



**NOAA Teacher at Sea
Barney Peterson
Onboard NOAA Ship RAINIER
August 12 – September 1, 2006**

NOAA Teacher at Sea: Barney Peterson

NOAA Ship RAINIER
Mission: Hydrographic Survey
Thursday, August 31, 2006: Last Day

Weather Data from Bridge

(Weather data is not recorded on the Bridge when the ship is in port)

Question of the Day: Who are the Teachers at Sea?



The sunset behind St. Augustine.

Personal Log

Start to finish, my NOAA Teacher at Sea assignment has been an incredible learning experience. From the moment at the Seward, Alaska, railroad station when OS Dennis Brooks bounced up to me and asked, "Are you the teacher?" everything has been new, exciting, and memorable. His mini-travelogue about Resurrection Bay, delivered as we bounced over the mud puddles of the dock area, got me to looking and thinking right away.

Out of the car, up the gangway, and onto the ship I was herded to where my first official greeting was from petite, feisty Ensign Meghan McGovern. She grabbed my heaviest bag, put up a brief struggle about letting me carry the smaller one, and set off on a whirlwind flight down three decks to my quarters. Up one level, turn this way, turn that way, off to the stern, open the doors, point out supplies, hear the words, and learn the jargonwhat had I gotten myself into? What was it going to be like to be a Teacher At Sea?

Well...the REAL teachers at sea were the officers and crew of the NOAA ship RAINIER!

- ENS McGovern, Jennings, Eldridge, and Smith who sensed my perplexity and tactfully and adroitly filled in the gaps: What is this or that? Why or why not? Who? What? When? Where? Why?
- LT Ben Evans, Field Operations Officer, who was always bursting with enthusiasm as he explained the scientific mission of the RAINIER
- ENS Olivia Hauser, quiet, calm, and friendly who made me feel so at home about everything

- ENS Sam Greenaway who guessed that I didn't know, explained away the puzzles, and then (with a twinkle in his eye) added just a little extra twist to see if I would fall for it! (About those whales Sam...)
- The Hydrographic Survey Crew: Erin, Shawn, Marta, Nick, and Matt ...ask them any question and I got as much time as I needed for answers, explanations, and demonstrations; Nick and Matt who kept me on my toes with open-ended discussions about the purpose and future of education
- Amy and Amanda ...just a little less new to the ship than I am, but willing to try to make things clearer and easier whenever they can
- Hydrographer Bonnie Johnston, *always* happy and friendly and with endless good ideas about how to take some of the science from this trip back to teach in my class
- The Deck and Engine crews...lively, ornery, spicy, and eminently lovable:
 - Meghan G. and Leslie who actually taught me how to splice rope!
 - Jodie and Ben A. who always found a way to make me feel welcome, special, and not at all in the way; Jodie who tried to teach me to steer the survey boat and didn't laugh when I was a dismal failure
 - Steve, Jimmy, and Dennis...smiles and teasing and lots of answers to even my dumbest questions; Steve with wildlife books and information and pictures to share anytime
 - Muzzy, Puppy, Keegan, Kelsen, Mikey, Chris, and Josh...prototypes for John Fogerty's "Rambunctious Boy," full of fun and attitude and hard, hard workers who made the running of the ship make sense
 - Erik who taught me how to put on my survival suit...and didn't laugh
 - Joe – my personal guide for the long-awaited tour of the engine room... "What makes it go Joe?"
 - Carl – the guy who left the Midwest for a life at sea and who shared his enthusiasm for everything marine with a big smile and endless courtesy
 - Umeko...the new kid on the block, an intern learning the ropes and the rules and really eager to share her knowledge and explore new things...sorry we never saw enough of the stars for you to teach me how a sextant works...
- The Galley crew: Do and Floyd, who just kept smiling and telling me where things go, how to get what I need, and filling me up with way more good food than I needed; Raul who caught more fish with less fuss than anyone I've ever met before
- Gary..."right click, no, right click, no right click"...the very patient IT who helped me to figure out the server, email, the internet, and to get these journal entries off to NOAA
- Executive Officer Julia Neander...career NOAA Corps officer, scientist, literary critic, mom, and the person who always tried to make sure things were going right for me...taught me to kayak, went out for hikes, took great pictures, reviewed my journals, took time for good conversations, and made sure I got included in all the memorable things...she even taught me how to butcher a halibut!
- Last, but not least, Captain Guy Noll – quiet, thoughtful, sometimes serious, sometimes not, who shared his knowledge of Alaska and the ocean and history and fishing and who always showed a sense of the importance of his job and his personal commitment to it.

These were the real "Teachers" at sea: the people who helped make each day memorable and worthwhile as *they* took time to teach *me*.

Just what did they teach me? Well, I learned about life aboard a ship, planning and following through on those plans to accomplish big jobs, multi-beam sonar, working with data to make information useable, navigation and the importance of good charts, steering on water in a straight line (or not), the importance of understanding the basic science behind their job so it makes sense to use equipment correctly, the geology of the Aleutian Islands and the Ring of Fire, Alaskan wildlife, and lots more.

At this point, my mind is so full that I probably don't realize how much I have learned. I do know that I am coming away from this last three weeks with new ideas and attitudes to share in my classroom and with my teaching colleagues. I know that I will encourage other teachers to apply for the NOAA Teacher at Sea program. I know that my experiences have reinforced my belief that learning by doing helps learners make sense of new experiences and ideas.

My assignment from NOAA involved recording my experiences to share on the Teacher at Sea web page. This task has been particularly valuable for helping me to clarify what I was learning and to store ideas for use with my students. Being a Teacher at Sea has given me a chance to be immersed in applied learning as the student instead of the teacher. I have a refreshed perspective on how it feels to walk into a new classroom with new classmates and an unknown teacher in charge. When I walk into my classroom to meet my new students in five days I hope that this insight will help me start the year off comfortably, kindly, and meaningfully for that room full of young minds.

I thank NOAA for the opportunity to be part of a unique and wonderful educational experience. Besides learning about the life and science aboard NOAA ship RAINIER, I have a new appreciation for how important it is that I do my job in the classroom well. Helping develop the curiosity and exploration skills of young learners seems even more critical after spending three weeks with a group of amazing people who are using those skills and attitudes in such a dynamic and impressive way.

To Captain Guy Noll, Executive Officer Julia Neander, and the wonderful officers and crew aboard RAINIER, my heartfelt thanks for all you have done to make my experience so remarkable. My memories of RAINIER and being Teacher at Sea will bring joy to my life for a long time to come.

Footnote: There are others in the crew of RAINIER, not mentioned specifically, that I just never got the chance to get to know for whatever reason: Time was short, schedules didn't mesh, we didn't move in the same orbits at the same times, the stars didn't align... Whatever the reasons, I'm sure the loss is mine because everyone on the ship has been so great. Sorry I missed you guys...next time, OK?

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