

## Leaving the Nest

Sailing west from Manhasset Bay/Stepping Stones after being virtually born and raised on a boat in that area is not exactly the same as an eagle pushing its young out of its nest, but adjusting to a new way of life is never easy for bird or sailor. My Dad, with little extra money to spare, spent years in Freeport, New York looking for his first boat. Before that it was rental boats from what he used to call Sloppy Louie's rowed to the center of Manhasset Bay. I am not sure that the restaurant was ever really called Sloppy Louie's and I note that today it is simply the upscale Louie's. My Dad never had money for an outboard motor, but fortunately he was a strong guy. As the years passed, he took along a friend who usually did spring for the motor. Fishing in the baking sun of Manhasset Bay was never my favorite thing, but being with my Dad was worth it. When finally he bought his 19 foot wood lapstrake Cruiser's Inc., the uninspired name was SueCliff. I protested that my sister never had to scrape the paint off the bottom of the boat or help to push the boat on the double axel trailer, but my father urged me to recall that in the Bible, the elder's name was always given preference over the younger. So be it!

The precise year escapes me, but I believe that Mooring Number 214 or 240 was given to my father in 1964. It was only a short hiatus between his boats and mine, when two years ago we finally left Stepping Stone's park for Manhasset Bay, just next door and around the point. Not only did we thrive at Stepping Stones, the former Chrysler Estate summer home, but I served as a Coast Guard licensed launch operator there as well. I was followed by my son, who served as a launch operator in the same public park, only with a license 2 ½ times the tonnage as mine. He was also a much better launch operator.

Sailing in and around Stepping Stone Park became more difficult as family obligations multiplied. Visiting my mother, as she aged, was at least in part a pilgrimage to the boat and summer life on the water. In the winter months, my mother would go down to where the boat was dry-docked to check on her. The boat yard was run by a woman, who is now the owner. She was delighted to talk with my mother about boats, sanding, painting and other items of earthshaking importance.

One of the first things my sister asked me when my mother passed away last year was, "What are you going to do with the boat?" At the end of my mother's life, she was convinced that the boat was not mine but rather my father's and she too asked me, "What are you going to do with Dad's boat?" My first thought was to sell the boat, but my son agreed to be a partner in all the work that goes with owning a sailing vessel.

Finally, after much cogitation and agitation, it was decided to move the boat to Northern Chesapeake where it would be more accessible. The planning of the trip seemed a forever proposition. First we were going to go in the fall of 2018, but it never

came off. The weather was an issue, the boat was not ready for the trip and there were too many work and family related issues. There was a question as to which marina, how far north, water depth and just how the heck an aging sailor would get this boat from Manhasset Bay, New York, down the East River through Hell Gate, under the Verrazzano Narrows and down the Atlantic Coast through the Cape May Canal, up the Delaware, down through the Chesapeake/Delaware Canal and eventually to Worton's Creek. It seemed prudent to hire a Delivery Captain.

The timing seemed right to try to bring the boat down to Delaware in early June 2019. It did not happen. There was a trial commitment and there was always something else. The Delivery Captain did not seem adequate, available or stable. In desperation, ready to give up, I called Matt Coney at Coney's Marine. I had gone to high school with Matt and had talked to him in the past about buying boats. Matt, intelligently enough, is retired, but I spoke to his younger brother Ryan, only 65. Ryan recommended a Delivery Captain.

We set sail, me, Steve Beyer and District Magistrate Judge Allen Page on Tuesday, July 2, 2019. I worked all day with Steve Beyer, the day before, fixing the short, testing the boat, fueling her up and putting domestic water on board. For me this trip was like going to the moon. It was not exactly Shackleton conquering the South Pole or Neil Armstrong, as first man on the moon but, for me, it was like climbing Mount Everest. Allen was as pleasant as pleasant could be. Steve Beyer was a marvelous character. He told me that he did not get married until he was 40. Steve was a landscaper and did all kinds of other odd jobs throughout his life. He took years and several colleges to get a college degree. Then at age 40 he took the LSAT's, did well and went to St. John's Law School. He is a lawyer, although he does not practice very much law. He said that he does some stuff in Orphan's Court and he does edit a transportation newsletter. Steve is an expert on the Carmack Amendment; an iconic ICC law/regulation dealing with rate structure or some other such thing.

After speeding down the East River and Hell Gate, always an exciting experience, we found ourselves passing gently under the Verrazzano Narrows Bridge. Several of us had been down the East River before but going through Hell Gate, even with the tide, is always a remarkable experience. Simply seeing New York City off the starboard beam is just amazing. New York is so overwhelming. I could not help but think what the Native American's first thought when they saw this magnificent bedrock island.

Leaving Manhasset Bay, I looked around at the Bay and I realized I knew the story of almost every marina there. There was the old Capri Swim Club which my parents helped to start. There was the boatyard owned by the Jewish guy, Shepsman, who had his legs amputated in some horrible auto accident. There was Bill "the Swill" whom my father had a fist fight with. I worked at one or more of those boatyards myself. I remember the cross dresser who looked like a rough tough blue collar guy but kept women's dresses in his trailer and painted his fingernails in red. I remember

once seeing him all dirty in a hardware store, but he had the red fingernails. These stories are legion in Manhasset Bay and I felt like I knew many of them.

We then rounded Buoy 29, an old friend, at King's Point. That buoy has been the beacon leading me back to Stepping Stone many hundreds of times. As we passed Stepping Stones, after having left Manhasset Bay, I did feel myself tear up. It simply has been too many years. I have been in the rented rowboat that my father used, right through his boats and my boats, making the Rieders family 60+ years veterans of Western Long Island Sound.

As we passed out of the lower New York Harbor still on the tide with the current in our favor, the question was whether to go for broke and keep sailing south or to hang overnight at a slip around the corner from Sandy Hook at Raritan Bay. Steve repeatedly said that was "anxious" because of the weather. Allen seemed to want to go on and they turned to me for a decision. I thought long and hard and I told Steve that I trusted his judgment and that's why he was with us. Therefore we would stay. He still seemed apologetic for it but we stayed, arriving at a slip in Raritan Bay probably at 2:30 in the afternoon. We put in only 2.9 gallons of fuel, having used very little diesel on that trip because of the tide and current helping us down the East River. We found a place to get a drink and to eat and then the storm broke. It was a torrential windy storm and proved that Steve's judgment was totally correct. He was delighted and I was happy for him. That night I slept outside on one of the cockpit benches and could not have been more comfortable. I simply opened up a sleeping bag and used it as a mattress on top of the foam seat cushions. It was delightful.

The food was not great anywhere that we ate or that we made. However, we ate, were hungry and got a little sleep. We left the next morning, I don't know what time, it must have been 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning. It was dark when we left. After half hour or 45 minutes, we rounded Sandy Hook and we were in the Atlantic Ocean.

The sail south to Cape May was a marathon. We were fortunate and had God's grace to have a south/southeasterly wind that allowed us in Dream Extreme to sail upwind most of the time. We were close hauled and although we ran the engine, we had great help from the wind. We probably averaged over 7 knots going down the Coast. We saw evidence of the storm the night before with a 40 footer or so up on one of the beautiful New Jersey beaches. We were very lucky.

As we raced down the Coast we saw storms all around us. It was almost as though we were followed by rolling clouds in the Atlantic City area. There was a storm from the eastern horizon to the western horizon. Above us, however, was a hole in the sky with blue light and the sun shining down. This followed up all the way to Cape May.

Before we left on the trip when I was a little bit nervous, I remembered the prayer of Jonah in the belly of the whale where he said even in the depths of the sea, God

remembers and protects. I felt just that way as we sailed down the New Jersey Coast. That prayer gave me some comfort before we left and while we were traveling.

We arrived at Cape May just as dark was setting in about 8:30 p.m. We motored to the last slip which we had arranged in advance in Cape May and tied up. There it was so crowded that we could not find a place to eat. After we left a bar/restaurant because we could not get seated for 45 minutes, Allen Page specifically going back in to thank the woman at the register. His politeness, decorum, and overall deportment were really wonderful to see. He treated everybody with the very highest of respect. I was made fun of a little bit by Steve, but I considered it all good natured. Allen referred to me as a "boat monkey" after he saw me climbing around in a way that neither of the two of them possibly could.

Boats are funny, strange beings; having almost a life of their own. Some sailboats, when the going gets rough, buoyantly rise above the waves like a bird to take flight. Unfortunately they come crashing down into the waves. Still other boats, not necessarily the heavy ones either, submarine through the crests of the waves dousing everyone in tons of green water. A properly founded boat will rise up but her bow will slice through the top of the wave throwing the foam to port and starboard, while keeping her occupants toasty and dry. Such was the behavior of Dream Extreme when the winds piped up to 19 knots off Cape May and the waves, having 3,000 miles to travel, began to look ominous. The action of the boat was impressive. She rose up but not too high and therefore she did not pound. That was one of the most memorable moments.

Cape May was another short night. I took a shower there and we left at 3:00 a.m. in the dark. We left too early. In the Cape May Canal I bumped bottom twice. I was not in the center. Steve will never let me forget that. It was a moonless night and there were no lights on either side of the canal once you get outside of Cape May. I am not sure it would have made any difference, however, since it was low tide.

We looked at the bridge and it said 46 feet. Steve reassured us that we could get under the bridge which for our boat required 53 feet. However, it was low tide and we slipped underneath imperceptibly. We shone flashlights up in the sky and expected to hear a scraping, but the whip antenna on the top of the boat did not touch anything. We made it under the second bridge and the third bridge and found ourselves propelled by the tidal current into the lower Delaware.

In the lower Delaware we angled up towards the shipping channel again guided by Steve's Navionics App on his cell phone. In fact, most of the trip was using the Navionics App.

Steve insisted upon our using the auto helm. I did not want to do that, but he was right. It certainly made it a lot easier and more accurate to use that auto helm.

Even though wire was hanging out of the thing because the belt was obviously being stripped, nevertheless it never failed to work.

I wish I could say the same thing for the tack. At one point we noticed that the tack was at zero actually from the beginning of the trip and the batteries were not being charged. I do not know how long the batteries were not being charged for, but they were really low by the time we got to Cape May. Fortunately, a diesel will keep running even if there is no electric. However, we had plenty of other electric stuff we were dependent upon. At Cape May, I found the charger and charged the batteries. I then went into the engine and fooled around with some wires. I was worried about one loose wire that had three wires attached to it which attached to the back of maybe starting motor. In other words, there are three wires, one of which is yellow that are together all hooked up to the same place in the back of the starting motor which I have always wondered about being loose. I have tightened them before. In fact, there was some electrical tape around one of them. I fooled around with that and it apparently did the trick because the next morning when we left Cape May at 3:00 a.m. guess what, the tack was working and the batteries were charging.

So up the Delaware we go. I thought that would take a long time and I was told that the tide would turn against us since it would take more than six hours to get up the Delaware, but it never seemed to. We made it all the way to the canal with the tide and current in our favor. It took about an hour for the current to turn our way. I did learn something about the difference between tide and current. The current does not necessarily turn when the tide turns. It is like a bowl of soup. When you tip the bowl of soup a wave will go to the end of the bowl but it takes a second longer than for the water itself. It takes time for water to move after the tide changes and hence the current seems to be behind the tidal change. Anyway, once the tide had turned in our favor for an hour or so since we left Cape May at low tide, we then had the current with us and it propelled us all the way up to the canal.

We entered the canal from the Delaware to the Chesapeake which is 440 feet wide, plenty wide. Again bridges. We were told by Steve that the railroad bridge, the Amtrak Bridge, which is almost 400 feet across, is only in the up position. It is only down when there is a train. We had nothing to worry about. By this time we were pretty buoyant since we were quite ahead of schedule and we had survived the long trip down the Atlantic. As Steve and Allen were schmoosing I noticed that the huge iron Amtrak Bridge did not seem to be in the up position to me. I could see from one side to the other that it was uniform across. I pointed out to the other two fellows who had first did not notice. Finally, Steve and Allen agreed with me that the bridge was not in the up position but in a down position which would mean 46 feet. I wasn't sure what to do but Allen to the rescue. He called the bridge tender and we had to wait 10 minutes. During that time I simply let the boat drift and the current was taking us probably at 1 ½ to 2 knots towards the bridge. It indeed take about 10 minutes on July 4<sup>th</sup> the bridge went up and we went underneath.

Out in the Chesapeake we continued to have the marvelous current with us. Here there was not any tidal issue but there was current and we were being driven downstream no doubt by the high water in the Susquehanna and the water that was coming through the canal. Finally we rounded the point to Worton's Creek. It was like landing on an alien planet. I could not believe we got there, that we got there in one piece and without any really major problems, no fights or arguments.

Dream Extreme handled well and we pulled into Greene Point Marina where Joshua was waiting for us and got some pictures of us coming in.

Friday was a day off and Sunday we went back to cleaning the boat in the blistering heat.

It was hot the whole time. Out on the Atlantic it was so cool in the morning that we actually wore jackets. Allen was able to take a lot of snoozes on the boat as did I the first day. After that, I did not really feel like sleeping and was up all the time except for those 3-4 hours a night that we would sleep.

The second night I also slept on the cockpit benches and it was much more comfortable. I slept pretty well that night.

Just being on the Atlantic and making that run down the Coast knowing that there were storms all around was a remarkable feeling.

It was also amazing that we saw so few boats. There must be thousands of yachts and all kinds of boats from Manhasset Bay to the Chesapeake but we saw very few boats going in our direction and no boats our size. Oh yes, a freighter or two. Down the East River there was a boat in front of us, but that boat peeled off and went into Raritan Bay or somewhere, maybe even in New York Harbor. Maybe it was the weather, maybe it was that people we hold up wherever they were going to go for the July 4<sup>th</sup> week, but few or no boats.

I did have new jack lines, but did not have my personal e-perp. I did have two individual strobe lights but hooked neither one of them up to my life jacket and I only wore my inflatable life jacket once for a short time. Otherwise, no life jackets out there which was a mistake.

One mistake I feel I did make was by not absolutely insisting that somebody look at the back of that engine and make sure those wires were tight. I had asked Tom's Point to look because I was concerned about the tack not working but he never came out to do that. So we left with a nonworking tack. We could not have known that the batteries were not charging because of course they would show that they were full of energy.

All in all it was a good trip and I learned a lot of about tides and currents and have a much better feel for oceans.

I did determine to fix some things on the boat with new stuff. I am going to get a new wheel set for the Ray Marine. I am going to get a new condenser for the refrigerator or get the old one fixed. I am going to have somebody look at the back of that engine and make sure that all of those connections are tight. I have to stop at the pump out station. Probably a few other things to do but I need to make sure all the mechanical stuff really works perfectly on a boat before setting out on a journey like that.

Having pushed myself out of the nest from the comfortable abode of Great Neck/Port Washington, New York to Worton's Creek, I now have a better understanding of how that little eagle feels the first time. The first flapping of the wings may be scary, but the thrill of soaring through the sky and over the water is fulfilling. Out of the nest is not so bad and is full of future hopes and dreams; one might say Dreams Extreme.

**CAR/srb**