

Hawaii Voyage Communiqués
Porpoise Crew
Friday, May 11, 2010
Revenge of the Boggle Cubes

Ok I'm back. Two days later. You wouldn't believe how long it takes to do stuff out here. Every normal thing takes two to three times longer. Like here I am trying to write this (in the same place as before. It seems that before the mast is my place) with two medium sized fenders crammed under my right and left thigh. Why, you say? Well because the bow rolls 20 to 30 degrees in each direction, so the fenders keep me from doing a barrel roll off the port or starboard side, which would definitely be an inglorious end to this adventure. The other thing is they help me sit cross legged yoga style so I can pretend I am the yogic flyer of the sea like the legendary _____M_____ Even with the fenders I have to strain right and left to keep my balance. It is exhausting. Hitting wrong letters as I type is common. I spent ten minutes just trying to find my mouse on the screen under this bright grey Pacific sky.

So, "How is life at sea?" Well it's great. Amazing, actually. It is such a totally different environment. The sea color has turned to a deep teal blue, almost as if someone dyed it. It actually shows blue in a light colored bucket. I'm not kidding. It is such a lovely blue that I almost feel it could eat me if it wanted to, and it would be OK. I stand mesmerized on the bow, tempted to cast myself into it. Sort of like Lucy saying that Aslan could devour her if he wanted to. I'm sure I wouldn't really feel that way if I landed in its very cold embrace, but it remains a constant wonder, especially when the sun shines.

Yesterday the sun shone and the winds blew twenty to twenty-five knots, and we rushed along under full sail, then reefed the main (that's sailor talk you lubbers) and Jenny (that's not a girl, it's a genoa) ((that's a sail)) and then just Jenny. The seas built under the steady fresh breeze until they rose up behind, before, and from the side, a great blue meadow of moving undulating hillocks throwing us about between them, threatening to engulf us and then sliding away under stern and off the bowsprit. Periodically a lonely shearwater bird would soar over the watery hills, only a foot off the water, expertly diving, weaving and climbing, never touching the water. I wonder what he is looking for, this relative of the albatross. Little sea mice in our blue meadow? He pretends like we aren't even here, but we know he went out of his way to check us out.

I love this great deep that I am just getting to know, but I am also constantly annoyed and aggravated by it simultaneously. Why does it have to be so restless? Where I come from even the waves follow some kind of orderliness, coming from one direction or another, lining up in strait lines to break on beaches, or form orderly rows of advance from north or south so a sailor can choose his angle of comfort or attack. Out here it seems a bloody free for all of wave groups running pell mell after each other, bumping into each other and our intruding presence, occasionally slopping water over the deck and throwing us about like so many sacks of potatoes. Maybe its not always like this (I am hoping not), but according to my

first introduction here it is pretty much anarchy. We're all in awe of this, while Jack just says, "Awe this is a cake walk."

This spirit of rough house and rowdyism enters freely into our little community life, and thinks nothing of tossing us about inside in our floating house. It is this that literally effects everything of normal life, especially preparing meals and eating (a major preoccupation out here), sleeping, reading, peeing, you name it. You can use your imagination on some of these things. (Gosh, there goes my mouse again. I found him hiding under the safari icon, from whence he scurried over and disappeared among the flowers on my desktop).

Let me just try to explain this to you in some practical way. Yesterday I was elected to cook my patented and boat famous blueberry pancakes with bacon for breakfast. No problem, I can usually whip them up from scratch in a jiffy, and take great pleasure in the process. Nothing like the smell of bacon sizzling, and the sight of fluffy golden blueberry pancakes rising. The first few steps of putting the dry ingredients in were accomplished with out too much trouble, apart from the stainless bowl becoming a sliding moving target on the counter. Just over the countertop is a clear view of the sea, which is the glory of the Porpoise, but unnerving when running almost broadside to seven-foot waves. It is true, by the way, that every six or seventh or something wave is bigger. In fact there are a couple of 'biggers' together. When they hit, the pilot house slants abruptly backward (where we are mercifully held in place by the cool belt I found in the junk bin of the marine exchange), and then careens just as abruptly forward, while everyone instinctively reaches for the nearest handhold. While you cling for dear life, whatever your hand was finding to do is no longer being done with all your might, and is left to the wicked devices of gravity. Bowls slide across tables, dish drainers take flight off the counter and even things you thought secure on the floor slide clean across to pile into other articles cowering under the table. You soon learn that literally everything must have a secure home, but that everything never does because everything is always being moved everywhere by everyone.

Back to the pancakes. I was belted in, covering a backward fall, while in front of me sizzled the scalding hot grease of the bacon in a pan. Next to the bacon was the hot griddle, and next to that a bowl of patented pancake batter. (This is not leading up to a major disaster - that actually happened the next day.) This is just to help you understand why this life needs some mental preparation, something like astronaut training for outer space. Common rules don't apply. I reach for a plate found behind the slider cupboard to put the bacon on, at the same time realizing I have no paper towels to soak up the grease. As I look behind me to locate them, the floor heaves, my left hand grabs the handhold in the ceiling, and my right goes to steady the bacon pan. Simultaneously the batter bowl slams the restrainer on the counter, risking a tumble but stops short. Whew! But as the world pitches the opposite direction, my two hands remain fixed, the bowl slides back to bang the cupboard. As the ship heaves back for the second roll, I decide to abandon the bacon and save the batter, which will surely leap the parapet on the second pass. As I lunge for the bowl - saved - a white corning ware plate frisbes out of the cupboard (forgot I opened it to get a plate for the bacon), and shatters on the floor and down the stairs. Now we have to try to clean it up under these same conditions, so that no

one will step in it. By the end of breakfast preparation I had enlisted Matthew's help, and we were counting seconds between seventh waves. OK...wait....wait.... go! Grab batter, ladle pancake, grab a plate...hang over the belt to place it in waiting hands just before the boggle cubes are upended again.

Let me tell you about going to the bathroom. No, let me not. Suffice it to say that even manly boys sit. Yes, sit. I know that this is just sick and wrong, but everyone knows it's harder to hit a moving target, especially when you AND the target are moving. Anyway the cleaning crew said it wasn't an option.

Two or three days of this and nerves are stretched thin. Lyza has been awesome,, even perky most of the time. She has a strong sea stomach, a cheerful disposition, and a servant's heart. Even she, however, reached the limit yesterday when the "Chicken Divan" took a very unfortunate tumble. I was stretched out on the pilot house bench at the time, taking a quick queasy break, when the big lurch happened. With a screech from Lyza and clattering explosion, the half-cooked dinner flipped off the stove, slammed and slid to my bench, splattering "Chicken Divan" all over my rain pants, the bench, and even the cupboard sliders which are at least three feet up. The great consolation was that most of it landed on me instead of her newly recovered cushions.

The other great adventure, when you're not trying to adjust to periodic episodes of weightlessness or super gravity on the inside of the boat, is to venture to the outside of the boat. The saving grace, according to all knowledgeable people, is that you can focus on the horizon and gain a sense of orientation, along with fresh air. Best thing is to put the green novice on the helm, where they can clutch the helm grimly, like I saw Chris doing the other day, and stare fixedly on said horizon. The novice may then do something disastrous to your sailing strategy (like chicken gibing you in a blow), but at least we all went down focused on the horizon.

On the outside we have rigged, with Jack's help, what are called jack lines. Not because of Jack. It's just what they're called. When you go forward you are supposed to clip on to the jack line with a tether and harness so that when you are pitched off the boat, instead of disappearing quickly off the stern and drowning, you dangle by your tether off the side of the boat and bang there suspended half in the water and half out until somebody notices you are missing. Then we have to figure out how to haul your mangled remains back on deck. Jack says we shouldn't worry much about all of this, because if you fall off you're just dead that's all, and the best thing is to sink quickly. (He's the same guy who told us not to worry about having a life raft. Lyza said she wasn't going if we didn't have a life raft, so we bought a four person raft and told Jack he was crew member number five. (It's OK if you sink fast.) We didn't really confer with his wife about the matter.

So enough of this. This says May 11th but believe me I couldn't write all this in one day. Hope all you jealous ones ("Oohhh, you get to sail to Hawaii?") will be partly mollified by this truly narrated account of our first days at sea.