

Greg Whitehorse - Tribute to Paul Krueger

4LIYC Spring Gathering | April 25, 2026

We'd like to pay tribute tonight to two of our most distinguished long-time members, Paul Krueger and Jerry Simon.

Any club that has stood the test of time for over 100 years has relied on the contributions of many devoted members. Many are listed on our club's Honor Roll, as are Paul and Jerry. It's my privilege to say a few words about Paul.

In the mid-1950s Paul was introduced to iceboating by Tom Krehl, who sailed Skeeter ice boats in the winter and raced power boats in the summer. At that time Krehl operated Inland Boats, which coincidentally was located right where we gather tonight. Paul started racing power boats with Krehl but soon shifted his interest to iceboats and auto racing. Along the way he was introduced to iceboat sailors and builders, including Bill Mattison, Jack Ripp, and Dave Rosten, guys who would become lifelong friends.

When Paul finished his education at the University of Wisconsin, with a degree in Mechanical Engineering, his involvement in iceboating and midget auto racing grew.

Just a quick aside on midget auto racing. You may be familiar with the racing that has gone on at the track in Sun Prairie and other tracks around the state for nearly 90 years. Paul operated a two-car team that, along with future Skeeter sailor Walter Whitehorse's car, dominated the BMARA races from the late '50s through the late '60s. It was through Paul's involvement in auto racing that I first met, or should say became aware of Paul, as he and Walter Whitehorse worked on their cars in a small shop located behind Walter's business, Chief Auto Parts in Monona.

When that business closed, it became the location of Ken Whitehorse's iceboat shop. My dad, Harry Whitehorse, worked on his race car at his business, Chief Auto Body, which was located next door. During summer months, as a kid, I would hang around my dad's shop and would occasionally walk over to see what was going on at the Krueger/Whitehorse shop. I was about 10 or 11 years old at that time and never said anything to the guys doing important work on the race cars. Incidentally, helping on Paul's car was Skeeter sailor Dave Rosten.

Paul is a member of the BMARA Hall of Fame and also the National Midget Racing Hall of Fame. Fellow members include A.J. Foyt, Mario Andretti, Parnelli Jones, and many other prominent auto racing figures. While many, if not most, ice sailors have a background in summer sailing, there has been a strong association with motorsports as well. Besides Paul, iceboaters Tom Krehl, Dave Rosten, Walter and Harry Whitehorse, Bob Clements, Al Moldenhauer, and Ken Kreider all have motorsports backgrounds.

In both auto racing and iceboating, Paul's even temperament and outstanding knack for choosing the correct path led him to holding administrative positions in both sports. The BMARA, the International Skeeter Association, and the Northwest Ice Yacht Association have all benefited from Paul's knowledge and expertise.

I know that the years I served as Commodore of our club, President of the ISA, or Commodore of the Northwest, Paul made the job easy, as I almost always just asked Paul what to do. He was always right.

In the early 1970s Paul took over as Secretary/Treasurer of the ISA, a position he held for nearly the next 40 years. Even though he no longer fielded a car in Badger Midget competition, he became a top official with the organization as well.

In sports that can be dominated by competitors with large personalities and egos, no one was better at soothing bruised egos, unruffling feathers, and keeping things running smoothly than Paul. It's impossible to imagine either sport without Paul's steady hand guiding the ship.

In 1975 he was involved in a crash at a regatta on Lake Winnebago near Oshkosh. He hit an expansion crack that was hidden by a snow drift. Major damage to his boat and a concussion suffered by Paul caused him to rethink the design of the Skeeter iceboat. The problem was the limited vision one had when sitting under the boom. He reasoned that by moving the cockpit behind the boom this problem could be solved. Besides improved vision, the new design proved faster as well, and Paul won several regattas in the following years.

In addition, the under-the-boom boats could be converted to rear-seat configuration fairly easily. No boats were made obsolete with the change.

I always thought the rear-seaters were the best boats I ever sailed. Increased vision, increased performance, no more getting hit in the head with the boom, and being able to step into the cockpit from the same side on starts regardless of what side of the starting line you're on.

Paul pretty much dominated club racing for the next several years. At our club's awards banquet one year in the late '70s, Paul walked away with nearly every Skeeter trophy, and the joke was that he won everything but the kitchen sink, at which time he was presented with an old kitchen sink by the Commodore. I'm sure that all these years later that old kitchen sink is proudly displayed in PK's trophy case. Well, maybe not.

The 1980s was truly a golden age for the A Class Skeeters. Forty or more boats at regattas was the norm. Many of the boats were new boats built by Paul and Bill Mattison or converted under-the-boom boats to rear-seaters, or rumble-seaters as some called them. Many of those conversions were also done by Paul and Bill as well.

By the end of the 1980s, carbon fiber was beginning to replace wood in Skeeter construction. Without missing a beat, Paul and Bill began making fast carbon-fiber boats at Bill's Willy Street boat shop. But another change was on the horizon.

When Dan Clapp showed up at a 1990 regatta on Lake Geneva, he quickly demonstrated the speed of his new front-seat Skeeter. It didn't take long for others to see that Clapp's cab-forward boat was the way to go. Paul and Bill started building new boats for themselves and for others as well. Unlike Paul's rear-seaters, the new cab-forward resulted in a whole new boat to be built if you wanted to stay in the game.

Paul quickly adapted, with his new front-seat version of Ramblin'.

By 2010 the Willy Street shop closed down and Paul was in his seventh decade of ice sailing activities. In the late 2010 decade Paul stepped down as Secretary/Treasurer of the ISA after nearly 40 years of service.

2020 marked Paul's eighth decade of racing and building iceboats and being instrumental in running the sport on a national level. He was still fast on the ice as evidenced by top finishes in the major regattas.

Paul's sailing ability, boat building expertise, and administrative know-how clearly show what a remarkable person he has been for our sport. I would like to raise a glass and thank you for all you have done. Thank you, Paul.