

# FC News

Editor: Ron Walton

Summer 2000

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Three years ago I published my first issue of the **FC News**. I did not imagine then that I would be publishing the thirteenth issue already. So I want to say *THANK YOU* to all of you in the Falmouth Cutter fleet, whether you own a boat, are an alumnus, or are still looking for that Falmouth Cutter. Without your letters and support WE could not have done it.

This is the annual owner's list issue. So if you are still looking for a place to cruise where there is another Falmouth Cutter to buddy-boat with, then this is the issue for you.

Since the last issue I have located one of the five missing Falmouth Cutters that I mentioned then, *Wavewalker*, and possibly a second (see the letter from *Mon Desir*). Thus, I now have 41 boats on my mailing list. The other boats are still out there, somewhere...

As mentioned in the previous issue, the Third Lyle Hess Tribute Rendezvous is being organized by Cliff Unruh of the Lyle Hess Association. The date for this rendezvous is the weekend of July 21-23. And the location is Marina Bay in Richmond, California. That is in the San Francisco Bay area. For more information, contact Cliff Unruh: telephone: (559)638-2222, FAX: (559)637-0331, e-mail: CliffUnruh@aol.com, website: <http://members.aol.com/cliffunruh>.

There are letters in this issue from the owners of *Mon Desir*, *Jolly Dolphin*, and *Maid of Slapton*. Also, I have done some research in the back issues of the Falmouth Cutter Newsletter, which I received earlier this year, to provide you all with some information on handling weather helm in a Falmouth Cutter. Finally, this issue concludes with a book review and a listing of some more Falmouths which are for sale. As always keep those letters coming, but let's not all sell our boats at once.

Ron Walton  
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## *Mon Desir*, FC # 2

All is well aboard *Mon Desir*. I kept the boat in Morro Bay last winter in a slip with power and water. Quite a treat for me. Now the boat is back at Port San Luis on the mooring. In the last newsletter Alan Spears (*Coconutz*, FC # 29 -- *Editor*) commented about seeing a Falmouth sailing in Avila Bay and wondering who it was. Well, it had to be me, no one else sails here.

The boat has been in the water now for well over a year and I will not haul out until next November, for a few months on the trailer. I only mention this because the bottom is perfectly clean. Every month or so I sail through the local kelp beds. First directly down wind as fast as possible, then on each tack to windward with a backed jib sliding sideways, well heeled to wipe both sides of the keel and rudder. The art, of course, is to not wear all your bottom paint off and some kelps are better than others. Leafy kelp is best.

This summer will bring local sailing on weekends and some minicruises to Morro Bay, San Simeon, and Pirates Cove, my favorite anchorage. This part of the California coast is usually passed by as cruisers travel north or south so the local anchorages are never crowded.

Before hauling out next winter I want to build a removable tabernacle so I can lower the mast without a crane. I've got some ideas, but perhaps some other owners have some thoughts or designs that work well. I only lower and raise the mast once a year, so I really don't want a permanent fixture. Something simple that lashes in place is what I am leaning toward.

Lastly, I think *Palanthia* and *Mon Desir* may be the same boat. Simon Blyth, who we met in Long Beach, renamed the boat before he moved up to his BCC *Mon Desir*. I met a fellow in Morro Bay who lives on a Nor'Sea 27 who used to work for Heritage Marine. He remembered that a couple of the first Nor'Sea 22s (Falmouth Cutters now) were given to employees half completed when the company could not make payroll. He thought my boat was one of these, and was originally *Palanthia*. Small world---

Larry Schmidt

P. S. I would like to invite any and all Falmouth Cutter owners to Port San Luis. "In and Out" launching with a crane for our boats is only \$10 off the trailer and there are several wonderful anchorages near by with good shelter. It is also sunny here when everything north of Point Conception is fogged in. But be ready for some wind.

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### *Jolly Dolphin, FC # 3*

Susan and I have owned *Jolly Dolphin* for the past 6 years. We have just left her in the water at Burnt Store Marina north of Ft. Myers, FL after 4 weeks of good cruising. We are sad to report, however, that recent health problems have caused us to decide to sell the boat. Having really enjoyed and benefited from your excellent FC newsletter, we would like to share some experiences, equipment, and construction ideas with fellow FC boaters.

Before *Jolly Dolphin* we had owned a Westsail 32 for 14 years and sailed it from Maine to Grenada, keeping it in Antigua for 7 years. As a Professor of marine geology I worked on coral reefs most of my life and had the Westsail rigged up as a floating laboratory. After retirement we looked for a trailerable boat with the same seaworthy full keel characteristics as the Westsail. We wanted to be able to quickly get to coastal ports and yet keep it most of the time in our barn to enjoy "just messing around in boats" which to me has always been a joy. After a long search we found the FC to be the very best option for us and have been very satisfied.

Finding a trailer was difficult until we hired Mike Orro of Triad Trailers Ltd. (90 Danbury Rd., New Milford, CT 06776; phone 203-543-1146). Mike measured the boat while it was "on the hard" and made a custom dual axle trailer that allows us to travel swiftly on interstates to wherever we want. It has a spare tire, galvanized wheels, stabilizing jacks, bow stop / ladder, ratchet tie down stops, Dexter axles, & electric brakes; the cost in 1995 was \$4700. We highly recommend this small, family-operated company for a mighty fine trailer for a FC. The mast is supported on top from the boom gallows to a steel holder at the bow coming up from the trailer. It's fun and easy to drive and we often sleep in it enroute. The trailer has never been in the water -- we use travel lifts in and out. We usually store the boat in our barn but occasionally at marinas where fees for boats on trailers are always much cheaper (\$40 / month at Indiantown, FL). We were recently surprised when we calculated that *JollyDolphin* has been off the trailer and in the water for only 15 weeks in the last 6 years! This reflects too many other time-consuming commitments on our part!

After bad back problems I researched power windlasses and bought an Ideal vertical bronze windlass and chainstopper with foot switch on bow and remote on a cable for cockpit handling. This was a \$3000 item in 1996. I installed this gear on a 1 inch teak plank midway on the recessed deck behind the starboard anchor slot so the chain goes straight out. This position allows the windlass to be used also by the port anchor rode / chain. We are very satisfied with this gear. We

use all chain on the starboard anchor and chain with line on port side. We have a plastic milk crate (lots of openings) wired to back corner of the recessed bow deck to receive chain that is too muddy and then use a bucket to wash the mud off before it dries.

In the forward cabin (where we refinished the bulkheads with teak slats) we made a table with the berth extension board by using a single leg to hold one end and a wingnut on the other end to the bulkhead. It makes a narrow but wide enough table to write or read on and can support a laptop. Two 4x16 inch tinted plexiglass skylights in the forward hatch make it light enough on a rainy day to easily read now in this area while using the head or lying on the bunk. In the main cabin, a galley foot pump and a drain to the bilges for the ice chest have simplified life.

A custom made full canvas cover with screened air vents completely converts the boat when in storage. The aluminum pipe frame allows one to crawl to the bow or almost stand in the cockpit when this cover is in place. Because of this unit the teak and fiberglass keeps in good shape.

Our first season ('95) we had 4 good weeks cruising in the northern Chesapeake with the boat launched and hauled at the Bohemia Marine Services (410-885-2736). In '96 we trailed her to Northeast Harbor, Maine, where we put it in and out at the Mt. Desert Yacht yard (207-276-5114). Unfortunately, severe back problems necessitated returning after only 1 week, but the lobster was great. In '98 we explored the eastern Florida coast, especially the Indian River, where the best anchorage was off little islands in Mosquito Lagoon. We put the boat in at Melbourne (Telmar Bay Marina, 407-773-2468) and had it hauled and stored 5 weeks later at the Indiantown Marina (561-597-2455) in mid-Florida along the E-W Florida Canal. This is a safe and less expensive marina with over 200 boats with their masts on sitting in rows in a field. Its location on the canal makes travel to the Atlantic or Gulf both easy options. The 36 foot mast height passes easily under all fixed bridges on this E-W canal. In April of this year we started at Indiantown, sailed across Lake Okeechobee, went west to Ft. Myers, and then up the coast to Burnt Store Marina (941-639-4151). Along the canal the most beautiful and friendly marina was a small one called Rialto Harbor Docks (941-728-3036) and the most scenic anchorage was in Pelican Bay of Cayo Costa State Park (941-964-0375). Accessible only by boat, this park is an unspoiled tropical island consisting mostly of trails through lush greenery, beaches (excellent shelling), and a small campground.

Although we cannot continue cruising as planned with *Jolly Dolphin*, it certainly has been a joy to have known her well. We wish all FC owners FAIR WINDS.

Gray & Susan Multer

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### *Maid of Slapton, FC # 32*

Once again its maintenance stories rather than any accounts of pleasant or, equally, unpleasant experiences out on the water. You did ask about my feelings over the water based products. The Blakes Sea Tech anti-fouling has been a great success. Obviously, the best treatment will be decided where the boat normally "lives" but for "all over" protection I can't complain. As I wrote before, its easy to apply and can be quickly removed if one happens to wander above the masking tape. As to treating the teak, the Burgess wood sealer and water based varnish didn't suit me or, for that matter, my boat. I stripped right back again this winter. Two coats of teak oil plus wet sanding with oil on 400 grit paper have really produced a beautiful appearance and, dare I say it, a quite sensuous feel to the wood. It looks better than when the *Maid* came out from the yard at Costa Mesa. Yes, I know the purists go for all those coats of varnish, but the resin sweat caused by the Sun means so much work where teak is concerned.

I'm sure most of my fellow Falmouth owners are much more aware than myself but a couple of points I have discovered follow. There is a bolt that holds a locking washer under the pintle that sits close to the waterline. When removing the rudder last year I found that galvanic corrosion had just about destroyed the head of this bolt. I was lucky to catch this problem before drilling out the bolt

would have been necessary. In my case some stray current in the boat yard may have been the cause but, I thought, worth mentioning.

My boat, hull # 32, was the first Falmouth built by the good folks at the Morse Company for some years. Certainly the first when George and Roger were on watch. Possibly as a result some of the hardware was not to the original specification. This is no complaint as my boat is exceedingly well founded and strong. However, I have had a problem with the crane iron. Roger tells me that this most likely a 'one of' problem and, to the great credit of both Roger and his company, a replacement part was supplied to me at no cost with the assurance that this would last as long as the boat -- most probably longer than me!

My original crane iron was approximately two inches long with a straight bore (no taper). The flanges (both sides) had long cracks where the pulpit was bolted through. There were other signs of distress. The now standard casting has a tapered bore and thicker flanges (4" long). Anyone with the shorter crane iron should look very closely. The cracks do not show until tension is applied to the whisker stays. The straight bore also put a great strain on the narrow rim where the round section transitions to the octagonal section of the bowsprit.

Another thing is calcification on the cutless bearing but you folks in the USA don't suffer from that -- do you? How about the Spade anchor? It sounds good and an aluminum one out on the bow roller will reduce hobby horsing.

Next letter will have, I hope, some sea stories. Best regards,  
Keith Smith

P.S. If anyone wants information on the Speedy furling system for a free flying genoa I can send a flyer from the U.K.

Keith Smith

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## On Weather Helm and the Falmouth Cutter

Upon reading the old newsletters sent to me by Greg MacDonald and Lore and Carrol Allen, I couldn't help but notice many discussions of weather helm and the Falmouth Cutter. In fact, in the very first official Falmouth Cutter newsletter (June 1981), Gary Ryan, the editor of that issue, wrote: "Lyle (Hess) designed the boat to have 30 inches of mast rake. Lyle has told me that he likes to rake his masts because that way an owner can tune in any helm he wants. Lyle likes a positive helm for several good reasons, which include better feeling and forcing you to sail right on. When Sam cut the rigging for my boat we decided to put 18 inches of rake in it. This was based on my experiences on the earlier Nor'Sea 22 with the full 30 inches of rake and Lyle's input. I did not put the standard Elliot battenless main on my boat. I have a very positive roach on my main with medium battens for better down wind performance. I find that my close-hauled helm is just right for me with a positive but not tiring helm. I find, however, that I need to be very careful on my sail trim when reaching or else I have too much helm. Because of this I plan to take out 8 inches of rake. A lot of where you put your mast depends on what kind of helm you like and what kind of main you put on. It is a credit to Lyle to give this amount of *tunability* in the sail plan. With correct tuning you can achieve any desired helm you want on the Falmouth."

In February, 1982, John Riebe, owner of *Second Look*, FC # 11, wrote about too much weather helm when sailing with all sails up in about 25 knots of wind. Lyle Hess replied in that same issue: "...in 25 knots of wind, you should have had one reef in the mains'l; your boat would have traveled faster, more comfortably, and higher on the wind. There are times, with a lee shore, or a congested area, when it is impractical to reef; then I suggest keeping the heads'ls sheeted closely for good on-the-wind efficiency and luffing the main slightly; do not let it thrash. The tendency in a fresh breeze is to ease the jib and stays'l sheets, but that increases the helm and reduces the

weather drive of your vessel. I like to get my craft, under these conditions, high in the weather slot and as closely as I can, to hold it there. If you are singlehanding, and you have plenty of sea room, haul your stays'l to weather and put the helm down, and heave to. It will take a little adjustment of your tiller and stays'l sheet, let your main sheet go, and get in your clew and tack hauls, sway up your mains'l, make it fast, and get your vessel back on course again. Before any offshore cruising is attempted, the ability to heave to and reef your ship should be second nature..."

In 1986, Jim Baker made the first blue water passage in a Falmouth Cutter, from Manzanillo, Mexico to Hawaii on board *Bosun*, FC # 10 (now named *Sapo* and sailed by *Mary White - Editor*). In his February 1987 letter recounting that voyage, Jim wrote: "Anyway, I couldn't get the darn vane or boat to hold the course with the wind forward of the beam. It kept pointing up and up until it gets close hauled, then it would steer a perfect course. The problem was too much weather helm even with one or two reefs in the main. I finally dropped the main entirely and that was the answer...under jib and staysail, we flew along. Didn't touch a sheet or halyard for over a week until the wind finally came around to the east. Then I went wing and wing the rest of the way. The trades were east that year and I pretty much just ran down latitude 19 to Hilo, Hawaii."

Continuing, Jim added: "I, too, felt that the boat had excessive weather helm, but I saw the problem as too little sail area in the foretriangle. I needed to single reef the main for balance in about 10 knots of wind and didn't think that was right for a stout little cruiser like the F. C. Reading Pardey's accounts, I noticed that they always used a lapper jib instead of a working jib, so I had Kern Sails make me up a 180 square foot jib with a high clew and one set of reef points set fairly high so that the reef would put me back to about the same size and shape as the designed working jib. I couldn't have been more pleased with the results. In fact, I think the trip to Hawaii would have been miserable without it. It allowed me to wing and wing all the way. Jib poled out and main vanged out the other side -- in higher winds, of course, I was able to reef both jib and main and continue."

Sam Morse also weighed in on the question of weather helm in February 1987: "Have you raked your mast so that it is nearly vertical? That's about as far as you would want to go with it. Also, do you reef your main before you hit 18-20 knots of wind? Excessive heeling is possibly the problem. You should try not to heel over 30 degrees at the outside and, if you kept it down to 25 degrees you would notice a definite improvement. If your boat is rather light and not down to her lines, you should consider putting more ballast in her. She has only 33% ballast to displacement ratio and is meant to carry a load of cruising gear and stores. Since you are not cruising her, you can add 500-600# of ballast, down low, in her bottom and you'll be surprised at the change."

And later, in December 1987, Gary Felton of *Anglesea*, FC # 19, wrote to the newsletter: "As far as weather helm goes on the Falmouth, it may not be actual weather helm... The problem may be rudder float. The rudder is extremely buoyant; when you heel over, the rudder want to float up, giving the feel of weather helm. One way to check is to actually measure the angle the rudder makes to the centerline while sailing. It should be no more than 3 to 5 degrees. If its within this range then what you feel is the buoyancy of the rudder. Lyle told me, with emphasis, once that another culprit can be hook in your main sail's leech. My ...sail is very bad in this regard and will need recut or replacement."

In 1995, shortly after buying *Mijita*, FC # 5, I called Lyle Hess to ask about how to sail this boat in the windy conditions that often prevail on San Francisco Bay. Specifically, I was concerned about controlling the weather helm. Lyle's response was that as the wind picks up, put the first reef in the main. As the wind picks some more, put the second reef in the main. And, if there is still too much weather helm, put the third reef in the main. In fact, Lyle said that if I had a storm trysail, I might want to use it when the wind was really blowing, rather than the main. Lyle's suggestion seems to agree with Jim Baker's discovery aboard *Bosun* on his way to Hawaii.

But is reefing the main down to the size of a handkerchief before reducing the headsails the best answer? Jim Baker did not say how strong the winds were. Should I keep sailing with both headsails if the wind is over 20 knots? On *Seraffyn*, the Pardey's took their jib down when the

winds reached Force 6, approximately 22 knots. And my own experience is that *Mijita* is pretty well balanced (slight weather helm going to weather) if I sail with only a reefed main and staysail when the winds get up to 20+ knots. She doesn't go very fast to weather then, but she is a lot more comfortable and controllable since the heel is held to about 20 degrees.

Finally, if you do not have a clinometer installed to measure your boat's angle of heel, I recommend that you install one. I have learned from mine that the weather helm increases rapidly when the angle of heel increases past 20-25 degrees! This agrees with Sam Morse's comments.

I hope these excerpts from past newsletters will stimulate some more discussion about the "best way" to sail the Falmouth Cutter. So, please write with your comments. Thank you.

Ron Walton

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## Twenty Small Boats to Take You Anywhere

John Vigor's **Twenty Small Sailboats to Take You Anywhere** is a book I would certainly have bought eight years ago when I began to look for a sailboat. His purpose in this book is simple: to provide "detailed comparisons of 20 different classes" of small sailboats capable of crossing oceans and "available in North America for prices ranging from \$3,000 to \$50,000...". Among the boats he includes are both the Falmouth Cutter and the Bristol Channel Cutter, boats I know all the readers of this newsletter admire.

In his book, Vigor gives a description of each boat, including its design, accommodations, rigging, performance, and known weaknesses. Plenty of useful information is provided about each boat but a weakness of the book is that Vigor does not provide any photographs of the boats, only sail plans and floor plans. **Good Old Boat** magazine is taking care of the latter problem by republishing one chapter of this book in each issue with photographs. I hope that Vigor also gets some feedback from the **Good Old Boat** articles about the "twenty" boats and that he includes that information in a second edition along with the photographs.

There is only one serious fault which I find with this book. Vigor gives a ranking to each boat in his book according to their "seaworthiness". The fault is that Vigor's rankings are purely subjective, and without any explanation. How is it that a Falmouth Cutter (7,400 # displacement) ended up ranked number 14 on his seaworthiness scale while an Albin Vega (5,070 # displacement) was ranked number 6 and a Folkboat (4,322 # displacement) was ranked number 9? Granted, the Vega and the Folkboat are longer on deck and examples of these boats have circumnavigated, but really....

I think John Vigor should and could have provided more quantitative comparisons of the boats in his book, such as the motion comfort ratios, displacement to length ratios, sail area to displacement ratios, capsize screens, etc. These "figures of merit" are all easy to compute from the data he provides and relate to a boat's seaworthiness. If John Vigor had used each figure of merit to rank the boats and discussed the results, then I think his book would more rigorously live up to its stated purpose.

In summary, **Twenty Small Sailboats to Take You Anywhere** will be a useful research tool for someone looking for a good, small sailboat. But, most of the readers of this newsletter already own such a boat, and know it. So they do not need to run right out and buy the book, except they might want to because it is one of the few books that mentions the Falmouth Cutter.

**Twenty Small Sailboats to Take You Anywhere**, by John Vigor, is published by Paradise Cay Publications, P. O. Box 29, Arcata, CA 95518-0029 and costs \$19.95. Their telephone number is: 1-800-736-4509.

Ron Walton

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## FC Ads

For Sale: *Jolly Dolphin*, FC # 3. Ready to sail and trail. 1980 factory finished (Sam L. Morse Co.) with 1990 Yanmar, Maxprop, North tanbark sails, Profurl roller reefing for both headsails, Hassler vane, sextant, GPS, Loran, complete canvas cover, 1996 Ideal electric windlass, diesel heater, inverter, and trailer. Asking price: \$56,500. Contact Gray & Susan Multer. Address: 9855 Canaseraga, Arkport, NY, 14807. Telephone: (607) 295-7677. E-mail: multerg@infoblvd.net.

For Sale: *Hokje*, FC # 18. This is a truly spectacular Falmouth Cutter. If you or someone you know is up to owning and maintaining a Falmouth Cutter in "concourse d'elegance" condition, then this is the one for you. Asking price: \$65,000. Contact Jack & Sherry Lelah. Address: 436 Ardmore Avenue, Hermosa Beach, CA, 90254. Telephone: (310) 318-5856.

For Sale: *Wavewalker*, FC #3\*. A kit boat by Heritage Marine and seen in the June 2000 issue of **Latitude 38**. Located in Seattle, this Falmouth Cutter is available for only \$28,000. Contact Will Lund. Address: P. O. 571, Redmond, WA, 98073. Telephone: (425) 485-6156.

Wanted: a Falmouth Cutter. Contact Gary Bouge, 56 Table Rock Drive, Eureka Springs, AR, 72631. Telephone: (501) 253-2002.