

South China Sea



By Rich Wilson
aboard *Great American II*



Date: March 19, 2003

Position:

14° 24'N / 114° 11'E

Boat Speed: 8 knots

Boat Course: 200°

The South China Sea—the name alone evokes mystery and romance and exotic cultures. It also defines the reality of hundreds of millions of people of different ethnicity, religion, and nationality, all living in very close proximity. En route to the Sunda Strait exit between Sumatra and Java into the Indian Ocean, we will pass China, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia to starboard, and the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia to port. All these countries are grouped in an area less than 1800 miles in length (north to south), and 600 miles in width (east to west). The

United States' "melting pot" pales alongside this enormous mix.

At 2 o'clock a.m. last night, I counted 35 ships' lights on the horizon: fishing vessels, both native and commercial; tankers taking oil from the Middle East to Japan; containerships taking sneakers from China to the U.S. and MP3 players from Taiwan to South Africa; car carriers taking Toyotas from Japan to India; bulk carriers taking timber from Malaysia to Scandinavia; and much more. It is a Times Square of worldwide commerce.

In the blue sky above, jetliner contrails skywrite this interconnectedness: Hong Kong to Singapore to Taipei

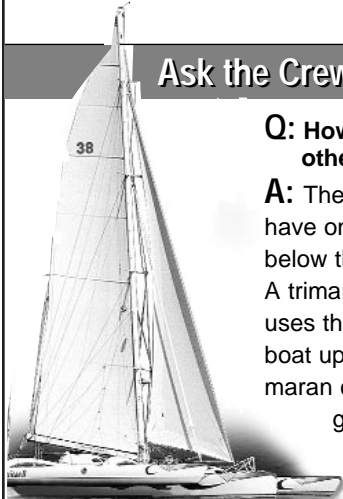
to Manila to Kuala Lumpur to Jakarta. The South China Sea demonstrates and declares that we are all in this world together, and we must strive to progress, or we will most certainly regress, together.



ANSWERS AT
sitesalive.com/bh

1. What religion is practiced in China? in Indonesia?
2. What is China's population?
3. How many different religions are practiced by your classmates?

Ask the Crew of *Great American II*



Q: How is a trimaran different from other boats? From Ken, MA, USA

A: The sailboats that you usually see have one hull (monohull) and a lead keel below the hull that keeps the boat upright. A trimaran has three hulls (multihull) and uses the buoyant pontoons to keep the boat upright. Without the lead, the trimaran can be much lighter, and generally faster than most monohulls.

—answered by Rich Wilson



Have students review the Help Wanted section of the newspaper and then write an employment ad looking for a qualified person who would undertake the Ocean Challenge Live! project. Compare students' ads.