

Beaufort Gyre Exploration Project: Dispatch 27: Bon Voyage Doug

Chris Linder
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After so many days of endless light, I was excited to see some darkness. As we progress southward and the dates tick off on the calendar, we will be leaving 24 hour daylight behind. While it wasn't fully dark when I stepped out on deck at 4AM to photograph a CTD cast, it was dim, like a winter twilight. The clouds were heavy on the horizon, but a thin sliver of pink told me that dawn wasn't far off. Sure enough, just after Hugh's night watch team were pulling the CTD back on deck at 6AM, a bright sun peeked out from the cloud bank. It blazed brightly for several minutes, then disappeared into the clouds.

Instead of the thin annual ice we were expecting today, we continued to batter through thick multi-year ice. Ice officer Lucie Theriault manned the crow's nest with a walkie talkie, guiding the *Louis* to the easiest passages. The leads, or open water areas in between the floes, are frozen now, with thin sheets of ice up to two inches thick. The ice sometimes buckles and bends before breaking, so thin it's almost elastic. I asked Lucie when we would break free of this thick pack ice. "The charts that we received several days ago indicated very light ice here" she told me. "However, the ice is always moving, and the wind has been out of the north for the past few days--it must have blown this thicker ice southwards." Heavy ice not only slows down our work, it's also expensive. When the *Louis* is using all of her power to break thick ice, the fuel cost can reach a hefty price of \$1300 per nautical mile of progress. That's a lot of fuel, but it's the cost of doing business in one of the most inaccessible regions of the planet.

In between CTDs and XCTDs this evening, we had a special party for science party member Doug Sieberg from the Institute of Ocean Sciences. After 31 years in oceanography, Doug is retiring. Doug was a member of the *Louis*' historic 1994 expedition to the North Pole, so it's fitting that his last cruise should be aboard this vessel. Gifts from the science party and crew members included a ceremonial hard hat decorated with knots, a photo of the *Louis* signed by everyone on board, and a trip to Woods Hole to visit the mooring operations group.

This was my first cruise with Doug but he made an immediate impression. Tall and lanky, with a shock of silver hair, Doug is the epitome of a sailor. His weathered fingers always seem to be wrapped around some bit of line that he's tied into an elaborate knot. His smile is warm and friendly, and he's always eager to share his 31 years of seagoing wisdom. Doug has been leading a 12-hour CTD watch team and also lending two very experienced hands at every mooring deployment and recovery. He's always the first to jump forward and pitch in every step of the way from setup to cleanup. With seemingly boundless energy, he's happiest when his hands are busy with his lucky green-handled wrench. Bon voyage Doug, happy sailing into your retirement!

Tomorrow Doug will be wielding the green wrench again, this time to help John Kemp and Kris Newhall deploy the fourth and last Beaufort Gyre Observing System subsurface mooring. After our difficulties at Mooring C, we are hoping for open water and sunny skies.

Last updated: October 19, 2015



We are far enough south and late enough in the season to see actual sunsets and sunrises now. This is sunrise at 6AM.



Cleaning up after the CTD cast; Ryan North (left) takes up the CTD conducting wire while Hugh Maclean (right) reattaches the lifelines.



Kris Newhall (left) and Doug Sieberg (right) test acoustic releases for the upcoming mooring deployments.



Game on. Doug's favorite pastime.

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