



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

Date: Tuesday June 6, 2006

Time: 8:15 AM Hawaii

Speed: 10.5 knots

Entry

I survived the night with ease! The only problem I had was after I woke up the first time (around 1:30 AM) and could not fully get back to sleep. I am still struggling with this jetlag thing, although my “sea legs” are coming along well. Knock on wood; I am already well adjusted in the inner ear, though I still get tossed around a bit when I try to walk. I can handle that though. It is the seasickness that I feared.

I ate breakfast with Ameer and John, the Electronics Technician guy. He handles all of the communications and electronics stuff on the ship. We all traded past war stories and somehow ended up in a pseudo-philosophical discussion about science and technology and the future of our world. (I say “pseudo-philosophical” because none of us is trained in any way in philosophy!) Yeah, we are all science geeks! But it was fun. I am learning that everyone on the ship is very kindhearted and friendly. I guess you have to be if you are going to live in such close quarters together for so long. I’ve begun to think of this ship in terms of reality shows (Not that I am a fan of them, but we are under a lot of the same conditions: many strangers with unique backgrounds put together in a strange situation, forced to share resources in close conditions, while attempting to complete a task or mission in a given amount of time.). I will attempt to document the human element of this trip as much as the scientific. After all, is observation not a key element to the scientific method? So far we are drama-free, aside from losing Tonatiuh. But there are still 30 days left.

On a more concrete note, we are headed towards Necker Island, to the northwest of Oahu. Unofficial word is that we will be there by mid-afternoon. Although I have also heard that we have another full day of transit. When we arrive there, we will begin baiting and setting lobster traps. Our mission on the OSCAR ELTON SETTE is to trap lobster in the Hawaiian waters, take measurements of tagged lobsters, and keep track of the overall population density of lobsters in the given areas. My colleagues are concerned that the number of lobsters in the area is remaining low despite the fact that the waters have been off limit to commercial fishermen since 1990. They are hoping that, each time they come out here, there will be a sudden increase in the number of lobsters in the area. Something must be keeping the population down, and through the data we collect, we will be able to contribute to determining the cause, and therefore be able to help scientists devise solutions to stabilizing the lobster population.

Until we reach Necker Island, it is smooth sailing across a gently rolling Pacific, upon my perch on the Marine Mammal Observation Deck, the highest deck set directly above the

bridge and which is intended for use for scientists to search for whales, dolphins, and other such life. It is covered, with a nice breeze, and Garret, a fellow researcher, is playing his harmonica. Life couldn't get much better.

On that note: Bob, the Chief Scientist onboard the ship (my "boss" so to speak) has made it rather clear to me that when the time to work comes, I will be working hard alongside everyone else. "I don't know what they told you about the Teacher at Sea program," he told me over the phone when I first arrived in Honolulu. "But you are not going to be just observing. You will be getting hands on and dirty." "Good," I told him with a smile on my face. "That's why I am here." I imagine that when we arrive at Necker Island the pace of life will pick up rather dramatically. Until then, I am going to work on learning the ropes and enjoy my time with good company.