



beer at a crumbling quay behind the customs house, in Basseterre, the island's capital.

Today, that customs house is a museum. Behind it is a paved cruise-ship pier and an adjacent yacht basin. The only passenger-carrying now done by sail is on a fleet of four day-charter catamarans operating from the yacht basin. There's nothing rough-hewn about those boats: their hulls are fair (wood/epoxy composite construction), their hardware glistens, and their performance thrills, prompting a common but mistaken assumption that the boats must be made in Europe or the United States and imported for the trade.

In fact, all but one of the four cats were designed and built by Doug Brookes on St. Kitts. And as many as a dozen other Brookes-designed-and-built cats—sail and power alike—ply the lucrative day-charter trade in prime tourist destinations ranging from Barbados to Malta. Moreover, only protectionist clauses in the Jones Act keep Brookes's boats from carrying passengers in U.S. waters and competing with Roger Hatfield's and Rich Difede's prosperous Gold Coast Yachts of Saint Croix, in the U.S. Virgin Islands—perhaps the region's largest and most innovative builder of day-charter multihulls.

I stopped in to see Doug Brookes's newest project, a 70' (21.3m) sailing cat, in St. Kitts last year immediately following IBEX, the annual trade show and seminar program co-produced by Professional BoatBuilder and the National Marine Manufacturers

Association. Brookes met me at the airport in a well-worn pickup, and as we bounced over the back streets of Basseterre, he spoke smoothly into his cell phone about a Travelift and blocking.

Then a pause.

"Don't move anything until I get there," he finally said.

Then to me, "We just cut a catamaran in half."

He'd said his new-build was a 70-footer designed specifically to carry 100 passengers at a time in the Caribbean day-charter trade. (Brookes's boats have helped define that business since the 1980s.) I wondered what could have gone so terribly wrong that it had to be sawn in half.

Turns out he was talking about another, older boat: a 53' (16.2m) sailing cat named *Falcon* that he'd designed and built on St. Kitts in 1985 for an Australian flight attendant, who disappeared before her yacht was complete. The boat had drifted into day-chartering and was back with Brookes 23 years later. Her current owners wanted to add 7' (2.1m) to her length to increase capacity—for passengers and thus potential profit—sailing in St. Kitts.

As we drove on up the coast, past the veterinary school and through small coastal towns, dodging pedestrians, minivans, and livestock, Brookes

On the trampoline, Brookes marvels at Eagle's sound condition—despite her 25 years of heavy tourist traffic and hard sailing by numerous captains and multiple owners.

Facing page—Doug Brookes, left, discusses materials for a new 70' (21.3m) model under construction in the fall of 2008, at his shop on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts.

Left—Spirit of St. Kitts, left, and Eagle are two catamarans Brookes built in the 1980s, of wood/epoxy composite construction, which still carry tourists on day trips from St. Kitts's capital, Basseterre. Brookes's boats are characterized by their low freeboard, compared to other charter cats in the area. (Note the high bow of Ire Lime aft of Eagle.)

marveled that when *Falcon's* crew tore into the hull in preparation for the lengthening process, they found only a couple of spots of rot, and those were in the deck where water had intruded around hardware.

"She was built as a sports car to carry a few friends and go fast," Brookes recalled. At less than six tons new, there wasn't much to her. In spite of that, the boat's been a success in a business that every day loads catamarans with tons of passengers and provisions, and then thrashes to windward in choppy seas and strong winds. Her builder was more than a bit surprised by *Falcon's* ability to tolerate such demanding long-term service.

As Brookes tells it, he got into multihull construction literally by

