

[Sailor's lessons ripple through friends' lives Kevin blaum In the arena](#)

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[Kevin Blaum](#)

THE LUZERNE County Government Study Commission voted against governmental checks and balances Wednesday evening (so much for home rule) while President Obama was delivering his State of the Union address. Interesting topics to write about and any other week I might have selected one.

Both events will impact our lives, but neither is why we live. There is a distinction and many miss its meaning. One who didn't miss a thing was Frank Wadas of Shavertown.

Frank understood the meaning of life and seemed to live it every day. Two weeks ago, he and Dorothy celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary. On Wednesday morning I was told he'd passed away the night before. A loving husband and father, Frank was 87 years old and one of the wisest human beings I ever met.

Born in Michigan, Frank served in the Army during World War II, married Dorothy King, moved to the Wyoming Valley, raised five children and started a business. Frank owned and operated The Hearing Aid Centers in Wilkes-Barre and Scranton from 1951 until his retirement in 1984.

Our paths crossed 12 years later as I docked my sailboat at the Harveys Lake Yacht Club. It and sailing were a sanctuary during the long battle to build the First Union Arena. The older gentleman with the great-looking tousled white hair watched me tie up and seemed to understand. I soon discovered he understood everything.

Friendly, humorous and unassuming, Frank Wadas introduced himself and I shook hands with the greatest sailor I would ever come to know. Frank loved boats; he knew everything about sailing and was eager to teach those of us who thought we did. He seemed to have traveled everywhere on a boat. His stories and encouragement were endless. I hung on his every word.

During the winter months, Frank and Dorothy would often head south. Frank didn't drive, he sailed. From Maryland on the Chesapeake Bay to Marathon in the Florida Keys, Frank went by boat, year after year. He did so aboard Meander, his beloved 31-foot sailboat. "Get anything bigger and you won't sail it much," he said.

Meander was his home, his transportation and his joy. Frank often quoted the author Kenneth Grahame, who said, "There is nothing half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats." Frank loved the water and understood its peace. Sailing sets your spirit free, un-clutters your life and reveals the wealth in simplicity. Always positive, always smiling, by his word and gentle example, Frank showed us the way.

He organized sailboat races to test our skills. If I made a mistake, he would pick the right moment to tell a story about a sailing error he had made 20 years ago and how he corrected it. It

wasn't until later that I realized he'd never made that mistake. He saw me make it and was telling me how to prevent it without the others knowing it occurred.

I never heard him utter a negative word about anyone. He never once asked me about government and never mentioned he graduated from The University of Pennsylvania Wharton School Business. We talked about boats and life. He was the consummate teacher, and we were all so fortunate to know him.

*I never used to miss the chance to climb upon his knee*

*and listen to his many tales of life upon the sea ...*

*He died about a month ago while winter filled the air,*

*and though I cried, I was so proud to love a man so rare.*

*He's somewhere on the ocean now, the place he ought to be;*

*with one hand on the starboard rail, he's waving back at me.*