



NOAA Teacher at Sea
Eric Heltzel
Onboard NOAA Ship RONALD H. BROWN
September 26 – October 22, 2005

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Teacher at Sea, Sunday, September 25, 2005: Eric Heltzel

Today I flew from Salt Lake City to Orlando, then on to Miami. This was an educational experience in and of itself. Having chosen a seat with a view my head was pressed against the window for the first hour. We flew along the south slope of the Uinta Mountains and I could look down on Tungsten Basin where we caught such beautiful Book Trout last summer. I could see King's Peak and the length of the range. What a great way to connect studies of maps and experiences on the ground. It was like looking at the best three-dimensional map possible

Having received a degree in Geography from the University of Colorado it was great to get such a bird's eye view of the places I had studied. I saw the mountains near Crested Butte and gazed delightedly at the highest fourteeners in the Sawatch Range. The view changed when looking down on the striking contrast of the light color of Great Sand Dunes National Monument. A bit was vertical view of the summit of the Spanish Peaks. I could see dikes radiating from the summit of the western mountain. It was striking evidence of the geologic complexities of these mountains that were once active volcanoes.

As we crossed over the flatter country my interest became more focused on the atmosphere. Looking northward from over New Orleans I was searching for the remnants of Rita. By this time she had moved inland and was already downgraded below a Tropical Depression. My gaze was drawn to where I thought her center would be and there were tall, well-developed cumulonimbus clouds. The phenomenon that interested me most was the sight of bands of mid-level cumulus clouds radiating southward from what was Rita's center. They were in bands with clouds alternating with clear air. Students, I don't have a clear hypothesis as to why this occurred. I'd be curious to here your ideas. I hope to discuss this with the scientists on board.

Speaking of on-board I arrived at the ROANLD H. BROWN at the Coast Guard facility in Miami Beach at 1900 without a hitch. The ship is larger that I had visualized, about 270 feet long and over 50 feet wide. My berth is one level below the main deck and has no porthole. It is, however, quite comfortable. I have a small bunk (too low to sit up in, but plenty long), a desk, storage for my clothing and equipment, and a bathroom I share with the room next to me. It strikes me as comfortable and I am sitting at my desk as I write this first entry.

Tomorrow we sail. I hope to get some photos of our departure. So far it looks great!

EH