

Johnny Wise's Day 71: September 25, 2010

Day 71 – Saturday, September 25, 2010 – Tumultuous Day

Early start to the day – the first people to go on watch were part of the new kids, so I had to be sure they knew what they were doing and had everything they needed. I had an hour in between my helm watch and the first whale watch, so I decided to take a quick nap. When the first couple showed up, I also realized that Matt had gotten up to help them out, so I decided to sleep a little longer (Matt apparently didn't see me stir, otherwise he would've returned to bed). With that the day had begun. We have six people rotating through the mid-level platform, so my first shift didn't come until noon! I used the time to finish up some studying and start putting my notes together.

By the time my watch came up, all the new kids had been through their first shifts on the mid-level (except Tania, who is uncomfortable with heights and is only doing watches on the pilot house). Just about everyone who went on the pilot house got sick. Not too much of a surprise since it was their first day, and the seas were not super calm. This caused Dr. Wise and I to reflect – what would we think of these conditions if it was July or early August? The seas seemed calm to us, but we have also been through much worse and have grown our sea legs.

During my first shift, we began our third approach of the voyage to the Deepwater Horizon site. Since the leak was capped, Capt Bob wanted to see how close he could get to the site. We came within 2 miles and decided that was close enough. Matt and Tania took water samples, and I tried to get some fish samples with our new cast net – no fish. We did see some flying fish and some birds, but no other living organisms.

An hour after my watch was done, Dr. Wise called in everyone from watch – a storm was coming our way. As the storm approached, I found myself standing on the bow deck with Dr. Wise and Matt, awaiting our shower for the day. And boy did we get a shower. Towards the end of it, Monique, Kait, and Steve came out to join us but were a little too late. I went back to the pilot house and asked Capt Bob if we could do a quick 180. Everyone laughed. Capt Bob turned the boat around, and we prepared ourselves for our second shower. Bailey and Tania also joined us – bringing us to a total of 8 of our crew showering on deck together.

We did not resume watches for the remainder of the day. Most of the new kids seemed relieved, and spent the afternoon asleep in the salon. I resumed studying, but found it incredibly difficult to focus with so many sleeping bodies around me. Eventually I succumbed to the atmosphere and took a nap in the galley.

I learned later in the afternoon that the shipment of our samples had gone awry. Sandy and Matt arrived a couple minutes too late to ship them on Friday afternoon, and left them with someone to be shipped first thing on Saturday. The person they left them with forgot to write down the importance of shipping them and when they were supposed to be shipped, so they didn't get shipped until Saturday afternoon. Then they

arrived in Memphis, but there was no indication as to where they had gone after that – did they go to Maine? Did they stay in Memphis? Did they go somewhere else? Hours passed and there was no news.

Fortunately for us, the task of finding and picking up the samples fell into James's lap. One very good quality of James's (and sometimes humorous) is his tenacity to complete a task he feels or knows is crucial. We knew in response to this that James would stop at nothing to find those packages and bring them back to the USM lab. He had already been on and off the phone with FedEx all day trying to figure out where the packages were and where they were headed. The time had come to 10:30 eastern time, and James still had no idea where the packages were.

A few hours earlier, James and Dr. Wise had arranged plans with friends, family, and collaborators to pick up the packages at every airport on the eastern seaboard. The plan became they would pick them up from the airport, and James would drive to Boston, New York, or New Jersey to meet them. True dedication.

James continued his search for the entire day and night for these samples. Last I heard he had tracked them down to Logan airport in Boston, and was on his way there to pick them up. It was 10:00pm our time, meaning James would return to the USM lab with the samples around 1am or 2am eastern time. Amie, a graduate student at our lab, was standing by waiting for James to return with the samples. She would help him get everything stored properly.

Meanwhile, we also had a benefit event at Binga's Stadium set up, which Cathy was taking charge of. James was supposed to be working on this with her, but obviously had to leave – the samples are FAR more important than a benefit event. I tried talking to Cathy to see if I could help at all, but there wasn't much I could do. She said she REALLY wanted a banner, but wasn't going to be able to get one. Then I called a friend of mine who was part of the band that was performing for us – everything was cool with him, so I felt a little more relieved. Finally, I called a good friend of mine – Maggie – to see if she could help me out get a banner to Cathy. She said she would, and got right to it (by the time I talked to Maggie, the event was already 30 minutes into it). A little while later, Maggie called back to tell me she was in the emergency room with her sister – her sister had an anxiety attack, and Maggie was having a trick getting the poster done while trying to calm her sister down. But the poster was done!

So the end of a tumultuous day at home ended on a downhill slope – all the problems that seemed to arise were coming to their end (I hoped). Thanks to the dedication and determination of family and friends, I feel like things worked out. I have not heard from Cathy or Maggie about the event, but I hope the poster brought a little bit of relief to Cathy.

I'm writing this at 5am, during my helm watch. We didn't see or hear any whales yesterday, but there are about 5 whales clicking right now!

Johnny