

Dawn Watch (from Liz's journal, August 27)

5:30 AM

Everything is annoying when I'd rather be asleep - the length of my life-line harness strap, the roll of the boat, the wetness of the cushions - I hope, as I feel more awake, I'll appreciate this sunrise more.

5:57

A dark rim of clouds around horizon to the East, with sky brightening above them. Some horizontal clouds tinged with deep dusty rose. Sky blue behind this but just to the East

5:59

Area brightens as I watch. The range of rose-colored clouds extends. It's like the release of a "brightening" gas which diffuses from a point on the horizon. The wind is light and seas small. AE rolls, side to side with sails luffing and banging occasionally.

6:02

Orange clouds line the horizon to the Southeast, but thick grey clouds mound above it. Greys are distinguished by density, it seems. These dark grey clouds, so menacing at night, seem quite manageable in daylight.

6:04

Wind picked up to 14 knots and our boat speed to 5.5 knots. That always feels so much better. It and the dawn are raising my spirits; maybe blood sugar up from cocoa I made myself at 5:15.

6:06

The dawn seems to happen behind the near grey clouds. They pile and drift and float in the foreground and keep their greyness. Dawn happens behind them, light blue sky, delicate salmon-colored clouds. This is happening from N to S to the E by compass. The W is still steel grey, but retreating. The horizon makes a circle 360 degrees around the Alter Ego -- Heaven knows where the nearest human beings are.

6:10

I'm moving out from my perch behind the dodger (canvas structure which blocks wind, spray and sun.), since I can't see the overhead sky. I had postponed doing that since all the cushions are

wet from the squall which came through at the start of the watch. Oh well, why not start the day wet? Helm chair not too wet, but now the man-overboard ring obscures the direct E horizon. However, the roll of the Alter Ego is such that I catch the dawn once each swing of the pendulum.

6:15

Lots of grey clouds still in E foreground but dawn colors intensify down along the E horizon. I cut my hair yesterday -- no mirror, just up on the deck, fingering and cutting and throwing hair into Pacific, using my shadow on the deck to guide my snips. Then I took a total salt water shampoo and soap down -- with fresh water rinse -- difficult, but not impossible. Tom claims the results are ravishing. Being the only woman within hundreds of miles can cut down on the competition in the "ravishing" department.

6:19

Along the range of NE horizon, sky has become white-blue. Toward the E, more intense orange hues of different shades are layered below the grey clouds, but the greyness is muting.

6:22

Wind up to 20 knots, speed over 6.5 knots. We've got ourselves some wind, some "spit rain," now real rain...back scurrying under the dodger, while dawn progresses without interruption. Weather on the big ocean is very local and transitory.

6:25

I don't need the mini-light to write anymore. The deep oranges are lifting to orange-gold -- to the N, the puffy grey clouds are tinged with light pink "soft to the touch." If I were trying to do a dawn sun sight it would be difficult since clouds will obscure the first appearance of the sun -- it will shine through the clouds with beams extending out -- just like on the "holy cards" I used to keep in my missal as a child.

6:33

Rain stopped minutes ago, now cockpit seats are all wet again. The sky to the SW and NW is catching the pink.

It's definitely a good morning, I'm feeling more awake.

6:39

The horizon cloud has a glowing edge. The sun is approaching -- a bird flies about a foot above the waves between me and the sunrise. Do they get blase because they've seen this since birth?

6:41

The sun appears -- I know because I can't stare at its arriving point anymore. The bird wheels on an updraft and disappears.

6:43

The clouds in front of the sun are sculpted in shining orange gold; the sun rises behind them, slowly favoring one cloud with a gold setting, then the layer above it. Nothing stops the sun from continuing its course -- not this journal, not the clouds.

6:46

The sun has found a cloud break and dominates the horizon. Day has begun!