

SAILING ANARCHY

"WHERE THE STATUS QUO BLOWS"



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What About Bob?

If you need to ask, then you simply haven't been paying attention to the world of yacht design for the last twenty years or so. Robert Perry is one of the handful of designers who have been hugely successful by occupying, indeed, dominating a niche in the design world. Like Bruce Farr is in the racing world, Bob Perry is often thought of as the king of cruisers. But it would be foolish to stop there. When he has drawn performance boats, they've been very fast for their intended purpose. And his latest effort, the 65' ICON, is by all accounts, an extremely fast and comfortable racer/cruiser. Bob has, in a lapse of judgment, decided to not only become a frequent contributor to our forum, but also agreed to do this InnerView. Jeez, maybe he's not so smart.....



Bob pretending to drive
(the real driver is on the other wheel)



Let's talk about your latest project, the 65 IRC carbon custom "Icon". A second in the Sydney Hobart is not a bad start. Tell us a bit about the boat.

BP:

I was blessed with an optimistic, experienced, creative and idealistic client, Dick Robbins, a confident and very competent skipper/ project manager, Jim Roser, and a very supportive and creative sailmaker, Doug Christie. I can truly say this was a group effort. The idea was the "ultimate" family racer/cruiser for Puget Sound. Clearly the boat is not everyone's idea of a cruising boat but that's what custom design is all about.

The Sydney-Hobart was never my idea although I was overjoyed with the results. I was hesitant to see my light air flyer being put through that heavy air test. They did not have time to put on the heavier bulb we had designed specifically for this race. The new bulb sat on the dock.

All of Icon's engineering was done by High Modulus in NZ and construction was done by Marten Yachts. I was lucky to have such a



high powered and competent team involved. The crew at Marten Marine were great. I was put in charge of barbecuing the two whole lambs at the launching party.

Design wise it was fairly simple. I drew a hull that was light, quite narrow and geared to Puget Sound's fluky conditions. D/L is 68. The rig is huge and the keel retracts going from 8'6" to 13'8". It's just a big dinghy like hull form, very fine forward. The stern's a bit wide but I had a lot of things to squeeze into the cockpit while maintaining some volume for the interior layout, i.e. two wheels, two coffee grinders, mainsheet system, a racing crew plus some cruising considerations like back rests. The two grinders needed some specific ergonomic considerations and they worked out great.



ICON

The boat is very high powered with a huge roach on the mainsail. SA/D is 33.25 using just I, J, E and P. The main overlaps the backstay by 48"! We just use non overlapping jibs but we have all the horsepower you could ever want. The boat is exceedingly close winded. Entering the Harbor at Auckland I fell off and we eased sheets as I rounded the buoy and rum lined it for the barn then looked down and saw that I was still sailing with an apparent wind angle of 28 degrees. The feel on the wheel is delicious and always two fingers. 15 knots is effortless to the point where it is commonplace and not worth mentioning.

The interior has everything a cruiser would want: huge galley, lots of lockers, scuba gear storage, large dinette two staterooms with double berths, two heads, large nav station and it's all detailed in carbon fiber and gray leather for a very techno look. Anchor chain and windlass are just forward of the mast.

It's also a good looking boat. Dick, the owner, insisted on conventional aesthetics. He also owns the old S&S boat CHARISMA so he is well steeped in traditional yachting beauty. He wanted a sheer with some spring and that suited me fine. The bow is also a wee bit more shapely than currently common. It's a strong look. I'm proud of this design.



What's the price tag on a project like that?

BP:

I've never asked but I suspect that it's something approaching \$2,000,000. Sometimes the owners like to keep that secret, from themselves too. The forged 17-4 stainless keel fin cost \$40,000 before machining. It's gun drilled so the walls of the fin are the actual walls of the hydraulic cylinders that raise and lower it. Very elegant engineering done with the help of Marten Marine.



What are your thoughts on the IRC?

BP:

I like it for club racing and it seems to avoid the subjective whining of PHRF. Rules come and go, it's very cyclical. Everyone wants a rule they can win under. It seems like they all have shorter and shorter shelf lives regardless of their characteristics. I did not like the overly complex IMS although I believe it taught us a lot. I believe in one rating per boat regardless of conditions.



On the subject of handicap racing, there is little doubt that a major shift is happening or about to. To our way of thinking, something drastic needs to be done to not only save the Grand Prix end of things,

but perhaps more importantly the rank and file. Any thoughts on problems and solutions as you see them?

BP:

Not really. It seems like we have this big ball rolling faster and faster and I'm not sure where it's going. I would like to see a "universal" rule but there are so many competing interests and agendas today that it seems unlikely. Hell, it makes me yearn for the old IOR days. As weird as the boats were the racing was good and you could race anywhere.



If an owner of a Farr 40 has to pay somebody like Peter Isler \$1,500 per day to go racing, in our estimation something is very wrong with the advent of professionalism in the sport. Your take on professionals in the sport?

BP:

I'm not sure how I feel about professionalism. One way I feel is that it does allow me to compete against the best. I can't play golf with Tiger Woods or run pass patterns with John Elway but I can sail against Dennis Conner.

I'm not sure I can get behind the mind set that would make someone pay a pro to run their boat. I've always approached racing as a test of my skills and not my bank account. Money and sport, it seems an epidemic these days. If I win the race I like to know the win belongs to me and my crew and not to a hired gun who will be on the competitor's boat next weekend.



Our readership indicates that there is a percentage of disenfranchised racers who are clamoring for an affordable production "sport" boat that has some dual-purpose ability. Frankly, a marginal performing \$180,000 J-105 ain't the answer. Can such an animal be built, and how would you go about doing a project like that?



BP:

It's funny but we have been here before. Remember in 1973 when a lot of racers were making the decision to abandon the IOR? That's where Valiant sold a lot of 40's. I'm not really sure where these "disenfranchised racers" are coming from this time. I just looked at the J109 and it seems a nice boat. Pretty benign and lots of comfort below. Don't know the price but I suspect it's more. I also like that new Farr 395.

I have a visceral dislike to the vast, overblown hype that surrounds all J boats. But I do like many of their designs. Their cruising boats in

particular appeal to me.

I think the term "sport boat" has outlived it's usefulness. To me it means a boat that is overpowered and uncomfortable. We seem to move towards these extremes in design while leaving sensible proportions behind. Nobody likes to sail on their ear and these high powered boats actually frighten some sailors. If it's a "family" boat it has to have a pretty forgiving nature and that makes it dull and boring for many racers. The top end of performance has been pushed so far up the scale (ICON?) that "moderate" is now seen as too sedate.

We just drew a 32'er for a Seattle client. We call it the "Geezer Boat". It just so happened that this client

owned a brand new rig for a PC. The old wooden PC was falling apart. He didn't want to shit-can the rig and new sails so we just designed a new hull to go under it. The hull is totally modern in proportions and shape elements but by today's standards the rig will be seen as small. But, the good news is that old farts can sail this boat without hurting themselves. He did not want a Melges 24. He doesn't want to hike.



Why aren't you thought of more when it comes to designing race boats?

BP:

It's hard to be thought of as a racing designer when your reputation is made on Valiant 40's, Baba 30's, Tayana 37's and a whole array of other cruising boats. When I started in this business I was a racer, straight out Dick Carter's Boston office and I had never done any real cruising. I never intended to be pigeon holed this way but this pigeon hole is better than none at all so I'm not complaining.

When Bruce Anderson approached me to design STEALTH CHICKEN my first question was "Why me?" He said I think you can do it. I told him I knew I could do it. I was just surprised that someone finally asked. I had done some good IOR boats when I first started but nothing since for racing. Actually I think Bruce chose me, as the designer because he thought my name on the drawings would get him a better PHRF rating! He had me put "Cruising Cutter" on all the drawing's title blocks. Bruce sold the "CHICKEN" eight years after he had it built. He sold it for almost exactly what he paid for it. I think this speaks well for the particular combination of speed and comfort that I think I am good at. Chicken's value was durable.

I don't think it's reasonable for a potential client to think I can go head to head with the Farr office. They have numbers on their side and a track record that I can't approach. But, I can draw fast boats and with the right team behind me I think I can compete with any other design office. It just takes a client like Icon's Dick Robbins to have the faith that I can produce a good, fast boat.

I don't feel tremendously "unfulfilled" because I don't design more racing boats. Maybe a little. Cruising boats can be even harder to design. Racers generally know what they are doing. I would however like to design racing boats from time to time just to have the chance to hone my own design skills and get some objective feedback for a change. Designing racing boats keeps me current and allows me to pass on the design lessons to my cruising clients.

Besides I have an associate Ben Souquet and he is young, about seven years out of school. I know for sure that he wants to do more racing boats. I want to keep Ben happy.



Whose designs do you like?

BP:

My favorite designers are:

- K. Aage Nielson
- German Frers
- Bruce King
- Bill Garden
- Phil Rhodes
- Gilles Vaton
- Bruce Farr
- Alan Andrews
- Laurie Davidson





Whose don't you like?

BP:

Boy, you just want to get me in trouble don't you? I won't name names but there are a bunch of designers who never seem to get the picture "integrated". They cut and paste from different current designs with little originality or thought for the "total boat".

There are too many designers today doing "me too" boats. You can't tell one from the other.

There are also those designers who seem to keep their heads in the sand without regards to advancements in yacht design. I

mean, if you want a full keeled boat just say "I like full keeled boats" (we are doing an 85'er now) Just don't try and tell me that full keels are required to make a healthy offshore cruising boat. I can remember being attacked by several designers when the Valiant 40 was introduced. They thought it was too radical to be a true offshore cruising boat. Times change.

I have a personal dislike for some boats.



Let's play "word association" - Give a few words or a few sentences for the names below:

- **SA: Bruce Farr.**

BP:

Money, he makes lots. I respect him immensely as a designer. He certainly did it his own way. And, if you set him down at the board without his staff he'd still draw a damn good looking fast boat.

- **SA: North 3DL.**

BP:

Money and legal trouble.

- **SA: Larry Ellison.**

BP:

Money and a true patron of the art of yacht design. We need more like him. "Would you be wantin' a cruising boat Larry?"

- **SA: Cruising boat.**

BP:

Where do I start? A world of escape and self sufficiency. A world where all you need is just your boat to control all the variables of life. I want cruising boats to deliver an experience you can't get on shore and this means you have to accept the fact that from the moment you step on board every move you make will be different. Keep things simple and don't try to take your shore life with you. Embrace the different life style.



28 ft composite

If you are asking me what I think a cruising boat should be there are as many answers as there are clients. It's a matter of personal sailing style. It's my job to match the boat with the owner's approach to life on the water. I'm not going to tell you that a light boat is better than a heavy boat or vice versa. That all depends upon how you like to sail.

- SA: Steve Thompson.

BP:

He's fine, a skilled man but seems limited in his design vision. I'm certain his boats are very fast but I like to see more variety from a designer. Of course he's probably the mirror image of me and nobody asks him for moderate cruising boats. There are a lot of his type of boats around today. I can't tell them apart and I'd bet you can't either from a 100' distance.

- SA: Play Station.

BP:

I'd love to go for a ride. Can I drive?

- SA: Paul Cayard.

BP:

I respect his approach to being a complete professional. He seems willing to do it all including talk to the media. I'm envious of his sailing abilities but not envious of the time he must spend away from home. I'm a homebody.

- SA: Doug Peterson.

BP:

Who? Not Luigi Petersoni?

- SA: Sailing Anarchy.

BP:

I tried some of the other sailing forums. I was chased off one of them, I was too professional. I left another because I didn't like dealing with chat room "heroes" and chat room "tough guys". I haven't read any cyber sailing forums for over two years. Then I found SAILING ANARCHY when I was trying to validate the rumor I heard about poor Carl.

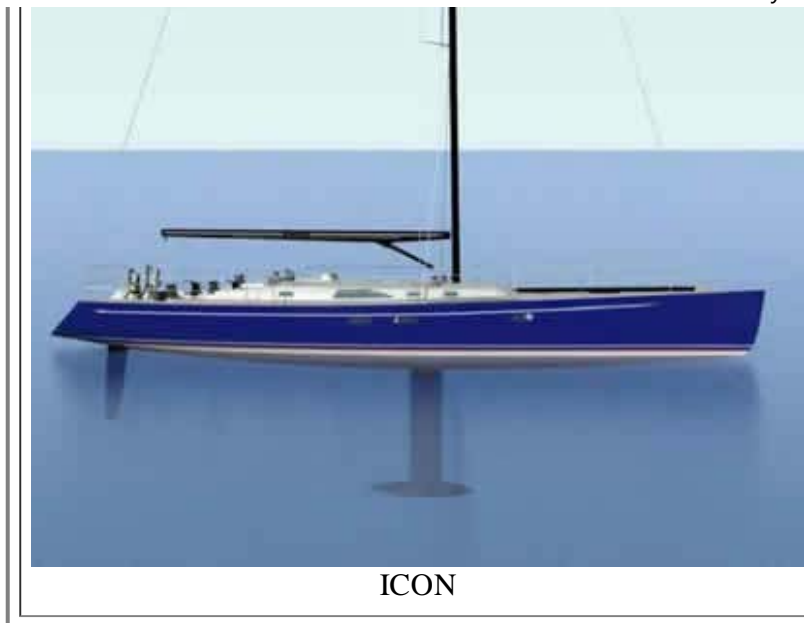
Of course after reading the "Leifing" thread I was totally won over. Having grown up in Sydney Australia, I admire straight talk. But I'd like to see the blue language toned down a wee bit. My dear old Dad used to tell me that swearing was the mark of an inadequate vocabulary. But, from time to time I'm as guilty as the next man.

I was initially reluctant to contribute to SA because I do feel a little more "vulnerable" than maybe some of you. My wife said "You're not using your real name this time are you?" I do take what I do very seriously. Sailing is not my hobby, it's not my passion. Yacht design is my life. I have other hobbies to keep me sane. I'm my own worst critic but if I catch criticism from someone who I don't feel is qualified to pass judgment on my work I'm like a cornered mother lion. But, I did sense that with SAILING ANARCHY I was dealing with sailors I could relate to, for the main.



When you look at the state of the America's Cup, what do you see?

BP:



A sad and sorry mess. I miss the days when it was the US vs. other countries. Hell, I miss the old 12 meters. It's been downhill since Perth as far as I'm concerned. They should have left it there. I know there has always been an element of, how you say, manipulating the rules with the Cup... but it has grown to be real soap opera and it only detracts from the racing and interferes with the marketing of the series to the general public.

Of course I like the new boats but once again they are sure getting to look alike. I miss the old days when we had some real pigs on the starting line. It was fun to watch design variety at work. It was

educational for young designer.

But, unlike baseball or football there is no team feeling to these nationally homogenous crews. They just don't have a cohesive identity beyond the name of the boat itself. I usually root for the Italians because they have the best paint jobs and the best music.

I don't have the time nor inclination to study the legal wars that seem to envelope the efforts. I laugh at people's efforts to smear Laurie Davidson. I know Laurie. He stops into my office from time to time. He's way above all that bullshit.

I'll watch the races starting with the Louis Vuitton Cup and I'll enjoy them. I'd like more wind this year please and less cancelled races.



Have you had the chance to do any AC design work, and if it was offered, would you accept it?

BP:

Like a fat kid on M&M's. Of course I would. I would love to be involved with the testing that goes into creating an AC boat. It's a dream I keep. I'm not sure I want to be dragged bleeding and naked through the yacht club if my boat loses though. I could run down quite a long list of designers you have never heard of. They would all have one thing in common. They designed losing AC boats.



There is little doubt that some of the most amazing yacht racing in the world is going on right now with the Volvo Ocean Race. Yet, the general public has zero knowledge of it's existence, and even the most dedicated fans get to see precious little of it. Frankly, unless something is done to inflate entries, sponsors and interest, this, too will go the way of the dodo. Can it be saved or should it?

BP:

The American public could give a shit about the Volvo race. Maybe if Seattle had a "SEATTLE" boat in the race and there was a "PORTLAND" boat more would be interested. I'm only remotely interested myself. I want to see how the different designs work out but other than that I don't really care. I follow the races though, ambivalently. I respect the crews.



Offshore One Designs are certainly enjoying their day in the sun, but we can't help but feel that the current classes have peaked, in terms of numbers, and the new ones being introduced, simply are not innovative enough to generate any real momentum. What is your perspective on the current scene and

future prospects for same?

BP:

Rich guys want to buy an edge to help on the race course. If it isn't a faster design then it will be pro help on the crew. I can see a day when they will get bored with one design and go back to "development" rules like the new Transpac "box rule" classes. I hope I can anyway. It sure is a lot more fun for the designers if the boats are different. Personally, and I speak as a designer, I wish the one design classes would go away. Of course if you are Bruce Farr you are receiving royalties from these boats so there is another element involved.

Personally I like measurement handicap rules. They are fun for the designer and yes I do recognize the stress they put on owners.

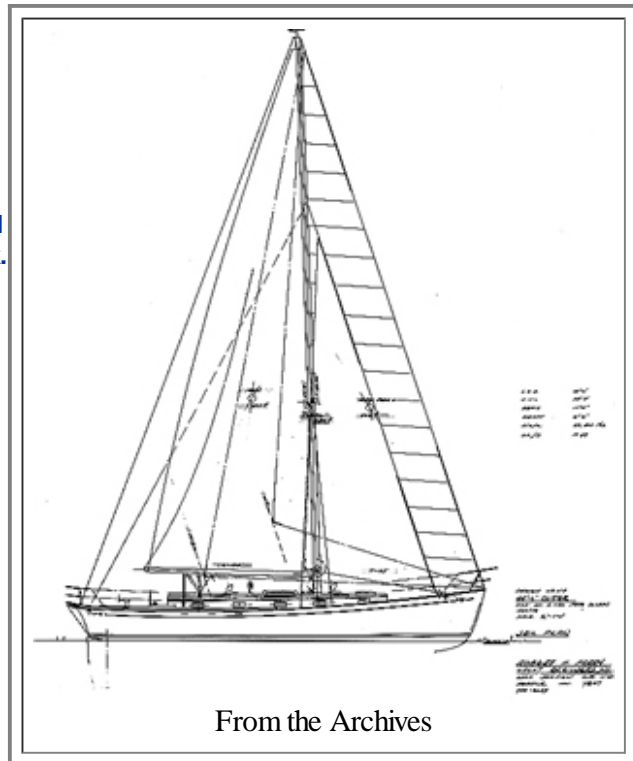
**What would be the one type of boat that you would really like to design?**

BP:

That's hard to answer. I end up liking all the boats I design, some more than others. I guess my favorite type would be the hybrid traditionally styled boat with a modern underbody and rig, i.e. a wolf in sheep's clothing, something romantic that had a performance edge to it. I like to preserve the playful nature of our sport with some art in the design work. Without that playful aspect of the design everything would end up looking like Steve Thompson's boats, no offense intended.

I tell my clients "We are not looking for sensible shoes, let's have some fun with this."

25 years ago I designed Doug Fryer's NIGHT RUNNER. It has the look of an old cutter but it is fast enough to win races, lots of races around here. Sure it has a reasonable handicap but the boat is also fast enough to make it fun to sail aggressively. NIGHT RUNNER has also been around Cape Horn. I think NIGHT RUNNER is one of my all time favorite designs. It's a fingertip delight to sail.



From the Archives

**Your work in the cruising boat market has truly put you on the map. Yet you've also done some interesting racer/cruisers like the 56' Stealth Chicken. Aren't the cruisers of today that you would design more like Stealth?**

BP:

Yes, for that type of client. We have done a series of boats that we call "cruising sleds". These started years ago with the 70'er MERIDIAN and extend to ICON today. The idea being that you can design a long, lean and fast boat that is also a comfortable cruising boat. With D/L's down close to 100 and SA/D's over 25 these boats are very close to being race boats but they have full interiors, simple rigs and deck layouts for a minimal crew. Modern construction techniques helps us to keep the weight down and carbon masts sure help a lot. But I have found that you can do a fully equipped 55' to 60' cruising boat for less than 32,000 lbs. without going to the construction extreme of all carbon as we did in ICON.

The Clutes have been sailing their 59' STARBUCK for about 5 years now. Bill and Heather came from a racing background and wanted a boat that was exciting to sail and fast. I think putting this boat together with Dennis Choate was one of the highlights of my career so far.

Then I did a similar boat with Dennis for Denny Howarth. Denny's FOXFIRE was a bit beamier than

STARBUCK but no heavier and it had a frac rig. Denny also comes from a racing background. These sailors know the difference and that means everything to me. When they say the boat is good, I know we are speaking the same language. Unfortunately I have to deal with some cruising sailors who haven't moved their traveler in years and wouldn't know what to do with it if they did move it.

I'm happy to design heavy if you want it. My 50'er "YONI" weighs 50,000 lbs, and has 20,000 lbs. of ballast. It's a beauty, tough as nails and stiff as a church. It's a dream to sail. Offshore, on the wind, in 40 knots, true, ONI might be the world's best ride for a 50'er.

There are a lot of different flavors to be explored. Each has it's own set of beneficial attributes.



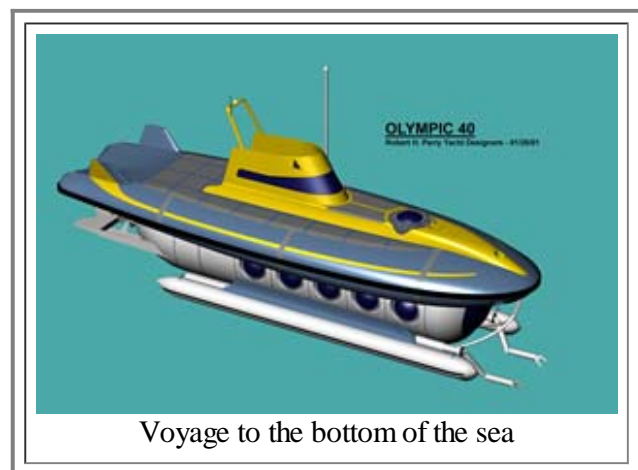
Let's talk a little about the custom boat design market. What is the client market like these days?

BP:

I've been doing fine for a number of years but I don't look too far ahead and I try not to worry. The clients always just seem to come along for me. There are a lot of sailors who started sailing with Perry cruising boats and they seem to think of me when it's time for that custom boat.



What are you currently designing?



BP:

We have just finished our 42', \$7,000,000 submarine for a Seattle owner. The sub will go in the back of his 380' mother ship. This project took two years and is currently under construction at Olympic Tooling in Shelton, Washington. Don't ask.

We are also finishing the 32' GEEZER BOAT.

We are doing a 48'er for SAGA in Canada. It will be our third design for them.

We are doing a 56' double ender. This is the most fun design I have done for a long time. I'm not going to try and justify the double ended

configuration. I'll only say that it is what the owner wanted and that was good enough for me. I find myself unusually excited about this boat. It's the first double ender I have drawn in almost 20 years and it seems to be getting my juices flowing.

We have an 85' aluminum boat going for a Canadian couple to be built in NZ at Fitzroy's yard. This has been a fascinating project because the owner is a commercial fisherman and he really knows boats. This is not your typical big luxury yacht. Below the surface there is a lot of pragmatic thought at work in this design. This client is his own skipper and that makes a huge difference.

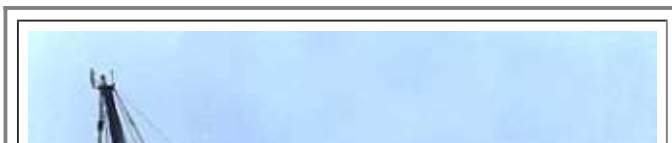
There are only two of us here so that's enough work for now.



The world production boats seems pretty solidified. That is, Designer/builders like J boats; Beneteau/Farr; Swan/Frers, etc., have their path fairly established. Are there still production boat opportunities for you?

BP:

I would hope so. I continue to do design work for Passport and we are just about ready to start a new 56'er for them. I also do custom interior



design for every Passport 44/47 built.

Saga is doing well and we are doing their new 48'er.

Ta Yang or Tayana still produces my 52 and my 48 but I don't see any new Perry boats for them on the horizon.

I don't think Valiant will tool any new boats, they continue to sell V-42's and 50's at an impressive rate. But if they did I'd be shocked if it was not my design.

I dream of the Perry/Swan but it's not likely. I'll bet they would sell more boats if they built one of my cruising boats.

I'm always open to talking design with any production builder.



Bob, where do you see the grand prix and PHRF-type racing scene in the next 5 to 10 years?



Kickin it old school

BP:

I'm not even sure what "Grand Prix " is any more. It's different boats to different people.

PHRF, well, the whining will continue that's for sure. If you can stand in front of the rating committee and actually cry while you whine you have a far better chance of getting your rating lowered. Better yet, have your wife cry. That always works.

I really don't understand PHRF. It seems to me that in many cases the raters are so insecure about their ability to rate and understand boats correctly that they avoid any expert advice. I have been called several times by raters in various areas for help with ratings but in Seattle they never call me. They didn't like Jesus in Nazareth.

I recently helped a client prepare a case for having is rating lowered (a Frers IOR 50'er). I put a lot of effort into this. He is clearly getting hammered with his current rating. The committee voted not to change the rating at all. Zip. The reason was that tired old PHRF excuse "It will have snowball effect and we'll have to adjust too many other ratings." It bothers me. I can't wait to see what happens to ICON in the hands of our local mavens. I'm nervous. I need to stress the lineage with the Baba 30.

I think in a perfect world PHRF would be the perfect rule.



Thanks Bob.

BP:

You're welcome, it was my pleasure.

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