

William (Bill) Raynham. December 1st, 1932 - October 25th, 2023.

I have been asked by Derian Scott to put together a few words to highlight the life at Chew of my "old" helm Bill Raynham. My first thought was "Impossible", I cannot use a few words when thousands wouldn't be enough.

I first encountered Bill when I joined C.V.L.S.C. in the late 70's, I was sailing a Mirror whilst Bill was sailing a Fireball, despite Bill being 15 years my senior we both had young families his wife Jeannine was very occupied with looking after Jo and Kate while Bill was busy racing.

The two boats mentioned formed the largest fleets by number within the club, Bill was the Fireball Fleet Captain and a prominent voice on the sailing committee, within a year of joining I became the Mirror Fleet Captain and joined Bill on the committee, serving on various committees became something that we both did for almost 30 years together and in all that time Bill gave a lot of wise advice and I was only too happy to learn from it.

Bill was a great character and gelled with everyone and this helped him encourage people to move into Fireballs, which I eventually did. The fleet grew and grew under his Captaincy to the extent that on Sundays we could have between 15 and 20 boats on the line for club racing, our Opens were the talk of the club with regularly 50 to 70 boats attending.

Bill had many crews over the years, some were dedicated crews' others were helms stepping in just to have a sail and a laugh. Roger Davies, Steve Morris, Robert Flack, Ian Cadwallader, Jim Bishop, Julie Creed, myself and many more. Bill handed the fleet over to me when he stepped up to be Vice Commodore and ultimately Commodore, Vice President and finally President.

The club was founded by dinghy racers and racing was the ethos of the club back then, Bill was Commodore when Fireballs, Mirrors, Larks, Kestrels and that new upstart boat (Laser) had some of the biggest opens in the country with Saturday night Discos and parties the norm, the bar was usually heaving and Bill was without doubt always amongst the last to leave, this was also a trend after racing on a Sunday and on Wednesday evenings during the summer series.

Bill enjoyed the odd visit to other clubs and National championships which were always occasions to build memories that would be remembered and recounted numerous times as the escapades and laughter were boundless.

Bill finished his sailing in Fireballs by helming for Jim Bishop, now there was a pairing for fun. On the boom above the crewing position, I wrote "Mr. Grumpy" and above Bills position I wrote "Black Richard", explanations on asking me! With the tragic and untimely death of Jim, Bill lost his enthusiasm for sailing and took to golf with Nick Fisher, I took ownership of the Fireball and sailed it with my stepdaughter Heidi.

I said at the beginning that I would need thousands of words to record my thanks and admiration for Bill, change that to millions.

For any who read this and knew Bill and were at the club in those halcyon days you don't need me to feed you stories as you will have enough of your own. For those that came later, I can only say "You missed the best years of the club and you definitely missed one of the legends that helped form it, guide it and make it the best of clubs to be a part of".

Farewell Bill, you will be sorely missed by all those who knew you, loved and admired you.

Your one-time crew, George S.