

TEAM BLOG- April 14th – June 24th 2006

Official Website Announcement!

Written by OAR Crew

Friday, 14 April 2006 09:38

This is the first Journal entry on our newly launched website!
Thanks goes to Kevin Audleman for all his work. This site now allows us to update these entries from the boat and will track our position automatically while at sea. We hope that OAR Northwest fans will spend a bit of time checking this site over the next few months!

Pre-Launch Sat Phone Blog Update

Written by OAR Crew

Sunday, 23 April 2006 13:54

Hey OARNW Fans!

Greg here, still on shore before our weeklong trip on the Pacific Ocean. It's a beautiful, sunny day in Seattle. The weather outlook for the Pacific row looks HOT! Waves will be 3-4 meters in height, and we should have a fantastic row this week.

Click the link on the front page to see where we're at, and check back for our daily updates.

Greg and Crew

P.S. - Thanks to Mark at OCENS for the onboard email and Weathernet service!

The Night Before...

Written by OAR Crew

Monday, 24 April 2006 22:04

Hello from OAR Northwest!

We're at the marina in Port Angeles, WA, seated on the south side of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The boat is in the water, Jeff's boat, Luard, is set and ready to go tomorrow as our escort, and the first practical joke has just come to fruition.

A Jordan-admirer was too shy to offer her phone number directly, so Brad kindly delivered the message :-{ We finally got him to call, he figured it out, but the great thing was that this had already happened before! Easy target, we guess! Sleep tight - we'll be posting from the water tomorrow. Trip plan is to leave Port Angeles, travel out the Strait to the Pacific Ocean, end up in Grays Harbor by Sunday.

Greg

Port Angeles, Part Duex

Written by OAR Crew

Tuesday, 25 April 2006 21:19

Weren't we in Port Angeles last night?

Yes!

Shortly into our row this morning, we realized our VHF was not receiving; Jeff (our support boat) could hear us, but we couldn't hear him or any one else. So, after an executive order by our fearless but rational captain, we turned back to port for a new VHF.

Our plans for the next few days are fluid. The way the winds look, we could row west until Sunday and not make the ocean. Stay tuned here for an updated itinerary, and more actual rowing stories.

In rowing news, Jordan succumbed to seasickness. Greg and I are betting on which of us goes next.

Dylan

Tonight to Water

Written by OAR Crew

Wednesday, 26 April 2006 21:07

After yesterday's VHF failiure and subsequent botched run up the Strait of Juan de Fuca, we woke up the next morning with a new VHF as our first target in sight. Winds and currents around Port Angeles continued to provide adequate headwind to which our quick reply was: to hit the road.

The goal of this row is to hit blue water -- the ocean. Though it is no Atlantic, we can learn a lot from our Pacific Ocean. How fortunate are we!? Living the northwest provides the best training ground in the world for a cross-ocean voyage. The weather can be amazing and awful at once; the waves calm, yet fierce. We've heard skippers claim that the Strait contains some of the most challenging water in the world - and it can whip up in just a few short hours!

With that, we trailered the boat ~60nm west toward Cape Flattery and Neah Bay, where the world begins. When you have the only boat of its kind in the USA, and you're doing something as mind boggling as rowing the Atlantic, a reputation can precede you. The small town was open and receptive, and we had a blast getting to know a few of the locals before we depart.

It's 2106 PST right now, we leave for the ocean on the next outgoing tide at 0030.

Sleep tight,

Greg

In the ocean

Written by OAR Crew

Thursday, 27 April 2006 20:00

We're in the ocean. What an amazing feeling.

We left Neah bay at 1:00am, to take advantage of the outgoing tide. I think everyone was a bit nervous, as it was pitch black and our first open-water voyage in the JR Hanssen. All went well, as we made good time rounding Tatoosh island and pulled SW to about 8 miles offshore. Our arrival on the ocean coincided with dawn, bringing grey, grey and grey. Until noon our world was surreal - a monochrome environment with grey skies melding into darker swells. Our excitement was tempered by the weather, but as we got used to the rolling seas (anywhere from 4-8 foot swells, with a 10 second period) all of us came to realize: OAR Northwest is on the ocean!

In a way, it feels safer out here. Even in the morning, when we could not see land, we were self-reliant. We have prepared well for this, and feel confident that our ability and preparation can carry us anywhere.

Now, watching a sunset that you could only see over an ocean, OAR Northwest feels at home.

Highlights from the day:

Ships can see us on radar! A NOAA vessel (that came quite close at one point) had us on radar 8 miles away. Our one-grand SeaMe beacon may be of some good after all. More seasickness has struck the boat, with all of us feeling a bit queasy and Jordan having a few more rough shifts. Did I mention the sunset? Mash potatoes are the biggest hit so far.

Time to sleep or row,
Dylan and OAR Northwest

Settling In, following the flood...

Written by OAR Crew

Friday, 28 April 2006 20:40

Now that everyone is in synch (unlike the band), the food goes down easier, stays down easier, and our extended-hour shifts offer a substantial boost in mileage. Today we were followed for a mile or so by a visiting whale, sea lions poked their heads around, and for the first time, we were not called in to the Coast Guard for appearing to be a "pleasure boat" in distress!

We're heading into what will be our last night on the ocean, prior to the June race. Plan is to set the sea anchor about 7 miles west, and 7 miles north of the mouth of Grays Harbor. We'll spend ~7 hours on anchor, all crammed into the stern cabin,

wake up at 5am and follow the flood tide into Westport, Washington. With everyone's sea legs underneath them so far, the rocking and rolling of the 15-20 knot winds, and 8-10 foot seas should hopefully lull us to sleep onboard the James Robert Hanssen.

A few to thank for this successful training row:

- Geoff Douthwait for providing a safety vessel
- Rebecca, Emily, Betsy for helping us put our menu together for the trip=
- Kokatat, Sol Sunguard, and Kaenon for keeping our bodies warm and protected from the sun
- OCENS for their Weathernet service, and email support so we can talk to you!
- De La Estancia for providing excellent polenta, which together with spices, cheese, and nuts, will be the backbone of our summer menu plan

One more tomorrow when we reach land, but please look forward to daily updates (with pictures next time) from the Atlantic Ocean beginning early June.

Best,

Greg and OAR Northwest

YEE-HAs in stereo

Written by OAR Crew

Saturday, 29 April 2006 23:11

OAR Northwest spent our last night on the Pacific on sea anchor, 7 miles north of Grey's Harbor and 7 miles from shore. After rowing through some rougher weather, we spent 7 hours not drifting, getting some nice rest after a great test run.

Waking up early this morning to even stronger winds and messy seas, we rowed the last few miles through the bar into Westport in the craziest water any of us have seen. Waves were coming from seemingly every direction; Jordan was knocked from his seat, Dylan broke a center pin, and it seemed at times that we might be overcome. But the boys pushed on, as we are apt to do, and with a little grit, a little luck, and plenty of Amsteel, we made it! Surfing the waves into Grey's Harbor brought whoops and hollers from all.

Pictures from this entrance should be up soon, as our trusty support boat piloted by the supportive Geoff Douthwaite brought Erinn, our photographer, Rebecca, and Greg's parents out to greet us. More stories will come when we get home, but a big thanks to all of you who followed this trial run!

Dylan and Crew

80% There!

Written by OAR Crew

Wednesday, 31 May 2006 06:50

OAR Northwest is here in New York (actually, New Jersey), awaiting the arrival of our boat Friday. We have had chance to explore the city, have been welcomed by the wonderful people at the Liberty Yacht Club, and have shaken hands with two of our three competitors. We are looking forward to our family and friends coming out to see the departure, and would like them to know that it's HOT in the city, so dress for summer. For those of you not able to make it out, stay tuned here for updates about media appearances as the timing is finalized. Again, we'd like to thank all the organizations, companies, and amazing individuals who have helped us get this far. One of the first things the British team Commando Joe said upon meeting was that this adventure has renewed their faith in human beings. While none of us are old enough to have lost that faith, we have been continuously blown away by the amazing qualities of everyone who has leant us a hand. As one of our first supporters, Erden Eruc, said, "getting to the start is 80% of the work." It is because of your wonderful support that we are even close to where we are now.

leaving New York

Written by OAR Crew

Saturday, 10 June 2006 18:30

We made it to the ocean! Thank you to all that came out to New York for your support and help. The love we have gotten in the last weeks has been overwhelming. The rowing is going well; we were flying this morning, but have slowed down a bit with the wind. Our spirits are high, and everything is working well on board. We'll be thinking of all of you.

Second night at sea

Written by OAR Crew

Sunday, 11 June 2006 19:11

Thanks for your patience as we adjust to the ocean. As of tonight, OAR Northwest is handling the North Atlantic quite all right! Before I tell you more, we would like to extend our condolences to team Sevenoaks, who has broken their rudder and dropped out of the race. Much of what happens on the ocean is out of our control; we would like to express that their early departure takes nothing from the tremendous accomplishment of reaching the starting line, and are proud to be considered competitors of such wonderful men. Life on the ocean is a bit rough. It has taken us a while to adjust to the patterns one must go through. Everything is a chore, from brushing your teeth, to eating, to writing this update. Hopefully, as we break into a rhythm, the easy chores will become thoughtless so that the harder ones are simplified. We are pulling two hours on, two hours off, and seem to have found a good balance for now. Pulling away from New York last night was so emotional for all of us. As we watched the sun set over the city, we realized that when we woke up there would be nothing. Now, 24 hours later, another beautiful sunset (now over water) gone, we can finally begin to take stock in ourselves and our undertaking. Some storms are headed our way. One looks to be North of us, but could cause some pretty rough weather for the next two days. A tropical storm is brewing in the Gulf and forecasters have it headed our way. Fortunately, it does not seem as dire as first predicted, but we shall see. We are thinking about all of you.

Visiting neighbors and sunsets

Written by OAR Crew

Monday, 12 June 2006 05:44

This is Jordan and this is my first update from the sea. The first time I have been well enough to concentrate on writing in the cabin. It seems to take Brad and I about 3 days to really get over the worst of it. Lets hope it holds out. We had our first mid ocean conversation this morning with the fishing vessel Sakonnet Lobster. She and her crew stopped by to see if we were ok. and stayed for a good morning chat. We were offered some lobster but as per race rules had to decline it, and besides, jet boil does not make a lobster pot yet. We are ok, and I believe acclimating well to the ocean and our little boat. It seems much more like hop than it did even last evening. Last night we saw our first sunset out of site of land for the first time, it lit the whole sky orange and the moon rose behind us with a deep yellow red hue before turning into its customary brilliant white for the rest of the night. we are well and will write soon. best, Jordan

sunsets and moon rises

Written by OAR Crew

Monday, 12 June 2006 19:32

I have these moments when I realize again what I'm doing, it's what I have been dreaming of doing for 18 months. The culmination of so much work by the four of us. What does that come to but a perfect moon looking over us, lightning in the distance and the deepest trails of purple in the sunset.

Day 4 - The James Robert Hanssen Encounters Local Denizen

Written by OAR Crew

Tuesday, 13 June 2006 13:11

From the inception of the cross-Atlantic project, well-traveled salty sailors told us repeatedly that the North Atlantic is scant for sea life. The James Robert Hanssen's experience has been otherwise. When travelling under human (or nature's) power - the quiet way - your vessel becomes an intriguing foreigner for local ocean residents to observe. Thor Hierdal and his Kon Tiki project heard much the same leading up to his journey, and if you've seen his 1950's documentary, they caught and saw more fish than they could handle. Today we met a sun fish - beautiful, majestic, and simply massive. Portuguese Man-o-war are everywhere. The phosphorescence, especially as we neared the warmth of the gulf stream, is blazing with each solid stroke of the oars in the evenings. Jordan and I just finished our shift and are enjoying some De La Estancia polenta with lots of butter and tuna, and our water maker is humming to the tune of direct sunlight on the solar panels. Dylan and Brad are busy at the oars, chatting away and running at just over 4 knots. By the way, did you know Dylan has never been to Europe? If we make it, what a first approach, eh? OAR Northwest says, "Take care of yourselves!" So please do so and we'll see you tomorrow. Greg

freighters and the night shift

Written by OAR Crew

Wednesday, 14 June 2006 05:40

After our encounter with the sunfish we saw a apparition appear on the horizon. Five minutes later it was very clear it was a very big ship. In a short thirty minutes the FEDERAL EMT past us with the rumble of deisel. There was no danger, she was easy to hail on the VHF but it is still amazing to see that mass of metal move past us with such ease. Thirty minutes later she was the same aparition steaming over the horizon. Two hours on and two hours off seems to work so fine every other part of the day, but when evening rolls around their is that one brutal night shift that redifines pain. The hardest part is working in your minds haze. Your mind may be wandering but the pain is very real. Fortunatly this does not last long and sleep comes two hours later. Tonight we expect a storm so we are making our preparations. We will keep you informed. Best, Jordan

stampeded by a heard of dolphins

Written by OAR Crew

Wednesday, 14 June 2006 09:54

So, greg and I are rowing along when we hear what sounds like water boiling. There was a split second in which we thought the worst- a boat? When we turned around we saw the biggest pod of dolphins any of us had ever seen in real life or on TV. Litteraly hundreds of them on either side and beneith us. It was stunning. for a brief two minutes all we could hear was the splashing and the talking of these dolphins heading west. We got footage of it but unfortunately no film. However, attached is a picture of us and the freighter yesterday. Not as cool as dolphins. Jordan

Through the storm...

Written by OAR Crew

Thursday, 15 June 2006 13:19

We made it through what turned out to be a pretty horrendous night. The wind was making noises I didn't even know wind could make! But, apart from a crushed bucket and snapped line, we came out unscathed, a little rested, and certainly eager to row. The seas are still messy, but the wind is dying down and there are no longer waves crashing over the boat. While last night was scary, it was certainly a confidence booster. It was rough to have all four of us in the cabin, but after a couple of hours we got comfortable, we came up with a ventilation system, and even had some laughs (albeit, nervous ones). Getting your text messages throughout the night was wonderful, to say the least. Keep em' coming! (a recent study shows that boat speed increases by as much as 11.7% per text message received). For now, we're rowing toward England, rough seas and all!

Ocean evenings

Written by OAR Crew

Saturday, 17 June 2006 11:41

We had a moment of perfection last night. Not by us, we were just lucky enough to observe. Midnight, the stars were out with no moon or clouds. There was no horizon and the water melded to the sky. With each stroke our oars lit up the water with the

brightest phosphorescence I have ever seen. It was a calm night but every few waves our boat would lift up just enough to crash and the ocean around our boat would light up like a bright green milky way. It was rowing among the stars.
Jordan.

Walkin' speed

Written by OAR Crew

Sunday, 18 June 2006 07:21

Given everything we've gone through in the last year with this project, we expected to be a little caught off-guard at the pace of life in a rowboat. No kidding. All the little aspects of life take exorbitant amounts of time, especially in relation to what is available. But it's not the adjustment to the living requirements that is so profound, but the adjustment to movement. Our top speed rowing is about 3 knots, or just over what you could walk at a fast pace. In good current (like we are right now!), 5 knots is incredible; this may be equivalent to driving your car in a parking lot. That speed gives plenty of time for contemplation about course adjustments, rowing technique, and overall strategy, but it doesn't give you much ability to act on those discussions with any satisfactory speed. Stuck in an eddy the last few days, we fretted over the fact that we progressed at such a low rate. But what could we do about it? It took us 12 hours of rowing yesterday to make any headway at all, and that is a long time to row without going anywhere. It's humbling to live at this pace. At home, if I want to go downtown, I am bummed if I have to wait 15 minutes for the 358. It's a drastic change in lifestyle, but we're slowly starting to adjust. So, if you're stuck in traffic today, thank someone that your not going backwards for 12 hours.

a rainy sunrise

Written by OAR Crew

Monday, 19 June 2006 08:04

We spent some time on sea anchor last night to lay low through a lightning storm. It was still very visible this morning when we put out oars again. The wind was to our back and so were most of the seas as Dylan and I rowed the first shift. Oars were light this morning and I believe the shift banter was something comparing our boat to super yachts when the sky's opened up. It was fresh and Sweet and washed the salt that accumulated on our bodies since yesterday. To my left the light had created what looked like a golden filigree over the waves where the rain and light hit providing a brilliant back drop to the rainbow that reached from what seemed our boat all the way into the sky. It was brief, it was pure, and I feel cleansed once more.
J

Belated Fathers day

Written by OAR Crew

Monday, 19 June 2006 08:04

I would have sent this yesterday but a lightning Strom was coming up when I got the writers itch. It took a feat of technology to realize just what this day meant to me. Using the sat phone I called my Mom and Dad yesterday to wish them a happy fathers day. It felt good to here their voices, so remarkably clear on our little boat in

the middle of the ocean. After I spoke with them I went through another daily ritual out here-checking the amazing messages we get from everybody back on shore. Two of which struck me with a connection I had not yet made that fathers day. They told me that James Robert Hanssen must be very proud. I know he is, because my father now is proud. His name is James Roy Wood and when he married my Mom I became his instant five year old. I could have a dad and a step-dad but that never felt right to me. It felt much more natural to have two dads. Nature or nurture I would not be who I am with out both of them and I am so proud to be their son. I love my dads.
YLS Jordan PS: Pete at Commando Joe: your boy is very proud of you. HAPPY FATHERS DAY!

Food For Thought

Written by OAR Crew

Tuesday, 20 June 2006 02:43

A note on the conversations on-board the JRH. There are 3 main topics of conversation: family, future plans and food. Well, there may be some more conversation topics, but these will not see the pages of this blog. Enough said.

Family and Friends: your support and encouragement is amazing The text msgs keep us going and there's a noticeable increase in boat speed when they get read off every AM/PM. You're on our thoughts more than a topic of conversation, but we have gone over many embarrassing family stories. Doug, this means you.

Future plans: we try to limit the ambition here, but there have been several road trips planned. Most involve dry, warm places. In regards to boats, we talk about if we will row again or not We have also discussed these boats that have sails. Someone should have told us about these boats earlier.

FOOD: we spent a 1/2 hr this morning discussing the many assorted varieties of cookies in the world=2E The conversation then moved on to salad, pasta, fried food, fresh OJ, fresh bread, fresh anything. Well, you get the idea. The food talk has started and my guess is that it will continue on to the UK and beyond.

Take care and enjoy!

The food crazy crew of OARNW

Advice from Athena

Written by OAR Crew

Wednesday, 21 June 2006 14:23

My Penelope sent this too me and I felt it was very appropriate It is from the Odyssey and is Athena speaking to Telemachus:

"I have some good advice, if only you will accept it. Fit out a ship with twenty oars, the best in sight, sail in quest of news of your long-lost father. Someone may tell you something or you may catch a rumor straight from Zeus, rumor that carries news to

men like nothing else.”

We will see what we can do with six of best oars in sight and pray from then that Athena-Nike will carry us to victory

J

Ladies and Gentlemen, there ha

Written by OAR Crew

Wednesday, 21 June 2006 13:58

Ladies and Gentlemen, there has been some concern as of late as to our position and proximity to Sula. First of all we are doing quite well the only concern being that we have no wine, women or a place to make a decent espresso, however we knew this getting into it. The support boat stopped by to say hello and taunt us from the bridge with various hot beverages that we will not be able to enjoy till England We responded with a broad side from our port guns.

As for course explanation there are two main ways of getting to England. Great Circle route and the Gulf Stream. We are in the GS and are hedging our bets on more favorable currents that this will provide. Its a risk, but so is rowing the Atlantic. Till next time enjoy safe travels!

J

Ingredients

Written by OAR Crew

Wednesday, 21 June 2006 14:12

I am often surprised how the same ingredients can produce such different results. Last night it was all there. Water, Phosphorescence

Post-Solstice Perceptions from the Sea

Written by OAR Crew

Thursday, 22 June 2006 09:50

How about a picture for the mind's eye? We've spent most of the last two to three days battling our way due east, watching the lead over the fleet continue to shrink as south winds and choppy south seas impede our usual good progress. The sole purpose of it all is to get to the Gulf Stream - the warm current running up the eastern seaboard, turning right off New York, and extending out across the Atlantic. Many a text message has come in wondering why we forge our own path toward Portugal, and that is why. The current is fast, and it is well worth the lightening storms, awkward waves, backward currents and torrential rain, free speed Yesterday afternoon, OARNW adjusted course to the NE toward a warm eddy (an entrance), and it was finally our chance to cash-in on the wet feet and miserable rowing from before. Since then we've been surfing the waves that thwarted our progress, and myriad sea creatures visit the JR Hanssen. If they're in the area, or we

end up in theirs. A small pod of porpoise surfed along side us for a few minutes, a giant sea turtle breached to take a look at us, and later that evening, Brad and I were treated to a thrill. With another moonless night to welcome the evening's row, phosphorescence lit up the sea at the crest of each wave, slice of oar blade in the water, and path of the shark that bumped in the night.

It swam up just behind the boat - you could see it's track through the water, a torpedo of sorts. She quietly slipped along side the JR Hanssen, just beneath the oars, then disappeared underneath the boat. You couldn't see the 8-ft shark, but you could see every detail as if it were an animated, digital display beneath the surface virtual reality! She gave our daggerboard a little nudge (right below Brad), and for the rest of the shift, every cloud of light beneath the surface begged inspection.

Today the seas are millpond – glass. A thick fog blankets the area and visibility is, at best, 1/4 mile. Once it burns off we should have plenty of sun to replenish our batteries, water supply, and spirits from the dreary last few days.

Thanks for your imagination, and thanks for keeping us company with your text messages.

Greg

p.s. - who won the NBA finals?

Photos to Share

Written by OAR Crew

Thursday, 22 June 2006 10:16

Hello again! We finally got a few photos resized enough to share with everyone... Here's what you'll see:

- ~ Greg & Brad at the oars, working against the southerly origin seas
- ~ Vessel Sula (Woodvale Events support ship) visiting OAR Northwest and the JR Hanssen
- ~ Video being taken of a container ship in fly-by (the captain wasn't so talkative)
- ~ Quick shot out the hatch door at Tropical Storm Alberto... upgraded to a hurricane status storm just after it passed us. Nothing like a baptism by fire for Atlantic storms, eh?

Greg

the whale road

Written by OAR Crew

Friday, 23 June 2006 14:30

In the story of Beowulf the sea is referred to as the "whale road." This line hit home for me yesterday when a pod of right whales surfaced off the starboard side of our boat last evening. There were between six and ten of them moving slowly south on a

road that the human eye could not make out. They moved effortlessly past us, their undulating movements making our rowing seem uncivilized in comparison. No acknowledgment, no curiosity on their part. They had much more important business to attend to and were not going to let some errant row boat slow their progress. We on the other hand stood silent, mouths agape searching for words more elegant than "wow" or "awesome" that always seem to escape in awe inspiring situations. And with a scramble for our camera they were gone leaving less than a wake for us to remember them.

J

Gumbo night

Written by OAR Crew

Saturday, 24 June 2006 03:30

On the seventh day there was gumbo and the rowers thought it was good. We may not get to rest every 7th day, but we do get a nice change in the menu with a healthy serving of gumbo. Our weekly dinner menu consists of mashed potatoes or plenty (thanks de la estancia). This provides all the carbs and protein that a rower needs to cross an ocean, but lacks variety. That's where the gumbo comes in...Here's the step by step for those interested:

add 2 cups water to Jet Boil

Boil water

add 2 cups instant rice

stir under heat for 1 min

remove heat

add 1 glob butter

add 1/2 packet gumbo mix

stir vigorously

add vacu-sealed shrimp

again, stir vigorously

eat 5 bites, pass onto the guy in cabin and wait 5 bites...repeat.

..smile...repeat

clean jet boil

go to sleep happy

get up in less than 2 hours and go back to rowing...

well, there it is, our little 7th day dinner plan

so now you know...

That's all from the galley. Next on the carbon fiber chef we'll discuss breakfast on board the JRH

Oh-yeah, thanks for the info on the NBA finals. Go Heat! Keep the texts coming, we

read them out before b-fast and at sunset every day.

Also, thank you very much to Kyle, Kevin, Bev at Accompany, the Spooner's and everyone else that's been helping to keep our website/blog up and running.

Take care,
The Gumbo Happy Crew of the JRH

p.s. if it's a blog post on food or super heroes chances are Brad is the author...