

Day 49: September 3, 2010

Today was a busy day - lots of errands and tasks to do. Ethan and Chris continued their excellent work on the array. Captain Bob and First Mate Ian continued getting the boat ready for the upcoming leg. Johnny and Matt continued with the myriad of tasks they have. I spent my time shuttling folks around including getting Cathy to the airport and getting the samples shipped back to the lab for analysis. We are almost ready to go.

The fun part of the day was the Bus meets Boat event. Alexandra Cousteau and her team and some guests brought their tour bus Calypso to the boatyard to meet and spend some time with our crew and the Odyssey. They even catered the event. It turned out to be one of the best evenings of the voyage. Alexandra and her team and the guests were really nice, genuine and interesting folks. Our only regret was that her film crew could not be there as we enjoyed our time with them during filming and that Cathy and the rest of our team (Rick, our students who have been on and our students still to come) could not be there either. There was truly a remarkable chemistry between the two groups as conversation flowed comfortably and continuously in all areas of the boat, parking lot and bus.

We enjoyed the tour of their bus. It is the size of a greyhound bus (60,000 pounds) equipped with a remarkable amount of technology with all the flexibility you could want for working on the road, editing film, holding conference calls and doing all that they do - very comfortable seating too. Turns out that at one time this bus was Paul McCartney's touring bus, and then John McCain's touring bus. Very impressive office on wheels. They enjoyed a tour of our boat including lab tours and tours on deck. Captain Bob arranged to send their photographer up to the aft platform, which led to opportunities for them to climb the ratlins to the aft platform. At one point, folks were curious about how fast Johnny and Matt could climb the rigging as I told them of how remarkable it was to see, so they timed Johnny. He made it into the crow's nest in 90 seconds!

I think the evening could have gone on well into the night hours were there not so much work that both groups had to attend to. But alas the evening had to end. They will be back in the morning to film some more so the time has not come to say goodbye yet, but it really was fun and a nice way to end our last evening in port for a while. We are excited to see the video and to be part of the documentary they are making that should include some of our time together.

The one bummer for the evening was that Cathy's flight was cancelled due to mechanical failure. She was stuck in Alabama and had to return to the boat. She was devastated as she really wanted to be at her soccer game tomorrow and be with her team and but for this plane problem- the trip should have worked fine. I tried to console her a bit and pointed out both that the whales were calling her back and not quite ready for her to go and that she would have another chance to spend some time with Alexandra as she had wished she could. I also tried to help her find the bright side as there are so many other outcomes that would have been worse. But, for the moment, she was inconsolable.

However, I left her in the care of her monkey brethren, our two sea monkeys Johnny and Matt (yes Cathy is a monkey too- a bonobo I believe). They will engage her in a game of Quelf an outrageous and funny board game that will have her laughing and smiling in no time. It's a hard game to describe, but when Rick played with them he ended up having to write a rap song and then sing in and also performing a belly dance! The web describes the card categories as this:

"Stuntz - balancing acts, costume creations, daredevil moves, weird contraptions

Showbiz - mime, sing, tapdance, draw, do impressions, write poetry

Quizzle - mind-twisting trivia, nutty riddles, brain teasers

Rulez - rules you must follow: snort like a pig when you laugh, say everything twice, roll the dice with your elbows

Scatterbrainz - choose one of two topics and everyone gives answers until no one can think of a valid one ("Ways to get your leg out of a spring-loaded, steel bear trap" or "Brands of Lipstick")"- so you get the idea. They really have fun with it and laugh a lot. They almost got Alexandra to join them, but there was not enough time. But- they will get her camera man Ian to join them when he comes on tomorrow for the next few days.

During the planning of the voyage, I learned that whenever you talk with the press you are on the record. Today, I realized that whenever you are on the voyage you have to be ready to have your picture taken. Periodically, like today, I figure that no pictures will be taken. I don't know why. I should know better by now, but alas, I find myself in many photos with my hair a mess and looking disheveled. Now, I know what you're going to say- I always look that way! It's true, but sometimes I do try and prep for a photo. So I either have to figure out a way to prepare for a photo in a moment's notice - very hard to do in the heat and humidity with all the distractions I have - or just accept that I am always going to be looking disheveled (much to my mother's dismay!). Oh well, I guess I am just one of those crazy looking scientists.

On a more serious note, we learned yesterday another oil rig blew. We are hearing conflicting reports of what is going on, but we do hear that they have cordoned off some areas- which certainly suggest oil is flowing. We are not sure if it is or isn't. But, we have learned that rigs catch on fire and leak in the Gulf all the time. The frequency we hear about is staggering and depressing. Not surprising given the number of wells, but it amazes me how shortsighted we are being as a society valuing the oil in the ground more than the sea itself and all the life it contains. No one of course wants a spill and yet we risk it all for more oil.

There is a fundraising event in Portland, Maine tomorrow- a concert at one long fellow square with local artists donating their time and the venue donating its space. If you are in the area - please try to go. The team worked very hard to pull it together and Cathy will emcee. The team is working on a slide show for it tonight.

John