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TAX REFORM: Tips for sailors

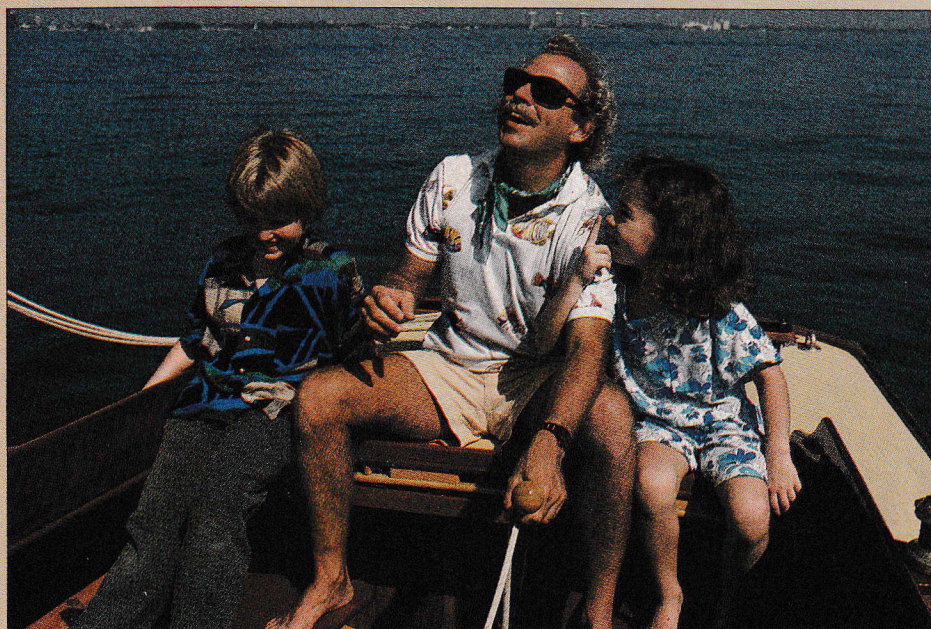
- Bo Derek
- Christopher Cross
- William Simon
- Jimmy Buffet

**CELEBRITIES
WHO SAIL**

\$2.50



Celebrities at Sea



Jimmy Buffet

66 I turn forty next year. I want to go around the world by sailboat and tramp steamer, and when the feeling hits, go in and play. Places like George's Bloody Mary on Bora Bora or Foxy's on Jost van Dyke. They're all my friends"



Buffet, far right, sails his *Alerion*, *Savannah Jane*, in Biscayne Bay where her designer, Nathanael Herreshoff, once sailed near his winter home in what is now Coconut Grove. The real *Savannah Jane*, Buffet's six-year-old daughter and a friend (above) share a joke with the singer while (right) he entertains friends in Key West

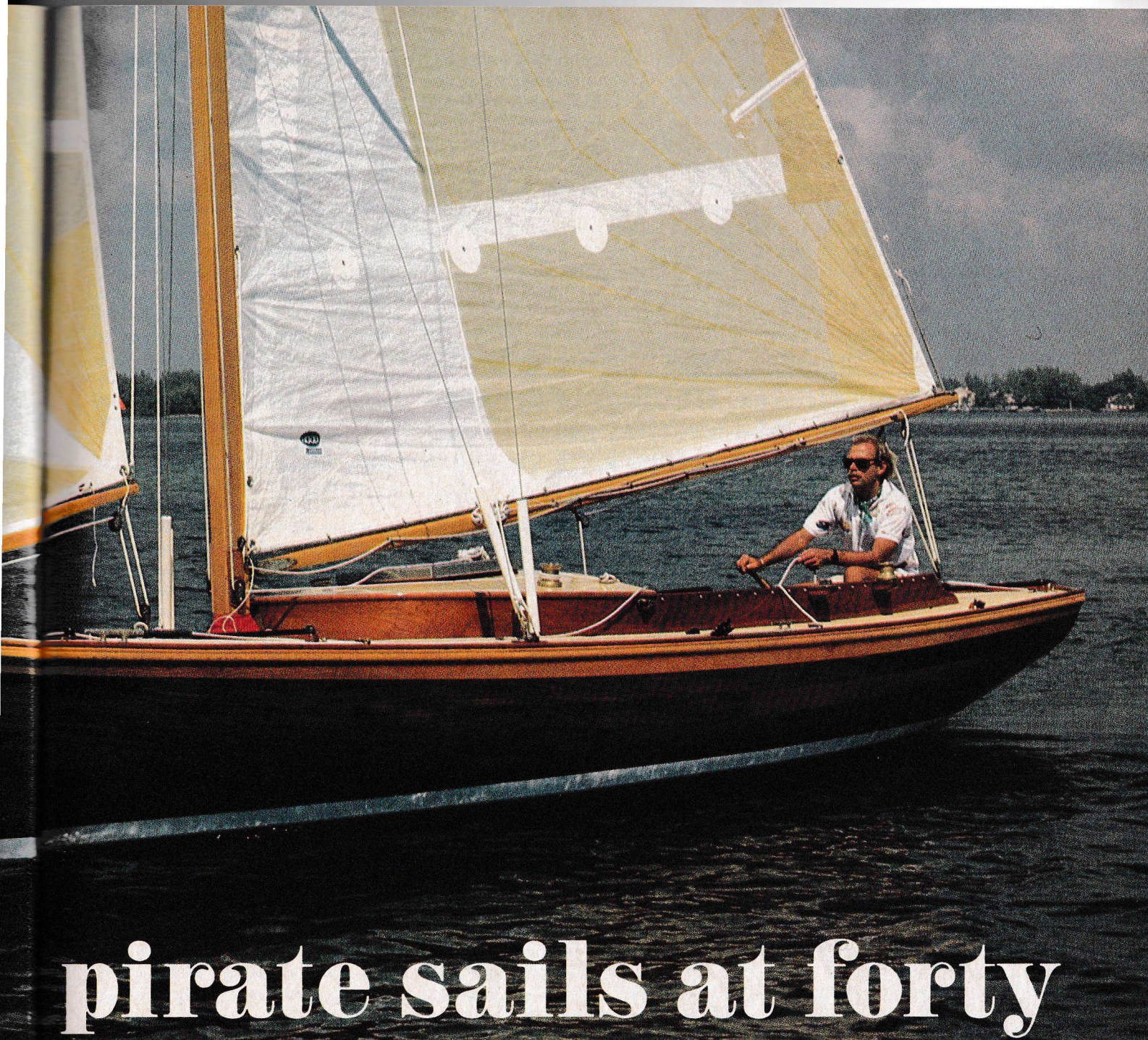


The

Story by Martin Luray
Photos by Benjamin Mendlowitz

It's 9 of a May Friday morning in Key West, Florida. Even at this hour the heat of the sun would be merciless were it not for a light breeze from the southeast and a few lenticular fair-weather clouds. At the Galleon Marina the boats stir restlessly in their slips; the white fiberglass hulls and decks seem bleached by the heat and add to the overwhelming glare.

Relief, however, is at hand with a vessel on which the eyes can rest. She lies starboard-to at an outside dock—



pirate sails at forty

a classic, by the look of her, with a wood hull varnished bright, a rounded stem, a somewhat high bow leading to a gently dipping sheer as it runs aft. There is not a lot of freeboard showing, but there is a very deep, long cockpit and a low coachroof well rounded forward, the mark of a Herreshoff design. The mainboom with its long blue Hood sail cover extends beyond the stern. Hand-lettered on the transom is her name, *Savannah Jane*, and her home port, St. Barthélemy. She may be the most beautiful sailboat in Key West, a jewel in a place where powerboats reign su-

preme. She doesn't quite fit among the speedy center-console fishing boats, the big deep-sea tuna-towered sportfishermen, and the commercial trawlers with net booms swept out like the antennas of giant waterborne insects. The boat is obviously in the hands of a good seaman; lines are coiled and stowed, decks are clean and clear.

That seaman—her owner, folk rock singer Jimmy Buffet—arrives at 9:30. Smiling, cheerful as always, he lopes down the dock carrying a paper sack filled with a bag of ice and cans of Aqua Supreme pure spring water. He

apologizes for being late and says, "Boy, am I looking forward to this."

The boat, named after his six-year-old daughter, is very dear to his heart. When Buffet returns to Key West after a road trip or a month-long recording session, *Savannah Jane*, a Nathanael Herreshoff-designed 26-foot Alerion, is there to sail away with him. "Sail" is correct. There is no engine aboard. "It would seem improper," Buffet says, "change the look and feel of the boat. Captain Nat sailed the first one without power for seventeen years—until he was eighty-one. There is a story that he actually took his Alerion

to Bermuda. He sailed in a suit and a straw hat, and he put a piece of canvas on his weather shoulder and that was all he needed as far as foul-weather gear was concerned.

"This is the third and most satisfying boat I've owned. The first one was a Cheoy Lee 33 that I bought for cash when I signed my first big record contract and started making money in this darnfool business. We had it for two years and sailed it to the Islands and hung around there for a while. Then I bought a bigger boat, a Cheoy Lee 48." Buffet laughs. "It had the best

completely undiminished.

When Buffet changed his venue from St. Barts back to Key West last year, he turned the boat over to Pogo Evans at Derecktor's Fort Lauderdale yard for a refit and a totally new hull finish. Buffet has added solar cells (undisguisedly mounted on the cabin-top) to charge the boat's battery, a new main with a Kevlar leech and a lightweight Mylar jib, a pair of bronze Barent sheet winches, a nonskid fiberglassed deck (the boat had been canvassed), ball-bearing blocks and traveler, beefed-up rigging, running

Buffet communicates. He sings of dreams that never happened—but they may. Few cruisers sail without his tapes. "I've got a Caribbean soul/I can barely control," he sings, and all aboard know what he means

air conditioners in the Caribbean. Also reefer boxes and freezer boxes and generators and a three-quarter-inch video tape player. Because it was so heavily loaded, it wouldn't go to weather worth a damn. Now we're back to basics."

Still, the "basic" *Savannah Jane* is a bit removed from the Alerion that Herreshoff designed in 1912 and is now in the Mystic [Connecticut] Seaport Museum. One of 22 Alerions "recreated" by the Sanford Boat Company on Nantucket in the late seventies, *Savannah Jane* is hull no. 6 (Buffet's brother-in-law, writer Thomas McGuane, owns hull no. 3). The Sanford brothers "modernized" the boats by cold-molding the hulls out of four layers of laminated wood planking—mahogany on the outside, cedar on the inside—making a 3/4-inch sandwich. They added a fiberglass-and-lead shoal-draft (2 feet 5 inches) ballast keel with an airfoil-shaped centerboard, cut away some of the deadwood aft, provided a balanced rudder, and changed the rig from a gunter mainsail to a Marconi-rigged sloop with a large, low-aspect main.

After buying the Alerion, Buffet took it to the French Caribbean island of St. Barthélemy, where he was part owner of a hotel and was doing most of his song writing. Six years in the tropics did nothing for the boat's health and looks, although her sailing qualities, even in the big Atlantic rollers and heavy trades, remained

backstays, and an extra halyard for a 1/2-ounce drifter. Below, he installed a VHF and a four-speaker stereo system and yanked out the old galley stove ("got rusty as hell"), replacing it with a two-burner Coleman for "camping out." The original Sanford price was about \$40,000; Buffet's modifications cost \$45,000.

Buffet asks, "Don't you think Captain Nat would approve? He was pretty advanced for his time."

If there is one distinguishing feature about Buffet, it is his openness and his ability to engage you. Like many native southerners, he can chat the ears off anyone who wants to talk. In the South, the art of conversation is alive and well. You may not hear much of it in Key West, which abounds with petulant whispered voices these days, but Buffet learned chat and charm at his mother's knee in Mobile, Alabama, nurtured it as an entertainer in some very raw Key West bars in the sixties, and brought it to full flower in the many cleverly worded semi-autobiographical songs about loss and yearning and survival he has written since 1973. Buffet communicates. He tells his audiences stories about themselves, about how life ought to be lived, about dreams that never happened—but you never know, they may. Very few cruising boats sail without Buffet tapes. "I've got a Caribbean soul/I can barely control," he sings, and everyone on board knows what he is talking about.

Aboard *Savannah Jane*, Buffet, in a

faded polo shirt and blue neckerchief, khaki shorts, and beat-up boat mocs, is quick on his feet as he moves around the boat getting her ready. He talks while pumping the bilge, exhaling with a "huh" on each stroke.

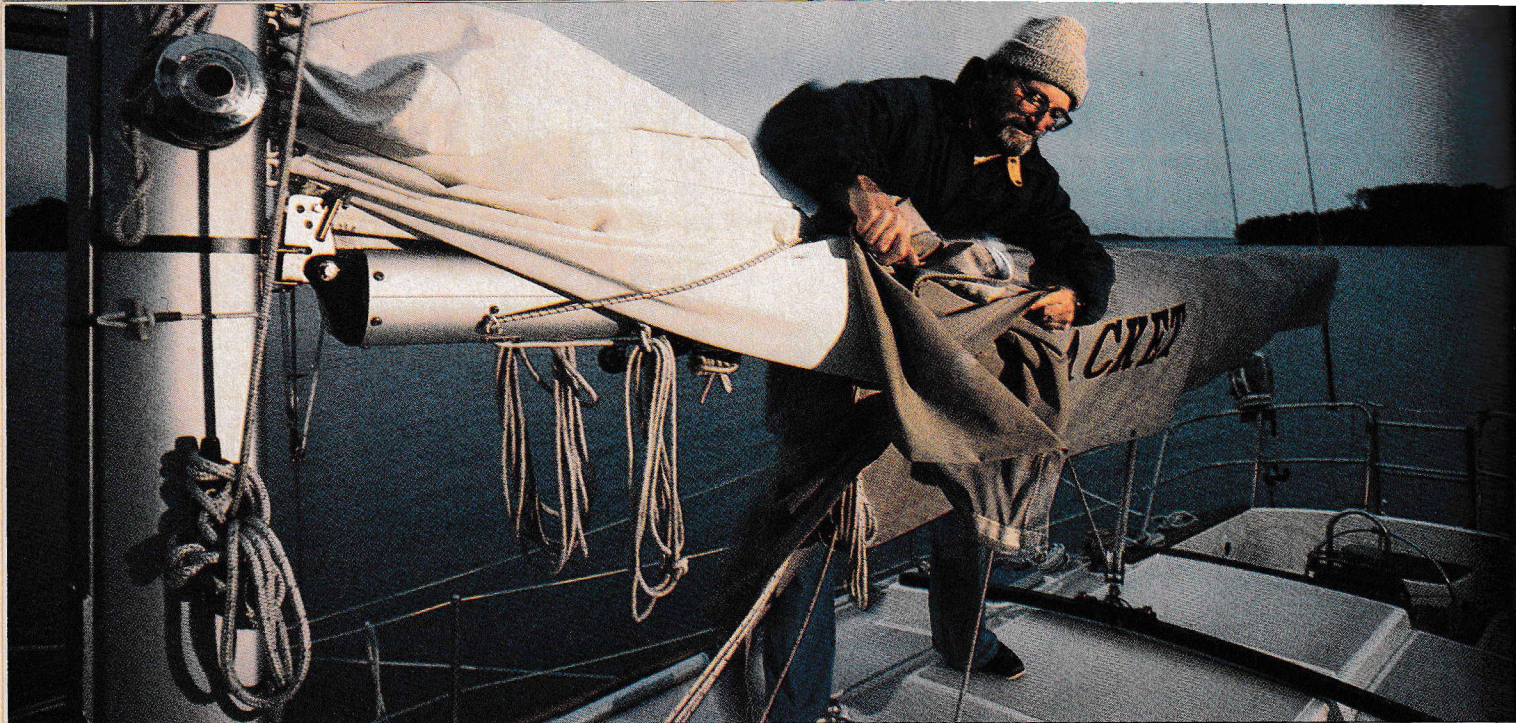
Now we uncleat the lines, move the boat by hand around the corner of the dock to get the wind on the starboard beam. Buffet raises the main, lets the boom swing to port, raises the jib. I push the bow out and jump aboard, and we maneuver into the channel and then pick up a little more wind as we head into the Gulf of Mexico. With the big main and lightweight jib carrying the vessel, the water begins to chuckle under *Savannah Jane's* forefoot.

Like all good sailors, the boat is part of him; he is deft at the helm, efficient and calm. His commands are given quietly as we sail out the Northwest Channel toward his backyard—the flats where he fishes for tarpon or permit or bonefish when he isn't sailing. This is Buffet territory, a natural arena that he knows as well as any concert stage.

Buffet came to sailing and fishing early in life, a natural consequence of growing up around Mobile Bay. "If you grow up in that area, once you're out of school for the summer, you're on the water. Ever since I can remember we had a summer place on the bay. Sailing, shrimping, crabbing, and fishing in the bayous—that's the way the summers went." Later on, while in high school, he worked as a deckhand on commercial shrimpers. A year in college during which he took up the guitar convinced him that music was where he wanted to be, much to the consternation of his father.

Buffet describes his father, a shipyard project engineer on Navy vessels, as a "hotshot small-boat racer" at the Mobile Yacht Club and a "bit of a tyrant" during his high school years. Closer to him was his grandfather, James Delaney Buffet, the legendary "old man" of Buffet's songs, who had the greatest influence on his life.

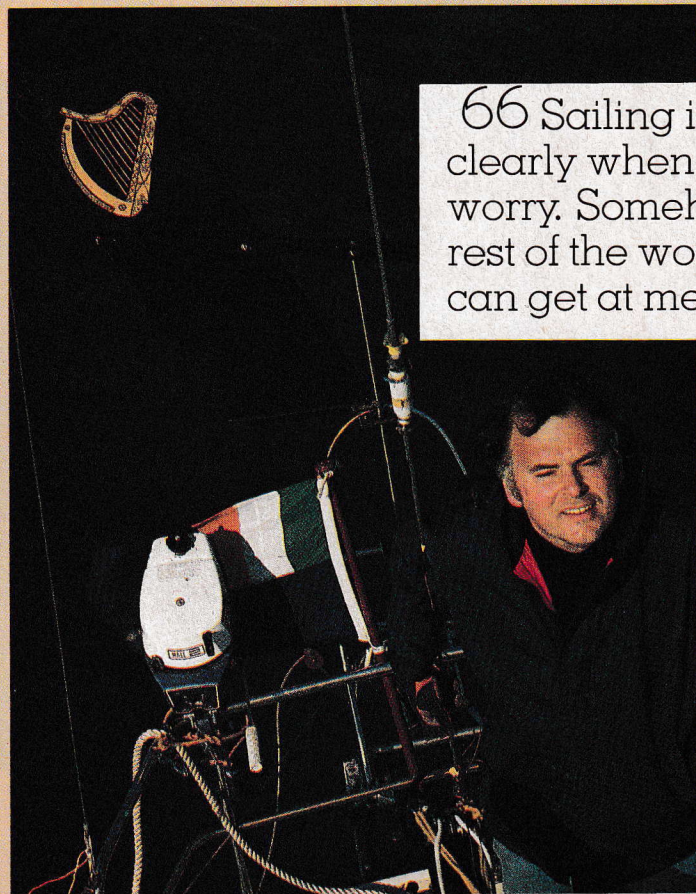
As a 10-year-old, James Delaney Buffet, born in Nova Scotia, shipped out as a cabin boy on a sailing ship, "kept going and never looked back." He finally settled in Pascagoula, Mississippi, the base from which he went to sea for 30 years, first as a master on square-riggers and then as a captain for the Delta Steamship Lines. Every-



John Barth

Author John Barth (*Giles Goat Boy*, *The Sotweed Factor*) owns *Cobweb*, an Island Packet 31, which he sails "exclusively" in the Chesapeake Bay. Contrary to the folks portrayed in his most recent book, *Sabbatical*, who are returning from an offshore cruise, Barth's only experience sailing outside of the United States is on charters in the Virgin Islands

66 Sailing is recreation for us . . . our favorite hobby. When the school semester is finished [Barth teaches at Johns Hopkins University], we take off for two weeks and disappear on the Eastern Shore. Just hover around the Chesapeake. The boat draws three feet with the board up, and we can get in almost everywhere"



Stuart Woods

66 Sailing is the best release I know. I think clearly when I'm sailing, and I never seem to worry. Somehow I feel invulnerable from the rest of the world when I am on a boat. Nobody can get at me, not bill collectors, not anybody"

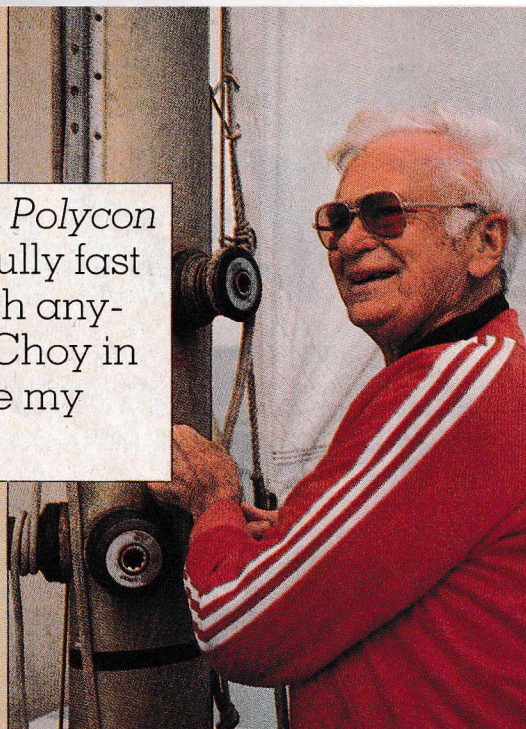
Author and tv-writer Stuart Woods (*Chiefs*; *Blue Water*, *Green Skipper*; *Deep Lie*) commutes between Atlanta, Georgia, and Cowes, England, where he writes, sails, and does race-committee work during Cowes Week. A small-boat sailor, he achieved his personal best at the age of 37 sailing the 30-foot Ron Holland-designed Half-Tonner *Golden Harp* in the 1976 Observer Singlehanded Transatlantic Race

Stuart Woods

Buddy Ebsen

66 The pleasure is in continuing to sail *Polycon* every weekend. She is still a wonderfully fast boat and easy to sail. I don't race much anymore, although I navigated for Rudy Choy in the last Ensenada Race. He didn't take my directions so he didn't finish first"

Actor Buddy Ebsen is a long-time California sailor who raced small boats at Long Beach as a youth and started sailing multihulls in the late sixties. He still owns and sails his 35-foot Rudy Choy-designed catamaran, *Polynesian Concept*, considered a breakthrough in the late sixties



Kenneth Garrett

Chuck Place

Christopher Cross

66 For me it's a real getaway. When I am out there I am away from everything, enjoying the intense, concentrated effort of balancing the boat and its power. You get perspective and a lot of pleasure"

Musician and singer Christopher Cross ("Sailing") keeps his Hobie 16 at a friend's house at Malibu Beach and makes for it whenever he is not on the road or in recording sessions. Born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, Cross as a teenager sailed small boats on the Texas Gulf Coast

William Simon

Financier William Simon, former Secretary of the Treasury, owns a very special boat, *Freedom*, a 124-foot ketch, designed by Sparkman & Stephens and built by the Picciotti yard in Viareggio, Italy, for one purpose: world cruising in comfort. The boat's first major stopover is Fremantle, Australia, where Simon, a New York Yacht Club member, will be taking in the America's Cup scene

66 It's a dream come true for me. I've had a pretty busy life. I love to dive and fish and sail, so we're going to keep the boat in the South Pacific for the first two years. After the America's Cup, we're off to the Indonesian archipelago, and then we'll be scuba diving in the Great Barrier Reef"



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