



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 6: Saturday, June 24, 2006

Personal Log

I spent another day of hydrographic surveying today! We started at 8:00am by launching boats RA4 and RA5. I was on RA5 today.

I took a motion sickness pill the night before because the seas have been pretty rough lately and some of the technicians have gotten sea sick. I had no idea how I would feel so I took one just to be safe and let me just say...I am never taking one again. I felt like a zombie woman the entire day. I haven't gotten sea

sick yet and I think I'm going to take my chances next time the opportunity arises. I'm sure the medicine has different effects on different people, but for me, I felt like my head was floating a foot above my body the entire day. We're going to be crossing the Gulf next week and rumor has it that can be a rough leg so I might eat my words and cave by taking the medicine. In that case, it will make for an uneventful log.



Survey launch RA5 working in Kanga Bay in Southeast Alaska. The cruising speed of RA5 is up to 25 knots, but while on the survey line logging data, the boat can go no more than 8 kts.



The Plot Room onboard NOAA ship RAINIER. After data is collected from the survey boats, it is cleaned and processed by night processors in this room.

After a day of surveying we came back to the ship, had dinner, and then I was off in a skiff to shore to spend some time in the hot springs. WOW! This was amazing. When I was packing for my trip I remember thinking it was pointless to pack my swimsuit, but I did anyways...because ya never know!

Turns out, I needed it for my visit to the springs.

Tucked away in the forest on one of the surrounding islands encircling the bay are beautiful hot springs that people can come to enjoy. The US Fish and Wildlife Service built several small cabins that enclose a big round brown tub, similar to what you'd see in old country western movies. White pipes buried underground are hooked up to the natural spring water and pumped into the tubs. The cabin has a huge window so you can view Hot Springs Bay from the tub. It was like a rustic Alaskan spa experience!

After spending some time in the tub, Survey Tech Erin Campbell and I went up into the forest a little ways where we found a natural hot spring surrounded by hemlock trees. The bottom of the hot spring was pretty muddy and crunchy from what I am assuming (and hoping) to be twigs and leaf litter. I couldn't help but wonder what other little organisms were having an Alaskan spa experience along with me. I came out a little muddy, but very relaxed!

These are the kinds of amazing experiences the crew of the RAINIER gets to enjoy while traveling onboard the ship. They are visiting places that most people will never get a chance to visit in their entire life. There are fishing poles, kayaks, surf boards, and all kinds of other equipment onboard that the crew can use! I think that's awesome. Everyone is working so hard during the day; it's nice to see they have some options for things to do on their down time.

I have to say, I have been so impressed with everyone onboard the RAINIER. This is a group of adults who live together, work together, and then play together...all in very close quarters. Everyone is very well rounded and kind. They are truly professionals at sea. I really am appreciating the competency and maturity of everyone onboard the RAINIER. There is a common understanding that although you have high expectations placed on you to get the job done, there is also an understanding that everyone is always learning and it's okay to make mistakes here and there.

I think that is extremely important to support the crew's confidence and comfort level in performing their duties while onboard. I'm just so impressed with the level of support and encouragement of one another. This is not something always observed onboard a boat or ship. I think it says a lot about the high quality of the crew onboard the RAINIER. I feel lucky to be a part of it for my time at sea in Alaska.

Next log, I'll explain more about how the hydrographic data is processed after it's been collected on the launches. For now, I am off to see how things are going in the bridge, which I have decided is my favorite place on the RAINIER...well, the bridge and the galley, where the coffee is always flowing.

Aloha-

Jessica Schwarz

Calling All Middle Schoolers-We Need Help Answering a Few Questions!

What is a hot spring? How are they formed and where does the hot water come from?
Isn't water in Alaska supposed to be cold?

Also, just out of curiosity, what kinds of things might live in a hot spring?

Check out this United States Geological Survey web site to learn more about the ecosystem and climate history in Alaska:

<http://esp.cr.usgs.gov/research/alaska/>

8th graders, think about plate tectonic movement. How would plates shifting apply to what you read on this web site?