



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

Date: Monday June 5, 2006

Time: 8:15 PM Hawaii

Entry

“Sea Legs”

I am having difficulty acquiring my “sea legs,” but it seems that I am not the only one. I took my non-drowsy Dramamine an hour before departure and I have seen others among us landlubbers with seasickness-medicated patches behind their ears. A mee, my British confidante in which I have already found similar humor, perspective on life, and taste for tea, has assured me that it is all inside my head. “Stop thinking you’ll be sick,” she says in a Mary Poppins’ motherly sort of way. “And you won’t be sick...And stop drinking so much tea!” Had she been a psychologist or a flight surgeon and not a marine biologist, I might have accepted her advice as truth. As for the tea, I have fallen asleep by 7 PM both nights I have been in Hawaii and I have resorted to drinking caffeine tea to try to extend my waking hours. A mee says that drinking too many fluids will make me sick. I say, not drinking enough tea will make me fall asleep on the job.

And here it is 8:15 and I have already conceded defeat unto the Sea. I have taken my *drowsy* Dramamine coupled with some Tylenol PM, Melatonin, and Gabba to ensure myself a good night’s sleep. Surviving the first night of rest is imperative to the success of the other 29. I think that sleep shall come swiftly and gently.

“The Head”

I learned several things when I was young, most of which I learned from my father’s good example:

1. Never pee into the wind. (Ladies, this does not really apply to you. Guys, I hope you know this by now!)
2. Buy a LOT of Girl Scout cookies when they are on sale. Do not forget that you can always freeze them, and they are only on sale once per year.
3. Chew with your mouth closed and come to the dinner table wearing a shirt. (Again, ladies hopefully this does not apply to you!)
4. Do not try to take a shower on board a moving ship unless you are prepared for water shortages, drastic changes in water temperature and pressure, a general inability to hold oneself upright without the use of one’s hands long enough to use one’s hands to scrub one’s back or hair without falling over, and the door to suddenly open, exposing you to your roommate to both of your dismay. (Yeah, you are right. I did not learn this one until today. Father, the veteran Navy sailor, should have explained these things to me years ago!)

Bathrooms are affectionately referred to as “the head” onboard a ship. As so, I have not figured out why, nor had the inquisitive mind enough to research the reason. But one thing that I did know about moving ships at sea, which my younger sister Lauren taught me in the Galapagos, is to sleep with a trashcan by your side. That poor child slept curled at my feet by the toilet while she “popped” at intermittent intervals because we didn’t have a good trashcan in our room. I have a great one by my side right now, double lined with Hefty bags, though I am hoping not to use it!

“Chow”

We had buffet-style dinner tonight that included salad (with ranch dressing!), spaghetti with shrimp, teriyaki chicken, and Hawaiian pig and roasted vegetables. I had a little of each, with a second helping of green vegetables. I told Ameer that I was worried about scurvy. She told me that I was dumb for worrying about scurvy. I told her to re-read the history of the merging of her ancestors and mine through the long ship rides from England to what would become the United States; it is littered with failed attempts to colonize due to scurvy. She told me I was dumb and to shut up and eat. I did. (Did I mention how well our personalities compliment each other?!) We have to buss our own dishes after we are through eating. That is better than having to buss everyone else’s dishes after *they* are through eating. (So long to the restaurant server life...for now.)

“Teacher at Sea”

I am treated somewhat like royalty here—in the sense that I have my own large room, I have to have my correspondence screened by the Commanding Officer of the ship, and everyone knows me as *The Teacher at Sea*. Being royalty makes life kind of nice. It doesn’t make the rocking of the ship upon the sea any calmer (I think Jesus is technically the only person capable of such a feat!). But it does give me an air of importance. It’s strange, but I am looking up to these “kids” (being college students, they are “kids” to me, though several of them are actually older than me) for their experience and expertise as scientists, researchers, and specialists while it seems from conversation that they all look up to me for the same. A mutual environment of respect will be important for the bonds we are to form over the next thirty days.

Also, when purchasing a souvenir T-shirt from the ship’s store today, I told the officer that I was a Teacher at Sea, and asked if he had any special deals for me. “Yeah,” he said as he handed me a blue Oscar Elton Settee t-shirt. “Fifteen dollars.” “How much are they regularly?” I asked not really sure if this was a good deal. “Fifteen dollars!” He replied with a smile on his face. I handed him the money, returning the smile. Most everyone seems to be good-humored here...at least for now. Thirty days at sea is a lot of time together. We will see how the rest of the days go.

Today was essentially a “get-acquainted-with-the-ship” day. We will be charging ahead for the next day and a half towards Necker Island. I hope to have acquired my “sea legs” by then. Breakfast is at 7 AM. Maybe I will write more after breakfast. Until then...

Oh yeah. There is talk of getting Tonatiuh back in a few days if his foot heals. We are meeting up with a charter fishing boat to drop off some researchers around Necker Island. He may come out on that boat and jump on with us. It would be nice to have some company to talk to at night. I am sleeping in a bunk bed like the good old times of sleepovers in my childhood, yet I have no friend above me with which to talk into the early hours of the morning. Oh well for now. Woe is me for being in such a terrible position as I am now, on a ship in the middle of the tropical Pacific with a place to sleep, good company, good food, and wonderful scenery. There is no pity party for me! Not yet at least!