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ECOHAB-PNW Scientists Find a Home Away from Home

KB GRID LINE



Scientists aboard the R/V Melville are settling into life at sea, getting their sea legs, acclimating to odd shift hours, finding their way around the labyrinth of passageways and starting to feel "at home."

The R/V Melville was built in 1969 by the U.S. Navy which owns the ship, but the Scripps Institute of Oceanography operates and manages the vessel, which is based out of San Diego, CA. Diverse science teams, such as ECOHAB-PNW

commission the Melville for research voyages. This year Melville and crew have traveled to Fiji, Tahiti, Tonga and Hawaii.

Most of the science happens on the main deck. Scientists are busy 24-hours a day in the labs. The galley and mess hall are located in the center. Some cabins and the "hospital" are on the main deck. Most of the rooms, called berths, the laundry room, dry food stores, and the exercise bikes are located on the platform below the main deck.

Level 01 consists of the computer lab, library, and lounge, as well as rooms for senior-ranking crew (mates and chief engineer). Level 02 is reserved for the captain and senior scientists' berths. Level 03 is the bridge, or pilot house. The "crow's nest" over the bridge is the highest point on the ship.

The 28 ECOHAB-PNW scientists depend on the expertise of the 24 top-notch crew members for the success of the research cruise. The resident technician ("res tech") is the key link between science and crew. She is responsible for the safe use of science gear and lab space, communicates with the bridge, and answers the scientists' inquiries. An on-call computer technician maintains

the ship's network, satellite internet, and many computer-based science equipment.

The deck and engineering departments keep the Melville in "ship shape." Each has a traditional chain of command. While the captain oversees everything on the ship, his first mate manages the deck department consisting of: 2nd and 3rd mates, the boatswain (or bos'n), able-bodied seamen (A.B.s) and the "ordinary" seaman. The 2nd mate is in charge of navigation and charts. The 3rd mate is the safety officer in charge of life rafts, fire extinguishers, alarms, etc. The bos'n, A.B.s

and ordinary conduct general maintenance such as chipping rust and painting the ships' surfaces, oiling hatches etc. A.B.s also keep watch hours in the bridge with the mates.

The Chief Engineer (or "Chief") knows the ship's systems inside and out. He oversees the 1st, 2nd and 3rd assistant engineers, 3 oilers, 2 wipers, and one electrician. An assistant engineer and oiler are on watch at all times. The terms oiler and wiper come from the steam ship days when it was necessary to constantly tend to the engines.

Perhaps the most important crew members for ship morale are the galley crew. Two cooks combine their skills to create gourmet cuisine. Salmon mornea, braised chicken with fennel, stuffed pork loin, king crab, grilled steak (on Sundays), and au gratin potatoes have been on the menu. Desserts have included blueberry blintzes, apple pie, and chocolate mousse with garnache.

The scientists on the Melville notice how the crew have made the ship their home, and appreciate the opportunity to do their research on the ship, settling into life at sea, if only for a little while.

Master in Command

MASTER BERTH 02-41-1



Sunlight on the sea sparkles through two portholes. Tokens from travels to exotic lands line the walls and shelves of the room. A Polynesian stick chart shows how primitive South Pacific cultures navigated between islands – shells are islands and bent sticks between them represent swell patterns and currents. There is a 10-inch Moai statue from Easter Island on a ledge, and the bookshelf is filled with maritime classics: *The Endurance* and Melville's *Moby Dick*.

This is the captain's quarters, located on the 2nd level, just below the bridge (where they steer the ship). Captain Chris "Rip" Curl wears a grey T-shirt with "Kailua boys" printed in gold - he once lived in the town Kailua on the Hawaiian Island of Oahu. A ukelele sits on the coffee table. The captain says he's learning to play and picks it up to carefully pluck out the notes to *Aloha Oe*.

Rip has been the captain of the Melville for 9 years. He spends 6 months at sea each year – 3 months on, 3 months off. His family lives in Bishop, California on the east side of the Sierra Nevada mountains. He points out the Ansel Adams print of the Yosemite valley on the wall, a reminder of his home away from the sea.

Captain Curl grew up with the ocean. His father was in the Navy. As a boy he had a toy boat. Whenever he saw a lake, river or puddle he would ask his parents, "Can I float my boat in there?"

When asked what he most enjoys about his job he says, "The beauty of the sea, handling the ship and the camaraderie." The captain voiced his pride at leading a research ship; helping scientists work to improve people's lives.