

Member Profile

Don Devine

Life Member 1980

The following is taken from the Citation for nomination for Outstanding Contribution to Yachting 2012 YWA Yachting Awards:

"Don was born in Perth in 1934. Don had battled illness in his early years, contracting polio and tuberculosis which left him with an undeveloped left shoulder and upper left arm. This however never hindered Don in his love of sailing and his amazing ability to design and build boats.

Don's introduction to boats and sailing started at the age of 15 when he started work at a furniture factory where the foreman was building a fourteen foot dinghy. Don soon became the number one helper and started crewing on a friend's VJ around the same time. This introduction to sailing led to Don's first boat building exercise which has now lasted a lifetime.

Don's boat building mainly took place in his spare time, when he was not sailing and after work. Don would work through the night on occasion to get a boat finished or to get the next evening's work set to keep the building process running smoothly.

Don joined the Perth Dinghy Sailing Club in 1949, sailing a VJ he built himself. The next 4 - 5 years saw Don crew on fourteens while he built 8 VJ's for friends and fellow sailors. All of these sailors went on to win Club, State and National Titles. The Perth Dinghy Sailing Club moved from its original 1903 Club at the end of Barrack St to its present location. The Club had gone through a re-build phase and Don led the charge by building at one stage, every boat in the Club. This done in his spare time. If not for Don's enthusiasm for sailing and building boats the PDSC may never have survived.

With the Club now functioning well it was time for Don to concentrate on his own sailing career. The disability that Don was left with as a result of his childhood illness could not stop his determination and he went on to win National, State and Club Championships in the Fourteen Class.

Having achieved his dream of winning the National Championship, Don started to design Fourteens and pioneered construction methods that would set the trend before the introduction of Foam Sandwich. Don's ability to design and build wooden spars was also legendary with Don having the ability to build a completely segmented wooden mast in a day.

Don's most successful design was the Comet 3. Don designed the Comet 3 and built two boats with his brother Bill. The boats were built using Don's ultra light-weight, super stiff construction method. Bill sailed his boat to a second place in the Australian Titles that year and was selected to sail for Australia in the first open World Championship for the Australian Fourteen and the International Fourteen Class sailed in the U.S.A. Ray Hancock from W.A. was the other skipper to be selected. Bill won the regatta and in so doing turned the International 14 on its head. The rest of the world was in awe of the Australian boats, both of which Don had designed and built. A revolution had started that amalgamated the two classes some years later.

Don's design and construction method was now spreading across the globe and resulted in the one International 14 Class that we know today. Don sent plans and templates/kits for his design to sailors overseas, (USA, UK, Japan, etc.) eager to enjoy the thrills that Don's Australian 14 provided. The Maritime Museum in Fremantle is in possession of the original Comet 3 of Bill's that won the Open Worlds in LA, U.S.A.

The classes of boat that Don has built include:

Mudlark, Pelicans, Javelins, Signets, Junior Dinghies, Flying Dutchmen, Gwen 12s, Hornets, Skates, 14ft Dinghies, International 14s and VJ's.

In total, Don has built 83 boats, almost all of them in his spare time (if you could call it spare time) for sailors of all ages and ability.

Don's boats have won World, National, State and Club Championships and he has truly left his mark on sailing not only in Australia but also overseas.

Don designed and built a foam sandwich 14 recently for the 2010 International 14 Worlds at the age of 76.

The thrill of watching people sail the boats he has built has seen Don spend a lifetime designing and building boats for sailors not only in Perth and the rest of Australia, but also around the World."

Yachting Achievements in summary:

Joined P.D.S.C. in 1949

Sailed in Jack Groves' Open 14' "Chad" as Bailer Boy (5 up) on rough days.

Held the following positions at P.D.S.C.:

Treasurer

Junior Rear Commodore

Senior Rear Commodore

Vice Commodore

Commodore

Past Commodore

Patron

Life Member

Australian Championship Title 1960 - 61

State Championship Titles - 2

Club Championship Titles - 5

In the early days when the P.D.C. moved from Perth waters to the Matilda Bay site the Club sailed a fleet of 7, 14 footers, all of which were built by Don Devine. The year of the Official Opening of the new clubhouse - 1960, saw the Australian 14' Championship Title won by Don Devine, Bernie Quinlan and Bill Devine.

Total yachts built - 83

Total individual personal yachts built - 20

Total 14' yachts built - 55