



NOAA Teacher at Sea Jessica Schwarz Onboard NOAA Ship RAINIER June 19 – July 1, 2006

NOAA Teacher at Sea: Jessica Schwarz

NOAA Ship RAINIER

Mission: Hydrographic Surveys

Day 5: Friday, June 23, 2006

Crew Interview Day!

Today was another excellent day onboard the mighty RAINIER. I awoke and made my way to the galley for an English muffin and some coffee before I made it to Central Engine Room Control to chat with Third Assistant Engineer Kelly Baughman. Before Kelly made her way down to talk with me, Engineering Electronics Technician (EET) Joe Gallo took me beyond the center console and into the engine room. I was able to see for myself the machinery that is powering the ship. I checked out the main engines, the generators, the boiler, the evaporators, and all kinds of other noisy machines.



Third Assistant Engineer (3AE) Kelly Baughman, checking gauges in Central Engine Room Control (CERC).



Photo of the port main engine. The starboard main engine is not shown but looks exactly the same and is directly across from the port engine.

After my tour I sat down to find out what got Kelly into being an engineer in the first place. Kelly started out as a young girl with aspirations of becoming a naval pilot. This was interesting news to me because I didn't realize the Navy had pilots in the first place. I thought the Navy aircraft carriers were carriers for Air Force planes. In actuality, the Air Force is only land based, and all Navy carriers support naval aircraft.

As she grew up she changed her mind, deciding to pursue a Bachelors of Science in Marine Engineering

Systems Design from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, NY. Along with a BS, Kelly also received a minor in nuclear engineering.

The United States Merchant Marine Academy (known simply as “Kings Point”) is one of the five federal military training academies. It is the only academy that allows its graduates to be hired as civilians with the expectation of completing their military service requirements. Kelly is completing her requirements by working for the Navy Reserve.

Kelly has traveled all over the world on various ships. Before she even finished college she was onboard US Naval Ship LARAMIE during the time the United Nations decided to go into Kosovo. LARAMIE was a Navy support ship that replenished the battle ships with fuel, food, and other consumables. She mentioned these ships are the only military ships that will employ civilians and they follow the battle fleet for the sole purpose of providing support and supplies to the vessels.

While onboard Kelly was getting hands-on training as an engineer. Students at Kings Point are required to have at least one year of hands-on training on a ship before graduating. While she was getting her training she was traveling to Japan, Australia, Spain, Alaska, Hawaii...and plenty of other places (I just can't remember them all...there were so many).

Now Kelly is an employee of the Maritime Engineers Beneficiary Association, which is the largest maritime union for engineers. She was originally placed on NOAA ship RAINIER to work for 45 days beginning in April 2006, but after arrival, due to her level of experience as an engineer she was offered to stay onboard until August 2006.

I was just so impressed talking with Kelly. She's traveled all over the world working as an engineer on many different kinds of ships. I really appreciated the time she took to explain how all the machines work to power the RAINIER!! She is obviously doing what she enjoys and life at sea comes very natural to her.

After talking with Kelly, I spent some time responding to e-mails and chatting with the crew. Today is Friday, so in my normal routine that means...DAYS OFF!!! Not for the crew of RAINIER...their schedule continues to rotate regardless of what day of the week it is. Ordinary Seaman (OS) Megan Guberski put it simply, saying “yeah, every day is a Tuesday.” They are working so hard out here...all the time. I think when we come into port I'll get to see what it's like for the crew to get a break. That'll be nice.

OS Megan Guberski showed me a little bit of what it's like to work on maintaining the quality of the ship. She spends her days cleaning, painting, scraping, scrubbing, fixing, etc and gets to use really cool power tools (she mentioned that's why she enjoys her job so much). When she had a little time, I asked Megan if she would put on her fire suit for a picture, or as it is supposed to be called, “turnout gear.” Turnout gear is the protective gear Megan has to wear to fight a fire onboard.

She went through Coast Guard Advanced Fire Fighting Training and is now one of five people responsible for putting out a fire onboard! I noticed the suit during our fire drill earlier in the week and I SO badly wanted to get pictures, but knew it probably wasn't the best time. I was still trying to figure out where I was supposed to go in case of a fire. As I mentioned earlier...I get lost easily so stopping for photos during a fire drill would be a bad idea.

Anyway, it's supposed to take them around a minute to get the suit on. That seems impossible to me because there are a lot of things Megan had to put on. The turnout gear was even more difficult to get into than the Gumby suit and that took some serious effort.



Ordinary Seamen (OS) Megan Guberski fully suited in her turnout gear onboard NOAA ship RAINIER.



Showing off her air tank, OS Megan Guberski is dressed to fight a fire!

Megan, as well as all the crew on the RAINIER, has been excellent at taking time to explain how things work on the ship. She has been on the RAINIER for about a year and a half now and is working her way up to be an AB, Able-Bodied Seamen. By September 3rd of this year she will have enough days at sea to qualify as an AB onboard. Megan is very ambitious and has already completed all the training necessary to qualify as an AB. She will need to take a Coast Guard test before she will earn the title, but she said she's not concerned about that. It's just a matter of getting in her sea time.

onboard a NOAA ship. Many of the positions require little to no training prior to employment and therefore training is provided onboard the vessel. I think that's awesome!

It's been so nice to have the opportunity to learn about the different job opportunities

Personal Log

Tonight I had halibut for dinner. The CO caught a 15-lb halibut off the stern of the ship and we all were able to enjoy! There are hot springs on shore and rumor has it we'll be visiting them soon. I'm looking forward to that.

I'm getting more used to the noises of the ship and am sleeping soundly. My bunk is surprisingly cushy and very comfortable. It wasn't exactly easy getting out of it this morning.

I saw a sea otter today!!! He was swimming on his back. We don't have otters in Hawaii so I'm having my first otter encounters here in Alaska. I guess some of the crew saw whales this morning as well, but I missed it!

Life is good out here on the RAINIER! A little rainy today, but good!

More tomorrow-

Jessica Schwarz

This is cool...check it out!

Go to NOAA's website:

www.noaa.gov/charts.html

Originally I hoped you could download charts online, but I think you need to download software in order to view it properly. So for the truly ambitious you may still be able to do that. For the rest of you take a look at the link anyways. There is some really neat information about nautical charts and navigating.