

Georgian Bay Bound

This year marked our fourth family trip into Georgian Bay and third trip for the Georgian Bay Regatta. A lot of members ask me why go so far (and with so much effort) for a regatta. I usually answer that the regatta is our summer family vacation. But the fact of the matter is that we've been smitten by the fabulous sailing offered in Georgian Bay. It's offered us challenging sailing conditions, greatly expanded our sailing experiences and improved our sailing abilities. We've also been especially welcomed by the Georgian Bay Regatta; each year we feel compelled to return.

Georgian Bay has much to offer; fabulous anchorages, fantastic sailing, and quaint sailing communities. I'm always amazed how different things look from the water whether it's the numerous islands and anchorages, escarpment, and yes the approaching storms. The weather and the safe harbors are important considerations when sailing in the area. The regatta for its part helps to showcase all that Georgian Bay has to offer in the safe and secure company of other sailors whom we now call friends. The regatta offers two flying sales divisions (high and low) and two white sail divisions, plus a cruising division. This past summer 40 boats participated in one form or another.

We began the 2009 regatta in Wiarton under spinnaker with windy conditions – 15-20knots. Wiarton has a deep open bay. At the mouth of its bay are a series of islands which offered an ideal destination with numerous sheltered anchorages. Many boats rafted together for cocktails and dinner before derafting and retiring for the night. Many of our nights on the hook are pleasant and this night proved to be no exception.

From a starting point off White Cloud Island we sailed the next leg of the regatta to Meaford. Many sailors would prefer to forget this leg because the wind gradually built to over 30 kt. I'm not particularly fond of Meaford because the last time we were there (2 years ago), we had so much wind our rudder snapped in half. In any event we were glad to survive the leg with no damage this year. Cocktail hour at the Reef Boat Club retold many harrowing stories. Dinner was an option of BBQ steak or salmon with awards for the first two legs of the race and more drinks.

Meaford to Thornbury was the shortest leg of the regatta and an appreciated respite from the previous two windy days. Thornbury was very amusing because the hungry sailors couldn't get enough of the delicious appetizers at the dock side hosted party – mini- strip loin burgers with pickle and mango sauce, mini pulled pork sandwiches, breaded goat cheese fritters with blueberry chutney, grilled tiger shrimp tossed in garlic butter, and miniature crab cakes with honey Dijon aioli. Yummy. Thornbury's numerous restaurants offered pleasant dining for anybody with room to eat after the party. Oh and did I mention the free beer at the party.

From Thornbury, we left for Christian Island. The wind did not cooperate this day and we motored across to our anchorage. Unfortunately I underestimated our diesel consumption and needed a tow halfway across the bay - John Giles of Giles Marine Shop in Thornbury came to our rescue aboard Crackerjack II - how embarrassing as I had pumped out in Thornbury but opted not to refuel. That evening a few boats offered enough diesel to get us to Midland.

If you ever have the opportunity to sail around Christian Island take it. Only four hours from Midland it is the destination of choice for many sailors and is a frequent departure point for other destinations in the bay. Over the next day we held course racing under variable and shifty wind conditions. Thankfully we were on the right side of the shifty wind conditions and came away with our first bullet in the flying sail high division. We spent the second night off of Christian Island at Little Sandy Bay. A fire on the beach with marshmallows and beer, capped a successful race day, but if you go watch-out the island is owned privately and you could be charged \$5/person to land and light a fire.

Sailing from Christian Island to Midland Bay Sailing Club meant we were completing our regatta. Winds were from the northwest but shifted to the southwest. So we flew the spinnaker for the first half and beat into the Midland Bay Sailing Club with 20 kts wind on her bow. The Midland Bay Sailing Club hosted the awards banquet complete with Mount Gay rum and numerous friendly rivalries were finally settled. Another year of racing on the bay was over.

Next year will be the 25th Anniversary year. It's always held the last week of July before the August long weekend. The regatta moves its location around the bay to offer a variety of experiences but I expect next year's regatta will return to the west side of Georgian Bay. Watch the internet for details. We would be glad to be accompanied by some new friends.

Cheers and fair weather to you and yours
Tom Bolland

Vice Commodore – Barrie Yacht Club
Co-Chair - Georgian Bay Regatta 2010

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