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HUMAN INTEREST

Vice Commodore William M. Parks

December 11, 1921 – December 10, 2008

By Melinda Berge

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Bill Parks. Photo by Jan Walker.

Star Class Vice Commodore Bill Parks passed away December 10, 2008, one day before his 87th birthday. He was the president of the Star Class from 1974 to 1978, a past commodore of Chicago Yacht Club, an ISAF International Judge, a bronze medalist in the Star at the 1960 Olympic Games (Rome), and a Star sailor for 50 years

He belonged to the Southern Lake Michigan Fleet, racing in the Chicago area. In 1938 he skippered a Star for the first time in a junior championship, and thus began a love affair of long standing.

In 1947, in partnership with Gary Comer, he acquired his first *Shrew*, #1308, a boat already eleven years old at the time. Four years later with this same *Shrew* he won the Mid-States championship and the Fourth District Green Star, and was on his way up. He had a gold chevron from the 1955 World's in Portugal, and was twice the runner-up in the North American Championship (1966, 1969).

Parks was a civil engineering graduate of Illinois Institute of Technology and had an M.B.A. from the University of Chicago. He was a vice president of Vapor Corporation and served on the board of directors of the American Transit Association.

He was a lifelong Star sailor who truly gave more than he received. Besides being a top level competitor, he gave freely of his time, training many young Star crews over the years. An active singer, with a beautiful baritone voice, he was known for singing operas on light air days.

The Star Class sends its deepest sympathy to his wife Joan and his daughter Julie Soxman.

There will be a Celebration of Life at the Belmont Yacht Club, the date to be determined.

Memorials for Bill may be sent to:

Parks Family Scholarship
c/o Illinois Institute of Technology
Attn: Betsy Hughes
10 West 35th Street, Suite 1700
Chicago, IL 60616

or

Judd Goldman Adaptive Sailing Foundation
875 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 3718
Chicago, IL 60611

Remarks on Bill Parks by David Bolles

Bill Parks, the Technical Committee and the Evolution of the Star

As noted above, Bill Parks was the Star Class President for the years 1974-1978. Prior to that he was very involved in working on technical aspects of the Star hull during the period

of transition from a boat being built out of wood to being one built out of fiberglass. He was one of the original members and the first chairman of the Technical Committee, which was first listed in the 1965 Log.

After his stint as Class President Bill continued to serve the Class in the International Governing Committee, for a time as Chairman, and beginning in 1984 returned to the Technical Committee, and continued to serve on it until 1995. Even after that he was often consulted by members of the Technical Committee.

In the 1971 Log appeared technical drawings which accompanied the Specification section. These were the first of a set of drawings drawn by Bill. Some of these drawings, in modified form, continued to be used through the 1990's.

In the June, 2008 issue of the 1st District Newsletter Bill wrote an article entitled "[Some Comments on the Development Article](#)" in which he talked about the question of to what degree the Star boat should be one-design.

Obituary from the Chicago Tribune 12/16/2008

William Wilson "Bill" Parks, age 86, beloved husband of Joan Simpson, nee Erdmann; loving father of Julia Soxman (David L.) of Kansas City; brother of Richard R. Parks of Corvallis, OR. Predeceased by first wife, Patricia, nee Gaghan, died at The Classic Residence by Hyatt in Glenview, Dec. 9, 2008.

He was born Dec. 11, 1921, in Oak Park, IL. Undergraduate degree earned at Illinois Institute of Technology and Masters Degree in Business Administration from University of Chicago. Bill was a U.S. Navy Veteran and served with the Seabees 111th Battalion in the Philippines.

Bill was a world recognized yachtsman. He was awarded a bronze medal in the 1960 Olympics racing a STAR Class boat. He was Commodore of Chicago Yacht Club, Commodore of the Chicago Yachting Association, President of the International Star Class Yacht Racing Association, a many year board member of the Judd Goldman Adaptive Sailing Foundation, and served as a Yachting Judge for the 1984 Olympics. He was Chicago Yachtsman of the Year in 1994.

His business life was spent entirely with VAPOR Corporation, first as a development engineer in the steam generator lab and eventually became President a few years before his retirement, 40 years later! He held six patents for transportation equipment devices. He served on the Board of Directors of the American Public Transit Association. In the 40's and 50's Bill sang barbershop, one time appearing with his quartet on the same program as the Buffalo Bills. He moved on to classical and popular music, played piano and composed and arranged music. In addition to his wife, daughter and brother he leaves a huge void in the lives of his son-in-law, David Soxman; and Joan's three daughters, Tobey Robertson (Scott), Kyle Witt (Craig) and Megan B. Simpson (Ian Marshall); as well as Joan's five grandchildren.

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