

Sailing Legend, Former Commodore Barney Flam, 90, Dies



PROUD BOATERS. Barney, Evelyn and Steve Flam pose for a photo with their Cal-40 in December 1963.—Photo courtesy the Flam family

By Jo Murray // Gazette Columnist // Monday, January 12, 2015

Eight Bells.

We lost a yachting legend this past week.

Renowned sailor Barney Flam, 1975 commodore of the Long Beach Yacht Club, died in his sleep last Friday. He was 90. Flam served as commodore of the Cabrillo Beach Yacht Club in 1959-60, the Southern California Yachting Association in 1964 and the Los Angeles/Long Beach Harbor Association in 1969.

Flam graduated from Van Nuys High School in 1942. As a teen, he crewed aboard The Delphine, a 45-foot Norwegian cutter out of the Los Angeles Yacht Club. From that first experience, his love for the ocean grew and he became a sailing protagonist.

After being accepted into the California Institute of Technology, Flam enlisted in the Navy. As a student, he became part of the Navy V-5 Program and later was sent to the Midshipmen School at Cornell University, where he received his commission. After the war, he completed his studies and earned a degree in mechanical engineering from Cal Tech.

Following his marriage to Evelyn (who died in 2009), the two purchased their first racing sailboat in 1955, a Kettenberg-38 that was the beginning of a series of boats they named

Flambouyant. The Flams tied the legendary Peggy Slater for first place in the first regatta they entered. During the eight years they campaigned that boat, they won the Los Angeles Yacht Club Wrigley Trophy and several K-38 Championships.

Sailing in three TransPacs, Flam was part of the Ragtime syndicate, whose members owned and crewed aboard the 62-foot, New Zealand-built sloop that was the first to finish in the 1973 TransPac. In the two years the syndicate campaigned the boat, they were first to finish in every race they entered. He was proud to remind folks that Ragtime's elapsed time record set in the Mazatlán race still stands today.

With his Cal-40, Flam won four Nationals, raced in 10 Congressional Cups and was the first Cal-40 to finish in the 1979 TransPac. In 1969, he was the first sailor to put a hydraulic backstay on his Cal-40. He continued to be an innovator through the years and in 1982, he integrated his home computer with his boat's instrumentation to formulate the polars and optimize its performance.

Son Steve Flam, who first rode on the family's K-38 in a Barney-designed gimbaled seat, said, "He lived life on his own terms right up until his last day and we are grateful for that. He recently enjoyed Christmas and his 90th birthday with all of his family including his three grandsons."

Fair winds and a following seas, Barney.

SoCal SAILING NEWS

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Sail On and Godspeed – Barney Flam

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Long Beach and Southern California sailing legend Barney Flam has passed away. He was living life on his terms to the very end notes his son Steve Flam. He recently enjoyed celebrating Christmas and his 90th birthday with all of his family including his 3 grandsons.



Your SCSN editor spent much of his youth into adulthood sailing with this incredible man on his Cal 40 named Flambuoyant, highlighted by competing successfully in multiple Congressional Cups on some great teams that Barney assembled and led, that included his wife Evelyn who handled the foredeck and his young son Steve at the time.



Steve of course developed and grew into a very successful sailor himself carrying on where his father left off. Another highlight for this SCSN editor was sailing with Barney on his IOR Doug Peterson 41 winning the Lipton Cup (ahead of Dennis Conner on his Peterson design) with an incredible crew that Barney put together that included at that time Long Beach greats Rod Davis, Roy Cundiff and Hank Schofield among others.

Barney was also one of the original Long Beach Syndicate owners that acquired Ragtime to compete and win the 1973 Transpac by 4 minutes over Windward Passage, that effectively launched the ULDB phenomenon to SoCal and changed the sailing world.

Barney Flam certainly left an indelible mark having personally been a part of steering and developing the SoCal yacht racing scene that lives on to this day.

RIP my friend.