



Contact: Shelley Dawicki
508.495.2378
Shelley.Dawicki@noaa.gov
NOAA/NMFS/NEFSC
166 Water St.
Woods Hole MA 02543

December 5, 2008

It was a Great Day!

In a ceremony steeped in tradition, from lowering of the flags and ringing of the ship's bell for a final time to presentation of the ship's flags to crew members, the *Albatross IV* was officially decommissioned November 20, almost 46 years to the day the 187-foot ship arrived in Woods Hole for the first time.

Despite the frigid and windy weather, a crowd of some 200 gathered on the Woods Hole Laboratory dock to pay tribute to the many accomplishments of the vessel and to mark its retirement from the NOAA fleet after 45 years of service. Music for the formal decommissioning ceremony was provided by the U.S. Navy Band Northeast, with colors presented by the U.S. Coast Guard Sector Southeastern New England.

Principal speakers included Acting Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Acting NOAA Administrator William J. Brennan, who started his NOAA career aboard the vessel as a deck hand and survey technician in the late 1970s, and RADM Jonathan Bailey, director of the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps and NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations, which manages NOAA's fleet of ships and aircraft.

Northeast Fisheries Science Center Director Dr. Nancy Thompson welcomed the crowd to "the house that the *Albatross IV* built" and noted the special connection of the *Albatross* line of ships to the Woods Hole Laboratory, home port to four research vessels to bear that name since the first, a sail-rigged steamer, left the Woods Hole dock in 1883 to survey the waters off the northeastern U.S.

She recognized those in the audience who had sailed on the first bottom trawl survey cruise on *Albatross IV* in 1963, noting that "more than 2,400 scientific staff have sailed on her and thousands of researchers, teachers, fishermen and environmentalists have benefitted from her work." Laughs erupted from the audience when she mentioned the number of days at sea some of the former lab directors and other government officials from Washington in attendance had spent aboard the vessel, ranging from one

day for retired Woods Hole Laboratory Director Herbert Graham to 100 days for Acting NOAA Administrator Bill Brennan.

"Marine fishery research is possible because we send scientists and their instruments to sea. It can be said that the *Albatross IV* was the first of our vessels to be an instrument herself," Thompson told the crowd. "This was new, but is now a standard on its own, expected in all modern fishery research vessels. Because of her long life, many of us here at the Center have a special relationship with the *Albatross IV*. We have grown up with her, spent entire careers on her, found remarkable things, and learned more than has ever been known before."

During the ceremony the ship's pennant was presented by tradition to the last captain, Stephen Wagner, and the American flag to the longest serving crew member, 1st assistant engineer Charles "Chuck" Hersey, who sailed aboard *Albatross IV* for 24 years. Hersey's father Robert also sailed aboard the vessel as a scientist, logging 457 days at sea.

The event was also an opportunity for current and former crew members, scientists and staff who sailed aboard her, government officials and many others who had some connection to the vessel to share memories and see old friends, a number of whom traveled great distances for the occasion.

A reception followed in the Meigs Room at the nearby Marine Biological Laboratory, where a 50-minute commemorative video of *Albatross IV* through the years, created by Dave Chevrier of Data Management Systems, was played for the first time. Guest of honor at the reception was Dr. Herbert Graham, 102, who welcomed the new ship to Woods Hole in November 1962 as director of the Woods Hole Laboratory. Tours of the ship were offered in the afternoon, and dozens took advantage of the opportunity, viewing photographs displayed in labs and lounges and recalling their experiences at sea.

Albatross IV will depart Woods Hole December 5 to await further disposition at NOAA's Marine Operations Center-Atlantic in Norfolk, Va.

#

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.