

WEEK 3 EQUATOR CROSSING

Position:
6.01667, -27.8533
Time: 2016-11-17
13:54:00 UTC



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By Rich Wilson, Skipper *Great American IV*

For a mariner, Crossing the Line is a special event, no matter how many times he or she may have done it before. North turns to South (or the reverse) on the GPS. The Line is not marked by buoys, only by signs (+ or -) in the spherical trigonometry of the planet.

New stars and constellations appear that cannot be seen from the other side of "The Line". Polaris, our celestial anchor in the Northern Hemisphere, will disappear below the horizon in our wake when we cross heading south.

In a maritime tradition universally followed, those who have Crossed the Line must initiate those who have not. The ceremony is to degrade and interrogate as to whether they are worthy of entering King Neptune's new domain, which must be respected. The Ancient Mariner of-

fended King Neptune by shooting the Albatross, and brought disaster to his ship.

I have crossed the line eleven times under sail and once aboard cargo ship (*New Zealand Pacific*, after our rescue off Cape Horn in 1990). Even aboard *The Big Red Lady* (NZP's affectionate nickname), merchant mariners who had not crossed were ceremoniously doused in bilge water and diesel sludge, demeaned, questioned, demeaned some more, and then permitted to cross. I was happy to see that these highly professional mariners still adhered to this tradition of the sea.

When we cross in a few days, I will wonder, as I did in 2008, what adventures, inspirations, calamities, marvels, and rigors will happen to us before we re-cross going North. We will have gales, we may see the *Aurora Australis*, we will suffer the cold and the fear, before rounding Cape Horn and heading north again. The South, how will we fare in the South? We will do our best; yet King Neptune will decide.



By Dava Sobel, Author

People often speak of drawing "a line in the sand," meaning a boundary that cannot be crossed without serious consequences. Next week Skipper Rich Wilson will cross a line in the water. Although no one can see that line threading through the ocean waves, still the Equator constitutes a real borderline between the northern and southern hemispheres. At the Equator, the Sun and planets pass more nearly overhead, the temperatures at sea level change little with the seasons, and the girth of the Earth is widest. Perhaps most important for the person sailing from north to south, the Equator marks a ship's passage into the mythic realm of King Neptune.

The slow winds—or no winds—in the so-called doldrums near the Equator left European sailors of centuries past plenty of time for mischief. The old experienced hands would put the new recruits through a rite of passage that could include smearing their heads with foul slops, "shaving" their faces with jagged bits of iron that pierced the skin, pouring salt water down their throats, flogging them, and pitching them blindfolded into makeshift pools (sails filled with seawater). One senior sailor would dress up as King Neptune and preside over the shenanigans.

When the initiation was over, the crew headed into whatever dangers awaited them in the southern ocean.

On ships that observed such line-crossing ceremonies, no first-timer could demand exemption. Charles Darwin experienced the indignity aboard *HMS Beagle* in 1832, en route to his encounter with the interesting wildlife of the Galapagos Islands.

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NEWS EXPLORER

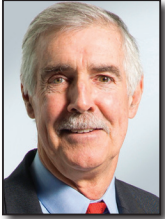
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Next Week:
Environment: Water
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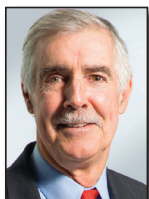
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NEWS EXPLORER

Locate an article that focuses on transportation. Explain the type of transportation involved (ship, rail, automobile, etc.) and what is being transported.

How is this type of transportation well suited for this purpose? What alternatives, if any, might be available? How do you think fuel prices affects this type of transportation?

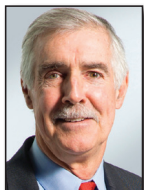
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