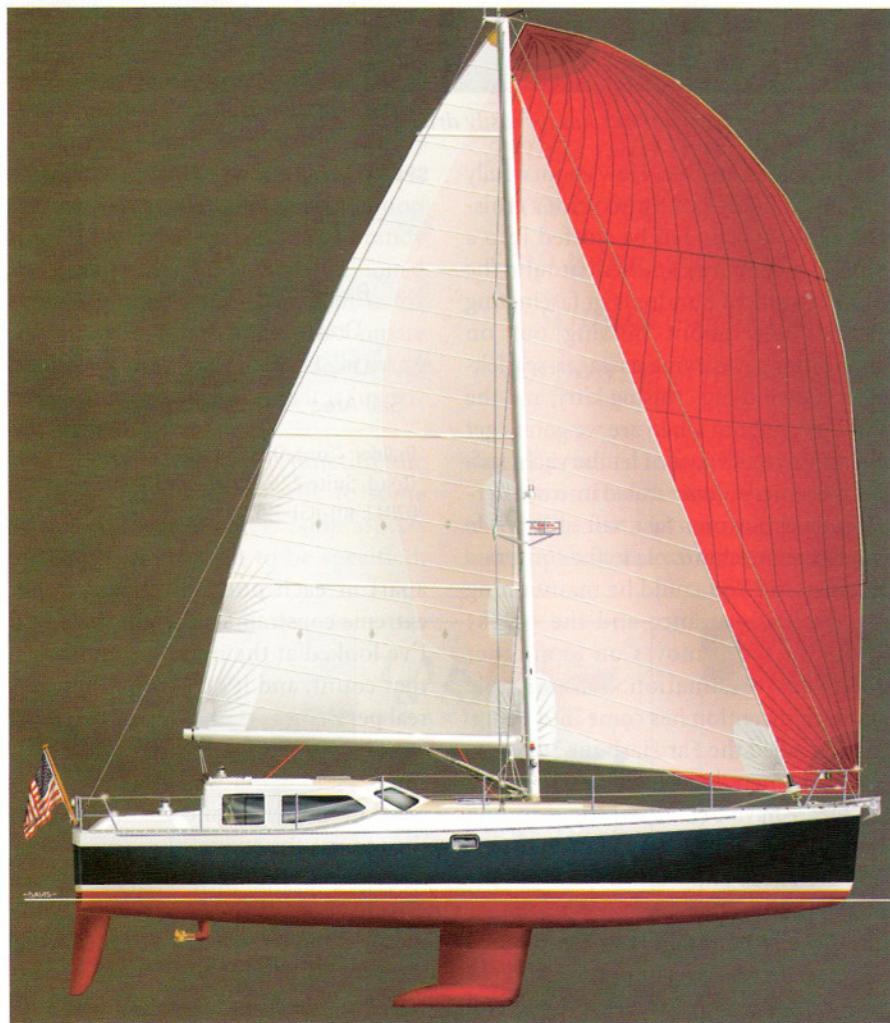


Adventure Travel in a Box: The Far Harbour 39



Designed by Bob Perry, the Far Harbour is more motorsailer than sailing yacht.

A yacht designed to be shipped in a container to cruising grounds around the world could revolutionize sailing.

BY ART PAINE

I LIVED THROUGH A TIME in America when cruising under sail first became widely available to the common working slob. Just out of the service in 1969, I took a job as a sailboat salesman in California and worked the boat shows in coat, tie, and Topsiders, trying to hook newcomers into buying a Catalina 22 as an entrée into the sport of cruising. We were coached never to speak about the final cost of the product, only the monthly installments. I might as easily have been selling Fords or refrigerators. But it worked. Wage-earners in pedestrian jobs put a sailboat (on a trail-

er) in their driveway, and Catalina made sure that as families and incomes grew, there was a steady progression of larger, more expensive models to move up to.

Although historically sailing had been a sport of kings, for a time it became fashionable and accessible to commoners. Marinas filled up with plastic cruisers with now-familiar brand names—Columbia, Ericson, Catalina, Tartan, Pearson, etc. A certain portion of these everyday folk took off during their prime—over the horizon to far and romantic places.

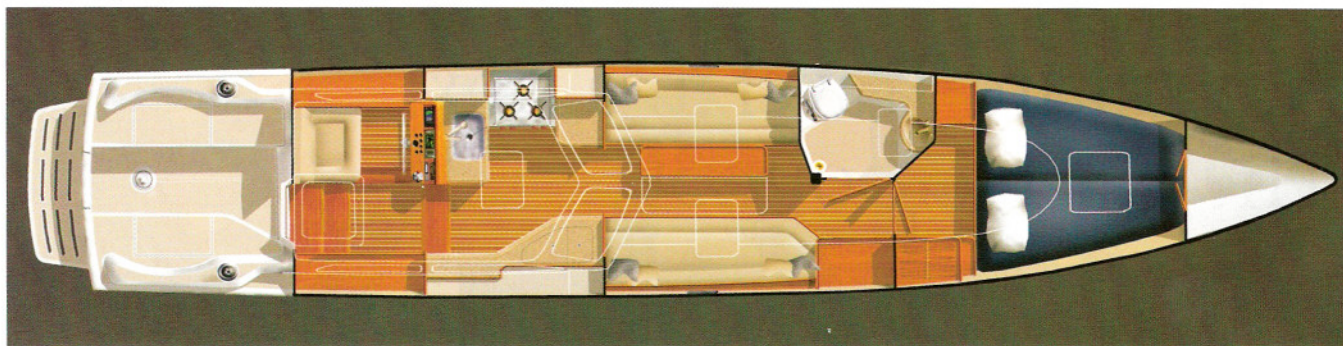
Sailing was “in.” Ocean voyaging was as popular as disco. A generation’s heroes signed on. Bob Dylan had a boat built for himself on the beach in Bequia. Crosby, Stills and Nash sang songs about sailing. Popular ditties spoke about 90 feet of waterline nicely making way. An editor I know found a way to ditch the land and sail off into the tropics with her husband, listening to cassette tapes of Jimmy Buffet. All on a shoestring. This lasted awhile.

Turn around, turn around.

Today, cruising is almost entirely the sport of a much older generation. When I first stumbled on “Volleyball Point” down in the Exumas, there were in that beautiful place three sandy *plein-air* volleyball clearings separated by vegetation: one for the topless, one for the modest young, and a third for the wrinkled, gray, and potbellied. These folks all arrived and slept in sailboats. Nowadays, by and large, only the third category exists.

You might find 400 or even 500 sailing yachts anchored in Exuma today, but if you took away the retired folk and aged cheapskates trying to find an affordable wintering place in the sun, there’d be a lonely harbor. One might ask first, what happened? Then one might consider what can be done about it.

My take on what happened is that life swiftly and unexpectedly went ballistic in terms of expense. Following closely on



Narrow, with a long waterline, the Far Harbour has an easily driven hull shape.

the heels of this reality, risk-tolerance went from chic to unthinkable.

In the 1960s, practically nobody who was single paid much more than \$100 a month for a place to flop; with a whole bunch of friends I paid \$20 a month in tony Marblehead, for cryin' out loud! Granted, the house was condemned, but I was part of a generation of young who defined themselves by their adventures rather than by security. Probably as big a factor as any other was this: "Retirement" was too far off the edge of the radar screen to represent more than a word. None of us even thought about health insurance. We were buff. We were healthy. We didn't smoke. Not cigarettes, anyway.

Enough of ancient history. The reality of today is that few wage-earners, let alone family nurturers, can afford to go cruising. Even if the money's available, can anyone really take the risk of telling the boss, "Sayonara—the islands beckon"? Can anyone really risk getting off the health-insurance rolls or interrupting payments into the 401(k)?

The biggest impediment to cruising the world isn't about money, though. There are boneyards full of used, cheap sailing craft that are probably capable of taking to the sea. The problem is more about a shortage of time and of the daring involved in any sabbatical off the bandwagon.

Chartering is an answer, and it's a good one. It fills the bill for the working stiff with limited time. But what about the Marquesas, or the Philippines, or even Exuma or Mayaguana? There's a world that can be enjoyed by chartering a sailboat, for the well qualified. But there's a whole lot more of the world that is entirely unavailable.

Here is an answer. How about a fully equipped if not exactly luxurious cruising sailboat that can be stuffed into a shipping container and sent around the world to any of hundreds of fascinating lands? How about missing out on month-long, wearying passages, seasickness, a dwindling cruising kitty, and the kids' pleas about when are we gonna get there? Instead, why not let the yacht suffer the storms alone, sealed into a watertight steel box on a fast, safe ship while you keep the schnozzola to the corporate grindstone? You could be maintaining the health insurance and the 401(k) while the yacht moves on to another interesting destination. This sensible modern invention has come into being.

It's called the Far Harbour 39.

Containers, in just two sizes—20 and 40 feet—have been used for shipping boat parts, racing boat sail inventories, and even keels and workshops. Container shipping is efficient, and it is a far, far cheaper alternative for crossing the great waters than voyaging or putting the boat on a float-aboard yacht delivery ship. All that was needed was for somebody to design a yacht that would fit into a shipping container.

I'm sure there are many yacht designers who have thought of this. There is already one class of small racing sloops designed specifically for container shipping. But the Far Harbour 39, designed by Bob Perry, one of the world's best professional designers, is the first purpose-designed and -built container-ready *cruising* yacht. It is the perfect invention for the task. It has been carefully devised not only to provide the maximum in comfort and living space given the "envelope," but also to be relatively easy to put together and take

SPECIFICATIONS / FAR HARBOUR 39

LOA	38.9'
LWL	38.0'
Beam	7.4'
Draft	5.5'
Displ.	12,500 lbs.
Sail Area	550 sq. ft.

Builder: Container Yachts, 1272 West Main Road, Suite 226, Bldg. 3, Middletown, RI 02842. 401-851-7925; www.containeryachts.com.

apart at each port. Given the rather extreme constraints inherent in its box, I've looked at the numbers and ratios that count, and it's clear that here is a real performer.

Think of this boat as a motorsailer. There is no better way to get to windward in moderate and stronger winds than to use the engine along with some sail for steadying. This boat's diesel is a sail-drive unit; the lower unit, easily installed and removed, is detached while the boat is being boxed. With such a narrow and thus easily driven hull shape, and a long waterline, it is possible to drive straight to windward at eight knots under power. Though the hull is very narrow by necessity and will heel going to windward, its ultimate pendulum-stability will make it less prone to actual capsize than a majority of ocean yachts. Furthermore, in the unlikely event you suffered a storm at sea and went topsy-turvy, a combination of narrowness, the deckhouse shape and watertightness, and the low center of gravity virtually guarantee that the boat would quickly right itself.

In reality, this hull and, especially, rig is extremely apt for what cruisers normally do, which is to sail on a reach from

anchorage to anchorage. In a strong breeze, this boat will be capable of very high speeds throughout a very wide range of apparent wind angles. With a tiller and an ultramodern, perfect-foil rudder, it'll be easy and exhilarating to steer.

What is this boat not? Essentially, it is not really a yacht. Although there is every possibility that an individual owner might attempt to maintain and even enhance fit and finish, the actual accommodations are more geared for practicality than for showing off. There isn't a livingroom-like main saloon around which barons can snifter brandy and puff on cigars. That's old fashioned and outmoded stuff. This boat is for adventure travel, and when you compare its accommodations to virtually every other means of such travel, it is luxurious enough.

I must say that at this juncture the Far Harbour project is still, to some extent, a work-in-progress. Some aspects of the vessel have yet to be specified,

including the level of finish and luxury. Personally, I hope that no extreme effort will be made by the manufacturer to gold-plate the product. The idea of using the relatively cheap shipping method to broaden horizons is too clever and practical, maybe even too revolutionary, to be

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suffer the storms alone,
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much up-valued by a Tiffany veneer.

At this time the keel shape and its method of installation into the hull is being optimized, as are some features of

the rig. Because Perry is one of this country's practicing yacht-design masters, I have little doubt that in its final form, this will be a relatively easy boat for even the most rudimentary boatyard to put together and launch. (There's even talk about making some provisions for use of the empty container as a shore base at the boatyard.) No boat designed to fit into a shoe box is destined to be a great beauty, but I see the beauty of practicality, and the basic choice of a "pilot-house" configuration makes wonderful use of a predetermined boxy shape. Any cruising boat benefits from good shelter and an ability to enjoy the interior while viewing the surroundings. These features are maximized. There is no "navigation desk" and no real need of one. The boat is designed to be sailed and piloted from within the pilothouse.

Certain aspects of a distance-cruising yacht will definitely be specified for the boat. Among these are water tankage, both hot and cold pressure water and a shower, and a quality cooking stove.



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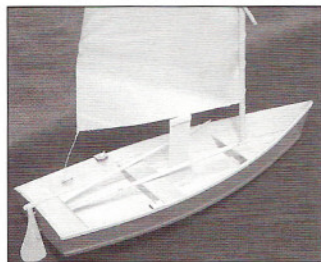
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OFF THE DRAWING BOARD

Fully battened sails, roller furling, and a detachable rudder and shaft are evidence that this project has been developed by sea cruisers with a depth of experience. Even though there's an emphasis on maximizing cruising value overall and minimizing costs, extra strength and quality are earmarked for those elements that count most.

Container Yachts LLC seems to recognize that the first responders to this new and untried means of sail adventure won't necessarily be aware of the intricacies of shipping, customs, trucking, etc., that will come into play. It appears that they are planning a certain level of ongoing support and schooling for buyers. Apparently, even a program of management of the itinerary, oversight of progress, and commissioning and decommissioning of the boats will be an option.

Worth noting here is that containerization is a concept both for the seas and for the road. There is no impediment to this boat spending one season in Alaska and the very next on Lake Mead. It can

go over the road legally in most states on a trailer.

Until the first prototype boats are produced and begin to be sent over roads and seas in their containers, it's

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unclear how much cruising will be done in them at what savings of cost. Naturally, the boat itself won't actually be inexpensive—there is too much quality and

technology inherent in it. On the other hand, you must balance cost against frequency and versatility of use. For anyone who works and can wrangle intensive periods of off-time, the Far Harbor concept cannot possibly be beat. Owners whose boats spend months stripped-down and shrink-wrapped should have no trouble visualizing a Far Harbor 39 in a container headed for New Zealand at about the same cost. And, though I cannot fathom why, flying almost anywhere in this watery world to meet your boat is still cheap. It's especially alluring for those of us who experience the Northern Hemisphere's winter, when we all hanker to get away.

It is my personal hope that container yachting proves practical. If it does, perhaps we will reenter a time when popular music once again celebrates the freedom of sailing under tropical stars.




Art Paine, a long-standing Maine Boats, Homes & Harbors Contributing Editor, is a boatbuilder, photographer, artist, and writer.


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