

## Day 86: October 10, 2010

First things first. Happy Birthday to my sister Tina! Imagine a birthday on 10-10-10. As my birthday is on a 27, this outcome will never happen to me. Tina was a big help in inspiring this effort at the beginning and keeping us going throughout. Hope you had a great day sis!

Our day, well... Johnny names each day of his log... this one needs to be named "silver lining" cause that is what I did all day- continually searched for the silver lining. The difficulty started at midnight on helm watch. Seems all bad news comes on my helm watch. Captain Bob had spent the better part of the evening trying to fix the transmission. It had overheated and released a noxious smell though with my congested head yesterday, I could smell nothing. Everyone else, however, could. Bob had emerged at about quarter to midnight feeling like he had finally solved it. But, now it was midnight and it was clear that the transmission oil pump was shot and we had to again head in. I know he did not like delivering this news to me, but it was what it was.

Bob explained that boat transmissions had an emergency "get you home" bypass and that we needed to invoke it and head in. The question was where. Biloxi became the best choice. Port Fourchon was closer, but we'd just been there and there was nothing there. I have attached pictures in case you have any doubts. Venice was next in distance, but it was less developed than Port Fourchon. Mobile and Bayou La Batre, Alabama were options but neither had docks amenable to repair work. Pascagoula was strictly large commercial boats these days. St Petersburg, Florida would have ready access to parts we needed but it was twice the distance. Biloxi would be the best choice and we would just hope Iain Kerr could again arrange for parts to arrive quickly. It would have both shore power and fresh water and hopefully the shower and laundry facilities would now be finished.

Here began my first silver lining. When we started none of us had any knowledge of any Gulf ports. Thanks to Iain Kerr's insistence, we now knew all of this ports. Funny, I never imagined myself being so conversant in Gulf boat ports that can provide 12 feet of water so we can dock.

More frustrating news, the weather looks great the next few days. First time that has happened when we have been forced in. In fact, usually when we go in its because of weather.

Next silver lining: Biloxi is near University of Southern Mississippi and I have recently been discussing a collaboration with them on a marine health or ocean health institute that constitutes both USMs. This delay will allow us to have some face to face discussions and work it through. Very useful.

So I go to bed hopeful that Captain Bob can work around this transmission. At some point the power goes out to allow Bob to work. But that means my cabin is silent and dark (no equipment lights), which means I wake up. I simply cannot sleep in the dark

and quiet in that cabin, even when I know why it's off, I simply have the triggers built in that dark and quiet in the lab cabin are stressful as something is wrong with the cells. Instead, I head up to the deck and sleep outside where the stars are stunning in a moonless sky and there is plenty of creaking noises.

Captain Bob works all night. No luck. I wake in the morning and talk with First Mate Ian. He says the bypass is not working yet. I call Iain Kerr to inform him of our plight, leaving him a voicemail. Captain Bob continues on.

Meanwhile, I am thinking of swimming since the boat is stopped, but then I wonder about sharks feeding in the morning and think better of it and mention it to no one since they would get excited about swimming. Suddenly, Sandy shouts from the bow that she sees a shark... Glad I didn't swim! Then Ian, who had gone out to check on the shark, points out large mahi mahi off the bow. Shouping and Johnny start fishing and before long Shouping hooks one and we are hopeful as these are tasty fish and we are well west of Deepwater Horizon. I join in the efforts to wrangle in the fish when two events happen within minutes. My iPhone falls out of my pocket and into the sea and the line breaks freeing the fish. Yes, my phone sank. So if you get a phone call tonight from my number and hear gurgling noises- it's not me it's that mahi that got away!

Silver lining- actually I had a number of thoughts to just throw my phone in the ocean and escape from it all. I imagine everyone does now and then... But in this case, I was already trying to buy a new one as mine is 2 or 3 years old now and having some issues. By this afternoon, James had a new one for me and it will greet me in port. I have lost my address book (one of those issues) so for those of you who like a call from me from time to time - please send me a separate email with your phone numbers so I can call.

By the way, Cathy, I know you were planning to inherit this phone so it's bad news for you too. But as Jane said when I commented on it, you know you can still have it. You just gotta go and pick it up.... I can already see your jaw getting set by that one! Seriously though, we will figure something out when I get back.

About noon, Captain Bob, with an assist from Iain Kerr, got the transmission bypass to work and we are headed in. Not sure how long, it will depend on repairs and weather, but a few days anyway, which will set us up for what will likely be our final leg of this trip.

The rest of the day was spent trying to pass the time with a frustrated team. Jane and Monique will depart at shore to make way for those coming on the last leg. Shouping will stay for the final leg. It was a long day, but again a silver lining is I started reading Linda Greenlaw's book "The Hungry Ocean". If you have not heard of Linda Greenlaw, she was the female captain represented in "A Perfect Storm", who was close friends of the Captain who perished in the storm. Anyway, I am only at the beginning and I found much in common with her experience in her pursuit of swordfish. For example, consider this quote:

"At some point in every trip, everyone reaches a stage of exhaustion unimaginable to anyone who has never quite been there. It is a state way beyond dead tired, a fatigue that goes all the way to the bitter end of each and every hair on your head."

I know Johnny and Matt and Bob and many others can relate.

I find many of her comments resonating with me and think more about the suggestions that I write a book. Perhaps, I will. Maybe my title should be:  
"The Deepwater Horizon Accident: A Whale of a Toxicological Crisis"

We'll see.

John



