



NOAA Teacher at Sea
Mike Laird
Onboard NOAA Ship RAINIER
July 24 - August 13, 2005

Log 11

Day 14: Sunday, August 7

Time: 13:00

Latitude: 55° 49.3 ' N

Longitude: 158° 51.5 ' W

Visibility: 8 nautical miles (nm)

Wind Direction: 210°

Wind Speed: 8kts

Sea Wave Height: 0 '

Swell Wave Height: 0 '

Sea Water Temperature: 12.2° C

Sea Level Pressure: 1028.0 mb

Cloud Cover: Sky 0/8 covered

Science and Technology Log

While running echo soundings on the launch one day, the topic of conversation turned to sailing superstitions. Since that time, I have informally talked with several crewmembers about superstitions they have heard of or that they personally believe in. Here is what I have discovered so far.

The most widely believed superstition is that it is bad luck for a ship to leave port and set sail on a Friday. No one I talked to knew the origin of this belief, but everyone I talked to thought it best to stay in port an extra day or two and not tempt fate. One of the ensigns had even heard a tale of a non-believer trying to prove the superstition was a bunch of bunk. He began construction of a ship on Friday, christened the ship on a Friday, put the ship under the command of a Captain Friday, and began the maiden voyage on a Friday. The ship was never heard from again, believe it or not! In any case, most sailors will not happily set sail from port on a Friday.

Another common superstition, observed by most, is that one should not whistle. I heard a couple of explanations for this. One version is that whistling is not allowed on the bridge, because it will "whistle up an ill wind." One coxswain, who has been around the sea and ships, including steamships, for many years, gave a different rationale for the whistling ban. On steamships, a whistling noise was an indicator that there was steam escaping from one of the ship's steam pipes – often a dangerous situation. Whatever the reason, whistling is discouraged on the ship. As one ensign said, "I don't whistle, because it is annoying."

Having a woman, minister (or other religious figure on board) was at one time considered to be bad luck. None of the people I talked to felt strongly about either of those.

Apparently, having bananas onboard is supposed to be bad luck for racing vessels and fishing boats – no one knew why.

Finally, one ensign who grew up in France shared that it is not good to say the word “rabbit” onboard. Instead, one should say “long ears.” However, having mice—stuffed, carved, etc.—will keep the real thing away.

An interesting topic! Remember to avoid sailing from port on Friday and to refrain from whistling while you work – and life should be good!

Personal Log

Gorgeous weather again today – scattered clouds and lots of sunshine! This afternoon we changed anchorage locations, moving from Sosbee Bay on the southern side of the island back to Cushing Bay on the northern side. During the transit we saw a sailboat off in the distance. Haven’t seen much traffic while we’ve been here – two fishing boats motored by, and while on the southern side we saw three tugs pulling barges out in the gulf. Mitrofanía is a pretty peaceful and secluded spot.