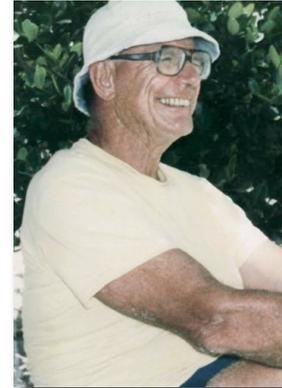


Peter Barrett: A Life Under Sail

c. 2007, Donald P. Sanford

Madison, Wisconsin is home to more than its share of celebrities. Nationally and internationally recognized educators, business leaders, sports figures, musicians and entertainers call Madison home. Although it's the state capital, Madison behaves like a small town. It's easy to cross paths with the talented people who live here. Back in the early 1960s Lon Schoor, now one of the Mendota Yacht Club's top E scow skippers, had one of these experiences. "I first met Peter Barrett in the early 1960s when I was in high school. His father was my principal at East High. Peter talked about his Olympics effort at the school auditorium one day."



Courtesy of Laurie Barrett

"Peter Barrett has the capacity for scholastic achievement and promise of effective participation and leadership in other university activities." ⁱ

That's what the selection committee at Cornell University said about this 17-year-old young man from Madison, Wisconsin when they awarded him a scholarship for their five-year program in civil engineering. I wonder just what crystal ball they looked into to see that this young man would have a successful career in business and education that spanned 30 years. Could they see that he would win medals at the highest level of competitive sailboat racing and become one of Madison's Olympians?

GROWING UP IN MADISON

In May of 1952, Peter Barrett was a senior at East High School in Madison, Wisconsin. A good student, he ranked in the upper 10 percent of his class. But his efforts in the classroom were just part of his life at East High. Outside class, Peter kept busy with a host of other activities: National Honor Society, sports editor on the school newspaper, homeroom president, Student Council representative, and debate team member. An athlete, he was quarterback of East High's football team and ran the mile in track. Outside of school, Peter was a Sea Scout and served as an alderman on the East Side Youth Mayor's Council. And, by the time he finished high school, he had gotten hooked on sailing.

The son of Berneice and A. J. (Hunk) Barrett, Peter was born in 1935 at Madison General Hospital. Pete's dad was the principal and football coach at East High. Peter's mother, Berneice, an athlete in her own right, was the first Madison city tennis champion, both in women's singles and mixed doubles in the mid 1930s. From the Barretts' home at 455 N. Few Street, it was a short walk to both Lapham Elementary and East High Schools and just a block to Lake Mendota.



The Barretts' home
455 N. Few Street
Author Photo

LEARNING TO SAIL

According to his wife Laurie, “Pete's first memory of sailing came when he was about 2. His aunt and uncle Corinne and Dick Johnson of Peoria, Illinois took him out on their Star boat. Peter was hooked and a few years later, he tried building a sailing rig for an old rowboat using old draperies to make the sails. Uncle Dick took this as a signal that Pete was ready for a real boat. Peter spent a summer in Peoria building a small sailboat similar to the X class (Cub) boats that other kids sailed on Lake Mendota. When it was finished, Uncle Dick brought the boat up to Madison.” During the war years of the 1940s sailing and sailboat racing were popular sports on Lake Mendota. Cub boats were popular then and the Mendota Yacht Club (MYC) organized many events for kids. In 1942, MYC hosted the 3rd Annual ILYA X Boat invitational.ⁱⁱ Pete might have been too young to sail in that regatta, but he often crewed for a good friend, Chuck, on an X boat during MYC races.

In the summertime, Pete had the boat he and Uncle Dick built. In the winter, the call of frozen Lake Mendota was answered with an iceboat kept at the vacant lot on Sherman Avenue, just a block from his house.

COLLEGIATE SAILING

During his first year in college in Ithaca, New York, he stepped into the world of collegiate sailing on Cayuga Lake as a member of the Cornell University sailing team. A year later he transferred to the Webb Institute of Naval Architecture in Glen Cove, New York. Peter was at a new school, but his old interest in racing sailboats called and soon he was a member of their sailing team.

Peter returned to his hometown in 1955 as a junior at the UW in Mechanical Engineering. He joined the Hooper Sailing Club and the UW-Madison sailing team. A year later he was a member of the UW Sailing team that competed in the Rose Bowl Regatta.ⁱⁱⁱ In 1957, just before he graduated with a bachelor's degree, he notched the first of many honors as a competitive sailor. He and teammates Bruce Goldsmith, Art Mitchel, Dexter Thede and Otto Scherer won the Collegiate Team Race Championship. And though it might not have happened in this order, it was during those years that he met another Hooper sailor, Laurie McClure. They were married in 1958 and became lifelong partners.



Hooper Tech Dinghy-1958
on Lake Mendota
Courtesy of Laurie Barrett

C SCOWS ON LAKE MENDOTA

Peter began racing C scows as a member of the Mendota Yacht Club in 1955. He owned a succession of boats including *Din*, *Hot Shot*, *Sea Lore* and *Lazy C*.^{iv} Peter, with Laurie as crew, was a regular in MYC races in ILYA regattas. Jack Lowe, former Commodore and MYC member for more than 50 years, has raced C scows, E scows and MCs. He's quick to point out that his first boat was the *Lazy C* purchased from Peter Barrett in 1963. “Pete got me started in sailing. If it wasn't for him, I would have missed out on a lot of fun all these years.”

SHARING A PASSION FOR SAILING

After graduation, Peter enrolled in the graduate school of Engineering at the UW and began studying Law at the UW Law School. He was also a mechanics instructor at the UW. Like his father, Peter would spend a lifetime teaching. Bill Mattison, a Madisonian with an extensive record of championships in both iceboating and “soft water” sailing, knew Peter well. Over the years, Bill has mentored more than his share of up and coming sailors. I asked him one day what he remembered about Peter. “Peter was a first-rate sailor and a teacher. Always teaching,” Bill told me.

Peter’s first paid teaching job came around 1955 while he was an undergrad at the UW. He taught at the Mendota Yacht Club’s sailing school. Jim Henkel, one of Madison’s great E scow skippers, told me this story: “Back in the 1950s, MYC had a sailing school. We’d meet at Botham’s house near the Maple Bluff beach. Later, we’d meet out in the middle of the lake with our Cub boats for instruction, practice and racing. He taught us to race by teaching us skills like sailing backwards or sailing without a rudder or racing across the lake to bring back a floating watermelon.”



Courtesy of Harken, Inc.

during lunch.^v Years later, they’d become business partners. Peter’s career in business and education was just ahead, but that would have to wait a few years. Peter was pursuing another dream.

Sailing became a passion he enthusiastically shared with others he met at the UW. Art Mitchel, Director of Operations at Harken, Inc., recalls meeting Peter this way: “Peter Barrett, Peter Harken and I all met at a Hoofers Sailing Club open house in early September 1955. Peter Harken and I were new freshmen while Peter Barrett was a junior. We were all new to Hoofers that day and agreed to meet and go racing the very next day in tech dinghies.” Together with Charlie Miller, that group would rush to the boathouse to get an hour or so of racing in

THE FINN, PETER’S BOAT OF CHOICE

Peter began racing Finns in the late 1950s. According to Madison sailor Peter Lundt, a classmate of Barrett’s, “Peter got permission to build a storage rack for Finns on some city-owned land at the foot of North Park Street. That was the beginning of his road to the Olympics.” Peter later said that he got involved in the Finn for two reasons. First, it is the only Olympic class boat that you don’t have to own to race and it’s the only one sailed by one man.^{vi} Years later, Peter would say that the Finn is the only class left in the Olympics that demands raw guts.”^{vii} Finn sailing is tough, especially when it’s windy.



*Peter on a breezy day
Courtesy of Laurie Barrett*

Don Ermer has sailed and raced on Lake Mendota since the 1960s. He and Peter were engineering students in those days. “When it was windy, Peter, like all Finn skippers, would have to add weight so he could keep the boat flat. We’d be on the sailing club pier at the Union where I’d see him pull four or five sweatshirts on over his life jacket. Then he’d jump off the pier, get soaking wet, climb out of the water and go race. I don’t think I could even walk with that much weight on my upper body, but Peter was in great shape. He loved to sail in heavy weather and even with all that extra weight he was very fast.”

To get in shape, Peter built a portable two-person hiking rig that he used for training. As Art Mitchel recalls, “Peter and I were in law school together then. In the evenings, we’d review the day’s case studies while working out on the hiking bench at his house on North Livingston Street near Lake Mendota.”

ROME OLYMPICS, 1960

Peter graduated from UW–Madison in 1960 with a Master of Engineering Mechanics degree. While working on his Engineering degree, studying law and teaching, he took on a fourth job—preparing himself for the Olympics. This would be his second Olympic campaign. He tried out for the 1956 team, making it only to the final eliminations.^{viii} On July 1, 1960, an article appeared in the *Capital Times*. “UW Student Hopes to Take Part in Olympic Races on Bay of Naples.”^{ix}

By the end of that summer, Peter had progressed through the eliminations and became a member of the U.S. Olympic team, on his way to his first Olympic Game in Rome. At the trials, Peter continued teaching. Harry Anderson, co-founder of the US Finn Association, said, “At the trials in Marblehead for the 1960 games, Peter went out of his way to coach his lesser competitors in the class. That U.S. sailors became competitive at the Olympic level in the Finn is due in large part to Peter’s guidance and support.” In his first Olympic outing, Peter placed 11th, putting him in the top third of the fleet.

About the Finn

In sailors’ language, the Finn is a 14-foot, cat-rigged, single-handed, one-design sailboat.

Translated into English that means it’s a 14-foot, 9-inch boat with one sail sailed by one person. All boats are *exactly* the same, with no variations.

Mark Twain once said, “Where boats are evenly matched in the matter of speed and draught, it is the quality of the piloting that wins the race.” Twain was thinking about riverboats, but the same holds true for the skipper of a one-design sailboat.

Racing a Finn is rigorous, especially in the Olympics. Races are held on a 7-mile course far from shore. Mental and physical conditioning are crucial to success in the Finn. The Finn is a small boat and the skipper needs to be both strong and agile. Ultimately, what makes one boat faster than another is the skill and athleticism of the skipper, who has to study the wind and the other competitors, know the rules, determine tactics and adjust sails and trim to bring the boat to maximum speed in the changing conditions of wind and wave while hiking out to keep the boat on an even keel. Hiking out keeps the boat flat and going at top speed.

TEACHING AND THE MALLORY CUP

Peter returned to Madison and the UW Law School in 1961. Once again he raced his C boat with the Mendota Yacht Club. At the end of the 1961 season, he took home 11 trophies at the MYC banquet.^x The next summer, 1962, Peter found himself in the spotlight once again with two significant victories--one solo and another crewing for Madison sailing legend, Jim Payton. In his solo victory, Peter was the first winner of the U.S. single-handed Sailing Championship, the George D. O'Day Trophy. Later that same year, crewing with Charlie Miller and skipper Jim Payton, they won the Mallory Cup, the U. S. Men's Sailing Championship. Jim and Peter have been the only Madison sailors to compete in that event, let alone winning it. Later that year, he and Jim were named to *Popular Boating* magazine's honor roll.^{xi}



Charlie Miller, Peter & Jim Payton
Courtesy of Jay Payton.

Meanwhile, Peter continued teaching. In December of 1962, members of the Mendota Yacht Club organized the Mendota Sailing School. Rodney Stebbins, Bob Beck, Bob Bolz, John Frautschi, Frank Bernard and John Wiffen were the directors. Peter was hired as the head instructor. The school operated from Hoofers and later from the old Bernard-Hoover Boathouse on East Gorham Street at the east end of James Madison Park. Peter would later serve on the school's Board of Directors.

TACTICAL DECISIONS

In 1963, Peter had earned his J. D. from the UW. He was the U.S. Finn class representative to the Pan American games in Brazil. Steve Colgate was the alternate skipper and watched the races from a chase boat. He offered this example of Peter's understanding of the rules and his ability to turn every situation into a teaching moment: "In the last race, Peter had to beat the number two boat to win the medal. At the weather mark, Peter had that guy tucked to leeward. When he rounded the weather mark, he reached off instead of turning down towards the next mark. After the race, I asked him why he didn't tack right away. Peter said he correctly guessed the other guy hoped Peter would turn downwind at the top mark, hitting the leeward boat and be disqualified, thereby ending his chance for the Gold. Peter won that race and took home the Silver Medal for that year's Pan Am Games."^{xii}

THE 1964 TOKYO GAMES

In 1964 Peter made plans to attend the Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo, again in the Finn. What happened there cemented Peter's reputation as a competitor and sportsman.

Bruce Kirby, Olympic veteran who would later become a designer of the Laser and other sailboats, was a member of the Canadian Olympic team, competing in Finns against Peter. He describes what happened during the fifth race when Peter Barrett dropped out of the race after committing a foul that no one else had seen.

“Pete had a less than perfect start in the fifth race, and had to make an early tack onto port to clear out, taking a few transoms to do so. While closely crossing the stern of another Finn, his shoulder brushed the other boat’s rudder. Pete felt the contact, but it was so slight that the helmsman of the other boat didn’t happen to notice it. Pete dropped out of the race, as there was no 720 rule in those days. He then sailed out beyond the starboard tack lay line to be clear of other boats, and headed up to the area of the weather mark, where he arrived with a lead of about 50 yards over the next boat.”^{xiii} Peter was awarded the Silver Medal that year, but final results confirmed that had he placed in the top five in the 5th race, he would have easily won the Gold.

Peter’s conduct during that race became a teaching moment about sportsmanship and the philosophy of competitive sailing. Forty years later, sailors still talk about that moment. Bob Merrick said this in a recent article in *Scuttlebutt* about sportsmanship: “No one saw him hit the other boat. Peter Barrett dropped out of that race because he knew he hit the other boat, and that was enough.”^{xiv}

NOT TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT



Until the *New Rules of Sailing* were enacted in 2009, there were no on-water umpires or referees in a sailboat race. Competitors were and still are responsible for reporting rule infractions. Fundamentally, the racing rules are designed to prevent collisions between boats in a race by establishing which boat will have the right-of-way when they meet on the racecourse. Even the *slightest* physical contact with another competitor is prohibited. In the 1960s physical contact, *however slight*, with another competitor or a mark on the racecourse resulted in immediate disqualification from the race--the difference between winning and losing a regatta. Take a close look at this photo and consider the skill required to keep clear of another competitor when dozens of boats are packed into the starting line while the wind is blowing at 18 knots.

Courtesy of International Finn Class Association

THE ESSENCE OF OUR SPORT

Peter's experience that day in 1964 on the waters off Enoshima typifies the best in everyone who races a sailboat. Sailboat racing is often described as a "pure" sport. Sailors compete in a sailboat race not for money, lucrative contracts or endorsements, but for the challenge it presents, both mental and physical. The winners in a sailboat race, whether at the local, national or international level, receive a prize, not a check. Whether the prize is a mug, silver cup, flag, Olympic Medal or the America's Cup, our sport is about being in a race, having fun, developing friendships and challenging yourself. It was that way during the 1960s and it is that way today.



Courtesy of Harken, Inc.

Though sailors are not usually front-page news, Peter became a bit of a media star in the local papers. The *Wisconsin State Journal*, *Capital Times* and *Milwaukee Journal* all ran stories about Peter and his Olympic campaigns.

THE "MARY B" AND SAILMAKING

Peter returned from the Olympics, moved to Mequon and held a position at UW-Milwaukee as a lecturer in engineering mechanics. A member of both the Four Lakes and Pewaukee Ice Yacht Clubs for many years, Peter would often crew for his old friend Jim Payton on one of the largest and fastest Class A Stern Steerer's, *Mary B*. In 1964, with Jim on the tiller and Peter as crew, they raced for the Hearst Trophy. Victory was in sight when weather called a halt to the races and the series was not completed. They reunited in 1965 for the Stewart Cup, this time joined by Mo Cleland. In that same year, two other honors came his way. Peter finished third in the North American Finn class championship and first in the Caribbean Regatta at San Juan.^{xv} That summer, the Madison Pen and Mike Club and the Bowman Sports Foundation recognized his accomplishments by naming him "Favorite Son."



The *Mary B*
Courtesy of the Four Lakes Ice
Yacht Club



In 1964, Lowell North hired Peter to manage North's second sail loft in Costa Mesa, California. Peter and his family moved to California in the summer of 1965^{xvi}. Peter would work at North Sails for the next 21 years. Five years later, in 1969, he and his family moved to Pewaukee to manage the new North Sails Midwest loft. Together with his old UW sailing buddies Charlie Miller, Art Mitchell, and Peter and Olaf Harken, they operated North Sails Midwest, Harken Yacht Fittings and Vanguard Sailboats from the basement of an old bottling plant in Waukesha.^{xvii} They

all lived on Pewaukee Lake, raced Finns and were members of the Pewaukee Yacht Club. Peter spent the remainder of that summer at a series of regattas in Milwaukee, Wilmette,

San Francisco, Eugene, Oregon and Kingston, Ontario.^{xviii} North Sails named Peter Executive Vice-President in 1973. During his tenure with North Sails, Peter led the company's expansion as it established lofts throughout the world, becoming the number one sail maker in the business. Lowell North, the founder of North Sails, Olympic Medalist and America's Cup Skipper, had this to say about Peter: "Without Peter Barrett, North Sails would still be a one-man operation next to the San Diego Yacht Club. Without Peter Barrett, I would never have won my Gold Medal. He is the best person I have ever known."^{xix}

SPREADING THE WORD

Beginning in 1964, Peter, always the teacher, began to combine his sailing talent with his ability to teach. He was one of the first champion sailors to lecture regularly on the fine points of sailing, tactics, rules and equipment. He was a frequent guest at Steve Colgate's Race Weeks. Then, under the auspices of Sailing Symposiums, Inc., Peter, along with Dr. Stewart Walker and Steve Colgate, embarked on a series of weekend lectures around the country.



PETER BARRETT
CARTE BLANCHE

KING of the Dum Dums! Meaning no disrespect to the bottom half of the Thistle fleet at this year's mid-winters, this is the honorary title bestowed on the lucky skipper who leads the second division (the fleet is split by standing for the last race). It may be of interest (and of great psychological value) to learn how the writer, who had placed 3, 1, 1, 2 in the four previous mid-winters, finished 35th out of 69 and became king of the dum dums!

The story really began a month before the series, when a two week siege of pneumonia slowed the preparation of Thistle 471, which was being rebuilt after a rear end auto collision three years ago. As a result, the last two days at St. Petersburg were spent frantically mounting fittings, sanding the hull, board, and rudder, and rigging a new mast (a decision of the class governing body reversed its earlier

permission to sail with an experimental tapered version of the standard aluminum mast). This is not the way to go into an important series, although we felt we were ready when the first race started Monday afternoon.

The wind was oscillating, and at the start the flag end of the line was favored (meaning port tack was lifted and it would behoove us to get on port quickly). As we approached the flag end on port, planning to tack onto starboard ahead of the line of starboard tackers, it became apparent that no one could get to the flag by the starting gun. Hence a quick change of plans, a short time spent huffing on port tack, and we trimmed in and hit the line at the gun right next to the flag on port tack, crossing about five feet ahead of class champion Jim Miller.

Our first mistake came when the wind shifted back (as expected) to the right and instead of tacking I gambled on a continuing clockwise shift and stayed on port, crossing behind the first two or three boats from the committee boat end of the line. Jim, who had gone onto port behind us after the start, went back onto starboard . . . he had good speed, and when the wind went back counterclockwise again and filled in from the left he had a nice lead at the mark and we were 10th.

We had picked up two or three boats on the two reaching legs and the second beat, and approached the finish line from the leeward side of the run.

I had stayed low hoping to reach up at the end and perhaps catch two or three of the boats just ahead of us, who had gone high — my big error was not paying enough attention to the current, and when the wind suddenly died completely we were past the finish line before we could react, and anchor. See diagrams on page 24.

Sailing Symposiums News

VOL. I, NO. 4 139 E. CHICAGO AVE., CHICAGO, ILL. 60611 NOVEMBER, 1968

Dick Stearns Guest Expert

Richard Stearns, former World Champion in the Star Class, an Olympian and one of the top high performance sailmakers in the world, will return for another week as "guest expert" at Sailing Symposiums November 30 Race Week. Stearns, along with Steve Colgate, director of the Sailing

Symposiums program, and Mike Harty, resident manager at West End, will be out on the water. He said/Heater, more than 30 registrants had signed up for the November 30 work, but with the new 33-foot fleet of Sifflins, up to 50 sailors may participate in the program.

Regattas On Agenda For '68-'69

CHICAGO — The Sailing Symposiums program at West End, Grand Haven, will be extended this year to include Regatta Weeks as well as the Race Weeks on the lake. The Regatta Weeks are different from the Race Weeks in that they are more racing with no instruction. The boats (owned and sailed) will be supplied, race courses set up, race committee provided, and trophies presented. The plan is for racing sailmakers to get themselves to West End for "regatta maintenance" without any traveling to and from.

Regatta Of Champions

WEST END, Grand Haven Island — The first world championship regatta of sailing is to be held at Sailing Symposiums, regatta West End facilities as one of the features of 1969 regatta. The series will be held in the 18-hour sailing to be used in the SSC program beginning in October, and will involve all of the world's top helmsmen. Several 1967 and 68 world champions will be asked to compete, the new helmsmen they consider to be the best in the world. The venue will not be



George O'Day, Bruce Kirby, Steve Colgate demonstrate quick surfing qualities of the Sifflin under chaps.

Peter's columns in *One Design & Offshore Yachtsman* (later *Yacht Racing and Cruising*; now *Sailing World*) were full of insights and anecdotes from the world of sailing and iceboating. In one memorable article, Peter offers a clear and concise explanation of two fairly complex phenomena—apparent wind and why iceboats can sail faster than the wind. In others, he describes the benefits of using a compass (a radical idea at the time) to determine wind shifts and is quick to point out his own mistakes during a championship regatta. Few Olympians or championship athletes have the courage to do that, but he does it with humor and grace as a method of teaching critical sailing skills to his readers.^{xx}

SOUTH OF THE BORDER, THE 1968 OLYMPICS

The Olympics called again in 1968. This time, Peter had three plans. His old favorite, the Finn, would be his first choice. He and Laurie had been sailing together for years and were ready to make a run for the '68 games as a team in Flying Dutchman. Ultimately, he teamed up with Olympic veteran Lowell North in the Star class for the games in Acapulco, Mexico. Countless stories have been written, told and retold about that effort. Against the challenges of equipment breakdowns and a very sick skipper, they handily took home the Gold medal.^{xxi}



Peter & Lowell North
Olympic Medalists 1968
Courtesy of Harken, Inc.

Peter is in a select group of Olympians. Only 120 men have represented the United States as sailors in the Olympics between 1900 and 2004. Only four have medaled in the Finn, only 12 have medaled in multiple games, and only three came from Wisconsin. Peter falls into all of those categories of talented athletes.^{xxii}

THE AQUARIUS 23

In the late 1960s, Peter and Stan Miller designed two small cruising sailboats. The Aquarius 21 and Aquarius 23 were produced from 1969 to 1977. The revolutionary features on those boats--a deck-stepped mast, swing keel and many others, are now common on today's small cruisers.



Aquarius 23
Maggie's Dingy
Courtesy of Peter Fauerbach

MENTORING YOUNG SAILORS

Boys and Girls, Together

5 Days Of
Racing
Lectures
Coaching . . .
Fun

With Peter Barrett In 14 Brand New 470's!

A rare opportunity for America's young sailors to participate in an advanced yacht racing instruction program under the supervision of one of the world's best smallboat helmsmen, Peter Barrett. The program is inspired in part on successful Olympic Training Camp programs.

Sailing Symposiums, Inc., a partnership between ONE-DESIGN & OFFSHORE YACHTSMAN magazine and Steve Colgate's OFFSHORE SAILING SCHOOL, LTD. in New York, is sponsor of the program. A similar program last summer at Holland, Michigan, earned the enthusiastic approval of the 20 boys who took part in it.

You'll alternate between the International 470's (taking turns with your partner on the trapeze and the helm) and in single-handing a fleet of Tech Dinghies.

It's going to be all yacht racing, even in the after dinner bull sessions, so unless you're willing to dedicate a week of your life to this single subject, this program is not for you.

To qualify, you must be 14 years old and not have reached your twenty-first birthday. Supervised dormitory housing permits inclusion of girls this year. You must be able to demonstrate that you've had considerable experience in racing and thus be able to benefit from this advanced program. We ask that you submit

Peter was an active and passionate sailing teacher for years. In 1970 Steve Colgate's Offshore Sailing School and *One-Design and Offshore Yachtsman* announced a weeklong advanced yacht racing program for young sailors to be held that June here in Madison, Wisconsin using the facilities at Hoofers. The program was led by Peter Barrett, described as "one of the world's best small boat helmsmen."^{xxiii}

More honors on the racecourse came in 1971 when he crewed on *Endurance*, the winning boat in Division 1 of the Chicago-Mackinac Race. He became the first winner of UW-Madison Hooper Sailing Club's alumni Tech Dinghy Intergalactic championship, known now as the Peter Barrett Intergalactic Tech Championship Regatta, sailed on Lake Mendota in a 30-knot gale.^{xxiv}

Peter's list of other trophies and recognitions during his career is legendary. I've probably missed some but he has won national championships in the 470 and the Finn. In ILYA competition, he won the C-Scow Blue Chip and a 1978 ILYA Championship in his A Scow, *Tabasco*.^{xxv} As a former commodore of the Hooper Sailing Club, Peter returned to Madison and the Hooper Sailing Club many times to run regattas and mentor young sailors. In 2000, the Milwaukee Community Sailing Center named him Sailor of the Year.^{xxvi}

A CAREER IN EDUCATION

In the mid-1980s Peter and his wife Laurie started Barrett Life Vests, located near Schenks Corners on Winnebago Street in Madison. Laurie says, "We had the crazy idea that building comfortable lifejackets might entice boaters to wear them, and would thus save lives."^{xxvii xxviii}

In 1985, Peter earned a MBA from UW-Milwaukee followed by a PhD in Finance, again from UW-Milwaukee, in 1994. Following his 1985 retirement from North Sails he taught finance and business law at UW-Whitewater. His wife Laurie was a member of the Accounting faculty there. They retired from UW-Whitewater in 1997 and moved to their dream home on the shore of Flathead Lake, Montana.

REMEMBERING PETER

Peter passed away on December 17, 2000 following a two-year battle with cancer. Lon Schoor, champion E Scow skipper from the Mendota Yacht Club, remembers Peter as "forever a teacher and coach to me." Lon and Bill Mattison got hooked on A scows twenty-five years ago. Lon tells the story this way: "At an E scow Blue Chip regatta in the early 1980s we were dissecting that day's races with Peter. One thing led to another and Peter said that his A scow team could not make the big A scow regatta the following month at Lake Pepin. Could we get a few more crew and take his boat? At first, we weren't sure that he really meant it, but he did, and so we did. We got the A scow bug then and there. Bill and I picked up our first A scow soon after that and raced against Peter for several years."^{xxix}



Courtesy of Laurie Barrett

That's the way it is whenever Peter's name comes up. "He got me started in this boat or that." "I read every article he ever wrote." "He was my first sailing instructor." "I raced Finns with him." The stories go on and on.

The Four Lakes Ice Yacht Club maintains an honor roll to recognize outstanding contributions to iceboating and iceboat racing. Only 27 iceboaters have been named to the honor roll since it was created in 1967. In 2001, Club members voted unanimously to add Peter to that select roster. In 2002, he was inducted into the Sailing World Hall of Fame.^{xxx}

Peter is survived by his wife Laurie, their three children Tara, Bruce and Kevin and his brother Tim. Peter will be remembered as a sailor who loved competition, sailing, friends, family and life. His big grin was there for everyone, whether he beat you or you beat him.^{xxxi}

Peter's family remembers him as a man who loved to show his children the beauty of water, as a grandfather who told enthralling bedtime stories, and as a colleague whose accomplishments everyone respected. His family said that he always made his loved ones feel most important—teaching them the beauty of steering a boat, modesty in achieving success, and caring for people above all else. "I think this example of living a life with integrity was the most important thing I learned from him. He was an amazing person at all levels and I think his commitment to truth and honesty and kindness were far more important than his sailing accomplishments," his son Bruce said.^{xxxii}



Peter, Laurie and their young family about 1963
Courtesy of Laurie Barrett

Pete was an inspiration to everyone who knew him, even those like me who never met him. I grew up racing Lightnings on Cazenovia Lake in Central New York. I first learned about Peter from my Finn-sailing friends Mike Hill and Arthur Diefendorf. Later, I tore through each new issue of *One Design and Offshore Yachtsman* to read Peter's latest column and learn what I could about sailing fast and fair. I never expected to live in his hometown, sail on his lake and meet his friends. Now, whenever I bring up his name in a circle of Madison sailors, whether at a UW Hooper social, an iceboat race on Lake Monona or a Mendota Yacht Club party, someone usually has a story or recollection about Peter and his impact on their sailing career.

Peter Barrett was and is one of this country's greatest sailors and finest competitors. During his sailing career he was a leader during the period of revolutionary change in our sport. He brought honor and recognition to Madison, his hometown and mentored untold numbers of sailors worldwide. What an honor it is for all of us in the Madison sailing community to see him recognized by the Madison Sports Hall of Fame.

About the author:



Don Sanford grew up in a family of sailors on Cazenovia Lake in Central New York State and recalls that he was a reluctant sailor until he was about 19. Then he discovered that where boats were raced, there was usually beer, great people to meet and fun places to visit. He raced Lightnings in Central New York until his move to Madison in 1976. That's when he "saw the light" and got hooked on E Scows and iceboats. He's a member of the Four Lakes Ice Yacht Club and a Rear Commodore of the Mendota Yacht Club. He lives in Madison with his wife and long-suffering grammatical advisor, Barb, who enjoys getting out on the water and occasionally the ice in one of their boats. Don retired from a 30-year career with Wisconsin Public Television in 2006. When not sailing or iceboating, working on boats or writing, you'll find Captain Don at the helm of one of the vessels on the Betty Lou Cruise Line on Lake Mendota or Monona.

If you'd care to comment on this story or share a recollection about Peter, he'd welcome your thoughts at: dpsanford@charter.net

SOURCES:

- i *Capital Times*, May 17, 1952
- ii *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 2, 1942
- iii *Wisconsin State Journal*, December 28, 1956
- iv MYC Directories: 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960
- v *Milwaukee Journal*, June 29, 1969
- vi *Capital Times*, July 1, 1960
- vii *Wisconsin State Journal*, October 26, 1969
- viii *Oyster Bay World Telegram*, July 23, 1962
- ix *Capital Times*, July 1, 1960
- x *Wisconsin State Journal*, September 14, 1961
- xi *Capital Times*, December 10, 1962
- xii Steve Colgate, Correspondence August 15, 2006
- xiii # 2282, *Scuttlebutt* on-line newspaper.
- xiv # 2280, *Scuttlebutt* on-line newspaper
- xv *Capital Times*, May 20, 1965
- xvi *Capital Times*, May 20, 1965
- xvii *Milwaukee Journal*, June 29, 1969
- xviii *Milwaukee Journal*, July 6, 1969
- xix www.e-scow.org/ Peter
- xx *One Design and Offshore Yachtsman*, November 1968, April 1970, April 1971.
- xxi On the way out to the start of one race, the main halyard broke. Rather than retire, Peter and Lowell dropped the 25-foot mast, tied the main to the top and resteped it with the main attached. They not only made the start of that race but also went on to win it. Then, in the 4th race, with the Gold Medal in sight, Lowell came down with a bad case of the flu. Lowell later recalled that he was so ill that about all he could do was steer. His eyes were watering and he could hardly see. He had a high temperature and was suffering other side effects of the flu. He said that Peter told him, "Just steer, I will do everything else." After the race, Lowell said, "Barrett won that race, but *we* won the Gold Medal."
www.starclass.net, Lowell North Interview
- xxii International Sailing Federation Web site, Sailing Medalists by Event;
www.sailing.org/olympics/medallists_by_event.asp#1960
- xxiii *One-Design and Offshore Yachtsman*, April 1970
- xxiv UW Hooper Sailing Club, www.hoopersailing.org/racing/igs/pjb
- xxv Hodgson, Thomas A., *The History of the Inland Lakes Yachting Association*, pg. 181
- xxvi *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 21, 2000
- xxvii "The house next door came with the building we used for the lifejacket company, so we remodeled it and made it into a day care center." Interview with Laurie Barrett, June 2004
- xxviii Author's note: Our son Emery Sanford attended that day care center for a couple of years. Now, 20 years later, he's a mechanical engineer with a major computer manufacturer in California and a champion sailor. There was good karma in that building.
- xxix Interview with Lon Schoor, March 2007
- xxx <http://sailingworld.com/article.jsp?typeID=398&catID=608&ID=200815> and
<http://www.star2004.com/mr-hall%20of%20fame.htm>
- xxxi O'Day Sportsmanship Trophy, donated by Harken, Inc.
- xxxii *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 21, 2000