

**2017 Folkboat USA Invitational event in San Francisco hosted by the
Corinthian Yacht Club (CYC), Tiburon**

28 August – 1 September 2017

Cold Cold Cold/ Hot Hot Hot..... in San Francisco Bay (SF Bay)

So it was a week of two weathers. To begin with the usual SF Bay weather with fog in the morning giving way to sun and strong sea breezes from the West to South West, 20 / 30 knots in the afternoon. ***Take a heavy crew is our advice.*** We were only saved by the advance of high pressure and extremely hot unusual conditions finally on the last two days over 100 F/38 C, and no wind on the last day so we lost this racing day.

16 boats were there to race, 2 from Denmark, 2 Swedes, 2 Germans and one UK and 9 USA teams (after their selection trials). Dave Wilson, USA 106 last years' winner was the man to beat, and he surprisingly with a lightish crew!! Indeed, he finally sailed brilliantly in the right direction, except for the last day. Christoph Nielsen was back for the 5th time trying to win, but could only manage a valiant second place. One of his crew certainly had an interesting crewing position! Fully lying on the deck with his arm and knee over the side! The tides (and wind forecasting) were the most critical aspect and hard to master here. We went as prepared as possible, with charts of the area and stream directions, but timing direction of change was the critical aspect, thereof as usual but all linked to the maximum ebb at the Golden Gate Bridge (GGB). We read a lot about the wind and sea breezes backing etc, but eventually read it as "its nearly always right to go right on the Olympic (Berkeley) Circle, except when it is right to go left"!

At the opening National Flag raising ceremony, we exchanged a Royal Lymington Yacht Club Burgee for the CYC, Tiburon Burgee and also drew names of lend boats from a hat and sang the National Anthem as did the other countries there's and each skipper introduced their crews. When the German Anthem was played and sung, our third crew member showed me the Spa Grand Prix result with Vettel second!!

Monday dawned and we had an early start as we were due to collect our new sails from North, but sadly Hurricane Harvey appeared to have got in the way and there was no delivery. Many frantic phone calls and emails later, and they finally arrived just in time on Tuesday morning. Thankfully a beautifully cut main and jib. After some assistance from Tom Reed (USA 111), who kindly made us the loop for the whisker pool, we were ready to go racing... We had pre-agreed with the Regatta Chairman, George Cathey, that he would purchase the sails at the end of the week, so no folding and bringing them home. All worked out well in the end.

There were three areas to race, Knox near Angel Island, where the practice race was held, The Olympic Berkeley Circle and the SF City Front. Day one, Monday, the PRO gave us three or four practice starts and then we had three short windward / leeward races to get us comfortable with our boats and the other competitors and of course him, what a great idea. The tides here were very strong as we started, and in strangely defined lines. The leeward mark was set in rather a windless area near to Angel Island, which reminded us of the Cowes Norris nudgers, so we came out of it well.



This was the first time that we noticed the water temperature, a year round 13 degrees C, so all your warm gear was required, especially in Claire's case.. GBR 734, Pilgrim/Elise's team was your authors Julian and Claire Sowry and Doug Neville-Jones a life-long friend of us both and a racer in various classes, most recently J80's but also X boats and lots of big boat racing, but he admitted to racing Merganser at Cowes Week with Catherine Munro-Kerr. After racing we repaired to our host's lodging with Judy Walsh in Sausalito, a beautiful house, perched high on the side of the hill overlooking the city to the south. How lucky we were. Judy's husband Jerry Langkammerer used to race Volker USA 113 and 116 and there were Folkboat pictures all over the house about a 20 minute drive from Tiburon.

The second day (Tuesday) was the first proper racing day, over at the SF City Waterfront. The scene of many International Championships for big and small yachts, including of course, the America's Cup and in front of the St Francis Yacht Club, where most of the Folkboats are moored and raced. Weather and spreader marks were set near the foot of the GGB, out of the famous tide, finally, but also in a rather light air area, making the approaches rather tricky. This quite heavy day produced some terrific photographs (links at the end of this article) of the fleet with the GGB and Alcatraz in the background. We acquitted ourselves reasonably, with Claire getting the hang of the long whisker pole, for poling out the jib downwind (no spinnakers). Everyone sailed flat, making it not very tactical downwind and with two crew members on the bow! Ashore later on the deck of the CYC every night we had two barrels of beer to drink, which helped proceedings along, once long johns and foul weather gear had been removed.

The third day was over at the Olympic Berkeley Circle with quite shallow water but two or three tidal streams. One had to go right for the ebb in the channel towards the end of the beat and if we had known, then hard left to get the ebb out of the south bay which produced the winning formula. In the background was the famous GGB, half consumed with fog and at its best. Wind was SSW 25 knots, sunny and cold. We struggled a bit here with our old ladies gear (boat)!, but we got the hang of her and the area and were not last.. ..

One has to mention the sea life that we saw from all the birds, including Pelicans, to seals, sea lions, dolphins and also breaching Grey Whales to boot! Quite wonderful.

That night we went home and changed and nearly missed the skits (!) meeting, when one is invited to sing, recite or perform a skit. We arrived back at the club at the appointed hour to find the Danes, Germans and the Swedes, all having eaten and drunk the beer and were uncatchable on the Skits course. Doug heard the Brits being called to the podium and recited John Masefields poem “I must go down to the Sea again” to good applause, a great effort.

Thursday we were back on the SF City Waterfront in lighter airs where we finally got the hang of it all and on race three of the day we got away in a group of four from the pack, from the usual light airs near the GGB marks. Near the downwind gate, the leaders one and two USA and Germany were fighting it out, and Den 803 and GBR 734 saw their chance. On the final beat, the leaders went right into the beach where there was less wind and still strong flood tide, whereas 100 meters from the left gate mark, the tide was still slack and later on further out still ebbing, just like the Solent; we went left alone, and won quite easily. We heard later that the Danes kicked themselves, but drank more beer. (all week!)

As there was no racing on Friday, (due to be racing on the Knox course) due to no wind and 110 F most unusually in SF, we finished on a great high.



At the closing dinner on Friday night, all the skippers got up to speak and thank their teams and the organisers where Julian also did so, and sang his short ditty about “Lord Horatio Nelson”, our most famous Admiral, to suitable acclaim, and maybe made up for our lack of song at the Skits evening.

The Danes definitely won the prize for their noisy eccentric performance that evening, whereas the Swedes had guitars and a banjo and sang a wonderful Folkboat tune and all had a copy to sing along to.

In summary, a great week, which for us, was followed by a visit to Julian's cousin in Mill Valley close by, and a further tour of the Bay in his Catalina 42 cruiser, followed by some time in Sonoma and Nappa. Yosemite was cancelled as the park was on fire and our hotel was evacuated, so the Ranger said when we were 1 mile from it, having driven for 4 hours from SF. Hey Ho!

Finally we do feel we must invite our San Francisco Bay Folkboat friends back here in some form? Ideas welcome please.

Links for the event and Photographs:

<http://www.sfbayfolkboats.org/2017-international-regatta/>

<https://jimerskine.smugmug.com/Sailing/Folkboats-2017/>

Leslie Richter's Photos: <http://www.rockskipper.com/Sailing-Galleries/2017-Folkboat-International-Regatta>

Race 1: <https://youtu.be/TqsEzr-aK9M>

Race 2: <https://youtu.be/1WBUZTlqCnQ>

Race 7: https://youtu.be/7MU_3x1iT_Y

Race 8: <https://youtu.be/1x3ngHFtmLs>

Race 8 Downwind: <https://youtu.be/sOXQoVMWd8Q>