

CHANGES

**Fairwyn — S&S 42 Yawl
Rick and Gayle Leland
Baja Ha-Ha Reprise
Emeryville**

The only thing more fun than doing a Baja Ha-Ha is doing it a second time. After enjoying my first Ha-Ha in 2021, and



FAIRWYN

Rick and Gayle have owned 'Fairwyn' since 2017. Prior to that, the boat had sailed for 15 years and 50,000 miles under Stephen and Nancy Carlman.

bashing back home, I was itching for another go. This time I had it all lined up: solid crew, my stupid freakin' TIP, slip in San Diego, slip in Mazatlán, offshore connectivity (thank you, Starlink), weather forecasting, meal planning, Mexican insurance, warm clothes for night watches, fishing licenses — and new downwind sails ready for a workout.

The first of three crews joined me in Emeryville for a three-night run to San Diego in "delivery mode," with no planned stops. Of course I had allowed time to

While a wooden dinghy seems a natural choice for a wooden boat, Rick says they're worth considering for any boat.



make stops for weather or breakdowns, but everything ran smoothly and *Fairwyn* arrived in San Diego a week before the start of the Ha-Ha.

San Diego marinas seem not to like wooden boats very much, so I was glad that C.F. at Koehler Kraft made room for *Fairwyn*.

Crew for the Ha-Ha itself was boat partner Sarah Dime and her friend Chelsea Greene. We were all pretty salty, but after some thought decided to use scopolamine patches anyway. Everyone gets seasick if the conditions are bad enough, or if you must change a fuel filter upside down in a seaway. With the patches we were bulletproof.

The trip down to Cabo was wonderful: calm seas, gentle winds, stunning sunsets and sunrises, and lots of fish on the line. In 2021, there were a few rough days out of San Diego, and the breakdown report during the first radio net in Turtle Bay went on for over an hour. This time there was very little damage other than one unfortunate boat that needed some help getting into Turtle Bay. *Fairwyn* suffered only a broken spinnaker halyard block from my misguided attempt to center the lifting point. Fortunately, I had a spare halyard rigged.

The leg from Turtle Bay to Bahia Santa Maria allowed for some beautiful photos of one another's boats. We coordinated with Eric Mizrahi of *Bibi* to get a good photo of our new sails. (That great picture above — showing off our two new spinnakers — is one of his.)

Things got exciting in Cabo. When the fleet arrived on Wednesday, the Poobah passed along the weather forecast for a big blow on Sunday. He wisely canceled all Ha-Ha events and encouraged the fleet to hightail it out of Cabo.

My third crew — wife Gayle, sister Kathy and brother-in-law Chris — was flying in Saturday night to help take *Fairwyn* to Mazatlán, and we didn't want



ERIC MIZRAHI

to risk getting stuck in Cabo for five days worrying about dragging. So I soloed the boat up to Frailes on Saturday morning, and my crew hired a driver to meet me at the anchorage. It was exciting taking them and their luggage in the dinghy through the surf in the dark!

We hunkered down in Frailes until Tuesday, when things calmed down enough for a bumpy but fun overnight sail to Mazatlán.

Fairwyn was once again the only wooden boat in the Ha-Ha fleet. I know friends don't let friends buy wooden boats, and for most folks that is good advice, but when I was 12, I sailed as a guest on a wooden sloop built in the 1930s, and that set my idea of what a boat should be. When I retired from abstract legal work in 2017, I wanted my first and only boat to be wood, and a wood yawl at that. *Fairwyn*, built in 1957 in Scotland of double-planked African mahogany and red cedar over oak frames, fit the bill perfectly.

What's not to like? Wood is strong.

IN LATITUDES



Above: Cool shot of a night watch. Left: Breaking in some new sails (with the 'Fairwyn' logo) on the way to Cabo. Top left: 'Fairwyn' is as shipshape down below as she is topsides. Top center: Rick with Ha-Ha crew Sarah and Chelsea. Top right: Plug removed for a new thru-hull shows the thickness of 'Fairwyn's' double-planked bottom.

relatively lightweight, accepts fasteners, can be patched when you move hardware around, provides sound and temperature insulation, and looks good. Wooden boats are built a piece at a time, which means they can be taken apart easily. The entire interior of *Fairwyn* can be removed with a screwdriver.

Yes, a wooden boat requires work to keep her in top condition. I love to tinker with her, so bring it on. I also know a lot of owners of plastic boats who love to tinker. The difference is when they work on the boat, they need respirators and Tyvek suits, while I get to smell the leathery scent of teak.

This year I doubled down on wood and dumped my RIB in favor of a wooden

rowing dinghy. The rigid inflatables are indestructible and extremely stable, but let's not mince words — they are squat, ugly and reliant on an outboard, which means your boat has to accommodate gasoline, oil, spare spark plugs and a crane to get the engine on board.

If that engine dies, good luck trying to row back to the boat in any headwind. When you have to land through the surf, your dinghy wheels run aground or you have to pull up the outboard just where the waves begin to break.

With a lightweight rowing dinghy, you don't need no stinkin' outboard — you can gently row on the top of that last wave through 6-inch-deep water till the hull kisses the sand. And the exercise will delay the deterioration of your body from its usual buff condition on land to the dreaded "boat bod."

You, too, can get one. Chesapeake Light Craft will send you a kit and you just glue the pieces together and cover each side with fiberglass. Three-hundred

hours of work and Bob's your uncle. It accommodates a sailing rig if you don't want to row, and an electric outboard if the wind goes away.

In all, *Fairwyn* spent a month cruising 1,400 miles from Emeryville to the El Cid marina in Mazatlán. We plan on moving her to La Cruz in January for warmer water, but in the meantime we are hitting the beach.

All gratitude to the Poobah and his crew for putting on another great Ha-Ha. I hope everyone had as much fun as we did.

— Rick 12/1/24

Where Are They Now?

Lots of folks come and go in the *Changes in Latitudes* column every year, telling their past and present stories and writing future plans in the sand at low tide. We feel as if they're all part of the extended *Latitude* family, so it's always great to catch up when we can. Here's a look at what a few of our 2024 *Changes* contributors are up to these days.

— A lot has happened since we last heard from Keith Rasmussen of the Port Townsend-based Fraser 41 **Nikko**. Departing San Francisco on Easter morning (March 31), Keith and crew — son Jason and buddy Adin — did a straight 25-day shot to Hiva Oa. In Tahiti, Jason and Adin headed home and Keith's daughter and her boyfriend took their place aboard. Since then, says Keith, "*Nikko* sailed on through the Societies, waited out weather in Aitutaki, partied with *Ali Baba* at

ALL PHOTOS FAIRWYN EXCEPT AS NOTED



Keith pops the question. Sorry, we didn't get the lucky lady's name — but she said, "Yes."

Beveridge Reef, lost our dinghy in Niue, pieced together a new one in Tonga, saw the kids engaged in Savu Savu, got myself engaged in Vanuatu, and got *Nikko* sold in Newport, Australia. It's been a busy season."

"Much gratitude for all our crew, our friends on *Sea Soul*, *Ali Baba*, *Andante*, *Hooligan*, and the many others that made this voyage a lifetime treasure."