

Tom Whalen was mayor of Albany from 1983 to 1993. His likeness – along with Finn McCoul, his golden retriever - are immortalized in bronze about 500 meters from here as the crow flies. Another reflection of Tom is the racing shell “Thomas M. Whalen “that we see before us. It was Tom who invested the resources of the city in reestablishing the long-lost connection between Albany and the Hudson River. The boathouse and the continuing sport of rowing in Albany owe their existence to Tom.

Tom was a sculler, so at first blush it may seem a bit odd to have a 4-man sweep shell named for him, but then again, when you know the history of the Thomas Whalen, it may seem quite fitting. The Thomas Whalen was among the first new four-man (or woman) racing shells purchased by the Albany Rowing Center when it had finally grown to sufficient strength to afford boats that had not already seen a lot of hard years. It, and the Neil S. Kaye, were purchased new and named in honor of the two visionaries who 25 years ago made ARC and rowing on the Hudson possible. The boat was originally christened in the presence of the mayor himself.

The original Neil S. Kaye, which had many endearing and not-so-endearing quirks, has gone to the great boatyard in the sky, but miraculously, through the heroic efforts of a young man who devoted himself to the task of resurrecting it, the Thomas Whalen has been reborn. Anyone who saw the Whalen in the spring of 2011 might have doubted it would float, and certainly would not have believed it could ever be rowed again. Now we see it, and it truly represents the indomitable spirit of the man for whom it is named. It is fitting that we re-christen it in his honor – the Thomas M. Whalen.