



Jim Hater

Doctor/Sailor/Family Man/Friend
February 12, 1943 - September 21, 2013



“...Jim fell asleep at a party. As a prank, (we) painted his toenails red. As usual, he took it in stride. He even walked barefoot through the hotel lobby to the hot tub.”



Jim Hater was an unusual man. We remember him as a Y-Flyer, Snipe, and Sunfish sailor who has been racing with wife Carolyn at Acton Lake for two centuries, it seems.

But he was far more than an enthusiast for wind powered boats. When he wasn't at the lake competing, he was a doctor of optometry with a thriving business in Delhi in Cincinnati. More than that he was a pilot, having gotten his license to fly just ten years ago in his late fifties.

He bought a plane with one of his three sons and often flew to Kentucky just to touch down or to Wright Field in Dayton. He also flew to West Point, Florida, where his oldest son David, a colonel in the Air Force, was once stationed. Jim knew wind. And microclimates. Both came in handy on the water in a sailboat as well as in the air.

You can ask any who knew him what kind of a man he was, and you would get the same reply: kind, happy, and a great friend. But even more, he was, in my mind, a courageous man with integrity.

I became convinced of that about four years ago when Jim and I were on race duty together. I waited about five minutes too long to abandon a race as a dangerous weather front approached from the northwest. I was on the committee boat and Jim

was in Rescue One. By the time we abandoned racing, the storm had raced in itself and, with it, some ferocious lightning. I picked up a junior or two and their boats and headed for the marina docks so we could get off the water. Most of the race participants had gotten into the docks as well, but there were still four boats on the water when the 30+ miles per hour wind struck. Charlie Buchert's Hobie, and two Y's - Charlie DeArmon and Roger Henthorn. The fourth boat was Jim Hater in Rescue One.

The three sailboats capsized within 10 seconds of one another as the squall hit them in a synchronous wave of powerful wind. Those of us standing beneath the shelter of the marina concession stand watched helplessly and strained to see through the rain if all those thrown into the water were OK.

And then we saw Jim. With a thick rain pouring and lightning bolts thundering all around the lake, he was methodically moving from one capsized to another and picking up the people in the water, just as if he was picking up buoys after a race. Just like it was a part of his duty.

Everything turned out well that day, but it could have been worse. Jim brought all five sailors out of the water and back to safety with little regard for his own.

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I am glad that I told him afterwards that I was grateful for his small but important act of heroism. He shrugged it off saying it wasn’t a big thing, but I won’t forget, nor should any other sailor, his sense of duty and obligation under stress.

His sister-in-law Christine White wrote that she knew of Jim saving a drowning swimmer. She also recounted a story that reflects Jim’s good sense of humor. Jim, she said, “...fell asleep at a party. As a prank, my sister and I painted his toenails red. As usual, he took it in stride. He even walked barefoot through the hotel lobby to the hot tub.”

Friend Bill Hanseman wrote that “Jim and I spent many a day together ... on our big deer hunt in eastern Ohio...I know he will be with us in spirit this year, waiting by his tree for his two o’clock deer to come by.”

HSA members recall Jim’s (and wife of 48 years Carolyn’s) many appearances at the lake but, in particular, their many days and nights at HSA’s junior camp where they helped the Callahans supervise, feed, and instruct the campers. But Jim had a long history of working with youth too. Jim was connected to scouting for 60 years beginning with his own scouting experience and extending to his serving as a scoutmaster and scout advisor for many boys as well as his own: David, a colonel stationed at Ft. Mead; Michael, an ophthalmologist and cataract surgeon; and Todd, a stockbroker with Fidelity Mutual.

Jim was recognized twice by HSA for his participation in our club. In 2002 he was the recipient of the Frank Peters Memorial Sportsmanship Award, and in 2010 he was awarded the U. S. Sailing Sportsmanship Trophy for his contribution to the club and to sailing at Acton Lake. He and Carolyn began their wind odyssey in 1970 with the purchase of a “bathtub” boat, but soon graduated to competing in a Snipe and then to a Y-Flyer which they bought from Bob and Lorraine Schultz. They were a fixture in HSA for forty years. And if you asked Jim why he raced he would only tell you that “you do it for the pleasure... because you like it.”

Testifying to his great physical capacity despite a lung transplant two years ago, Jim worked a full day on September 10, the day he was taken to Good Sam.