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## OBITUARY

# Powerboat racer helped others enjoy the water

By [Mark Zaloudek](#)

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SARASOTA -

Grant Elsbree was at home on the water as a champion powerboat racer and divemaster. As a marine mechanic, the 48-year-old outdoors enthusiast also took pleasure in helping others enjoy the water.



Grant Elsbree, 48, won the 1990 Key West World Championship, C-class, and was a marine mechanic.

Elsbree, who won the 1990 Key West World Championship Offshore Powerboat Races, C-class division, died unexpectedly Sunday in his sleep, said his wife, Melissa Karp Elsbree. The medical examiner's office is awaiting test results to determine his cause of death.

Self-employed for more than 20 years, Elsbree was forced to close his Offshore Marine repair shop last year because of the economic downturn, but continued to work on boat engines as a traveling repairman.

Some of Elsbree's greatest joys were sharing his love of the marine environment with others.

As a teenager, Elsbree and several of his Sarasota High classmates helped build the Carefree Learner floating classroom under the leadership of two of their marine science teachers.

The 41-foot research vessel docked at Marina Jack has been used by thousands of schoolchildren and adults since 1978 to learn about marine ecology.

Elsbree's name appears on a plaque at its berth, acknowledging those who spent long hours building it.

"He would take our daughter there because he was very proud of the fact that it's still a floating classroom," his wife said.

Early in his career, he volunteered at Sarasota's Mote Marine Laboratory to help maintain its fleet of research vessels, she said.

He also helped prepare the boats that took handicapped children fishing during the pre-race events of the Suncoast Offshore Grand Prix Festival in the 1980s, she added.

Born Dec. 5, 1959, in San Jose, Calif., Elsbree came to Sarasota at the age of 12 with his mother and stepfather.

He became an avid boater and water skier who performed with the Ski-A-Rees water-skiing team as a teenager. He later became an accomplished downhill skier.

His wife said his cremated remains will be incorporated in an offshore memorial reef ball to create a new habitat for marine life.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by his 10-year-old daughter, Brooke; his parents, Earle and Virginia Bradshaw of Sarasota; five brothers: Dr. Scott Elsbree of Sarasota, Kent Elsbree of Marietta, Ga., John Bradshaw of Sarasota, Jeff Bradshaw of Clearwater and Scott Bradshaw of McKinleyville, Calif.

A celebration of his life is planned for 1 p.m. Saturday at South Gate Community Center, 3145 South Gate Circle, Sarasota.

Memorial donations may be made to the Brooke Susan Elsbree Beneficiary Fund at any Wachovia Bank.

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