

## Day 53: September 7, 2010

Still tired. Last night was interesting as it was my first helm watch in charge of the helm. Matt was on with me as the science team person and Ethan was with us as he wanted to see the array in action with the software at night. I had the 10-midnight shift. I had First Mate Ian give me a quick autopilot lesson as while I have 'driven' Odyssey before it was always manually. It was straightforward and easy, but I had a funny feeling in my mind that somehow, someday things were going to get more complicated. Sure enough they did.

No sooner did Ian fall asleep, and then we heard a sperm whale click. The goal now was to follow that sperm whale through the night. We flipped on the software and looked for where the click was relative to the boat (this information is what the software supplies). Suddenly, we were overrun by a swarm of dolphins (yes I know swarm is technically incorrect as a term for a dolphin group but it better conveys the moment). First. Our speakers on the array erupted with a cacophony of dolphins' whistles and clicks. The computer screen shone with a brilliant spectrum of colors reflecting the array of frequencies of sound. Then one dolphin found the array and began talking directly to it and on top of the array. The sound produced was remarkable and the computer screen became one giant mass of color. We recorded the event, but needless to say, we could not hear or find that sperm whale.

After a while, Ethan fell asleep and Matt and I then heard a bunch of sperm whales clicking and clicking loud. We turned on the software and adjusted the boat keeping them at our bow. The challenge with sperm whales is that they click under water and then go silent at the surface. We followed them for an hour and then just as our shift was ending they surfaced and went silent. We switched shifts with Rick and told him where we last heard them but alas no one could find them again.

At 2:20 am, I finally went to bed, quite tired. But alas, no sleep. We hit rough water and it was time to roll around the bunk... only now I have a roommate. Sandy tells me that provide a sufficient barrier to her rolling around. Hah! This situation meant that I was getting tossed around by the boat and then slammed into in the back by Sandy who was using me to keep still! Before I knew it, it was 6 am and time for my next helm shift. The morning shift passed with no whales, but finally I could get some sleep.

The hardest part of rocking seas for me is falling asleep and then worrying that I am not going to fall asleep. I managed to fall asleep and was peacefully dreaming away when Johnny burst into my cabin worried about what happened to Matt and wanting to change watch lengths. Matt, like me was exhausted and sleeping in his bunk. I could not really fall asleep for the rest of the day.

It was a slow day, occasional dolphin whistles and faint whale clicks, but no whales found or sighted. Of course, the seas are quite rough and it was hot, but despite the 6 to 7 foot seas and the heat, the students kept their watches as the visibility was good.

I spent my day quietly working in my cabin waiting for the call of "whales" which never came. I came out periodically to check on things and on one check up enjoyed another conversation with cameraman Ian. We discussed the future of media, TV, film and the impact of the internet, websites, facebook, and apps for the iphone. We came up with some interesting possibilities; one which he stressed was to keep writing these emails to all of you. While I expect to do this during the voyage, it becomes a more challenging task at the lab at home. But it speaks to an interesting and important idea- can molecular and cellular toxicology be made interesting on a daily basis. I guess on one level it must be as a bunch of us do it each day. I'll have to give it some thought.

The day is ending with a game of the infamous Quelf. Johnny is playing with both Ians, Mario and Ethan. Cameraman Ian has a couple of amusing cards. One required him to act out a number and name a number of homemade karate moves. Another requires him to act like a boomerang in which he must race 50 feet from the table while making a noise like a boomerang. The thing is he has to do it each time another player asks him too. First Mate Ian has had to act out a person being covered with lava with screaming allowed but no words. He has also had to sing "The wheels on the bus go round and round" while Irish dancing. Mario had to make his mouth a rhythm box. Ethan has had to sing his favorite disco song while performing his favorite disco dance routine and also act out a person in snorkel and flippers being stung by bees.

So our evening comes to a close with cameraman Ian boomeranging around the boat and the guys enjoying their game. We will sail up the Mississippi river and drop them off in Venice Louisiana.

Oh look, there goes Ian again...

John