

Saorsa II — 2010 Cruise

Part 011

2010-07-08 20:16 ADT (23:16 Z)

Anchored in Shediac, watching the sun get lower in the sky, wondering what tomorrow will bring. This town has been something of a disappointment. Even the Lobster Festival, which drew us here, is more of a Carnival in Town event than a cultural celebration. No matter, all part of the ups and downs of being “out there”.

Very warm here today, so I dropped over the side for a swim to cool off. Followed with a quick rinse from the shower bag and then a nice crisp Gin&Tonic. All rather pleasant, really.

The wind is a bit gusty here tonight. A solid Force 5 with gusts of 6 or 7. One can see them coming as lines of ruffled water advancing across the basin. Then, the boat heels a little more and sheers about tugging at the cable. Our anchor is holding well. Good ground tackle is a great comfort.

Tomorrow, we'll sail out across the Northumberland Strait and visit the town of Summerside in Prince Edward Island. A few of the local folk with whom we have talked say it's a nice place.

I've been feeling a bit odd all day. Woke up a little out of sorts for no readily apparent reason. After morning coffee, the Crew took the dinghy ashore and went for a walk. I stayed on board and tidied a few things. I put some whippings on a new mooring warp and even that didn't go particularly well. It all worked out fine, but only after I had a stern chat with the needle and twine.

Anyhow, enough for now.

2010-07-09 18:12 ADT (21:12 Z)

Here, still, in Shediac Harbour. Awoke this morning to a completely overcast sky, strong wind, and a benign forecast. The latter was updated mid-morning to include a Strong Wind Warning. I guess someone at Environment Canada finally looked out the window.

I decided to stay in Shediac another day. As it turns out, the Force 5 gusting 6 we had this morning quickly became a 6 gusting 7. A good decision.

If this moderates a bit, we'll head for Summerside tomorrow. There's no question of us and the boat handling it. Just a question of how much discomfort one wants to endure.

The Crew is on a run ashore just now in the dinghy. The solitude is nice.

Last night, the gusts of wind blew out the anchor lamp. First time in the 25 years I've used the lamp that it couldn't stand the wind. More than a few *firsts* on this trip already; more to follow, I'm certain.

Kind of sad that we won't be in Summerside tomorrow morning. There's a Farmers' Market every Saturday during the summer. My guess is they sell potatoes.

I grow impatient with waiting. It would be foolish to head out into a half-Gale, but after a day or two in port... enough. Boats are safe, secure, and comfortable in harbour. But, that's not why they exist and not what they are meant for.

It's warm again today, so I went for a mid-afternoon swim. Wore my reef slippers to protect my feet on the ladder, and a pair of knickers to maintain a modicum of modesty and decorum. Would rather swim naked.

I tried a few snaps with the new waterproof digital camera. Some of them look OK in spite of the nasty short two foot chop that continuously splashed over my head. The camera took a couple of bumps on the boarding ladder, but seems intact. I guess it is waterproof.



Illustration 26: Swimmer's view of Saorsa II at anchor in Shediac Harbour

From here, I can see the Crew launching the dinghy and getting ready to row back. It's upwind; she'll be wet with the spray.

Just about time to open the wine.

2010-07-10 21:03 ADT (2010-07-11 00:03 Z)

Earlier today, we sailed across the Northumberland Strait from Shediac, NB to Summerside, PEI. From a pilotage perspective, quiet a simple passage of about 35 miles on a course of North by East. But today, we had a wee bit of wind to make the day interesting.

The forecast included a Strong Wind Warning and even mentioned gusts up to 30 knots (Force 7, Near

Gale). We had at least that and I think probably went into Force 8 at times.

We started the day well, raising anchor and motoring out of Shediac Harbour. It took a bit of effort to break out the anchor, as it was well dug in from the past couple of days blustery winds. We used the old trick of everyone stand on the bow, harden the cable vertical, and then move everyone to the stern. Simple, effective, easy.

Too tired. I'll write more tomorrow.

2010-07-11 14:45 ADT (17:45 Z)

Loneliness. It came to visit yesterday. Profoundly deep.

Alone on watch in the cockpit while crossing the Northumberland Strait in half a Gale, it came to visit and is with me still. Deeper this time than I have felt in many years. It had been dancing about the periphery the past few days, but now it's here. Like the Gale, there is nothing to do but ride it out. Until it moderates and the skies clear, it is a living Hell on earth. Like the Gale, it sings an awful song.

A challenging sail yesterday. My sweet Mistress held me safe. When I choose the sail plan with care and helm Her well, She rewards me as no other can. With purposeful power She drove through the water. This was no frivolous day outing; even half a Gale in the shallow waters of the Strait moves quickly from uncomfortable to dangerous.

The No. 3 jib was set for the entire passage. For about an hour in the middle, the wind moderated to Force 6 and we hoist a double-reefed main as well. She charged forward, easily reaching hull speed and sometimes more as the waves rolled us from side to side.

Then, the struggle to get the main down as the wind rose to a solid 7 and touched at 8. On the cabin top, wrestling with sail cloth turned demented demon by the wind. Hold Fast! For losing one's grip here means overboard and death.

Secured.

Back to the cockpit. Marvel that my Mistress drives on still at hull speed with only the No. 3 hoist. The smallest sail on board and we are on the brink of being over canvassed. I have no idea what will follow if the wind continues to increase. Down to bare poles will be the only choice left.

Note to Self: Contact Andy *sailmaker extraordinaire* and order Storm Jib.

The mechanical marvel that is the wind vane continues to steer well, holding our heading, correcting as wind and wave force us aside. An awesome mixture of levers, vanes, blocks, and lines, Peter's contrivance is a delight always.

Another hour passes. Plot the position. Update the log. Check the course made good. Carry on.

The wind in the rigging makes a frightful sound, the hull rolls deeply to port but never past vertical to starboard. I have made good choices; the lee rail stays above water. My Mistress and I are again in harmony.

The rain comes in fits and starts, and then settles in to solid and steady. It falls almost horizontally, stinging as it hits bare skin. Wet before with salt spray, I am drenched with fresh rain water. A nice rinse, I suppose.

Again, check the position. We are off course a little too far south, but only four miles to the fairway bouy. Alter and scan the horizon hopefully. Almost there.

The Confederation Bridge is in sight to the east. A tiny thin line almost lost in rain and mist. In a few days, we will pass beneath it.

One last struggle, bring down the heads'l. Engine starts, halyard let go, and Myra wrestles it down. My Crew is beginning to own the foredeck. She is good.

Pick up the range lights, find the bouys, enter harbour, then the marina. Tie up at the Visitor Dock.

Safely in.

Then, rest, and live with the loneliness.

End of Part 011.