



The Destined Creation of KATE

*A 12-Meter sloop
of the first rule*

by Matthew P. Murphy

Photographs by Cory Silken



Philip Walwyn built a 60' gaff-rigged sloop on the side of a hill on a former sugar plantation on a Caribbean island. He built the boat well, on a budget, to a 100-year-old design for a racing class that has only a handful of boats still sailing. The construction shop, an open-air shed covered with a metal roof, was 300' above sea level. Several visitors to the site midway through the building job reported that they saw no clear route from shop to water. These visitors might reasonably have concluded that the half-built hull would be stuck permanently on the hill, a monument to a half-realized dream. And the hull might indeed still be there, but for the force of personality behind the project.

The boat, called KATE, was launched and commissioned last winter. She is a first-rule 12-Meter—an early iteration of the design rule whose evolution produced the AMERICA's Cup competitors for the three decades preceding 1987. KATE, however, bears little resemblance to the Bermudan-rigged Cup boats. She weighs about 10,000 lbs less than a modern 12-Meter but is powered by 700 sq ft more sail. She has minimal winch power, minimal accommodations, and no engine. She is gaff-rigged. And she is yellow.

KATE, a 12-Meter-class sloop built to a 100-year-old design, was launched last year from the Caribbean Island of St. Kitts. Her owner-builder, Philip Walwyn, has crossed the Atlantic 14 times, and once had ambitions for a grassroots AMERICA's Cup campaign.