



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

**Date:** June 20, 2006

**Time:** 2:30 PM Hawaii

**Location:** Cruising around Necker Island

**Entry**

Today has been rather uneventful in the world of lobster fishermen. I was in the pit as a cracker for my last day for a while. That is good because dead fish are no fun to play with. Except that I made friends with “Albert the Albatross” with the help of Ameer. She would get on one side of the boat and whistle at Albert (who she incidentally named, very creative that girl is!) and I would wait on the other side for him to fly *away* from her. Then I would toss him a fish and he would be happy. And I would be happy watching him be happy. Then the sharks below him would be happy because they would think that they had a nice feather-filled snack (if sharks could think, this is what they would think). Then Albert would try to take off. The goofball that he is, he would flap his wings and then kick his feet along the top of the water as though he was running a marathon. (I tell you what, if I had a dozen Galapagos sharks underneath me fighting over who was going to get a nice bite out of my rear end, I would be running on top of the water too!) Albert would get away and we would both be happy once again. It has been a very happy day for pretty much every party involved. Except of course for the mackerel that we use as bait. They have been very unlucky for a long time. At least since they were caught and frozen and shipped from Taiwan several weeks ago. Before then I am sure that they were as happy as a school of mackerel could be!

I have found myself in the middle of a book by Antoine de Saint-Exupery, the author of *The Little Prince*. He had an amazing life, short as it was, and kept track of his adventures and stories along the way. In the story I am reading now, *Wind, Sand, and Stars*, he recounts his first years as a French airmail pilot back in the 1920s and 1930s. Talk about amazing stuff. The guy seemed to crash a plane every few weeks! And he walked away from all but one (the one in the middle of World War II that was responsible for his disappearance forever). I am also reading a short book of his quotes on the side. He was a very insightful human being- full of love and compassion and optimism for the human potential. So as you can imagine, I am paying close attention to the things he has said.

Many of the passages in *The Little Prince* and in *Wind, Sand, and Stars* that have stood out in my reading of them have been included in this short book of quotes. Also, since I am borrowing Huntley’s copies of the books, I find that Huntley has also dog-eared the corners of the book in the same places. And I reflect back on an experience I had just recently, at the end of my cross-country drive just days before leaving on this cruise.

My friends and I ended up in Yosemite National Park near the border of California and Nevada and were surprised at what we found. Thinking that this park would be similar to the parks I have visited around the world, I was sure that we would find our own part of the park away from everyone else and be able to get off the beaten trail and do some hiking. As it turns out, thousands upon thousands of visitors enter the park each day. Not only this, but the park has several places where you can eat prepared food (including a huge grocery store), stay in resort hotels, and take tour busses throughout the park. We were even able to purchase gasoline inside the park (at the rate of \$3.85/ gallon!). This was not what I imagined of Yosemite.

What is more, the park is HUGE. We had no idea where to begin. And since we only had one day to visit as many parts of the park as we wanted we followed the handout that the rangers gave us and every other vehicle to enter the park that day. By the way NEVER give yourself one day for Yosemite, give yourself at least a week.

Those of you who know me well know that I would rather take the long way around a crowd, than to find myself mixed up in one. In Yosemite we did not have an option. We were part of the crowd everywhere we went. So we crawled our way up to Glacier Point, at the top of the park looking down upon Yosemite Valley, behind a long line of cars headed to the same place. Once there, we rushed out of the car excited about what we were going to see.

What we saw were hundreds of people standing around in the afternoon sun eating ice cream bars and taking pictures of each other with the valley in the background. But I forced myself to look beyond the people for a moment, and into the valley. What I saw was absolutely amazing. And of all of the mountain views I have seen in my life, this one was perhaps the most remarkable. I stood at the edge of a 2,000-foot ledge and looked down into the valley where cars moved like ants below us and thought about how special the moment was for me, regardless of how many other people were around.

Moments later, when the astonishment of the scenery had calmed a little inside of me, I took to watching other people enjoying the view. At some point during this time I had a revolutionary thought that I never thought myself capable of thinking before: Some things are great by their *essence*, and that is what draws people together around them. Crowds cannot take away the essence of something Beautiful. They may distract you from it, or ruin the “perfect photograph,” but the Beauty still remains beneath it all.

In Yosemite I was in a crowd of people all desiring to admire the Beauty of the park for whatever reason each of us had. For some, it was a checklist of things to do in the United States. For others, it was a weekend trip from the city. And for us, it was the realization of all of our effort in driving across the country in the week before. Whatever our reasons, we all shared the same awe and admiration for something that is truly spectacular in its essence.

In reading Antoine de Saint-Exupery, and any other author for that matter, and recognizing quotes from his stories in other places, I find myself comforted in the fact

that others recognize the same Beautiful things that I do. So often I give up on humanity still appreciating the simple, Beautiful things in life. And when I experience Yosemite as I have, and read *A Guide for Grown-Ups* as I am now, it warms my heart and makes me optimistic for those of us who find Beauty in the simple things.

I have leant Huntley one of my favorite Hermann Hess books, *Narcissus and Goldmund*, and he has told me that he has the same experiences in reading it as I have had in reading his. Is this not the goal of any author, that his readers would find agreements among each other as to the Beauty of his prose? It is, for me, something that I strive for as I teach myself to write from all of the experiences I have gained thus far in life. Will people look back one day and find words that I have shared with them to have truly moved them to feel something? To do something? To be something?

“True freedom lies only in the creative process. The fisherman is free when he fishes according to his instinct. The sculptor is free when carving a face.”