

63 years of sailing and the Kaufman Brothers are still hard to beat!

The Kaufman family have had a long and extensive involvement with Sandringham Yacht Club. Peter Kaufman joined SYC in 1951. In the same year he also joined up his sons, Ian aged 11, Graeme aged 13 years and Daryl 15. Graeme and Ian have been members ever since. As juniors the brothers sailed in the old style cadet dinghy (Clinker) and Sabots. Graeme and Ian are still sailing competitively in a Triton 24ft yacht called *Willarie* in the Wednesday Wonders races, which continue throughout the year at SYC. Most of their early sailing was done at Portsea in off the beach boats and keelboats owned by the Ham family. John Ham later became a member of SYC. They competed in informal races for kids conducted by Col Davey off Shelley beach in three yachts that he owned – a cadet dinghy, a Vee Jay and a Gwen 12.

After sailing off the beach Graeme went on and crewed for many years on a Flying Fifteen out of Hobson's Bay Yacht Club.

Their father started sailing in 1951 after buying a 32-foot carvel gaff rigged boat moored at Stony Point, Western Port. He was not all that experienced as a sailor so he paid two professional fishermen from Hastings £20 each to bring the boat to St Kilda. £20 was then about two weeks wages.

When the yacht had not arrived after three days Peter called the police, who quickly found the fishermen at the Hastings pub drinking their way through the money. The boat was named *Willarie* after the name of the family home and meaning in the indigenous language 'Still Waters'. Later the mast and centre plate were removed to make it into a fishing boat. It remained in the family for 33 years. The yacht was kept at Portsea and SYC.

Peter served a few terms on the SYC Committee and was very active in fund-raising after the 1954 clubhouse fire, with the help of the world billiards champion Walter Lindrum and a few bookmakers. When his sons, Graeme and Ian, joined as members, the Commodore A D Mackenzie asked why the youngest son Philip, was not a member, Peter replied, "He is only six years old and must be eight to join". The reply he received from 'Mack' was "He looks eight to me, here is a joining form". Phil joined SYC in 1954.

Graeme first sailed in Wednesday Wonders in a

Triton 24 owned by Tye Power called *Innocence*. At that time there were five Tritons 24s in the fleet. Skippers of the Tritons did not worry too much about the rest of the fleet as they had their own race. Graeme decided to purchase his own boat and bought a yacht called *Rebecca* that was on a mooring at Williamstown. He changed the name to *Willarie*.

Graeme's first crew was his brother Philip on Wednesdays and some Sundays. Phil was forced to retire from sailing about 15 years ago due to health problems and this was when his other brother Ian started sailing WW. The eldest brother Daryl who died aged 35 was a SYC member for about 15 years until flying, skiing and scuba diving took his interest.

Philip passed away in 2014. He was a very active member who supported every aspect of the Club with a passion. He owned a motorboat called *Skipper 60* and later a trailer sailor called *Mr Grumpy*. That is the name the boat came with. He later enjoyed sailing on *Rumbeat* with Geoff Henderson.

Philip was involved in race management and was active with juniors helping with training at Off The Beach for many years. He also joined in the trips to Metung for the Easter Regattas. The 'Yacht House' (his name for SYC) was his special place.

It has not only been the male members of the Kaufman family who have been involved in sailing. Philip's daughter Felicity was captain of the juniors at SYC. Philip travelled with her when she competed in the World Cadet Dinghy Championships in the UK. Felicity also competed in a Sydney to Hobart a few years ago on a Sydney 38, a University of Melbourne boat borrowed from Lou Abrahams. Philip's other daughter, Amie, is also a sailor and has been active in promoting sailing. She sailed with OTB yachts and two seasons in J24s. As a student at Firbank she convinced the school to adopt sailing as a sport. She became an instructor and has sailed in the Women in Sailing Series, twice on the winning yacht, as well as with The University of Melbourne.

The Kaufman brothers have witnessed many changes in Wednesday Wonders. The yachts in the beginning were smaller, mainly division three and some division two boats. Now the average is



34.2 feet and there are a dozen yachts over 40 ft including 4 fifty footers. The WW fleet started with only 15 or 20 yachts. Races started at 14:00 and the courses were about 8.5 nm, much shorter than the current distance of around 10nm and never included the outer marks 5 or 6.

Wednesday Wonders races are officially recorded as starting in 1968 but started earlier in about 1964-65. At first WW were just winter races at Sandringham. In summer the serious sailing was on Saturdays and yachts would travel to race at Brighton. By 1969 Sandringham held races both summer and winter and later introduced Sunday races. Graeme won the Sunday Sailors series in about 1995.

The first handicapper Graeme can remember was a French chap he thinks was called Pierre who used to work out the handicaps while walking up the clubhouse stairs.

With Graeme's age and the age of their Triton they have qualified to be admitted to the Century Class of Wednesday Wonders. The criterion for this class is that the combined age of the yacht and skipper must be 100 years or more. There are about 10 yachts that qualify for this class and *Willarie* won the first series in 2011-12 Summer Series.

Graeme and Ian sail *Willarie* very competitively and in the 2014 winter season finished in the top 10 places on five occasions, in a fleet of 46 yachts. With 126 years of sailing experience between them it is understandable why it takes a major effort to finish in front of *Willarie*.

Recently two of Ian's grandsons, Jack and Lachlan Morley each competed in a Wednesday Wonders race. This makes four generations of Kaufmans who have been sailing at SYC.



One of *Willarie*'s more memorable starts, with possible outside assistance from the police?

Photo supplied by Ian Whitbread