

GC Thoughts (Recollections, Not Necessarily Accurate)

BY SUZANNE O'CONNELL

I learned about the *Glomar Challenger* while an undergraduate at Oberlin College. Helen Forman, the wife of the late chair of the department, sailed on the ship several times as a radiolarian specialist. She wasn't faculty and had an office somewhere in the rafters. I'm not sure I ever met her. What impressed me was the way the male professors said, "She's sailed on the *Glomar Challenger*." I knew it was a big deal.

Years later when I finished a two-year stint as Science Coordinator for JOIDES (Joint Oceanographic Institutions for Deep Earth Sampling, an international organization that provided scientific and management guidance for the Deep Sea Drilling Project and Ocean Drilling Program) and just before I entered graduate school at Lamont-Doherty Geological Observatory, I had an opportunity to sail on Leg 74. It's the kind of experience I wish every geology student, maybe every person, could have. I saw my first microfossils, got to measure the amount of carbonate in sediment using a "carbonate bomb" (a device that you shook by hand for each measurement), helped to load cylindrical rock plugs into a spinner magnetometer, learned how to describe cores and filled in seemingly endless "barrel sheets." (These were hand-drawn core description that seemed impossible to get just right.) To a neophyte, it was amazing to see the variety of geology done in one small space and how it all came together to develop an understanding of the paleoenvironment in the ocean beneath the ship.

Tall muscular men mostly from Louisiana populated the rig floor. Country music would blare the entire time we were on station. They were amazing to watch, as they grabbed rusty drill pipe swinging down from the derrick and pulled it toward the pipe joint to attach it to the drill string. Despite their size, the work was so well coordinated that it could only be described as a ballet, although I doubt they would have appreciated the analogy.

Food was plentiful and excellent. Four meals and four cookie breaks daily. The mess had high windows so you could watch the weather outside. The galley was near the sedimentology lab, where I worked from midnight to noon. About every other night the baker, "Big Mac" would make cinnamon rolls. The smell would permeate the lab and we'd have to go and taste the warm, sticky rolls. I still have the recipe.

Of course this food indulgence, one of many, led to a concern about gaining weight. With the hot water in the laundry, it was never clear if you were growing or the clothes were shrinking. Rumor was, that the record weight gain on the *Glomar Challenger* was 60 pounds in 60 days. Apparently after a while, the victim of this indulgence could only fit into his bathrobe and Captain Clark banned him from the mess. The guys on the rig floor took pity on him and gave him some of their clothes.

Maybe I'm a medical emergency Typhoid Mary. On about half of the legs I've sailed there has been a medical emergency, requiring a trip toward port. This streak began on Leg 74. One of the crew came down with hepatitis, so we had to head to port in South Africa. Everyone had to get a gamma globulin shot. When it came time for the T-shirt contest, the contest was between "A shot in the ass for marine geology"—including a graphic representation—and a big elephant. The elephant won.

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