

15/9/2004 MERCURY



PICTURE: S'BU MFEKA

CHARL de Villiers, who wants to be the first deaf man to sail solo around the world, has had an extremely difficult time, but he is determined to complete his journey

## Deaf sailor on solo journey

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WHILE many people may give up on their dreams and aspirations because of their disabilities, novice sailor Charl de Villiers is attempting to be the first deaf person to sail around the world solo in his yacht Island Time.

De Villiers, who is originally from Port Elizabeth, has been living in Texas since 1992. He is in Durban to have his yacht repaired and is visiting his family.

Since he set sail in March he has visited Panama and Australia and was on his way to Cape Town when the yacht was damaged.

Although De Villiers has experienced many difficulties, he is determined to complete his journey before Christmas.

He has always wanted to sail

around the world solo and now he is making his dream a reality.

"I want to show all the deaf people that if you want to do something and you have the driving force, it's possible.

"I still have to sail from here to Cape Town and back to Texas, so I still have a long way to go," De Villiers said.

However, it has not been smooth sailing for him and he has experienced terrible storms and was burgled while docking in Samoa, as a result of a storm, but his ability to fix things himself has helped him overcome such obstacles.

"I am scared, but I have a satellite system for emergencies and I have a bed shaker that vibrates in case something happens and I keep a watchful eye all the time. I am going to try to stay as safe as possible," he said.

His father, Johan de Villiers, could not hide his excitement about his son's attempt at being the first deaf man to sail around the world solo.

"I'm so happy that he can finally live up to his potential. He's the toughest guy I know and there are a lot of family and people around the world admiring him for what he is doing.

"He has experienced a lot of discrimination throughout his life and at times he couldn't find a job because people did not want to employ a deaf person.

"He is proving that deaf people aren't stupid and they can do anything. I am so proud of him.

"Families with deaf children should allow them to be part of society and not shelter them so they can give them a chance to prove what they can do," De Villiers snr said.