

# Father and son duo take the Wayfarer Worlds

By Lindsey Cole  
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It's a simple, but telling picture. Alex Rahn, sporting a white and red Wayfarer World Championships T-shirt, stands next to George Blanchard. It's 1995 and the two were

competing in the Wayfarer Worlds at the Toronto Sailing and Canoe Club. The picture is telling because Alex is just nine years old, the youngest to sail at the championships, while the late Blanchard was continuing his perfect record of having sailed every Wayfarer Worlds. He was in his 80's. "I was the youngest competitor ever," Alex says, adding it was a memorable experience for him as he and his father Peter finished 18th that year out

of around 65.

"The youngest and oldest competitors," muses Peter as he describes the event. "I felt, when we first started, he (Alex) had a natural liking to it (sailing). He performed like the adults. When the winds were relatively calm, 12 knots, we did really well. The little chipmunk...he was scurrying across the boat."

Alex started sailing when he was about seven years old at a local sailing

school on Lake St. Francis. He began sailing with his father the next year on the family's CL 16, states a description of the pair on the Wayfarer International website, [www.wayfarer-international.org](http://www.wayfarer-international.org). This happened to be the very same boat Peter had sailed with his dad in the 1970s when he began.

"I was sailing since I was a youngin'," Peter adds. "Back in the '70s to get me out of drugs, drinking...sailing would keep me busy. I stayed out of trouble."

In Peter's second year of sailing, he and his father won the Canadian championships without the use of a spinnaker, states the website.

"During the teen years Peter raced on anything he could sail on. Peter

crewed for André Laframboise in the 1980 Worlds placing 6th right behind Al Schönbom," the description reads. "Then, in 1994, Peter purchased his own Wayfarer and started to sail with Alex. In 2000, they rebuilt W286. The two love to sail with the other Canadian teams."

The partnership between Peter and Alex has only grown over the years, with the two honing their craft. They have come a long way from the 1995 championships.

The two captured the top spot during the Wayfarer Worlds XV, held on home turf in Canada, defeating teams from Denmark, the U.S. and the U.K.

The Worlds were held at the Mississauga Sailing Club in August on Lake Ontario. The event is held every three years and rotates between the U.K. and North America. The last Worlds in 2010 was in

Weymouth, England. A dingy-only club also had some help for the event with the Canadian Wayfarer Association and the Port Credit Yacht Club on behalf of the Wayfarer International Committee pitching in. More than 30 people competed.

Co-organizer Robert Wierdsma says the Worlds went off without a hitch, as competitors took to the course, but also socialized as well.

"It was great. It was especially good to hear the feedback from the other competitors, which was unanimously good," he explains. "We had such a great time. The camaraderie was great. When Wayfarer sailors get together, you expect that. Everyone was old friends by the end."

Wierdsma also competed at the Worlds, in yet another father and son team. He and his son Daniel had been training for months aboard their Mark IV Wayfarer. He says he was thrilled with how they performed.

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The Wayfarer fleet readies at the start during the Worlds Wayfarer Championship.  
photo courtesy of the Mississauga Sailing Club





Peter and Alex Rahn said they were shocked but elated to win the 2013 Wayfarer Worlds, which were held at the Mississauga Sailing Club.  
photo courtesy of the Mississauga Sailing Club

## A love for sailing passed down from generation to generation



A 9-year-old Alex Rahn stands next to George Blanchard, who was in his 80s, at the time, during the 1995 Wayfarer Worlds Championships in Toronto. George Blanchard died in March of 2011.

photo courtesy of Peter and Alex Rahn

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"For myself, I'm very much at the back of the fleet. The fleet was divided into chunks," he says. "It's the culmination of two years of racing. This was kind of the penultimate sailing for us."

It was bittersweet for Wierdsma. His son is off to the University of Waterloo and he knows they won't be sailing together as much anymore.

"I'm becoming an empty nester," he says with a laugh. "I'm hoping I can entice my wife to go sailing with me."

The organizer says thanks to the sailing club members, the Worlds was a success.

"Everything that's going to happen has to have membership participation," he states.

"The club has been taking on more regattas."

What's more, he says he was thrilled to see a Canadian team beat out the rest of the competition.

"We were quite delighted that a Canadian team has won. They didn't even need to sail the last race. They had it in the bag. Peter and Alan won against some pretty good competition. Peter's a great sailor. They've competed together for a long, long time."

It's that history together that ensured them the win this time, adds Rahn. Few words have to be spoken while out on the course.

"We hardly say anything to each other," Peter says. The Montreal team sails out of

Beaconsfield Yacht Club and also has a Mark IV. "We look at each other and grunt."

When it came to the win, the Rahn's say it was a complete surprise.

"We had some really good competition," Peter says, adding he thought the British would take the competition. "We just happened to make fewer mistakes. All the stars aligned. There were some very, very good people we were racing against."

There was also a bit of luck on their side, Peter adds, as their number was 10888.

"It was lucky," he says.

Alex says the Worlds was a welcoming atmosphere with good, healthy competition.

"There were a few moments. We pulled the spinnaker up right away and we were off. It was a nice smooth transition from course to course. It's a big lake, it's steady winds," he explains. "I've never gone to a competition this big anywhere and yet it felt like home. In the Wayfarer fleet it's a very close group. We all know each other."

Both Peter and Wierdsma would like to see that camaraderie continue by attracting youth to sailing.

"Bring in more youth and spread the fleet out," Wierdsma says is one way to do so. "That'll be fun to get some kids coming out."

"A little resurgence. The biggest concern is to get new blood in it," Peter adds, stating sometimes it's hard to find true sailors and not just those buying fast boats. "Having a fast boat doesn't make you fast. I

ran the numbers back and forth. That was the whole calculation," Peter explains, adding since they had a Mark IV along with numerous other competitors, they also felt confident their lead would stick. The boat is really well laid out. We all had the same equipment. In the past they'd always come down in their own boats and kick the pants off us."

After nine races, Alex says they were allowed two drops. That's when they decided to drop their first race, as it was their worst, and not sail their last race and they were already ahead of the pack, showing that after eight races they had won.

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Rob Wierdsma and son Daniel waiting for the next start during the 2013 Wayfarer Worlds.  
photo courtesy of the Mississauga Sailing Club



Peter and Alex Rahn also at the start in their Wayfarer Knights of Mayhem.  
photo courtesy of the Mississauga Sailing Club


certainly believe if they can make a brick go fast, then they are a good sailor. A Wayfarer, even Albacore, these are old classes that have been around since the late '50s. They need new blood. Go into it to have fun. Don't be scared of getting wet or

starting at the back of the fleet. The main thing is to never give up. It teaches people to be patient. Respect for the environment and skipper and crew together. Together they will make it work."


And together, the Rahn's have truly

made their partnership a memorable one, culminating with the 2013 Wayfarer Worlds win. "We are just very proud. We never dreamed of it back in 1995," Alex says. "It was a very proud moment for my father."

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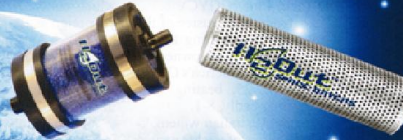
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