



THE BEACON

Issue #4. January 1st 2026



THE CONCEPT OF A BEGINNING

Beginnings start with a full stop. They start with the end of another. Take this story for example, it started with the end of silence, the end of another thought, but simultaneously it started with the beginning of one of mine. Unlike a human's life, time is not so similar. While every person is born with the chance to grow older and slowly fade into the past, time is both eternal and instantaneous; every second brings a different entity and yet every entity must simultaneously interact. Despite this, we still very clearly can mark an end. The point in time where something ceases to occur, where it all just stops. But after that, no matter what happens a beginning occurs, even if it is the beginning of an end or the end, suggesting that neither can independently exist. When I was younger and reading one of the many novels I have since forgotten the title of, I was introduced to an idea that I have carried with me since discovering almost endings and true endings. An almost ending, in my understanding, is the point in a story where most people believe it to be the conclusion, the ending that takes a hard but easier path, a true ending. It's the pain that makes it beautiful. It's the ending that changes the soul. It's the ending where the main character decides their story isn't over and forces the start of a new chapter, this time without a pre-written plot to guide them. As we draw to the close of what could certainly be considered a chapter, some of us are faced with brand new beginnings, and others almost endings. To every student I have not yet met, congratulations; your next chapter is about to begin. If by some chance you are reading this, then I truly welcome you to what may become an unexpected turn in your story. I know you expect these next few months to change you, but what you don't expect,

what none of us originally expected, was just how different ourselves and our perception of life would become. But to all those leaving, I offer you a challenge: don't let Class Afloat be the most exciting chapter of your life. What you face now is your almost ending, your chance to say you crossed the Atlantic as a teenager and leave it at that, but how terribly boring that would be. Think about it, you crossed the Atlantic as a teenager, what will you do in your 20s, your 30s, for the rest of your incredibly complex and beautiful life? If there's anything you should've learned, it's how vast the world is, how big life can be, and how brave you are. Let your true ending be able to fill a storybook; let it be as wild as all those fairytales you read as a child. Let it be everything you might ever dream of, and then maybe, just maybe, a bit more. To any alumni, parents, and other loved ones reading, I offer a similar challenge; I do not know you nor your stories, but set yourself a goal, a grand, almost unimaginable goal. As I write this, I am honestly struck by the irony of this edition being released on January 1st, the same day people every year make so many goals they never keep. But this one you will, not keep for me, nor anyone else; choose the one thing you've always wanted to do, see, or experience, and promise yourself that you will, to the best of your abilities, achieve this by the end of your life. What I find so beautiful is that despite the fact that we are at an almost ending and such important people to us will hopping on their flights and not returning, it is also the beginning I know must be coming. I can't see it, and like most times I won't notice when it happens. I won't realise something new has begun until we're halfway to the end. I won't realise how close I am to a new chapter until it is virtually upon me, until I notice its louder twin, an ending, the conclusion of an action. Beginnings start with a full stop, and endings start with a beginning, the middle however, the middle is up to you.

— Claire Cuddihy



PICTURE ME

Picture me, a chubby twelve year old being dragged up a mountain with my brother and dad on a camping trip. The trail we were hiking was four and a half miles long with one and a half thousand feet of elevation gain, and I spent the whole trek up complaining. After three hours of not making much progress, my older brother decided he did not want me slowing him down anymore; this destroyed me. I felt embarrassed and ashamed and desperately wanted to quit. However, when we finally got to our campsite I was blown away by the beauty of Lake Angeles; the snowy mountains reflected on the perfectly still water while the summer sun shone over the peaks. I did not know it at the time, but the struggle I had to overcome made the view at the top so much more breathtaking. If you had told me on the way up that I would not want to come back down, I would not have believed you, but there I was, already planning our next backpacking trip. As what was once impossible became easy for me, I started looking for longer term adventures to push my boundaries and expand my horizons.

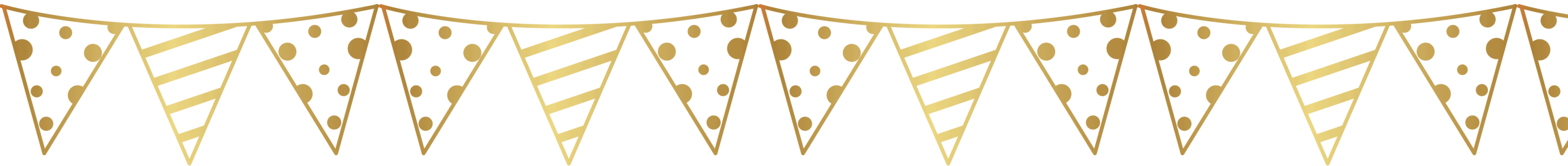
Picture me now, a less chubby fifteen year old portaging between the boundary waters in Minnesota. This twenty-six day trip with Outward Bound was by far my longest and most ambitious yet, but I was not daunted by that challenge. Instead, my challenge was to take initiative and become a leader, helping anyone who might struggle like I did at Lake Angeles. I volunteered to carry the heaviest bags and biggest canoes, I took on the role of navigator, and I encouraged my peers by setting clear goals. At the end of the voyage, lying on the sunny dock as "Breathe" by Pink Floyd played, I realized I had played a vital role in getting the group to that triumphant moment. I was eager to see what feats I might tackle next.

Picture me now, suspended thirty-four meters above the water packing a sail on a tall ship, my home and school for the next nine months. Surprisingly, the hardest challenge is not waking up in the middle of the night to pull ropes in the freezing wind. It is not adjusting to cultural norms in different countries every week or trying to learn when your teacher and half the class are incapacitated by seasickness. It is learning to prioritize what is truly important to me. I have learned to embrace the seemingly mundane moments because I now see them as part of the overall adventure. For every fleeting moment spent dancing in the Sahara Desert with Berber hosts or paddling through the Amazon rainforest to reach an ecolodge, there are countless hours spent studying with peers, catching up on much needed sleep or even scrubbing the public toilets. Class Afloat has inspired me to choose my own path while also understanding what needs to be done to reach this level of freedom.

I know that Class Afloat will not be the biggest adventure of my life. University will be another challenging adventure filled with new people, new ideas and new opportunities to grow. There will be a period of adjustment and some tasks may seem impossible at first, but I have learned the skills necessary to stay focused on my goals and persevere until what was once impossible becomes easy. I have grown so much through my outdoor experiences and my time with Class Afloat, but I know this is only the beginning.

— Max Brown





A LETTER TO OUR PARENTS



A letter to our parents
written not in haste
but rather with time moving
at an incredible pace

to us the time has flown
while for you it must drag on
yet miles away from home
our story is half way done

the time away has changed us
more than you'd expect
and the time stuck out at sea
has forced us to reflect

for some the change is subtle
while for others it is loud
Yet look very closely
And you'll see it in our crowd



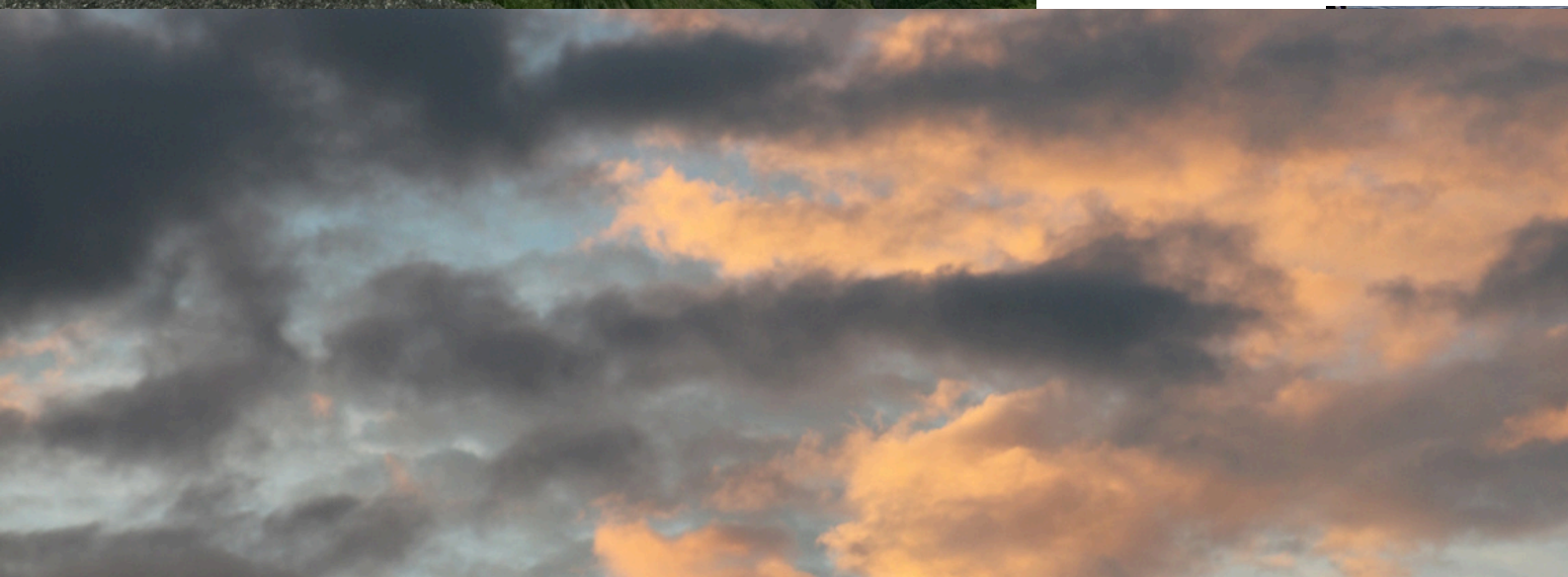
A letter to our parents
Just before we're with you
The time away from us
has probably changed you too

Perhaps you feel the same
and some of you may be
But you have grown also
by watching your children leave

and grow again you will
as we leave for the second time
and trust me when i say
neither of us will be fine

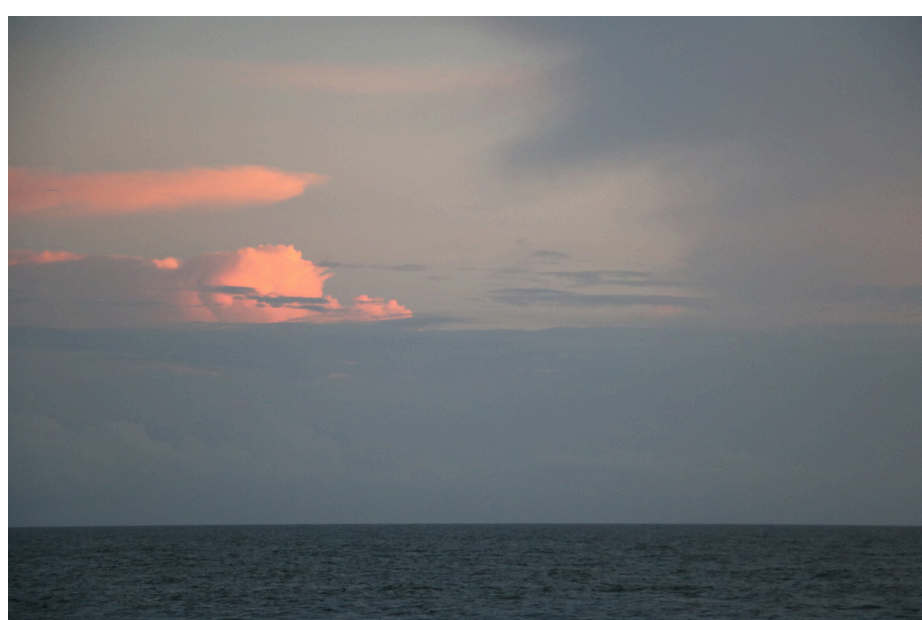
but then you'll be back home
and us back on the sea
and we'll carry those moments with us
out while sailing free.

— Claire Cuddihy



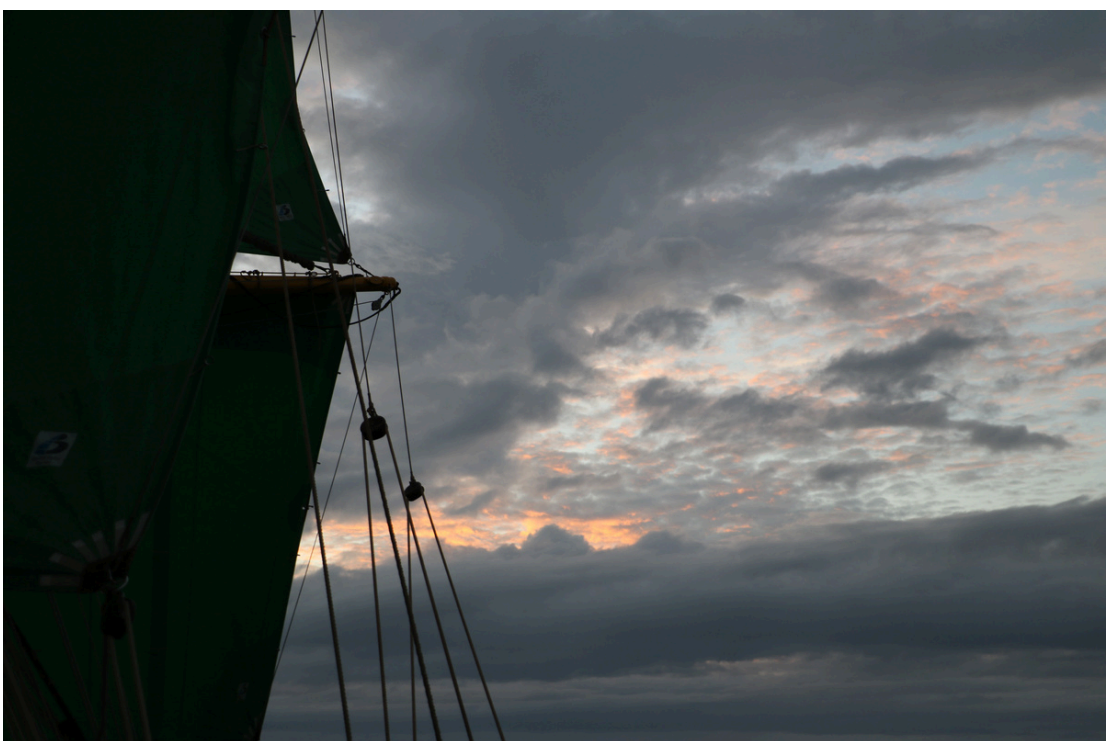
AND NOW, THE INTERMISSION

Much like any good play, this story also has its intermission, the time when its actors no longer play a role; they rest and change. So allow me, the narrator, to take over and retell the story so far in a very abrupt version. We started off four months ago in Germany, where nearly all of us lugged our heavy bags through Berlin's streets and onto a bus bound for our first stop, Natura Ferienpark, about an hour outside of Berlin. Here, on the very first day, we played games and learned to work in a team, but for the next two weeks we also learned how to get along with one another, and yes even wake up for Colours. It was an interesting two weeks with the teachers and the 48 of us students, but we made it work, even if we thought some of the rules were rubbish. In true Class Afloat style, just as we settled into a rhythm, we moved and soon found ourselves on a bus bound for a completely different country. Yet, before any real hullabaloo had gone on, we were in the Netherlands just outside Heino in a 'Canadian' style summer camp. Although the food was lacking and we found out just how many foods can actually be deep fried, the entertainment was not. There was a large oval, high ropes and obstacle course to keep us busy and let's not forget the lake that took up nearly half of the property, the mini golf course, and the canoes, which bobbed on said lake. If Berlin was about learning how to work in a team, then Heino was about really nailing the little bits. We split from our bubble watches and joined our ship watches. We had to completely relearn everything about our watch on the fly. We had many a wide game, with the watch olympics truly being the pinnacle. Watch Five naturally won. Then, seemingly before any time had passed, we were off, and once again on a bus back to Germany, but this time our stop was Bremerhaven.



I don't think any of us are able to put into words the feeling of seeing the Alex for the first time. In fact, I don't think any of us can describe the completely insane feeling of the first few days on board. But once again we adapted, and soon nearly all of us were used to waking up for watch, climbing the rigging, and even chores, which happen straight after Colours every morning. Soon enough, we were casting off the mooring lines and venturing out into the vast, open ocean. Although many of us found it so incredibly magical, I think there was an equal amount of us who, in the first few days looked a little green, or gray in some cases. However, after a few days most of us found our sea legs, just in time to lose them again in Cherbourg. I must say, Cherbourg and I did not agree, with disgustingly cold temperatures and far too much rain, my Australian blood was calling for somewhere less French, no offense to the French. Despite my misgivings, many of us found it a wonderful unexpected break from the unnatural rocking and rolling of the sea and took to nearby restaurants and shops. Once again we had to leave, this time skipping our scheduled stop and landing in Vigo instead of Lisbon, in the hopes of avoiding the brunt of the storms. For once, I'm not complaining. Vigo was a place most of us had never heard of before and it turned out to be a hidden gem, with sprawling hills and twisting streets. There was always something new to explore, which was good because we were stuck there for seven days. Those days were of course filled with excitement, with runs and shopping trips, and yes, don't worry parents, lots of educational port programs. Although most of them were about sustainable fishing and industry standards, there were a couple that stuck out. One was the musical history of Vigo, which became rather interactive at times, and surprisingly, included bagpipes. The second was a ferry ride to an island used for many things over the years, but most recently as an isolation and immigration point for the port. It seems that the crew of the Alex didn't want to be the next sailors stuck there because as soon as the storm cleared, it was full steam ahead to Casablanca.

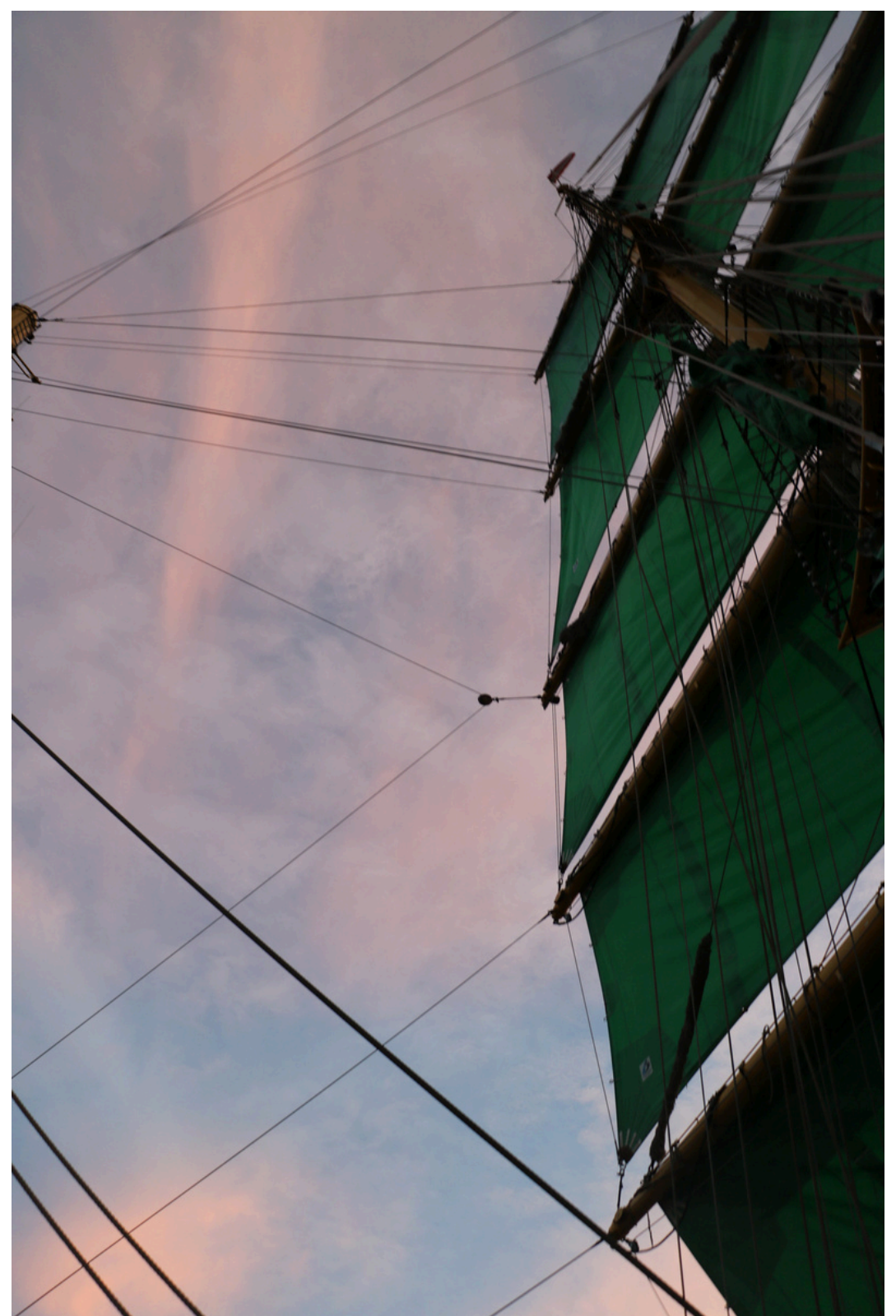
I could write a whole story on Morocco alone but for now I shall stick to a very very abrupt version. We landed in Casablanca and very early the next morning, we were off to a town on the edge of the desert. With its high built markets, this became a popular place for us to do some shopping. No rest for the wicked, however, as after only one night, we were back on the bus going over the highest mountain range in Africa, and yes nearly getting blown off said mountain. Just as soon as the wind started, though, it was back on the bus, this time down the mountain. We spent this night in a town that was really on the edge of the desert. Apparently, that wasn't close enough so we boarded the bus the next morning and we finally, finally got to go into the desert. As we got off the bus, we were greeted by the sight of nearly thirty camels ready to carry us all the way into the dunes of the Sahara, and that they did, with Pickles and Mr. Pickles and the rest of them. Yes, I'm biased; no, the other camel names don't matter. The night we spent in the dunes was mythical; the sky was so clear. An unimaginable view to drift off to greeted anyone who slept out on the dunes. The night's activities also didn't disappoint, with a campfire singalong and a lot of star gazing. The next morning, it was back out again, this time with a stop in a village that has been making pottery the same way for over 200 years. Finally, it was nearly nonstop travel all the way back to the ship. Once again, we hightailed it to Madeira for our first Parent Port. Before I even had time to catch up on sleep, we were landing in Madeira, where nearly all of our parents were watching from the docks, welcoming us into port. We each went on our separate adventures from there, but all too soon for most, we were bound for Tenerife. Despite our short time in Tenerife, we packed the adventure in with beach days and hikes up volcanoes. It could not be more varied, however, two days after landing once more we cast off our lines and left.



The winds brought us to Cabo Verde, which is good because that's where we wanted to go. While still at anchor, we held swim call and nearly everyone of, students and teachers alike, ended up jumping into the deep blue ocean. We had our students watching out for sharks and no one got even a nibble. Once alongside, our quest for wifi started, as nearly no one had any working internet to text their friends and family back home. I think a lot of us can agree that it was the port program that stole the show this time, with long drives through beautiful national parks and even a stop at the beach. We spent the day learning about the culture that was on display throughout the island. Once again, we were away far too quickly, this time on a sail that would truly test our resolve: the Atlantic crossing. The Atlantic crossing was something no words could describe, with clear skies and stunning constellations, our night was lit up by a mass of stars. On Christmas Day, we both worked hard and played hard, both Germans and Canadians. With swim calls, there was always something to look forward to. But before we knew it, and almost disappointingly, we arrived in Suriname where we are currently, as you read this, staying in the jungle after motoring up the river to port where we had some, um, technical difficulties. But don't worry, I'm told it's normal. And that is where our story ends for now, sitting in the middle of a rainforest in Suriname, South America.

Fair winds and following seas,

— The Narrator



RECIPES OF THE MONTH

Chocolate Chip Cookies

- 3 cups salted butter softened
- 3 cups granulated sugar
- 3 cups light brown sugar
- 6tsp vanilla extract
- 6 large eggs
- 9 cups all purpose flour
- 3tsp baking soda
- 1.5tsp baking powder
- 3tsp sea salt
- 6 cups chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 190 degrees celcius. Line three trays with parchment paper and set aside.

In a medium bowl mix flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Set aside.

Cream together butter and sugar until combined.

Beat in eggs and vanilla until light.

Mix in dry ingredients until combined. Add chocolate chips and mix well.

Rolls out cookies and then bake in a preheated oven for 8 - 10 mins.

Enjoy!

Peanut Butter Balls

- Cornflakes, to acquired taste of crunchiness
- ½ cup creamy peanut butter
- 3tbsp salted butter softened
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- Cooking chocolate (to melt)
- Vegetable oil/coconut oil/canola oil/sunflower oil

Mix the peanut butter and softened butter in a medium bowl. Gradually add in sugar until fully combined, mix in cornflakes. Place in the fridge to firm up.

Roll into balls of the desired size and refrigerate for a minimum of 20 minutes or until firm.

Meanwhile melt chocolate and add oil to maintain thickness of the chocolate.

Dip balls into chocolate and refrigerate allowing them to fully set. Enjoy!

THE IRVING JOHNSON MEMORIAL GAMES

The Olympics involved 10 events. Well, 9 events and a skit really. For the past weeks, all watches have been preparing so tensions have been running high. The Olympics ended with Watch One winning, but let's look at how that happened. The first event was the quickest and neatest harbour furl; the shortest time determines the overall winner but the neatness is per bracket. In the end, Watch Five got the fastest time, even with a five second penalty. Their time was 1 minute 38 seconds, plus 5 seconds, so 1.43 mins. Watches 1, 4, and 5 won for neatness in their brackets. The next event was the quickest time setting the vorstengestagsegel with one of the watch members acting as the toppsi. In the end, it was a close race with the top 2 times within 2 seconds of each other. Despite Watch 5 snapping at their heels, it was Watch 4 that was the fastest with a time of 56 seconds. The last team event was the clar deck, which ended with Watch 3 landing on top. Even with penalties, they had a time of 2.00 minutes flat. So far, it had been a pretty close competition, but it soon became obvious that the individual events would truly set the game in motion. The first challenge was the longest time helming within 2 degrees of the set course. With a remarkable time of 4 minutes and 3 seconds, Angelo from Watch Five dominated the first individual event. The next win went to Grace from Watch 4, who completed the set knot list the fastest while blindfolded. What came next was the metaphorical sprints of our Olympics: the fastest belay of the mooring lines. Using a knock-out style of round, Watch 5 took out this event and Max their champion also secured a clear win with a mindblowing time of 7.3 seconds. Next was the eye splice and, of course, this was the quickest time to full completion. In this event we needed a tie breaker as Dawson (Watch 2) and Mariandre (Watch 4) both completed their splice in 1 minute 35 seconds. After mistakes from both competitors, in their showdown, Dawson recovered quicker and won the event. Down to the final two events tensions were running high and everyone clamoured to watch.

First was Fizz quiz, a game where participants blindly draw pin names from a hat, or yogurt tub, and stand anywhere on deck. When the adjudicator called go, everyone unfolded their paper and raced to get to their pin. Points were only given if the first person got the correct pin. After a few redos, the games ended with points tallies as such: Jacob (Watch 3) 2 points, Claire (Watch 5) 2 points, and the winner Mau (Watch 1) getting a grand 6 points. That left one event before the skit: the survival suit donning race. In time trial fashion, Watch 5, led by Emeric, landed on top with a time of 32 seconds. Let's just say he's not dying anytime soon. So that concluded all the seamanship events and the point tallies were as follows.

- 1st Place - Watch 5, 23 points
- 2nd Place - Watch 4, 22 points
- 3rd Place - Watch 3, 16 points
- 4th Place - Watch 1, 12 points
- 5th Place - Watch 2, 8 points
- 6th Place - Watch 6, 0 +1 pity points

For the skit, teams had the chance to wager points and of course every team went all in, double or nothing. Yes, that meant that nothing before the skit mattered. Despite Watch 4's beautiful rendition of one of the scenes from Mean Girls, thanks to the guys from their watch, Watch 1 won the skit and thus claimed gold at the Irving Johnson Memorial Games Watch Olympics.



OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

Time: 1332 UTC
Date: 01.01.2026
Weather: 30 degrees Celsius, disgustingly humid
Sea State: 1
Wind: 1kn
Location: Amazon Rainforest, Suriname
Sailing Status: At berth
Kms Travelled: 2220
NM Travelled: 7293
Days till Graduation: 147



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO...

- Amelia, who turned 17
- Teagan, who turned 16
- Klava, who turned 19



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“I’VE FAILED SO MANY TIMES NOT SUCCEEDING NOW IS STATISTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE.”
- ABIGAIL OWEN

