



# The Falcon Soars Again

**Refit:** For one passionate, accomplished sailor, the perfect family performance cruiser is a completely revamped maxi raceboat.

**Story by Herb McCormick, Photos by Billy Black**

BACK IN THE DAY, CIRCA 1996, when the all-carbon 80-foot maxi-class race boat *Falcon 2000* was launched, going for a sail meant assembling an elite crew of a couple dozen well-paid America's Cup professional sailors to operate the powerful beast safely and efficiently. With a towering rig, nearly 14 feet of draft and a small platoon of "grinders" the size of

NFL linemen spinning the handles of the coffee-grinder winches, at all moments *Falcon 2000* was a ticking time bomb, one false move or poorly executed maneuver away from absolute mayhem — or, you know, the unfortunate loss of a finger or two.

This was something I couldn't stop thinking about on a gorgeous afternoon last July, aboard that very same

(yet these days, quite different) *Falcon 2000*, while enjoying one of the most pleasant and stress-free — yet still incredibly thrilling — sails of my entire summer. Under blue skies on the West Passage of Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay, a lovely 12- to 14-knot southwesterly sea breeze had filled in and *Falcon 2000* was reveling in the ideal conditions and flat

water, smoking upwind and notching double-digit boat speeds as her highly skilled but hardly imposing crew of five expertly put the ex-Grand Prix racer through her paces.

At the wheel, skipper Cary St. Onge called for a touch of headsail trim, and a couple of young surfers — his nephew, Cameron, and Cam's mate, Mike, two slender high-



*Though she once required a couple dozen pro sailors to execute maneuvers, today Falcon 2000 can be efficiently sailed by a shorthanded crew. Even setting the kite, with the aid of a sock, is easily accomplished (left), and the result is double-digit boat speeds. Once back at the mooring, deck furniture is deployed from the huge aft compartment, and the open cockpit becomes a patio (inset left). When St. Onge purchased the boat, the interior was a “black hole” of bare carbon (inset above), but that same space is now the sensational, comfortable master stateroom (above).*

school kids who will never be mistaken for Green Bay Packers — quickly dialed it in. As the boat came hard on the breeze, one of Cary’s two sons, Ryan — a two-time member of the U.S. Olympic ski team — trimmed the mainsheet in unison. Aft, Cary’s girlfriend Jennifer McCord, an interior designer whose expertise is evident in the stunning transforma-

tion that’s taken place below deck, readied the running backstays for the inevitable next tack.

Before long we bore away, the cruising kite, from its sock, was easily hoisted and set, and *Falcon 2000* was screaming down the bay at a nifty 15 or 16 knots while her mellow crew chatted amiably about this and that. Well, most of the crew: Cary

seemed pretty amped, and he should’ve been, as it was his vision that had brought this dynamic scene and vessel to life.

“Somewhere along the line I found out that I’m a sailor,” he said later, once we’d returned to the mooring. “That’s kind of the focus of my life. To have the ultimate tool to do that is why this project came together.” Now

that he has it, he also wants to share it, with his kids and grandkids, of course, but also with junior sailors and fledgling offshore voyagers who might not otherwise have the chance to sail a yacht so mighty and grand.

“Sailing this boat is such an amazing experience,” he said. “To be able to share this with others makes me happy.”

## HANDS-ON SAILOR



*As a raceboat, Falcon 2000 had a rudimentary galley and the sleeping accommodations were pipe berths (inset above). Looking aft from the forward stateroom, that space has now been converted to a long, luxurious galley with plenty of working counter space that's adjacent to the main salon (above). Another priority was a roomy and inviting master head, and Falcon 2000 now boasts a beauty (below).*

I had to agree that taking the helm of *Falcon 2000* was certainly special. And given the boat's history — what she was and what she has become — it was also incredible.

### **The Black Hole**

A year and a half earlier, on a blustery winter day hard by the gray Taunton River in Somerset, Massachusetts, I scaled a ladder lashed to *Falcon 2000's* transom in a quiet shipyard; descended the long companionway; and had my first good look at the boat. Rough and spare, she was little more than a stripped-out, cold carbon tube that literally gave me the shivers. Yet her owner seemed more than slightly enthused about the surroundings. "Here's where the master stateroom will be, and just aft will be this



## HANDS-ON SAILOR



*The stark sink module smack-dab in the center of the original layout (inset above) had to go, and once it did, there was plenty of space to create an inviting main saloon (above). Woodworker Hugh Maxwell crafted a modern European aesthetic in warm, golden walnut, and even fashioned a custom folding table that opens up for dinner parties. The reworked nav station remains tucked beneath the companionway stairs (below).*



## HANDS-ON SAILOR

incredible master head,” Cary said, waving at an entirely open, dark, blank space, his voice echoing though the empty hull.

I’d known the man for about five minutes, and the thought occurred that he was possibly pulling my leg. Either way, one thing was clear: *Falcon 2000* was far removed from her glory days competing in some of the world’s most prestigious ocean races.

She boasts a glorious pedigree. Designed by the prestigious Nelson/Marek office and constructed by New Zealand’s renowned Cookson Boats yard, she’d been commissioned in 1996 by the New York Yacht Club’s Young America syndicate in advance of the 2000 Ameri-



ca’s Cup races, ostensibly as a training vessel for the crew to compete in events like the Sydney-Hobart classic while their Cup racers were

built. But once those Cup boats splashed, *Falcon 2000* became expendable and was subsequently reduced to ignominious duty as a day

*By removing a series of panels fronting a pair of “mechanical rooms” in the long corridors aft, there’s unparalleled access to pumps, wiring, systems and so on, including the toolboxes.*

### MARION TO BERMUDA



2 0 1 5



### Celebrate the 20th Anniversary Event!

- Race open to racer/cruiser monohulls, 32-80 ft.
- New simpler safety requirements
- New Youth Boat Trophy for sailors 16 to 23 years of age
- Only offshore event in North America to offer Celestial Division (*courses available*)
- Races within the Race: Celestial, Family, All-Female, Double-Handed, Short-Handed
- Join pre-race rally from Portland, ME to Marion, MA



**Race Start Date:**  
June 19, 2015

**Race Discussion:**  
<http://racetobermuda.ning.com>

**Website:**  
[www.marionbermuda.com](http://www.marionbermuda.com)

**Contact Us:**  
[race@marionbermuda.com](mailto:race@marionbermuda.com)

**Follow Us: MarionBermuda**



**Look for Marion Bermuda Race Presentations in your area.**

## HANDS-ON SAILOR

charter boat in the Caribbean before winding up, neglected and forlorn, in a Florida backwater.

This is where Cary found her.

A lifelong sailor, he had already sailed around the world on a seven-year odys-

precisely what he'd want in his next boat: something big, strong and fast (speed, he'd learned, equates to safety on long passages) that was also fundamentally simple and easy to maintain and repair, with readily accessible systems (he'd had enough

exist. Besides, what he really wanted was a tested, sound, bulletproof hull — a shell, really — that he could revamp, customize and make his own. A retired raceboat with little more than a no-frills galley, head and pipe berths, all of which he could yank out and

and another aft; otherwise not a sliver of light anywhere. Everyone called it 'the black hole.'

"I wasn't necessarily looking for a maxi racer. What I wanted was a cruising boat that was seriously fast, seriously agile and the height of simplicity. It just so happened a friend of mine heard about this particular boat and called me up. But if you want high performance, a maxi pretty much defines that. So I guess we started in a good place."

And there was no turning back.

### Seeing the Light

After taking ownership of the boat in 2008, Cary and mates sailed her from Key West to West Palm Beach in

## DESIGNED BY NELSON/MAREK AND BUILT IN NEW ZEALAND, THE BOAT HAD BEEN COMMISSIONED AS A TRAINING VESSEL FOR THE 2000 AMERICA'S CUP.

sey aboard a rugged 60-foot pilothouse ketch, sometimes with his family aboard (he and Ryan crossed the Indian Ocean together, a wild and challenging trip), sometimes singlehanded. The journey whet his appetite for more oceanic adventures, and it also gave him the time to ponder

of soldering autopilot wires and such while hanging upside-down in the lazarette on his previous circumnavigation).

It took only a bit of research to discover that the boat he was after, the one he'd visualized in his mind's eye, didn't actually

start from scratch, would be ideal.

Enter *Falcon 2000*.

"The interior was basically black carbon fiber, that's it," said Cary, recalling his own initial inspection of the boat. "You could barely see anything when you went below. There were two hatches, one forward

 **DELPHIA**  
TRUE YACHTS®

*"The flagship of the Delphia range. Outstanding performance and safety while blue water sailing."*

*J. Jabłoński*

KAROL JABŁOŃSKI,  
professional racing skipper  
and world champion

RDC CATEGORY A,  
PROVEN BY MASTERS®

 47

 **DELPHIA**  
AUTHORIZED DEALER®

Authorized dealer — Canada and USA:

northlakesyachting.com  
manitowoc-marina.com

DELPHIAYACHTS.EU



## HANDS-ON SAILOR

more or less the shaky condition that he'd found her, "breaking one thing after another," he said. At Cracker Boy Boat Works, over a couple months' span the big sloop was put into seagoing condition. Then they voyaged north, to New England, and began the refit in earnest, first in a Rhode Island boatyard and then later at Bristol Marine in Massachusetts.

The initial work list addressed the rig and the underbody. The former was removed from the boat, disassembled and gone over with a fine-toothed comb. Below the waterline, the entire bottom was stripped, faired and repainted, and the keel and rudder were each pulled, faired and reattached.

Meanwhile, the Yanmar 160-horsepower diesel was rebuilt, as was the sail drive.

Then came the major projects.

Enlisting the services of the boat's original designers, Bruce Marek and Bruce Nelson, the keel was shortened by more than 3 feet, from 13 feet, 6 inches to 10 feet. The sail plan was also reconfigured and shortened, so the fully hoisted mainsail now reaches the hounds of the fractional rig (the original 114-foot spar is still stepped in the boat, but it too will be cut down in the future to match the recut sails).

"Those jobs really reduced the stresses on the boat," said Cary. "It took significant loads off the rig, keel bolts and entire hull, which greatly

increases the safety factor offshore."

In the meantime, whether the boat was in the water sailing or on the hard, Cary continued to refine his thoughts on what to do with the interior accommodations and deck layout. Once those plans were finalized, he gathered a dream team of local craftsmen to realize them. Longtime Rhode Island boatbuilder and composites maven Eric Goetz came onboard as the general contractor, ably assisted by, among other craftsmen, finish carpenter and woodworker Hugh Maxwell, electrician Peter Duquette and electronics expert Bob Champlain, all of whom became as obsessed with the project as the owner himself.

The first task was the messiest. "The interior of the boat was just raw carbon," said Cary. "So before we could paint and fair everything, we had to sand every inch of the interior. Then four coats of paint, two primer coats and two finish coats. It was a huge process, but we ended up with a nicely faired, professional job that looks beautiful."

Still, it wasn't until 11 new hatches were installed in the long, flush deck that the clear light, figuratively and literally, finally came streaming through. "That was a life-changing event," said Cary, smiling. "It was unbelievable."

### Falcon Resumes Flight

Pictures say a thousand



**A quieter generator.**  
It's a beautiful thing.

Visit us in the Engine Tent at Booth 1208 at the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show.



There's a reason that Cummins Onan marine generators have the name "Quiet Diesel."<sup>™</sup> Our engineers spend thousands of hours testing, analyzing and designing products to gain the maximum reductions in noise and vibration. What's more, the Quiet Diesel generators are famously reliable. And they're backed by the largest network of factory-trained service techs in the industry.

Check out the full line of hardworking Cummins Onan marine generators from 4–99 kW at:

[powertocruisers.com](http://powertocruisers.com)



Get the free mobile app at  
<http://gettag.mobi>

**Performance you rely on.<sup>™</sup>**

**Cummins Onan**



©2013 Cummins Power Generation. All rights reserved. Cummins, Onan and the "C" logo are registered trademarks of Cummins Inc. "Performance you rely on." is a trademark of Cummins Power Generation.

## HANDS-ON SAILOR

words, and as the photos here attest, the conversion of *Falcon 2000* from a bare, stark racing machine to a comfy, well-appointed floating sanctuary and home was indeed stunning and improbable. Cary's future plans for the boat are also unusual.

real estate in Colorado, truly enjoys working the boat; and besides, he has laid out the deck with nearly everything within reach of the helm. "One of the things I love about sailing is the physical work involved," he said. "I like grinding winches and haul-

stateroom and space aft. He also plans to offer the boat to high-school sailing programs that want to gain some big-boat experience, and even to the Storm Trysail Club for its Junior Safety at Sea programs. Sharing his boat with others is actu-

Virginia, to the Caribbean. "When the project was coming together," he said, "in the back of my head I kept asking myself whether I really needed a boat this big and powerful, and the answer to that question, for most everybody, ought to be no. But for me, that's kind of the heart and soul of the whole project. I wanted to create a boat so everyone who'd want those kinds of experiences could have them. So this boat wasn't built just for me."

Nope, as *Falcon 2000* lifts airborne on the second leg of her singular journey, as far as her skipper is concerned, she's nothing less than an equal-opportunity wonder.

*Herb McCormick is CW's senior editor.*

## ST. ONGE ASSEMBLED A DREAM TEAM OF MARINE CRAFTSMEN TO WORK ON THE PROJECT, ALL OF WHOM BECAME AS OBSESSED WITH IT AS HE WAS.

Somewhere down the line, after cruising New England, the Caribbean and the Mediterranean, he'll tackle a solo trans-Atlantic. Of course, not everyone would think an 80-foot ex-maxi was suitable for such an undertaking, but Cary, a former ski coach who now invests in and develops

ing halyards, and also finding ways to be more efficient."

That singlehanded voyage, however, is a few years away. In the meantime, he wants to sail with his family — he has laid out the boat's interior so each of his sons, Ryan and Chad, has his own private

ally a recurring theme: This year, in conjunction with the Caribbean 1500, he's launched a website ([www.force10sailing.com](http://www.force10sailing.com)) for prospective sailors who want to purchase a berth — and a truly unique offshore training voyage — on this fall's passage from Norfolk,



# FleetOne

ONLINE ONBOARD

Fleet One is a unique voice and data service that has been specifically configured for regional leisure sailing. It can be easily installed on your motorboat or sailing yacht, and guarantees reliable, flexible internet access and cost-effective mobile network coverage at sea.

Inmarsat offers your yacht a highly evolved maritime communications ecosystem which makes trips or voyages more efficient, safer and more productive. In short, just a lot smarter. Visit [inmarsat.com](http://inmarsat.com)

# FleetOne

  
**inmarsat**  
The mobile satellite company™