Passing of Paul-Henri Nargeolet: Ifremer and Genavir salute a pioneer of underwater exploration

Among the five passengers on board the *Titan* submarine was Paul-Henri Nargeolet, a French explorer who devoted more than 10 years of his life exploring the deep ocean at Genavir.

"Genavir shares the grief of his family and friends. We are deeply saddened by the loss of this insatiable explorer of the ocean, who left his mark on Genavir. His dives will remain engraved in the memory of the French oceanography", says Éric Derrien, Director of Genavir. We would also like to extend our sincere condolences to the families of the *Titan's* other passengers.

Paul-Henri Nargeolet was a deep-sea diving expert with a passion for marine archaeology. After a rich career in the French Navy, he joined Genavir in 1986, which was then operating Ifremer and IRD oceanographic vessels. In 1987, he made his first dive aboard the *Nautilus* on the wreck of the *Titanic* during projects led by Ifremer and the American scientist Robert Ballard. In 1989, he took over as head of Genavir's deep intervention submarines.
"Paul-Henri Nargeolet was a leader with undeniable human qualities, who knew how to bring people together as a team and embark them in the depths of the ocean," says Jean-Paul Justiniano, who was at the time pilot of the Nautilus at Genavir and then director of the submarines.

Over the course of his career, Paul-Henri Nargeolet made 39 dives aboard the Nautilus, including around twenty on the legendary wreck between 1987 and 1998. He left Genavir in early 1996 to devote himself entirely to explore the Titanic and recovering hundreds or even thousands of objects; he then dived again in 1996 and 1998 with the Nautilus.

"As a young technician at the time, I shared six dives on the wreck of the Titanic in 1996 and 1998 with Paul-Henri Nargeolet," explains Xavier Placaud, pilot of the Nautilus and Victor 6000 and assistant to the underwater vehicle operations department at Genavir. We drove together from the Nautilus the mini-robot 'Robin' that he had launched to explore the inaccessible parts of the wreck. Paul-Henri also led operations to raise part of the Titanic's hull, the Big Piece, which weighed 18 tons. On his initiative, we organized a live broadcast on Discovery Channel from a dive from the Nautilus, as an opportunity for anyone to discover the wreck of the Titanic. It was an unforgettable experience! Every year, Paul-Henri came to see with the same passion and desire to return to the Titanic."

According to the US Coastguards, the Titan submarine most likely imploded during its descent towards the wreck of the Titanic. The debris were found by the American ROV Odysseus about 150 m from the wreck. The US Coast Guard (USCG BOSTON) announced this morning that further operations did not require the presence of L'Atalante. The oceanographic vessel is therefore heading for Saint-John's where it will arrive tomorrow afternoon, Saturday 24 June.