

## Sitting Out Hanna

We decided to take a late summer vacation this year and ended up sailing east on Labor Day weekend. The weather was great as the typical humid foggy weather of a Southern New England summer was replaced with clear blue skies and northerly winds. This made sailing east to Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket a pleasure.

The fear, of course, is that it is hurricane season. Even though the season is from June to November, we always think of September as particularly dangerous and expect these southern tropical whirlwinds to visit us just after Labor Day. This is borne out by how many people picked September days in the DCYC Hurricane Pool. Nevertheless, we set out trusting the weatherman's early warning forecasts.

We made Nantucket after stopping overnight on the Vineyard and took a mooring right in front of the town. For three days we explored Nantucket by foot, bike and dinghy. It was then that Hanna decided to take a run up the coast. We made a decision to make it back to Vineyard Haven, which seemed more protected, than sitting out in Nantucket's open mooring field. Leaving the old gray lady, Nantucket, on the only morning with dense fog with zero visibility we made it back to Vineyard Haven by afternoon and dropped the hook outside the harbor's small breakwater.



“Eighty feet of chain should do it”, I said to my first mate as we prepared for a night of monitoring the falling barometer and building wind. Thirty knots was the predicted blow which didn't sound too bad. The low clouds arrived in the morning while I watched nearby boats up anchor and proceed out the harbor to a small lagoon. “Hmm, did they hear a different forecast?” Soon the rains came and we were committed to staying put.

Hanna was to rumble through between 1 and 2 in the morning. Late in the afternoon, there were reports of 60 knot winds off Montauk. Sixty knots! That was a little more than we planned on. What could we do now? Break out the storm anchor! In the failing light we lugged the Fortress, 50 feet of chain and 200' of 3/4 line up on the foredeck. The bitter end was made fast to the base of the mast. “If we start to drag, just drop it over the side”, I instructed the first mate. For the rest of the night we watched the plot of the boat on the chart plotter to detect any dragging.

The wind never exceeded 35 knots by the time the glass bottomed out and started to rise. The wind abated then shifted 180 degrees and then picked up to 30 knots. The boat swung around, the anchor held and we finally went off to sleep at 2 in the morning. By sunrise the clouds were chasing Hanna to Nova Scotia and the winds were down to 20 knots. Other boats were returning to the anchorage as we raised anchor and sailed to Tarpaulin Cove.

It was a long night as we sat out Hanna's visit to New England but it departed leaving clear air and fair winds. That gave us more pleasant sailing weather all the way back to New York.

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