



WILLIAM MATHEWS (“MATT”) BROOKS RECEIVES NEW YORK YACHT CLUB MEDAL

By Elaine Lembo

Matt Brooks is the newest recipient of the New York Yacht Club Medal. Commissioned in 1964, the medal is awarded periodically at the discretion of the Club's Flag Officers for achievements of exceptional merit or contribution to the Club or yachting in general. The Foundation is honored to include this recognition in this edition of Foundation Corner. Upon his retirement from the Foundation, Matt was honored by the Board of Trustees with the title of Chairman Emeritus.

—Editor



Matt Brooks was awarded the New York Yacht Club Medal in December 2023 for extraordinary contributions to the Club and to the yachting community in general. Brooks, an attorney, entrepreneur, sailor and accomplished outdoors adventurer, has played a pivotal leadership role in grant-funded projects and initiatives during his term as chairman of the New York Yacht Club Foundation. In addition to multiple victories on the racecourse aboard his restored classic yawl, *Dorade*, Brooks' philanthropic efforts have positively benefited the Club and Club members.

“The true heartbeat of the Club is the members who volunteer their time in the service to the Club, and this is particularly true of Matt,” says Commodore Paul M. Zabetakis, M.D. “Perhaps as important as the amount raised is that he has left a lasting legacy of giving that will go on after he retires. The number of members who actively contribute has grown significantly due to Matt’s leadership and dogged determination. It is hard to say no to Matt!”

Since 1985, the Flag Officers have been authorized to award the New York Yacht Club Medal from time-to-time in recognition of achievements of particular merit or outstanding contributions to the Club or yachting in general. With the award, Brooks, who became a Club member in 2011, is the 16th person to receive this medal, the highest recognition for outstanding contributions to the Club. Since he became chair of the New York Yacht Club Foundation in 2017, he pioneered fundraising initiatives that have resulted in the Foundation granting a total \$9.4 million in funds for critical capital projects at both historic clubhouses. Key among them at 44th Street are the Palm Café and the multi-phase

window restoration, including the iconic Model Room ships windows. At Harbour Court, projects include the façade and outbuildings renovations as well as the upcoming reconstruction of the 900-foot-long seawall along Brenton Cove, which includes restoring, upgrading and moving the Boathouse.

During the Club’s 175th Anniversary, Brooks created the popular 175th Society to encourage members to join with a minimum donation of \$175. In response, more than 30 percent of members showed their support for the Foundation’s mission. His leadership resulted in the creation of giving tiers, including the Preservation and Institutional Partners for substantial donors, the Legacy Giving program to include the Foundation in estate planning, and the Landmark Society for five-year pledges.

NEVER-SAY-NO APPROACH

“The notion of a society and other giving programs, as well as the idea of beginning for the first time to recognize donors—all that came from Matt,” says Harry T. Rein, Foundation treasurer

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and chairman-elect. “This is a creative man who likes to see the things he’s involved with succeed. His creation of the 175th Society really put the Foundation on the map and got us into a mode of broadening the base of our donors with the additional giving tiers.”

Rein, whose Club membership is distinguished by long-term service in a variety of capacities and committees, including formation of the Foundation, has acted as a springboard for Brooks’ ideas over the years.

“Matt has brought to the Club and Foundation the same energy he brought to the restoration of *Dorade* and his other career exploits. He has a lot of energy and a never-say-no approach. He brought to the Foundation the vision for what was possible and how to take the Foundation to the next level. He assembled the team around him, and he went for it, and it was successful—just like on the racecourse.”

Rein adds, “Matt has put the time in, he knows how to walk the walk, and his enormous respect for history and tradition, I believe, has in part come from his association with the New York Yacht Club. He’s a real pleasure to work with. I’ve never met anyone quite like him. He’s *sui generis*.”

The entrepreneurial skills that underpin Brooks’ business success have also served the Club and Foundation, according to former Commodore David Elwell, Foundation board member. “Matt’s extremely well organized,” Elwell says. “He’s a unique individual in that if he says he’s going to do something, he does it, which in

volunteer organizations makes all the difference.”

GOING BEYOND THE NORM

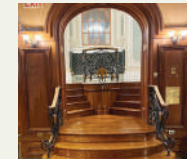
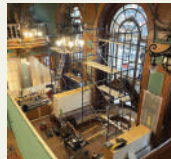
Childhood summers found Brooks learning to sail at camp on Monterey Bay, Calif., and as an adult racing on San Francisco Bay. However, his passion for outdoor adventure extended well beyond sailing to off-piste skiing, mountaineering and deep-sea diving.

As an alpinist and mountain guide, Brooks attained several first ascents in the Sierra and the French Alps. He went on to establish the Brooks-Range Mountaineering Equipment Company, where he invented the widely used Brooks-Range rescue ski sled. Among climbing honors, he is the recipient of the Presidential Gold Medal from the American Mountain Guides Association.

A solo pilot since his teen years, he has set world air records, including the record time for circumnavigating the globe (westward) and flying westward across the United States in a specially equipped Citation business jet.

Brooks returned to sailing as a collaborative outdoors platform with his wife, Pamela Rorke Levy. Their restoration and campaigning of *Dorade*, the famous oceangoing wooden racer designed in 1929 by Olin Stephens, earned the couple the Distinguished Service Award of the National Maritime Historical Society in 2019. The honor recognized the couple for returning *Dorade* to a seaworthy state and for her “Return to Bluewater Campaign,” in which Brooks and Levy successfully repeated all the major ocean races she won in the previous century—the

Foundation Grants by Project 2018-2024



2018 - 2023	44th Street Window Replacement	\$1,345,726
2018	Chicken Coop/Icehouse	407,605
2018	Children’s Playhouse Restoration	5,450
2018	Model Room Floor	677,054
2018 - 2021	Harbour Court Carriage House Windows	111,429

2018	Harbour Court Fish Pond	\$107,620
2018	Harbour Court Formal Gardens	48,583
2019-2020	Carriage House Gutters	18,853
2018 - 2023	44th Street HVAC	2,153,829
2019	Grill Room Renovation	55,286

THE NEW YORK YACHT CLUB FOUNDATION was created in 2007 for the sole purpose of funding capital restoration and preservation projects at the two historic properties, Harbour Court and the 44th Street Clubhouse. During Brooks’ leadership term, many of the projects listed above were completed or had funds committed. Also, during Brooks’ tenure as chairman, the Foundation created these four giving societies:



PRESERVATION PARTNERS
Contributions from

Preservation and Institutional Partners enable substantial projects to steward the ongoing preservation of a pair of matchless architectural jewels.

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Newport Bermuda, Fastnet, Transatlantic, and Transpac. Brooks and Levy also raced *Dorade* in the 2017 Sydney Hobart Race, finishing second in class and earning recognition as the oldest boat to complete the race. Besides *Dorade*, the couple has restored the Clinton Crane-designed 6-Metre *Lucie* and the Riva-designed, Feadship-built *Serena*, the support vessel for *Dorade*.

Other accolades received by Brooks include the 2013 Sailor of the Year Award of the St. Francis Yacht Club in San Francisco. In 2018, California Governor Jerry Brown appointed Brooks to the state's Board of Pilot Commissioners for the bays of San Francisco, San Pablo and Suisun.

Brooks and Levy's appreciation for the positive impact of sailing has also led them to provide substantial support to other organizations, such as the IYRS School of Technology & Trades in Newport, R.I., and the St. Francis Sailing Foundation of the St. Francis Yacht Club. The latter has been one of the most important national sources of direct funding to athletes campaigning for the Olympics.

Such diverse commitment to yachting and the marine industry in general makes Brooks a natural choice for the NYYC Medal, says past Club Commodore Charles Townsend, a member of the Foundation executive committee.

"Matt really is a very special member," Townsend says. "The award is based on his accomplishments with the Foundation, but it would be a slight not to acknowledge that he's a very

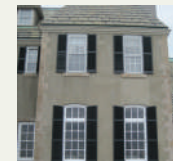
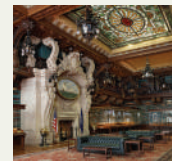
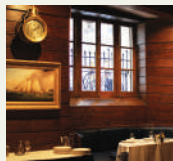
accomplished racing sailor. He did a phenomenal job of restoring and campaigning *Dorade* successfully."

That passion seamlessly set the stage for his Foundation role. "His tenure at the Foundation is remarkable," Townsend says. "He never shies away from an opportunity to become involved. Since Matt's election to the chairman's role at the Foundation, he hasn't left a stone unturned. He's made indelible accomplishments organizationally and financially in terms of the Foundation's value to the historic preservation of the New York Yacht Club."

The ownership journey with *Dorade* has been a transformative odyssey on a personal level, according to Rorke Levy, who viewed it as an opportunity to pay homage to Stephens as designer while learning about the ocean and offshore competition.

"Matt's favorite part may be the fixing up and tweaking and optimizing and project-managing," Rorke Levy reflects in *Adventurous Use of the Sea*, the centennial history of the Cruising Club of America by author Tim Murphy. "My favorite part is just sailing the boat. I love driving the boat. I love that every time I go out on the water, I learn something new. That's my happy place."

In recognition of Matt's accomplishments, the Board of Trustees has honored him by naming him Chairman Emeritus. He and Rorke Levy continue to divide their working and sailing time between the U.S. West Coast and East Coast; they are now renovating a home in Jamestown, Rhode Island. 🇺🇸



2019	Red Bar - Steps & Patio	\$29,705
2021	Palm Cafe Renovation & Roof	466,139
2021-2022	44th Street Terrace Floor	115,987
2021	Palm Café Lighting	1,515
2021 - 2024	Seawall	3,138,801

2022 - 2023	Harbour Court Master Tree Plan	\$82,420
2022	Harbour Court Main House Shutters	10,690
2023	44th Street 5th Floor Pergola Repair	24,497
2023-2024	Boathouse	575,000
		9,376,189



LANDMARK SOCIETY
Members of the Landmark Society will commit to a five-year pledge, ranging from \$12,500 to \$50,000.



LEGACY SOCIETY
Gifts in the form of bequests, retirement plan assets, a gift from your IRA or gifts of securities will make a lasting difference and ensure we will have resources in the future.



175TH SOCIETY
Annual donations have a wide range, starting at a minimum of \$175, and help contribute to current preservation projects.