



BALBOA



ISLAND LIVING

A PRIVATE SOCIAL PUBLICATION EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE RESIDENTS OF BALBOA ISLAND • October 2021

Meet Your Balboa Island Neighbor

**Joanne
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history

By **Pete Weitzner** – Balboa Island Resident and Co-Producer, “The Golden Age of Newport Harbor”

SAIL ON, SAIL ON, SAILOR

Seymour Beek Talks About a Lifetime of Sailing

Harbor life is synonymous with sailing. And so is Seymour Beek. When we spoke, Beek, 87, had just competed in the 85th annual Flight of Newport Beach. He didn’t compete in the first one – but close. Here are edited excerpts of our conversation:



Balboa Island Museum: July was Flight of Newport. You’ve raced in a few.

Seymour Beek: First was the summer I was 6, 1940. Was brother Bart’s regular crew in Snowbird—dominant class in Newport Harbor. By the end of that summer, I could sail a boat by myself. There was a race for crews, I think I got 2nd...next summer I was a skipper.

Museum: Snowbirds race was a big deal.

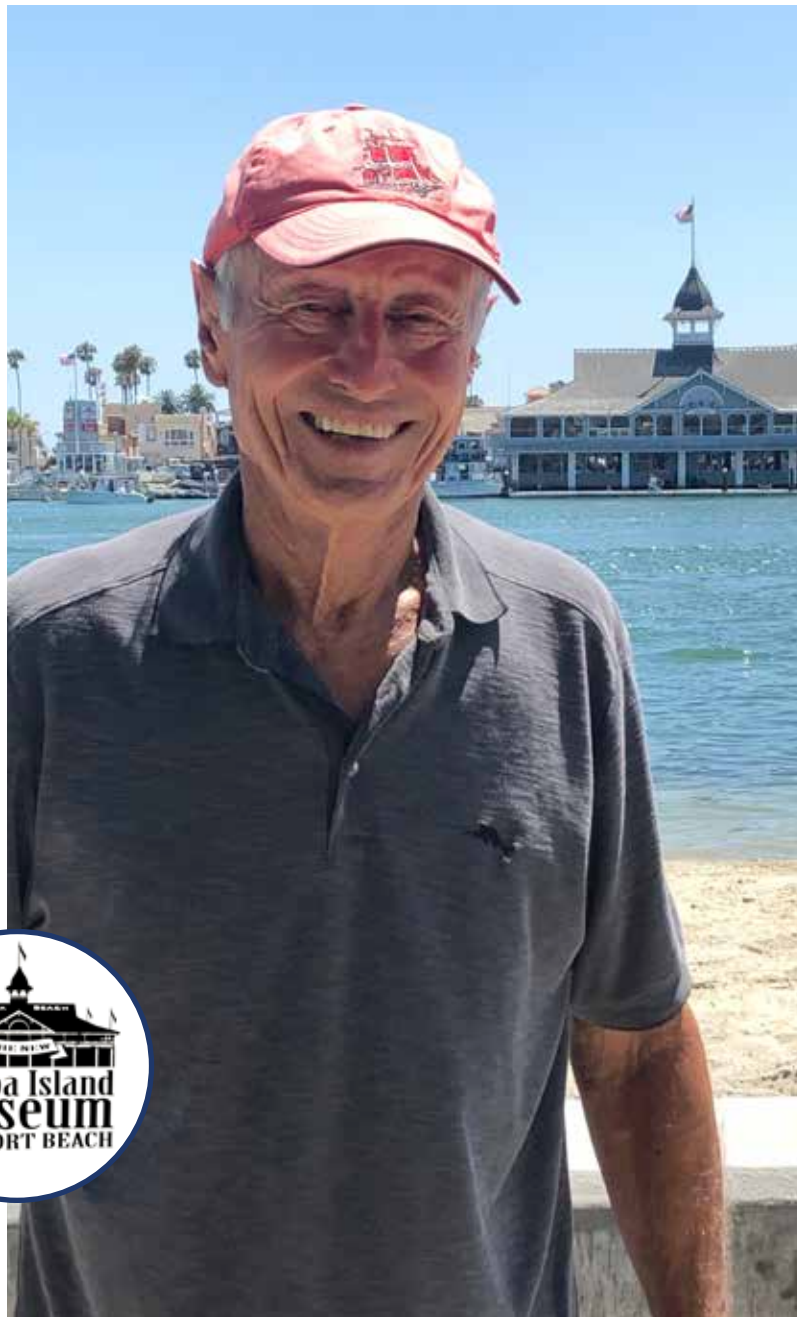
Beek: Spectacle. Weren’t as many things to attract the public...people came from all over Southern California. Became Flight of the Lasers, now Flight of Newport Beach. Starts in Eastern part of Bay...finishes roughly off South Bay Front and Diamond.

Museum: You’ve sailed, raced a lot of boats.

Beek: Lido-14s, Lasers, lot of fun sailing Lehman dinghies, Lehman 12s. I did a whole lot of windsurfing, won a World’s Championship 1974. Windsurfer class was in its infancy then.

Museum: Your son Clark, he took a long trip.

Beek: Clark circumnavigated, took about 10 years—joined him about seven times...South America, Malaysia, sailed down the



Docked at Dad’s:
Clark and Seymour
with globesailing
Condessa in
background



Start Young: Seymour
onboard the “Beeking II,”
Snowbird 129 owned by
his brother Allan



Still Sailing: Beek
sailed every week as
recently as 2019



Friendly Sail: Beek sails on the
Peresphone, a Farr-40 owned by
Jack Woodhull. Also onboard Rick
Othmer and Irwin Stawicki, circa
2000 off Newport, Rhode Island.

coast of Patagonia. Had some harrowing experiences, not in trouble but scary, risky undertaking. Wind blew 60-70 miles an hour. Didn’t have a good chart. Relief to get the anchor down.

Museum: What makes a good sailor?

Beek: There are good sailors today. They’re more computer nerds. So much instrumentation on big boats. Small boats still pretty much seat-of-the-pants, compass, and a wind guide. Instinctive. Experience helps, some people just have a knack, starting early in life helps. A good sailor knows the wind at all times.

Museum: You’ve seen some great sailors, a few Hollywood types that could sail.

Beek: **Humphrey Bogart** was a good sailor, raced dinghies, raced the Santana. Good sailor. And he was a lot of fun. I did race against him...beat him a few times. More than he beat me. **Errol Flynn, James Cagney** had nice boats, they could sail. Cagney was an active member of BYC. **Sterling Hayden. Donald Douglas** (Founder of Douglas Aircraft) and his sons were good sailors, I think LA Yacht Club.

Museum: What’s Newport Harbor’s allure?

Beek: Main thing is weather, rarely strong winds...even in the ocean it’s safe, seldom blows over 20 knots—not likely to get in trouble like you would in San Francisco. But good sailors, it’s more fun to sail in Los Angeles, San Francisco, even Long Beach. They like more wind.

Museum: What’s next on the water for Seymour?

Beek: Even two years ago I went out every week—now I go kayaking quite a bit. I plan to go shopping for a new Lehman 12 next year. It’s just a lot of fun.

Writer’s Note: *This is the first in a series of Museum stories paying homage to Newport Harbor’s sailing legacy.*

Visit Balboa Island Museum Newport Beach – discover the Harbor’s rich sailing history and much more. Monday – Thursday, 10am to 5pm; Friday – Sunday 10am to 6pm. Free general admission. Become a member: balboaislandmuseum.org/become-a-member.