

A day at sea aboard Yukon.

Noon Monday 28th March 2011

Lat 8 degrees 25.5 minutes South

Long 112 degrees 44.3 min West

A day at sea starts at noon, the time of logging the vessels daily position on the ocean scale chart was traditionally done with the completion of the morning sun sight, with the run up to the sun reaching its highest altitude, or zenith observed by sextant, which is noon local time.

We are in the tropics, the South East trades heading west, 1560 miles west of the Galapagos Islands with 1567 miles to go before landfall in the Marquesas Islands. The nearest land is far away (if you don't count the land which is 5000 meters below us). We are in the middle of nowhere! or are we in the middle of everywhere? These fundamental questions have time to be considered, discussed, pondered and sometimes even answered on the good ship Yukon.

We left Denmark nine months and one week ago and have done nearly 11,000 miles on our voyage around the world. We departed the port of Porto Ayora in the fascinating Galapagos Islands fourteen days ago, so I guess today is hump day- halfway through what will be our longest passage before arriving in Tasmania.

The skipper takes the eight to twelve watch that's the way it is, the first mate gets the twelve to four and the second mate four to eight. Twice a day, four hours on, eight hours off. It's luxury, built in siesta, if things are going as we wish. If we are shorthanded it's six on six off, that can be a bit grinding after a while.

Noon position logged today via a GPS, we all gather for lunch down aft in the shade of the mizzen awning as we do every day at sea in fair weather. We are eight souls on board, this leg we only have one passenger or voyage crew her name is Suzanne a young teacher from Denmark. The crew are made up of our Bosun Ola from Norway, a super deckhand, calm strong and friendly. Cille and Sune a brother and sister pair from a second-generation square rig family, they have sailed with us on and off for the previous six seasons in Denmark. They have been instrumental in helping make this voyage happen, they know Yukon and us like the back of their hand. Then the family, Ea my wife, our two sons, Kristopher and Aron aged eleven and eight and myself David. On some of the legs of this voyage we have been twelve persons onboard, but on this long haul eight is ok. We are a strong crew, many miles have we sailed in most reaches of the globe, the air onboard is warm, routine, relaxed and informal.

This is the sailors dream; trade winds steady South Easterly force 4 to 5 which equates to around 15 knots, a moderate to fresh breeze. The swell

is South Easterly as well, around 3 or so meters on the port quarter, even and blue, the brightest of blue, the immensity of the ocean day after day manifests itself slowly into our beings. We are a minute community sliding along a westerly track on the surface of a giant sphere of blue.

Lunch is done, dishes are left to the twelve to four watch, next routine food job, prep and make coffee with something sweet for 1500 hours, but not me mate, its siesta time, 2 hours down in the aft cabin whilst Ea heads for her favourite spot on fair days, the bowsprit net kind of like a big hammock over the waves. Its comfortable down below, we have rigged an elaborate system of wind chutes that catch the breeze and funnel the cooling air down below through the vessel, no power consuming and noisy air conditioners onboard Yukon.

The sounds are all familiar, light chatter down aft, the sound of the dishes getting stowed in the galley, water gliding by- a few inches from my ears before I nod off, I am tuned into the experience, trust in my crew, faith in our little ship.

Voices on deck awake me 'ship ho'! Well there you go, us thinking we have the place to ourselves, two long liners on the port bow miles away probably Japanese, they often work in pairs. We have a running bet on how many vessels we will sight on this leg. I guess ten, closest to that gets a prize in Nuka Hiva, a milkshake, it's the little things.

1700 hours

South Easterly wind force 5. We brace up a point to starboard as the wind veers a little to the South. Moving well is the comment, we are sailing with a full mainsail, main topsail, square sail, raffee and Jib. This gives us around 6.5 to 7 knots. Smooth and easy, we always hand the main topsail before nightfall, she can be a bugger to get down in haste and will require extra hands from their bunks in the hours of darkness, not good. It looks a bit squally away to the South we crank up the radar and put him on standby to save batteries. Radar is a great way to track squalls, where they are, which way they are heading so we can see if we are going to cop one.

Retard clocks to GMT minus 7 West we go West we go.

'Fish' is the excited call from aft, yes, it's a beauty a Wahoo, good eating. Our trawl line is a double barbed hook with a piece of blue aluminium tied to it, a sliver of Panamanian beer can I recall. 17.2 kilos of fish puts up a bloody battle, Sune is super quick, he wrestles the beast to the deck. It's a visitor from the world below us, the knife cuts the main arteries behind the head and our prize is gutted immediately in the fading light. The Wahoo is filled with roe, so we find a recipe in an old Danish cookbook, we steam the roe and blend it with potatoes it tastes great. There is an abundance of meat, a deep red flesh, it will be grilled on the weber, fried

in the pan, used in soup and curry. The rest frozen down for later, this fish will feed us for days, thank you fish.. Twilight is short lived in these latitudes the awning is derigged after the decks are washed down the sun sets quickly.

20 00 hours

Back on watch, we are always at least two people on watch, no auto pilot on Yukon, hand steering sitting on the helm seat. Ea and I take our watches together the boys are up with us until 21 hours a bit of family time on deck, everyone else turns in or finds a quiet spot in preparation for the night watches.

'Running lights on, burning bright' reads the log. We cannot see any of our lights from the deck they are shielded by the light cases only the little 10-watt compass light is for our eyes.

Familiar stars begin to reveal themselves within a short time, darkness. Its absolute tonight, the moon will not be rising until the mates watch around 0200. The stars guide us tonight so it's compass light off, so many stars it's hard to grasp the depth of the heavens the warm night, the ship moving easy, all is well 'it's a special night' I say as the boys turn in, 'we are half way to the Marquesas' . The boys like the idea 2 weeks to go to the next island paradise.

Midnight,

Sune and Suzanne take the watch. After the handover to give the next watch a chance to gain their night vision we turn in. Time for a sleep, the proper one, the skylight in the aft cabin reveals the stars reeling above in an easy motion. Sleep is good.

Morning

Cille wakes us at a quarter to 8, the suns up, fishing line is not out, still got loads of fish to eat. Breakfast is ready, bread has been out of the oven for about an hour, food glorious food, we eat a lot of food, the art of cooking is tested every day by all hands. The toughest job on a ship, we all take turns to cook, clean, wash up and scrub down but Ea is the boss of all provisions. It's her iron hand that administers ingredients and quantities. Water the most vital ingredient is also carefully controlled 3 litres per person per day, the rest can be done with sea water.

Set the main topsail, morning deck scrub, look for flying fish around the deck, 9 to 11 it's school for the boys, they usually knuckle down to get it out of the way so they have max Lego time on the foredeck.

The morning is taken up with routine maintenance, tallow the leather gear check for chafe in the rig, stich this, check that, on deck and aloft,

moving as quiet as mice so as not to disturb the off watch crew, prepare lunch, before you know it, noon comes around.

Noon Tuesday 29th March 2011

Lat 8 degrees 19.0 min South

Long 115 degrees 02.4 West

Yukon moves easy in pristine conditions. We all have lunch in the shade of the mizzen awning.

Days run 139 miles 5.8 knots average I announce in the familiar ceremony 'how many to go?' they all ask.....
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David Nash

Franklin 4th April 2020