



## SAF Station Meeting Minutes for 1 November 2023

By Chuck Hawley, Secretary



The Marin Yacht Club, as seen from about 2,000' feet in the air.

The 1 November meeting of the San Francisco Station of the Cruising Club of America was held at the Marin Yacht Club, located on San Rafael Creek in San Rafael.

### THOSE IN ATTENDANCE:

Zia Ahari and guest Cameron Gibson, Skip Allen, Diane Barker, Liz Baylis, Mary Crowley, Peter English, Douglas Finley, William Foss, Bill and Karen Foss, Bob Hanelt and guest Sally Lee Stewart, Wyman Harris, Chuck and Susan Hawley, Michael Johnson, Stafford Keegin, Terry Klaus and guest Rodney Pidmental, Dave MacEwen and guest Bill Dana, Steve Mason, Michael Moradzadeh and Noelle Leca, Bruce Munro, Christopher Parkman and Joan McCune, Synthia Petroka, Michael and Susan Proudfoot, Moe Roddy, Richard Schaper, and Aaron Wagenheim.

Our guest speaker was our very own Station Historian, Bob Hanelt.

*Note: The Secretary completely neglected to take any photographs, and was so interested in the conversation taking place at the MYC that he took almost no notes, and thus this month's Minutes are short and sweet. Or at least short.*

#### REAR COMMODORE'S REPORT

R/C Schaper began the meeting by announcing that SAF member Jim Cooper had recently passed away. A moment of silence was held in his memory.

#### TREASURER'S REPORT

Synthia reported that we currently enjoy a balance of \$8599, due to the pass-through of dues from the national organization, as well as the receipt of dues from members who were not aware that they were due.

#### MEMBERSHIP CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Moe announced that the CCA website now has a slick online way to propose a new member. By logging into the site, you can fill out information on the candidate and get the process rolling.

#### ENVIRONMENT OF THE SEA REPORT

Mary Crowley gave us the hopeful news that interest in underwater mining is reduced based on next generation electrical vehicle batteries that don't require some of the elements that were intended to be mined from the seabed. This is very hopeful news for those of us who cannot imagine a more damaging activity in the World's oceans.

#### FUTURE PROGRAMS

Mary Crowley said that our next meeting will be held at the Marin Yacht Club in San Rafael on November 1. Our own Bob Hanelt will give a presentation on the "Treasures of the St. Francis Yacht Club". Cost for lunch is \$40.00. Our Holiday dinner and awards will be held at the San Francisco Yacht Club in Belvedere on December 6.

#### HISTORIAN'S REPORT

Bob Hanelt reported that SAF members were doing all sorts of amazing voyages, including Jean Socrates, sailing being the Tuamotos and New Zealand (and recently elected to the Cape Horn Hall of Fame), Lin Pardee who was sailing in the vicinity of New Zealand, and Ronnie Simpson, who had just started the Global Solo Challenge, departing from A Coruña, Spain. Sailing Sparrow, an Open 50. He's the third youngest participant in the fleet of 18. The staggered

start has the slowest boat departing earlier in the fall, with the fast boats departing as late as January 6. We wish Ronnie and all of our sailors at sea the very best luck and conditions.

Sally Honey was headed to Newport Harbor YC where she was inducted into the National Sailing Hall of Fame on Saturday, November 4. As a two-time Yachtswoman of the Year, Sally is one of our most decorated CCA members. Way to go, Sally!

#### NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The nominating committee has met and has recommended the following officers for 2024:

Rear Commodore, Chuck Hawley

Treasurer, Synthia Petroka

Secretary, Richard Schaper

#### SAFETY MOMENT

The Safety Moment for November is attached, regarding the loss of the keel on *NEXBA*, a Farr X2.

#### FEATURED SPEAKER

The station members were treated to a presentation on the Treasures of the St. Francis Yacht Club, given by our own station historian, Bob Hanelt. Over several years, Bob and Kimball Livingston have cataloged and documented the incredible half-models, full models, fine art, trophies, awards, photographs and charts that have been donated to the club. Artists including local sailmaker Jim DeWitt, Caleb Whitbeck, and Rich Myers have paintings hanging in the halls of the St. Francis. Photos of some of the great ocean racing yachts, including *Baruna* and *Bolero*, are also on display. Everyone in the audience was impressed with both how much effort had been put into organizing the collection, as well as how lucky we are to have it in our local area.

Respectfully submitted,

Chuck Hawley



## Unanswered Questions

*“Safety Moments, presented at CCA Stations and Posts”*

By Chuck Hawley, San Francisco Station, November 2023

The news reports that came to our attention around July 2 of last year seemed all too familiar: a modern boat, sailing in moderate conditions, had lost its keel, resulting in an immediate capsize, and the eventual safe rescue of the vessel’s co-skippers. As additional information about the incident was reported, there were a number of twists that begged for more information. The doublehanded crew were participating in a pre-race qualifying sail off the coast of Eastern Australia, from a harbor north of Sydney, to a turning point south of Sydney. The vessel was a three month old Farr X2 race boat, *NEXBA*, hull #1, designed for double-handed racing. Since the boat’s arrival from Indonesia (she was built by XSP, Extreme Sailing Projects) the crew had participated along with boat yard workers and specialists to prepare the boat to be sailed, and then to be raced. This process had taken approximately three months, as minor details were attended to as one would expect with any new boat, especially Hull #1.



*NEXBA*, in happier times, before the accident. The keel did not cant, although it appears as though it might have. Photo from the official report.

*NEXBA* was well-equipped, as the eventual [incident report](#) from the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club documented. The report goes into exhausting detail about the safety inventory, where it was stored, what was carried on each individual, and any issues regarding its performance. The combination of both personal gear, carried in foul weather gear pockets or “bum bags”, plus the vessel’s gear, should have allowed the crewmembers to alert rescue agencies, or nearby vessels, shortly after the boat capsized around 0115 on July 2. However, for a variety of reasons, the majority of the gear was rendered useless due to the capsize. This was due to several compounding conditions:

1. Due to an impending change of watch, one of the co-captains was below in the cabin, and had stripped off much of her gear so she could don different gear. This included her bum bag which included a personal AIS beacon and a PLB. When the boat inverted, she was unable to locate her personal safety gear.
2. Gear in the boat moved from its stored location(s) to the underside of the deck and cabin top. This made it increasingly difficult to exit through the companionway. As this occurred in the middle of the night, there was very little light by which to identify items and navigate the interior of the vessel.
3. Water filled the cabin very quickly and did not result in air pockets so the co-captain's time was severely limited. She was forced to exit the inverted cabin to find her way under the lifelines and to the surface.
4. The co-captains made several attempts to dive under the inverted boat to retrieve safety items, like the vessel's EPIRB, but were unable to find key items while swimming.

The report goes into detail about the failure of the captain's PLB, the loss of safety equipment while trying to hold on to the inverted boat, and the difficulty that the crew members had in getting out of the water to reduce their heat loss and to be able to keep a better watch. Miraculously, the device which eventually summoned aid was an cellular-capable Apple Watch, which was able to raise emergency services after the pair had spent about 12 hours either huddled on the stern clinging to the twin rudders, or clutching the Saildrive in the center of the inverted hull.



*NEXBA, the next day, after washing ashore without her rig and rudders.*

What's missing from the 30 page report is any description of the keel attachment, and the likely sequence of events that led to the loss of the keel. One would hope that a complete analysis of how the keel could be lost after only three months of sailing would be forthcoming, but so far there's no mention of an addendum to the current report. This goes directly against the work that World Sailing has done to increase the transparency of incident reports so that all sailors can learn from the reports, including a database of keel failures (close to 100 in all) that goes back to the early 1980s.

What is clear is that there was either an assembly error, or a materials issue, or a design issue that allowed the keel on a brand-new boat to separate from the hull and put two sailors in peril. Thanks to their level headedness, their physical strength, and their inclusion of an Apple Watch in their personal kit, they were rescued so that they could sail another day. The rest of us should encourage World Sailing and Australian Sailing to publish a report on the nature of the failure so that our sport can benefit from what is learned.

Personal note: I was the skipper of a 67' Transpacific Race boat that lost its keel about 300nm from land while returning from Hawaii to California 40 years ago. We were lucky; the boat did not capsize, and we were able to return to Waikiki in two days under power. While frightening, the story had a happy ending. In our case, the causes of the keel loss were widely discussed and undoubtedly resulted in more care when attaching keels to race boats.

*The Cruising Club of America is a collection of accomplished ocean sailors having extensive boat handling, seamanship, and command experience honed over many years. "Safety Moments" are written by the Club's Safety Officers from CCA Stations across North America and Bermuda, as well as CCA members at large. They are published by the CCA Safety and Seamanship Committee and are intended to advance seamanship and safety by highlighting new technologies, suggestions for safe operation and reports of maritime disasters around the world.*