



NOAA Teacher at Sea
Charles “Chuck” Gregory
Onboard NOAA Ship THOMAS JEFFERSON
August 12 – 24, 2007

NOAA Teacher at Sea: Charles “Chuck” Gregory
NOAA Ship: THOMAS JEFFERSON
Mission: Hydrographic Surveys of New York Harbor
August 12, 2007 – Day 1 – 2000h

“Determine never to be idle. No person will have occasion to complain of the want of time who never loses any. It is wonderful how much may be done if we are always doing.”
~Thomas Jefferson

I left the Portland, Maine Jetport at 1:55 pm for LaGuardia on US Airways. A nice, short flight. About 1 hour later we landed on Long Island. It was a beautiful day to fly.

After a 45 minute wait for my duffel bag I grabbed a cab for the ride to Staten Island and 355 Front Street.

At 1610h - and \$70 later (including tip) - we pulled up to the NOAA Ship THOMAS JEFFERSON (affectionately called the ‘TJ’). She was docked on the northern side of the Stapleton pier, hidden by the retired USS INTREPID – an “old” (commissioned by the Navy in 1943) aircraft carrier now acting as a floating sea, air and space museum. You may remember the USS INTREPID as the aircraft carrier that got stuck in the Hudson River mud not too long ago. No wonder, she is 872 feet long and an overall beam of almost 150 feet! And very, very gray.

In the distance, off the northern side of the pier is (from left to right) the Staten Island Ferry and piers, New Jersey, the Statue of Liberty & Ellis Island, the entrance to the Hudson River (the west side), Manhattan, the entrance to the East River (the east side), Governors Island, and Long Island (Queens & Brooklyn). In the foreground is the Inner Harbor of New York bustling with tankers, tugs, and ferries. Not many recreational boats in sight.



NOAA Teacher At Sea, Chuck Gregory, getting ready to leave from Portland, Maine. His destination is LaGuardia airport on Long Island, and from there, the NOAA Ship THOMAS JEFFERSON tied up to the Stapleton Pier on Staten Island.

The THOMAS JEFFERSON is a member of the NOAA Fleet. She was delivered to the Navy in 1992 and commissioned by NOAA in 2003. She is 208 feet long, 45 feet broad, and has a draft of 14ft. She can berth 36 (crew and guests), and is packed with neat equipment (multibeam sonar, side-scan sonar, two 31' launches, an emergency launch, and more hoses, cables and gizmos than I care to mention). She is scheduled to leave port tomorrow for 19 days. I will be getting a ride back to shore after day 12. The THOMAS JEFFERSON will not return to Staten Island, but head on to her home base of Norfolk, VA.



Destination - The NOAA Ship THOMAS JEFFERSON tied up at the Stapleton Pier, Staten Island, NY.

six decks, emergency areas and equipment, various stations, bathymetry equipment, etc., etc. Boy do I have a lot to learn. Port, starboard, aft, forward, main deck, amidships, bridge, lounge, computer station, yadda, yadda! The one term that stuck was “Mess Hall”. It is located just up the main stairway and almost above our room. Nice location!

Andy and I chatted for about an hour and he kindly answered all of my basic questions – toilet protocol, shower, a good place on the ship to hang out, where to make cell phone calls, what we will be doing for the next 12 days, etc. He is a really nice person and seems like a great crewmember. I’m really interested to see him at work doing his navigation thing.

In addition to Andy, I met the Commanding Officer (CO), Commander Tod Schattgen. Another nice person and easy to talk with. He really seems interested in the various activities occurring on the ship, but not in a controlling way. I am sure he and I will have more opportunities to talk during the voyage. I met the FOO (Facilities Operation Officer) and Acting XO, Chris Van Westandorp. Chris will be my ‘supervisor’ since the regular XO, Jim Crocker, is on leave.

The first person I met when I crossed the gangway was Ensign Megan Guberski. She is a NOAA Corps Officer and a graduate from Smith College. She took me down a flight of stairs to my ‘stateroom’ and introduced me to my bunkmate, Ensign Andy Ostapenko.

Andy is another NOAA Corps Officer who works on the important navigation systems. He is from Minnesota. He gave me a great tour of the vessel, showing me the

While in the Mess Hall I ran into Engineer Charlie. A retired Navy person, Charlie was eager to give me the tour of the engine room area. And what a tour it was. This may be the only time I get to tour the engine area, so I took advantage of the moment. Engines, air conditioner, water treatment, sewage treatment, compressors, refrigeration systems, control room, workshop, etc., etc. And all compressed into a small space. There was enough equipment (and back-up equipment) to keep that vessel going for weeks! And that's a good thing! Charlie was happy to show me around and give me some ear plugs for the engine room. It was loud and I needed them!

I'm trying my best to meet everyone on the ship and chat about what they do on THOMAS JEFFERSON and how they "found" NOAA. In general, it seems like there are two types of crew – the old ex-navy types, and the young recently-graduated types. A nice mix of both. Lots of experience able to teach the next generation.

One piece of bad news: I forgot the cable that connects my digital camera to my computer. While I can take many photos I just can't send them to NOAA until I return home. Bummer!

Another piece of bad news: Since I was busy getting the tour of the ship and missed dinner. Not like me, but I was too interested in the ship to stop for food. Once my initial excitement calmed down I was able to call my wife, Roxann, and have a snack before bed. After a few pages of "Cannery Row" I drifted off and slept quite well.