



NOAA Teacher at Sea
David Riddle
Onboard NOAA Ship ALBATROSS IV
July 13 – 28, 2006

NOAA Teacher at Sea: David Riddle

NOAA Ship ALBATROSS IV

Mission: North Atlantic Sea Scallop Survey

Day 15: Thursday, July 27, 2006

Parting Thoughts

It's Thursday afternoon. We have completed almost 300 tows to sample scallops from Cape Hatteras to Cape Cod. Today will be our last full day at sea; we return to Woods Hole, MA early Friday morning. I am of course looking forward to getting back to land and eventually back home to North Carolina, but I am immensely grateful for this experience.

During our introductory meeting at the start of the cruise, our ship was compared to "a city at sea". I've thought about that a number of times. All the normal services provided by municipalities must be duplicated on board a ship: electricity for heating and cooling, fresh water for drinking and washing, food supplies to last for the duration of the cruise, waste disposal, emergency services, communications, even entertainment. Then too, this is a city on the move. It takes brainpower to know where we are and where we're heading at every moment in time. And it takes mechanical power to keep us moving through the water.

I would suggest that it also takes a considerable amount of people-power to keep this city-at-sea operating at its fullest capacity. And I've witnessed this sort of people-power consistently aboard the ALBATROSS IV the past 15 days. Organization, planning, and procedures govern nearly everything. Officers, crew, and scientists know what to do and what not to do, and all this works to achieve the overall goal of gathering the data necessary to continue this study of scallops that started back in 1975.

But beyond merely following procedures, I've also witnessed something else among the individuals on board this vessel that makes work progress smoothly: simple courtesy. People are quick to offer a helping hand. "Thank you", "Excuse me", "Let me help you with that", as well as unspoken gestures of consideration, are plentiful. Everyone seems fully aware that we are, literally, all in the same boat out here, and getting along is an important aspect of getting the job done.

So, as I approach the end of this experience, I am grateful to all those who made it possible: the NOAA Teacher at Sea program and its administrators, as well as the officers, crew, and scientists aboard the ALBATROSS IV. Thank you all for the valuable work you do, and thank you for allowing me to be a small part of it.