



2012-10-11

Greetings from Honolulu! I had a wonderful trip over – mostly calm seas (we had a bit of rock and roll the last day out, but it wasn't too bad), nice weather, some nice clouds to observe, and MAGIC data! In port in LA was busy, as usual, with MAGIC personnel getting off and on the ship, and others coming in for installation. Most of the instruments are up and running well, and of course there are a few that are being a bit problematic, but that's not unusual for this point in a deployment.

Weather balloon launches have been quite successful, with most of the balloons reaching heights of 25,000 meters (about 15 miles) or more before bursting. There have been clouds of all varieties, and the sky changes over very short times from completely clear to completely overcast, with an array of cloud coverage and types between these two extremes. Some of the nights have been completely clear, with the Milky Way stretched from horizon to horizon.

The techs have been wonderful. Pat, the lead tech on this leg, is a great choice for this position. He gets along with everyone and never seems flustered, regardless of the situation. He's also tenacious - on the first day out, a pump went out and we worked on it for the better part of a day. I would have given up long before that, but stayed with it until he got it fixed. The other techs, Brett and Rob, refer to him as "Zeus" – need I say more? I met Brett in port a few weeks back when he came to LA to help set up. He's eager and creative, and he's pretty good with his hands – he's made several improvements in the vans that will make daily living better. Rob is a trained meteorologist, is already familiar with some of the instruments, and has considerable time at sea from previous jobs – all good traits for the tasks at hand.

Our vans are on the bridge deck, which is one level above the cabin deck, which is one level above the upper deck, which is one level above the main deck, where my room is located. Thus, I get my workout doing stairs during the day. One level below the main deck is the second deck, where we dine. The food on this trip has been great, and some of our biggest challenges have been deciding between two wonderful choices at mealtime. The worst news we've had on the trip so far is that the cook is getting off in Hawaii; I hope her replacement is half as good.

We've had some fun with the time zone changes. All our data is recorded in UTC (Universal Time Coordinated) which was formerly called Greenwich Mean Time (and still called Zulu time by some). We also have some events (such as balloon launches) that are regularly scheduled on UTC. As getting good data is the top priority (yes, even ahead of meals), I set my clock to UTC. The ship runs on local time, but this varies between Los Angeles and Hawaii. Los Angeles is currently 7 hours behind UTC (it will be 8 hours behind next month, when Daylight Savings Time, or DST, ends), and Hawaii is 10 hours behind (as Hawaii doesn't observe DST, it's always 10 hours behind UTC). The confusion comes in several forms. First, some events that happen during one day are recorded on the next day, as that's what it is in UTC land (it's currently Tuesday, Oct. 10, but our next balloon launch in two hours is on Oct 11 UTC). Also, we are constantly confused about when meal times are because we have trouble keeping up with the time changes. We set our clocks back an hour the first, second and fourth nights out; that's three time changes, but there aren't three time zones. We all spent quite a while looking for that other time zone between Alaska (which is one hour from LA) and Hawaii (which is three hours from LA). We named it the Twilight Zone, but it doesn't exist – it's that Daylight Savings Time thing; the ship doesn't make a 2-hour jump between Alaska time (which is on DST) and Hawaii (which isn't), but splits this into two changes of one hour each. Now that we have it figured out, it'll be backwards on the return, and sure to lead to more confusion.

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Please address any questions or comments to elewis@bnl.gov.

All updates and other MAGIC information can be found at
<http://www.ecd.bnl.gov/MAGIC.html>.