

THE SKATE SAILING CLASS TURNS 50 YEARS OLD

By John Grant.

In conjunction with Heats 1 & 2 of the Skate State Championship, a Reunion to celebrate 50 years of Skate sailing was held at Toronto Amateur Sailing Club on the 4th November 2006.

Around 70 past and present sailors reminisced, watched movies of highlights of 5 decades of sailing, listened to some short speeches and ate and drank in keeping with their age (the old salts consumed the most and the younger brigade did so responsibly as they had another race the next day).

Some of the legends that attended were Jack Longbottom and Steve Bull from the sixties, Peter Reilly a former National Champion from the Seventies; John Allen, George Stipis and John Fiene also from the seventies and many, many others.(apologies to those not mentioned)

A great night was had by all.

Well done to Toronto A. S.C. officials and Peter Scott who organised the catering and a host of old memorabilia, photos, programs, newspaper articles and the old movies and videos.

One month later, at the club where it all began, Georges River Sailing Club an even bigger attendance of past and present sailors gathered.

The reunion was honoured with the presence of one of the four founding fathers of the Skates Don Dixon, a naval architect responsible for drawing the plans for the skate 50 years ago.

Don and his wife were in great health ,with Don still involved in yacht sailing on Port Hacking.

Don gave an informative speech about the early development and some of the early sailors. Another founding father, Jack Herrick who now lives at Port Stephens sent his apologies.

Finger food and refreshments followed a lunchtime BBQ all organised by Jeff Brooks in consultation with Steve Ward ,Commodore at G.R.S.C. and son of a Skate Legend ,Joe Ward.

From the sixties there was a big contingent of Yarra Bay sailors: John Pike, Ross Davies, Steve Bull, Rod Moore, Mike Goldberg, John Gettens, Keith Cole, Cam Sutton, Errol Coates, & "Bottles" Green.

From the seventies John Stone ,Bruce & Rick Heyhoe & Ron Melbourne were in attendance.

From the eighties Geoff Hughes ,Bruce Hollis, Sean Leonard , Pete Winney and Rob Young joined the fun.

Special mention must go to Bob Holm, Paul Johnson and Chris Merfield, the three travelling down from Airlie Beach to be at the reunion.