



**NOAA Teacher at Sea
Philip J. Hertzog
Onboard NOAA Ship RAINIER
July 24 - August 13, 2005**

Log 19

Day 19: August 12, 2005

Time: 0800 hours

Weather: Clear Skies, warm temperatures

Location: Alaska State Ferry Terminal, Homer, AK

Status: Journey Over

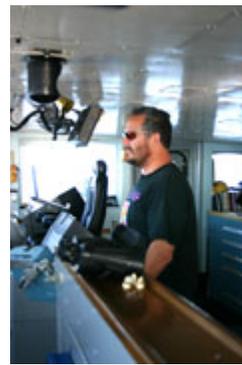
Science and Technology Log

Last evening we stopped and fished for a few hours off the Barren Islands located between Kodiak Island and the Kenai Peninsula. I caught three rockfish with a 12-pound test line (compared to 60-pound used by others) by slowly reeling in the fish and letting them run to prevent breaking my line. A few other people caught rockfish and lingcod, but no one came near reaching their limit like at Albatross Banks.

After cleaning my fish, I went up to the flying bridge around 11:30 pm to watch the evening sky. The flying bridge sits above the main bridge and forward of the ship's smoke stack. It offers the best view on the ship with an open deck and observation platforms. Jonathon Anderson stood watch on the center platform looking ahead for any whales that might surface in front of the RAINIER. A small diameter metal tube runs down from the flying bridge to the main bridge, which serves as a communication link by shouting into it. In addition to calling down any whale sightings, Jonathon let the bridge know of any light buoys or vessels he spotted. The deck crew takes turn standing watch on the flying bridge, which usually starts at dusk and ends at sunrise.

The main bridge maintains a quiet dignity. Before entering the bridge, you must obtain permission from the officer of the deck. People talk quietly and infrequently while on the bridge. The conversations focus on ship's business, but mostly quiet dominates the bridge as the officers concentrate on handling the ship safely. An officer always scans the horizon to look for potential danger to the ship. A second officer maintains record books and frequently plots the ship's location on charts. A helmsman, usually a deck crewmember, steers the wheel under direction of the officer of the deck. The CO comes on the bridge when problems arise and is the only one allowed to sit in the Captain's Chair.

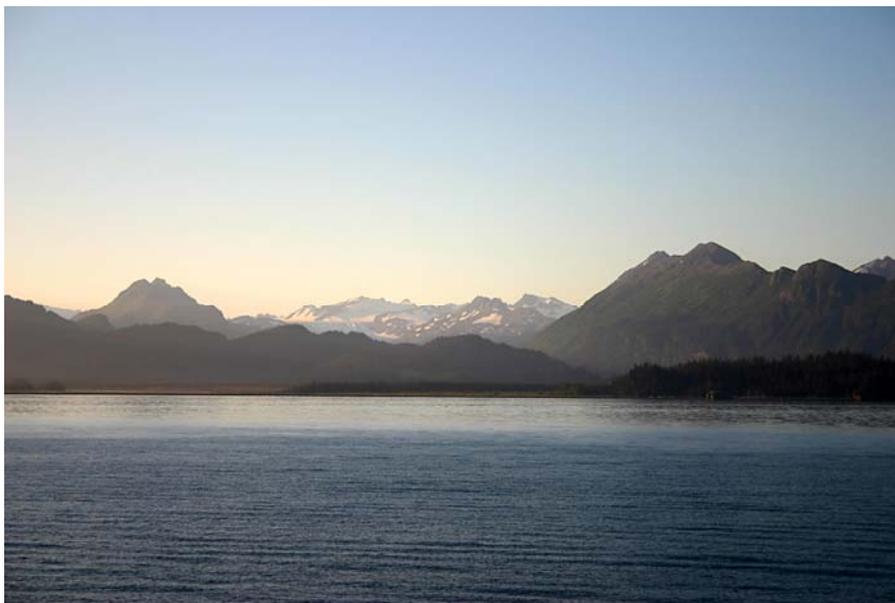
Here are photographs of the bridge and deck crewmember Dennis Brooks serving as helmsman:



After I spent a few minutes on the flying bridge, Corey Mussey and Allison Thueur relieved Jonathon of watch duty. Allison came on board with us in Kodiak as a new General Vessel Assistant. Corey stands watch with her as part of her training, but she will eventually be on her own. Allison previously worked on sailboats in the Caribbean and enjoys life on board. Allison told me she makes a point of teaching any visitors to the flying bridge the name of at least one star. She showed me a star and then pointed out several other constellations. Allison then made Corey point out the star he learned from her the previous night.

I stayed on the flying bridge for 45 minutes and looked at two distant volcanoes to the west silhouetted against a faded orange skyline. To the east, the dark outlines of mountains on the Kenai Peninsula slowly approached us as we headed towards Homer and our final transect runs starting at 2:00 am. What a wonderful way to spend my last evening at sea on board the RAINIER.

My journey aboard the RAINIER ended at 8:00 am as we pulled into Kachemak Bay and tied up at the Alaska State Ferry Terminal in Homer:



I want to thank the senior officers for giving me the freedom to explore the ship and allowing me to participate in all aspects of ship life. I end my log entries with a little bit of information on each of them.

Commander Guy Noll captains the RAINIER. Commander Noll grew up in Olympia, Washington (in my own neighborhood) and has three children. His oldest daughter will enter the Eighth Grade this fall in a school district north of Seattle. The Commander served on board the RAINIER as an Ensign earlier in his NOAA career and returned as Executive Officer about six months ago.



In June he received a promotion to Commanding Officer (CO) during a formal ceremony in Seattle. The Commander has many years of experience in conducting hydrographic surveys and I found him to be one of the most knowledgeable people on board in charting technology. He also is an expert fisherman, though I observed that his command duties severely limit this recreational activity. To the right is the CO.



Commander Julia Neander serves as our Executive Officer (XO). The XO is second in charge, sets the ship's schedule, and makes administrative arrangements for mooring in harbors like Kodiak and Homer. She also deals with personnel issues, makes room assignments, and resolves disputes among the crew. In many ways, XO Neander's job is similar to that of an assistant principal at a school while the CO acts as the principal.

Commander Neander went to Montana State University (at the same time I did) and once circled the Earth over the course of a year on a NOAA ship. Her husband served on the RAINIER as XO and they have a five-year-old son. To the left is the XO.

Lieutenant Ben Evans runs all of the mapping efforts as the Field Operations Officer (FOO). As the FOO, Lt. Evans makes decisions on all aspects of survey work. He organizes the junior officers in the field and constantly monitors the radio to resolve any technical problems the survey crew encounters on the launches. Lt. Evans also looks over the quality of the sonar data and determines its acceptability. He oversees the officers processing the data on board the Rainier and works long hours to make sure mapping efforts run smoothly. Lt. Evans grew up in upstate New York near Lake Ontario. To the right is the FOO out in the field trouble shooting the HOR CON.



Again, I thank the Senior Officers and all the crew of the RAINIER for the wonderful experience.

Personal Log

My voyage has officially ended aboard the RAINIER as her Teacher at Sea. I'll spend tonight on the ship and then stay in a hotel tomorrow night before flying back to Washington State.

As I write this, I hear laughter in the hallway from the Junior Officers for the first time since we left Mitrofanina. Commander Neander stops by with her five-year-old son and says good-bye to me as she leaves to spend a weekend with her family away from the ship. Other people talk about plans for the weekend: going to Anchorage, renting a hotel room, going camping, and eating in a fine restaurant. A joyous mood seeps throughout the RAINIER as people prepare for two days off after three weeks at sea.

What a journey for me. I got to touch base with technical fieldwork that I had done prior to teaching. Before the RAINIER, I had spent no more than two continuous days aboard a ship. I learned how a ship at sea operates like a small community, like a family.

I look forward to meeting my new students in a few weeks and telling them about the RAINIER. Both Mike Laird (the other teacher) and I have started to use our experience to modify lesson plans for the fall.

The RAINIER departs in a few days for the uncharted waters of the Southwestern Alaskan peninsula. Miles of coastline and deep water await her as she carries out a mission to update decades-old nautical charts that will then safely guide mariners engaged in commerce or pleasure. Goodbye to the RAINIER and may fair seas greet you on your mission...



Question of the Day

Would you like to live on a ship like the RAINIER for a year? What are the pros and cons of living a seafaring life?