

## Charting Our Course

*A poem for the  
2007 Marblehead to Halifax Ocean Race*

Once again for the race, we gather,  
Marblehead to Halifax, nothing else we'd rather,  
One Hundred and Two years since the first,  
Sailed by thousands, so earnest,  
And, as in life, of course,  
Captain and crew must chart our course,

Eighth of July, as light dawns over Marblehead,  
Forecasts are in, tides are read,  
Provisions stowed, sails on deck,  
Circling Tinkers Gong, watch rules in effect,  
Last minute doubts, there exists no recourse,  
Captain and crew re-chart our course,

Southwest breeze, sun reaching high,  
Off they go, an adventure, no question why,  
To Halifax, east by northeast,  
Three Hundred Sixty miles, at least,  
Past Bakers and Halfway Rock, too late for discourse,  
Captain and crew chart our course,

Eastern Point off Cape Ann, fading sun,  
Mass Bay to Gulf of Maine, nighttime race to run,  
Separating fleets, passing Ammens Rock and Cashes Ledge,  
Over Crowell's Basin, new forecasts hedge,  
Fog, rain, winds contrary, God's fury and force,  
Captain and crew re-charting our course,

Adjusting north or south, tides from Fundy Bay,  
Passing over watery graves, too many to say,  
Final resting place of fishing men and boys,  
From a long ago time of lesser joys,  
First land at Cape Sable Light, weather worse,  
Captain and crew charting our course,

Boats in trouble, shelter in Clarks Harbour,  
Treacherous tides, reefs and rocks, on we labor,  
"Turning the corner," Brazil Rock is past,  
The final downeast run at last,  
Checking for boats in our class, new plans to endorse,  
Captain and crew charting our course,

Outside Mahone and St Margarets Bays,  
Tracking markers, whistles and bells in the haze,  
Around Sambro Light, since 1758,  
Saving many a ship from a dire fate,  
On to Duncan Reef, new heading to enforce,  
Captain and crew re-charting our course,

Around Chebucto Head, past Portuguese Cove,  
Shoals to starboard, not a time to rove,  
North to Mars Rock and Sandwich Point,  
Hoping for winds not to disappoint,  
Last check of the fleet from any source,  
Captain and crew charting our course,

Entering Northwest Arm, taking the gun,  
Nearby cove, named for Sam Purcell's farm,  
All hands on deck, a mighty cheer,  
Inspections and Customs, all clear,  
Sailors happy, but weary and hoarse,  
Captain and crew have charted our course,

Retiring with "spirits," liquid and friend,  
Pondering passage of life, which years blend,  
Into tacks and jibes, no Rhumb Line there,  
Love, hope, unknowns and luck, best we fare,  
So when life gives way to heavenly force,  
Remember our Captain, who charts our course.

Don Nowland, 7 July 2007