

Crossing the Line



By Rich Wilson
aboard *Great American II*

Date: March 26, 2003

Position:
02° 23'S / 109° 00'E
Boat Speed: 7.3 knots
Boat Course: 150°

The Equator demarcates the northern and southern hemispheres. At zero degrees of latitude, it is the starting point for north or south in the latitude/longitude grid pattern of worldwide positioning. Meteorologically, weather patterns rotate in opposite directions on either side of the Equator.

The Line, as its know to mariners, is important in maritime traditions. Sailors crossing the Line for the first time must be judged worthy by King Neptune to cross into his new domain. A shipmate who has crossed the Line before, invariably with trident and crown, will pass judgment on the lowly supplicant's worthiness. On my

first crossing, I was not properly initiated, and thus incurred King Neptune's wrath in the Southern Ocean and lost *Great American* off Cape Horn in an appalling somersaulting capsized in 80 knots of wind and 60-foot seas. Our rescuers off Cape Horn, the containership *New Zealand Pacific*, heeded tradition and initiated their new mariners when we reached the Line in the Atlantic. I made sure to initiate my shipmate Rich du Moulin on this, his first crossing of the Line.

In that rescue, *NZP* exemplified the mainstay maritime tradition of "going to the aid of a mariner in distress". That ship and crew risked

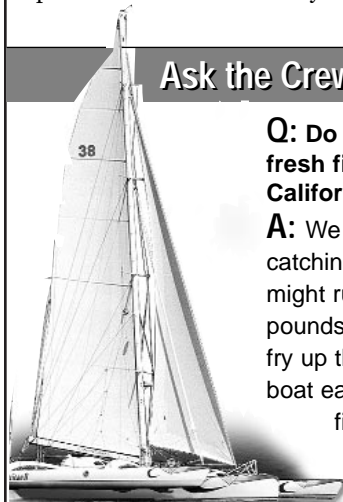
themselves to rescue us. They accepted our heartfelt thanks, but stoically maintained that they had simply abided by the age-old traditions of the sea. They were justifiably proud of their rescue techniques, yet they were prouder of having lived up to those traditions.



ANSWERS AT
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1. At what degree of latitude is the equator located?
2. Who is King Neptune?
3. Will Rich and Rich see flying fish throughout their voyage (what is the fish's habitat)?

Ask the Crew of *Great American II*



Q: Do you have any means to catch fresh fish for dinner? From Judy, California, USA

A: We did not plan to feed ourselves by catching fish. However, if it looks like we might run out of food (we have 850 pounds of it aboard the boat!), we could fry up the flying fish that jump into the boat each night, or try to catch the bigger fish like the beautiful Dorado which feed on the flying fish.

—answered by Rich du Moulin



Find an article or picture in the newspaper that shows or discusses a ceremony (political, religious, or personal). Why is this particular ceremony important? Write a letter to the editor that describes one of your traditions and why it is important to you.