



**SEA Semester**<sup>®</sup>  
Environmental Studies in Woods Hole & at Sea

March 12, 2016

## Life in a Polygon

Emma Fichtner, Muhlenberg College



All hands saying bye to our pilot as we head out of Cuba and start heading to Jamaica.

### Position

18°50.9' N x 76°23.2' W (somewhere in our polygon), **Weather** clear, starry skies, **Speed** 3 knots

Historical sites visited, Salsa danced, and cigars smoked. I'd say C-264 did Cuba the right way. Since we have plenty of science to do and navigational techniques to master, we are not sailing directly to Jamaica, we are working our way through an area of the ocean that coincidentally forms a polygon on the chart.

As we gybe back and forth at the boundaries of our polygon, all of us here on the *Cramer* have been reminiscing about our time in Cuba. It has only been a matter of hours and I already miss the city of Santiago. I was going into Cuba with some knowledge of the history of the country,

but I still had no idea what I was going to encounter when I was there. Not only did I get to learn more about the evolution of the country, with all of its historical highs and lows, but I also got to experience the people and their culture.

Walking around the city streets allowed me to see Cuba from a less structured way and interact with a lot of the residents of Santiago. So many people wanted to share their stories, talk about their lives, and show us different things around their city. I was surprised to see how open everyone was and how they were so quick to help us whether we wanted to find a gallery, cool shops, or delicious churros. It was nice to feel so welcome in a place that before felt so foreign to me.

Being a dancer on a ship is harder than I thought it would be. Even when I have my random moments of dance it doesn't work out too well because the ship hits a swell and I just end up tripping over myself or accidentally pulling a line. Luckily, I finally got to dance while we were in Cuba. I was able to Salsa dance with some locals and I learned that practically everyone there knows how to Salsa dance and it's a huge part of their social lives. It was so cool to do something I love in a place that is so new to me. It was also very interesting to talk about dance with people in Cuba because they knew so much about it and can relate to dance so much. It was an experience that I was very lucky to have.

Even though we all wanted to stay on solid ground longer, it was time to put our sea legs back on and start setting some sails and head to Jamaica. Before we can get to Jamaica and leave the polygon, we have to make sure Mama *Cramer* is happy. How do we do that you ask? Field day! (duh). We spent the afternoon scrubbing, scraping, and polishing every inch of our home while we listened to the latest hits (or the latest hits from four weeks ago, really) to make sure that the ship stays clean for the final stretch of our trip.

I'm starting to realize that time works in weird ways on ships because we are working our way to the final port stop of our voyage but it feels like we just left St. Croix yesterday. We have spent over four weeks on the *Cramer* but it feel like we have been hauling, easing, tending, and furling for years. Before I know it, we will be pulling up to the dock in Boca Chica, and I will be saying goodbye to the *Cramer* and walking away the ship with amazing memories from the amazing six weeks I've spent on it!

- Emma