

Wilson said, "Having sailed so many miles aboard *Great American II*, I would not have done the TransAt if the finish line was anywhere else. But, when I heard it was coming to Boston, I just knew it would be a spectacular venue to finish the race. It is challenging on all levels, physically, emotionally and intellectually, but I feel as a Bostonian it is my civic obligation to do this."

Wilson pursues sailing adventures unlike many others and is very acquainted with danger. He lived to tell of a dramatic rescue in 1990, during his first attempt to break the Boston to San Francisco record held for over 100 years by the Clipper Ship *Northern Light*.

Wilson's trimaran *Great American* capsized on Thanksgiving day 400 miles short of Cape Horn and for the first time in recorded maritime history, a mountainous sea threw the massive trimaran upright again just after it capsized. In a dramatic midnight rescue, the giant container ship *New Zealand Pacific* located the awash trimaran and Wilson and his shipmate Steve Pettengill leapt for safety by scrambling to a net draped down the side of the ship.

In 2001, Wilson set out to challenge the 1853 Hong Kong to New York record of the *Mandarin* that had remained untouched for a century and a half. *Great American II* sailed into New York Harbor, 72 days out of Hong Kong and broke the record by over a day.

The adventure was followed by tens of thousands of students via the internet. Wilson hopes to continue his work with students, and will provide a curriculum to teachers who can follow his progress throughout the TransAt via his sitesAlive web site (www.sitesalive.com)

Joe Harris

For Hamilton, Mass. resident and sailor Joe Harris, 44, the TransAt will be his proving ground as he hopes his first, major single-handed race will launch a long career in the sport. His boat, named *Gryphon Solo*, is an Open 50 purchased from Around Alone Class 2 winner Brad Van Liew whom had a stellar performance on the boat, formerly called *Tommy Hilfiger Freedom America*.

"I bought the boat from Brad Van Liew and I am hoping to follow in his success in bringing this offshore sport to the same level," Harris said. "A solo trans-Atlantic is a big challenge for me with icebergs, shipping lanes, and North Atlantic storms. I do have the theme song of the Titanic going through my head but this is just the beginning for me. I hope to continue with this race, and eventually do the Five Oceans race in 2005 (formerly called the Around Alone).

Harris grew up sailing one-design boats like Blue Jays and Lightnings on Long Island Sound and sailed on bigger boats offshore with his father. Harris was a commercial salmon fisherman in Bristol Bay, Alaska for 8 summers after college and learned a great deal about seamanship and navigation in those treacherous waters.

"I have been sailing offshore in my own boats for the last 15 years," Harris said. "I have completed two Bermuda One-Two races (single-handed down to Bermuda, double-handed back) and have delivered my boats back from Bermuda four times solo."

Harris says that he loves being alone offshore—alone with the elements of sea, wind and sky—particularly at night.

"It is very intense because you are 100% self-reliant and you have to have all your senses finely tuned and constantly be thinking ahead to stay out of trouble," he said. "You have to do everything: change reef sails and trim sails for maximum performance, navigate, forecast weather and route the boat on the most advantageous course, cook,



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communicate with the outside world, and fix anything that breaks to keep the boat going. It is the ultimate challenge—much like solo mountain climbing."

Harris is currently trying to raise \$250,000 for the TransAt effort and \$1.5MM for the races next summer (Bermuda One-Two, Marblehead-Halifax, TransAt Jacques Vabre) and then Newport-Bermuda in June 2006 and the 5-Oceans solo around the world race which begins in November of 2006.



Joe Harris under sail in *Gryphon Solo*.