

Eight Bells for Michael Ewens: His Love of the Sport Made a Difference

By Deb Heisler, Vice Commodore

Longtime AYC member Michael (Mike) Ewens passed away peacefully on Sunday, November 29, after a battle with MDS complicated by COVID-19. Mike was 73 and just one week shy of celebrating his 74th birthday.

An Arizona native, Mike joined AYC in 1980. In 1990 he served as our Racing Fleet Captain and was instrumental in AYC's Roosevelt Lake racing program. Mike's son Troy informs us that, his father and Charlie Fife, coordinated the first Tall Cactus Regatta in 1987- and its infamous bean pot trophy. You win it; you clean it!

According to our AYC archives, Mike won the *Ye Blunder Bucket* trophy in the spring of 1988 for rounding an intermediate course mark for his run to the finish line...story has it there were more than a few navigators aboard that day. Good crew is sometimes hard to find!

Mike's last race was with his son, Tony, aboard *Predator*, a J35, in the 2004 Pacific Cup to Hawaii Race. During his active years with the club Mike was one of those guys that got the newbies on his boat and took them sailing. Below are a few recollections of Mike's actions and the lasting impact he made on our club and our members.

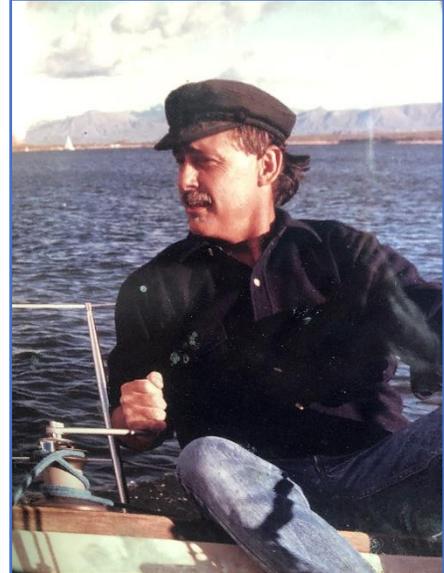
Mike is survived by Sue, his wife of 50 years and their two children, Michael (Troy) and Lyndsey. View Mike's public obituary [here](#).

Remembrances

Troy Ewens and fellow AYC member shared this about his father, "He was notoriously the loudest on the lake. When Mike was racing, everyone heard every mark rounding. One year during the Spring Series, he fell overboard rounding the mark, and his crew enjoyed the blissful silence before circling back to pick him up.

"All kidding aside, Mike is part of the fabric of the early Arizona Yacht Club. He enjoyed racing and hanging out with Jim Swartz, Joe Laux, Charlie Fife, Pat Guthrie, and Rick Gilchrist, as well as whomever he picked up in the parking lot that day for crew.

"He started racing his Thistle 2737 *Comely Miss* with fellow Thistle sailors Ben Cravens, Joe Rowe, Dan Schott, Bob Alley, and Bob Frazier. Thinking he might want to cruise, Mike moved to



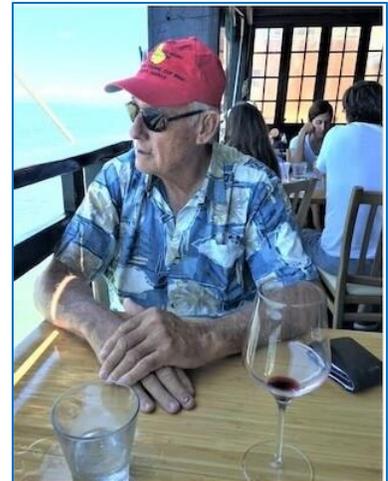
Mike in the early years – 1990.
Sailing on Lake Roosevelt. (Family photo)

PHRF with *Checkmate*, an Erickson 25, and enjoyed a friendly rivalry with *Alley Cat*. Mike soon realized his need for speed and started racing *High Flyer*, his Olson 30.

"While he has not been on the water in a while, the Arizona Yacht Club was an important part of Mike's story, as evidenced by his lifelong friends and endless memories.

"The Ewens family would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the AYC. We know that even in his passing, Mike still wishes everyone fair winds and following seas."

Martin Lorch wrote, "I am sorry to hear about Mike Ewens. I did not know Mike well, but I remember that he purchased an Olson 30 in the early '90s from Neil Clark in Tucson. The boat's name was *Brujo* (sorcerer in Spanish), on which I crewed a lot on lake Pleasant, San Carlos (MEX), and Southern CA. Mike then changed the name to *Flyer*. May he Rest In Peace."



Mike wearing his Mount Gay Rum hat that is ubiquitous amongst sailors. (Family photo)

George Sheller says, "I was very saddened to hear of Mike's passing. Too many of my AYC friends have died this year. It was Mike who introduced me to the AYC. "A yacht club in Arizona?" The year was 1987. I had responded to an ad in the newspaper (remember those?) for a Laser. I did not know what a Laser was, but I traveled out to his house and looked at the one he had. I was not interested as it could not hold more than one person, and I wanted to introduce my family to sailing. Mike gave me an application form for the AYC, and he signed one of the sponsor lines.

"Soon afterward, Mike called me and asked if I wanted to crew on his Olsen 30 at Lake Roosevelt during the AYC racing season (yes, the AYC held its racing series at LR). I had no idea. Mike and his son Troy were on board as a dynamic duo along with others I cannot remember. Mike had me be the bowman. I guess he liked to have the novices take that position as I invited a friend of mine later, and as a novice, he got the position. That was a bit harrowing, to say the least, on a California "Sledge" (narrow, lots of sail and fast)! In fact, during a race in high wind, we were going downwind at 19 knots, oscillating back and forth down the lake towards the finish with me on one of the spinnaker lines. Just before the finish, the line got away from me as it also did on the other side of the boat (can't remember who, but I think it was Troy). We crossed the finish line with the spinnaker flying out before us from the masthead. I think Mike was nominated for the Blunder Bucket for that, but onboard I believe poor old Troy got the rath and I got "the look." In any case, the buck stopped with the skipper, so Mike was nominated for the Bucket. I believe a photo of this event still exists in the AYC archives.

"I have not seen Mike for a very long time, something I now regret. Mike, I hope you are in sailing heaven. Thank you for introducing me to the Club. Thank you for showing me a Laser. It has changed my life and enriched it immensely."



Sometimes sailing is not all work! Mike appears relaxed on a boat delivery after the Marina Del Rey to San Diego Race in 2003. (Family photo)

Charley and Debi Fife sent this remembrance, "When Debi and I became interested in sailboat racing, Mike opened the door for us by crewing on his boat in the AYC racing series. Then when we joined AYC, Mike was our sponsor. Mike and Sue typified AYC people; Mike would always come by our business for a visit whenever his work had him in the area. Sue even tried to lure Debi into show horses. Good people. And Troy turned out pretty good too. After 35 plus years, we are still at it, and remember the beginning we got from Mike!"

Joyce Seale sent this about Mike, "My best memories of Mike are discussing the feasibility of racing at Roosevelt Lake. At the time the club was pretty divided. The new dam at Lake Pleasant was being built and the dam at Roosevelt Lake was raised. The bigger boats were struggling to launch at Pleasant and wanted to have the series at Roosevelt. Mike and I spent many hours on the phone going through the pros and cons. Mike was pragmatic and passionate - a real credit to AYC."

Dennis Lynde shares, "I was very sorry to hear of Mike's death. I have raced against him many times - he was always a great competitor, and always had a smile; just a great guy. I believe Mike's boat was an Olson 30 and very fast. We raced here and at Roosevelt Lake one year and Mike was very tough to beat. He was also one of the nicest guys around."

Farewell Mike - may you have fair winds and following seas.

Thanks for the difference you made!

