

GO SHIP A20 report

I don't know when exactly the GO SHIP A20 cruise began to feel like home. I retrace my steps to the first day on the ship, when I got lost finding my stateroom and did seemingly endless circles through the doors and staircases and hallways all over the ship. It didn't feel like home then. But hours later, I knew I was in the right place at the right time.

Being around the scientists, the crew, the blue and endless ocean, just felt right. Like so many others on this cruise, I was coming out of my entirely remote and virtual new world of science, excited to interact with others for the first time, not just scientifically, but socially, for the first time in a while. As I spoke to everyone about their research, bit by bit I began to understand how unique and wonderful oceanographic cruises are. I was not only in an environment where I could nerd out about the ocean, but where everyone else around me was actively doing so. Socially, intellectually, scientifically, this cruise seems to have really been a goldilocks just right scenario. I am typing this in the main lab, listening to a sink gurgling and the alkalinity system breathing. I am home.

I can not yet say with certainty what this cruise has meant to me. I first dreamed of going on an oceanographic cruise around four years old. It was a national geographic documentary about oceanographer Robert Ballard that sparked my imagination in oceanography, and desire to do the science at sea. My love for oceanography grew with me. I applied to many cruises as an undergraduate and graduate student. No luck. I pressed on.

My fascination found a happy home in the world of biogeochemical modeling. My graduate studies found a happy home at UCLA in the Atmospheric and Oceanic Science department. Although I was fulfilled and fascinated by my research on waste water modeling and phytoplankton models, I felt a slight twang of melancholy when other oceanographers would speak about their times at sea, cruises both upcoming and past. My desire to go never faded, but my understanding of what types of oceanographers actually need to go on these cruises broadened. Modelers don't need to go on cruises. In fact, one of the primary purposes of modeling is to create data in the absence of direct observations. Why on earth would I NEED to go on a cruise?

The opportunity to be a CTD watch stander popped up on our lab groups slack channel. I spoke to my advisor, who said any oceanographer, no matter their specific discipline, can glean so much from a cruise. I applied, I was accepted, and now I am at the end of this journey I have dreamed about for the last 21 years.

The tasks have felt a little mindless at times. The CTD watch stander does not need to think critically. But the role is mission critical, and I am endlessly thankful for the opportunity to have been at the intersection of scientists, crew, and our shared love, the ocean. As a watch stander I coordinated depths, samples, and paid attention to every small detail needed to ensure great samples. Without great samples, the scientific mission of the cruise cannot be met. Even if I had a tiny influence in making those amazing measurements, I am immensely proud.

GO SHIP provided me the opportunity to see the full lens of oceanography, the beautiful challenge of creating a snapshot of one piece of water, and given me a deep and profound appreciation for each carbon measurement I have ever used. GO SHIP gave me a home, an oceanographic home, in the middle of the Atlantic, moving at a speed of 12 knots, down 52.33 degrees west.