



Marion Bermuda— *Spirit of Bermuda* Day 6

Royal Hamilton Amateur Dinghy Club, Paget BERMUDA—, June 19, 2013:
From *Spirit of Bermuda* – Wednesday JUNE 19, 2013

DAY 6 - We *are* the Spirit of Bermuda

Having feasted on tuna tartar, tuna sashimi, seared tuna steaks, and tuna pasta bowl with ginger soy sauce (see earlier post), we set our sights on our final approach to Bermuda. All signs are positive as the wind is up and its direction calls for a direct course waypoint to the finish.

But this this is sailing, and things happen.

First, the mid-day wind drops, slowing our progress and adding about 8 hours to our estimated time of arrival. Then, the wind shifts so that the finish line is directly to windward.

Recall that Spirit does not go upwind as well as modern yachts, especially in light air. So we will have to beat a wide zig-zag toward the finish after dark. As the sun begins to set and the finish line remains hours away, Spirit's spirits begin to sag.

Suddenly, at just the right time, Patrick performs a miracle and produces, out of nowhere, some welcome frosty beverages and snacks. Just what we needed. We all cheer, pause for a fabulous team photo, and resume our course to the finish with renewed enthusiasm.

The wind increases after sundown, but we just can't seem to get to the finish line. We sail to distant lay-lines, only to find them short of the mark. We tack back and forth, and search for the finish line in the dark.

Spirit's 5 sails include 3 mainsails and two jibs. Because the outer jib overlaps the inner jib, the outer jib must be furled each time we tack. Obviously, tacking is no easy feat: it is time consuming, labor intensive, and causes the yacht to slow to a crawl. But tack we must.

The finish line is located between a buoy placed out in the ocean and the St. David's Lighthouse. But tonight, there are dozens of lights in the water boats,

buoys, markers, etc. It is very difficult discerning which lights are the finish line.

After more Spirited debate, we find the finish line, and finally, at 2:43 AM on Wednesday June 19, 2013, we cross the line, successfully concluding our race of 645 nautical miles from Marion to Bermuda.

And another race begins - to clear customs. But first, we are instructed to fly our quarantine flag and hold in St. George's harbor until sun up. This we do, which gives the crew the opportunity to pull out some champaign and toast a safe, fun, and exciting race.

We have been up all night, but our Spirits soar as we celebrate accomplishing our goal and winning our division. We look forward to receiving the Captain Ed Williams Trophy later this week.

We fold and flake our sails, pack up our gear, and make the boat ship shape. We load all our gear and trash on deck and mop the galley and bunk rooms. We coil lines and stow away gear. We pull out and raise our ceremonial colors to fly all during the week long celebration.

And then, as dawn breaks on a beautiful Wednesday morning, we pull in to Hamilton harbor and dock alongside the pier at the Royal Hamilton Amateur Dinghy Club. Loved ones greet us on the dock with cheers, hugs, and a few tears of joy and relief.

We are tired.

But we are proud of what we have done.

We started the race as 32 separate individuals from all over the globe. Many of us were complete strangers. We all stepped way outside our comfort zone. Just like the objective of the Bermuda Sloop Foundation, we united over a common purpose. We worked together to accomplish our goal.

And in the process, we became a team. More than that, we became a family.

As we step off the yacht, I suddenly realize that we – this crew of Preston, Patrick, Alan, Larry, Karen, Ben, James, Sean, Tre, Gus, James, David, Elijah, Steve, Neil, Chris, Mark, Chris, Ed, Will, Max, Deb, Amy, Luke, William, Oliver, Dylan, Dan, Rauiri, Alistair, Willie, and Stewart -- We have become the Spirit of Bermuda.

Cheers to All!!

Stewart Thomas

stepping off Spirit of Bermuda
safely in Bermuda