



NOAA Teacher at Sea Ginger Redlinger Onboard NOAA Ship RAINIER July 15 – August 1, 2007

NOAA Teacher at Sea: Ginger Redlinger
 NOAA ship RAINIER
 Mission: Hydrographic Survey –Baranof Island Project
 Date: July 25-27, 2007
 Final Log: August 9, 2007—Reflections
 on the last few days return trip: July 29 –
 31 Travel Inside Passage to Sand Point
 WA.

The RAINIER started its work in South East Alaska in April of this year. Four months and hundreds of nautical miles later it was time to leave: Juneau, Ketchikan, Sitka, Baranof Island, and the Gulf of Esquibel. Three or four research boats were in the water everyday rain or shine, calm or rough water, gathering data. At night, crews' maintained watch, reviewed data, and planned for the next day's work. Equipment was checked to ensure everyone's health and safety. Quality control ensured that the data gathered met NOAA's expectations. Now it is time to end the Alaskan part of their work and move to their next working location.



Weather log on the RAINIER. Data is gathered, then entered into a database.



Water from the Fraser River (green) and the southern end of Georgia Strait waters.

While traveling from South Each Alaska to Washington I reflected on the most memorable parts of the journey. I immediately remembered the compliments from pleasure boaters and fishermen about NOAA's work. Next I thought about the ease at which the crew safely delivered and returned their equipment and crew to and from the ship each day. Then I thought about the NOAA resources I learned about as I studied information about hydrography, technology, satellites, weather, and tides.

And how could I not mention the food – it was great. Good food compensates for the sacrifice of being away from home for such a long time.

There would be a short break between the end of this voyage and the start of the next, some would remain on the ship, and for others it meant being “at home” for the first time since April. This is part of the sacrifice that mariners, and those who explore the oceans make. As we traveled closer to home many off-duty crewmembers gathered on the fly deck to see home slowly approaching from the distance.

They shared stories from the last four months and recalled the moments of laughter on “the big white ship.” After traveling through Canadian waters, around Vancouver Island and into Puget Sound, people began to gather in earnest of the desk. At first I thought it was because we were taking a picture for a “NOAA 200th Anniversary Postcard



Mt. Rainier and Seattle in the distance.

from the Field,” but many remained on deck. Many were anxious for the first glimpse of their families and their homes. Many of their family members arrived at the Ballard Locks – waving and communicating their excitement about the reunions that would happen in a few short hours.



The Seattle skyline at night

The sun is setting as we traveled past the many marinas for all types of marine vessels, houseboats, and dry-docks. As we passed through crewmembers neighborhoods the fading sunlight was replaced with light shining in their eyes as they talked about the view from their windows, their favorite neighborhood haunts, and local treats that mean “home.” As we turn toward the waters that lead to downtown Seattle the crew on the fly deck is silent. The

last embers of sunlight are reflecting on the downtown Skyline, it is spectacular.

We turn away from downtown and travel through the Fremont Cut. Thank goodness for the navigational skills of this young and talented team – the water traffic from Seattle’s SeaFair was busy. Once we arrived at the NOAA Western Regional Center in Sand Point, CO Noll’s work was done. He had trained his crew to successfully navigate the ship and complete the mission. We are all home; the final navigational command is given.

“All Engines Stop”

“All Engines Stop, Aye. - All Engines Stopped”

“Very Well”

Rear Admiral De Bow was on board to congratulate him, and pass the time-honored command coin.

I hate to admit it, but like a kid at camp leaving a new set of friends knowing that I most likely will not see many of them again, I feel sadness. The memories and lessons will remain. What a great adventure for a teacher, what a great experience for those who work on the ship,

and what a great service provided to those who depend on navigation for commerce, recreation, and those who seek a greater scientific understanding of the earth and how it changes. I can’t wait to share it all with my students and colleagues!!!!



Rear Admiral De Bow handing the Command Coin to Commander Noll