

A memoir of the 1960s: early history of PHOSC

by Malcolm Rogers

My memories of PHOSC begin in 1960 when my father, Harry Rogers, moved our family to the large area of land surrounding the northern and western boundaries of the club. He built the concrete drive-in boatshed and wharf, now demolished, on the northern side of the club between 1962 and 1966. This caused much aggravation to the club's weekend racing as he would blast the rock away with gelignite and send debris flying over the clubhouse. Despite these incidents my father remained a staunch supporter of PHOSC and a good friend to many of its founders including Doug McLennan, Syd Crabb, John Peelgrane, Jim Herron and Merve Mason.

My brother Brian and I were active sailing members and close friends of the Everitts and Peelgranes. These families were sailing royalty, especially the late Mark Peelgrane who went on to win Australian and World titles. Mark and I started sailing in his Manly Junior and would spend school holidays sailing out to Jibbon Beach and beyond, camping under the stars; what freedom for two 11/12 year old boys. We were top grade swimmers trained by Mark's auntie, Joy Peelgrane, who ran a swim school in the Peelgrane compound across Attunga Road diagonally opposite the PHOSC entrance.

Around 1963 the club hosted the National Sharpie Titles. Sailors from all over the country converged and accommodation was sought in all quarters. There was an old vacant house adjacent to the club entrance on Attunga Road. Two elderly sisters had lived there and somehow the club was allowed to use it to billet the sailors. It was Mark Peelgrane, Ken Dinham and I who were given the job of cleaning out the old ladies life-time accumulation of memorabilia. What treasures we found. There were reels of the old Sydney Tivoli Theatre tickets, posters of 1920's and 30's vaudeville stars and other theatre mementoes. I don't remember that anybody was clever enough to save it, but I hope they did. Incidentally these two women were rumoured to have sighted a submarine in Port Hacking during World War 2. Apart from cleaning the house, the three of us plus other young fellows were assigned roustabout duties during the Titles such as holding onto the gunnels of champion sailor John Cuneo's Sharpie while his crew embarked from the club's busy boatshed ramp.

Later, as I grew heavier and stronger I was forward hand on the VJ of Lang Walker. Yes, 'the' Lang Walker, who lived with his parents, just north of Yowie Bay Boatshed and Tarzan's Wharf. After that I crewed on Mark Peelgrane's father John's "Cheapskate". This boat which John designed was a morphed VJ without a bowsprit and was very attractive and fast.

Apart from sailing there was an active social scene. One of the most enduring events was the PHOSC revue with Dolly Peelgrane, Mark's mother, as the singing and choreography coach and Mrs Mac (McLennan), the producer. I remember performing as part of the sailors' chorus in an adaptation of South Pacific staged at Miranda School of Arts. Rehearsals were held during the off season in Dolly's rumpus room while husband John was building another world class Sharpie in the adjoining workshop. If not building a new hull or spars John could be found upstairs in the lounge room with a large sewing machine running up a new set of "Terylene" sails. When we weren't learning a dance routine or our lines we were seconded to the workshop to help sand the hull ready for varnishing. Indeed there wasn't much time for us boys to get into trouble. It also helped that girls hadn't yet been invented.