

WEEK

2 MARINE TRANSPORTATION

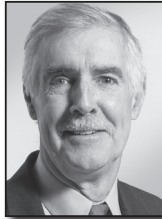
Position:
33.7922, -17.0578
Time: 2016-11-10
14:38:00 UTC



Next Week:
Equator Crossing

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**By Rich Wilson, Skipper
Great American IV**

Shipping is an unseen, yet essential, industry. 90% of the world's goods are sent to their destinations by ship. On land, if you live near a port, you might see a few ships from time to time.

At chokepoints for the movement of ships, Panama and Suez Canals, Straits of Malacca and Gibraltar, you can see many ships, of many types, densely packed.

Last night, we passed Cape Finistere ("end of the land"), at the northwest corner of Spain. Ships coming from South America, Africa, the Mediterranean Sea, and from Asia via the Panama Canal, that are going to ports in northern Europe, all come around this corner, in one direction or the other. This congestion presents a collision risk, and combined with the ferocity of winter storms in the Bay of Biscay, it was deemed important to organize ship passage around this sharp corner. Thus, like painted lines on a highway, the chart shows Traffic Separation Zones, and ships must go in their lane. There are four lanes, each is 4 miles wide, and the entire zone is 22 miles wide.

Ships are identified (by position, direction speed, and type) on our computer chart by AIS (Automatic Identification System). Last night I saw a tanker, a wheat carrier, a cruise ship, multiple container ships, and a general cargo ship.

Aboard New Zealand Pacific in 1990 after they rescued us off Cape Horn after our double capsize, we spent 18 days going to Vlissingen, Holland, and thus came around this corner (and into a Biscay gale!). The ship was the largest refrigerated container ship in the world at the time. The ship was fascinating in its technical complexity and the crew was astounding in their skill, diligence and hard work to keep that complex ship functioning properly in its hostile environment. And all unseen by people on land!

The next time you fill your tank with petrol carried by tanker from abroad, or have a sandwich with bread made from Australian wheat brought by bulker from down under, or slip on a pair of running shoes brought by containership from the Far East, think of those hardy souls aboard ship who brought those to you, and thank them for their skill and expertise!



**By Rich du Moulin
Owner, Intrepid Shipping**

Most people go about their daily lives never thinking about how the goods they use every day end up in their home. World trade is bigger today than ever before in history, and 98 percent of everything that comes to the United States

and most other countries arrive by sea. Giant tankers weighing as much as 330,000 tons carry crude oil for refineries. Smaller product tankers take gasoline jet fuel, and heating oil from refineries, to our nearby ports for distribution. Bulk carriers as large as 440,000 tons transport iron ore, coal, alumina, corn and wheat, and other "dry" commodities. Car carriers- big floating 13 deck parking garages- carry as many as 8000 automobiles. Containerships- today the worlds biggest ships - can carry as many as 20,000 containers, each the size of an 18 wheel truck. Millions of these containers packed full of manufactured goods arrive each year.

But shipping is a "hidden" industry unless you happen to live on the shoreline in a major seaport. Ships spend over 90 percent of their lives at sea over the horizon, only seen by other ships or curious dolphins. In the days before high seas radio was invented by Marconi, when a ship left port one of two things happened: she arrived safely at her destination, or she was never heard from again. About 110 years ago, radio and the use of Morse code changed all that. The famous tragedy of the Titanic in 1912 was not the first use of radio for rescue, but it was the most famous "SOS" in history.

Merchant (non-military) ships generally have a crew of 20-25 trained mariners of many nationalities. These professional sailors live pretty isolated lives when they are on board, connected to the world through satellite communications only. There can be a lot of stress on families given the separation, so the increasing availability of satellite communications is a good thing. It is through satellite that Rich Wilson will be communicating with all of us during the Vendee Globe.

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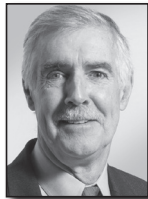
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