

## Sailing Invictus from Maine to Fredericton

by: Tom Power

Every day is new to me. When Invictus was launched, I discovered a seacock the I left open and disconnected. I thought I was going to lose the boat, a great first lesson. The marina donated dock space so I could finish up, there I really got to know some amazing people. The day came to sail for home, I was very anxious. My best memory that day, a Captain of a large tall ship docked next to me, called my name, I looked over and saw the crew at attention and saluting me and Invictus as I pulled my last dock line. "Fair Winds Captain!" was heard from the tall ship, I will never forget that.

As I left the harbour, I was a bit nervous. This was my first sail after the camp, in a boat with no working electronics except the VHF and a spotty engine, I'm now going to solo sail with no crew using map and compass to get me home, this was very new to me. The first day I had managed to make some miles and navigate to a harbour, it was starting to get dark, and my lights were faulty. I was motoring past the entrance buoy when my motor quit, quick thinking landed me in my dinghy towing Invictus behind. Having never moored a boat before, I was now heading towards a mooring buoy with an unmanned boat in hot pursuit behind me. Quickly I stopped the dinghy next to the mooring ball, over my shoulder I saw my boat pass on the other side of the ball at a high rate of speed heading for shore. I rapidly twisted the tow line around the ball, Invictus made a quick 180. I motored over, jumped aboard to climb in my sleeping bag. I thought to myself, this is just like the Military, extraordinary people taking on extraordinary challenges.

The next morning, I worked on the engine with positive results, heading out I would wonder what was ahead. The day was met with continued work on improving the reliability of the engine, repairing electrical wiring while attempting to keep Invictus on course. It was a great day, I remember a remarkable coastline and the sun reflecting the choppy water. I anchored for the first time in a little cove, after a few hours I had lights and a GPS. I felt really accomplished, we were working well together.

Two hours before sunrise I pulled anchor with the notion that I may continue through the night if things were going to plan. The day was spent once again working on the electrical and engine, I was feeling great, I pulled up the weather on my phone with a cautionary forecast. I decided to press on, I was unaware of what I was up against when I entered the Bay of Fundy. As day turned to night, the winds picked up to 25 knots gusting 40, with seas of 3 meters, this was new, the



seas looked to be very confused. I later learned the tide, wind and currents were working against each other.

When I reached the first reporting point, I announced my position to Fundy Traffic, they advised all commercial traffic was off the bay due to the weather, I thought that was interesting. My plan was to stay out instead of heading into an unknown harbour at night. To help mitigate risk, I reached out to Ellen on my phone for advice as this would be my first storm and I'm solo at night. She was instrumental in bringing to safe harbour. During the night I would routinely relay my location to one of my SAR contacts from my previous unit in Greenwood Nova Scotia. Fundy Traffic and the Canadian Coast Guard took an interest in my travels, they would ask for updates on position and my status. I'm very thankful for that. During that night I was hit with a large wave on my Starboard side, knocking her down, which at the time did not faze me as I had so much adrenaline running through me. The current was so strong, at one point I thought I had snagged a crab pot. I notified my plight to Ellen and prepared to hop in the water to cut it, Ellen convinced me the risk was too severe. That was a good decision after which she was able to help me troubleshoot that it was indeed just the current.

As I carried on trying to stay upright, the day was greeted with fog, another challenge. I decided to head for a safe harbour as my fatigue was growing. I was elated to finally see the entrance buoy 10 feet off my bow. I entered calm water, let the anchor out and sat for a bit to let the rain cool off my head, I was safe. When I entering the channel, I remember seeing the Coast Guard off my Port Stern, that was a great feeling. I called Canada Customs, advised them of my situation and was cleared in via phone call.

I looked out through my steamed portlight and observed two individuals motoring on pallets and milk crates. When they came alongside, I made it known my desire to stay where I was. They informed me that the boat would be on high ground due to the tide if I stayed there, it was suggested that I raft alongside a docked fishing boat. While on the dock we talk for a while, I was told they were prepping their boat to help me to safety. It turned out Ellen was teaching a course, one of the students was a resident of the harbour I was attempting to enter; a call was made to the fishermen of the community. I was humbled by their willingness to risk their lives to preserve mine.

I was overwhelmed, enjoyed a well-deserved beer and met my family on the dock. Three days later I made passage to Saint John, successively traversed the Reversing Falls, sailed up the

Saint John River and ended at the Fredericton Yacht Club. Mission complete, Invictus is home.

After my trip, it was evident that I need to learn a lot of training to be a better sailor. I have since carried out an extensive refit on Invictus and continue to sharpen my skills while attending various courses. The Soldier On Sailing camp is once again being held in Charlottetown, I hope to be in attendance



with Invictus. I want to show everyone that we still are capable of being extraordinary.