

## Day 30, Voyage 2, July 7, 2011

We are thirty days in now. This particular day was sooo quiet. Not much at sea. We did get one sperm whale biopsy early, but not much else. No whales, no dolphins just the quiet ocean and bright hot sun. I spent a good deal of time wrestling with matters at the land lab. The rest of the day was mostly spent in quiet reflection on a month at sea.

It's interesting spending time in close quarters under these conditions with people- some you don't know particularly well. Odyssey is not a big boat with 11 people on board. The days are hot and opportunities to shower are mixed as you don't want to be showering when a whale is spotted! So all of us are certainly not dressed to the nines, but rather are often in appearances we would normally not consider appearing in public.

I have been pleased and impressed with the students we have had so far. Imagine yourself in this setting- you're a young undergraduate student (three 19 year-olds on this leg alone). You have never been to sea, you may not have ever seen a whale in the wild and you're going to spend 2+ weeks on a boat with people you hardly know if at all. You're going to be hot, sweaty, take limited showers, battle seasickness and wear the same clothes over and over. Plus you get to work with the voyage core- those who have been and will be on the entire time.

Your Odyssey experience begins with Captain Bob. A grizzled veteran of the sea who offers a quiz you must take and which you will fail, and Bob will chuckle. If you're lucky he will break into song and dance from either Abba or the Rocky Horror Picture Show, accompanied in these antics by me and possible others. But make no mistake, Bob is a man of the sea and you do feel safe under his watch.

You then get to meet the first mate- Ian, a young man in his mid-twenties with a smile as wide as the day is long and always ready to crack a joke. He's a blend of Jack Nicholson and Chris Farley. He serenades the team with various songs from the helm and delights in knowing that every so often one will get stuck in your head. But make no mistake, Ian too is a man of the sea and you do feel safe under his watch.

Then you meet your student team leader, Johnny. He doesn't expect much – only that you keep up with him and his pace. The only problem is his pace is fast and hard as he has done all aspects of the science, except grow the cells, which you're not likely to do anyway. He's very close to you in age, maybe even younger than you and he climbs to the highest and furthest points on the boat and waits for whales. But make no mistake, he drives the team as hard as he does to ensure success and safety and he has your back and does your job without complaint when the sea gets you down.

Next is the team's cell culturist, Cathy. You need not worry – if Johnny irritates you too much - Cathy will happily get on his case for you or ask me to do so. You may want to keep up with her as she quietly goes about her day. Only problem is that come evening, she has these soccer workouts she has to do and so each day she is either on the fore deck or aft deck exercising at sea! Her coach carefully scans these emails for signs that Cathy is not fit enough (e.g. think about the one of her hauling the seaweed in) and pushes her more from land. It has been fun watching the various students join her in these endeavors.

Then there is the cook, Sandy. She's just quiet and great and cooks a tasty meal. Simple rule on a boat keep the cook happy so I'll do just that and say no more about her.

Finally there is me. Enough said there.

But seriously, we have appreciated and enjoyed all of our team members. First Nora, and now Nick manning the nets and arrows. Shanelle and Shouping, our photographers, who have taken so many great pictures. Nate and Alyssa, our whale spotters, working above. Jane and Cyndi our cell culturists learning to grow cells on a boat. Rick our long time biopsier. John Bradford our new crew member doing a great job. Thanks gang for a great job as we have now exceeded 25 sperm whale biopsies this voyage with your help! I hope you are enjoying or enjoyed the voyage as much as we enjoy/enjoyed working with you.

Reflections by some of these team members of their time at sea can now be found at: <https://cms.usm.maine.edu/toxicology/student-reflections-their-voyage-2010-0>

Photo of sunset attached.

John

P.S. We are still off Louisiana looking for sperm whales. Our current location is 27 degrees 44.1 minutes North and 90 degrees 09.1 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): 27.441 N, 90.091 W

For those of you who are new to this email diary - the previous days can be found at: <https://cms.usm.maine.edu/toxicology/dr-wises-voyage-leg-summaries-2011>

