

Day 111-115: November 4-8, 2010

We are home. Thursday in Key West was spent packing and seeing some sights. Sandy, Johnny and I took a trip out to Captain Bob's place. A neat little place out on Cudjoe Key. Not too many neighbors and lots of peace and quiet. We also spent time learning, Bob and Bailey and Ian's favorite haunts in Key West. It ended up being a late night. When we returned to the boat I was amazed to learn the air conditioning was out and my cabin was once again 90 degrees and stuffy. It seemed the voyage was to end as it had begun with me roasting in my cabin. I chuckled and shook my head and headed to bed. Sandy wanted no part of the hot cabin and elected to sleep in the salon. That too made me chuckle as I hate the heat and Sandy prefers it. Prior to the voyage I would have been the one in the salon and Sandy would have endured the hot & stuffy cabin. Alas, with the heat and the need to feed an early parking meter, I only slept about 4 hours and Sandy slept less. That would be our last night on the Odyssey- at least for this particular voyage.

Friday was spent loading the car and saying goodbyes. Johnny, Matt and Shouping flew home on a 1 pm flight. That certainly brought home to all the end of the trip as Johnny was the one person on board the entire time. Sandy and I spent the afternoon continuing to load and pack. It was quite the task. We said goodbye to Rick and Bob first as they had errand to run and then to Ian and Bailey. Then it was time to drive. We didn't go far stopping for dinner at a place Bon had taken us for lunch ironically named Bobalus (Bob get the fried yellowtail sometime Sandy loved it!). Then we stopped for the night at about 8 pm as I was exhausted from too little sleep, a full day of car loading and too many goodbyes. I have attached pictures of the car so you can see - I really did pack it full.

Sandy was sad that we had missed fall and asked me to find a route more scenic than 95. It being the weekend, I decided to head up and cross Virginia on 81 (I drive a lot and everywhere so I know may way around the east coast quite well). We left at 8 am and just drove stopping only for quick bites and some small treasures. On such was a small orange tree I found at a roadside stand in Augustine. Self-pollinating orange tree I can grow indoors, something I have wanted to do since middle school. Not sure if it will work but it cost little to buy and it fulfilled a long forgotten desire of my childhood so what the heck. By noonish we stopped for lunch at a highway service area - crepes- remarkable. I looked at the map. Overall 6 hours in and we barely even made our way up the lowest part of Florida. Truly an experience driving the length of Florida starting in Key West. Feels like it lasts forever. I drove 16 hours that day and we stopped in Rock Hill, South Carolina at midnight for the night.

Sunday we again left at 8 am heading north. We drove 12 hours and stopped in Milford, Connecticut where we used to live when I started the lab. It was cold, but there was little to do since I had packed in July for hot weather in the Gulf. Good thing I like cold weather.

Monday we awoke to snow and Christmas carols in Connecticut. We knew now fall was behind us. By noon we were in Massachusetts have lunch with Iain Kerr and sharing our mutual thoughts on how pleased we were with the entire expedition. By 3 pm we were in Portland and visiting Hank and Nancy Beebe, more of our adopted family and swapping stories as they told of us how the show went that we were supposed to perform in before we went to sea and we of course told of the voyage. At 4:15 pm, I was having tea with the University President and the voyage was officially done. The day ended with a lovely dinner of sushi with Cathy and Johnny, though we missed James. Ironically, James is travelling in Portland, Oregon at the national meeting of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) presenting the first national presentation of the voyage. He'll be back this weekend.

One humorous moment came early in the evening. Cathy's soccer team was doing a fundraiser and was selling shirts with the USM logo and players number on it. Cathy asked me about it via email long ago on the boat. Of course, I would buy one I said. She asked me to choose a color as they came in blue & white (USM's color). Well, you know I had to say it... "orange", I said. Cathy said it was not an option so I went with blue. Last night she delivered the shirts and there for me was an orange shirt!!! The coach had made an exception. I was thrilled and extremely touched. I look forward to wearing it at next year's games.

When he left for the airport, Johnny sent me a text with a quote that I think sums up these past few days well. From Dr. Seuss: "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened".

I have been smiling for days already.

John





