

Cass Smullen

DBSC Members, particularly veteran members, will have learned with sadness of the death, aged 87, of Cass Smullen. A yachtsman of repute, he was a member of DBSC for over fifty years. Cass, whose real name was John - opinions differ on how he acquired his nick name, - was a keen Dublin Bay sailor and loyal member of the National Yacht Club for over fifty years. His enthusiasm for the sea and sailing was infectious; a swimmer and a sailor, and one time secretary of Monkstown Football Club, he was also a raconteur whose anecdotes were blended with an esoteric knowledge of seafaring. He bore his long drawn out final illness with fortitude and dignity and even humour and continued, wheelchair bound, to attend events at the National Yacht Club until recently, ably and kindly assisted by his devoted wife, Helen.

Cass 's sailing was not confined to Dublin Bay. In 1956 he sailed on *Evora* with Michael (Styx) O'Herlihy to Vigo on the first leg of the transatlantic voyage that would bring Styx to fame in Hollywood. Besides DBSC, Cass was a member of The Royal Alfred Yacht Club, the Irish Cruising Club and RORC and participated in many off-shore races, including the Fastnet and transatlantic races. However, he is best remembered as one of the stalwarts of the Dublin Bay Twenty Ones in which he sailed under the original 1903 gaff rig and also under the much criticised Bermudan rig alteration of the 1960's. His public display of single-handedly rigging a Twenty One under the old rig in nine minutes in front of the National Yacht Club is the stuff of legend. In 1955, to compete in the only recorded race ever between the Mylne - designed Twenty Ones and Fyfe-designed Cork Harbour One Designs, Cass, with Styx O'Herlihy, sailed the engineless *Naneen*, to Dunmore East - the passage taking fifty hours. The result of the contest between these classic yachts was inconclusive because racing was abandoned due to light airs.

Never an owner of a Twenty One, Cass was a popular President of the Crews' Union, known as The UFU (Unpaid Footmen's Union) in which capacity he wore a remarkable chain of office at the annual dinners organised by the crews to entertain the owners. (The chain was made up of lavatory chains from the waterfront clubs and decorated with various, possibly inappropriate, emblems). A gifted actor who had participated in amateur dramatics in his early life, Cass was a star performer at these dinners with his own compositions of satirical songs, extravagantly praising the feats of skippers while unashamedly criticising their shortcomings. After the Twenty Ones, he was for many years a valued member of the crew of Dublin Bay Twenty Four, *Harmony*, until the demise of that class in 2004. Earlier this year he was keenly interested to learn that plans were afoot to reconstruct his beloved *Naneen*, complete with gaff rig.

We all mourn his passing and share the sadness of Helen and all of Cass's family.

May He who calmed the wind and sea, grant rest and peace to the sailor we knew as Cass

Anon