

Days 19-23, Voyage 2, June 26-30, 2011

Port was in Pensacola and it was hot and muggy. The air was heavy with humidity and you could cut it like a knife. Chris joined us for a couple of days in port to get our bow cam working better and improve our internet capability. That was a huge help. We said goodbye to Rick, Cyndi, Nora, Shanelle and Alyssa. I know Cyndi made it home safely and we hope the others check in soon, but in all likelihood-they too have made it home and are telling their friends and families of their days at sea.

One would think that port is a relaxing time and I received many kind notes encouraging me to do just that. But, alas, it is anything but relaxing. As we await new crew to arrive, those of us still on board have much to do. The boat crew is constantly busy with maintenance and upkeep. The science crew has to sort samples, check logs, check supplies, package and ship samples, analyze slides and ready for the next leg. On top of that there are provisions to get and it takes several hours to shop for 11 people for 2-3 weeks. Then of course is the laundry and the odds and ends of personal items that need replenishing. All of this effort in a port where you're not sure where anything is. Ever try and find dry ice in your town?

That is not to say port is not fun. Dinner is late, but we usually go as a group, tell stories and laugh. It was frenetic and necessary and part of the overall grand adventure.

This particular port call was different for me, Johnny, Cathy, James and Sandy (though James was not here). We learned a couple of days into it; on June 28th my mother had lost her remarkable battle with cancer and passed away at the age of 80. It was not surprising, but very much unexpected. She was given just a couple of weeks to live more than a year-and-a-half ago and, yet, she seemed to be going essentially fine. I guess she finally felt complete.

My mother was a complex woman who taught me one clear lesson in life there is nothing I cannot do- And that, as Robert Frost would say has made all the difference. She loved these emails and she valued this work, and reminded me of both in each port call and in many conversations beyond. She was my mom, Sandy's mother-in-law, and James, Johnny and Cathy's grandmother and we all will miss her. She is finally at a peace.

Fortunately, my whole family supports this voyage and memorial services will be later in the fall so we can continue this important voyage and work.

We are back at sea now. We have new crew. Shouping and Jane from last year are back and ready to go with laughter and smiles. John Bradford has come on as new boat crew. Nathan Polhemus, a biology major at USM, and Nick Tobat, a business major at the University of Virginia have joined the science team. So far the three new crew find us a bit loud, but amusing and are ready to get to work.

I have attached a picture of the team. Johnny and I are in the back, From left to right in the front are: John Branford, First mate Ian, Jane (in the hat), Captain Bob, Nick Tobat, Cathy, Sandy, Nate Polhemus and Shouping.

We are headed below Louisiana to find sperm whales. Our current location is 30 degrees 03.2 minutes North and 87 degrees 13.9 minutes West, for those who want to track us as we go. For Google maps (not Google Earth - but maps) use (include letters and comma): 30.032 N, 87.139 W

My mom tried very hard over the years to get us samples from whales that beached. She never succeeded. Perhaps, now she can help steer them our way. I wonder...

Photo of unusual sunset attached.

I look forward to the challenge ahead and our time at sea.

John



