

**Hawaii Voyage Communiqués  
Porpoise Crew  
Monday May 17, 2010  
Smilin Jack**

Hey, where have you been? That's what you're thinking - four whole days. Actually, you wouldn't be thinking that because you aren't even going to get these for a week or more. That's right we're almost half way, hopefully. We're just finishing the tenth day. The mileage may not confirm it (today we're only 1400 miles from Hilo), but we're through goofing around (just being polite) in those dodgy forty latitudes (that's right, forty Chris Scholes), eh? And now we're in the thirties, with clearer skies and a serious high forming above Hawaii. This means we could have some clear trade winds sailing and be in Hilo in record time.

Jack keeps saying we're a lucky ship. I don't like the way he keeps saying that because it feels like he knows too much of misery that we don't. To my mind there have been miseries enough without him smirking in the background about *real* weather, and calling waves that I think are seven feet only three feet.

You're probably thinking so who is this Jack guy he keeps talking about? Well it's probably about time you asked, since I have already referred to him several times as if you should know him, or that we have along some sort of sailing guide, or commentator, or something. If you want to know, simply, Jack is our savior. Yes that's right, savior. Now I'm not being sacreligious or anything. Jack himself is a good Dutch Reformed, salt-of-the-sea Protestant descendant of the Reformation and all that, so he's got his perspectives right. Nevertheless, he has saved our butts significantly - if not eternally, then mortally, for sure.

If we had not listened to his sea-saged advice back on the Blaine dock we would probably have had a mutiny on the Porpy by now, or maybe have jumped overboard or at least be floating aimlessly in the Pacific, because everyone would be too wiped to man the ship. What could be of such crucial importance? Well in a few words...Lee cloths—Helmsman seats—restraining belts in the galley—staysails--reefed mains---chastity boards - night watch schedules—and happy hours. There's much more but that will suffice.

Mostly, a first timer on the open sea must have a smiling Jack, whose job it is to just kind of smile knowingly and, with a touch of condescension in his voice, respond to our multitude comments and questions about things we know not. He's kind of like someone whose been to the other side, and has come back to tell us of things our eyes have not seen or our ears heard. You see, Jack has been there and back six times, or is it seven. He can't even remember. Now anyone who would do this that many times either has some kind of aberrant sickness, or he has gone beyond the natural to taste of the sublime - that which is beyond.

Lyza and I think maybe this is an awesome one timer for us. You know, it was amazing and sublime but don't ask us to repeat this lunacy again. Once is good for stories - any more borders on having some form of sadistic bent. No one would do this to themselves repeatedly and on purpose, and certainly not for pleasure. So you can see why I think maybe Jack is some kind, holy ocean man or saint of the seas. Either he's a little crazy or he has tapped into something that

escapes the rest of us, and probably both. That describes a lot of the holy men I know. When I asked him why he would consent to come with us when he had already done it so many times he just said, 'I love it out there'. OK now I've been out here and I am looking at him with some amount of wonder.

Jack owns the boat moored across from our slip in Blaine, and agreed to come with us just for the reason given, and because he kind of likes us, I guess. I've checked to see if he has any wings tucked up under his heavy weather gear, but didn't find any and he doesn't glow at night. Besides I don't think angels would drink as much rum and coke at happy hour as he does. Nevertheless, he is gonna fly home as soon as we reach Hawaii (when the good stuff really starts), and we'll be wondering if he really was with us or not, especially when we head back out to Alaska by ourselves. I think God knew he better send us some kind of help when He saw we were set on doing this trip. So He sent us Jack - even if he is a sort of seventy year old Clarence Oddbody of the seas. So from now on when you hear of Jack, you will know it's our guide and not Jack Sparrow nor Jack of Titanic fame. Who can forget Kate crying out "Jack! Jack!" as the freezing arctic water gurgles about her waist and the ship is going down. All such associations with the name Jack, sordid sea stories, jack tar and all should be laid aside, and replaced only with our kindly old smilin' Jack, and happy tales of the lucky ship Porpoise.

So let me take you back a couple of days to our least progress day, so you can understand why I haven't reported for awhile, and you can get your head around the idea of what 'foofing around' out here might look like. We had been motoring pretty steady for almost two days because there wasn't any wind. I didn't think that happened out here, but it does if you miss the right combination of highs and lows, and your position in relation to them, etc. It's either motoring monotony or getting beat up by perverse seas and winds, or yes, the in between moments you live for when the wind's on your beam at a steady 15 to 20, the swells are behind you and the sun is shining. This does happen! In fact it's happening right now! Why do you think I am finally writing? It's just that you have to pay for this. You have to put in your time. Do the grind to get to the glory. You understand me, right?

So there we were motoring along for two days, getting our batteries all charged up, when finally a breeze started up. Only one problem, it was coming straight against us in the direction we were heading, 210 degrees south west, and that's where this wind was coming from, and an indication that it might be the beginnings of a low pressure area! Only true initiates will understand that little aside on a low pressure area. It all goes back to a cruise years ago with Chris Scholes, and a guy they had on the VHS weather report who sounded exactly like Elmer Fudd. "We will be having a vewy wainy weekend in your awea because there is a wo pressure awea in your wegion Uh huh uh huh. I added the Elmer Fudd laugh after each of his reports. Enough of that.

Sorry. So this wind from the south west began to brisk up. I guess you'll find out why I hate going to windward says Jack. Smiling always smiling. To go windward means you have to go hard on the wind. I know. That doesn't really help does it. Well it means something like this. You pull in all your sails as tight to the ship as you can, and point your nose into the wind as close as you can, and bash

away against the wind and waves going a direction you don't really want to go, and hope to God the wind fades, dies or veers before you do. The only alternative is to 'heave to' which doesn't mean you finally decide to throw up. That could happen, and if it does you don't want it happening to windward, but the term means there is a way to park your boat until it all blows over.

After bashing for three or four hours, I suggested to Jack that maybe we should practice the heaving-to maneuver. Weeelll...yeah... we could ...but it would be a shame to lose the 2 or 3 knots we're going here (in the wrong direction). Jack's an old salt, and I didn't want to be a wuss (woosie, one who is afraid...cant take it.) Yeah right, we wouldn't want to lose those knots. Hmm.. maybe that's Nauts. I just realized I'm not sure how to spell this term which is a seaman's mile (a minute of latitude, longer than a mile). So we kept up the nauts into the wet cold night, me on watch first, bracing my foot against the dodger at what felt like a forty degree angle (I'm sure it wasn't), and bashing away. Then there was this tremendous rainstorm downpour that lasted about twenty minutes, and suddenly the wind seemed confused about what it wanted to do, and thankfully, lessened. I came off watch while it was still making up its mind under a very dark cloud bank on the twilight horizon. It took its time, because I knew nothing more till about 2:00, when I was awakened by a great clatter and raised voices. I was in a total immobilized fog, having been wakened from the dead sleep I fell into after coming off shift. It was Matt and Jack's voices I heard above me in the dark, saying things like, "tie it off! "Over here"....Whack! crash flap flap flap "Oh (expletive deleted), I gybed." "Matt, you've got to take the mizzen down!..." Meanwhile, the boat is heeled steeply, and I am pressed against the bulwarks of the ship, trying to comprehend. My first waking realization that I was not safe in my bed at home, but in the middle of a gosh darn huge Pacific Ocean in the dark night with the sound of the wind whistling through the rigging. Next, after emerging from probably sleep level three, I was trying to get my head around the problems above, which were not making any sense to me at all. When I finally came to a feeble grasp that the wind had totally changed direction to the north (ultimately good news but presently distressing), I then, to my shame, tried to pretend it wasn't happening and that I was still asleep. That is until a familiar voice spoke in the dark.

"You're not really sleeping through this are you?"

I sheepishly admitted I was awake, but remained immobile and silent. The sounds above were growing more frantic. I was going through in my mind what it would take to get past the board, over Lyza, through the lee cloth, to end up standing in my boxers, shivering in the cold. Then it would be how to find my clothes, heavy weather gear, harness and tether, and get myself out into the cold wind and mayhem on deck.

"Arent you going to go help?"

My conscience smote me and I made as if to rise and fell helplessly back.

"I think they've got it under control"

"Jack ...Jack! I can't get this sail down...Where is that stupid wind coming from? I think it has veered to the north"....Wham! ..."Get the preventer untied... here tie this down... We've got to get the staysail down first"....

Once more I made the feeble attempt to 'Arise thou that sleepest'. The very first obstacle, 'the board,' totally defeated me. 'The board' stretches from my chest to my knees and is designed to keep one from rolling back and forth across a double-to-queen size bed like so many billiard balls (more about the board later). It was just too much, and my reluctance to go above was overpowering. Thankfully, the bedlam on deck seemed to be sorting itself out, and the change of the wind direction deciphered. Jack and Matt had it sorted out, and I was left below in the darkness to slink back under my covers and return to fitful dozing behind the board. I couldn't help but think that for all of smilin' Jack's idiosyncracies I was glad it was him up there this time and not me. On the way back north he wouldn't be an option. Maybe God will have some other angels on the job.