NOAA Teacher at Sea
Claude Larson
Onboard NOAA Ship ALBATROSS IV
July 23 – August 3, 2007

NOAA Teacher at Sea: Claude Larson
NOAA ship ALBATROSS IV
Mission: Sea Scallop Survey
Date: July 24, 2007
Time: 13:15
North Atlantic Ocean

Weather Data from the Bridge
Wind speed: 13 knots SW
Atmospheric Pressure: 1019 mB
Cloud cover: 4/8 cirrus, stratus and cumulous
Air temperature: 18.3º C 65º F
Water temperature: 18.9 º C 66 º F

Science and Technology Log
Although our departure date was delayed by one day due to some problems with the air conditioning system that cools the staterooms, we are glad that the problem has been resolved and we are underway on Tuesday, July 24. We left from the dock at approximately 9:00 AM under partially cloudy skies and with a light breeze. Just as I was standing on the hurricane deck enjoying the view of the diminishing landscape, there is an all call onboard and we are asked to muster in our stations for a fire drill.

Teacher at Sea, Claude Larson, waves hello from the aft deck of the Albatross IV as she dons her immersion suit during an abandon ship drill.

We gathered all of our emergency gear and met in the wet lab area of the ship. In a few minutes, an abandon ship drill is announced and we head out to our life raft assignments and don our bright red immersion suits. They are a bit of a task to put on, but provide ample protection should we ever actually abandon ship. They are known as the "Gumby Suits" and I have made that my first image in my log of this cruise.

A few minutes after we put away our emergency gear, the Chief Scientist, Stacy Rowe asks the crew for a test tow to ensure that all of the equipment we will need to survey the scallops is in working order. This is a great opportunity for those of us who are new on board to see how the procedure works.

The deck hands skillfully direct the large dredge net over the back of the boat and release a specific length of cable based on depth of the water. Unfortunately, during the first attempt the net flips and does not collect any specimens. However, the second tow is more successful and allows us to get a collection of organisms large enough to sample.

Those of us who have never been on a scallop survey before get to work. While kneeling on mats we sort through the pile for any living organisms. These are put in blue buckets. The organisms are then sorted by species and we get a hands-on lesson from Larry Brady, our Watch Chief on how to identify certain organisms. Once all the species are identified and sorted, we weigh them, count them and measure the length of a few using FSCS, the Fisheries Scientific Computer System. The deck, baskets and buckets are cleaned and put back until the next tow. Our next tow is south of Long Island, approximately 87 nautical miles away, so we take the opportunity to enjoy a quick lunch break and some down time until we are on our modified watch schedule from 6 PM to Midnight.

I am looking forward to our first official tow and the treasures we will find there. Hopefully my body will have made some adjustments to the rocking and rolling of the ship as we steam through the Atlantic. In the meantime, I will leave you with my question of the day.

Why would scientists who are studying the overall health of an ocean environment collect and study organisms from the bottom of the ocean?