

The Nordic Folkboat & The San Francisco Bay Folkboat Association





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Introduction

The Nordic Folkboat has been sailed and raced on San Francisco Bay for over 50 years making it one of the oldest continuously active one design fleets on the Bay. There are reasons for this success. First and foremost is the boat's ability to not only handle, but to thrive in the heavy conditions the Bay dishes out all summer long. Combine her ability with classic lines and beauty and a down to earth group of sailors who enjoy both racing and cruising their Folkboats, you have 50+ years of success on San Francisco Bay.

The Folkboat is known for her clinker (or lapstrake) hull (the Swedish designers wanted to retain some Viking tradition in addition to simple construction for the original wooden versions), deep cockpit, simple sail plan and uncluttered layout of her running rigging. Her modified full keel makes her a very stable, easy sailing boat especially when the wind is up. The boat was originally built in wood and in 1975 Svend Svendsen built the first fiberglass Folkboat designed to compete side by side with boats of wooden construction. This innovation assured the success of the boat for future generations.

The San Francisco Bay Folkboat Association (SFBFA) celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2007. The SFBFA is active today, organizing racing and social events throughout the year. Our racing season consists of:

- A "Season Championship" weekend racing series (complete with a 50 year old perpetual trophy) that typically runs from April through September (July is a traditional month off.) See our website for more information. Racing is held approximately over 10 weekends on race courses around the Bay.
- A Wednesday Evening Series raced every Wednesday evening in May, June and August held off the St. Francis Yacht Club (St.FYC) on the famed "City Front" race course. After racing, sailors gather at the St.FYC for, drinks, dinner and nightly awards.
- Every other year, the SFBFA hosts a week long International Regatta for Nordic Folkboats (aka The SF Cup) inviting teams from the major Folkboat nations including Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Finland, the UK and the Netherlands. This weeklong regatta, complete with many after race social gatherings, is a favorite of the fleet.
- Mid-winter Racing. We typically qualify for a one-design start at the Golden Gate Yacht Club's mid-winter series.

Social events include both formal and informal events held throughout the year. Formal events include a bi-annual picnic held on Angel Island on Easter Sunday with many sailing in, an Annual Awards Banquet typically held in the Fall after the racing season. (You don't have to be a racer to have fun at this annual event.) The fleet also has numerous informal events organized by members themselves, including BBQ's, cruise-ins and even an occasional raft-up in McCovey Cove during a Giants game.

For more information and contacts, see page 5 of this booklet.

The Nordic Folkboat – History Highlights

Nov. 1939: The Royal Gothenburg Sailing Club expresses the desire that a new one design class be created that offers more room and beam than a Dragon, and cruising accommodations suitable to a small family.

Dec. 1940: The Swedish Sailing Association, urged by shipyard owner and 6-Meter sailor Sven Salen, joins the club's initiative, and announces a design competition

1941: The Scandinavian Sailing Association fields 58 design suggestions that were submitted but none satisfy the fancy of the jurors. The top four entries, however, and two others showing interesting details were awarded prize money on a sliding scale from 900 to 300 Danish crowns. After some deliberation, the association contracts with Tord Sunden, a Swedish yacht designer, to consolidate the top four entries into one design, following the committee's strict guidelines. Final plans are published by the SSA in the same year. To this date, the question of who actually designed the Nordic Folkboat is still hotly debated.

April 23, 1942: Launch of the first prototype as soon as the Nordic winter recedes and the Gothenburg harbor is free of ice. To jumpstart the class, Salen orders 60 boats being built in Swedish yards. Although many traditionalists turned up their noses at the new and somewhat unusual design, sporting a traditional lapstrake hull, a simple Bermuda rig and a raked transom, the enthusiasm about the boat's seaworthiness and well-mannered behavior in strong winds and high seas began to spread through the sailing community. However, the war hindered the growth of the class in the early years. Sales began in all earnest in the late forties.

1950-1970: Due to its versatility as a capable racer and weekend cruiser, the Folkboat prospered in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany, UK, Ireland, in the Baltic countries, in Australia and on San Francisco Bay. The Nordic Folkboat has inspired countless designs for small and seaworthy cruisers, which were sailed across oceans and around the world.

1975: Svend Svendsen, an avid Folkboat racer in the SF Bay fleet and a boat yard owner, decides to build a mold from a proven fast wooden hull (US 95 Folksong, a Boerresen-built boat). That mold is used to build the first-ever fiberglass Folkboat.

1976: Erik Andreasen in Denmark follows suit and manages to get fiberglass boats approved by the SSA, the organization which still governs the class. What sounds like an anachronism - building a clinker boat in fiberglass - may have well saved the Folkboat's life by helping to reverse the trend of dwindling participation in events. An important reason for new-found prosperity was that fiberglass boats did not sail faster than wood. Fiberglass just required less elbow-grease for maintenance. And that popular trend continues today.

2000: Another anachronism is set to occur: the approval of aluminum as building material for class legal spars. Soren Backman, a test engineer with Saab Aerospace, spent years behind powerful computer workstations, designing a "bad" aluminum mast that emulates the bending characteristics of the average wooden Folkboat mast. Tests showed that he did such a good job that there is literally no difference in the performance of wood and aluminum, repeating the Tupperware vs. wood experiment a quarter of a century ago.

2002: The Folkboat turns 60!

2004: 1000th Folkboat of fiberglass built by Eric Andreasen's Folkboatcentralen in Denmark.

2007: The San Francisco Bay Folkboat Association turns 50!

How is the class doing? Mostly well, evidenced by more than 4,000 boats that are still raced and cruised worldwide.

The San Francisco Bay Folkboat Association

To this day, the SFBFA is the largest and most active fleet of Nordic Folkboats outside of Europe. The reasons for this prolonged success of five decades can be found in a lucky combination of circumstances.

- People - The class was always blessed with enthusiasts who care and put on first-rate events.
- Venue - San Francisco Bay is the ultimate playground where Folkboats can show off their stuff. They simply don't get rattled by the fresh breeze and strong current - unlike some of the modern designs. Plus the Bay offers sun and wind AT THE SAME TIME, a dream for immigrants from Northern Europe.
- Foresight - The trust of SFBFA officers in the guidance of the Scandinavians who governed the Nordic Folkboats as a one-design class. Purism paid. No heads, no inboard engines, no kites.

Our story began when the first Folkboats appeared in 1955 and banded together in the SFBA in 1957. Already one year later, the Folkies had grown to such a strong class that the Yacht Racing Association, which ran most of the races, granted them one-design status. Encouraged by the boom times - in 1961, 42 of 46 registered Folkboats showed up for more than 5 races - the SFBFA got the creative itch and came up with a slew of events that now are happily copied here, there and everywhere.

- They sponsored the first Wednesday night race series long before shrinks prescribed active stress-release for the workforce. (We're not claiming to have invented "Beer Can Racing" but with 45+ years of weeknight summer racing, we are certainly among the first.)
- They showed off their antics in front of a merry shore-side crowd in the 4th of July race.
- They did a race with LeMans start. The Folkboat variation was more fun and less dangerous: all participating crews brought their sails in bags to the Golden Gate Yacht Club bar. When the gun sounded, they had to down a beer before running to their boats at the dock to hank on the sails and race across the bay to Sausalito.
- They were the first to sell out a harbor cruiser, which motored along the City front to bring spectators closer to the action during the first Wednesday night race of the season.
- They were the first class to invite rockstar skippers for a regular class event. (Tom Blackaller was one who participated.)
- Another fun event is the bi-annual Angel Island cruise on Easter Sunday complete with an Easter egg hunt, appearance by the Easter Bunny scrumptious buffet.
- The marquee regatta is the San Francisco International Cup, which is held in odd years and is the largest Nordic Folkboat event outside of Europe. Visitors from Folkboat Meccas like Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Germany are invited to race the top locals.

Folkboat sailing is an educational process with so much fun that even schools in Denmark and Germany have adopted it as part of their curriculum.

- You learn to wait for your turn when ordering drinks at the bar (at least for a little while.)
- You don't have to screw around with a chute (the famous less-is-more-lesson.)
- You get to enjoy a million-dollar-view of the City when you recline idly like a mermaid on the bow during the run.

- You learn that in an emergency there is nothing quite as good as a cool one in the bilge.
- That, and much more...

A Mentor Program

The SFBFA has a program to assist new, current and even potential owners with questions about their Folkboat, racing and even finding a boat. If you own a Folkboat and want to start racing, here is what we can help with:

- Finding experienced Folkboat crew
- Review your boat's running rigging, hardware and placement of such things as fairleads, etc. to help optimize ease of handling and performance
- Help tune your boat on the water
- Help you locate parts. We keep an inventory of used Folkboat parts (typically hardware, but also includes booms and even masts, when available).

Every year, the Folkboats typically have a one-design start at the Golden Gate Yacht Club (GGYC) mid-winter series. (The series races on the first Saturday of November through March.) This has traditionally been a great series for a new skipper to get valuable on the water racing experience accompanied by experienced sailors from the fleet. The mid-winter conditions are typically much more benign than the 15+ knots we typically race in on San Francisco Bay.

We periodically run other "one off" regattas to also get new skippers out on the water.

Why do we do this? A fleet that has new members is a healthy fleet. A competitive fleet is a healthy fleet. A healthy fleet is a happy fleet. We're a happy fleet and want to stay that way.

Crewing on a Folkboat

Don't have a boat but want to experience racing? See our website for our crew listing.

Folkboats are generally raced with 3 aboard the boat although 4 are permitted. (They are also raced shorthanded with 2—often because someone is missing crew!) With this few sailors aboard a 25 foot sloop, there is plenty to do for everyone. To help skippers looking for crew, please specify the type of crew work that interests you based on the following. Please also tell us how much sailing and racing experience you have. (There is often room for every level, but it helps skippers make sure they have a balanced crew.)

Aside from the Skipper, the 2 positions aboard a Folkboat can be described as follows:

- Middle: who sits, you might have guessed, in between the skipper and the jib trimmer. The middle position usually trims main, traveler and backstay, depending on the skippers preference. This position also usually releases the jib on tacks and helps from the cockpit with setting the whisker pole.
- Front or Jib/foredeck: Who sits in forward most position, typically trims jib and works the foredeck to set the whisker pole. (We don't sail with spinnakers. We did for awhile back in 70's but it was not making much of a difference on the race course because we were not and typically do not race Bay tours but rather bash around the buoys on the City Front, Knox and Berkeley Circle. This generally makes for more exciting and close racing.)

The above is only a general idea of who does what and in reality the middle and front crew positions often perform different tasks depending on what works best.

Boat specifications

Length Overall	7,64 m	25' 5/8"
Length Waterline	6,00 m	19' 7"
Beam	2,20 m	7' 3-5/8"
Draft	1,20 m	3' 11-1/4"
Displacement	1960 kg	4,321 lbs
Keel (53%)	1040 kg	2,293 lbs
Sail Area	24 m ²	258 ft ²
Main	17 m ²	183 ft ²
Jib	7 m ²	75 ft ²

Where to Find More Information

Go to our website at www.SFBayfolkboats.org for additional information. Our classifieds will typically have an assortment of used boats for sale and our links section will take you to two Danish sites (Folkboatcentralen and Brandt-Moeller) where you can order a new Folkboat.

Books: An excellent book was also published in 2002 by local sailor and author, Dieter Loibner, ***The Folkboat Story***. This book can be found on most on-line book sellers. The author also has a link on our website if you cannot find any the usual way.

Contacts

Please contact the following for additional information:

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Photo credits

Front cover: Photo courtesy of **Mariah's Eyes Photography**, copyright 2005
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Back cover: Top –Crew of Fog City, spectator boat at 2005 SF Cup.
Bottom – Svend Krumnacker, participant in 2005 San Francisco Cup, Deutsche Folkeboot Vereinigung.

