

# ARTICLES

## DUNCAN SIMONDS TO CELEBRATE 80<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY



Duncan Simonds will be 80 on 1st June and his many Soling friends around the world wish him many happy returns of the day.

Although some of the younger members of the Class will not know the name, the older ones certainly will, and many will also have met Duncan; but few know the full story of the Simonds family connection with the Soling class.

It all started in August 1968: Duncan was sitting on the deck of his beloved Seaview Yacht Club (Isle of Wight) with

his two elder sons - Raymond then 20, and Colin then 17. They suddenly saw "an elegant new shape, with a sail logo something between an Omega sign and a ruptured centipede, glide up to a mooring and tie on". This was their first vision of the Soling and it was love at first sight. They learned from their friends sailing her (Ralph Snagge and his son) that it was a new International class and that Norwegian designer Jan Linge hoped that it would be selected for the 1972 Olympics.

At the end of a perfect day of trial sailing the Soling in the waters around Cowes the Simonds' sons were completely hooked, and Duncan found himself promising that, if the boat behind the scenes he helps whenever called upon to do so - e.g. with the proof-reading of the latest Soling Guide - and he is always ready to give his good advice when it is requested. It was Duncan who "found" Dinny Reed and persuaded the ISA Committee to take her on as Secretary/Treasurer in 1980. From those early days to the present Duncan has acted as Dinny's guiding mentor, and has been the wisest of friends and counsellors to her.

Some of those who served on the ISA Committee with Duncan will also remember that moment in each meeting - it always happened - when Duncan had suddenly "had enough". It was usually late on the Saturday afternoon when we all had been sitting around the table since 9:00 a.m. (in those days we always met in the Royal Thames Yacht Club in London); the talk was getting repetitive, the subject had been aired many times before (to trapeze or not

were selected for the 1972 Olympics, he would buy one. He thought that it was a reasonably safe promise to make...

Their first Soling was delivered in July 1969 and "except for the bewitching hull shape and sail plan she bore little resemblance to the cultured and refined racing machine of today. She had no: deck handholds, self tacking jib, barber haulers, raised floor - to name but a few. But she did have: a built in steel plate on the starboard deck to support an outboard engine and two neat little helmsman's seats inboard. AND she was 150 lbs overweight. The rig was demanding but, when we finally got everything assembled the right way up, there was no doubting her integrity and functionality".

The first Simonds' Soling was called "Uproar" partly because "we reckoned (rightly) that this would generally prevail onboard, and partly because we rather fancied roaring up on other boats from behind with that beautiful spinnaker full of wind". Their next boat was called "Pandemonium" and this was no more than the start of a 15 year family love affair with the Soling. In 1976 Colin was selected as the British tune-up Soling for the Kingston Olympics and in 1980 as the British Soling representative for those Olympics (which were held in Tallinn, Russia, but to which unfortunately the British decided not to send a sailing team).

In 1977 Duncan joined the ISA Committee as an elected member and in 1980 became Vice President. After 9 continuous years' service on the Committee (during which time he repeatedly turned down all offers to become President) the Constitution dictated that he must retire, but it was unanimously decided that he was too valuable to lose. A new position of Vice President Administration was created and Duncan continued in this role until his final retirement from the Committee in 1990. He was rewarded for his many years of loyal service to the Class by being made a Life Member. But he continues his loyal service to this day - to trapeze, to reduce the number of sails or not to reduce... and no decisions were being made... Suddenly the Vice President would noisily get to his feet and, speaking quite loudly and clearly with just the right amount of frustration and anger in his voice, would state: "Gentlemen - this has gone on FAR too long and we are getting NOWHERE. I propose we call a motion and take a vote." This always had the desired effect. The debate was swiftly completed, a decision was made, and the next agenda item was attacked. And everyone felt better - particularly Duncan - because the air had been cleared.

Duncan, have a very happy birthday on 1st June and thank you again for all you have done, and are doing, for your beloved Soling Class.

*From Dinny Reed and Hamish Loudon*

