



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

Date: June 15, 2006

Time: 9:15 PM Hawaii

Location: Bouncing around in the Pacific Ocean!

Entry

I have lost track of time out here, both the date and the day of week, and am only reminded that it is the middle of June by the changing of the date on each of my new journal entries. It is kind of nice to forget about time for a while. All I know of time is that I wake up each morning and go about the routine of hauling the traps in the morning and setting the traps in the evening. It has truly become Groundhogs Day out here. Regardless of what day it is, there is one thing I know I will be doing: waking and working. At least the scenery is nice!

The trade winds have continued to blow at a consistent 20 knots from the east, bringing with them long, deep swells and choppy surface waves. It was much rougher today, and is still much rougher tonight, than it was on any other day. So long, quiet Pacific. As I stood on the bow of the ship to watch the sunset I thought about the fact that these trade winds have already come across my little Honduran island and have long since left. The same winds, at some point, helped carry tropical storm Alberto across the Atlantic Ocean and towards my home in Jacksonville. Of course, the energy and direction of the winds have fluctuated indefinitely over the time it takes them to wrap around the world, but they are essentially still the same. And I go back to my island in the Caribbean and think of how wonderful the trade winds are for keeping the mosquitoes and sand flies away during the summer time. And how they inspired me to do anything and everything. And now they make me sit outside long into the night to keep fresh air in my lungs and brain, and to keep a horizon of sorts on level ground for the sanity of my inner ear.

Many of the scientists have already given up the fight and have retired long before dinner. I, a fighter of nearly everything, have continued the battle against seasickness and am waiting for the trade winds to clear the clouds from the evening sky so that I might take in their beauty once again. I am yet to miss a sunset on the ship, or a moment of utter awe at the night sky above me. And I doubt I will miss either the rest of the trip, even if I am ailing from the increased swells that can be anticipated from strong wind across a large section of water over a long time. The view out here is definitely not something I get to see every day back home.

Work today was difficult with the waves splashing over the side of the ship. I was a stacker today and found, at times, that stacking traps on the fantail was like climbing a mountain and dragging the traps behind. I would watch and wait for the ship to tilt bow up, so I could pull the traps “downhill” across the fantail in the rear of the ship. Sometimes there was no “downhill” or “uphill” for that matter. Sometimes we just

bounced back and forth and rocked in almost every direction at the same time. I guess my offerings of respect and love for the Pacific were not accepted.

In addition to having difficult trap drags on the deck, it took us much longer to move from the site where we hauled the traps to where we set them than it normally does. (That sentence took a long time to write, not only because it seems grammatically deficient, but also because I had to sit and watch the mouse slide back and forth across the desk, dragging the cursor on the screen along with it! Talk about entertainment onboard a rocking ship!) In short, I ate a small dinner before I set the traps tonight. So we were not done working until around 6:45 or so. Long day. Plus I managed to get a nice sunburn.

I am again envious of our resident albatross. I watched him soar back and forth and up and down, along the tips of the crests of waves up to the outline of the bottoms of clouds, without moving his wings once. It was truly remarkable to watch him soar so freely without expending energy. A friend has informed me that only information can break the laws of physics. I think this albatross has come pretty darn close today.

Also, I will attach the “biographies” of two of the ships crew who have become good friends of mine. In an attempt to “practice” my creative writing and character development of stories, I am interviewing as many of the crewmen as possible and then writing a “fun” biography for the ships records. Knowing how well I am at starting projects, and how poor I am at finishing them, these will probably be the only two I complete during the cruise. But I am going to try to get everyone done before July 4, when we pull back into Honolulu. I make reference to many different people in my journal entries, and I have not done an adequate job of describing them. I will try to fill you in on their characters and personalities, but no promises that you will be able to relate to my experiences out here any more or less as a result.

As you will read, Sarah is a junior officer on the ship and a peer of mine through age and life experience. She has taught me many things about the bridge and how the boat functions, as well as how the ship acquires weather data that it sends back to the National Weather Service every few hours, and of course, the Beauty of the evening sky and the many constellations that occupy its space. We have a similar background that makes conversation easy and, as always, this conversation carries meaning for me because it constantly stretches my mind and perspective on how things in the world operate.

Bruce is the first of the crew that I met, and immediately struck a note with. He is native Hawaiian, born in the house in the Oahu hills that his parent’s still live in today. He has a wonderful laugh that makes me laugh every time I hear it, even if I do not hear the punch line of the joke or story he has just told. He is about the happiest-go-lucky person I have ever met, with an outlook on life that is enviable. I have been told that he can be mean at times. But I haven’t seen that part of him. And those times are so few and far between that his demeanor is positive in an almost excessive amount. (When has positive attitude and behavior ever been excessive? Certainly not in this world!) He is one of those people who you can’t help but to hope that everything good happens to him in life- just

because he is not expecting it to, and he is not demanding that it does. I am learning a lot on this cruise from Bruce.

All quiet other than that. I thought of school today and made myself sick with worry. So I stood up and walked to the very rear of the ship and watched the “screws” (props) churn up sky-blue water. I don’t like thinking of school. There are so many things that I know I will have to do- so many things to worry about. This is the last time I will mention it. Worry is not for me. Especially not here.

ENS Sarah Harris
Junior Officer/Scientist

Sarah always wanted to be a professional clown when she grew up, but her feet were not large enough to fit into the shoes of a clown, and so she was turned down from the National Clown Academy upon her completion of high school. Instead, she attended Long Island University in South Hampton, New York and earned a degree in marine biology. Upon completion of her degree, Sarah had a difficult time finding a job as a marine biologist. Instead, she spent the better part of the two years after college working “stupid jobs” in order to make ends meet.

One day, working as a server in a Moroccan restaurant and as a bodyguard in a girls’ home, Sarah had an epiphany of sorts. Memories of a Marine Ecology class came to mind. She had used NOAA data in one of her class projects and had the sudden revelation that she should apply to become a NOAA officer. Sidestepping pressure to join the Air Force or Navy, she attended courses through the Merchant Marine Academy and within three months was qualified to begin work with NOAA onboard several ships.

In an interview for placement aboard a NOAA ship, Sarah commented that she would prefer to be on a Hawaii-based ship. She knew that the OSCAR ELTON SETTE had the best crew, and by far the best meals of any NOAA vessel. As fortune revealed itself to Sarah, none of the other NOAA officers applied for Pacific ships, and she was given a position aboard the SETTE, based out of Honolulu, Hawaii.

Here she is at twenty-four years of age driving the SETTE through the waters of the Northwest Hawaiian Islands. Her unofficial capacity as an officer aboard the SETTE is to “drive the dang boat.” (As it would be, you can put a *boat* on a *ship*, but you CANNOT put a *ship* on a *boat*!). However, her official job description is to “help coordinate scientists and crew to accomplish the ship’s mission.” (Proper use of the term “ship,” and might I add as an objective interviewer, very well stated!)

Sarah focuses daily on her short-term goal, which is to not jump overboard during the shark feeding frenzy that takes place on lobster cruises each afternoon. In the long run, she hopes to use the GI Bill to help her earn her masters degree in the coming years. She also aspires to become a treasure hunter and, if that does not work out, a pirate!

In her spare time, Sarah enjoys riding her beach cruiser. Of course she cannot do that while at sea, so she also takes up the wonderfully entertaining hobby of reading. Her fondest memory aboard the SETTE was the first day setting sail in January of 2006, when she earned the affectionate nickname of “Princess Spew Wog” for putting on a wonderful demonstration of what a hangover will do when mixed with Pacific swells and a moving ship.

Sarah carries a line with her everywhere she goes, whether out to sea or on land:

“Desire is Desire wherever you go.
The Sun with not bleach it,
or the Tides wash it away.”

Bruce Mokiao
“Decky”

“Always look for the good in people.”

If there is a friendly face to know aboard the SETTE, and the warmest laughter to accompany a welcoming smile, it belongs to Bruce. He has been a decky aboard the SETTE since it was commissioned on January 23, 2003. Before that, he worked in the same capacity aboard the recently decommissioned NOAA vessel, the TOWNSEND CROMWELL. Even further back than that, one might recognize Bruce’s voice in the song “Wipe Out.” The royalties for the song have since run out, so Bruce takes to the sea to do what he has come to do very well.

Spending much of his time before NOAA as a commercial long-line tuna and marlin fishermen, he stumbled into his current position almost by accident. A friend of his working on the Townsend Cromwell had given him an application many years back, which he held onto for two years before finally submitting it to NOAA. Like many of us, he only knew NOAA for the National Weather Service, and not for its marine research.

On June 11, 2006 Bruce passed his five-year mark with NOAA, an accomplishment that he is very proud of. He has no real plans of leaving the ship any time soon, although he is finishing up testing with the Coast Guard when the ship is at port. As long as tuna are being caught in the trolling lines and he has first dibs on a freshly beating tuna heart, Bruce will always be found aboard the SETTE.

Some of Bruce’s hobbies on the ship include making fun of the Teacher at Sea, and storytelling, both of which he does with such clear evidence of god-given talent it is amazing! While the ship is not at sea, Bruce heads back to his parents home to spend time with them. He has great love and respect for his mother and father, who make frequent appearances in his stories, and he strives to model their example in his own life

for his daughter (21 years old) and his son (19 years old). Bruce was recently married in January 2006 and takes great pride in his wife as well.

Some of the best advice that Bruce has to offer surrounds him, much like the quotes at the top and bottom of this page.

“I like to be happy every day.”