

# Taking Action



By Rich Wilson  
aboard *Great American II*

Date: April 16, 2003

Position:

28° 46'S / 036° 32'E

Boat Speed: 5.4 knots

Boat Course: 270°

Approaching the southern tip of Africa, the approximate midpoint of our voyage, we reflect. We've seen half of the beauty of the ever-changing sea, and experienced half of the fatigue and anxiety of a short-handed voyage. We've seen half of the spectacular stars and flying fish, and laid in half of the arduous midnight reefs in the mainsail. We've also inhaled half of the fresh air, and endured half of the too-short off-watches in the bunk.

For the Cape of Good Hope to be our midpoint for reflection is ironic, for hope has no role at sea. More accurately, hope without action has no role at sea. Success for us will depend on conducting a mast

inspection that turns up a thin cotter pin, sleuthing and eliminating the electricity leak from the batteries, and deciding to accommodate tumultuous seas rather than to confront them. What sails us to New York are action items, not hope.

When I find myself hoping anyway, I then force action. Hoping that the chain plates hold in the shock loads of big seas, I inspect them and plan a solution should a failure occur. Hoping that I'm not thrown across the cabin to serious injury, I force extra care in my handholds.

I also find myself hoping, at this natural turning point at the southern tip of Africa, that the progress of South

Africa, where hopelessness ruled until a decade ago, may be imitated elsewhere. It took a leader, Nelson Mandela, full of hope, but full of action too, to lead changes there.

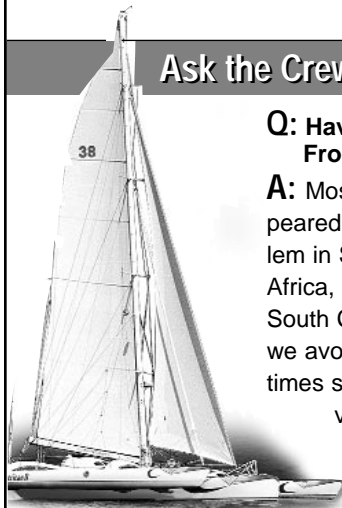
In our lives, we may hope for many things, but to make them come true requires action.



ANSWERS AT  
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1. Where might the boat have encountered pirates?
2. What does Rich Wilson do when he finds himself hoping?
3. Look It Up: What is apartheid?

## Ask the Crew of *Great American II*



**Q:** Have you seen any pirates?  
From Marcelle, USA

**A:** Most people think that piracy disappeared years ago, but it is still a big problem in South America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia in the vicinity of the South China Sea. On *Great American II*, we avoided the worst areas and sometimes sailed at night without lights, being very careful to turn them on if we saw a cargo ship.

—answered by Rich du Moulin



Search the newspaper for examples of individuals or organizations at a turning point.

Imagine yourself in the same situation. What goals might you set or change? What might you plan ahead for based on your previous experience? How might you evaluate your success?

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