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## Obituaries and Appreciations

(Monday, 05 June 2006) - Contributed by Editor - Last Updated ()

### Victor Clark, Founder Member

Commander Victor Clark, DSC and Bar, died on 14 December 2005 at the age of 97. He led a long, varied and exciting life, with an illustrious naval career before setting out, in 1953, to circumnavigate aboard his 33ft sloop Solace.

His interest in sailing began while he was still at school, crewing on engineless Lowestoft fishing smacks during the holidays. He joined the Royal Navy in the 1930s, serving in HMS Valiant, Warspite, Anthony and Punjabi, the latter including the evacuation of British troops from St Nazaire for which he was awarded the DSC. In December 1941 he survived the sinking of the battlecruiser HMS Repulse off Malaya, but within weeks was back afloat at the helm of a requisitioned steamship supported by a flotilla of smallcraft, bent on commando raids behind Japanese lines. When his command was sunk after a particularly daring foray he volunteered to take a pair of river gunboats to rescue 2000 allied troops cut off by the Japanese, successfully evacuating them to ships waiting offshore. Days before the surrender of Singapore he was sent south to Java, but his motor launch was intercepted and sunk off Sumatra and, following six weeks in the jungle, he and his men were betrayed to the Japanese, whose prisoner he remained for the next three and a half years.

Following the war Victor Clark spent five years as Chief Training Officer to the Sea Cadets while planning his circumnavigation. Solace was bought in June 1953 and, with Naval efficiency, by 4 September was ready to depart. Crewed by Chich Thornton (see Flying Fish 2003/1), Solace sailed south to Madeira, the Canaries and the Cape Verde islands, and thence to Barbados and Trinidad, where Chich departed, and St Lucia, where the teenage Stanley joined the crew.

Pressing on through Panama and across the Pacific, Solace was wrecked on the reef at Palmerston Atoll. However six months' work on the beach, aided by most of the island's population, saw her fit to continue the voyage via New Zealand, New Guinea, the Indian Ocean, South Africa, the Caribbean &ndash; so that Stanley could visit his family in St Lucia &ndash; and finally back to England in August 1959, six years and some 48,000 miles after departure. Solace is still afloat and sailing, owned by Victor's nephew Tim Thorn. The entire adventure was recounted in Victor's book *On the Wind of a Dream*, now sadly out of print but occasionally available secondhand.

In 1962 Victor took command of the schooner Prince Louis for the Outward Bound School, later replaced by the Captain Scott, only coming ashore permanently in 1975 on his marriage to Danae Stileman. He then taught for a while at the Emsworth Sailing School and, in 1994 at the age of 86, completed his autobiography, *Triumph and Disaster*.

Commander Victor Clark, prior to his death the Club's most senior member, is survived by his wife Danae and their two daughters.

### José &Peter's; Azevedo, OCC Port Officer Azores

José &Peter's; Azevedo, known to thousands of members as the proprietor of Horta's famous Café Sport, died at Horta Hospital on 19 November 2005 at the age of 80.

Born in May 1925, as a very young boy he started work helping his father Henrique Azevedo, founder of Café Sport. One of his tasks was to deliver goods to the families of the staff of the foreign cable companies operating at Horta, and this is how he learnt English. The Café Sport being in the harbour area, he became involved with ships and their crews and got the feeling of dealing with sailors, of many different flags and languages.

During the Second World War in the early 1940s, he got a job in the Allies's; base which was established in his home port. One of the British officers on duty found this young man very similar in appearance to his son, and asked him if could call him Peter, his son's; name. Thus José acquired the nickname which he carried with such pride and by which he has been known all over the ocean sailing world.

Though his father was the skipper of the Café Sport until his death in 1975, Peter was the very able and efficient deckhand.

Those were the days when transatlantic yachting was recovering from the war years and very few yachts called at Horta.

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These boats, usually of modest dimensions, and their crews were known locally as aventureiros, and one of Peter's tasks was to row out in a pram dinghy and meet them, inviting them to the Café Sport and trying to help everybody. This is how he met and became a friend of Humphrey Barton and of many founder members of the Ocean Cruising Club, such as Edward Allcard, Bill Howell, Carleton Mitchell (who mentioned Peter in an article published by the National Geographic Magazine), Ben Carlin etc.

In the early '60s all yachtsmen visiting Horta could be met at the Café Sport, where they could find their mail, all necessary assistance and an honest friendship. In other words, it was THE place where every sailor could feel at home. In 1967 José 'Peter' Azevedo became OCC Port Officer for the Azores and, a few years later in 1981, was nominated an honorary member of the Club.

During the years the reputation of the Café Sport grew beyond the islands' shores and the Portuguese frontiers and became a gathering place for the most heterogeneous clientele, but Peter always kept a special relationship with the navigators. His efforts to help the crews of visiting yachts have been recognised by both the Azorean and the Lisbon authorities and, among a few tributes, in 2003 the President of the Portuguese Republic granted Peter with the insignia of Grau de Oficial da Ordem de Mérito.

One the last tributes paid to Peter was by the management of the Portuguese Post Office for his work receiving and delivering mail for the thousands of foreign yachtsmen calling at Horta.

Another legacy left by Peter is his rich and beautiful collection of scrimshaw, some of it dating back many years and a valuable cultural heritage. The collection has a section of portraits including one of Humphrey Barton, and others of Sir Francis Chichester and David Lewis. Visitors can admire the collection, which is housed in rooms above the Café Sport.

José 'Peter' Azevedo is survived by his wife Luísa, son José Henrique, three grandchildren and a countless number of friends. Though he was never an oceangoing sailor, no sailor could find a better friend.

João Carlos Fraga

#### A Personal Tribute to Peter from the Admiral

João Fraga's obituary for Peter has given us a true picture of the man and of the esteem and affection in which he was held by all cruising folk who have visited the Café Sport at Horta. Here all comers have for many years enjoyed the warm welcome and friendly, cheerful atmosphere, in addition to the unfailing practical help and advice (if necessary) they have received at this unique meeting place.

Peter had long been a valued friend to Hum, but my first meeting with him was in 1970 when, after a slow passage from St Barts, we finally reached Horta. Slow because of a failed gearbox on the first day out combined with windless spells, and I will never forget Peter's arrival on board soon after we had berthed alongside the wall in the old harbour. 'Welcome, my friends', he said, 'I have brought just a few things for you'. And he had — not too much of anything, but all the fresh things most appreciated after 30 days at sea, accompanied, of course, by a bottle of Pico wine! That was typical of Peter and an experience doubtless shared by many in the cruising fraternity.

I was also fortunate in meeting Henrique, his father, on that visit — a quiet and gentle elderly man, with great dignity and natural charm and the generosity we have come to know from each generation of that family. Peter's son José said to me on my last visit during the OCC 50th Anniversary Rally in 2004, 'you have now met four generations of the Azevedo family'. I have, and this I regard as a privilege.

Mary Barton

And finally...

Just before Flying Fish went to press in mid May it was learnt that the town would be honouring Peter by renaming the waterfront street on which the Café Sport stands after him. A most fitting tribute.

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Pat Purdy

Pat was all his life first and foremost a seaman. Despite being born and brought up in Rutland – about as far from the sea as you can get in England – he decided at the age of seven that he would join the Royal Navy and duly started at Dartmouth at thirteen.

These early years saw the sailing bug take hold, whether it was in small dinghies or ‘50 Squares’, while his career led him increasingly under the water in submarines, in time commanding a couple of A-boats and the (at that time) newer O-class. He covered many thousands of miles on Her Majesty’s business, and in his spare time celebrated her Coronation by taking part in that year’s Round the Island dinghy race. He did concede that a Firefly was probably not the ideal boat for this 60 mile course!

Pat left the Navy at the age of 40 when it became apparent that he was likely to be sailing a desk from there on in. But he never left the sea. Family holidays were always afloat, and over the years took in pretty much every harbour and seafood restaurant between Le Havre and La Rochelle. Meanwhile his work with Marconi’s underwater weapons division kept him in touch with developments – and many friends – in the submarine service.

In 1992 Pat and I bought our Westerly Conway Ganilly Rose, partly as a more comfortable upgrade from our previous Sadler 32, but also with a quiet but increasingly firm resolve to one day take her off to the Caribbean – a place he’d always wanted to visit but to which the Navy had never taken him. In the summer of ’95 Pat retired and we moved aboard GR and headed south. After a season in the Med, our subsequent Atlantic circuit saw Pat’s lifetime ambition realised on arrival in Barbados after a 21 day crossing – with OCC membership duly following.

We returned to Europe the following spring, and continued to live aboard for all but the winter months until 2004. That year’s sailing was precluded by Pat’s diagnosis with throat cancer and consequent laryngectomy, but the following summer we enjoyed a leisurely few weeks bringing Ganilly Rose back to the UK from Rochefort.

Sadly, in early October it became clear that the cancer had returned, and he died on 1 November 2005 at the age of 73. His last sailing trip, only a few weeks earlier, was a memorable weekend on the Solent in our son and daughter-in-law’s boat, which somehow managed to include dragging anchor at 0400. As the young(ish) owners rushed on deck to sort things out Pat, in his pyjamas and with neither his teeth nor his laryngeal valve in place, made an offer to help. This was politely declined – to his obvious relief! – but still typified the attitude he’d shown on boats and ships for 60 years. Sometime this summer his ashes will be returned to the sea.

Pippa Purdy

Don Robinson

Don Robinson died on 12 October 2005 aged 74. Sailing and the sea were his life’s passion, and his devotion to

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sailing influenced all who came within hailing distance. He enjoyed cruising almost as much as he enjoyed racing, and spent most of his retirement aboard our Little Harbor 38, Puritan.

I don't think our marriage would have survived if I hadn't been enthusiastic about sailing. Our four sons were brought aboard when they were only days old, and two of these men now earn their living working on boats. I feel fortunate that Don was my skipper for more than 50 years.

Angie Robinson