point, and right now we can still reverse a lot of the damage. With comprehensive policy changes that tackle

the toughest issues like overfishing and acidification, we can fix this. It can become a "good news" story, but the clock is ticking. So for this book, there really was no time better than now. I want everyone to come away with the realization that these are fixable problems; this is a hopeful book. Whether it's overfishing, pollution or habitat destruction, all of the problems we face have very achievable solutions.

Some people will say, "Ted Danson is just another celebrity with a cause." Why should people listen to you about saving the oceans?

TD: I'm the guy who brings people to the conversation but then passes them on to a marine biologist who really knows his stuff. I'm lucky enough to work with some of the best scientists in the world at Oceana, and it's my job to help get their message out. So don't take my word for it, take theirs.

KA: Ted is the real deal. He could have walked away from his mission when he helped stop oil companies from putting up monster drilling platforms in Santa Monica Bay, but he's invested a tremendous amount of time, money and love into understanding the issues and promoting solutions. For me it's simple: When kids ask me in 10 years what I knew about the daunting challenges facing our oceans—and what I did about them—I want to feel good about my contribution.

GET INVOLVED: Make a difference in your environment by visiting oceana.org. Sign up to become a Wavemaker and participate in writing campaigns to Congressmen and policy-makers, or pledge to clean up your local beach.

Often people who speak on behalf of the oceans are seen as anti-fishing. But both the book and your organization seem to be pro-fishermen. Isn't this counterintuitive?

TD: Personally, I love seafood. Nearly three billion people around the world rely on seafood for their animal protein—for many of them it's more than just a tasty meal, it's life or death. So we can't stop fishing. But we need to manage our fisheries responsibly enough that our children and our children's children can enjoy the seafood we take for granted.

KA: We're definitely working to protect the livelihoods of the hundreds of millions of workers whose jobs depend on fishing. All of those countless families will suffer immeasurably if we can't figure out how to manage the world's fisheries effectively.

Your book talks about seafood fraud. What is it, and how does it affect everyone in the food chain—from the fisherman to the consumer ordering fish in a restaurant?

TD: Seafood fraud is the practice of misleading consumers about their seafood in order to make a profit. Sometimes cheaper, less desirable species are substituted for popular, more expensive species without consumers knowing. You might order swordfish and be served mako shark, for example. This undermines conservation efforts, hurts our wallets and poses potential health hazards. And it happens all the time. More than 80

percent of the seafood we eat in the US is imported, and only two percent is inspected by the FDA, so the potential for mislabeling is enormous. Oceana is advocating for rules that will require fish to be traceable from ship to consumer, so we can be sure of what we're getting.

KA: Consumers should also know which fish are loaded with dangerous levels of mercury and other toxins, and which fish are on the edge of extinction, like some varieties of tuna.

How is Oceana raising awareness of seafood fraud among the general public?

TD: In May we released a new report called *Bait and Switch: How Seafood Fraud Hurts Our Oceans, Our Wallets and Our Health*, which is available at oceana.org. I'm also a fan of Monterey Bay Aquarium's *Seafood Watch* guides, a wallet-size guide that tells you which fish are okay to eat and which we should avoid for health and conservation reasons. You may not think it's cool to be that guy at a restaurant who is asking the waiter if the salmon is farmed or wild, and from the US or Chile, but it is. More often than not, I'm that guy.

KA: Soon we hope to have simple kits made available to concerned consumers so they can collect seafood samples from restaurants and grocery stores, which we can then analyze in labs to clearly determine how much fraud is taking place right in front of our eyes.

Does the fact that an ocean in crisis can appear—to the untrained eye—to be perfectly normal present a unique challenge in convincing people there is in fact a crisis?

TD: Without a doubt. We can go to the supermarket and get any fish we want, and the water still looks normal and peaceful. We are probably the last people in the world to notice a change in the seafood selection at the grocery store because we eat so much imported seafood. So we try to get people below the surface to see what is going on—that's why it's important to get educated.

KA: There are so many visible and emotionally gripping crises in the world today, like hunger, homelessness and poverty, and all require our serious attention. But you just can't have a healthy planet without vigilant stewardship of our ocean resources.

What do you count as Oceana's biggest successes so far?

TD: Oceana is an extremely effective organization—it's amazing. The campaign-focused model Oceana has adopted is so impressive to me. We advocate policy changes and yield real, tangible results all over the world. I'm very proud to be a part of it. One of our most recent victories was the establishment of a huge marine reserve in the Pacific Ocean, the fourth-largest no-take reserve in the world. This area is brimming with incredible marine wildlife like sharks and whales, and now it will be protected.

KA: Commercial bottom trawling—the strip-mining of the ocean floor—had been going on rapaciously for decades along our coastlines until Oceana led the battle to stop it. Now more than 150,000 square kilometers of that essential habitat will be permanently protected from total devastation that some marine biologists claim could have taken centuries for nature to repair.

Oceana: Our Endangered Oceans and What We Can Do to Save Them ends with the inspirational message "Never believe that one person is too small to make a difference." What can ordinary people do to impact the health of our oceans?

TD: You can pledge to clean your local beach, call your representative in Congress or become a Wavemaker at oceana.org. My advice to people who are looking to help our oceans is to recognize this is tough work and we must come at it with a light heart. We have to connect with the ocean and remember why we love it so much before we take on these challenges. It's the only way we stand a chance.

KA: We all need to understand quickly our oceans are not a bottomless pit into which we can continue to dump all of our plastic garbage and industrial and agricultural waste products. Whether or not you believe our climate is changing, it's a fact that 22 million tons of carbon dioxide is being absorbed into the ocean every day, threatening to irreversibly change the fragile chemical balance upon which all life depends. We all need to do everything possible to lower our use of the fossil fuels responsible for this potential disaster. **LAC**

REACHING OUT

You can participate in the campaign to save the world's oceans in many ways. Here are just a few.

ATTEND: Each year, the SeaChange Summer Party draws celebrities and LA power-players to Orange County to raise money for this critical cause. Learn more about Oceana's largest fundraiser at seachangesummerparty.org.

LEARN: *Oceana: Our Endangered Oceans and What We Can Do to Save Them* is available online at oceanabook.net. The Monterey Bay Aquarium's *Seafood Watch* is available as a smartphone app and as a pocket guide, at montereybayaquarium.org.