

My Recollection of William Donald Schaefer as Baltimore Mayor

Adam Bernstein's paragraph about Mr. Schaefer's accomplishments in his first years as Mayor of Baltimore reminded me of the time I met him and prompted me to write my recollection.

“Mr. Schaefer became council president in 1967 and succeeded Mayor Thomas J. D'Alesandro III (D) in 1971.

Baltimore's revival had begun in the early 1960s with the Charles Center business complex. Under Mr. Schaefer, the city implemented plans to use the waterfront area to keep people downtown after working hours. The aquarium became a centerpiece. The mayor also helped bring in architect I.M. Pei to design the city's World Trade Center and courted businesses such as Hyatt to build a large hotel at the harbor.”

My Recollection:

I had the opportunity to meet William Donald Schaefer in 1972. I didn't know it at the time but he and his PR office were behind the idea of having a sail boat race in the Baltimore Inner Harbor during the festivities of Preakness Week and The Flower Mart. The Inner Harbor at that time was a mess. The only building that had an active business at that time was the McCormack Spice Company. The harbor was polluted and filled with flotsam and jetsam.

The Ice Cream Stick Regatta theme of the first boat race in 1971 was to bring attention to the annual collection of Ice Cream Sticks to be used in crafts for the Maryland TB and Respiratory Disease Association. Mr. Schaefer also wanted Baltimoreans to see how the inner harbor changed from year to year as the new developments there materialized. So, the sailboat race gave him the vista to share with his constituents.

I, and Johns Hopkins Pathology professor, John Yardley entered these races.

Dr. Yardley sailed a gaff rigged dingy which he made himself and I sailed a Sunfish.

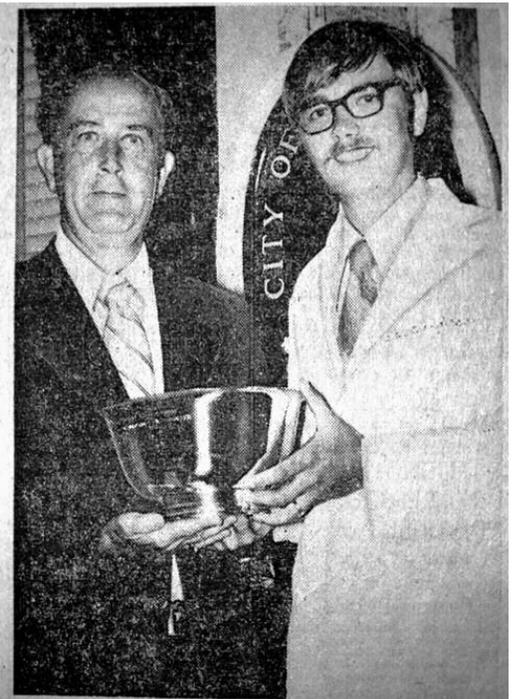
Our personal contest during the first race in 1971 resulted in my taking Second and Dr. Yardley took third place in the Handicap Class.

We entered the Inner Harbor Regatta again in 1972.

This time the Handicap Class included boats of very different lengths. One sloop was 20 feet long and had a jib in addition to a mainsail, my lateen rigged Sunfish was 14 feet long and had only one sail. There were quite a few 12 -16 foot boats of other makes and models. Dr. Yardley's boat was the shortest at 10.5 feet long but also had main and jib sails.

I tried as hard as I could to catch up to and pass the 20 foot boat. I didn't know that our times would be adjusted according to handicaps based on boat length. In the end, I passed the 20 foot boat and crossed the finish line completely alone, with no boats closer than three boat lengths.

My wife caught my finish in the snapshot included in this recollection. It also shows how much work needed to be done before the Inner Harbor would be the showplace it is now.



SAILING CUP — Mayor William Donald Schaefer officially presents the “Mayor’s Cup” to Dr. Arthur O. Anderson for his top performance in the 1972 Ice Cream Stick Regatta sponsored by the Maryland Tuberculosis and Respiratory Disease Association.

After the judges calculated my time, I also beat all the Olympic class boats as well. Fireballs, 505s, International 14s, and Mirror Dinks all had slower times. So, I was awarded the Mayor’s Cup.

The award was not made on the actual day of the race, however. I got a phone call while I was on duty in Pathology at Johns Hopkins Hospital. The Mayor’s office wanted me there right away for the presentation. There was no time to change so there I am in my whites.

I was really excited to have this opportunity, to meet the Mayor, and to know that my name would be on the cup that graced his desk throughout his terms as Mayor of the city of Baltimore.

However, my Pathology colleagues relentlessly teased me about “Having enough time to race sailboats” while everyone else toiled away in their clinical residencies. Hopkins residents were all work and no play.



I laughed off the teasing. John Yardley never asked me to race him again, and I went on to enter regional and national one-design sunfish races until that became too hectic.

While others may have mixed feelings about William Donald Schaefer, my experiences with him let me know how personally he felt about enriching the City of Baltimore without enriching himself.

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