



**NOAA Teacher at Sea  
Christopher Harvey  
Onboard NOAA Ship OSCAR ELTON SETTE  
June 5 – July 4, 2006**

**Date:** June 14, 2006

**Time:** 11:15 PM Hawaii

**Location:** Floating in the Pacific Ocean!

**Entry**

Some of you are about to begin your day, and mine is dragging on for a little while more. Today was a bit more full of wind and rain than yesterday. In fact, the seas have heightened to the point that we are in a continual state of bouncing back and forth like a ping-pong ball (or a rag doll, if you prefer the cliché). That would be ok if we were in fact a ping-pong ball. Instead, we are a 240-foot steel sailing vessel. The Pacific has definitely had her way with us today. Although we are all still healthy and the Sette continues to push back on the waves crashing at the bow just as hard as they are pushing on Her. Tomorrow is bound to be substantially worse than today according to preliminary weather reports from the bridge (remember, we are NOAA, *the* weather source!). As the French say... Yeah I caught myself before I quoted the French! The only French person worth quoting is Napoleon, who himself claims that he was not French! (I am only harassing France because Carole, one of our researchers, is French and I have not given her a hard time in my journals yet! I was treated very well by the French when I was in France, and I am also hoping to one day work with a man whose last name is Cousteau, so I better be kind to the French!)

I got to sleep in a little longer as the “runner” today than the last two days when I was a “cracker” and bait cutter. Having this job didn’t keep me any drier than the crackers. Nor did it keep me very far away from the smell of day old festering mackerel. But it was a nice change. Tomorrow I go back to my favorite job- that of a stacker. Being a stacker keeps me as far away from the science of this mission as possible. It puts me on the fantail with good music and good crew to keep me company. If you can’t tell, these two things have become some of my favorite aspects of the cruise. But now I am sounding redundant of past entries.

Today we lost eight more traps to the coral reef below. Good for it! Except that those traps will be there for some time. It is kind of ironic the way this mission and the next will work out for the Oscar Sette. On the next cruise, the Sette will be hosting scientists specializing in coral reef protection. Perhaps we should have their chief scientist and our chief scientist talk next time before anyone goes out to sea. Then maybe we wouldn’t tear down the bridges that they keep building!

Bob says that fishermen have a saying about losing gear to the sea: If you put it in, do not expect to get it back. I’ve thought about it all day long, a kind of sailor’s koan, and have only been able to conclude that fishermen who think this must have very little respect for

the sea. But that is not my position to say. As a wise man has advised me, some battles are best not fought. The sad reality of this trip is that despite how much effort we put into protecting any or all species of marine animals, someone in some part of the world is doing his part to remove as many of those animals as possible to put as much money in his pocket as possible. Again, no negativity. Only reality.

On the lighter side of things, I found enjoyment in two particular marine species today. The first was a monk seal that passed by the port side (left side) of the ship between hauling strings of traps. It didn't stop to give us much of a show, which is good because that is not its purpose in life. Instead it just dipped itself into the waves and moved on past the stern (rear) of the ship and out of sight.

The second was an albatross that didn't seem to mind the fact that the wind picked up to about 30 knots today. In fact, it took advantage of this wind to perform some acrobatic maneuvers that I am sure any pilot would love to imitate in any aircraft. At times I swore that its wing tips were in the crest of a wave as it raced about just above the waves. It couldn't have been more than six inches above the water at times. Which is remarkable because the waves were so sporadic and unequal in size that I expected it to wipe out at any point. Just when it seemed the albatross was going to crash into the water, it would tilt itself upwards and rise into the sky cutting the sky into two pieces as quickly as a warm knife through butter. The flight was so graceful and perfect in its form. As cliché as it sounds, I thought of how wonderful it must be to be that albatross today. It didn't seem to be scavenging for food or drink. And it never seemed anxious that it was lost. It was just playing in the wind and waves, perhaps taking a day off of the trials of yesterday and the worries of tomorrow. Perhaps it too can say moo!