

EIGHT BELLS FOR RICKY GILCHRIST

By Deb Heisler, Vice Commodore

AYC Life Member, Ricky Gilchrist moved to Arizona from Kalispell, MT in 1981, joined the club in 1988, and later served as Fleet Captain. Ricky was a gifted sailor that loved racing and being behind the helm. He was an Eagle Scout in his youth, so it's no surprise he had over 100 sailing trophies. He will forever be remembered as a dear friend, a loving father to Leighann, doting grandfather to Charlotte Rose, and faithful husband to Susan, his wife of 40+ years. Ricky passed away on December 30, 2020 at the age of 67.

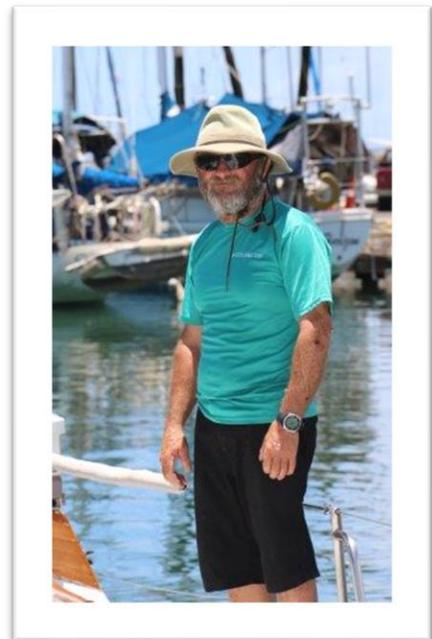
For the past 10 years you would find him aboard *Rolling in the Deep* with Paul Liszewski and friends, every race weekend at Lake Pleasant. Paul mentioned that he cannot recall Ricky ever missing a race. Ricky also participated in multiple offshore races over the years. In 2004, he sailed to Hawaii in the Pacific Cup – hailed as some of the world's best downwind sailing. This was aboard Troy Ewen's J35 *Predator* along with crew: Mike Ewens, Pat Guthrie, Frank Able (TSC), and a close friend from CA. Then in 2017 he ventured to Hawaii again - sailing in the TransPac aboard *Shockwave* with owners Jo and Mike Grijalva, and stayed on to bring her back stateside. He was a regular at Long Beach Race Week and competed in the MDR to San Diego Race amongst hundreds of others. Besides sailing, his pastimes included hunting, fishing, and riding his bike for fitness.

The ambit of Ricky's generosity appeared to be without boundary. If someone needed help, he just went about doing what he could to lend a hand and offer support. And many would add that he often went above and beyond.

Ricky was full of zest and held his calm when the situation required; he loved good music and dancing...oh the dancing! Besides being easygoing, Ricky was just easy to be around. Several years back, he took up cycling and participated in rides with the West Valley Cycling group. And in typical Ricky fashion, he found many others to call friends.

Leighann plans on hosting two life celebrations at a later date. One will be in Arizona and one in California. Steve Nahkala shared that one of Ricky's wishes was to have a sea burial – to be cremated and scattered at sea. Leighann, with Steve's help, is planning on making this wish come true. Leighann stated, "I want to give him the send-off he deserves and wanted."

From the remembrances shared in this tribute, it is easy to recognize the type of guy Ricky Gilchrist was. He was the one you wanted on your team and as a friend. He lived life to the fullest, practiced kindness, and had a unique and noticeable presence - one that will be deeply missed!



Ricky Gilchrist – Photo: Jo Grijalva

REMEMBRANCES

My family and I have known and been lucky enough to call Rick a friend for over 25 years. Our two sons sailed with Rick on his Merit 25 *Shark Bait*, which honed their sailing skills as well as other qualities all sailors seem to share. Who doesn't enjoy a cold one while out on the water with like-minded friends? At the last Birthday Regatta, I was sitting by the campfire with Rick and we were remembering years gone past. Rick told me the years spent on *Shark Bait* with my sons and friends were some of his best memories.

Some years ago, when others had bought sunfish, I decided to get one as well. Rick called and said his lifelong friend Dave in California had a line on one, so Rick and I drove over and brought it home. Rick was always there to help anyone interested in sailing to become more involved.

Rick was with my wife and me for one of the Catalina trips on our boat. We had sailed back after spending the weekend, derigged the boat, and started driving home. I was tired so Rick took over driving on the freeway outside of LA. That is when he showed me how to change lanes. He said, "You don't put your signal on. You swerve over a little, get the trailer swaying some and when they back away, you cut in." This technique is one I still employ today.

Rick was a solid guy that never had anything bad to say about anyone. He could be quiet and thoughtful or talk your ear off with his sailing stories and life experiences. I remember him telling me how he learned to sail as a Boy Scout and later become an Eagle Scout in CA. I have always been impressed by that accomplishment. Maybe that helped develop his character - certainly, his love of sailing and the outdoors did.

It saddens us all to lose Rick as a friend, but we are all a little better for knowing him and his family. My family would certainly be lesser without Ricky Gilchrist in it. He will be missed!



Bobbing around in the Pacific Ocean.
Photo: Jo Grijalva

- **Dave Nowak**

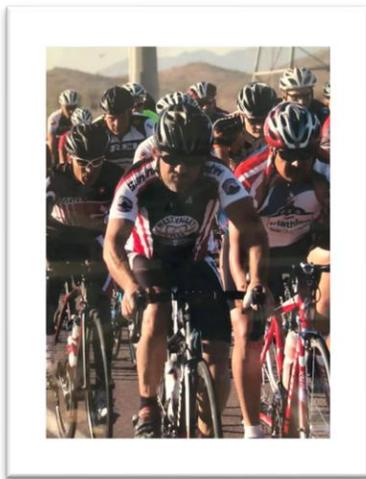


Ricky aboard *Rolling in the Deep* with friends and crew: Paul Liszewski, Tom Canasi, and Steve and Kenny Nahkala.
Selfie photo by: Lalaine Dowdell

If I counted the influential people in my life on one hand, Ricky would be the index finger. I'd just moved to AZ in 1993 and met Ricky (by phone) within the first three weeks. I crewed for him on his Merit 25 the following Saturday, and for the next four years, the boat never left the dock without me. Ricky suggested I move up from my C-15 to a C-22, helped me find one, then helped me restore it. Together, we built a boat sling out in Rainbow Valley, and *Fatalina* was the first boat to be slung.

Ricky was my friend, confidant, mentor, and coach. He talked me down when I wanted to quit, praised me when I deserved it and set me straight when I needed to be set straight. He saw me through rough times and good; weak times and strong; he was always there. A man like that comes along very few times in one's life. When it's my time to go, I hope someone says of me what I will say about Ricky; I am better for having known him. I love you, Ricky.

- **Steve Dolter**



Ricky became quite the distance biker once he started pedaling, completing multiple 100 mile "Century Rides."



I am so very sorry to hear about Ricky's passing. When I joined the Yacht Club about two years ago, I met Rickey when he first invited a few of us up to his Saturday night bonfires. He shared with us grand stories of his impressive offshore races around those campfires and was eager to dive deep into a conversation about sailing. He loved his rock music and would always have music and a nice fire ready by the time we climbed up the hill later in the evenings, leading to a relaxing night of camaraderie after racing. Towards the end of the night, he would kindly offer up floor space in his trailer, especially during cold nights, to ensure we didn't freeze.

His friendly personality off the water extended onto the racecourse, with Ricky eager to nominate seemingly innocent infractions for the blunder bucket. While Ricky and I sailed in different fleets, he would keep track of our races, always excited to talk about funny mistakes or good tactical maneuvers. We did occasionally tangle with each other on the starting line during shared starts.

Regardless of the outcome of our start line antics, we could always rely on him to catch a tow line from us to bring us to the dock when the wind died for the day, a true embodiment of his character as a person and Corinthian sailor.

- **Grant Younger**

Ricky. Boy, will you be missed! I remember you always willing to lend a hand, give a word of encouragement when I first started sailing my Merit 25 – *BlueStreak*! What a difference you made with your encouragement. Whether it was a mast gift when we broke our mast or a trailer modification so we could launch, you were there. All the little things that added up. You really made a difference, and you will be missed. Thank you!!

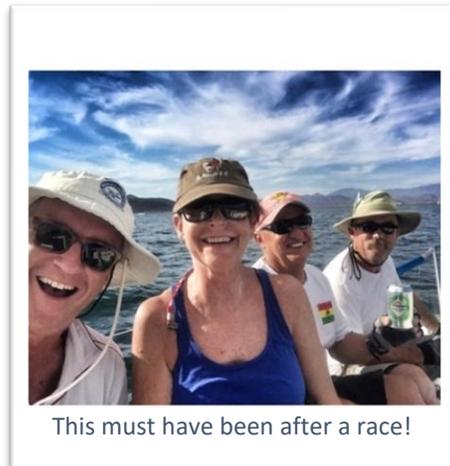
- **Norm Anderson**

Back in the day when I owned and raced Thistle 2737 it became apparent that the hull was not very smooth. Rick agreed to paint and sand the bottom for a very reasonable price. In those days Rick had a large yard at his home and worked on Thistle 2737 for many weeks – even having friends over to sand and fair the bottom, sand in between coats of paint and final buff out. The final job was WOW and unbelievable. The boat went faster in the water – but somehow, that did not lead to higher finishes in the races. We will all greatly miss Rick. RIP.

- **Michael Yarnell**



At Dana West YC with Shockwave crew.



This must have been after a race!

Ricky was the most loyal friend anyone could ask for. We had so many great times, sailing, camping and hanging out at events.

He inspired me and gave me courage. When I committed to do TransPac, I had a tremendous fear of ocean racing until one race. Shockwave was heeled over and Ricky was standing on the toe rail, knee-deep in ocean water, casually untying the preventer and looking back at Mike at the helm, discussing where we should go for dinner. I immediately realized there was nothing to fear. Thank you Ricky. I will always Love and Miss you!

- **Jo Grijalva**



The *Shockwave* TransPac crew finished 5th in their division. Jo & Mike Grijalva, Al Lehman Jr., John Ross, Kevin Edwards, Ricky Gilchrist, Tom Faraola.

Ricky was someone I sailed with a few times, mostly when crewing and getting to know other members after joining AYC in 2003. In the years that followed, I was impressed by what an excellent sailor Ricky was while making sure he was having fun. He never took the sailing or himself too seriously. We can all learn from his example and to make sure we are enjoying our sailing.

My memory of Ricky will be him riding his bike around at Lake Pleasant to chat with everyone. He always had something positive to say and will be sadly missed by those of us who were lucky enough to get to know and learn from him.

-Tony Chapman

Ricky truly made the world a better place. He knew how to shrug off the negative and embrace life to its fullest. His positive attitude was infectious to everyone he met. He was both a fierce competitor and a loyal friend. I have years of great memories with Ricky from Transpac to the Birthday Regatta and all of the times in between. He will be greatly missed.

One of my favorite memories of Ricky is the Happy Chicken Dance around the glow of the campfire late at night. Many of you will recall those famous dance moves. RIP Ricky.

- Al Lehman, Jr.

Ricky G was a gentle giant of a person. His passion for sailing was in his soul. I am not the only one to benefit from his help with a quick fix to my Thistle on the water and off. His Kinnikinick liars dice adventures were more than memorable. His 50-mile bike ride to Rick Johnson's for a party. His demeanor of kindness is how I will remember him. May we 'cross tacks' with him again in a different life.

- Tia Renshaw

Lasting Memories



Ricky as part of the crew on a MDR to San Diego Race with Rick Johnson, Steve Kusic, and Rusty Keagle.



Ricky at the helm and Santa as bowman on Rolling in the Deep during the 2020 Governor's Cup. Photo: Tom Errickson

It's hard for me to think about AYC without recalling fond memories of Ricky Gilchrist. Along with numerous others, "Ricky the G" was a cornerstone of the club and made significant contributions to its success over many years. Ricky had a passion for sailing and the friendship and camaraderie that came along with it. He was never without a friendly smile and a quick laugh.

Ricky had a gift for getting the most out of the Merit 25, and it did not matter if it was blowing 30+ or if there was barely a breeze. I can picture him standing up in the back of the boat, straddling the tiller, and steering downwind with the inside of his legs. Underneath a floppy hat, he would have a broad grin as he looked behind him at the competition.

I recall a memorable AYC overnight raft-up with Ricky on his Merit at Lake Pleasant's north end. The wind howled all night long and into the next day, leaving all the canvas awnings around the marina in shreds. In the morning, we hit 9 knots under storm jib alone, returning downwind to the ramp.

Ricky's spontaneous dance moves at the campfire on Saturday nights were priceless... We're all going to miss you Ricky, but we are lucky to have had you in our lives. Thank you buddy, for the memories and the good times.

- Chris Robertson

Rick and I were friends for nearly thirty-five years. Oakland to Catalina in 1989, aka "The Big One," was the first serious off-shore race for either of us. Of course, we were on night watch in storm conditions (45 knots, 15-foot swells) surfing an Olson 30 at 22 knots. Rick was driving, and my back was against the bulkhead. He used to say he could tell how large the following sea was by how wide the whites of my eyes grew in the darkness.

Now and then, one of the larger waves would crash over the stern, leaving us in waist-high water for the seconds it took to drain away. I was seventeen, Rick was surprisingly calm, and a close friendship was born.

We raced together hundreds of times in the years that followed, but nearly every time we got together, including last Thanksgiving, we still reminisced about "The Big One."

Throughout my life, Rick was always more than just a sailor. He was a mentor, a genuine and decent human being who taught me countless lessons on and off the water.

His love of sailing was infectious; whether it was a delivery, a weekend series, or racing the Pacific Cup, Rick relished every moment. There are honestly too many stories to recall here, but always finding time to stop at Catalina for buffalo milk on a boat delivery, even if it meant adding a day, will forever rest fondly in my memories.

Rick was a friend to many, a dear part of my chosen family, and a master pool and Texas Hold 'em teacher, depending on which one of my kids you ask. I will miss him terribly and think of him at every new start line.

Fair winds and following seas, my friend.

- Troy Ewens



Ricky and Steve Nahkala, sailing of course!

Rick was a great friend of mine. On race weekends back in the late 80s early 90s Rick, myself, and my daughter Marianne would meet up at Lake Pleasant and sail until 2 or 3 in the morning. It was a great way to end the workweek.

Many years ago, Rick asked if I would be willing to bring back a Merit 25 from the Marina Del Ray race. I said yes, as long as I could use it for five days to go to Catalina Island.

Rick and his daughter Leigh went with my family. Rick, Leigh, and my son David sailed on their boat, while my wife Ann, me, and our daughter Marianne sailed on the other Merit 25. Dick Daggett was on the third boat. My family and I have always said that was one of the most fun family vacations we went on. All thanks to Rick.

About 15 or so years ago, I began racing with Rick on his Merit 25, *Sea Dream*. We raced together on that boat for seven years. I thought I was a decent racer until I started racing with Rick. There was so much to learn from him and he was willing to show anyone that would listen. Rick and I were close outside of sailing, often camping and playing pool together. Rick was an amazing friend and will be missed.

- **Steve Nahkala**

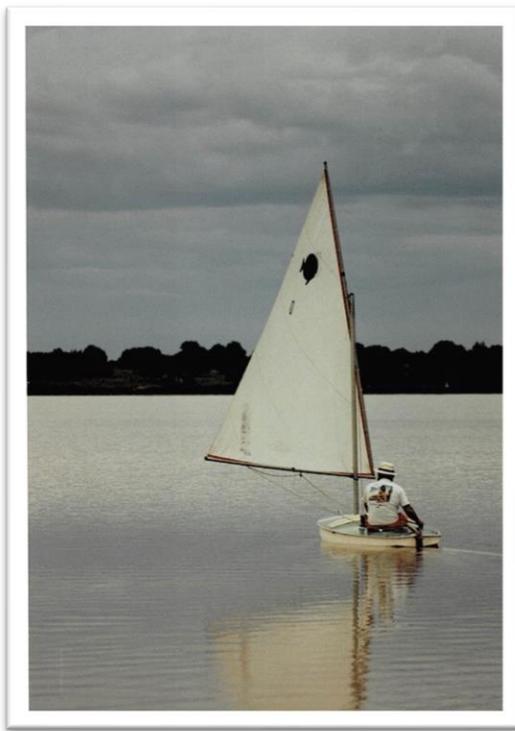


Photo: Rick Johnson



Sail on Ricky the G – We'll be missing you!

 **Arizona Yacht Club**