

## The Annual Classic Boat Race, 1908

**Warren Blake**

.....was held at Raffle's Marina for the seventh year running, to celebrate Singapore's National Day, Aug 9. As always, the Grand Old Man of Raffles, Commodore Gordon Maxted, meted out witty and paternal advice and cautionary anecdotes before the Race; and salutary punishment after the event, in the form of alcoholic "down-downs", to transgressors, real and imagined, of the numerous but gently enforced Rules. Prakash Reddy ably organized affairs and managed to restrain the worst excesses of the various crews, as scurrilous a set of scoundrels and sea-lawyers as ever sailed the Seven Seas.

The corporate sponsors, Luminox, Selangor Pewter, and Croc, donated, graciously and respectively: expensive watches, elegant pewter bowls and tea sets and colourful..errr..Crocs!

*The Commodore stands guard over the trophies...Prakash in white shirt watches for trouble...*



Five vessels entered the race. All the names, with their applied handicaps, are shown on the board below.

Four were cranky old Gaffers, with one sleek modern-style sloop of respectable vintage, *Frangipani Girl*. Two much-loved participants of earlier years, Simon Morris' *Sirius* of 1935, and Richard Curtis' *Evylyne* of even older vintage sadly did not make it from their Malaysian ports. Simon tried hard to compete. In a dramatic message from

Participants

	Class & Boat	'Provi'Py'	Entry
1	4 Friends   Warren	155	
2	Chin Chin   DE Thana	145	
3	Sari Timur   Mark Pauline	135	
4	Velera Linda   Chris	110	
5	Frangi Pani   David	85	

him read out at the race briefing he recounted how he had sailed from Langkawi as far South as Pulau Pisang, only to be beaten back by a vicious Sumatra squall, and dragged his anchor until the rocks were under his stern. Damage suffered precluded timely arrival for the Race.

Despite numerous, blatant attempts at bribery by four unprincipled competitors the Commodore's handicapping was impeccable, at least in the distorted view of this writer. Bloated with ego at winning on handicap, and distended with the fermenting gases of all that free beer, I was scarce able to stagger away under the load of prizes. All of them were earned fair and square after a titanic struggle

for last place that *Four Friends* won, finishing last only a few lengths behind that classic racing machine *Chin Chin*, and incredibly, with less cheating than usual.

This writer is not able to report much about the actual cut and thrust amongst the leaders during the Race because *Four Friends* viewed them initially from astern, and later as distant sails on the horizon, always obscured by our flogging sails, swarming crowds of eager youngsters heaving on lines, and because numerous cries of “Beer-time!” distracted attention from more nautical considerations. For these reasons I will instead briefly describe the convivial chaos that reigned on our decks.

Before the Race I called for “a dozen or so” volunteers from Victoria Junior College and Raffle’s JC to act as crew, as an appropriate statement on Singapore’s National Day. They were to arrive at 0830 in order to train at sail handling all morning before the Race. In the event 22 young people arrived. Most were familiar faces, indeed most had sailed with me before on 7 day School Adventure voyages. Their number now included no less than four National Sailors. They were now all at University, and the young men had filled out considerably, and were now shaving, and the girls had...well...filled out nicely too.



Their newly legal age contributed to the number of times “Beer Time!” was proclaimed, in fact I suspect it was not always the official Beer Officer who sounded the call.

The previous experience of my wonderful crew on long oceanic voyages and in competitive racing contributed greatly to our glorious and well-deserved success.

....“Heave away smartly, Lads...and Lasses!” cries the Mate, Big Dave Griffin, in blue shirt.

*Below: Four Friends on an earlier voyage with much of the same crew, but they were younger then....*

