

# Saorsa II — 2010 Cruise

## Part 017

*2010-09-24 14:40 ADT (18:40 Z)*

As I write, I'm starting a new book, literally. The last notebook is filled to the last page and now a fresh, empty book is before me. A coincidental metaphor? Perhaps not.

I feel a significant change in the cruise and me. The journey of the past few months is now in my wake and the next stage lies ahead, empty but ready to be written upon.

It's been two weeks since I last wrote in my journal and much has happened.

I have sailed the length of Massachusetts Bay stopping at Padanaram and Point Judith. I have visited the wonderful museum that is Mystic Seaport. Continued on into Long Island Sound stopping at Clinton, Port Jefferson, and Port Washington. On a mooring at Port Washington, I experienced a thunder squall accompanied by 100 mph winds. And, I have transited the East River, through Hell Gate, past Manhattan, viewed the Statue of Liberty, and entered New York Harbour. My, how time flies when one is having fun.



*Illustration 39: View of Mystic Seaport from Saorsa II's visitor dock*

I look back over the ship's deck log as an *aide memoire* to my writing.

A nondescript passage to Point Judith.

A very pleasant thirty mile passage to Mystic.

My horror as the crew almost steered us onto rocks at the entrance to Mystic River. Had I not intervened, another minute would have put us aground.

The frustration of missing the once-per-hour opening of the highway bridge in Mystic and idling about the river for 45 minutes waiting for the next opening.

The joy of visiting Mystic Seaport by boat. The latter included a ride on a steam powered passenger vessel and a rowing outing in a Chamberlain Dory Skiff. The Seaport is a must visit for anyone with an interest in boats and the sea.

A good sail from Mystic to Clinton; then meeting Susan and George followed by a nice evening of food, wind, and conversation aboard their sailing vessel *Precocious*.

Searching for a good spot to anchor in Port Jefferson and finding that the best spot was amongst disused moorings in Mount Misery Cove around the corner from the main harbour.

A good sail from Port Jefferson into Manhasset Bay and Port Washington harbour. A little anxiety as the forecast was ominous. It was accurate and we endured 100 mph winds for ten or fifteen minutes as a thunder squall flash-banged its way through the harbour.

Negotiating the East River and Hell Gate as we motored to New York Harbour. The first glimpse of the Statue of Liberty as we approached The Battery.

Realising that this was the southernmost point on the cruise as we rounded the south end of Manhattan Island at The Battery, a latitude of 40° 41.8' N.

Putting the crew ashore with an almost wordless good-bye and feeling the lightness as a cloud lifted.

A bunch of thoughts as I sit here alone with my Mistress and reflect on recent events here in New York City. The wonder of a chance meeting while cruising. The delight of spending time with Ingrid, Dayton, and Steve here in the "Big Apple".

When I think back over the past few months and recall those chance meetings so characteristic of cruising, I smile.



*Illustration 40: View of Manhattan from inside Central Park*

*2010-10-01 15:51 EDT (19:51 Z)*

I had anticipated that the cruise up the Hudson River from New York City and then back to Lake Ontario via the Erie Canal would be a simple matter. A graceful dénouement to the cruise, if you will.

It seems that is not to be the case.

After spending a few nice days in New York City sampling the o'erwhelming cacophony that is Manhattan, I dropped the mooring at the 79<sup>th</sup> Street Boat Basin and motored to Newport Marina on the Jersey shore of the Hudson.

About an hour after docking, my friend Brendan F. Walked down the dock and tossed his bags aboard. Following a suitable "Hail Fellow, well met" greeting, we got things organised, went for a grocery shop, had a shower, and then dinner at the restaurant overlooking the marina.

A passable Cabernet Sauvignon to accompany an excellent Filet Mignon. Say what you will about our American cousins, they do serve a good steak!

A not particularly early start the next day (September 26) let us catch the first of the flood up the river and make excellent time. The Hudson River valley at this point is quite beautiful as it passes through a portion of the Appalachian Mountain range. As we rounded a bend in the river, the impressive edifice that is the U.S. Military Academy at West Point came into view. It is a stunning piece of architecture when viewed from the river.



*Illustration 41: U.S. Military Academy at West Point*

Shortly after passing West Point, we docked at Riverview Marina in Newburgh. On approaching the dock, we recognised the trawler power yacht *Elizabeth Ann* owned by Liz and Dean M. from Cobourg. They are heading south on their way to Florida. In a delightful small world event, we convened on their boat for dinner and conversation. A most agreeable evening with charming company.

The next day, after breakfast at a local diner in Newburgh, we continued up river to Catskill, New York. A dreary rain drenched passage ended at Riverview Marine Services where we planned to unstep the mast in preparation for entering the Erie Canal.

The first task was to unbend sails and de-rig. The mainsail was folded and stowed; the boom removed and put below; halyards and control lines coiled and tied off; all in readiness for the crane to lift the mast.

The second order of business was a raid on the scrap wood pile and subsequent construction of wooden

frames to support the spar horizontally on deck. The mast is about 55 feet long and weighs something around 300 pounds, so it's important that it be well supported and secure during the remainder of the cruise.

This was all accomplished between and during rain showers.

After checking the forecast, I decided to wait until the next day to unstep the mast.

### *2010-10-02*

I left off writing yesterday at the point of unstepping the mast and stowing it on deck. We did this with the crane and staff at Riverview Marine Services in Catskill. Except for a few cosmetic scratches on the mast, the event went without incident.



*Illustration 42: At Catskill, mast unstepped and stowed on deck ready for Erie Canal transit*

The next day, September 30, we left Catskill and headed up the Hudson towards Troy and the first lock. The rain that had been forecast arrived and we spent the entire day motoring upriver in everything from light drizzle to heavy rain.

The Federal Lock at Troy proved to be a challenge. When the sluice gates were opened to fill the lock, the

boat was buffeted by the turbulent water and the heel of the mast banged against the lock wall. Using the engine and rudder to counter the current and with Brendan holding lines securing us to the lock's cables, we emerged shaken but unscathed. It was a very difficult experience.

We continued up river and made the turn into the Erie Canal. When I went to the Waterford Visitor Centre, I was instructed to move up past the first two locks of the canal, vizt., E2 and E3. It seems that flooding was expected as a result of the large amount of rain over the past few days and we would be safer above the lock in the controlled and guarded basin.

They were right! As I sit here, the Mohawk River is ten feet higher than normal, flood water was level with the ground floor of the Visitor Centre, and the Erie Canal is closed until further notice due to flooding. We're trapped!

At least the rain has stopped and today we enjoyed a lovely day of early Autumn sunshine.

I'm tired, very tired. Unstepping the mast and travelling with a 300 pound spar on deck has been a strain. I'm anxious about the remainder of the trip, especially the crossing of Lake Ontario. I must be very careful to select a good weather window for the crossing.

At this point, I just want to be home.

*2010-10-03 18:07 EDT (22:07 Z)*

Still moored on a wall above Lock E3 on the Erie Canal. The canal is still closed until further notice due to the flooding.

At least the dock is free. However, it has no water or electrical service. Every day, I run the generator to recharge the ship's batteries. Also, today, I added some water to the ship's supply. That involved a few trips to and fro carrying a five gallon jerry can from the water faucet at the Lock Station to the boat, a distance of about 250 yards. Tiring work.

Last night, Brendan and I spent a delightful evening with the family on the next boat, also trapped here. Madeleine, her husband, and their son Jean-Christophe are from Montréal and headed south on a grand adventure. Even though we struggled at times with language, the common bond that unites cruising yotties allowed us to pass a very agreeable evening together.

I'm tired now. As the end of the cruise draws near, I feel myself wishing I could just be done with it and return home. I fear the best part of the trip is behind me and this transit of the Erie Canal will be so much drudgery. Certainly, it has been rather inauspicious so far.

Perhaps I should have continued south to Chesapeake?

*End of Part 017.*