



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

**Date:** June 10, 2006

**Time:** 8:40 PM Hawaii

**Location:** Somewhere adrift in the Pacific Ocean!

**Entry**

Have you ever wanted to create something so Beautiful, but didn't know where to begin? I have. It happened last night just before sunset, and lasted until about midnight when I finally closed my eyes. I tried to capture the moment with my words and with my camera, but both failed in every attempt. Here are the words anyway. Pictures will have to wait.

"I don't know if I have ever seen anything as Beautiful as the sunset tonight. I can't describe it in words. Nor should I even try. They wouldn't do it justice. All I can do is try to describe *myself* right now, incredibly inspired to live in this one moment--and take back every other one, just to remain here now. A nearly full moon arises as the sun retires for the evening. White cumulus clouds of different shapes and heights scatter themselves across the sky and then fade into colors as they meet on the horizon. Every color exists right now. And with the setting sun, a flash of green to outline the furthest clouds. The depth my eyes perceives exceeds the depth of the ocean. Dolphin dance quietly in the waters around us to the sounds of Coltrane to make the evening complete. If I don't wake tomorrow, I know where I shall be--forever in this moment. Remove the people. Remove the steel from this ship. Remove my pen and paper and camera and lenses. Leave nothing but me in a dinghy to drift about through this lovely sea and sky. And let me go here in quiet moments, if I wake in the morning and this is no longer real. And let my soul reside in solitude among the gentle rolling swells and mirrored moon upon their hills and valleys. Keep me here, where I know that Everything that belongs here is in its right place. Let me sing along in wordless song to the music in my heart. Let my senses overwhelm me. I am here, right now. Not dreaming. Or am I? Will I wake tomorrow morning worn and weary, awaiting another breath, wishing and wondering when I--if I--should ever see a moment so still as now? Unimaginable. Love. Beauty. Life. All the same right now. All in front, behind, beside, within me. Love and Beauty and Life, forever in this moment. Until I close my eyes, and wake again..."

I would have painted the moment for you if I could paint. Or I would have sung it to you, if my voice could describe the colors, depth of perception, taste of salt in the air, and slightest feeling of air pressed from the wind against my skin. Not even Monet could paint it though. Nor could a church choir reach the solemnity of such a peaceful moment. And I fail with my words again and again. So I'll stop.

I spent a good part of the morning recounting the evening with everyone on board. Many of the crew agreed that they have never seen such a night before. All of us scientists, who are just along for the ride this one time, believe much the same. Last night was incredibly spiritual--on so many levels. I expect them to peel away from me over time, like layers of an onion.

The anchor was broken this morning, so we did not begin work until about 9:30. In the meantime, I sat on the fantail of the ship watching the sun change the colors of the sky from pastels to brighter primary and secondary colors. Joe put some Grateful Dead on the PA, and we sat in silence for a good while taking in the scenery around us. Except for Necker Island, we are entirely surrounded by water and clouds and blue sky. The Pacific remains so calm, and keeps the crew knocking on wood at every mention of Her stillness. It is becoming taboo around here to speak of the gently rolling swells. Though not quite as comparable as the Great Nor'easters that menace sailors off the coast of New England in a matter of minutes, the Pacific is known for turning on a dime and changing such silence into a terrible mess. I have grown to respect her Peace with us. I pray for it each morning in my own stillness. The birds also welcome such moments and offer their best unto the sea and sky with their graceful flight throughout the clouds. V Everything is truly in its right place.

As for work, I was inside the wet lab today measuring lobster. I saw a side of science that did not seem to fit my picture of what it *should* be. Not that it was bad, per se. It just was not what I *expected* it to be. Though I should know from traveling time and time again, my expectations of what should be will *never* fully match up with what really is. I am constantly reminded of this. And I constantly forget it. And my heart has been stirred, to say the least, to consider the nature of science and all of its implications. I am still a scientist. But I am learning that perhaps I am not a scientific researcher. Perhaps I will remain on the other side of science for a while, until I can sort out the disparity between my heart and my head in this matter.

It was an easy day, full of air condition and fluorescent lighting. I saved my skin from an ultraviolet beating, and kept myself fully hydrated. I didn't even break a sweat, and almost started feeling bad about it later in the day when I saw how exhausted everybody else seemed to be. Then I reminded myself how spent I had been the last three days, and how I would be again on Monday when I left the lab and returned to the deck of the ship. I have trouble slowing myself down sometimes, and feel as though I should be thoroughly involved in anything and everything that happens. So I intentionally withdrew myself after work into the Rec Room to watch a video with some of the other scientists. I need the down time. I need the break from reality. I take everything so seriously all of the time. And I wonder, shouldn't I? Can I afford to take these breaks? There is always something that I can do, something that I can write, some song that I can play. And there is always that drive in me to create something so Beautiful, and to begin doing it sometime soon...