

# Stella Maris' Voyage

by

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*...everybody has a perfect plan – until they get punched in the face.*

*Mike Tyson*

My punch in the face was hurricane Dorian. The plan had been sailing “Stella Maris”, a 38-foot Jeanneau sail boat, to Brunswick, GA - which prides itself as being a hurricane hole along the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway 70 NM east of Jacksonville, FL – as a retreat during hurricane season and a vantage point for sailing to the Bahamas for example.

Until reaching the Chesapeake, everything had gone better than I had hoped for. I had left the waters of Lake St. Clair July 12<sup>th</sup>, to cruise the North Channel and Georgian Bay arriving in Midland, ON, the gateway to the Trent Severn Waterway, by August 6.



Other than un-stepping the mast and passing through the 44 locks along the 240 NM from Port Severn, ON to Port Trenton, ON near Lake Ontario with the 54-foot mast resting on a wooden frame on top of the sail boat the challenge was to cut across 15 NM of Lake Simco and make the 60 NM passage across Lake Ontario to Oswego, NY on a calm day. And as luck would have it, on both occasions their waters just happened to be calm at the time we arrived – no need to wait for a

weather window. Eight more locks before the Oswego river/canal meets the Erie canal and then another 23 locks before the Erie canal drains into the Hudson river near Troy, NY. From there it is a short distance to Catskill, NY, where the mast was re-stepped. On August 22<sup>nd</sup> the skyline of New York came into sight and Stella Maris sailed by the statue of liberty to anchor in Great Kills harbor, Staten Island,

NY. This would be the vantage point for the 120 NM or so open ocean stretch solo along the New Jersey coast line to Cape May at the entrance of Delaware Bay. Luck was on my side again; waters were calm, and a light wind came out of the North, when I set off for my overnigher to Cape May. By pre-dawn on Saturday morning I had made it to Cape May, where I dropped the hook near the Coast Guard Academy to catch a few zzz.

Continuing from Cape May up Delaware Bay and into the Delaware river to catch the Chesapeake and Delaware canal near Delaware city tides and currents are to reckon with. Picking the right departure time makes all the difference in reaching your anchorage for the night in a timely fashion. Conveniently, navigation-software these days has built-in features like predicted tide and current tables – which came in handy sailing up Delaware bay – and down the Chesapeake to Annapolis, MD, America’s Sailing Capital on the Severn river.



There is a plethora of marinas around the Severn River and creeks that drain into it – but the cool thing was, so I thought, to grab a mooring ball in the mooring field near downtown Annapolis and across from the United States Naval Academy. That was Labor Day weekend – it didn’t take long for me to realize that with wind out of the Northeast and the resulting swell, the water-taxis, and the holiday weekend boat traffic this wasn’t a comfortable place. Passing through the Spa creek draw bridge I found more city-operated mooring balls and a well-protected anchorage in the creek – a dinghy-ride away from the dinghy dock near the harbor master’s office building with amenities like showers and a washing machine and dryer. Other than that, the creek anchorage seemed like a nice place to hunker down and wait for hurricane Dorian to pass.

Now here is my punch in the face: In talking to fellow cruisers anchored in the creek, others at home, and two more storm systems forming over the Atlantic-ocean the prevailing opinion was to avoid sailing

down the Chesapeake into the Intra-Coastal Waterway during the generally storm-prone time period from September to mid-October and continue afterwards. So, the plan now is to sail the Chesapeake during September, travel to/in Germany in October, and continue to Brunswick, GA in November – we shall see. And that is that.