



*Jim Baker —  
first ocean crossing  
in a Falmouth  
Cutter!  
Picture — Jim sailing  
Mexico's Sea of Cortez*

FEBRUARY 1987

FALMOUTH CUTTER NEWSLETTER

Dear Falmouth Cutter Owners:

Thanks to Sam Morse and Manfred Willasch for sending a letter to encourage the NEWSLETTER effort. The funds provided will be used to buy postage and paper.

I am especially pleased to report that intrepid sailor Jim Baker wrote to give us all a brief account of his single handed voyage from Manzanillo, Mexico to Hilo, Hawaii and then from Hawaii to Puget Sound, Washington. This accomplishment is especially important as it represents the first ocean crossing we know of for Lyle and Sam's sturdy little ship. Jim does a great job of telling the story, so I'll pass it along to you as I received it.

10, February 1987 Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico

Dear Rex – Thanks for the newsletter. “Bosun” and I are back in the Sea of Cortez at this time and heading south towards the canal and back up to Belize.

I've had Bosun a little over two years now and am getting my money's worth every day. I started my voyage from Sausalito, California New Years Eve, December 31, 1984. Went out the Golden Gate about sundown and haven't stopped very long since. Went into Mexico about March 1985, spent the summer cruising in the Sea of Cortez and exploring Baja...then over to the mainland Mexico for Christmas 1985. Fooled around that coast until middle of February 86, when a bunch of U.S. boats traveling halfway together, were going to run on down to Costa Rica. But one morning, I woke up and decided to try the crossing to Hawaii. I had never made a crossing before, alone or with someone, and Sam Morse had told me that no one had ever crossed an ocean in the Falmouth Cutter, so I figured it might as well be me.

The trip was great. I left from Manzanillo, Mexico on 25 March 1986, and arrived in Hilo, Hawaii on 25 March 1986, 28 days later.

The first few days are difficult to make mileage on the coast of Mexico as there is seldom any wind. You're in a wind shadow of the Baja peninsula for about 300 – 400 miles and you slat and roll about a lot if you have no engine. Bosun has a 6 HP BMW diesel which pushes me comfortably at 4 kts at 5 hours per gallon of fuel, so we motored and motorsailed some through this stretch. When the wind did finally pipe up, it was slightly forward of the beam, although not a beat. This point of sail and a beam reach were the hardest winds to balance out for the steering vane. I have a Monitor vane from the lads in Susalito, and have found it nearly faultless. It's a large vane for a boat of this size... they recommend it for 25' – 45', but I have found that this kind of overkill makes a device that steers "Bosun" in all points and velocities of wind – even dead downwind! If there is any apparent wind on the vane feather, then the Monitor will steer. The vane is extremely powerful and will steer in rough conditions, under bare pole, or with the sail rig completely over powered, such as too much main and too much weather helm. But, of course, it is better if you can balance...

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.

This brings me to your weather helm question. (I had asked about controlling weather helm in the November 86 Newsletter). I, too, felt that the boat had excessive weather helm, but I saw the problem as too little sail area in the fore triangle. 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 Ferguson of Kerns Sails make me up a 180 Sq. Ft. 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 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 – higher winds, of course, I was able to reef both jib and main and continue. I stole Pardey's idea on the mast mounted sliding whisker pole which works nicely when single handing...or anytime as far as that goes!

Another feature that was just happenstance, (maybe) is the aft swept midshroud that Hess uses instead of a running backstay. This prevents the mainboom from running out athwartship, so even running downwind with the boom out as far as it will go – you still have some mainsail to dampen the roll.

We had to heave to a couple of days in gale force winds and seas, but the Falmouth Cutter comes through once again... Two reefs in the main, lash the helm to lee slightly and go below. The mainsail area is so far aft on the cutter that reefed way down and in high wind and seas, it hasn't the horse power to tack you through the wind. There is no need to back the staysail to stay in the hove to attitude. Pardey's rap in [Serrafin's Oriental Adventure](#) and [The Self Sufficient Sailor](#) on storm tactics and heaving to is very appropriate to the Falmouth Cutter. On the trip from Hawaii to Puget Sound in May and June 1986, about 500 miles out from Cape Flattery, Washington we found ourselves in the true gale with sustained winds above 40 knots and seas so high you wouldn't believe me. I had to heave to with storm trysail. The double reef was just too much and we were knocked down a time or two before I wised up. I have a trysail on a separate track ready to hoist, but I don't like it! I let my sail maker, Kern talk me into it, but had to do over, I would put a 3rd reef in the main and use that. It's too much work getting the main furled and into the gallows, then rigging and hoisting the try.

...so, that's my sad story... 28 days to Hilo, Hawaii - couple months fooling around the islands, then 32 days to Puget Sound, Washington - fooled around there all summer spending some time cruising with Will and Kendall O'brien (F.C. #5 Tomaquag) Then in September 1986, I came back south.

I feel like I've had a fair shakedown cruise, both me and the boat. I like the life and think I'll just continue on I'm no longer in Arizona - correspond to me through the following address: Jim Baker - Bosun c/o Murph, 425 N San Antonio, Ontario, California 91762. . .Best wishes on your Falmouth Cutter and the Newsletter- Jim

Many thanks Jim for letting each of us get a small view of your great ocean crossing experience. I hope you will add a little to your story and submit it to Cruising World so more of the cruising nuts out there will know more about a great, small well designed and constructed seaworthy yacht 22' on deck! As you continue on your voyage to Belize, I hope you'll keep me informed so I can pass the word of your adventures on to the F.C. gang.

Manfred Willasch of Seattle dropped me a line 21 January 87 to ask what I might know about the fiberglass lay-up schedule for the boats built by Nor'Sea. Manfred, I have checked with Sam for this information and will forward to you what he is able to come up with. Thanks for your "gift" to the Newsletter fund... and also for the beautiful picture of your boat. LIBERTAD. - By the way, Sam got me squared away on the Nor'Sea notes on our mailing list. My mistake, I thought they were Nor'Sea 27 owners -glad to know we are all in the same boat!

Regarding my question on weather helm in the November newsletter - Sam offered the following comments..."Regarding weather helm - Lyle Hess would be more 'help than I in advising you - perhaps he will respond. Have you raked your mast so that it is nearly vertical? That's about as far as you 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 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. You don't have to buy lead to try this although it is by far the best. Try your local skeet club and see if you can buy some reclaimed shot. I think a few stout canvas bags with 25-30# in each so they are manageable, would do the trick.

To keep you folks writing, I'll keep asking questions, e.g. what kind of dinghy are you using with your F.C.? Some years ago, I owned an 8' sailing dinghy and had the had the most wonderful time tossing her over the side after arriving at an anchorage and sailing her o the far reaches of the anchorage... visiting briefly with boats on the way. I owned a larger ketch at the time and keeping a dinghy on deck wasn't too much of a storage problem. I was pleased to learn from Lyle Hess that he knows of two dinghies that will fit on the house of the F.C., i.e. the Fatty Knees 7' and the Montgomery 6'8" pram. (The one the Pardey's used on their round the world trip). Do any of you haul around a small sailing/rowing dingy?... Dr do most us have inflatables? I have a Metzler at the moment, but have my eye on the Fatty Knees 7'. The Metzler rows well because of its inflatable floor, but I sure do miss those lazy sails stretched out on the bottom of the dinghy, finger on the tiller and main sheet in my toes... sort of letting' the world go by.

I fear that with a hard dinghy on the house we will have to get on all fours to crawl into the cabin ...but maybe its worth it. Any experience out there? If so share it with us.

Re. NAVAGATIGN -A question for Jim Baker... You mentioned that you followed latitude 19 to Hilo... On your voyage did you use the old traditional nav. tools, or did you use Sat Nav? Loran? If you used electronics, did they perform well? Any problems keeping your batteries up to service electrical needs?

Is anyone using solar cells to power up? How about using the wind to charge batteries? Or dragging a prop aft for water charging? Any experience on these matters might be of interest to the gang.

Re. the dark forward cabin - Sam mentioned that he is putting a special option on an F.C. currently under construction -teak hatch with 3/8" lexan. This should make the time spent forward much more pleasant. I'm slowly collecting a few teak boards and plan to ask someone with wood working talent to help me transform our forward berth into a much lighter area. Deck prisms would help alot, but I think the large hatch done with lexan would be a winner! Have any of you done this already? If so, are you pleased with the results?

Smart use of space on any boat is appreciated, but on a small craft, it is truly a blessing. I'm sure you guys have come up with some interesting ways to get your gear packed in so you can get to it and still enjoy life below. Perhaps you can share a good storage idea you have come up with – give it a try. Jeannine and I have been able to get our two folding bikes tucked well aft on the port and starboard bunks and still keep the cabin looking good. Of course, if you want to stretch out full... you have to stick your feet a bit between the spokes...but the fun and exercise of riding once you get there makes up for this little problem.

IN MEMORY – I was especially sad to learn last year of the passing of the great sailor Eric C. Hiscock. What a friend and advisor he was to those who love sailing and the sea. I was reading the other day one of his very early books, "Wandering Under Sail". In the book, he tells the story of his first boat, an 18 footer built in 1898. The on to Wanderer II, a 23 foot cutter. In a chapter entitled, "An Autumn Cruise" he closes his account with a few lines that tell a lot about the man, his love of sailing and appreciation of well done boats. I quote...

"After we had stowed the sails and made all snug, we stood on deck for a few minutes enjoying the peaceful scene. The moon was up but she was blurred and only faintly visible for a thin sea mist had drifted in with the flood. Away in the distance a train clattered through a cutting, while nearer to us a curlew cried on the marshlands, and there was an occasional deep rumble as the tide moved the ... anchor chain gently along the bottom of the creek. Except for those small sounds all was completely still. With her mast and rigging hazily silhouetted against the silvery vapour, Wanderer lay silently above her own reflection. We had one last look round, then with great content we went below to the warm cabin where the firelight was dancing cosily on the deckhead and the polished woodwork."

We are wiser and richer because of your life – we'll miss you Capt Hiscock. I hope some warm hearted sailors are looking after Susan until you are together again on your next voyage.

Best wishes to all – til next time.



*P.S. Welcome to Pat & Mike Hunter  
New FC owners*

*Sam advised BCC Group  
is getting together June 12-14, 87  
for fun & grace, FC owners  
invited too! Contact Sam for*