

My name is Lois Ann Porter, and I was one of three handlers for Diana's swim from Cuba to Key West August/September 2013 along with Bonnie and Pauline.

The successful crossing was the first swim attempt where I was on the crew/team.

When the swim began, the handlers took turns for 8-hour shifts (although I don't think Bonnie ever left Voyager). When I wasn't on shift, I was shuttled to the "Handler boat" with Capt'n Dave to get some sleep and eat.

Beginning the afternoon of September 1st, I never left Voyager until we arrived in Key West.

My recollection is that at the time I should have traded shifts with Pauline, the water had begun to get rough due to a coming storm and it was important to stay in place on Voyager to support Diana. My primary role was to make sure Diana was getting water and food, and to pay attention to her pace (using my watch and counting her strokes).

Several details of what it was like on the boat as the storm started to get close, waves and wind increasing, are still crystal clear to me:

- all assist boats had to back off to prevent any chance of threatening Diana's safety
- the "drag" thing that kept us at pace with Diana was brought in because of the current and wind and the need for Voyager to be able to navigate in the storm
- those of us on Voyager would be there until the storm passed - no transfer to/from other boats
- it was decided that the best way to keep Diana safe was for her to maintain a greater distance from any boat than the regular swim protocol, so the shark team was instructed to surround her at a safe distance. They had a walkie talkie so were able to communicate with Voyager and Bonnie.

I remember one of the shark team commenting that they were expecting to float with her, but Diana kept swimming and they had to try to keep up with her.

- when the center of the storm hit, the rain was pelting and the wind was really blowing - Diana and the shark team were hard to see, but we could see their blinking light(s) and they kept reporting on Diana's safety.

- as the rain pelted us, the forecast was that the storm could last for a few hours, so I laid down on the deck of Voyager to get some sleep. I remember Angel Yanagihara covered me with a dry beach towel - to this day it is one of the most comforting things anyone has ever done for me.

John Bartlett told Bonnie that the storm had moved us in the "right" direction, that instead of pushing Diana back as in previous swims with squalls and storms, this one had, in fact, moved us closer towards to Key West.

The rest of our morning of the 2nd is a blur. I remember the emotion of making it through the storm, and having a sense that Diana would not have to swim through another night. I remember Bonnie telling Diana that she wouldn't have to put on the protective mask another night and the

delayed response from Diana as it sunk in what Bonnie was saying, that she would make it to Key West before another nightfall.

It's impossible to describe what this experience meant to me. To be a small part in such a monumental feat is something I hold dear. And to have anyone question the validity of Diana's swim is beyond the pale. There is no one with more credibility, authenticity and drive than Diana. If there is anything I can do to help ensure that her name and this achievement are held in the highest regard, please let me know.

Lois Ann Porter