

Teacher tells how he spent his summer vacation at sea

BY RON FERENCZI
CORRESPONDENT

For the two weeks of July 21 through August 2, I traded in my white shirt and tie as a Bishop Borgess High School math and science teacher, for shorts, sun block and sea legs to become a temporary member of the National Oceanographic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) ship WHITING surveying the sea floor in and around Galveston Bay, Texas.

From painting the flying bridge to taking salinity tests and temperature samples aboard the ships Boston Whaler. This unique Teacher at Sea program gave me first hand experience producing charts for the safe navigation of shipping in U.S. coastal waters. This is a very complex and involved process using the skills of a 29-member crew and three different types of sonars to complete our mission.

Captain of the WHITING, Steven Barnum, began his career at sea as a junior officer aboard the NOAA Ships RUDE and HECK.

"One of my main duties as Captain is that of the safety of the ship and its crew," he told me. "I also direct the collection of the hydrographic data and make sure it is done in a safe and timely manner." After this assignment, Captain Barnum will manage the Navigation Services Division which will educate and solicit information on

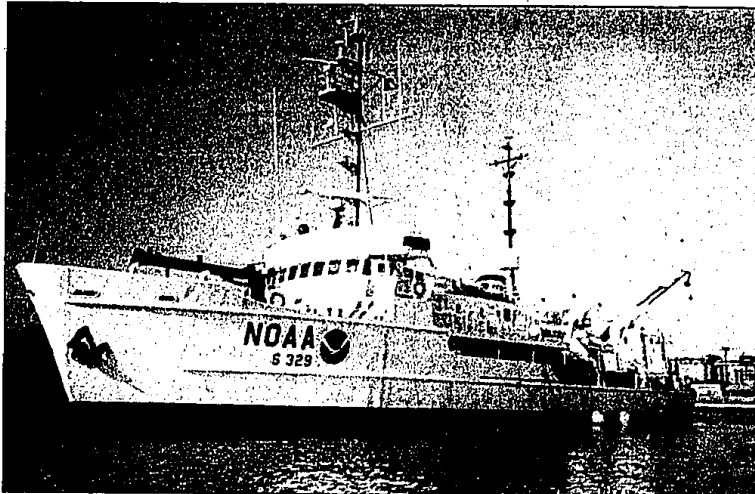
the quality of the charts that the NOAA fleet of ships produces. Executive Officer Donald Haines, is second in command of the WHITING. One of his main and most important duties was to supervise the unloading (morning) and loading (evening) of the two launches for their survey work in the Galveston and Houston Shipping Channel. This is no easy task.

The third in line of command is Jason Seifert, operations officer, whose job is to plan, manage and quality control the survey operations aboard the NOAA ship WHITING.

"We receive project instructions from HSD (Hydrographic Survey Division of NOAA) and they tell us the survey requirements: Where we will survey, the requirements and the information concerning tides, contacts, and specific items we are trying to find," he said. "I also quality check the survey data to ensure it meets certain requirements. I report to the CO who is the lead hydrographer on the ship."

Most of my time aboard the WHITING was spent with Chief of the Deck, Bernard Pooliser, who is in charge of seven crew members, who attend to the basic upkeep of the ship and to make sure that the two cranes and A-frame are in working order. He also makes sure that the two 29-foot survey launches are deployed and retrieved properly.

"We have a rescue boat



The National Oceanographic Atmospheric Administration ship WHITING.

(Zodiac), and a Boston Whaler which are used to do errands if the larger WHITING is out to sea several miles. I am also in charge of anchoring the ship, painting and cleaning the ship inside and out, top to bottom from the bridge to the heads (bathroom)."

My new best friend and evening fishing companion (catching large red fish and sea trout off the fantail of the ship) was Chief Steward Romulo Reynante, who supervises and purchases all of the food we eat, makes the menu, and cooks for a crew of 29, all with only one assistant.

"My day starts at 4:30 a.m. to prepare lunches for the launch personnel, then breakfast for the rest of the crew, then its on to the lunches, setting up the tables, then preparing for dinner with a clean up at 6 p.m. and start to

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prepare for all of the meals for the next day...so it is nonstop," he said.

"Every two weeks, we go shopping for all of the food, which costs about \$3,000."

Romulo said, "Each of the menus are in my mind, so with over 35 years as a steward, I have a huge list of recipes to choose from. I went to schools for meat

cutting, produce, sanitation, cooking, management and supervision with NOAA."

And what meals did we have. Everyday breakfasts consisted of fresh fruit, fruit juice, eggs to order, omelets to order, bacon, hash browns, corned beef hash, hot biscuits, oatmeal, pancakes, pastries, dry cereals, and milk or coffee. As for lunches and din-

ners, we dined on grilled blackened tuna, oven roast pork spare ribs, grilled salmon, flounder Florentine, beef lasagna and all topped off with ice cream cups or cones.

The last person I interviewed was Gene Parker, who concentrated on survey related work.

"Education is the one key factor that will open doors for students' future occupations and the process of how to learn, which will aid them immensely in the future," he said.

And that is what NOAA and its Teacher at Sea program is all about...the hands-on education of teachers to spread the word that crews are hard at work making sure the shipping lanes are safe for the delivery of goods nationwide.

For more details on the Teacher at Sea program, log onto www.tas.noaa.gov.



Ron Ferenczi, a Bishop Borgess High School math and science teacher took to the sea for his summer vacation.

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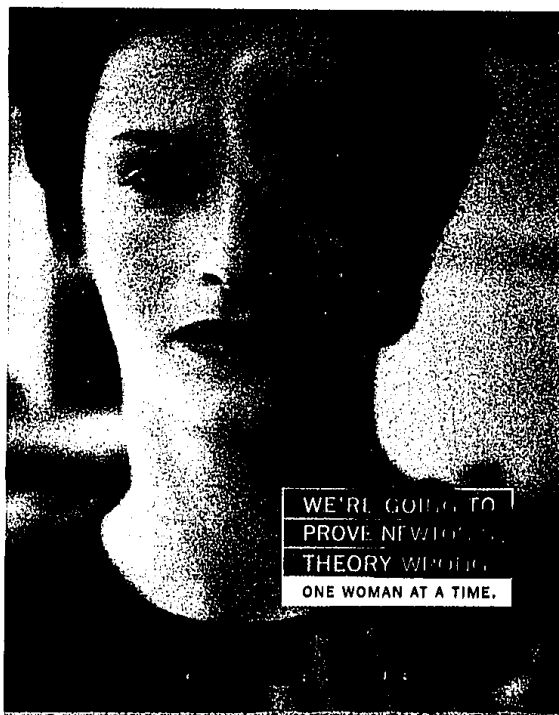
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