

Life at Sea

Drilling Crew

BY JOHN FARRELL

Where would scientific ocean drilling be without the drilling crew? Nowhere, leaving scientists naval-gazing in the ivory tower. The crew provides the mud and rock that make our science possible, end of story. At the same time, close quartering with these roustabouts, roughnecks, drillers, toolpushers, and occasional weevils (crew newbie) enriches our life at sea because of the fascinating differences in our cultures (for definitions of these terms and others used here, go to <http://www.glossary.oilfield.slb.com>).

Most shipboard scientists, affectionately(?) referred to by the crew as rock docs, geos, pebble pimps, stone squirrels, and doodle-buggers (geophysicists), first encounter a rig crew on their maiden voyage, possibly when boarding the vessel or en route to the ship's mess, hotel, or lab stack. The behemoth drillers on the *JOIDES Resolution* exude authority rightly theirs, since the ship is home to these stud ducks six months out of every year. They observe the scientists with bemused curiosity knowing that these visitors will be a great source of entertainment for the next two months.

The crew's telltale work clothes, hard hats, and toothpicks define them as much as their secret language that's concurrently confusing, descriptive, vivid, agrarian, and humorous. Did the barnyard-related drilling terms, such as pig, rabbit, cathead, doghouse, fish, blind ram, rathole, gooseneck, and go-devil carry forward, unevolved, all the way from Texas farms? Does a roustabout become a roughneck, and why is a toolpusher superior to a driller? What does it mean when crew go from the monkey board to the mouse hole to the moon pool? Ack! Take me back to my microscope and mass spectrometer.

This photo shows a Seacore drilling crew on the Swedish icebreaker *Vidar Viking* on the Arctic Coring Expedition, of the Integrated Ocean Drilling Program, the first mission-specific platform effort. The crew are proudly indicating their achievement of reaching 320 meters below the seafloor in water depth that was over 1200 meters. Some smile slightly, while others are formal, possibly stiff, reflecting the cold and exhaustion from a long shift at the North Pole. The man on the left looks like a character from a daguerreotype, staring out from the silver halide. The crew, from Cornwall, UK, are equally facile with pipe tongs as they are with shotguns, to ward off polar bears looking to board the low-slung vessel from the sea ice. With great pride, they flew the Cornwall flag, that of St. Piran, the patron saint of miners. How appropriate.

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Photo by
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