

Day 74: September 28, 2010

Not a very good day. At last night's helm watch, Matt and I heard what sounded like a Geiger counter going off. It was so distinctly like a Geiger counter that we thought someone in the salon was fooling around with one. It made no sense as Geiger counters give off a distinctive clicking noise when radioactivity is detected. I leaned around and discovered that the noise was coming from the helm and from the instrument panel specifically!

There is one main rule of helm watch, anything seems odd, anything, call Captain Bob. Fortunately, he was awake and in the salon. He looked at the panel and said the engine was overheating. On went his headset (for hearing protection) and down into the engine room went Bob. He was still down there at midnight when my watch ended and I woke Bailey to take the helm. He was still down there when I work in the morning. In fact, he is even down there now. Bob is a great captain and a fantastic engineer, but alas whatever is causing the engine to overheat cannot be determined here on board. He has tried and considered everything and nothing seems to work. There have been lots of oddities to the problem and we will all be curious to hear the ultimate resolution.

So we are sailing. Both sails are up and the crew is at the helm. Our goal is Port Fuchon, Louisiana right near Grand Isle. Except as Murphy's law would have it, the winds are blowing into us out of Port Fuchon so sailing is difficult and slow. But Captain Bob, First Mate Ian and Bailey are all well-seasoned in sailing into the wind and well up to the task. We are in excellent hands!

Our challenge is speed and weather. We have really bad weather headed to us on the 3rd/4th of October. The decision to go west was proven correct as the weather around Florida in early October is awful. If we are still out here on the 3rd/4th we are looking at 15-20 foot waves and 25-30 mph winds. Not fun! But it's the 28th and we are headed in oh so slowly as we head into the wind. We have about 90 miles to go into port. We are making about 3 knots on average which would get us in within 30 hours. The problem is we cannot go straight, we have to go with the wind as we can. For now we should make it with time to spare. Plus Bob is constantly trying to find a way to cool the engine enough to run.

Thus, my eyes are wide open, but my stress level is not up as we have time to spare. I will watch the weather and talk to the crew and expect all to be fine. We are not seeing whales, but that is not so much of a disappointment as we could not sample them anyway, both from a time and a maneuverability standpoint.

Spirits are good and we are headed in.

John