
Jennifer Stock: You're listening to Ocean Currents, a podcast brought to you by NOAA's Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary. This radio program was originally broadcast on KWMR in Point Reyes Station, California. Thanks for listening!

(Music)

Jennifer Stock: On Ocean Currents, we look at all aspects of ocean related issues, explorations, and research, and I'm quite fortunate to be sitting here with a woman who has witnessed the raw power of the ocean in her recent endeavor. I'm here with Roz Savage, eco-adventurer and ocean rower who has recently successfully crossed the Pacific Ocean from San Francisco to Hawaii in her rowboat.

You may remember, I interviewed Roz last year in 2007 before her first attempt and we had the opportunity to hear about Roz's story. She made a big career or life shift some years back and left what she calls a conventional life to another of rowing oceans and pursuing something that really meant something to her. She successfully rowed across the Atlantic Ocean a few years back and then set a path for the Pacific.

Roz's 25-foot rowboat is equipped with all the necessary safety equipment, communications equipment, and life-sustaining food and some water. Did I mention she is unaccompanied by a support vessel? She has assembled a pretty incredible land-based team to help her on her mission remotely. I have been keeping an eye on this incredible story in the past year and could not resist the opportunity to bring her back to hear about her recent crossing. So, welcome, Roz Savage.

Roz Savage: Great to be back. Thank you.

Jennifer Stock: So, why did you set the goal of crossing oceans in a row boat as you set your course for your life change?

Roz Savage: It was actually quite a gradual transition. I didn't go straight from the office out onto the ocean. I suppose I was looking for a big project that would resonate with a new value system that I was developing at that stage. I had realized that the materialistic lifestyle wasn't really working for me. I suddenly realized there wasn't much sense doing a job I didn't like to pay for things I didn't need.

So, I had really transitioned out of that lifestyle, but was fairly rootless for a while, really just looking around trying to find the perfect project for me, something that would be environmentally low-impact, that would be sufficiently unusual, that people would actually be interested in coming to hear me speak about it or buy the book about it and somehow ocean rowing just really seemed to fit the bill. I can't even really claim any credit for the idea.

It was almost like the idea found me rather than the other way around. Once the idea had found me, there was no way it was going to let me go. So, even though I tried to push it out of my mind, it persisted until eventually, I realized I was just going to have to do this crazy thing.

Jennifer Stock:

Now, that you've crossed the Atlantic and finished the first leg of your Pacific crossing, have your reasons for rowing changed?

Roz Savage:

I wouldn't say that the reasons have changed at all. It's really quite amazing how consistent the reasons still are with the original ideals that brought me to ocean rowing, but I would say that I'm becoming much clearer about my message, especially on the environmental side. I think I've always been very clear about the kind of inspirational even spiritual reasons behind my rowing, but I've really been on a fairly steep learning curve about the environmental aspect of it and I feel like I'm really honing in now on what my particular environmental mission is and if I could just try and sum that up for you, I think that there is so much bad environmental news out there at the moment that there are times when it's easy to feel quite overwhelmed and quite hopeless and despairing about it all. I know, certainly, I sometimes feel that way and in the past I have felt that there's nothing I can do as an individual that's going to have any real impact on these huge problems.

But, I suppose that this year, it's actually a really interesting parallel between my rowing adventures and what we can each do as individuals for the environment. It took me about a million ore strokes to get from San Francisco to Hawaii, which is an awful lot, and if I'd have stood there in San Francisco saying, "Well, one ore stroke isn't going to get me anywhere. So, what's the point?" Then, I wouldn't have got anywhere, but you take a lot of really tiny actions and through the power of accumulation they really can add up to something very important and very significant.

So, if you take that metaphor and apply it to the environment, I really believe that every single one of us, as individuals, is

empowered to make a difference if we just understand that the decisions that we make as consumers day after day after day, they really do add up and it's not just our own actions, but what we do spreads ripples. Other people see how we're behaving in the supermarket or in the coffee shop. If we take in our reusable grocery bags and our reusable mugs instead of using disposable, throwaway items, other people will see what we're doing and we'll be setting a good example and I really do think that that's how we will manifest change and hopefully, that will lead to a greener future and a healthier planet.

Jennifer Stock:

That's wonderful. I was just at the bio-neers conference in San Rafael this past week and I was stunned by that very philosophy that you just mentioned because the folks that are there have that in mind and everybody had their reusable water bottle, their reusable coffee mug, and their bags and the conference itself was hosted in such a sustainable way. There was so little waste, if any waste at all and it was just amazing to be in an atmosphere like that, realizing, wow, this really could be a reality and in just a few years.

Roz Savage:

That's fantastic. I really...when you look at those things, like, using your reusable water bottle and you have your water filter jug so that you're not having to buy bottled water, those things, once you get in the habit have such a tiny, tiny, little effect on your quality of life. They're not really going to make like any more difficult. It's just a matter of finding those things that we can do that's not going to make our lives any worse, but can have potentially an enormous impact on the environment.

So, my message for the first stage of my row was about plastics because a lot of plastic does end up in the oceans and as I was rowing past the north Pacific garbage patch, it made sense to focus on that for stage one and I saw firsthand in Hawaii when we went and did a beach cleanup, just how much that plastic trash is washing up on the beaches and it really is...that is bad news, but hopefully, we did show what people can do to avoid making the problem any worse.

The message for stage two of the row is going to be about green energies and going carbon-neutral, what each of us can do to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and move towards more sustainable sources of energy and then stage three will be able habitat destruction, but because I always like to put a positive spin on it, it will be about how we can avoid contributing to that destruction.

-
- Jennifer Stock:* And your boat, actually, is an example of sustainable energy. I understand it's mostly or completely solar and that's how you're generating your energy for the electronics on your boat?
- Roz Savage:* That's right. Well, unfortunately, the boat itself is actually human powered, rather than solar powered, but yes, all of my electronics are solar powered. It doesn't make the boat go any faster. It really makes me laugh when people say, "Wow, your boat looks so high-tech." Basically you paint anything silver and it's going to look high-tech, but really, it comes down to two oars and a sliding seat and a rudder, but yes.
- All the electronics are solar powered. I've got six solar panels on board and for the next stage of the row it'd be fun with a few other examples of recharging things. You get wind-up rechargers for your laptop, off your mobile phone, although, my mobile phone obviously doesn't work in the middle of the ocean. So, I think there are a few other fun things that I could do to make my boat a little showcase for all these fun little ways in which we can reduce our reliance on dirty energy sources and move towards clean ones.
- Jennifer Stock:* Going back to last year a little bit, after we last talked and after your first attempt, you were unexpectedly brought back to land and what did you need to do to get over that and re-prepare yourself to get out again this year, leaving from San Francisco?
- Roz Savage:* Well, it was a bit of an emotional recovery. I was quite possibly the Coast Guard's most reluctant rescue ever. I hadn't called them. So, that was all a bit unfortunate, but moving swiftly on, I did make some modifications to my boat after that. The issue out there was that when I ran into heavy weather, some of the previous modifications we had made had altered the center of gravity of the boat. So, it became rather too top-heavy.
- So, in twenty foot waves, it started capsizing, which is not much fun. It's a bit like being in a car wreck repeatedly. So, in order to avoid that, we added some extra depth to the skeg of the boat and we put two hundred pounds of lead into the bottom of the hull and the boat performed fantastically this year. Not only did those changes give some extra stability to the boat in regards to movement from side to side, but they also seemed to help with the steering and control of the boat, but even despite that, it was still pretty brutal trying to get away from the California coast.

I got swept a long ways south and I developed this very close relationship with 124 degrees west this summer. I crossed it five times in all. I crossed it going from east to west, then I got blown back, crossed it again, got blown back again, and finally at the third attempt, managed to break free of the California coast and after that started to key off the lines of longitude quite regularly every couple of days, but it took me six weeks just to get from 122 degrees to 124 degrees west and that was a real lesson in patience and persistence, I can tell you.

Jennifer Stock: Yeah, that's a true time of the Pacific Ocean that time of year because that's our spring upwelling season and I remember left at a time where it was just calm and perfect and you were going to get a couple of days to get out, but then that wind kicked up again.

Roz Savage: Yes. My weatherman did a fantastic job and it was wonderful being able to leave from underneath the Golden Gate Bridge because those opportunities come up very rarely and I was really quite prepared to leave from almost anywhere on the California coast where it would be calm enough and it was just absolutely fantastic that that opportunity arose at the Golden Gate Bridge.

So, I left at midnight on the 25th of May, on the Memorial Day weekend and it was a beautiful, calm night and we got this beautiful film footage where the orange lights of the bridge are glinting off the water. It looks like Christmas glitter. It's really pretty and my little boat as I head out under the Golden Gate Bridge and out into the darkness beyond. It was really quite spectacular.

Jennifer Stock: How does it feel? What are you thinking in those first few hours when you're leaving in the dark? What are some of the things that are going through your mind?

Roz Savage: You really trying not to think about the 2 and a half thousands miles that lie ahead of you. I really worked very hard on blanking that out of my mind. I focused on what I needed to do in the present moment and I also think about what it's going to be like arriving at my destination in Hawaii.

I need to have that daydream like the carrot on the stick to keep me going and I need to be focused in the present moment on the rowing, the process that's going to get me there, but if I think about anything between those two points, it's a guaranteed recipe for kind of mental meltdown and I actually try and apply that to lots of things in my life because I take on a lot of things that are quite

challenging like writing the book or working on the documentary film and sometimes you can really get quite phased if you think about the hugeness of the challenge that lies ahead.

So, it's good to have a list or to be aware of what you need to do, but really just to stay focused on the present moment. I think the other thing I was thinking about as I headed under the bridge was, "I'm tired already," because I only had 36 hours notice that this weather window had opened up and although I thought I was pretty much ready to go at a moment's notice, suddenly when it's that imminent you realize all of the things that you still need to do. I had to get the cottage where I'd been staying, I had to get that all packed up.

I had to repack the entire boat, fill up the water ballast bags, and I had so much to do, I barely slept the night before and then I've been awake all through that day and it's been a really hectic day of final preparations and then I'm setting out at midnight and I know I'm not going to get any sleep until the night after because I've got to get out and clear the shipping lanes. So, it was really important, actually, especially just then, not to be thinking even 24 hours ahead, but just concentrating on the right here and now and trying not to think about how long it's going to be before I get a decent night's sleep again.

Jennifer Stock:

These shipping lanes...actually was another question I had for you. How do you prepare for interactions at sea or potential encounters as far as meeting big container ships? IS there a way for them to see you on the radar? How about at nighttime and what type of preparations did you do for that?

Roz Savage:

I do have a see-me device, it's call, on my boat, which is supposed to make me look bigger on the radar and I know that later on in my crossing when I had a rendezvous in the ocean that I actually wanted to have, that was very useful. I'll tell you about that later on. Generally, when I see a container ship or an oil tanker, I pretty much hope that they don't see me, provided I can see them, I can make sure they're not going to hit me and I really don't welcome company out on the water. I don't really want them coming over to check me out, just in case they accidentally run me over.

So, I kind of go into stealth mode. I don't turn the radio on, I don't initiate contact. There were a couple of fun encounters out there that were really great, but those were with much smaller vessels.

-
- Jennifer Stock:* How many vessels did you encounter on this crossing? It just...it seems that you crossed the Pacific, you're not going to run into anybody, but the reality is we know there's a lot of folks crossing the ocean either in a sailboat or big container ships and how many folks did you run into that you weren't expecting to?
- Roz Savage:* In the whole crossing, I was out there 99 days, and I probably saw seven or eight other vessels, but the vast majority of those were within the first few days as I was leaving San Francisco.
- Jennifer Stock:* Closest to the San Francisco city?
- Roz Savage:* Yeah.
- Jennifer Stock:* Now, you've drifted south for a little bit and you mentioned earlier that you had water ballast to fill. Did that water ballast come useful to you later in your row?
- Roz Savage:* Absolutely, yes. Actually, just to take a step back for a moment, do you mind if I could tell you about something that happened just after I left San Francisco?
- Jennifer Stock:* Yes, please do.
- Roz Savage:* Because some of your listeners might find this one a fun story. So, about thirty miles west of San Francisco, of course, you've got the Farallon Islands and so, I'm rowing past there on my second day out at sea and suddenly I see this little boat coming across the waves towards me and like, "Oh. no! I'm in trouble. I've strayed into the marine sanctuary and they're coming to tell me off," but it turned out it was these two extremely bored marine biologists who had been on the Farallon Islands for goodness knows how long monitoring the bird life and the sea life there and suddenly looking through the binoculars, they see this bizarre little boat rowing past and they decided to come over to check me out and they were just so excited about what I was doing.
- So, they actually went back to go and fetch some interns who were also working there and when they came back out, they brought me some bananas and some M&M's and some trail mix and they wrote a lovely blog about me and they actually told me that it was the most exciting thing that had happened to them in months. I guess it was a bit different from the usual. So, that was really great fun. And yeah, later on I had a really interesting encounter with another vessel. I had a bit of bad luck out there on the ocean this year.

I got about five weeks into my row and my main water maker is an electric one that runs from my solar panels and it's got an electric feed pump that sucks in the sea water and through reverse osmosis, filters it to produce fresh water for drinking and bathing and unfortunately, like most electronics, it does not take kindly to being swamped in seawater. So, one day after all this rough weather, when I opened up the hatch where this water maker lives and discovered that it was mostly full of water, I realized this was extremely bad news and sure enough over the following couple of weeks, it gradually deteriorated as the innards corroded until eventually, it just sputtered to a halt and died.

So, at that point I switched over to my backup water maker, which is a manual one and I would have to pump that for at least 3 or 4 hours a day to produce enough drinking water. So, I was using that and my reserves of water, but in fact, the manual water maker then broke. It sprang a leak and wasn't producing fresh water anymore. So, at this point, I'm down to just my reserves and I still had enough to last me for about six weeks at that point, which might just have been enough to get me to Hawaii, but it was going to be really nip and tuck and you don't really want to be rationing your water when you're rowing twelve hours a day in the tropics.

So, I was obviously quite concerned about this, but I didn't want to put out a general news bulletin about the fact that I was running low on water. I was still a little bit stung by last year's experience when I was unwillingly rescued. So, I kept pretty quiet about it because I just had this spooky feeling that something really special was going to happen, but I was going to get a resupply, but it wasn't going to be from a big container ship or a big oil tanker and a few weeks later, people started putting comments on my website saying, "Do you realize that the junk raft is gradually catching up with you and you're in a very similar latitude?"

Now, the junk raft is... was out there, manned by a couple of guys from the Algalita Foundation, which is based in southern California, and they were also out there to raise awareness of plastic pollution. So, they put together this amazing craft made out of 15,000 empty water bottles, latched together into two pontoons with a grid of mast to form a kind of a deck and their cabin was the fuselage of a Cessna aircraft and they had this big sail and it looked like something out of Mad Max.

It was the most incredible vessel you've ever seen and so, I connected with them by sat phone and gradually over the next few days, we managed to get our courses kind of in alignment and we

finally rendezvoused when I was about two weeks away from Hawaii and their voyage was taking them a lot longer than they expected. So, they were actually running out of food. They'd been rationing from quite early on, whereas I had tons of food, meanwhile, I'm running out of water and they've still got plenty.

So, in a very surreal mid-ocean meeting, they finally caught up near enough to me and I actually turned around and rode back towards them for an hour because they were catching up with me so slowly and we met up one evening and had a dinner party.

Jennifer Stock: This is insane. On the ocean!

Roz Savage: It was so surreal, it really was.

Jennifer Stock: You hadn't seen anybody in how many days?

Roz Savage: Oh, months! Almost 2 months, ever since I saw the bored marine biologists at the Farallon Islands and it really felt magical. Apparently, they'd been trying for four days to catch a fish because they promised me this fresh fish supper, which I'd really been looking forward to and for four days they hadn't managed to catch a fish, but then when I actually went on board, one of the guys, Joel, hopped overboard with his spear gun and within half an hour had caught this fantastic, big Maui Maui and within half an hour it was in the pan and half an hour later, it was mostly in my stomach.

I'm sure I had only four helpings, but the guys tell me that I had five. Anyway, it was the best fish I had ever tasted. It was wonderful and they just treated me like a princess and it was so wonderful to be there. The only thing we were missing was a few cold beers, but it was really great and we had such good conversation about the environment and comparing experiences out there and they showed me they'd been trawling for plastic out there.

They had this little net that they trailed behind the boat and it's sad to say, but they actually found that they were catching more plastic than organic matter. They ended up with the phytoplankton and the zooplankton, but more plastic by weight...these the creatures and the vegetables out there and that's just a very, very sad statistic, but it was great for me to actually see firsthand what it was like out there.

I'd seen on calm days, I could see these tiny little bits of plastic suspended throughout the upper layers of the water, but to actually

get that statistic and see if with my own eyes what they were catching was quite a sobering thought, but yeah, it was an amazing evening and we ended up doing some joint press conferences together once we got to Hawaii and I've been in touch with them since and great couple of guys and we've definitely got more...we got the message across to more people by combining our efforts than I think either of our crews would have done independently.

Jennifer Stock: So, two completely independent efforts, yet, meeting up randomly on the ocean and fixed your problem, fixed their problem. That's quite a story.

Roz Savage: Absolutely and it was very good for my dignity and self-respect that I was able to help them out as much as they were able to help me out because it's not good for myself to be seen as the damsel in distress. So, they very much appreciated the food. Apparently Marcus ate three bag fuels of jerky just straight off. They were so happy to have some different food.

Jennifer Stock: That's great. Speaking of food, what types of food do you pack in your boat? Do you prepare for calorie expense as far as rowing 12 hours a day?

Roz Savage: I do do my calculations, but it's actually a bit more flexible than that. So, I grow my own bean sprouts. There's a San Francisco company called Sprout People who gave me a sprout pot, which makes it so easy to grow your own bean sprouts. In two days after you've put in your peas, beans, lentils, and things, you've got these really nice, crunchy, germinated (?) and I mixed that up with some tahini and nama shoyu sauce and some almonds and sunflower seeds and that makes a great lunch and a friend of mine who lives in Sausalito made me some raw food crackers. She makes them in a dehydrator, which keeps the enzymes alive.

So, those are super healthy. I also eat lots of Lara Bars, which are just raw food, nut and seed bars, and then in the evening, it's not quite so healthy, but I do have a hot meal. I boil up some water and rehydrate a free-dried meal. So, overall, I eat extremely healthily out there and I'm well away from temptation as well. All my usual weaknesses like Cafe Lattes and muffins are not available out there. So, it's a great opportunity for a detox and I'm very proud of this. I actually was tested at 11 percent body fat when I arrived in Hawaii, which is kind of, for a woman, that's way up there amongst the serious endurance athletes.

Jennifer Stock: Fantastic. Congratulations.

Roz Savage: I can't really take any credit for it because I just, I couldn't resist everything every temptation. So, I left the temptations behind on dry land.

Jennifer Stock: Well, we're coming up on the half hour break, here. So, we'll come back in just a little bit. We've been talking with Roz Savage, an ocean rower, talking about her recent crossing of the Pacific Ocean from San Francisco to Hawaii and when we come back, we'll learn a little bit more about the rest of the Pacific that she still has yet to go. So, please stay with us.

(Music)

Jennifer Stock: So, I'm back here with Roz Savage, an ocean rower who has recently just crossed part of the Pacific Ocean from San Francisco to Hawaii and she's here in the studio with us at KWMR. Roz, I just wanted to go back to some of the things associated with your boat that you may not have anticipated, or you probably did, but your vessel is a little bit slower going and probably is a potential habitat for animals like pelagic barnacles and what not. Did you look over the side at any point and discover you had anything traveling with you that was getting a free ride from Roz Savage?

Roz Savage: Barnacles were definitely an issue. Those gooseneck barnacles do grow on the hull of the boat and I had to go over the side several times to scrub those off so they didn't slow me down too much and there were also just some tiny little fish that would kind of gravitate towards the boat. I didn't see so many larger fish while I went over the side, but I didn't use the facemask this time.

I actually didn't see as many creatures as I would have liked. Just past the Farallones, I did see about thirty dolphins one day and there's actually a short video of YouTube that I posted from the boat where you could just...the soundtrack is pretty much all me squealing with excitement as these dolphins just cruise through the waves around my boat. It was just absolutely fantastic to see them and then there was another day when I saw about five whales came by and that was pretty exciting too.

They were definitely checking me out. They came really close to the boat, like, within ten feet. So, that was great, but I didn't see any turtles this time, which is a bit sad. When I was on the Atlantic, I saw a couple of turtles and I just love turtles. They're a very special creature for me and they really come up very close to the boat. So, it would have been nice to have seen some of them,

but hopefully I'll get the opportunities to do some diving when I get back out to Hawaii and I'd love to see a few turtles.

Jennifer Stock: I bet you'll see more turtles on your next crossing of what seems like the more tropical latitude would be more where there might be turtles.

Roz Savage: That's right. Well, when I was in Hawaii last November to meet with the NOAA people there, I went out with some paddlers in an outrigger canoe on several occasions and we saw turtles from the outrigger. So, yes. I think I probably will see a few more around the Hawaiian Islands.

Jennifer Stock: Now, on your course, you traveled south for a bit along the California coast, but you were offshore and then you started crossing there. Did you have any other pelagic wildlife, any seabirds that came check you out or land on your boat?

Roz Savage: None of them actually landed on my boat, but I did see birds almost every day out there. I'm afraid I'm not enough of an ornithologist to tell you exactly what they were, but it was always nice to see the birds and they would circle around my boat and I knew I was getting close to land when I heard them actually calling to each other. It's really weird, but I noticed this on the Atlantic as well, that in mid-ocean, the birds are silent even when there's more than one, they don't call out, but then, when I get closer to land, they seem to start being more vocal and I have no idea why that might be and if anybody's got any ideas, I would love to know.

Jennifer Stock: Well, that's really interesting. I'll have to start asking around about that. Only an ocean rower would know that being in such a peaceful place, not having a generated noise, you're pretty silent moving through there.

Roz Savage: Well, I guess the sailors might hear as well, although sails are more noisy than the rowing. Yeah, I've pretty much just got the roar of the wind. I noticed when I went on board the junk raft, it was so noisy on there because they've got, like I said, the flotation for the boat was provided by these 15,000 water bottles and because they're just loosely latched together in cargo netting, they're consistently rubbing and creaking against each other.

So, there was this constant den of all these water bottles. When I got back to my boat that night, it was just so peaceful. It was actually really nice. So, yes, I suppose my boat is the quietest way to cross an ocean.

-
- Jennifer Stock:* How about bioluminescence? Did you see any glowing lights at night?
- Roz Savage:* Oh, yes and that's really pretty. Yes, you can see the sparkles from the oars.
- Jennifer Stock:* Was it more intense on the coast of both places or was it about the same throughout the Pacific?
- Roz Savage:* I did notice it more in some places than others, I probably actually noticed it more out in the middle because the nights out there can be very, very dark. In fact, I was quite surprised just how many nights were overcast and days, a lot of days I didn't see much sunshine, probably only 50 percent of the time out there and I get, sort of, comments about how I don't look too sub damaged, which is amazing, because I am actually quite fair skinned being a bit of a kind of English rose complexion, but I think it's probably because there just wasn't that much sunshine and this time around, I did have a tiny little simony on my boat, which I didn't have on the Atlantic.
- We actually, we called it my thong, because it's just like...this narrow little triangle of fabric. It doesn't provide any wind assistance at all because that would be against the spirit of ocean rowing, but it does provide a very welcome little bit of shade, which especially around midday, is...it really helps me not to fry out there.
- Jennifer Stock:* That's really important. I can imagine that would be really tough to keep up your skin. Speaking of your skin, is that an issue as far as keeping your skin up? You are surrounded by saltwater all day long, you're moving your body, you're sweating, do you have any issues that come to keeping your skin healthy besides the sun?
- Roz Savage:* It was a problem that I wasn't able to bathe in fresh water this time and towards the end I was having a recurrence of the saltwater sores on my backside that I suffered so badly from on the Atlantic. They weren't nowhere near as bad this time around. None of them got infected, which is when they get really painful, but just aesthetically, it's not very pleasant, I mean, not that I regularly show off my bottom to people, but if I could get that figured out...I really do think that if I'd have been able to bathe more in fresh water, that would have really helped, but I was having to bathe in salt water, which wasn't ideal, but hopefully, next time around a

combination of gradually improving my cleansing techniques by experimenting with different products plus, hopefully, the next time around, not having water maker troubles and I'll be taking at least one spare feed pump the next time around.

Jennifer Stock: Excellent.

Roz Savage: Hopefully, with regular bathing and the right choice of products, eventually, I will get it sussed out and not have these problems with saltwater sores.

Jennifer Stock: You're going to have a lot to tell future rowers of how to do it.

Roz Savage: I'm learning a lot, mostly by trial and error. I'm learning it the hard way, but yes, I always liked to share my experience with other people if I can be of any help to them.

Jennifer Stock: It seems to me that it must be hard to keep track of time when you take off and you're rowing and you're focusing on day to day, do you feel like you lose track of time, what day it is?

Roz Savage: No.

Jennifer Stock: No? We have these landmarks during the day of what's going on on land and I just wonder on the ocean, you definitely have the sun and the sunset, but day to day?

Roz Savage: I'm very aware of the passage of time. I wish I could fall into this meditative state out there where I would go, "Oh gosh. I've been rowing for ten hours already and I hadn't even noticed." People imagine it must be sort of meditative, but the trouble is it's not usually a regular motion. I think on the days where I'm on flatter water and I can just get into a steady rhythm, the time does pass more easily, but those days are very few and far between and generally, it's a constant way that you would try to get both oars in the water at the same time.

It's a bit chaotic out there and that makes it very hard to get into that steady, repetitive rhythm. So, generally I am keenly aware of the passage of time and I'm afraid there is a lot of clock watching going on, looking forward to the end of the shift, but something that really did help this time around was having audiobooks and to an extent, I was able to lose myself in the books and some books just really, I could escape into them, and I listened to 62 books on the crossing.

Jennifer Stock: That's fabulous.

Roz Savage: Oh, it was great. It made a world of difference to my general levels of happiness out there. I think there were many things that contributed to that. One was the fact that I had one successful ocean crossing under my belt already. So, I had a bit of self-confidence knowing that I could do it, that I would find it tough, but I do actually have it within me to survive a hundred plus days out at sea.

I think also, I'd learned a lot of useful psychological techniques from the Atlantic crossing and I tried to explain some of those in the book about the Atlantic that will be coming out this time next year, published by Simon & Schuster and I think also, just the audiobooks because the human brain, or certainly my human brain, when it has no external stimulus, can become very self-destructive. It can be easy to fall into a bit of a negative spiral.

It's nice to have the mental stimulation and the distraction of a good book, be it fiction or non-fiction and it also helped me feel like I was doing something very constructive with my time out there. It's difficult because I think I wouldn't have learned as much on the Atlantic if I'd been listening to books. Certainly, the introspection that I went through out there, although it was really, really tough at the time was very educational, very character building, but that's because it was so brutally hard. I didn't really want to do it quite so hardcore again. So, I do feel like I'm being a wimp in listening to books.

I think it's still quite tough enough, but having said that, I'm actually planning to do a meditation retreat over New Year, this year where I will be compelled to just sit for ten hours a day, not even rowing, just sitting and from the people I've spoken to about these experiences, I think that is going to be mentally very challenging and it will be interesting to be brought face to face with myself and my inner demons once again, but it's been interesting talking with these people who do these meditation retreats because they understand what I go through out there.

We both know what it's like to just really have to confront yourself and those little negative voices that I think we all have in our heads and it's so easy to distract yourself, to anesthetize yourself by being busy, busy, busy all the time or even when we're not being busy to watch TV or listen to the radio, listen to music.

Jennifer Stock: Numbing.

-
- Roz Savage:* Exactly. To always be stimulated by external input and it is very educational just to spend time alone with yourself.
- Jennifer Stock:* Did you expect to come to that finding through this process of rowing?
- Roz Savage:* I think I did. When I first conceived of the idea of rowing across an ocean, I...it was at a very spiritually formative stage of my life and I had hoped it would be some kind of a spiritual retreat out there and I wouldn't say that the Atlantic was. I would say that I spent far too much time feeling sorry for myself and I wouldn't say that's really very conducive to spiritual growth, but there was, after that, an intense period of spiritual growth when I was able to evaluate what I had gone through out there and really start assimilating those lessons learned.
- I suppose analyzing my experience, drawing out the lessons from it, and start assimilating those lessons into my very being and the two years since or nearly three years now, since the Atlantic row, I would say I'm a bit older and a bit wiser. I would say that I've taken the time and the trouble to sit down and assess the experience and even last year's setback, that was a very educational experience too and in that respect, I wouldn't count last year as a failure. I would say it was a success in that I learned stuff from it and I think anything can be deemed a success if you've taken the trouble to learn something from it.
- Jennifer Stock:* It sounds like it really helped you to prepare for successfully making it this time by making some modifications.
- Roz Savage:* Indeed, yeah. I learned a lot about how to set up the boat, but I would say also, I learned a lot about dealing with the media and I learned that you can't please everybody all of the time and there will always be the armchair critics and people who will choose to misunderstand what I do and without wanting to dwell on the negative too much, you can't please everybody all of the time and it's important not to take that personally.
- I know that my motivations are good and I hope that if I carry on doing the right things for the right reasons, then everything will come good and I actually firmly believe that and things are going fantastically at the moment. It's been six weeks since I got back to dry land. I've been very...formative...all kinds of exciting opportunities opening up and, you know, watch this space.

-
- Jennifer Stock:* So, what's happening? When are you going to start your next crossing from Hawaii to Samoa?
- Roz Savage:* Hopefully Samoa, but the weather and the ocean may have other ideas, but we shall see. That would be setting out in May in 2009, in the middle of May.
- Jennifer Stock:* That's right around the corner.
- Roz Savage:* Ah, yes. Don't I know it and there's a lot to happen between now and then, but I tend to manage to pack a lot into a short space of time. So, I'm confident it will all happen.
- Jennifer Stock:* So, you're also planning on sharing some of these experiences through your book and also a documentary. What is the timeline of those and when may people be able to see these?
- Roz Savage:* The book is going to come out in October 2009 to be accompanied by a book tour and hopefully, a speaking tour as well and the documentary, the final film won't come out until after I finish the last stage of my Pacific row, which will be in 2010. So, there's a while to wait for that, but in the meantime, I'm regularly posting short videos onto YouTube. So, you can go and check those out. There's a link from my website at rozsavage.com.
- You'll see this little YouTube icon and that will take you straight to all of my videos and I'm very excited about a project that I was working on this last weekend and just a short little four minute video which summarizes...it's going to be the introduction to my new redeveloped website and it's just basically a short summary of who I am, what I do, and why. So, it's lots of mentioned of the environment and it's a really cool little video and I'm very excited about it. So, it'd be great if people go online and check that out.
- Jennifer Stock:* Wonderful. So, that's rozsavage.com and there's also, I believe, past blogs that you can read from the Atlantic row and your recent crossing here so people can learn a little bit about your past rows?
- Roz Savage:* That's right. I blogged every day on my Pacific crossing to Hawaii and on the Atlantic I blogged every day until my satellite phone failed, after which I wasn't able to post blogs, but my mother kind of took over to describe things from her perspective, waiting for me anxiously on dry land and, in fact, if you're a real glutton for punishment there are blogs going all the way back to, I think, 2002 and certainly, covering my expedition to Peru in 2003.

So, there's a huge archive there and people might also enjoy checking out the podcasts that I did with a resident of Petaluma called Leo LaPorte who is a TV journalist and he does a lot of technology shows and he and I were doing podcasts three times a week while I was rowing to Hawaii and a lot of people seem to have really enjoyed those.

Jennifer Stock:

I listened to some of them. It's very surreal. I was just thinking, gosh, this woman's rowing across the Pacific, phone rings, "Hello!" It's just, it was really quite entertaining. I recommend that for people to listen in. That was wonderful and it kind of...you sort of follow along with how your mood was, how you were doing and I was wondering about the water thing and I kind of figured you didn't want to play it up based on the potential of what could happen if somebody took that too much. So, I thought that was really interesting that you really kept on focus on what was going on at the time.

Roz Savage:

You know, I must listen to those sometime and also, even when I'm on dry land, my life is, I guess, a little bit different from most people's lives. I travel an awful lot, I meet a lot of really fascinating people and so, I am still blogging about those things, even when I'm on dry land, but even more than that I am Twittering, which, if you haven't checked it out is quite a fun website. Basically, you drivel on about what you're doing from moment to moment every day and it's all done by SMS.

So, no message can be more than 140 characters long. So, I tend to post those, I supposed, on average, 3 or 4 times a day just about what I'm doing on kind of a moment by moment basis, what my thoughts are and who I'm meeting with and it's just a fun little thing. So, those are also on my website. They're called micro updates on my website, or you can see them on Twitter.

Jennifer Stock:

That's a great way to engage you as far as keeping up with something like this. Have you been in touch with schools are far as...

Roz Savage:

I have, in fact, I gave a presentation at the Urban School in San Francisco the other week and at the moment, we're just piloting an online survey because as you mentioned, the internet is a great way to meet...connect with a younger audience and so, at the moment I am working on my social networking strategy through Facebook and MySpace and all these cool applications that people use to make friends, connect with new friends and stay in touch with existing ones.

So, I'm really trying to use that to reach the fifteen to twenty five year olds who are really the stewards of the environment in the future and so, kind of nurturing them, getting them involved, putting across the message that it's cool to be blue and it's just a lot of fun. I'm hoping to do quite a number of talks at schools in the future because I enjoy them and I feel like it's really important. It's kind of frightening for me when parents and teachers tell me that they think I'm a positive role model for the youngsters, a very daunting prospect, but hey, you know, I wish that I'd met a woman who was doing cool adventurous stuff when I was that sort of age and maybe we are a little bit short of positive, especially female, role models. So, if I can help out in that way, then great. Happy to be of service.

Jennifer Stock: Well, it's wonderful, Roz. I definitely see you as a role model for many, both...just everybody, not only women, but men and also where we're going with trying to protect this planet and you're rising to the occasion and engaging everybody. So, thanks for taking that lead.

Roz Savage: Just trying to do my bit

Jennifer Stock: Well, thank you so much for joining us today in the KWMR studio. I know you are so busy right now getting all of these preparations ready for your next crossing starting in May and we'll keep posted to see how things go from there on.

Roz Savage: Please do. I shall aim to entertain. Thank you very much for having me on the show. It's been a real pleasure.

Jennifer Stock: Thank you.

(Music)

Jennifer Stock: Thank you for listening to Ocean Currents. This show is brought to you by NOAA's Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary, on West Marin Community Radio, KWMR. Views expressed by guests of this program may or may not be that of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and are meant to be educational in nature. To learn more about Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary, go to cordellbank.noaa.gov.