

Ali Siddiqui
aboard the R/V TGT

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To whoever reads this in 10 years

Hi there !

I was a CTD watchstander and the LADCP operator for the A22 2021 GO-SHIP cruise.

If you're a student reading this, wondering what a watchstander or an LADCP operator experiences in a GO-SHIP cruise, I might not be able to do justice in this short statement. If you're a PI reading this, and wondering if your students should take part in a GO-SHIP cruise, this statement would only offer a fleeting peak into the experiences of potential students. If you're just someone browsing through student statements, I hope this one offers you something of value about the lives of GO-SHIP participants. I guess the only person who really needs to read this is Mike Kovatch who's wonderful job gives him the pleasure to make cruise reports which contain the tired musings of departing students. So, let me be terse.

As someone who's research involves modeling the ocean using computers, it's very easy for me to forget what the real ocean looks like. The ocean exists in the virtual world with smooth data and exact floating points accurate to the precision of the computer. What the CTD watchstanding taught me was how the ocean really looks like. In person. Or in water ? It taught me the importance of taking accurate, reliable and long-term measurements of the ocean using the CTD. It is very easy to sit in a lab and complain about missing data in the ocean. What this cruise has taught me is the value of recording data during each CTD cast and the amount of hard work and labor that goes into procuring a single vertical profile in the deep ocean. Undoubtedly, I'm going to be a better oceanographer after this cruise, or atleast a more informed one.

As for the LADCP, even though I had read up about the theory of the Acoustic Doppler and its functionality, it was an extremely enlightening experience to operate the instrument on my own. Admittedly, I was very nervous in the beginning but things got better as we performed regular deployments. Processing and understanding the ADCP data was another trick of the trade that I got to learn as we made our way from the Caribbean to

the familiar shores of Woods Hole. Hopefully, I will have more opportunities in the future to operate the LADCP.

There are a few of lessons that I will take away from my experience. I hope when someone reads this, they would find them helpful too. The first is about the importance of the ship crew. Without them, no science would ever be done. On the R/V Thompson, the crew was the star of the show in my eyes. They would help us with deployments, carry out maintenance on the ship, feed us, navigate us, and most importantly give us a glimpse into the lives of people who spend half their lives on the sea. If any person in a position of leadership is reading this, I want to acknowledge how important the crew of the R/V TGT was to us and commend them on a brilliant job they did to help us do our science. Another lesson was about the importance of staying patient on the ship. Taking measurements in the sea can get monotonous after a while, and people tend to slack off and become impatient with the process. I realized how important it was to carefully go through each and every step in our deployments, right from preparing and keeping track of log sheets to preparing the rosette for each cast, all the way up to firing bottles at the right depth and eventual recovery and sampling. Even though we get trained in all these exercises, it is interesting to see how much one can learn about an activity each time you repeat it. This brings me to the final lesson worth typing in this statement, which is that of mental well being at sea. The ship is a small space to be in for a month with a bunch of people who you've never met. It is very easy to get cranky around mid-way through the cruise. However, it really helps if you have something to occupy yourself with on your time off. Reading books, playing chess or catan and even darts, personal writing, admiring the ocean and the stars on the hammock at the bow, were some of the things that helped me keep myself cheerful. Obviously, this was on top of making friends with some really amazing people on the ship.

If that doesn't give much glimpse into the mind of a watchstander, then maybe the knowledge that most of us were even dreaming of the CTD and muttering, "Roger that, we are ready to deploy", should tell you all about the experience.

With hope,

Ali Siddiqui