

Going in a New Direction, Again Weldon Wichman

Most of my life was lived in areas more than a few miles from any large body of salt water. As a young man in high school I and my friends spent a lot of time at the two fresh water lakes that were within driving distance from our high school. But any kind of research was just observational at best.

After retirement at the end of a military career, we moved to Molokai. I immediately looked for something to do in the field of education, as the value of an education was forcefully demonstrated to me by my military career. I quickly learned that the Department of Education needed teacher at the high school and applied for a position in the Career and Technological Education Department. In a few months I was actively engaged as a high school teacher. It soon became evident that my education was still lacking in some areas, and I decided to correct this deficiency, by attending as many workshops and training sessions as possible.

It was during one of these workshops that I first learned about C-DEBI (Center for Dark Energy Biosphere Investigations) and C-MORE (Center for Microbial Oceanography; Research and Education. The ability to collect, view and identify the many minute life forms from the ocean surface to the ocean floor opened a whole new field of study and interest for me.

It was at the second workshop that I learned about the STARS (Science Teachers Aboard Research Ships) Program which provided the possibility of going on a research cruise to Station Aloha, sixty miles north of Oahu in the Pacific. An immediate application was submitted and my trip was set to begin in late June 2014 aboard the Research Vessel Kilo Moana. My education began as soon as I arrived at the Kilo Moana. I learned that it was a twin hull with modified hulls that made it a very steady ride on the open water.

While aboard we assisted researchers and graduate student interns as well as conducted research on our own. From participating in the deployment and retrieval of the plankton tow (figure 1), to the use of varied mesh filters to obtain the samples (figure 2) that were then observed under the microscope for identification and density determination. The varied life forms that we were able to view in the microscope as a result of the sampling and filtering have really inspired me to do more for the students here at the local high school. This year I am teaching a natural resources core class and the major focus has been the natural resources that are in the ocean water around us. The experience with the STARS program has enhanced the topics we cover in this class.



Figure 1 Retrieving Plankton Tow



Figure 2 Working in the Lab