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'John Dane III, Austin Sperry (USA) - Star Class' © Rolex/Dan Nerney

For some people in this world having a roof over your head and being able to provide for your family is a dream, for others having a positive role model to help you through tough times is a dream and for yet others representing your country at the Olympics is a dream. Everything about John Dane III is larger than life. His dreams are ambitious and his efforts to help others achieve their dreams are even more far-reaching and supportive.

This July, as he rids himself of jet lag and acclimates to the living conditions at the Olympic Sailing venue in Qingdao, China, Dane will celebrate his 58th birthday. Yes, at 58, he will be pinching himself about coming so close to achieving a life long dream of being in the Olympics. Dane's Olympic pursuit started in 1968 when he sailed his first Olympic Trials in the Dragon with OJ Young. Young and Dane finished second to the boat skippered by Buddy Friedrichs; the boat that went on to win the Olympic Gold Medal that year. At 18, young Dane learned some important lessons.

Not only did he realize what it would take to compete at the highest level, but he also realized how important having mentors such as sailing legends Gilbert Gray, Buddy Friedrichs, Barton Jahncke and Click Schreck were to helping him achieve those dreams.



John soaked up everything that he could from his sailing mentors and applied the lessons to his educational, civic, family and sailing communities. A native of New Orleans, Dane earned his B.S. and his Ph.D. in civil engineering at Tulane University. A three-time All American Sailor and the 1968 Intercollegiate Sailor of the Year, Dane has continued to support Tulane University as a board member to the University's Presidents' Counsel and an advisor to the School of Engineering.

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A Southerner through and through, Dane's business career started in New Orleans, prospered, was decimated by Hurricane Katrina and rose like a phoenix to lead the Mississippi Gulf Coast revival. Dane is not a dabbler. His shipyards and maritime interests have developed into one of the largest builders of luxury yachts in the world, Trinity Yachts. His other business, United States Marine, Inc. builds high tech patrol boats for the US Navy and other navies around the world. When Hurricane Katrina flooded Trinity's New Orleans shipyard, Dane led his partners in making the bold move to quickly relocate their operations to Gulfport, Mississippi. Trinity set up a 1-800 number and wired \$1,500 to every one of its 500 employees who called in. The company ordered 100 mobile homes and quickly went to work providing the infrastructure for the new housing and boat building community.

While he put the pieces of his business back together, Dane lived with twelve other members of his family aboard a houseboat that he has owned for 25 years. The father of seven and grandfather of two worked 18-hour days for six months and set an example for all including his son-in-law and US Olympic teammate, Austin Sperry. Sperry sings praises of Dane's work ethic and is forever 'indebted to him for showing (me) what it takes to be ultra successful.' Dane's businesses have flourished since Hurricane Katrina. Between direct employees and sub contractors, their employment has doubled to over 1,000 employees and their work orders have nearly tripled.

Dane's own mentoring program reaches well beyond his family, crew and employees. Trinity Yachts has been helping dreams come true in Broward County, Florida for years with their support of the Boys and Girls Clubs. Their support has fostered high quality relationships between children and caring, well-trained adults. The efforts extend throughout the county and provide positive role models for at-risk youth.

With a trustworthy and capable team minding the shop, Dane and Sperry, have the resources and have carved out the time to develop a strong Olympic sailing effort. Their campaign, complete with several coaches and trainers, multiple Star boats and support boats and lots of fans wearing the classic Trinity Yachts baseball cap is leaving no stone unturned as it approaches the Olympics. Remembering what it was like to 'be living out of a van and not having a pot to piss in' during one of his earliest Olympic campaigns, Dane also made a generous contribution to the US Olympic Sailing Team in 2007.

John Dane III will be honored by the world's leading inclusive sailing facility and program, Shake-a-Leg Miami at its Night of Launching Dreams on April 5, 2008. Dane, with dreams of his own has helped scores in attaining dreams of all proportions. It's a fitting honor. Let's hope that all who have been helped by John Dane III will wish him well in achieving his Olympic dream and share in his wish when he blows out the candles on his birthday cake this July