

Eight Bells for Joe Laux Jr.

Our sailing community has lost another friend, sailor and AYC member as Joe Laux Jr. died peacefully under Hospice care on July 13, 2020. He was 72 years old. He leaves behind his wife Betty, daughter Melanie Burm and son Joe Laux III.

In the 60's Joe came West from Michigan to attend ASU. After graduating he served in the US Air Force before working in the family-owned business for over 30 years.



Joe is remembered as someone who loved life and lived it with full sails, always smiling and never meeting a stranger. Long time members recall how he made meetings and award celebrations memorable and fun with his quick wit and natural ability to engage a crowd.

January 1983 – Joined AYC
1985-1986 – Rear Commodore
1986-1987 – Vice Commodore
1987-1988 – Commodore
1988-1989 – Jr. Staff Commodore
1989-1991 – Sr Staff Commodore

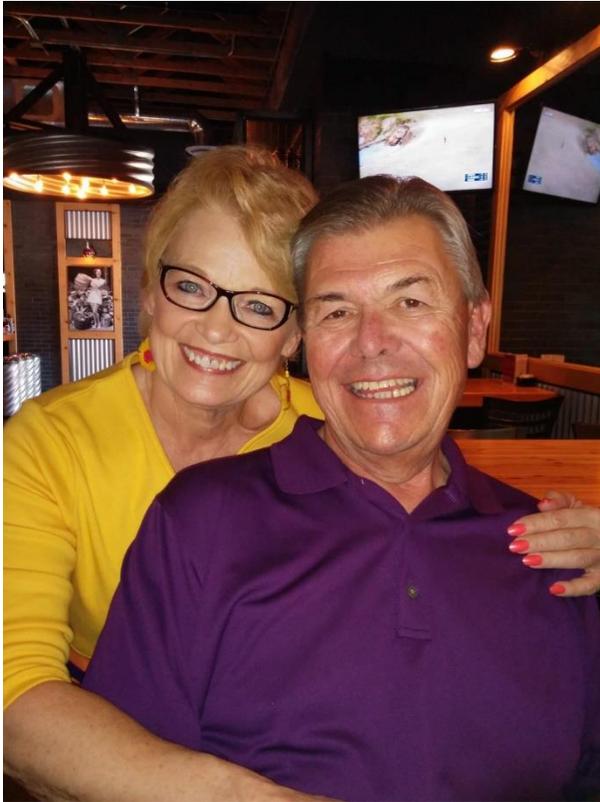
When Joe took the helm as Commodore, he began the tradition of having monthly membership meetings instead of members gathering every few months as had been the practice. This was not the only first he introduced. According to Al Lehman, “When Joe ran the Birthday Regatta...Joe arranged to borrow two National Guard tents for shelter during the regatta. I remember they weighed a bunch and had a very strong smell of preservative. Joe also was the first to make the Regatta a charitable event raising money for Make-A-Wish.”

Joe was a two-time winner of the famed AYC Blunder Bucket – in the same year! The most memorable was probably the spring of 1985 when it was for, “Utter chaos in raising his spinnaker while being filmed by a local TV station during the Birthday Regatta.” Often viewed as the least sought after AYC trophy, it is one that brings along with it the most laughter. I imagine Joe taking this nomination in stride and laughing along with everyone as the witness nominating him described his calamity in detail.

As written in his obituary, “He fought tirelessly to find the good in every situation, in every person, and was kind to all. He lived by simple rules: if you open something, close it; if you take something out, put it away; if you break something, fix it; and if you hurt somebody, make amends. He loved to laugh, to be silly, and encouraged others to be lighthearted too.”

The family has decided to hold a celebration of life for Joe at a later date. And in lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to Hospice of the Valley, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) or toward a scholarship with the Arizona Yacht Club (AYC) to teach youth how to sail, in his honor.

His public [obituary here](#).



Reflections

Al Lehman shared these thoughts, "I met Joe Laux when he first joined AYC in the early 80s. He always had a big smile and seemed to be enjoying life. We soon became good friends and shared many good times. I have many good memories of sailing with Joe. He was part of the crew when we returned a Cal 40 from Honolulu to Seattle after the Vic-Maui race in 1988. Most of my memories about that trip include Joe. Joe was one of the great people of AYC and he will be missed."

George Sheller joined the club when Joe was Commodore and writes, "Joe Laux (Commodore 1987-1988) and his family were a big part of my family in our "growing up years" in the AYC. As new members, he welcomed all of us and made us a part of the AYC family. It was fun. Joe was fun. He was always there to help others and the Club to remain friendly and happy. Joe had a knack of taking Club subjects (especially in his monitor roles for the Blunder Bucket) and making them fun, hilarious and interesting!

"I can remember Joe bringing his family and his little boat - his jewel - the *Toad*, a Pumpkin Seed, to sail at Chaparral Park in Scottsdale on Wednesday evenings during the summers. *Toad* was a dark green slat sided 12-foot dinghy; row/sail if I remember right. He was out there, instigating races and anything for family fun.

The last time I saw him was at the 2020 birthday Regatta with Melanie and Joey, (yes, "Joey") his daughter and son. As always, he was gracious and smiling. It was great to see him. It had been too long. I will miss him and those who knew him will also."



Joe Laux and the "Toad" showing the way to the Spring Picnic! Photo by Tia Renshaw

Dennis Lynde writes, “Joe and I go back quite a way. He raced in the Catalina 25 fleet, back when we had one, and did pretty well. We discovered that we shared the same birthday and celebrated several times at his good friend, Tony Siros’ house. Joe and I both liked an occasional drink of good Scotch and had some pretty good times together.

“I remember when the keel fell off Joe's fairly new Catalina 25. It sounds strange, but the keel is only held in place by 4 bolts, a shoe they rotate on, and a cable to raise and lower the keel. Now the keel on a Catalina 25 weighs approximately 2000 lbs and if those bolts work themselves loose, they can strip out, let go and the cable will break away. He was sailing on Lake Pleasant, on a nice day, when this happened. The keel was never found and is assumed to have sunk to the muddy bottom. Joe unsuccessfully tried to get the manufacturer to warranty the keel.

“Another time I remember was when Joe bought a new Suburban; light colored with stripes on the hood. Of course, he drove it out to camp at Kinnikinick with the club. We were all sitting around the campfire having a good old time when all of a sudden Joe noticed 2 kids jumping up and down on the hood. Suburban’s are well built with enormous hoods and these kids were just having a ball jumping on it. Joe let them know they should stop but not before they left some good-sized dents. The damage was done.

“Back in our early days with the club it was a big thing to sail your boat to Catalina and we usually ended up in Two Harbors secured to a mooring ball. As you know, there is no dumping of heads or holding tanks in a harbor. At that time most of our boats had a porta potty that sometimes required being emptied ashore. To get ashore you used your own dinghy with the holding tank in tow or took the shore boat to the dock.

“One-night Joe's porta potty was full and he needed to go ashore for disposal. He decided to take the shore boat and as he was stepping off the side of his boat a wave came along from another boat, causing the shore boat to lurch. Joe tripped and his holding tank fell onto the shore boat - half full of passengers. Yes, the valve came open when it hit the deck. Use your imagination, but as I recall, Joe was banned from using the shore boat again.

“By now you might think I'm roasting Joe, but I'm really not. These are just fun memories of Joe that stick in my mind.

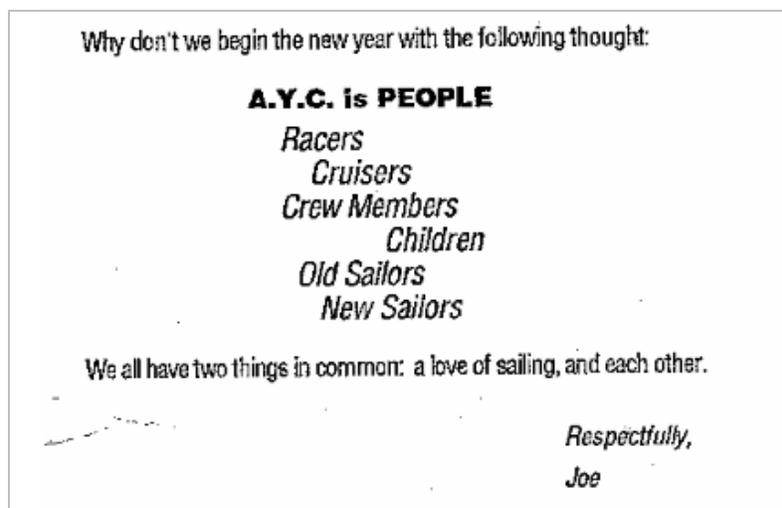
“Joe was a fun guy who always had a smile on his face, and he would try anything. After getting remarried, he and his wife bought a huge motorhome to travel in and see the U.S. I guess that's some of what he's been doing lately. I remember they brought it to Dairy Springs the first time they took it anywhere and he was right back in the swing of things with the club. I will miss Joe tremendously. He was a real spark of life, always smiling and with a rosy outlook. RIP Joe! Smooth waters and calm seas.”

Joyce Seale adds one of her cherished memories after reading what Dennis had submitted. She writes, “Dennis Lynde mentioned the ‘new’ suburban. We were lucky to purchase the ‘old’ suburban from Joe in 1986. It was a beaut! Tan with navy stripes! It

matched Joe's Catalina 25! That suburban replaced our car Panic Stop and thanks to Joe escorted us safely to all the AYC races and ten Catalina 22 National Regattas. We even drove it to the airport with the new owner in 1997 when we got on the plane for New Zealand. Joe was AYC's best master of ceremonies. His tall tales and grin were a real joy. His request for nominees for the Blunder Bucket were masterful!"

Martin Lorch was kind enough to send me over some copy from old *Compass Points* publications from the days when Joe was immersed in club racing, leadership and volunteering. I enjoyed reading a write up by Joe from the 1995 Marina Del Rey to San Diego Race. Joe writes of this race, as crew, aboard Tony Siros' Catalina 27. He describes spirits being high as he and son Joe III, and crew Tom Ohlin Sr. & Jr headed for the start line. Joe wrote, "We had wind nearly all night, only one person became seasick, the crew was great, it was a wonderful sail and WE WON!!" Joe mentioned that this win came after competing several times before in this race. I'm sure it is a memory treasured by every AYC member involved that year.

Joyce Seale emailed me the front page of the June 1987 *Compass Points* that included Joe's first communication as Commodore. While I enjoyed his welcome, it was this closing that I chose to share.



Thank you Joe - for your service, for laughter and your love of AYC and its people. Fair winds!

