

Nature Rules!



By Rich Wilson
aboard *Great American II*



Land is known as *terra firma* for a reason. Despite occasional floods, blankets of snow, or broken tree limbs from windy storms, the solid land essentially remains the same. Not so the sea.

Windy storms may produce waves of enormous height and power. I saw these off Cape Horn in 1990, where the seas reached 65 feet by official estimation. Flat calms in the doldrums—that we finally sailed out of just a few days ago—may make a sea surface so smooth, it's like a reflecting pool. A squall may kick up short steep waves, then the rain in the squall will batter the waves back down. The reduced air pressure in a low pressure system

allows the waves to get bigger with a given wind than the same wind in a high pressure system.

The Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) is the region near the equator where the weather systems of the Northern and Southern Hemispheres converge and try to sort themselves out. They don't. There is mass confusion there. In the north, high pressure systems rotate clockwise, in the south, counterclockwise. In between, with very high sea water temperatures at the equator—it's like the steam coming off a pot of boiling water—there is no rhyme or reason to the weather, and no predictability as to what happens next.

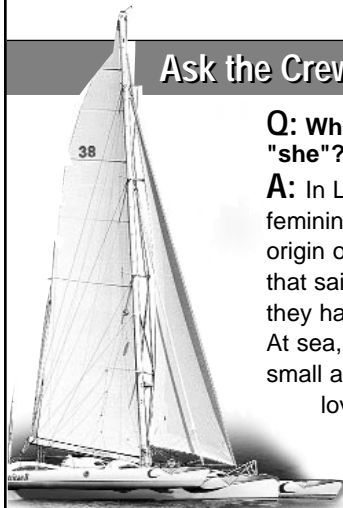
For us at sea, the weather controls everything. It determines what sails we have up, what direction we can sail in, what clothes we wear, when we can sleep, even what meals we eat. It is the #1 topic of conversation. Here on *Great American II*, Mother Nature rules.



ANSWERS AT
sitesalive.com/bh

1. What is the Latin word for "boat"?
2. Where is the Intertropical Convergence Zone located?
3. Where did Rich witness 65-foot seas?

Ask the Crew of *Great American II*



Q: Why do sailors refer to a boat as "she"? From Manny, Oregon, USA

A: In Latin, the word for boat is *navis*, a feminine word. This is probably the literal origin of the "she" reference. I also think that sailors call their boat "she" because they have great affection for their vessel. At sea, sailors know that they are very small and the ocean is very big. They love their vessel because they know that their lives depend on her.

—answered by Rich Wilson



Search the newspaper's national and world news sections for articles

describing events caused by forces of nature. Possible examples include hurricanes, blizzards, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes. Locate each of these events on a world map.

Visit the Website at www.sitesalive.com/bh

CQS MANAGEMENT

sitesALIVE
Foundation