

## *James M. Schoonmaker 1933-2021*

***“The Sport Has Given Me So Much. I Want To Give Something Back.”***

By Dr. Bill Smoak

The world of sailing knew James M. Schoonmaker as “Ding,” an extraordinary sailor, philanthropist, and honored contributor to the sport. His sailing achievements included Star Class World Champion, twelve times Star Continental Champion and he won medals in the Flying Dutchman, Finn, and Soling classes.



He credits learning to sail to an accomplished Bahamian sailor and gardener, “You teach me how to sail, I’ll cut the grass,” Ding said. That summer, 11-year-old Schoonmaker won his first sailing trophy in Watch Hill, Rhode Island. Ding’s devotion to the Star Class began in 1949 when Olympic medalist and Coral Reef Commodore Jack Price invited him to crew. He was immediately attracted by the high level of competition and the challenge of sailing the Star. In 1951, Bahamian and Olympic Gold medalist Sir Durward Knowles invited him to crew in the Trofeo Bacardi in Havana, Cuba. It would be the first of his seven Bacardi wins.



He joined Coral Reef Yacht Club in 1956 and in 1968, Ding first experienced the satisfaction of giving something back to the sport he loved when he was invited to an International Yacht Racing Union development committee. His following fourteen years of service culminated in his election to IYRU First Vice President. In 1988, Ding received the Nathaniel Herreshoff Award from US Sailing, and in 2011 the Beppe Croce Award from World Sailing - sailing's highest honor. In 2018, he was unanimously bestowed an Honorary CRYC Membership. That same year, he was inducted into the Sailing Hall of Fame. Schoonmaker was the driving force behind the creation of the US Sailing Center in Miami, providing Olympic sailors access to train and compete on Biscayne Bay. In 1990, the center created The Can-Am Olympic Classes Regatta, which later became part of the World Cup. In January 2003, Ding dedicated a permanent building at the center designed to accommodate

Olympic sailors. Ding is survived by his wife and ardent supporter, Patrice “Trecie” Schoonmaker, and by the thousands of sailors world-wide who will benefit from his many contributions to the sport of sailing.