



Chesapeake Tartan 30 Association

HEAVING TO

Brad Armendt, T-30 #282, *Emprise*, November 1995*

On a recent cruise the wind was blowing “right smart,” as the watermen say, and we were beating into it towards Broad Creek off the Choptank River. When the time came for VHF radio contact with the cruise host, we hove to for a few minutes rather than trying to converse while crashing to weather. Later, at the rendezvous, the subject of heaving to came up, and it became apparent that some sailors are unaware of this useful tactic and/or don’t know how to go about it. Here’s a brief explanation:

The idea of “pulling over” and stopping while under sail is a foreign notion to most sailors. There are times, however, when stopping while under sail is just what the doctor ordered: you’re approaching a new landfall, and don’t know exactly where you are. Or you’re in an area of hazards to navigation, and the fog has just closed in. Or you’re single-handed and just want to take a break, make some soup, get warm, and listen to the weather report. Sure, in some cases you could just start your engine. But heaving to is far more peaceful, and if you want the boat to move as little as possible, safer.

Heaving to is practically effortless in reasonable weather. To heave to, sail along close-hauled. Come about, but do not release the jib sheet. (After the tack, the jib will be sheeted on the windward side). Let the mainsail tack to leeward, as normal. Leave it there, close-hauled. After you tack, push the tiller down to leeward (or turn your wheel to windward). Here’s where you need to balance the helm. Your jib, which is sheeted to windward, is trying hard to push your bow off the wind. Your helm should be adjusted to exert an equal and opposite influence, pushing your bow to windward. The main, sheeted in as close as possible and reefed if the wind is blowing, serves more for stability than it does for locomotion. Most boats will hold a position about 45 degrees off the wind, and, depending on the amount of sail showing, remain remarkably motionless. Try it!

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A much more comprehensive explanation is found in *Sea Sense*, by Richard Henderson, p. 217, International Marine Publishing Company, Camden, Maine, 1972.

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