

Ship's Log

Foreword

The command was given to take in all lines. With one long blast on the ship's whistle—chased soon after by three short ones—we were underway. The mechanics of maneuvering from the pier into the shipping channel, and then making our way to sea, were familiar if not routine, but this time we were leaving for six months. As we departed, expressionless faces manned the rail, leaving a wake of emotion as subtle and as evident as the one being churned by our turning screws. Slowly and painfully the familiar channel buoys and landmarks of our homeport gave way to an open sea. Soon the coast we called home slipped over the horizon.

We would spend the next two weeks with no landmarks to guide us east other than those in the sky that had guided sailors for millennia. In a somewhat foreboding manner, our voyage—our anticipated, uneventful passage—became anything but. Two days to sea we hit rough weather, resulting in serious injury to a sailor. The nature of the injuries required a Bermuda-based helicopter crew to make a rough-weather air evacuation that pushed courage and good judgment to the limit. We lost all ship's power, were overtaken by a hurricane, and found ourselves tossed about by the will and whim of Mother Nature.

Aside from the life-threatening perils of heavy winds and seas, stormy conditions also blanketed from view our only

means for navigation: the sun, the moon and the stars. Midway across the Atlantic, however, the skies cleared long enough for us to capture a few celestial fixes. From them, we were able to pinpoint our position and make course corrections before clouds and heavy weather enshrouded us once again.

Our most immediate destination was a plotted position near the Straights of Gibraltar. There we were to rendezvous with a sister ship anxiously awaiting our arrival so she could begin her voyage home. Without benefit of a definitive celestial fix for a few days, we did our best to estimate our position by plotting ship's speed, direction and anticipated offsets due to wind, currents and sea state.

When we believed we were close to the intended rendezvous, we raised our sister ship by radio and communicated our position. After acknowledging receipt of our message, there was a longer-than-expected delay in acknowledging our position. Finally, somewhat baffled and amused, the quartermaster of our sister ship radioed, "I don't think you are where you think you are, because if you are, you're in the Sahara Desert." Obviously, we had transmitted the wrong coordinates. Nevertheless, a more studied look at the sweeping arm of our radar scope revealed the luminescent and ghostly outline of an approaching landmass—most certainly the coast of Africa . . . and most certainly nowhere close to the Straits of Gibraltar. Just a few days earlier we knew our exact location, and now we knew the exact location of our sister ship. Beyond that, nothing was clear. With the quartermaster's finger pointing to the penciled hash mark on the navigational chart, all we knew for sure was that we were somewhere between two known points . . . "somewhere between here and there."

Some times, most times, or perhaps all times, all that we have is the knowledge we are somewhere between here and there. We can reflect on where we have been; at times we can

articulate where we intend to go, but at any given moment we usually do not know exactly where we are, other than somewhere between here and there. Such is the course we each sail . . . and such is the subject of this book—making sense of our voyage by making the most of the points in-between.

Throughout history, sailing vessels have maintained a “log”—a record of their voyage. Even today, from engine room to bridge, logs capture details of machinery performance, wind direction, wave height, course, speed, weather conditions, personnel on watch, and the exact minute that shipboard evolutions occur. Logs re-create events, capture historical accuracy, and—at times—end the careers of sea captains based upon unavoidable truths contained within their pages.

Logs are a sacred record: maintained meticulously in the heat of battle, while sailing on moonless nights amid renegade icebergs, or among unrelenting seas during unforgiving storms. No matter what the circumstance, the log continues to capture data. Like a rear view mirror, a log offers insight, perspective and clues that can be studied to help explain past events and better prepare for similar ones in the future.

In many respects, *Somewhere Between Here and There* is a logbook. Each chapter, each story, is an individual entry made at a specific time with the intention of capturing the truth of the moment. From this perspective, each entry stands alone and need not be read in the order presented. Then again, the order in which the entries appear represents my attempt to retrospectively link each point for the most understandable and efficient course between here and there—at least as best I can tell, given where I find myself *between here and there*.

To fully appreciate this book and to gain insights uniquely beneficial to you, it is important to understand its origins. Every Monday for the past several years, I have

written a *Monday Message* to share with clients, past clients, friends, associates, and practically anyone who cares to receive it by email. Evolving from a simple two-sentence email to clients—"Good morning! Make it a great week!"—to what is now routinely 1,500 or more words, writing *Monday Message* requires me to connect with what is in my mind at a particular moment and to fully explore those thoughts so I can gain greater insight and understanding. *Monday Message* thus has become my personal gateway to "presence"—a world of heretofore-unexplored consciousness and awareness.

Each *Monday Message* is a highly personal, weekly snapshot. Over time, these snapshots begin to tell their own story. The story of *Somewhere Between Here and There* is about the voyage we each make in life, whether we do so sooner or later, consciously or not. Once we individually reach the conclusion that life is but one long voyage to be embraced and enjoyed as each moment unfolds, then we have begun our voyage home. *Somewhere Between Here and There* is about this voyage. It is a logbook that captures the fears, hopes, anxieties, humor, determination, inspiration, discouragement, enlightenment, resolve, exhilaration, and spiritual growth that make each voyage similar but also unique.

Much like a ship's log, no words were written with the expectation they would ever be published; they were merely entries in my personal "logbook" destined for dusty archives. By removing the dust and sharing the course this sailor has taken on a voyage yet to be completed, it is my sincerest hope my entries will support you in charting a course that is intensely fulfilling and uniquely you—a course that consciously captures your "*here*" in order to get you "*there*."

Before you is an opportunity to access your own wisdom and to go deeper than you perhaps have ever considered going before—an opportunity to emerge with an increased

sense of understanding, peace, inner strength, and enthusiasm for living life more graciously, generously and genuinely. Life is filled with past “*here*”s and anticipated “*there*”s, but no point in your voyage is as important as the singular point where you find yourself today.

[1330, 4/4/03, 32 degrees 40 minutes north latitude, 117 degrees, 10 minutes west longitude, Douglas A. Leland, Officer of the Deck.]

Chapter Eight

The Offing

Home at last

When you stand on the shore and peer across the ocean to where the sea meets the sky, you are gazing at “the offing.” In a very real sense, you can see it, but you never really know for sure what it has to offer until you get there—and even then it becomes illusive. Like someone trying to close the distance on infinity, you can reach the point you see, but never reach the point you thought you saw. For those embracing life, the offing continues to expand and continues to draw them forward.

Those many years ago when I sailed aboard the USS *Mississinewa*, my voyage home always seemed so clear . . . so literal. I could visualize the pier we would tie up to, the arms that awaited, and the landmarks that distinguished this seaport from all others. This was our home. In truth, what I visualized as “home” was merely another plotted point on the navigational chart . . . another short segment of a very long voyage, one in which home has always been in the offing and the definition ever-changing. The beauty of the offing is both its illusion and its allure.

We may not be able to see clearly what is in the offing, but as long as we continue to be pulled forward, we will continue to see all that we need to see . . . all that we can handle seeing. If we knew what lay over the horizon, we might well lose all courage to single-up our lines, leave our berth and

make sail . . . and if we never made sail, we would never know the contentment and exhilaration of sailing large.

Gaze into the offing. Let it draw you forward. Embrace the opportunities presented today, and sail large toward the possibilities that lay over the horizon.

What is in the offing? Everything in life is a choice and anything is possible. What is in the offing . . . is really up to you.

“The Mission”

September 30, 2002

They crossed the border on Friday evening. The team of eight consisted of six who would conduct the mission and two lookouts. They traveled in two vehicles, each handled by an experienced driver. This was a first time crossing for some of the team, however, and they had heard stories—anxiety could be sensed in both the silence and the senseless chatter.

The crossing was tedious, but uneventful. They headed south towards their objective, not knowing if the supplies critical to their mission had been staged as planned. They would know in the morning.

At first light they observed their objective, a 20-by-30 foot concrete slab. They were not alone. From a distance a young girl watched them size-up their target. She had learned of their mission and knew how much promise it offered her. She was more than a casual observer. As she watched from her distant perch, it was difficult for her to fully sense the team’s anxiety or appreciate the quick transition to adrenaline-driven activity. Their mission had to be completed by sundown. There was not a lot of time. Elements critical to the mission had not arrived and there was no telling whether they would. They needed access to electricity and their primary source was inoperable. There was no time for lamenting or second-guessing. The sun was up and it was time to go.

The lookouts took their posts and the team of six grabbed the weapons of their trade. In an instant the silence of the morning was broken by the bark of orders, the whirring of circular saws, and the steady staccato of nail guns. There would be only 13 hours of sunlight—not a lot of time to build a hospital.

The gray 20-by-30 foot concrete slab beginning to warm in the Mexican sun outside Ensenata wasn’t as smooth and

square as this construction team was used to. During the week, this team worked together with the best of tools and had unlimited availability of supplies and modern construction materials. Primarily they remodeled and renovated multi-million dollar homes for customers who did not think twice about moving windows and walls and electrical wiring in order to extend a kitchen counter by another six inches. In the land of excess north of the border, they spent their days building the space for excesses to be showcased. Today their customer was a young girl watching from a distance. She wasn't demanding, but she did have very high expectations. The gray concrete slab wasn't the quality they were used to, but they fully appreciated its craftsmanship. Two Mexican men had created this foundation—all 600 square feet of it—one bucket of hand-mixed cement at a time.

As noon approached the team was in a groove. They knew the plan, spoke the same language, understood their role, and responded to the pressure of a sun that poured down its maximum heat and signaled a falling away from its apex. The curious and interested began to gather and watch. Local reporters appeared and were kept at bay by the look-outs. There was no time for chitchat; every bit of sunlight would be required. By early afternoon, hunger began to set in, along with some concern. The shingles for the roof should have arrived three days before. They hadn't and no one knew where they were and when or if they would arrive. They broke for lunch, a festive smorgasbord of Mexican delights prepared by the women of the local community. As they recharged their batteries, replenished their fluids, and discussed contingencies for a roofless hospital, an approaching cloud of dust heralded the arrival of the shingles.

The young girl in the distance, the young girl missing a leg as a result of an automobile accident, began to see her hopes rise with each wall, rafter and cross brace. This hospital offered hope and promise to all in her region, especially

young people who required artificial limbs. This hospital would specialize in the creation of fitted prosthetic devices.

For adults, the proper fitting of a prosthetic device can last for years, if not a lifetime. But for growing children, the space between joints continues to grow, making the counterpart artificial limb of short and limited value absent constant refitting—an option not available to the youngsters in this region. In a country of mostly dusty dirt roads and no requirements for disabled access or accommodation for wheelchairs, the ability to walk is critical to one's quality of life, if not survival.

This wasn't simply a construction project or just a hospital for the girl watching from a distance. This was her future.

As the sun began to set, the last shingle was stapled into place, the windows tested, and the doors that would open a whole new world to many were closed behind the last of the construction team. Mission accomplished. Privately and cautiously with one another, they had questioned whether they could build a hospital in one day. They could. Their anxieties about being south of the border gave way to exhilaration. They were exhausted, but not tired. The adrenaline that had pushed them through the day now pulled them into an evening of celebration, and an opportunity to experience fully the local culture that had been a scary mystery until crossing the border the day before.

As the leader of the team relayed this story to me, it was clear that the adrenaline of this experience was still flowing, though it is often difficult to discern an adrenaline rush from his natural state. He's upbeat, optimistic, enthusiastic, responsible, accountable, action-oriented, a skilled leader, resolute, and charitable. He builds buildings, he builds businesses, he builds people—and he does each very well.

Through his own efforts, he arranged to have all of the materials for this hospital donated by suppliers north of the

border. His team of employees was also a team of volunteers. Together they harnessed their collective talents and gave of their time to make a difference in a community that fully appreciates the difference they have made. At the cost of gasoline for two vehicles to travel round trip between San Diego and Ensenata, plus a couple of meals, they built a hospital. If this hospital creates but one prosthetic device, one fitting for the girl who observed from afar, they will have far exceeded breakeven.

I listened to this story with awe and admiration. Admittedly, and not proudly, I found my own self-worth being challenged. I found myself looking in the mirror and asking, “What have you done lately?” Not hearing any satisfactory answers, I realized that this conversation would have to continue.

I also realized that as important as it is for me—for all of us—to ask the question, we might not always be the best people to provide the answer.

As I shared my admiration with the team leader, he pushed it aside.

He feels very good about what he and his team accomplished, but is unwilling to accept its full significance. From his perspective, there’s so much more he could do and so much more that others seem to be doing. And from my perspective, there are few in the world who will do as much as he and his team did in one day south of the border when they changed the life of a young girl and hundreds of children to follow.

These individuals may go on to greater acts of service, but the significance of this contribution should not be underestimated or undervalued. They set a high standard for all and did not seek—in fact they steadfastly rejected—any recognition for their efforts. Payment came on the inside, which is always the currency of humble service to others.

I continued to debate about what I've done lately with the image in the mirror and the self-worth chatter in the background.

It's a worthwhile question to keep in the spotlight. It's also important to answer the question honestly and to respond in a manner consistent with your personal skills, talents and gifts. We each wear different tool belts and have the potential to build different buildings. Carpenter or carpenter's son, our gifts are different, as will be our contributions. Inspiration and modeling by others is important, as is the translation, interpretation, and application to our own lives.

Know your tools, honor your tools, look in the mirror, ask the question, respond to the answer, and celebrate the strength you gain within. There are more children to be saved.