



# Compass Points

## The Journal of the Arizona Yacht Club

Special Edition – July 2020

## Eight Bells for Tom Ohlin: Part of AYC's Heart and Soul

By Deb Heisler, Vice Commodore

For many in AYC, gatherings will never be the same without the warm and welcoming smile of member Tom Ohlin. While he stopped sailing a few years back, he continued to show his support for a club he loved – he showed up.

On June 29, Tom died after falling ill from COVID-19. He and Carol were married for 63 years and are one of eight AYC Honorary Life Members. Tom and Carol have three children, Tom Jr., Cheryl, and Wendy Ohlin-Cannon.

After joining in 1979, Tom served AYC in almost every position and his dedication to this club was immutable. He's remembered for developing AYC's first computerized race scoring program and was referred to as "the computer guy." He was also a charter member of the Arizona Chapter of the International Order of the Blue Gavel - an organization that recognizes and unites past commodores.

When not serving his family or AYC, Tom was a computer engineer from the time when mainframes were housed in large rooms and occupied thousands of square feet. He worked many years at Honeywell and later moved into consulting.

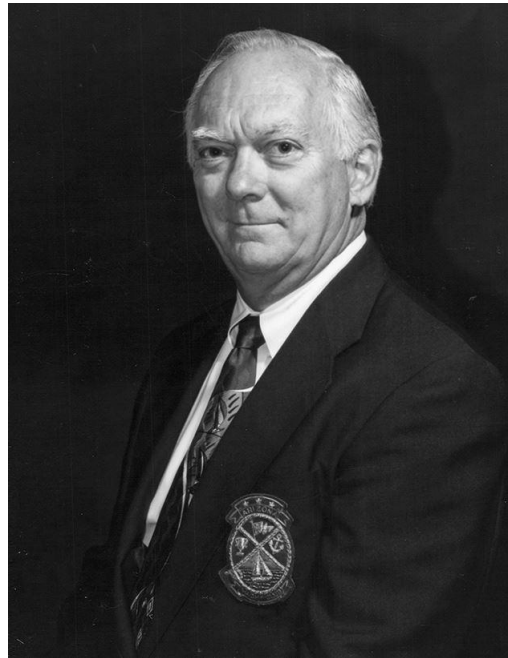
Although I did not really know Tom, it is obvious that newer members and I missed out. Tom liked things ship-shape and Bristol and embodied the principles of a servant-leader. He has left us with a better club and, I'd dare to say, with better character. As evidenced in the following remembrances, he made a difference in the lives of his fellow sailors and families; as a friend, role model, advisor, and man of Corinthian character.

Tom was a dedicated member for 41 years. He was 83 when he turned the corner and sailed across the final finish line.

## Photos & Memories

March 1979 - Joined AYC  
80-81 - Fleet Captain  
81-82 - Rear Commodore  
82-83 - Vice Commodore  
83-84 - Commodore  
84-85 - 2 Yr Director  
85-86 - 1 Yr Director  
1991 – US Sailing Sportsman of the Year  
Sep 91 - June 92 - Catalina 22 Fleet Captain  
Sep 92 - Aug 94 – Treasurer  
Longtime Scorekeeper  
Honorary Life Member

-Retrieved from archived *Compass Points*  
newsletters by Joyce Seale



Tom Ohlin  
Commodore 1983-1984  
Photo: Scott Seale



Tom and his wife Carol are warmly remembered  
as the dynamic duo.

"The other part of Tom was his wife, Carol. Let's not forget that dynamic duo who always cared for our Club and its members. We were in their hearts as they are in ours."

- **George Sheller**

"And Carol. What a great person she is! She shared Tom with us and joined in on all the AYC and Catalina 22 events. Tom and Carol's love for each other is never ending."

- **Joyce Seale**

"He and Carol were prominent personalities at every AYC and C-22 event."

- **Steve Grothe**

"We will all miss Tom but are all a lot richer for knowing him. Carol, thank you for sharing Tom with us."

- **Chuck Dahill**

**George Sheller** writes, "As many of you recall, Tom loved Liar's Dice. I think he loved it so much because he quite often won and had tens of my dollars in his pocket over the years.


"I told my son Tarik that Tom had died, and his comment was that he really liked Tom. And there is about a 44 year age difference between them. I'm sure he and his brother Greg pestered Tom quite a bit but enjoyed his attention.

"Greg told me that when he was racing his little Holder Hawk at L.P. in the AYC Series, Tom would be bearing down on him, on port tack, and tell him to, "stand your ground" in his 12 foot boat - even though Tom had tonnage and 22 feet of boat! Greg took the safer route and got out of the way.

"I will miss Tom also. I enjoyed his company and pointed jabs at me; they were thoughtful and to the point. And I will always remember his sly look when he took my money.

"The other part of Tom was his wife, Carol. Let's not forget that dynamic duo who always cared for our Club and its members. We were in their hearts as they are in ours."

**Chris Roberson** writes, "I first met Tom when I was a beginning sailor, racer, and then AYC member in the mid-1990s. I always had great respect for his high regard for the rules and spirit of good sportsmanship. My favorite memories include campfire conversations on Saturday nights with Tom and the AYC crew. RIP Tom, you set the bar very, very high. My condolences to the Ohlin family."

<p>"I will never be able to play another game of Liars dice again. Tom introduced the game to the club at one of our many camping trips to Kinnikinick. It will never be the same not seeing him sitting there telling everyone the rules and making sure we didn't cheat, even though we tried."</p> <p>- <b>Dennis Lynde</b></p> <p>"I remember feeling like I was invited into an exclusive club the night Tom taught me, then in my early twenties, the rules of the game. After a few rounds, he promptly took all my money and I learned another valuable lesson about sailors and adults."</p> <p>- <b>Troy Ewens</b></p>	 <p>Tom introduced countless members and their families to his favorite game, Liar's Dice. Photo: Mike Ferring</p>
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**Chuck Dahill** writes, "My memories of Tom are both individual and family related. My first meeting/experience with Tom was when I was Fleet Captain in the early 1980's and doing the PHRF score calculations with a hand calculator. Someone suggested I contact Tom as he was a "computer guy" and he could help develop a program to do these calculations. Everyone knew that if it was done by a computer, it had to be right. Tom spent several nights developing it and then he and I began testing the program. It was magic! After that, he and I would meet monthly for about two hours at his house to input the results for the fall and spring race series. In April, when we were doing the final review to determine who should be in the Club Championship, we discovered that there was an issue with the program and some of the calculations were incorrect. I nearly passed out but Tom remained calm and cool. For six hours we re-entered all the data. Carol came into the room several times to tell Tom to go to bed as he had to work the next day. Around 2:30 am, after re-calculating all the race scores, we had the final results – there were no changes in the top six positions and everything was all right!

"My family memories of Tom are related to Lake Kinnikinick and my daughter who was about 11 at the time. She was feeling a little left out of what the other kids were doing and Tom saw her hanging around by herself. He spoke to her and said not to worry as there was a great game she could play with everyone after dinner. This made her day. Turns out, Tom introduced her to Liar's Dice and allowed her to play with the other men who were at the fire place. After midnight, Tom walked her to our camp site where she began to describe how to gamble, lie and take money from other people. At that point, Tom just turned around and walked away. The joke the next day was about how much better Caitlin was at playing Liar's Dice than everyone else. And it just goes to show that the mind of one sober 11-year old is greater than the minds of four drunk men combined! We did many of these camping trips and could always count on Tom and "motorhome Carol" to be there and bring joy to our kids. To this day, my daughter still talks about that evening with Tom and returns to camp there with her family.

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- **Chuck Dahill** (On how Tom included his 11-year old Caitlin in the festivities at camp)

"Tom taught us how to play Liar's Dice and the lessons were not too expensive."

- **Al Lehman**



Game time 2002 with Kyle Clark, Tom Ohlin, Dave Nowak, Don DeFreze and others.

Photo: Kyle Clark





Tom was a fun fixture at summer campouts.

**Al Lehman Sr.** writes, "I first met Tom prior to his joining AYC when he came to look at a Catalina 22 I was selling. Tom eventually purchased a new Catalina 22 named *Long Time Coming* and joined AYC. Tom and Carol had a motorhome where we would gather after Saturday races and when camping.

"Tom taught us how to play Liar's Dice and the lessons were not too expensive. Tom was always interested in AYC and doing things 'by the book' and helped with many of the bylaw changes we have had over the years. Tom was a great supporter of AYC and his guidance and helping hand will be missed."

**Joyce Seale** writes, "In 1979, I was listening in on a conversation between Gene Carapetyan and Al Lehman Sr. as they were discussing the new AYC member – Tom Ohlin. AYC needed a candidate for Fleet Captain and Gene was adamant that Tom would deliver. At the time Gene or Al couldn't have imagined how much Tom would contribute to AYC over the next 41 years!

"Tom did become Fleet Captain and immediately moved on to Rear, Vice and Commodore while tirelessly scoring AYC races for all the fleets. He meticulously followed the scoring rules and applied the handicaps correctly. Thank goodness for his computer skills and integrity as no one could contest their standing due to his scoring.

"I owe Tom for all my AYC memories. He supported my journey as "Compass Points" editor, to Membership Chair, to Commodore. He was there to help when it was my turn to organize the Birthday Regatta and then continued to help me when I took up "Compass Points" again. Our family sailed alongside him and especially enjoyed the Lake Pleasant Saturday night 'events'. Tom, Frank Bigelow and Don DeFreze taught my 9-year-old son Liar's Dice. Brent won and walked away with his winnings and Tom, Frank and Don demanded a chance to win their money back. They taught my son well!

"And Carol. What a great person she is! She shared Tom with us and joined in on all the AYC and Catalina 22 events. Tom and Carol's love for each other is never ending."



Photo: Kyle Clark

Rusty Keagle, Tom, and Don DeFreze at the 2002 Halloween races and Spooky Sail.

**Janet Guthrie** writes, "Pat and I first met Tom and Carol in the late '70's when we bought our first sailboat and joined the yacht club. They were very kind and helpful to us, as I know they were to everyone. Although Pat has sold his Merit and no longer races or sails, we have many happy memories of the years he competed in the PHRF division. We were very sorry to hear about Tom's passing and send out sincere condolences to Carol and his family."

Past member **Elena Putman** writes, "While I'm no longer a member, I grew up in the club and Tom and Carol were fixtures from my childhood. So much of what we did as kids revolved around AYC. I can't count how many camping trips I've been on with the Ohlins – Rocky Point and Kinnikinick were way more fun when they were there. They were the cool people, not to mention very good to me and my family, and we couldn't help but gravitate to their camp. I'm truly saddened not just by his passing, but the manner in which he passed."

**Steve Groce** writes, "He was very supportive in training me to run sailboat racing [as fleet captain]. Tom was also there as a sounding board and the voice of reason when issues came up. He was always helpful and once told me, "The Commodore is the lowest position in the club, there to serve the members."

"We accomplished a lot in those days with the opening of Tempe Town lake in November of '99, with 95 sailboats racing on the lake, including the Catalina 22 fleet. We even had a special day for the Boy Scouts at TTL where he and many other AYC folks ran stations to help the Scouts qualify for the Sailing Merit Badge.

"Tom was an avid racer and very active in the Catalina 22 fleet. He helped make sailing in that fleet and our club a real joy!"

**Kyle Clark** writes, "Tom sure made me a better sailor, racing against him for quite a few years in the Catalina 22 Fleet."

**Steve Groce** recalls Tom saying, "The Commodore is the lowest position in the club, there to serve the members."

"On and off the water Tom was always a part of the heart and soul of this club, and should never be forgotten... Many of us remember and honor Tom for all the time, love and support he gave to our club. He was a true champion of AYC and a true friend to all. We will miss him with all our hearts."

- **Dennis Lynde**



Former AYC Commodores and Honorary Life Members:  
Joyce Seale, Martin Lorch, and Tom Ohlin.

Photo: Diane Bradley

**Dennis Lynde** shares, "I've known Tom since he joined the club and always thought of him as a great friend and one of the most dedicated members of AYC. Being the long-time scorer for the club, he was a pioneer and brought computers to the scoring process. When he stopped racing and skippering his own boat, he gave his beautiful Catalina 22 to his son who raced with us also.

"The last time I saw Tom was at this year's Birthday Regatta and he looked well, as did his wife Carol who also supported AYC and is a great member.

"I will never be able to play another game of Liars dice again. Tom introduced the game to the club at one of our many Camping trips to Kinnikinick. It will never be the same not seeing him sitting there telling everyone the rules and making sure we didn't cheat, even though we tried.

"On and off the water Tom was always a part of the heart and soul of this club, and should never be forgotten. Newer members may not realize the legacy he left - one of honor, sportsmanship, and an unyielding quest for fair play on the water.

"Many of us remember and honor Tom for all the time, love and support he gave to our club. He was a true champion of AYC and a true friend to all. We will miss him with all our hearts. Carol please take care and be well. We love you. Farewell Tom - fair winds and smooth seas.

"I am hoping this club will honor him for all the time, love and support that Tom has given to the club, much more than almost any other member. He was a true champion of AYC, and a true friend to us all."

**Bob Worrall** writes, "Tom was an excellent sailor and a fine friend and he will be greatly missed."



Commodores gather to hear Silver medalist Zach Railey speak at a 2009 meeting.

L-R: Kyle Clark, Dennis Lynde, Tom Errickson, Tom Ohlin, George Sheller, guest Zach Railey, Mike Parker, Mike Ferring, Dennis Martinelli, Martin Lorch, Arno Marcuse

Photo: Kyle Clark

**Mike Ferring** says, "It's hard to imagine the Arizona Yacht Club without Tom Ohlin. For 41 years Tom has barely missed an event, always ready with a story and a laugh.

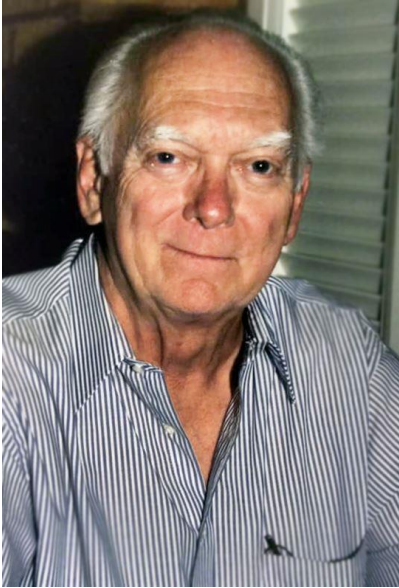
"Even after he stopped racing his Catalina 22, Tom made it to nearly all our events and was always ready to help. I don't think he missed a summer campout since it started in the mid-80s and he had the Liar's Dice winnings to prove it. Tom and some other regulars (Dave Nowak, Steve Nahkala, Joe Laux) once tried to coach me through my first game and even offered table stakes that I promptly lost. How many fresh fish were sucked in the same way?

"Tom once told me he knew nearly every AYC member at one time and was disappointed that he didn't anymore. In the same conversation he might have reminded me that nobody should be Commodore three times (as I have been) and then he headed off to find Maryellen to tell her the same thing. Part imp, part smiling curmudgeon, Tom was the keeper of the AYC flame."

**Steve Grothe** writes, "Tom was a *"Long Time"* (his Catalina 22 boat's name) leader and compass for AYC. Tom and I served on the AYC Board together in the early 1980s when he was Commodore, and I crewed for him a number of times racing his C-22. He was a fierce racing competitor (on light wind days he could always be located by the smell of his burning incense stick), but first and foremost a friendly and helpful personality in the yacht club and C-22 fleet.

"Every time we met, he asked about my family, work (we shared Honeywell employment in the past) and my latest goings on. Always with the Tom Ohlin smile. He and Carol were prominent personalities at every AYC and C-22 event. This one really hurts, and we will all miss Tom terribly. Our prayers and best wishes to Carol, Tommy, and the rest of the family."





Mike Ferring described Tom as, "the keeper of the AYC flame."

"When I think back on the Arizona Yacht Club, Tom is everywhere. He was an organizer, a stickler for the rules, and an enthusiastic participator regardless of position or pat on the back. He cared about kids, included us long before there was ever a Juniors Program.

"Tom was a show-up guy. A man inextricably tied to the Arizona Yacht Club and the bittersweet passage of time."

- **Troy Ewens**

"He really was Mr. AYC!"

- **Joyce Seale**

"I always had great respect for his high regard for the rules and spirit of good sportsmanship."

- **Chris Roberson**

**Troy Ewens** writes, "I met Tom when I was a kid, eleven or twelve. He was an adult standing tall on the bow of the committee boat as my dad and I drifted over the finish line at one of our first series races. We were dead last but determined to finish. I remember thinking Tom was going to be pissed that we'd kept him out there for so long. But as we approached, I was given my first Tom Ohlin smile. You would have thought we came in first. He didn't seem to care that there was no wind or that we were the only boat left on the lake. Maybe being out on the water in late afternoon was enough for him or maybe he hid a whole lot of angst behind that smile. Either way, he was there.

"So many memories followed after that day. The first Kinnikinick when Tom arrived early to make sure everything was laid out the right way, Chaparral Lake (AYC Spring Picnic) where the kids raced dinghies by throwing out anchors and pulling around the marks, and later Liar's Dice, which was a rite of passage. I remember feeling like I was invited into an exclusive club the night Tom taught me, then in my early twenties, the rules of the game. After a few rounds, he promptly took all my money and I learned another valuable lesson about sailors and adults.

"When I think back on the Arizona Yacht Club, Tom is everywhere. He was an organizer, a stickler for the rules, and an enthusiastic participator regardless of position or pat on the back. He cared about kids, included us long before there was ever a Juniors Program.

"Tom was a show-up guy. A man inextricably tied to the Arizona Yacht Club and the bittersweet passage of time. Wherever Tom is now, I hope the winds are fair and he rests easy knowing that his time spent with us meant so much to so many."

**Marc Danner** writes, "Tom was a great member and shared his knowledge with so many!"

**Charley and Debi Fife** write, "It always hurts the most when we lose the best we ever had! Carol and Tom were like the nurturing parents for the newbies to AYC. Tom was the guide with his insights and encouragements into our world of sailing. We all benefit from his devoted help and countless hours working to make AYC what it is.



Joyce Seale visiting with the old gang.

"It was in Carol's motor home all of the scoring took place. Tom led us up the ladder to Commodore. Even after all of the flack I gave the C22 family, it was Tom who skippered *Beamreacher* when I presided over my Birthday Regatta! Every couple of weeks our day would brighten when the white Mercedes pulled up out front and we would be blessed with Tom's big smile and greetings of, "How are you two?!" God bless you Carol!"

**Patty Roske** writes, "Gosh...what a surprise. Thank you for letting us know.

"I joined AYC in 1985 and learned sailing at the same time. Tom and Carol, and his family; so many great memories. For years and years. Tom was always there, waiting for me to drive into the Kinnikinick campground in my 1978 blue Chevy pickup truck/cab-over camper.

"One fireside night, years ago, we sat next to each other and I happened to mention I was paying \$90/month to Quest for my land line and computer connection. Tom said in a loud voice: "What! That's too much money!" I said, "It is?" He said, "YES! You call them right away and tell them you're not going to pay that!" I said, "You mean, I can do that?" He said, "YES!!!" So, I did. The telephone company immediately knocked the bill down, just like Tom said, to \$50 per month. I think of Tom every time I tell Century Link, "I'm not going to pay that!"

"I don't have my Chevy anymore but I still have that same 1964 crappy old landline that needs Century Link service every 3 months, and of course the same landline phone number for 42+ years. Rest in peace Tom. And a hug to Carol and family."

**Sharon Bell** shared, "Tom was a great man and I learned a lot from him as I am sure others did as well. Fair winds on his journey and may his family grieve in peace and understanding."

**Bob Naylor** writes, "I didn't know Tom very well, but I enjoyed talking with him. He and his wife sometimes attended the Catalina 22 pre-season cook-out at our house. He was an AYC member for 41 years and that's incredible. He will be missed."



Classic Tom, smiling and greeting all with his friendly wave of hello.  
At the 2020 Birthday Regatta with Dave and Debbie Nowak.  
Photo: Dennis Lynde

Farewell Tom - may you have fair winds and following seas.  
You were loved and will be dearly missed!

