MYSTIC WHALER CRUISES
SINCE 1995

THE MYSTIC WHALER'S DELIVERY LOG

A HAPPY CHAPTER

CAPTS. PAT & JOHN EGINTON

OCTOBER 20, 2021

LEAVING MYSTIC

By our rough estimate, Mystic Whaler has passed through the Mystic River drawbridge nearly 5000 times in her life.

But this morning's trip through the bridge was both poignant and joyful as we tossed pancakes to the bridge tender for the last time.

Despite the early hour, a good crowd gathered along the banks of the river, many holding farewell signs. The crew of Argia even gave us a three-cannon salute (either that or it was target practice).

Once in the sound it was slow going at first as we punched into a fresh west breeze and head seas.

The wind and seas moderated throughout the day, though, and our speed picked up steadily.

By midnight we passed Port Jefferson under a clear full moon sky. Fort Lauderdale is 1400 miles ahead.

OCTOBER 21, 2021

HELL GATE

Mystic Whaler has made many hundreds of trips through Hell Gate over the years. Nonetheless, arriving in New York City by water is always exciting and beautiful.

As the sun rose and the full moon set we caught up with the schooner Harvey Gamage, and together we transited Hell Gate and the East River.

Rounding the Battery, we received an escort as Aaron Singh and Marc Melendez came out in a boat from the Harbor School on Governors Island to wish us fair winds and a safe passage.

Although the straightest route to the ocean would have kept us close to the Brooklyn shore, I could not resist taking a detour to get a close look at the Statue of Liberty on our way through the harbor.

A cold front is due tonight, bringing strong southerly winds with it, so we'll anchor at Sandy Hook to wait it out.

By morning we should have a fresh westerly breeze and a good sail down the New Jersey shore.

OCTOBER 22, 2021

SAILING AT LAST

Under a crisp blue sky we came broad-reaching out of Sandy Hook at 8 knots, taking full advantage of the fresh northwest breeze.

It was glorious to be taking spray again, to feel and hear the schooner in her element.

Our joy lasted just about forty-five minutes. Our vaunted high pressure system had been grossly oversold.

Our speed dropped to six, then five, then four knots, until we grudgingly fired up the engine and continued with the business of getting south.

By nightfall we have made good progress down the Jersey coast. On the port side, our sails are bathed in moonlight.

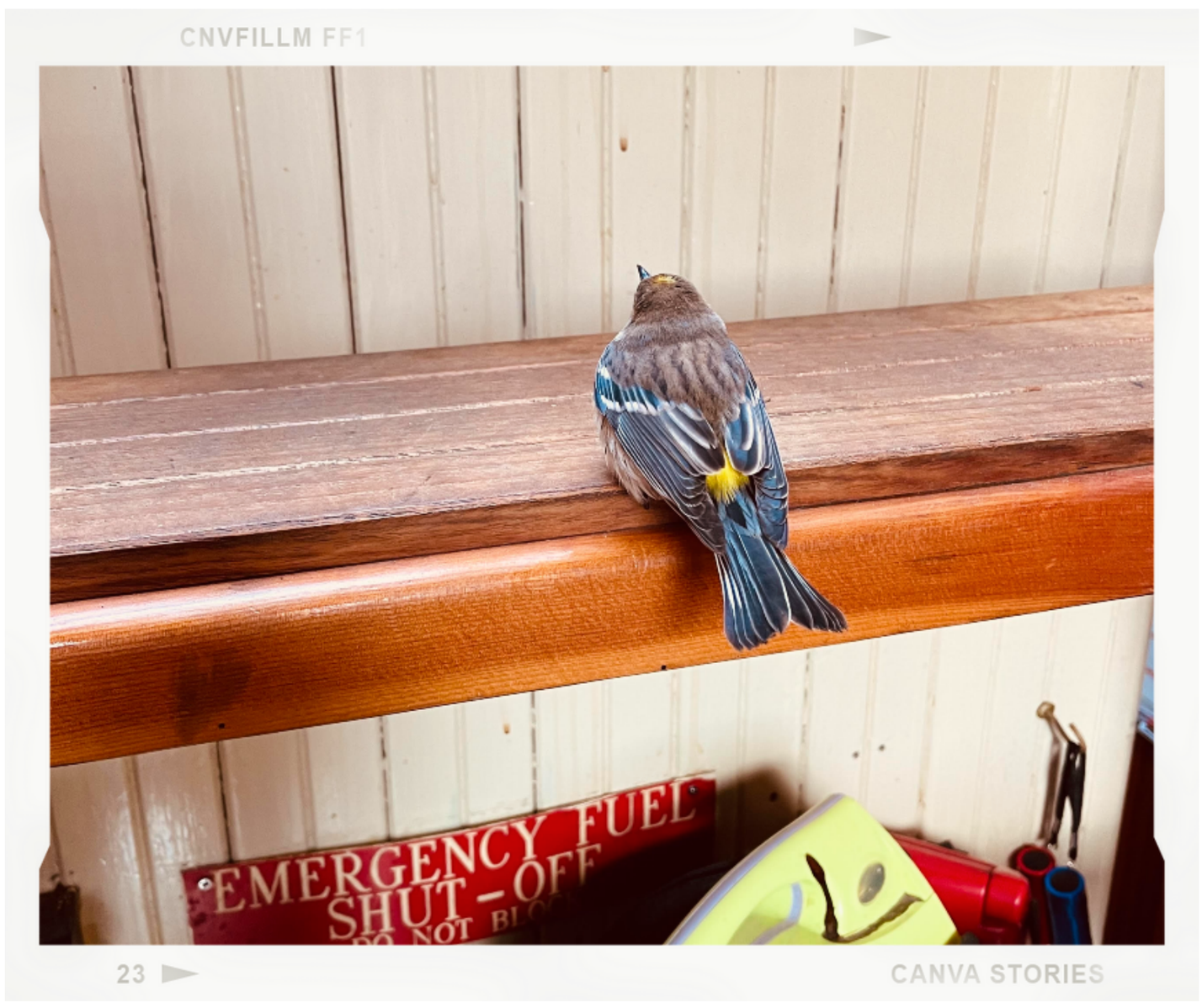
On the starboard side, our sails are bathed in the garish light of Atlantic City.

By the end of my watch at midnight, Atlantic City has finally dipped below the horizon.

It has been in view for fourteen hours and we're glad to put it behind us.

OCTOBER 23, 2021

UNEXPECTED VISITORS



When I came off watch at midnight we were in New Jersey waters, passing by the Cape May lighthouse. When I came back on at 0800 we were nearly past Delaware, having crossed the mouth of Delaware Bay during the night. As we crossed the Maryland border

I announced that we were halfway to Fort Lauderdale, having sailed through the waters of five states, with five left to go. The crew advised me that the next five states are going to take a lot longer than the first five did.

It was a sultry, glassy day. The light northwest wind gave us a bit of a push early, but then went lighter. We nearly had a flying jibe but the sails lost interest.

In the afternoon off Chincoteague we were visited by a shore bird. Then another and another until there were some two dozen birds hopping and flying all about the schooner.

We got out our bird book and identified them as yellow-rumped warblers, along with some sparrows. They were fearless of us, and made themselves at home on deck, below, and even on us.

We don't know what possessed them to fly ten miles over water, in the direction of Europe, just to go for a ride on our schooner, but we're glad to have them with us .

OCTOBER 23, 2021

UNEXPECTED VISITORS

I hope they're not disappointed when they realize where we're headed for tonight (Cape Charles, VA) is about where they set out from.

At 10:30 pm we passed over the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and entered the Chesapeake Bay. It's an eerie sight to see a long row of car headlights driving straight at us, then drive right down underwater to pass beneath us.

We anchored just past midnight outside Cape Charles harbor.
We'll go in to dock in the morning, and probably sit for a few days waiting for the next cold front to pass on Monday.

It will be a good chance to load up on fuel and water, and to give all aboard a respite before Cape Hatteras.

OCTOBER 25, 2021

IS THE RISK WORTH IT?

This morning at the captains meeting we made a decision that probably surprised us all. We're not going around Cape Hatteras tomorrow.

We came into Cape Charles, VA to await the passage of a cold front and its attendant thunderstorms and strong southerly winds. That front is passing over us right now.

It will be followed by high pressure, bringing us northwest winds and good conditions for a passage around Hatteras tomorrow.

A little too good, unfortunately. The forecast calls for northwest winds at 25-30 knots with gusts to 40, along with 6-9 foot seas. Can we go? Certainly.

Mystic Whaler is a strong vessel that would have no difficulty. But should we go? Not sure. We know that once we start the 180 mile trip around Hatteras we will have no options; there is no turning back and nowhere to put in.

My concern is us. In the expected conditions there is a good chance that someone will get hurt, and one injured crew member can set off a cascading set of calamities that results in doom.

OCTOBER 25, 2021

IS THE RISK WORTH IT?

I have been off Cape Hatteras in 18-foot seas. But that was on a schooner that was designed and built to survive a trip around the world. Mystic Whaler certainly was not.

Risk is inherent in what sailors do. But we asked ourselves “Is the risk worth it?" Our answer was “No." None of us are happy about our decision. So it must be the correct one.

I would rather regret staying in port than regret leaving it.

At the meeting I quoted "A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for" (John A. Shedd, Salt from My Attic, 1928) and reminded us that the same quote was used by Captain Robin Walbridge on the day he left New London on the tall ship Bounty to sail into Hurricane Sandy.

That decision cost him both his ship and his life. It was a few hours later when I was reading a “Today in History “ column that I realized it was on exactly this date nine years ago that Bounty left New London.
I'll take that as a sign.

OCTOBER 28, 2021

ANOTHER MAJOR STORM APPROACHES

We're still in Cape Charles, VA as another major storm approaches. This is Day 5 in port but it's starting to feel like Day 45.

It's a little frustrating not to be moving toward our goal. But, with gale warnings posted for much of the eastern seaboard, we are relieved to be safely tucked away.

Cape Charles is a charming little town, but by now we have seen every part of it several times.

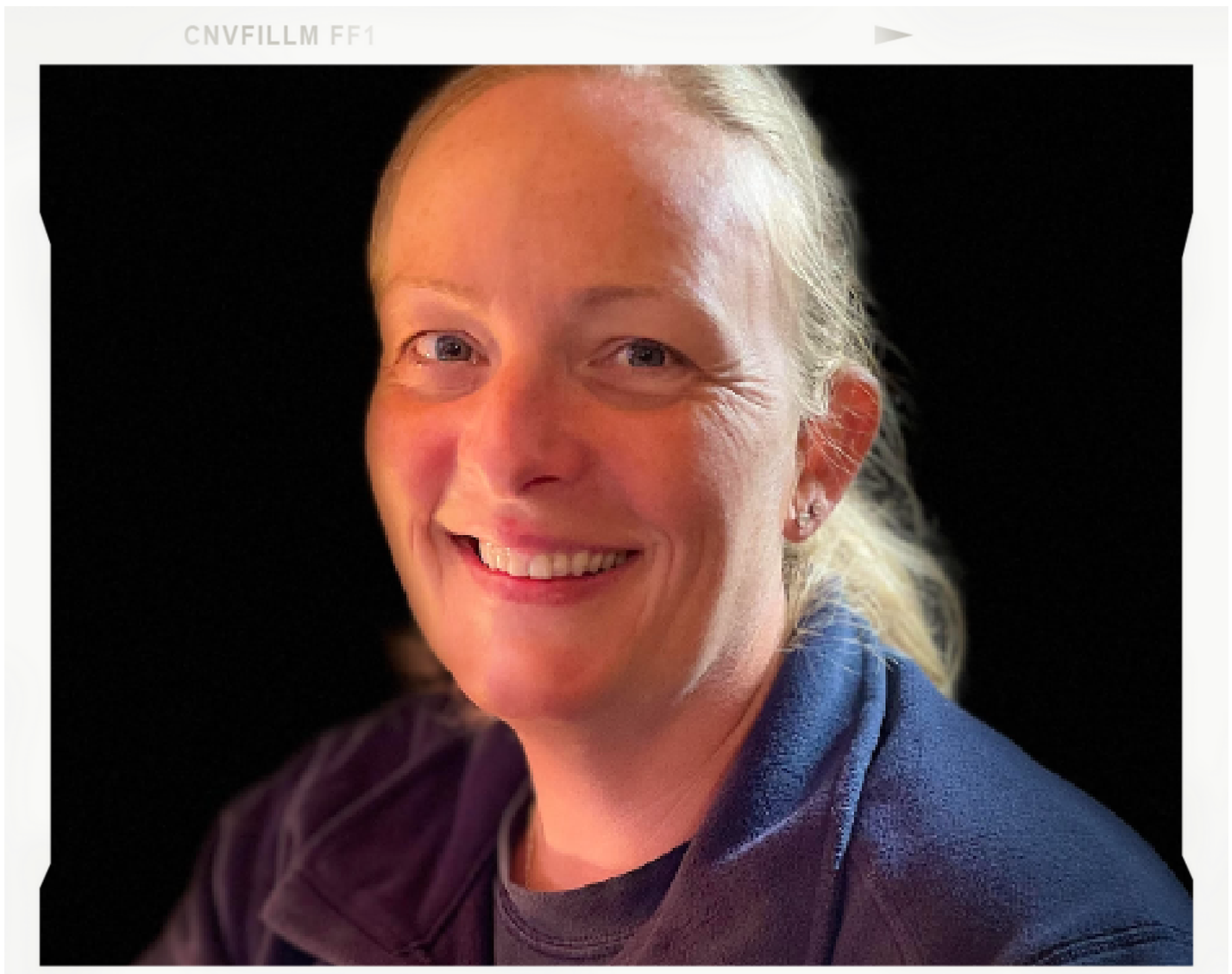
The crew wrote up a list of suggested activities while we're here:

- Buy a house
- Coach a youth sports team
- Watch a local do something
- Laundry
- Nature walks
- Get a job
- Run for office
- Adopt a highway
- Join the fire department
- Start a non-profit
- Buy a boat
- Pet someone's dog
- Get the band back together

This afternoon there is an all-crew soccer game scheduled. I am writing from the chain locker. I don't think they'll look here.

OCTOBER 29, 2021

MEET THE TRANSIT CAPTAINS



Captain Christine Healy

After just a few days underway together, we all agree that we have a remarkably talented, effective, and cohesive crew on board.

Even more impressive is that, in the one week between the sale of the schooner and getting underway, this crew was assembled in the space of about three days. Let's meet some of the crew.

Captain Christine Healy will be the schooner's future captain on the west coast. We first met Christine in Baltimore eighteen years ago when she was mate on the schooner Clipper City.

She has since sailed aboard the schooners Lynx, Pride of Baltimore II, Amistad, Woodwind, Liberty Clipper, and America.

Previous job least likely to result in her being here now: receptionist at the Pentagon.

OCTOBER 29, 2021

MEET THE TRANSIT CAPTAINS

Captain Nicholas Alley

Captain Nicholas Alley is one of the most respected captains in the tall ship industry,

Nicholas is a gifted educator and an inspiring leader. Having recently stepped down after seven years as captain of Mystic Seaport's schooner Brilliant,

Nicholas has previously served as captain of the schooners Virginia, Harvey Gamage, Spirit of Massachusetts, Bill of Rights, Westward, and Lettie G. Howard.

Most unusual job in the past: schooner captain.

OCTOBER 29, 2021

MEET THE TRANSIT CAPTAINS

Captain John Eginton

Captain John Eginton is a retired small business owner. Avid boater. Captain of Mystic Whaler (but for two years) since 1984.

Other commands: Brilliant, Arabella, Little Vigilant, Roann, Liberty, Connecticut Pilot, Mystic Clipper, Charlotte Ann, Just Us.

Previous job: wrestling coach.

Current hobby: attempting a blog.

OCTOBER 29, 2021

FORMER CAPTAINS

Captain Healey is in good company. Here is a list of Mystic Whaler's full-time captains to the best of our knowledge.

- 1967: Alan Aunapu
- 1968: David Iredell
- 1970: John Smalledge
- 1971-1982: Quentin Snediker
- 1983: Jeff Biastoff
- 1984-1986: John Eginton
- 1987: Casey Fasciano
- 1988: John Eginton
- 1989: Scott Gifford
- 1990- 2021: John Eginton

OCTOBER 30, 2021

HALLOWEEN

Happy Halloween from the Mystic Whaler delivery crew. Too many days in port?

OCTOBER 31, 2021

GOODBYE TO CAPE CHARLES

It seemed as though the gates of the Chesapeake Bay opened up this morning and about 40 sailing craft poured out.

I guess Cape Charles was not the only harbor congested with storm bound sailors.

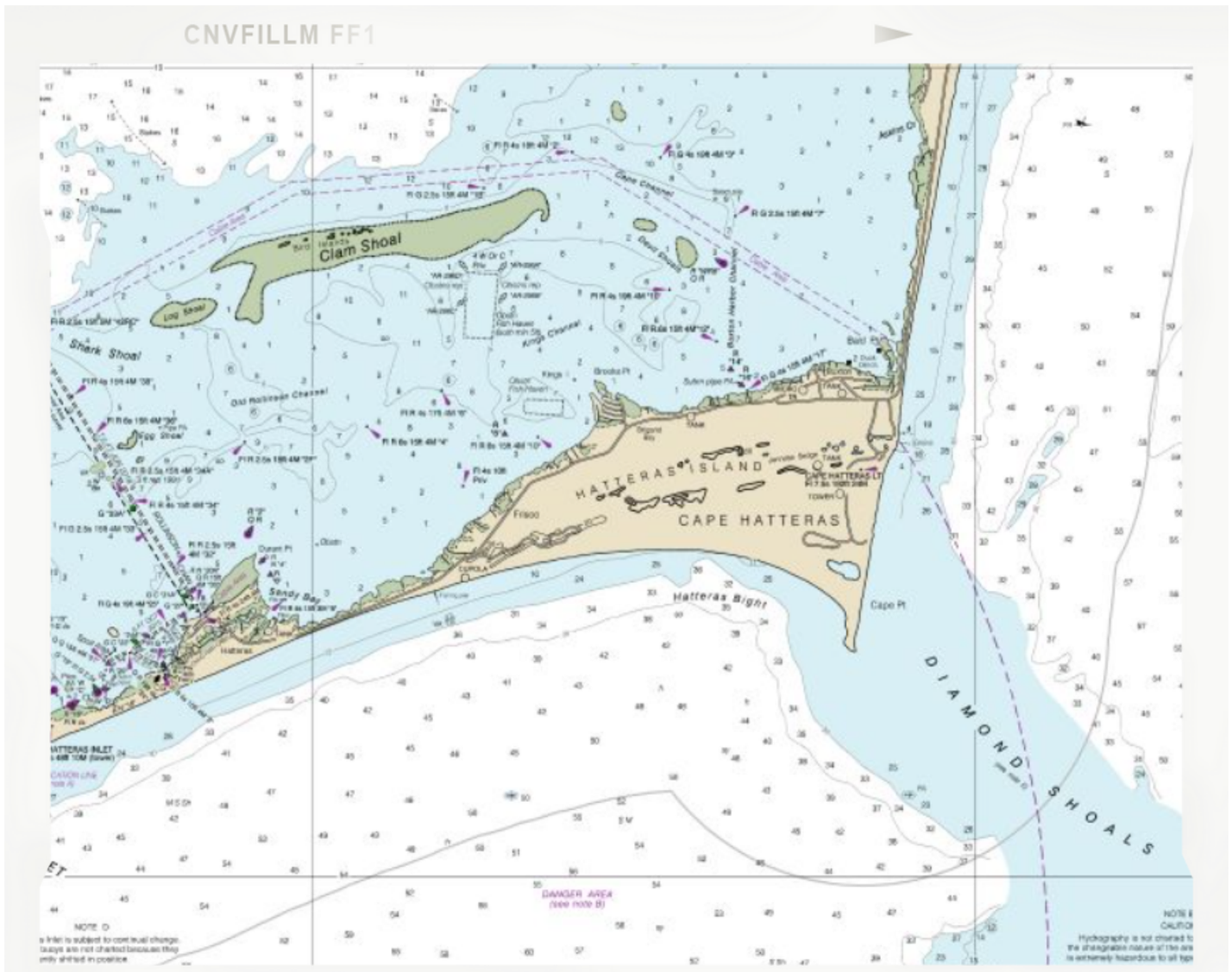
Throughout the day we have sailed in company with a considerable fleet of "snow birds ".

Beautiful day, smooth seas and west winds at 12-15. Numerous dolphins and leatherback turtles sighted.

All is well!

NOVEMBER 1, 2021

CAPE HATTERAS IS BEHIND US



At long last we got underway from Cape Charles at 7am with a clear, crisp day and west winds at 15-17 knots. Fortunately, yesterday's seas have quieted down considerably, and we had a comfortable ride past Virginia Beach.

Throughout the day the wind veered to the northwest, giving us a pleasant breeze at our backs as the seas continued to diminish.

We cleared Diamond Shoals just after midnight, then cleared Cape Lookout at sunrise. A sigh of relief: Cape Hatteras is behind us.

Last night was our first away from any significant light pollution. And, with clear skies and just a sliver of the waning moon, it was a joy to see the Milky Way. We made a casual effort to count the stars. Our estimate: about a bazillion.

With Hatteras behind us we had our first opportunity to put in to port at Beaufort / Morehead City, NC. We decided to pass up on that chance and keep pushing ahead. The high pressure system is nearly sitting still over us, and we don't want to squander this good weather being tied to a dock.

So with gentle winds at our backs and even gentler seas, we'll carry on toward our next challenge, Cape Fear and Frying Pan Shoals .

NOVEMBER 2, 2021

INTO THE FRYING PAN

We crossed Frying Pan Shoals and cleared Cape Fear at 4:30 this morning, grateful to have that challenge behind us. With that we headed inland for Southport, NC, the furthest we hoped to make it on this leg.

It seemed almost a shame to go in to port when the weather has been so opportune. So we didn't. Instead we steered back to the southwest and set a course for Charleston, thereby skipping North Carolina entirely.

Throughout the day we had numerous visits from dolphins, flying fish, and leatherback turtles. We noticed that every time a sea turtle poked its head up to look at us, every mature adult on board would wave at it. None of them have waved back at us. Yet.

At sunset we had a pod of six dolphins riding in our bow wave for a half an hour; a wonderful closing to the day.

At midnight we anchored in Charleston, SC - 410 miles from Cape Charles.

NOVEMBER 5, 2021

SOUTHBOUND MATES

Jeffrey Morgan

Oliver Hesketh-Tutton

JEFFREY MORGAN

Jeffrey has been sailing on Mystic Whaler for twelve years since we first met him as a Sea Scout in Bridgeport in 2009. Jeffrey served with distinction as our mate for several seasons, and has since sailed trans-Atlantic twice aboard Sea Education Association's schooner Corwith Cramer.

Jeffrey and his fiancé Melanie (who met each other on Mystic Whaler) founded and operate Ocean Protection Advocacy Kids-opakedu.org. Jeffrey is the linchpin of the crew, the one towards whom all eyes turn. He spends twelve hours a day teaching, and the rest listening.

OLIVER HESKETH-TUTTON

Oliver first joined us four years ago as a student on an overnight cruise with University of Connecticut students. He has since sailed in the crews of Harvey Gamage, Alabama, Mayflower II and as mate on the schooner Tree of Life.

I had the privilege of sailing with Oliver on Tree of Life for three days this summer on a delivery to Maine, and was most impressed by his dedication and professionalism. Many thanks to Captain Paul Morse of Tree of Life for releasing Oliver from his responsibilities to join us for this trip.

NOVEMBER 5, 2021

CHARLESTON: COME FOR THE WEATHER ... STAY BECAUSE OF THE WEATHER.

We are in a strange cycle. We make excellent progress when we move. Then we stop for a very long time.

At the beginning of the trip none of us could imagine that we would spend seven days in Cape Charles. Now, after an excellent run, it looks like we will be stormbound in Charleston for five days.

Another major low pressure system is passing over us now; gale warnings have been posted through Sunday evening. The coastal waters forecast calls for northeast winds at 30 knots with gusts over 40, and seas of 9-11 feet. Our disinterest in going out in that stuff could not be exaggerated.

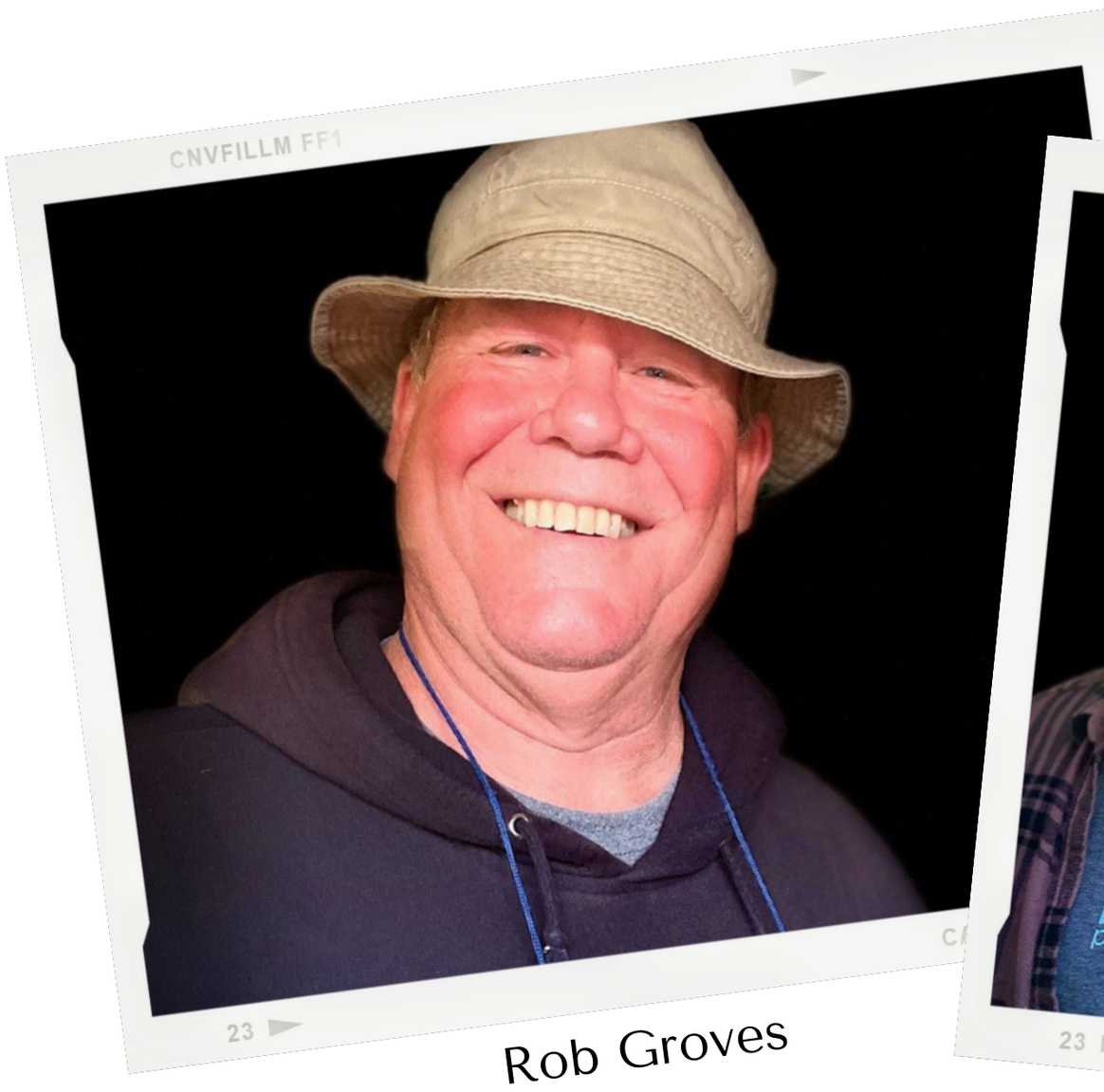
Another strange cycle has been the weather in general. It seems the further south we go the colder it gets. Today's high temperature was 50, and the nighttime low is expected to be 43.

I thought I would be mailing my down parka home from Charleston since I haven't worn it all trip. I'm wearing it now.

On the plus side, we're holed up in one of the most magnificent cities of the south. We're all using our time to stroll the town, enjoying the magnificent architecture and discovering great little bakeries, museums, and barbecue joints. After all, if we weren't stuck here we would want to visit it!

NOVEMBER 8, 2021

ON DECK AND IN THE GALLEY



Rob Groves

Kim Hunt & Ted Fornier

ON DECK: ROB GROVES

With a 1600-ton master's license, Rob accounts for about half of the license tonnage aboard. A native of Florida, Rob finished a career in the Navy and joined Edison Chouest Offshore.

Rob served aboard the submarine support vessel Carolyn Chouest, the tender to the Navy's nuclear-powered research sub NR-1. Rob next worked as a master for Gateway Towing in New Haven, CT before joining Mystic Seaport as a charter yacht captain.

Most unusual previous job: ditch digger.

GALLEY: KIM HUNT & TED FORNIER

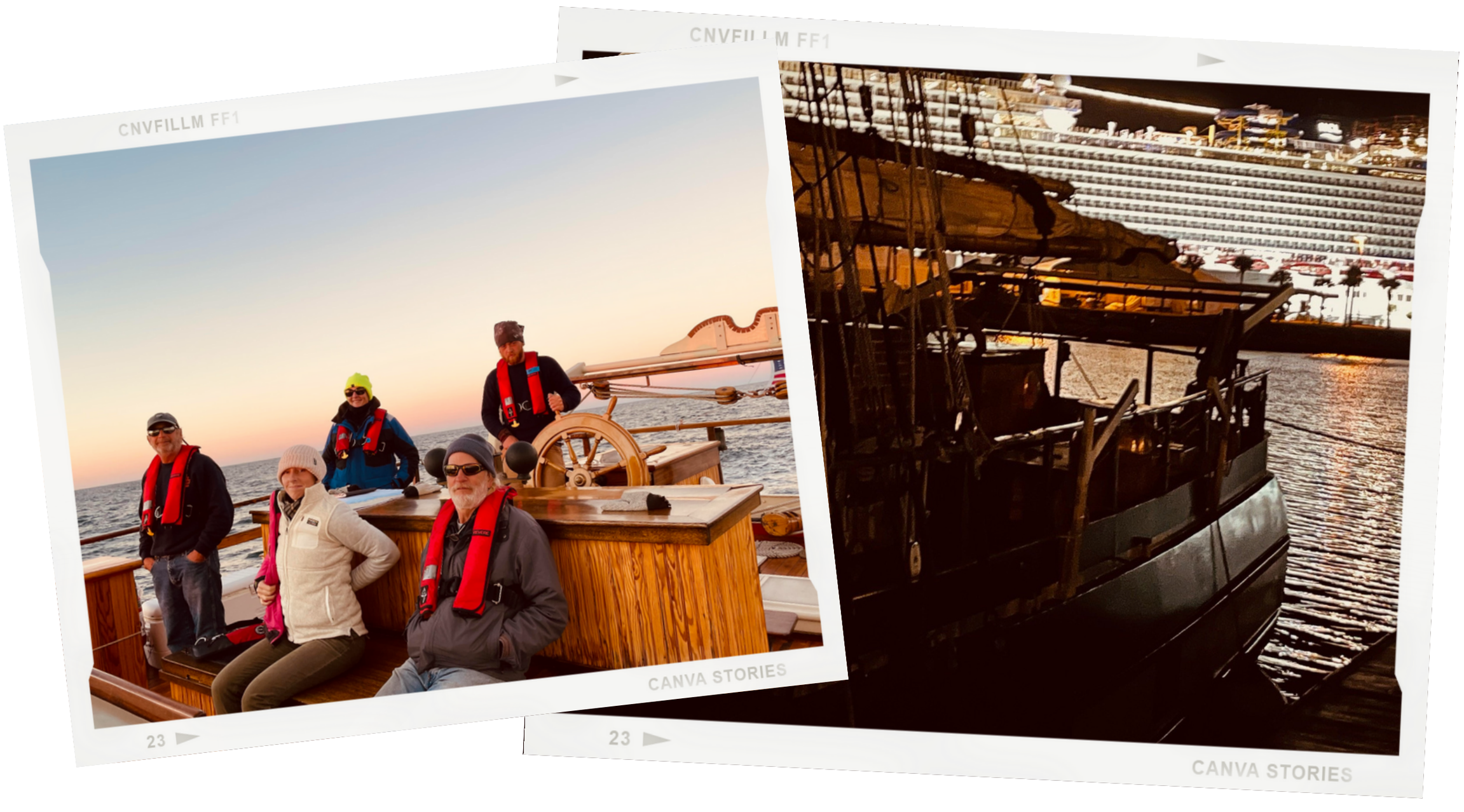
Hailing from Newport, RI, the dynamic duo of Kim Hunt and Ted Fornier have been keeping us very well fed throughout the trip. The timing worked out well, as they had just finished laying up their own boats for the season when we put out the call.

Kim is highly experienced in the tall ship trade, having previously cooked in the Maine windjammer fleet, Mystic Whaler, and on the educational vessels Westward, Harvey Gamage, Brilliant, and Tree of Life.

Previous careers: Kim: hospital dietician | Ted: chemist formulating emulsions for the printing industry.

NOVEMBER 12, 2021

140 MILES TO GO



We have traveled 280 miles since Charleston, and are now docked at Port Canaveral. It was a good run, although the 6-foot seas from the major low pressure system out at sea did give us quite a bit of motion.

We are now just 140 miles from our destination. Although it seems a shame to stop this close to the finish line, tomorrow's forecast calls for southeast winds at 15-20, and we don't want to get pinned against a lee shore.

Our timing is exquisite in one regard, though. We are docked next to the space center, and there is a Space-X Falcon 9 launch scheduled for 9:03 pm tonight!

NOVEMBER 13, 2021

WE MADE IT

Arrived in Fort Lauderdale at 11 this morning, grateful to finally cross the finish line. It was an unusual transit: 24 days, of which twelve were spent underway and twelve spent tied to a dock.

While the lack of progress was sometimes frustrating, there was never a day at a dock when I regretted not being underway. We did very well with what Mother Nature dealt us, and I am grateful to arrive, 1400 miles later, with the crew all safe and the vessel intact.

On my last full day aboard, I take stock of Mystic Whaler, and I must admit: the schooner looks really good! The credit goes to Pat for her meticulous care of the vessel, and to Bruce Adams, whose exquisite carpentry is evident throughout.

But, everyone who has volunteered their valuable time aboard appreciates just how much determination and elbow grease goes into keeping the schooner in prime form. You have all provided Mystic Whaler a bright future!

NOVEMBER 14, 2021

A HAPPY CHAPTER

Thirty-eight seasons have passed since I first stepped aboard Mystic Whaler. It has been twenty-seven years since we purchased the abandoned hull from the yard where it had been out of the water for five years.

I believe we have written a happy chapter in Mystic Whaler's story. And by “we" I mean hundreds of people.

Leaving Mystic Whaler is difficult but not sad. What would be sad is if we had written the final chapter in her life's story. Instead, she is on her way to a bright future and her next chapter. By her appearance the schooner has not aged. I have.

In my first years on the schooner passengers would occasionally ask “Aren't you kind of young to be a captain?"

It has been decades since anyone asked me that question. It's time for Mystic Whaler to once again have a captain who looks too young for the job.

With my bags on the dock, I went back to the wheel for a final conversation.

We'll, we sure have been through a lot together. Thank you for keeping us all safe. And thank you for the wonderful experiences you have provided to so many thousands of people.

We gave you our best, and you certainly gave us yours. You have performed nobly in everything we have ever asked you to do. You're on your way to a bright future. You're going to be fine. I need to leave you now. Thank you.