



NOAA Teacher at Sea
John Schneider
Onboard NOAA Ship *Fairweather*
July 7 – August 8, 2009

NOAA Teacher at Sea: John E. Schneider

NOAA Ship *Fairweather* (S-220)

Mission: Hydrographic Survey

Geographical Area: Kodiak, AK to Dutch Harbor, AK

Date: July 4, 2009

Position

Medford Lakes, NJ to Anchorage, AK to Kodiak, AK

Personal Log

Left home at ~0900 EDT and was driven to Philadelphia Int'l by my old son. First leg was PHL to Atlanta in order to connect to a 767 for the non-stop leg to Anchorage. On the first leg, I was in a middle seat, but that was OK as it was only a 1.5 hour flight. After a :45 layover I connected to Delta flight 1475 to Anchorage for a 7 hour non-stop flight. On that flight I *chose* a window seat which meant I would be boxed in. I usually like an aisle seat so I can get up and walk around, but figured that having never been to Alaska I'd like to be able to look out the window. After about 5 hours being stuck in that little seat, I was tired, cramped and uncomfortable.



Midnight – no flash! The moon is rising off to the left.

But then I started to see mountains covered with snow on their North slopes – the southern slopes being sunlit and having melted. A bit further on, the mountains were high enough and far enough North to be snow covered on all exposures. Then, for the last hour or so of the flight, the view was non-stop input of glaciers, fjords, icebergs, islands, tidal flats and a sun still high in the sky, even though it was almost 7 pm local time. It amazes me that folks take so for granted the wonders of where they live – there was a couple in front of me who just chatted through the last couple hours as if it was “business as usual.” Still, living in the Northeast, I know people who take the NYC skyline for granted, too, and having lived in the US Virgin Islands we used to say “Just another day in Paradise” as if it was nothing special. When I get home I will look at my home state with a different and less cynical perspective.



Glacier and runoff into the sea

The descent into Anchorage brought us closer to the ground and I could discern the tree growth and recognized that we were flying over the coniferous forests that characterize the landscape in Northern ecosystems like the Taiga biome. Once on the ground, the cool crisp air and generally quiet tranquil atmosphere immediately let me know I wasn't in the lower 48!

After a brief layover in Anchorage I went to the gate for the flight to Kodiak. Era Airlines is one of the local carriers that services Alaska's interior and the aircraft are relatively small. I was on a twin engine turboprop that carries about 25 people. Seating is not assigned and I was

fortunate enough to have a window again. The flight to Kodiak is only about an hour so the plane never reaches the altitudes of longer flights and I was treated to multiple glaciers, islands and near the end of the flight even caught a glimpse of the *Fairweather* at the pier in the harbor!

Once on the ground, I called the ship and Ensign Matt Forney said he'd be over in a few minutes to pick me up. While I waited, I got to sit and appreciate the day. It was 2030 hours (8:30 pm) and not even close to dark. Ensign Forney arrived and we were off. It's just a five minute drive to the Coast Guard pier but I was given a ten-minute diversionary drive to the public harbor area (very few private "yachts,") many commercial fishing vessels; also stores, clubs, restaurants, etc. but not too many.



In front of Kodiak Airport

I'm tempted to say "quaint," but I think that would diminish the true nature of the area . . . this is a remote area and the people live lives adapted to the area just as everywhere else. Being from New Jersey and its crowds, it seems a life less encumbered.

Because the ship is in port, I'll have time tomorrow to meet some crew members and get acquainted with the layout. I hope to also get a chance to get to town.

Animals (or other cool stuff!) Observed Today

See the above! It was all cool!