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## Downtown Notebook

### Tacking toward paradise in Downtown's harbor



Photo by Scott Surbeck

By Michael Fortenbaugh

When summer comes to our great city, I am drawn to the water. Water is where I find relaxation and comfort. It is where my soul is rested.

On Friday evening, I had the pleasure of sailing in the harbor. We raised our main and genoa just off North Cove. The sea breeze was blowing up from the ocean providing some cooling to the early summer day.

The sailboat handled like a fast and powerful sports car. A great group of people were on board with me. We tacked and jibed, reached and sailed close-hauled.

And then there was that moment, somewhere off Ellis and Liberty Islands, when we tacked and I stayed down to leeward, watching the approaching green buoy as the boat heeled over with purpose and conviction. That special feeling you get on incredible days in the harbor washed over me.

Whenever I get tired of work and responsibility, bring me back to that moment.

Whenever things seem too much or too little, bring me back to that moment.

When the winter comes again and seems unending, bring me back to that



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moment.

And if Providence is willing, before exiting this world, bring me back to that moment.

It is a moment when the forces of nature are in harmony with the purposes of life.

It is a moment you get when sailing on a boat, using the power of the wind, the waves and your hands to achieve something which humans have done for thousands of years.

Sailors are fortunate to know this experience. We are fortunate to know the beauty of sailing and the beauty of the harbor.

If there is one goal I have, it is to leave behind a city filled with sailboats so that our metropolis becomes an even better place to live.

But first, we have to free the waterfront.

One hundred years ago, our waterfront was ringed with a cage of iron, steel and concrete. It was closed off from the people and became the exclusive domain of industrial businesses.

Today much of the waterfront lies vacant in a type of suspended animation. The public will for recreational access to the harbor is slowly returning. But some are trying once again to industrialize the waterfront with new uses. I hope they are swimming against a tide.

Our waterfront is one of the greatest and most unique assets of New York City. The dream I have is to leave behind for the next generation a recreational waterfront filled with quiet, non-polluting, environmentally friendly sails, all using the force of nature to make people happy.

*Michael Fortenbaugh is commodore of the Manhattan Sailing Club and North Cove Marina Management in Battery Park City.*

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