



## SAF Station Meeting Notes for February 1, 2023

By Chuck Hawley, Secretary

The February 1, 2023 meeting was held at the Marin Yacht Club in San Rafael.

### THOSE IN ATTENDANCE:

Alan Olson, Bill Edinger, Bruce and Lynne Munro, Christopher Parkman, Chuck and Susan Hawley, Dave MacEwen and guests Aaron Wangenheim and Bill Dana, Diane Barker, Robbie and Dolores Robinson, Douglas Finley, Fred Huffman, Gay Harris, Jams Coggan, Jim Antrim, Jim Gregory, Joan McCune, Bill and Joan Mittendorf, Bob and Kristi Hanelt, Mary Crowley, Mo Roddy, Michael Johnson and guests Rick McDonald and Walter Sanford, Michael Moradzadeh, Michael and Susan Proudfoot, Terry Claus and guest Peter English, Richard Schaper, Robb Walker and guest Tomas from Sweden, Sylvia Seaberg and guest Tom Condy, Robert Horton, Rowena Carlson, Steve Mason, Synthia Petroka, Bill Foss, Wyman Harris, Zia Ahari and guest Marco Misbach.

### MOMENT OF SILENCE

A moment of silence was held for Alec Dalziel, who passed away in January at the age of 82. He was a longtime member of the San Francisco station. An obituary can be found [here](#).

### UPDATE ON HANK EASOM BUOY and OTHER NEWS

RC Richard Schaper reported that the station had donated \$500 towards the Hank Easom buoy. Apparently private donations from station members have also been donated for this worthy cause.

Richard also thanked Bob Hanelt and Robbie Robinson for their work on the 2023 Membership Roster which, unlike so many other club rosters, actually showed up early in the year so it could be of the greatest value.

### MEMBERSHIP

Mo Roddy announced that five applications for membership for new station members were in the hands of the national membership committee, and all signs pointed to their approval.

## ENVIRONMENT OF THE SEA

Rowena Carlson gave a brief update on the status of Midway Island, which is also covered in the February edition of Waypoints. She reported that storms have ravaged the island, destroying albatross nests, and putting residents in peril. You can find out more information at this [site](#).

Rowena also mentioned that the Environment of the Sea committee is looking for solutions to recycling shrink wrap plastic when boats are launched in the spring. While mostly a Great Lakes and Northeast issue, Rowena noted that many boats use cheap blue and gray tarps which deteriorate and are not recycled in other parts of the country.

## SAFETY AT SEA

Chuck announced that our School of Hard Rocks articles were going to be reprinted on a regular basis in SAIL Magazine's daily electronic publication. Michael Morazadeh's story of the costs of ignoring your boat's alarms will be featured in February. Chuck then presented a story about a vexing fuel system issue on Charley, a boat one which members Bruce Munro and Stan Honey were first to finish in the Transpac in 1983. Please see "Filter Fiasco" at the end of these minutes.

## CRUISE-WORTHY DESTINATIONS

Richard entertained ideas regarding local cruising destinations, and members suggested Petaluma, Tomales Bay, and Suisun City.

## FUTURE MEETINGS

Richard was pleased to announce that the next luncheon on March 1 will be held at one of the largest repositories of marine historical documents: the Maritime Research Center in San Francisco. This location is part of our overall effort to visit locations of interest in the Bay Area in addition to the lovely yacht clubs that serve as our hosts. A box lunch will be provided and the cost is \$25. More information on this event will be sent to members.

April 6 (Thursday) - San Francisco Yacht Club

May 3 - Supper meeting at Spaulding Marine Center

June 8 (Thursday) - Lunch at Encinal Yacht Club, Alameda

September 6 - Lunch at Sausalito Yacht Club (?)

October 4 - Lunch, TBD

November 1 - Lunch , TBD

December 6 - Annual Awards Dinner, StFYC

December 31 - New Year's Eve cruise to Clipper Cove

#### FEATURED SPEAKER

Program Chair Mary Crowley introduced Bill Lee, a.k.a. "The Wizard", as our featured speaker. Bill has been a West Coast legend since the early 1970s by building boats and winning races and turning thousands of sailors onto the philosophy that "Fast is Fun". Bill told the story of coming to Santa Cruz around 1970 and building simple, lightweight boats that won many of the downwind races along the California coast. Along with other Santa Cruz boat building pioneers, the ULDB, or Ultralight Displacement Boat concept was born. Bill gained notoriety when his 35' *Chutzpah* won the Transpac overall in 1973, and again in 1975. Based on his observation of the narrow plywood racer *Ragtime*, Bill took on his biggest boat building challenge in 1976 with the construction of *Merlin*: a slender, simple, and very lightweight boat intended to win the Transpac First to Finish Trophy.

Crewed by local Santa Cruz and Monterey sailors, Bill and his seven crew members clobbered the First to Finish record in 1977 with an elapsed time of 8 days 11 hours 1 minute and 45 seconds, thus fulfilling his theory that finishing the Transpac first allowed you to go the most parties as other boats arrived afterwards. This record stood for 20 years until 1997.

Bill described the various modifications of *Merlin*, not all of which were particularly successful. After several intermediate owners had campaigned her around the country, Bill was able to buy *Merlin* back in 2016 and race in the 40th anniversary of the race in which his crew set the Elapsed Time Record in 1997.

Bill was recently inducted into the Sailing Hall of Fame in 2022. We are so lucky to have him as a member of the San Francisco Station.



## Filter Fiasco

*"From the CCA School of Hard Rocks*

*...lessons learned in pursuit of the Art of Seamanship"*

By Chuck Hawley, San Francisco Station

67' Charley was designed in 1982 by CCA member Ron Holland to win the Transpacific Yacht Race, regardless of the cost. She was owned by Nolan Bushnell, founder of Atari and Pizza Time Theater, skippered by CCA member Bruce Munro, and navigated by CCA member Stan Honey. I was her Boat Captain, and was responsible for delivering her up and down the California and Mexican Coasts prior to and after races. Eventually, I was asked to be on the crew for the 1983 Transpac.

During my first long delivery, the engine stopped about three or four hours after leaving San Diego. I went through what I thought was a logical process of determining why fuel wasn't flowing to the Perkins diesel. Racor filter? Clean. Electric boost pump? Operational. Fuel level? Nearly full. But it was clear that the engine was starved for fuel.

The 40 gallon diesel tank was



Charley, sailing down the Molokai Channel, on her way to be first-to-finish in the 1983 Transpacific Yacht Race. The author, embarrassingly without a life jacket, is at the mast.

under the cabin sole and was wide and flat; not the ideal shape for a fuel tank on a sailboat, but it allowed the weight of the fuel to be carried as low as possible. When I couldn't resolve the fuel starvation issue with the usual suspects, I removed the fuel supply line from the fitting on the tank and withdrew the fuel pickup tube which extended to the bottom of the tank. It was



A maritized Perkins 4-236 diesel, which was originally intended to be used in small trucks and tractors. It weighed a svelte 1050 pounds.

only about a foot long, with a very fine filter of brass mesh on the end, ostensibly to serve as the first line of defense against getting debris in the fuel system. Each time I withdrew the tube, the filter was clean of any particulates.

After putting the fuel system back together, I'd laboriously purge the air from the supply line and go through the process of bleeding the engine's fuel injection system. The engine, a Perkins 4-236, had none of the abilities of modern diesels to purge air from the high pressure fuel circuit. It was messy work, and the smell of diesel fuel permeated my clothing and the cabin.

When restarted, the engine would run for... about another four hours, and then the cycle would repeat itself. Lather, rinse, repeat, as Pheobe from *Friends* would say.

Knowing that this could put the boat in jeopardy if it happened as I was entering a harbor, or some other place where having a dependable engine is critical, I vowed to solve the problem. After repeating this cycle perhaps 10 times over several weeks, I finally noticed that there was a slight hissing sound as I unscrewed the brass fitting on the fuel line where it connected to the fuel tank. It was faint, but it sounded like a weak gasp, as if the fuel hose was inhaling air briefly. The engine was pulling a vacuum in the hose, and I was apparently releasing the vacuum

The culprit, I finally figured out, was the fine brass mesh over the bottom of the diesel tank draw tube. As the engine ran, it would collect debris from the tank and slowly begin to clog up. Since diesels draw far more fuel than they consume (the rest being returned to the tank in a return line), there was a large volume of fuel trying to get through the mesh. When it finally plugged the mesh entirely, the engine would be starved of fuel and would quit. I was unknowingly "cleaning" the mesh when I released the vacuum by unscrewing the fittings.

The solution was to remove the mesh entirely and to let the Racor primary filter do its job by collecting debris that was sucked from the fuel tank: debris that had been there from the time that Charley had been constructed.

*The Cruising Club of America is a collection of passionate, seriously accomplished, ocean sailors making adventurous use of the seas. All members have extensive offshore boat handling, seamanship, and command experience honed over many years. "School of Hard Rocks" stories, published by the CCA Safety and Seamanship Committee, are intended to advance seamanship and help skippers promote a Culture of Safety aboard their vessels*