

July 16th, 2008

Day 52: Zen and the Art of Ocean Rowing



Today I have been listening to Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. I've read it before, in March 2004 - it was one of the many books on philosophy and religion that I gorged on during a self-imposed one-month retreat in a cottage on the windswept west coast of Ireland - and which lay the groundwork for my decision in August that year to row the Atlantic.

It's been good to read it again, and to be reminded of certain lessons. One of those lessons was about "stuckness" - something I've certainly been able to relate to recently. According to the book, a certain amount of stuckness is to be expected in any challenging undertaking (be it mending a motorcycle or rowing an ocean) but if you persevere through the stuckness you can always resolve the problem. Eventually.

I got pretty stuck under the Golden Gate Bridge when I first set out from San Francisco. I thought the tide would never let me through. I battled it for about half an hour - then, just as the camera crew was packing up to go home, the tide changed and/or I moved over closer to the north pylon and passed out into the open ocean.

Then I got stuck again at 124 degrees West. For a very long time.

And I may well get stuck again. Weather will do that to you.

But I've accepted that progress is rarely linear. In all kinds of contexts, on dry land as well as on the water, I've often slogged away at something and wondered if I will ever break through. And, 9 times out of 10, I have - although often the breakthrough has come about in a surprising way. Like I'll have been working away on one potential sponsor for ages - and then a generous donation comes from an entirely different quarter.

Or when I was looking for a life purpose - I knew what my values were and knew that they would guide me towards it, but I couldn't find the actual Thing that would meet those criteria - until one day, when I wasn't even thinking about it, the answer hit me like a thunderbolt from the blue.

I sometimes feel like the universe is testing me. I have to put in the donkey work, and eventually I get my reward - just not always from the direction I expected. Einstein once said that problems are rarely solved on the level at which they were created. He also reckoned that he wasn't any smarter than the next person (hmm, debatable), he just stuck at problems for longer.

All of which leads me to the conclusion that often the difference between failure and success is perseverance.

Other stuff:

Position at 2145 15th July Pacific Time, 0445 16th July UTC: 25 47.506'N, 131 14.001'W.

Been going great guns today. The wind has been coming out of the NE, and has been strong enough to create a swell also from that direction, both of which have helped me along. Strange weather though - lots of sunshine but also the occasional big black raincloud. I've had my buckets out a couple of times today, but the actual rainfall has been minimal. So no hair-washing just yet!

Any rumours (MarineTrack) that I have been doing 5 knots are probably much exaggerated. 3 knots possibly, but 5 would be the stuff of dreams!

Thanks to all the regulars for the lovely messages.

Click here to see [Day 52 of the Atlantic Crossing](#) 21st January 2005, Blue Skies and Cable Ties - more problems with broken oars.

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**16 Jul 2008 04:53:52Z | Roger**

Rita! Please intercept and/or filter this personal note to YOU! See, some of us have received orders from "floating headquarters" in the Pacific, to stop "chatting you up" !! LaUgHiNG !! But we do love your little side notes and would welcome another blog post soon, because we share in your enthusiasm and pride for the lovely lady in the ocean with lots of perseverance. OH! Hi Roz! Your pretty "blues" just exactly match the blue ocean! Have fun and may it rain gently! **Roger F.**

16 Jul 2008 05:14:08Z | **Mariya**

Nice visor!!! Represent yo ;-) A las ninas!!! Give mother ocean my love! I miss her. See you soon!

16 Jul 2008 06:03:45Z | **Rita**

**Thanks Roger** - nice to have a supporter! Cheers, Rita.

16 Jul 2008 06:54:30Z | **Chris Martin**

I saw something a few days ago. You'll only ever need 2 pieces of equipment. Duct tape and WD-40. If it moves and it shouldn't use the duct tape and if it doesn't move but should use the WD-40. The other one was if you hit something with a hammer and it still doesn't work you've got an electrical problem! Not sure either of these can help with the stuckness that you're in at the moment but I'm sure you'll come through soon. Take it easy.

16 Jul 2008 08:25:44Z | **Currin**

Hi Roz, I thought you might enjoy this bit of 'wisdom' that I found a few years ago, and refer to at tough times: "Adversity" is not an adequate deterrent. Forget the word impossible, there is no such thing. There is only the untried, the 'INTREPID' among us take great pride in proving the impossible, quite simply isn't. (LandRover Ad in Adv Mag) I made my Blue Plege and "bike commute everyday." Enjoying your blogs and pods. Currin

16 Jul 2008 09:18:02Z | **Gene Rubio**

Hi Roz, You're looking happy. That's the kind of news I like to see. I catch your drift on what you're saying about succeeding. Funny thing is that I always say to people that if you're pushing yourself forward in the right direction, avoid getting stuck in neutral which will take you nowhere. We all need that straightforward attitude to accomplish what we desire. The difficult part is living it. It may even

take a lifetime before we can truly understand what makes us tick. And yes Ocean Lady, you will persevere.

16 Jul 2008 09:25:35Z | **John H**

**Roger is right**, blue eyes, blue ocean..and blue cap, very pretty. Another one down...131!!! Are you spending an hour a day on the water maker? I had another thought, it would be fun to rig up a still to collect the water boiled off when you cook!...Cheers, and another good day...oh, the book I ordered on E-Bay arrived....."Collapse"...I will be reading that next. I ordered and watched the movie "Deep Water" last yer, pretty telling on the human mind. I also have completed 11 of my 40 hours, and 10 trees. You inspire me!

16 Jul 2008 12:08:29Z | **danhoyle**

Roz, keep up your perseverance..you are a great inspiration. Dan.

16 Jul 2008 12:42:24Z | **Andy Speidel**

One of the first things I do when I get into work is check out your blog, and I always let out a silent sigh of relief when I see that an update has been posted. It's really cool to paste in your latest coordinates into Google Earth and watch the earth spin to your current location (which keeps creeping closer to Hawaii!). Way to go! Regards, Andy

16 Jul 2008 12:44:20Z | **Jim Bell**

Waiting for you in Australia Roz! What part of our coast are you planning to aim for? Really enjoy the blog and the podcast.

16 Jul 2008 13:08:41Z | **greg k**

Congratulations on your progress Roz! You continue to be an inspiration to me. Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance is one of my favorite all-time books! His second book Lola is also VERY GOOD - about a sailing trip from what i recall. Is that Mike Birds Naau hat you are wearing?

16 Jul 2008 13:28:46Z | **Dana Clark**

Hi Roz, Been really busy lately and some comp.problems!!! Had to catch up to you some this morning hon!!! Your moving right along and looking good honey...;-) You take care and still no appreciable rain yet huh? Love Ya, Row On!!!!!! Pretty girl!!! Dana

16 Jul 2008 13:43:40Z | **Katharine Weber**

"Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance".... I LOVED that book years ago. I think I'm going to re-read it, with you in mind this time. I remember I thought the book was brilliant! What a great book for you to be into right now.

16 Jul 2008 14:22:52Z | **Kirk Allen**

Hi Roz, Your comment, "the difference between failure and success is perseverance" hit home for me. That's been much of my trouble throughout life. Thanks for giving me some true food for thought and action there! I had to laugh at **Roger's post regarding your stop chatting Rita up post**. I'm laughing as I type this. **I'm with Roger**, I think of lot of us share in the pride that your Mum has for you. I, too, always enjoy her interjected comments along your journey and would just naturally welcome a separate blog spot for her thoughts/feelings. Love Ya, Roz, keep on perservering. I know you will. Kirk-

16 Jul 2008 14:31:22Z | **Chuck Julian**

When you were here in Holly, you were lamenting that you had gained some weight since the Atlantic row. From your photo today, it looks like you have lost that and maybe a little more. Make sure you get those calories in. We don't want you wasting away. Seeing you pursue your dreams is always an inspiration. : }

16 Jul 2008 15:28:23Z | **Sindy**

Hi Roz, I have a waterrower and just found your link a couple of weeks ago. Haven't a clue what to say to you, me being in a cozy office and you out there in the elements. My kayaking between Ventura, CA and Channel Islands (Oxnard, CA) is about the closest I've been to the kind of workouts you are enduring. Ha!! Well, I'm watching your moves and hope to join the party in Hawai'i. Saw the movie WALL-e this weekend about the amt of unrecycled trash building up on earth. Please don't tell me you

are encountering much trash. What about floating cargo containers? Watch yourself; stay strong! -S  
16 Jul 2008 15:54:06Z | **Roland**

Roz, Looks like your on your way. Be careful and be aware of any turbulent weather. From a quiet observer and supporter.

16 Jul 2008 16:34:21Z | **Richard**

Hi Roz: I've only written a few times before, thinking your time to valuable to you. I "sent you gulls" to assist on your departure, and hope they're still pulling on those lines. But let me say HURRAY on passing 131 degrees! (I do check your progress Daily!) God's Speed and Blessings to you Roz! Richard T. Wisconsin

16 Jul 2008 18:29:04Z | **Sinead**

Hi Roz, quick update from Dunedin. The winter claimed its first victim - Bruce the Preying Mantis - we gave him a Viking style cremation in matchbox casket floating on a bark boat. Good to see you are making steady progress, enjoy the sunshine!

16 Jul 2008 18:42:53Z | **Joan**

I had a crap afternoon at the office on Monday, and the solution was taking what I am now calling A Roz Day. That is, getting the hell out of the office and doing something challenging, satisfying and productive. In my case it was painting the porch while listening to "Middlesex" from audible.com. A fantastic afternoon and spirit much healed afterward.

16 Jul 2008 21:04:48Z | **Tod**

Who knew someone that hasn't showered in weeks, bobbing on a small boat in the Pacific could be so DARN cute? Happy rowing, and thanks for the daily inspiration!

16 Jul 2008 21:55:32Z | **Anna**

JUNK here, currently crossing the Pacific on 15,000 plastic bottles! I'm posting this for Marcus, who is currently at sea, and from the looks of it, not too far from you Roz! You can follow their progress at <http://junkraft.com/> Two truly amazing voyages. Would be fun if we could all cross paths in Hawaii. Hi Roz! Looks like you're making great progress! What kinds of plastic debris have you seen? I'm really impressed by your undertaking, especially from where you started. I remember an earlier conversation we had about estimated time to get to Hawaii. I said 6-7 weeks. When you said, "three months" I was surprised. I thought, "That's a really long time at sea." Now I sit becalmed at 23degrees lat. and 123degrees long. We've already been aboard JUNK for 6 weeks and we're only a quarter the way across the ocean. Looks like we'll be taking three months. At least we're catching fish. Maybe we'll arrive in Hawaii the same time. If by chance I get there before you, I'll be .....

(To track and learn about Roz rows the Pacific, go to <http://rozsavage.com>)

*And to clear up the drift of the above conversation, in an earlier blog post I and a few other men had made favorable comments and warm hello's to Roz's mom after she posted an article and a picture of she and her Daughter Roz! So, Roz gets funny and shows her sense of humor and her pride for her Mom and tells us to "stop chatting up her Mom!" ..all in fun! Roger*