

Yacht club celebrates 75 years of sail support

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In 1978, Matthew Henley found an old wooden boat in the woods one day with his brother. He took it to the Kitsilano Yacht Club where he worked to fix it up.

Henley, now in his seventh year as the club's commodore, received a lot of help from the club's members, and it's that spirit of support he and others are celebrating during the club's 75th anniversary next month.

"People were always trying to help me out," Henley said.

Club commodore Matthew Henley will help commemorate Kitsilano Yacht Club's 75th anniversary.

The club, which started in 1934, is having an afternoon tea Sept. 12, the anniversary of the Point Grey Road club's founding. Several hundred people are expected to attend.

The opportunity to dry dock boats at a club for members of moderate means is what makes Kitsilano unique, said Henley, who races Lightning one-design sailboats introduced at the club in 1945.

"They're better off being kept on land," he noted about the club's sailboats. "You don't have to scrub the bottom."

The club offers Thursday night races and dinners during the summer, a bridge club, a lifeguard society that gives swimming lessons and outrigger canoeing.

Memberships start at \$405 a year, but the public is welcome to visit on Thursdays.

"On Thursdays someone will sometimes just show up at the dock," Henley said. "They'll come up, have dinner."

Henley's wife Johanne Berube, who is organizing the anniversary event, said the tea will include a slide show with recognition of the club's athletes, including some who

participated in the Canada Games. There'll also be pictures of old and new members, equipment demonstrations, and a parade of past commodores. "There'll be a lot of catching up and socializing," she said.

Barbara and Fred Dill are compiling a special book about the Kits club for the tea.

Dill, who also helped with the Kitsilano 100th anniversary celebrations, has been a member since 1969.

She and husband Fred are both lifetime members of the club and attend once a week for the Thursday night races during the summer.

The boats have changed, with new models showing up, but the camaraderie of the club has not, she added. "It's been a volunteer effort throughout the years," Dill said.

According to Dill, the yacht club has come together in times of trouble.

"There were a number of storms that have damaged the dock or part of the dock [including a major one in 1947]," Dill said. "It was necessary to have work parties over the years to repair the damages and maintain the clubhouse."

Female athletes have excelled at the club from the beginning, she added. "Women sailors have also been very active in the club."

The book is composed primarily of photos from past and current fleets, the construction of the club, and past and current members. Photos from the anniversary tea will be added after the event. There is also a bit of history, as well as the photos, Dill said.

Those interested can order the book at the anniversary tea. Open to the public, the event runs at 2401 Point Grey Rd. from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

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