

The Revolutionary Cal 40

Lest there be any confusion about where I'm coming from, I think that, despite her age, the Cal 40 is as legitimate a "performance cruiser" today as she was when launched more than three decades ago. I don't care that she is not a floating condominium designed for dockside entertaining, that her main saloon is not outfitted with an entertainment center, or that her galley does not have a microwave.

Not that I'm averse to speed and comfort, mind you.

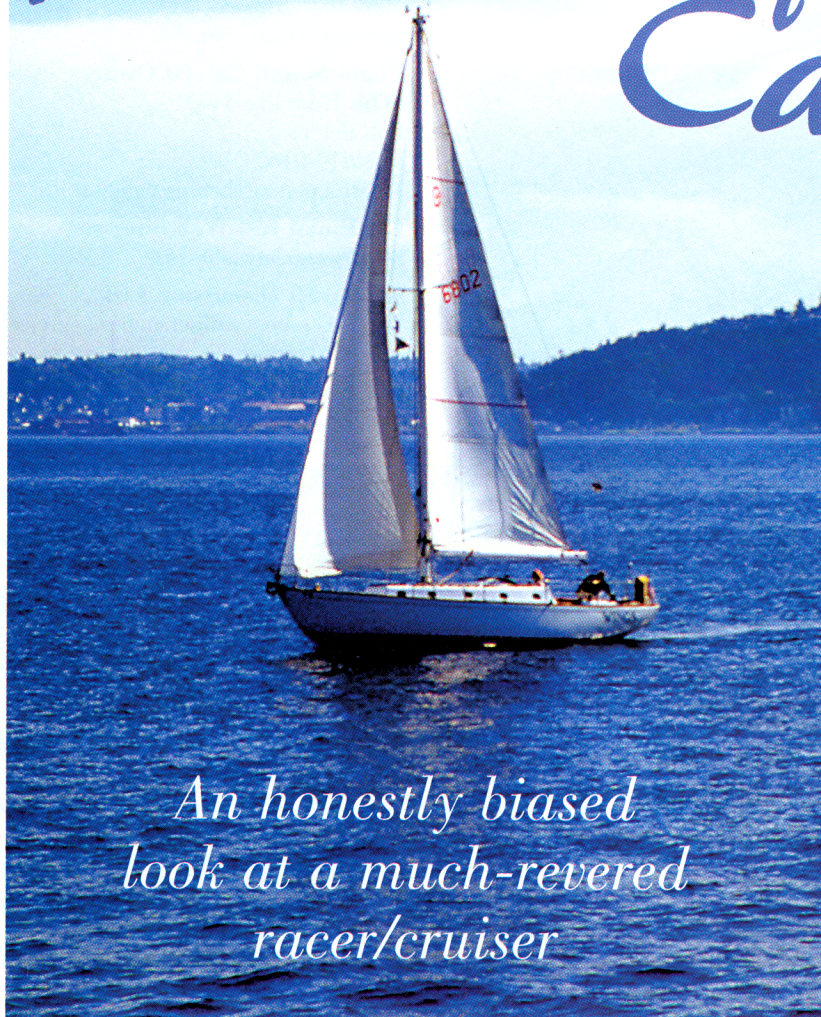
Speed? She's legendary for surfing to 20 to 25 knots during passages between California and Hawaii. For the record, this Bill Lapworth design is the winningest ocean-racing-class boat of all time.

Comfort? The cockpit is large enough to seat eight NFL linemen. Spaces belowdecks are large enough to cook three-course meals for the crew. Settees are long and wide. She will sleep eight in comfort, not that she needs a crew that large to produce fast passages. And there's enough wood joinery to create a warm, nautical environment.

I warned you: I like this boat.

Design

Like many boats produced during an evolutionary period in the 1960s, the Cal 40 has an interesting pedigree. Her design commission originated in 1963 with George Griffith, an avid racer in Southern California who completed his



An honestly biased look at a much-revered racer/cruiser

Wings enjoys a daysail in Seattle. This Cal 40 is owned by three Seattle couples: Steve and Kathy Jacobsen, Chris Pittack and Annie Fitzpatrick, and Bob and Kathy Peters.

first Los Angeles-to-Hawaii race in 1941 at age 20.

"I owned a Lapworth 36 at the time and wanted to build a faster boat. I felt that designing a more powerful midsection and increasing sail area would improve downwind performance, so approached Bill about the project," George says.

by Ed Lawrence

The fifth in a line of Cal designs conceived by Bill Lapworth, the 40 is an evolutionary shape. Her hull shape was described by contemporaries as symmetrical with a moderately narrow

stern and full bow.

"Design aspects that set her apart from her contemporaries were lighter displacement, a long waterline, moderate deadrise, a fin keel, and a spade rudder," Bill says. A nearly flat bottom produces a powerful hull with a generous waterline beam that allows her to surf when sailing downwind. A byproduct of the flat bottom is that she pounds when going to weather, a condition offset by reducing speed or footing off. Though the full bow detracts slightly from light-air performance, she's light enough in the ends to lift.

Bill Lapworth made history by designing a deep, high-aspect ratio, balanced spade rudder that delays stalling while producing lift with

low drag. The shape is fairly broad at the top and fits close to the hull, which acts as an end plate to reduce turbulence. He is generally considered by peers to have been one of the few designers who could design a functional spade rudder.

Retrofitting rudders

Many current owners, however, especially those preparing for extended bluewater passages, have retrofitted Carl Schumacher-designed rudders that reduce loads when sailing downwind in a blow (see sidebar on Page 48).

Since the coachroof is only 16 inches high, the Cal 40 has a pleasingly low profile. She carries a moderate sail