Jibe Talk

Riding the rough waves of the Pacific and HIV

May 1, 1998 By Charlotte Huff

We’re in the middle of a jibe,“ says Robert Hudson, using sailor lingo to describe the dangerous task of turning a sail to catch the wind. ”The boat’s heeled up on one side, and it takes 10 people to pull it off, everybody doing one job. If the spinnaker pole hits the front mast, it can pull the mast down. Suddenly you hear this *beep, beep, beep*."

Time for meds. Not for Hudson -- he’s resisted drug therapy since his 1990 HIV diagnosis (his CD4 count is 200) -- but for someone else in this 11-member, all-positive crew.

Medication regimens may intrude, but that didn’t stop the team from competing in the 39th Trans-Pacific Yacht Race from Los Angeles to Honolulu last summer. It took 10 sleep-deprived days for their 56-foot boat, aptly called Survivor, to cross the 2,225 miles of Pacific swells and reach Hawaii. Their skilled seamanship had some help: 200 “Angels on the Hull” -- painted names of people who died of AIDS, each signifying a $100 donation to cover costs of the voyage.

Survivor placed 19th out of 42, but Hudson insisted from the start that first place wasn’t the goal. “We’ll be winners if we just make it to the starting line,” he said a few weeks before the race.

That’s the message Hudson hopes to spread as executive director of Get Challenged, a not-for-profit organization he founded to raise self-esteem by presenting vibrant images of people with HIV. Look behind the scenes, he says, to the PWA who is battling the disease. “They say, ’I’m scared. I’m lonely. Yes, I’m getting medical attention, but my behavioral life and emotional instability are killing me.’”

Hudson envisions a sailing race from New York City to the Caribbean or a rafting trip in the Grand Canyon for HIV positive teens. “I’m a doer more than a dreamer, and I’ve done enough in my life to have died six times over,” says Hudson, 37, who swam with sharks both as a former stockbroker and as a scuba diver. “You can’t actually get to the ideas all at once, but you can sort of put them in the loop. If I live to be sixty-five, I’m going to have a terrific time.”

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Jibe-Talk-1614-5411