

THE BEACON

Issue #8. May 1st 2026



A STEP FORWARD

During our time on the Alex II, I've grown an immeasurable amount, be it improving my relationships with fellow shipmates or learning a whole new world aboard the Alex. Earning the Irving Johnson award alongside Claire is my greatest and proudest moment. Just like me, Telemachus experiences a coming-of-age. He takes an immense step towards finding his father. In that moment, he grows from a child who need his father's protection into a man who can take care of not only himself, but also his mother and those pesky suitors. I can clearly understand how my life turned around after the start of our journey. I became more extroverted, albeit I remain somewhat shy, as well as more kind towards my peers. I realize how much better I have become; the journey of my growth can be seen throughout our port programs and most importantly, our sea watches. They're the reason I have grown so much. Braving the ruthless seas together brought us closer than I'd ever been to anyone before. Those nights spent together, rocking side by side while stargazing and chatting about life, are what makes this experience unforgettable. Telemachus and I are similar in a way, as we both became better versions of ourselves each passing day. Your experiences shape your future, but only if you let go of the past.

-Edouard Roussin

MY OWN ODYSSEY

When I joined the Alexander von Humboldt II, my journey didn't begin the same way as everyone else's. I came aboard in Barbados, while the others had already been sailing together for three months. I felt like I was stepping into the middle of a story that had already been written, similar to how you feel when you open the first page of The Odyssey, which begins in medias res after the Trojan War.

At first, I felt uncomfortable and a bit out of place because of all the close friendships that had already been built. I felt as if I could never catch up to them. I also felt that way about their sail training and knowledge.

Even though it was challenging, I didn't give up. I pushed myself to learn everything about sailing, as well as staying open and positive. Despite being older and new, I eventually felt as if I belonged and was part of the crew, which meant a lot to me. This approach to a dilemma is also a characteristic of Odysseus. He never gave up on trying to return home to Ithaca, even though the odds were against him.

Looking back, I'm proud of how I handled this experience. By the end of this journey, I had not only adapted but grown. On the last day in Bremerhaven, I even passed my sailing exam and became an Ordinary Seaman. That moment felt like a reward for all the effort I had put in. The journey wasn't easy, but it made the destination even more meaningful.

-Luca Luboschik



COMFORT IN DISCOMFORT

When I first got on the Alex II, I was lost and worried like Odysseus once he washed up on Calypso's island. During my first few weeks onboard, I slowly distanced myself from others and didn't make any friends for quite some time. All I wanted to do was remain in my comfort zone forever without any risks. However, after some time I started to realize how others around me were acting. Everybody was friend with everybody, making new memories and having fun. Seeing how I was leaving myself out of all the fun, I was filled with determination to leave my comfort zone and make new friends. This is just like how Odysseus was filled with determination to leave Calypso's island and return to his people.

During this time, I stopped doing lookout and started doing helm. Watch after Watch, I kept doing helm until I heard about the Watch Olympics. Hearing this, I was filled with uncertainty, but also determination and courage. I HAD to compete on helm and prove to everybody and myself that I was truly dedicated. This is just like how Odysseus was determined to survive Poseidon's wrath while he sailed from Calypso's island to return to his loved ones. As the days started counting down, bring the Watch Olympics closer and closer, I focused more and more on my helm skills until it was finally time.

I stepped onto the helm platform and was given a course: 120. I grabbed the wheel and was given some time to adjust myself until I was ready. Once I felt the time had come, I told Andy to start the stopwatch. I gave the wheel all I had. Minutes followed minutes as time slowed down and I locked in. Once I finally went off course, Andy stopped the timer and read the numbers: four minutes and some seconds to spare. Hearing this, I felt like a hot air balloon floating through a blue sky and wanted to celebrate. However, I felt weak, having given all my focus and energy to the wheel. Nobody beat my score that day and I remained number one. Ever since that day, I have had more courage and motivation to work towards being better and socializing and finding comfort in discomfort.

-Angelo Romano

HOME

I have enjoyed building relationships with everybody and I am excited to see how they will develop once we go back to land. However, part of my is worried for what comes after, once we all won't be living together anymore. Once we all go our separate ways, I truly worry about the amount of friends I might lose. I imagine it could feel similar to how Odysseus felt after the Trojan War, or how Calypso felt once Odysseus was able to leave her island. I feel like it is hard to get away from people on the ship, which after getting used to, I don't mind anymore. But when I get home, there will just be a silence that will feel louder to me than any noise I have ever heard on the ship. Before the program, I was very much an introvert, but now it feels like I've forgotten how to be entertained while being alone. Although I suppose a difference between my situation and Odysseus's or Calypso's is that there is nothing really stopping me from talking to anyone from the ship at any time, but it obviously won't feel the same as a real face to face conversation. Another difference between us is that there are no higher beings or gods stopping me from seeing people again, nor am I a hated man by many. At least I can feel the closure of this school year, like watching sand fall in an hourglass. It gives the same feeling as knowing you have an upcoming test. But something that The Odyssey taught me is that you will make friends wherever you go. I believe xenia is still present, like with the kind locals in the Dominican Republic and Morocco, it just takes more time to find it than in The Odyssey.

-Luca Dearsley



FEARLESS?

One moment from my time on the Alex 2 that I'll never forget was climbing the rigging in 48 km/h winds to furl pack a square sail that was flapping like crazy. It was honestly terrifying. The ship was moving on a 26 degree tilt, the wind was blowing so strongly, and the sail kept flapping around like it had a mind of its own. No one else except Ali in our watch wanted to go up and I didn't blame them. Even Sandra, our watch lead, was explaining that it wasn't safe but had to be done, but something in me decided I should do it because if I didn't I would regret it forever. After all, getting out of my comfort zone is the reason I decided to do this program. So, I told myself I could, even if at that point my teeth were chattering. Ali and I went up together.

When we got to the obermast, it was absolute chaos. The wind was so strong it was making the sail flap up, like it was trying to throw us off the yard. At one point, the force literally pushed me off, and I landed on the untermast yard below. My harness saved my life, and for a second I was frozen in complete shock, but I pulled myself back up. Ali was hugging the yard with his arms and legs trying to stay on while I tried to tie the sail down. Even though we were scared, we were laughing through it. I remember yelling to Ali, "Remember when we met in the coffee shop in Montreal and now we're here!" It felt unreal. By the time we climbed back down, we were both so proud. We had faced something scary and hadn't chickened out.

This experience reminds me a lot of *The Odyssey*, especially the main character Odysseus. Throughout his journey, Odysseus faces dangerous and unpredictable challenges, like storms at sea after leaving Calypso's island or powerful enemies, and he often has to act even when he's afraid. One example that relates to my experience is when Odysseus sails past the monster Scylla. Scylla is a terrifying sea monster with multiple heads, each ready to snatch sailors off the ship. He knows it's dangerous and that some of his crew might not make it, but he still has to push forward and lead through fear.

Like Odysseus, I didn't have control over the situation; the wind, the movement of the ship, and the sail were all stronger than me. But I had control over my reaction to the situation. I think that's where the connection really stands out. Odysseus isn't fearless; he just doesn't let fear stop him. In that moment on the rigging, I felt the same way. I was scared the whole time, but I pushed through anyway in order to accomplish something I knew I had the strength to do.

However, there are differences. Odysseus is often portrayed as a strong, confident leader, while I felt unsure and nervous. I wasn't leading a crew, I was just trying to do my part. But maybe that's what makes the connection more meaningful. It shows me that courage doesn't always look like confidence. Sometimes it looks like climbing anyway, even when your teeth start chattering.

This experience helped me understand that I'm capable of more than I think, especially when things feel uncomfortable or scary. I can use that feeling of uncertainty and nerves to move forward. It also helped me see *The Odyssey* in a more personal way. Odysseus's journey isn't just about epic battles or imaginary creatures, it's about facing fear, pushing through challenges, and growing from those events. This is why Odysseus appears so confident as a whole. That day up in the rigging felt like part of my very own odyssey.

-Alyssa Roy

FATHOMS UNFATHOMABLE

The yellow skeleton stretches endlessly
Piercing cloudless blue

Red dots move along a network of cords
Veins globules make their way through

The vast green lungs inhale
With each breath, the beast charges forth anew

I don't move.

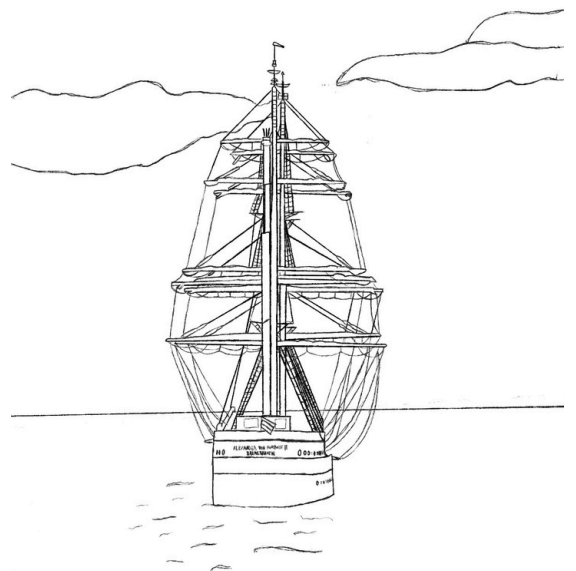
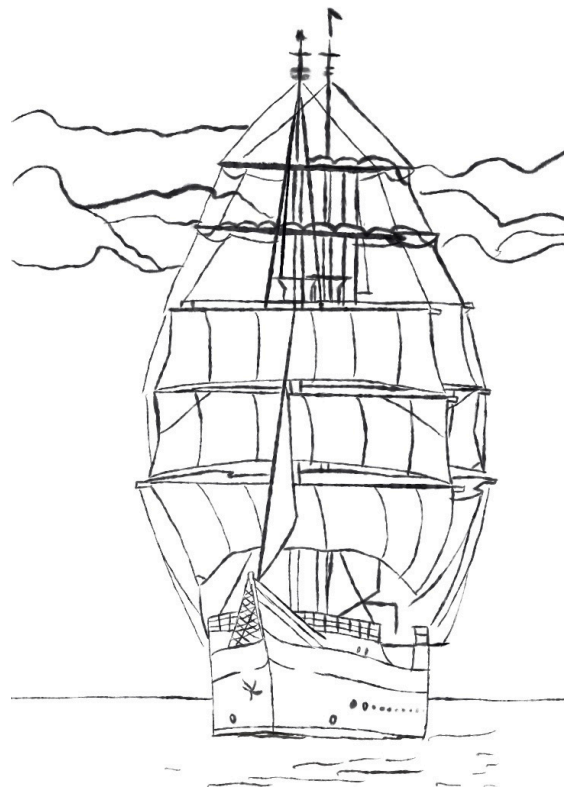
I'm suspended in the ebb and flow
That ceaseless truth
of fathoms unfathomable

-Emma Smith

JIGSAW PIECES

I came to the Alex confident but breaking on the inside. I knew what was going on at all times because I knew how to sail but I was terrified of the people around me. By the second week on board, I could tell you the meaning of every command they gave us both in German and in English, but still I was scared to make friends. By the end of the first month, I could lead sail manoeuvres but I couldn't tell you much more than the names of the people around me. By the time we started our first Atlantic crossing, I was working as crew because in my own efforts to distract myself from the terror I had in getting to know people, I had become someone my peers didn't want to know. I saw my parents over semester break and that's when things began to change. They expected to see me, but the "me" from before, the one that was angry, and selfish, and didn't let anyone in. But even if I hadn't seen it, I'd changed, and it meant I could change more. In the second semester I stopped caring so much, I let people see who I am when you get to know me, and I made friends. I was scared at first but it seems I picked the right people to let in because since then they have only changed me for the better. These days I still spend a lot of time in the rig, but I do it for the love of it, not to avoid people. These days I am just as likely to chill with my friends or joke with someone I barely talk to because I can. That's because they accepted me, even when I wasn't ready to accept them. It seems stupid when people say, "Class Afloat changed my life" and I am by no means saying that, but the people I've been lucky enough to live with for the last eight months? They definitely have, and I can't thank them enough.

— Claire Cuddihy



WHAT IS YOUR MOST EPIC MOMENT OF THE YEAR?

Backflipping off the tip of the ship

Catching tarantulas in the Suriname jungle

Morocco

When we were 100 degrees off course and I got hit by a sail. I got it on video too

When we climbed the dunes of the Sahara Desert at night

Doing a flip into a hundred foot waterfall

Jumping off the boat during swim call

Packing the kleuver in heavy weather and noticing dolphins beneath me

Jumping off the bow and belly flopping

Hitting four homeruns back to back in the DR

Swimming on the beach and in the lagoon in the DR. The waves were huge!

We were one of the last watches coming into the Azores after the Atlantic crossing and the Kleuver needed to be packed. The ship was crashing into the water and it was super stormy. I felt like a real pirate!

It was our third watch and Bjorn took us climbing at sea for the first time, during a storm. It took us an hour, but we tied a sail.

When I was in the rigging and lightning started

I was on the first platform and fighter jets passed by

The rapids in Suriname

Contraception lesson in bio

Being escorted out of Vigo Bay by a million dolphins

When I caught my first fish on the boat

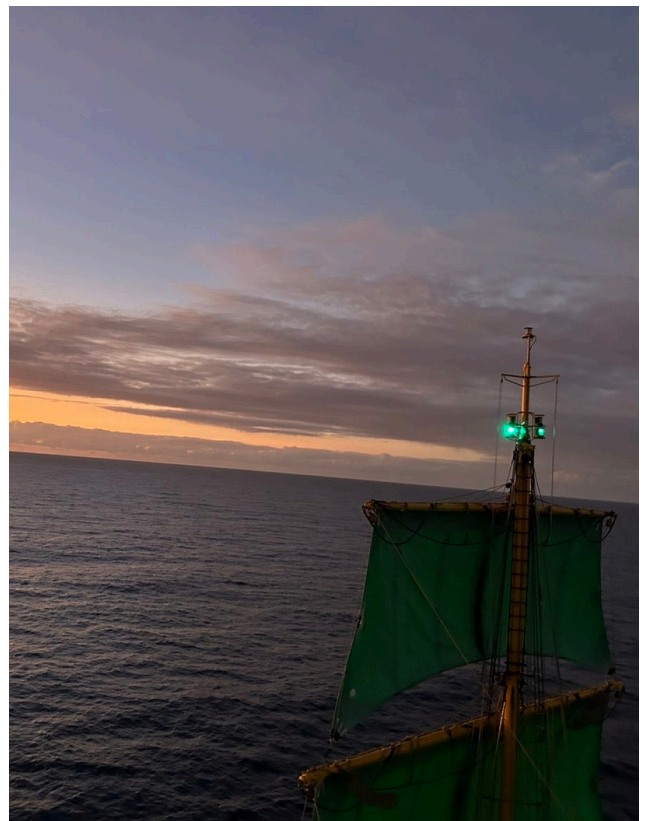
Watching the rocket as we passed by Cape Canaveral

Searching for any sign of the flares

Christmas morning on the ship

Spending the first two hours of being 16 on watch in the rigging

Standing 24 hour watches



AN EPIC STORY

It probably seems a bit aggrandising to compare our time on the Alex II to the voyages of ancient heroes, but I would be lying if I said that these connections don't flood to the surface every time we read about great old trips across oceans, sailors braving stormy seas, and adventures plotting their course to far away coasts in search of adventure. Exemplifying this is the story of *Jason and the Argonauts*, an epic poem recounting the quest to find and recover the Golden Fleece from the far away island of Colchis. Though there are countless moments in this myth that are comparable to this past semester, to me none is more relevant than moment the crew of the *Argo* set off from Iolcus and embarked on their seemingly impossible quest across the ocean.

Much like us, they left their homes and gathered together to seek out a great adventure and join a crew of people who they had never met, on a boat they had never seen before. They trusted this vessel, built by the famed shipwright Argos and the Goddess Athena, to carry them through the open sea, past mythical monsters, and into the realm of a foreign king. They relied on the brute force of their coordinated rowing for propulsion and maintained motivation by sharing their unique skills with each other along the way, and though the journey certainly changed them, the ship and (most of) its crew eventually reached Iolcus.

Though thankfully we did not run into Scylla and Charybdis, or face the wrath of Harpies and Stymphalian Birds, we never the less still had to work together to finish our voyage successfully. From dropping everything to lend a hand in an all hands manoeuvre to staying up together playing Mario Kart when the boat was rocking too much to sleep, we began to look out for each other in a way that surpasses friendship. The annoyance that often contrasts and exists alongside the fierce loyalty and care we show for each other is much more akin to the kind of relationship you see between siblings, and it makes sense to me why its said that your crew mates become your family, because no matter what they do or say you still can't help but look out for them and love them through it all.

– Anya DeCaires



OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

Time: 1331 UTC

Ship Time: 1531 (+2 hours)

Date: 01.05.2026

Weather: 15 degrees Celsius, clear skies,

Sea State: Grassy

Wind: Non existent

Location: Avilla, Spain

Sailing Status: Ship yard

Kms Travelled: 4910

NM Travelled: 14739

Days till Graduation: 23



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO...

- Gavin, who turned 18
- Mr Matt, who is our darling chem teacher
- Jacqueeeee, who is 25... again
- Elena, who turned 17
- Sasha, who turned 17



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“NOT ALL WHO WANDER ARE LOST.”
-J.R.R TOLKIN

