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WoodenBoat REVIEW

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DORADE

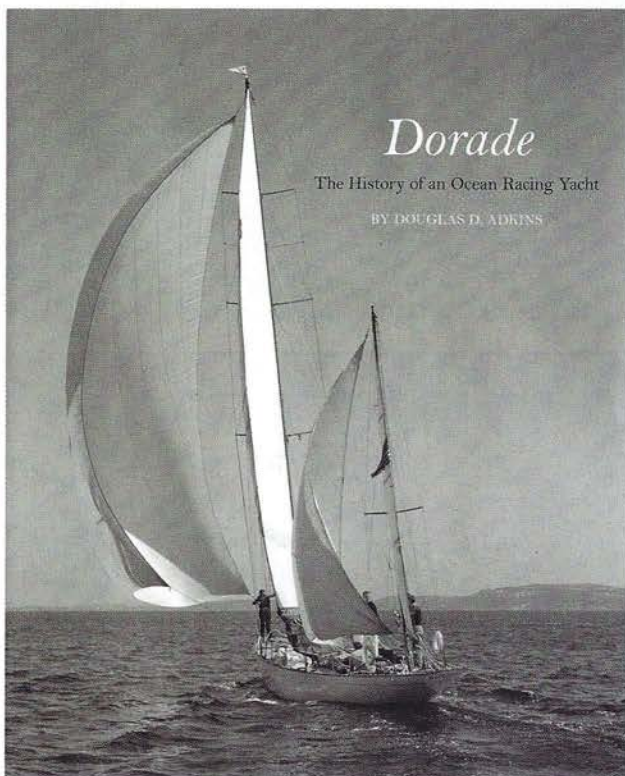
DORADE: *The History of an Ocean Racing Yacht*, by Douglas D. Adkins. David R. Godine, Publisher, 15 Court Square, Suite 320, Boston, MA 02108-4715. 240 pp., \$65. Available from *The WoodenBoat Store*.

Reviewed by Bob Scott

To learn what yacht designers of the early 1930s thought about Olin Stephens and his legendary yawl DORADE, one could not do better than turn to Uffa Fox (see WB Nos. 221-224), the breakthrough British boat designer, racer, and critic. He described DORADE as “perfection of every detail [and] fast beyond all doubt, all possible doubt whatever.”

One also does not have to read far to know that a lot of love went into the boat and into Douglas Adkins's history of that boat. Olin and his younger brother, Rod (“the real seaman,” in Olin's words), started their obsession with sailboats beginning at about age 10 during a visit to Cape Cod. Adkins writes, “they sailed, raced and hitched rides as crew...their enthusiasm, commitment and grace...in the sailing fraternity of Long Island Sound...laid the groundwork for DORADE.” Olin built his “foundation of design” with influence of a chance sail offered to him and Rod by Clinton Crane and Sherman Hoyt on a new Six-Meter. Before college Olin began drawing his first Six-Meter. Rod rode his bicycle to work at the Nevins Yard, where both young men saw great yachts being built and met those involved in their design and construction. Drake Sparkman, a 29-year-old New York yacht broker, brought Olin into his firm, which was soon to become Sparkman & Stephens.

Roderick Sr.'s faith in his two sons was demonstrated early by commissioning a family yacht to be designed by



Olin and managed in its construction by Rod. Built by the Minneford Yard on City Island near Manhattan, DORADE was launched in the beginning of the Depression. Quickly designed and built, she had her problems, with two feet more waterline than intended, an over-sparred and overcanvased sail plan, and awkward bulwarks. She did not win her first major contest, the 1930 Bermuda Race, which Olin later blamed on his poor navigation rather than speed. At age 95, Olin reminisced about his joy of her relative performance in that race. On the beat to the finish, “we saw twelve larger boats ahead of us...and on the way passed them all, crossing the finish line ten seconds ahead of the

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leader. [That line-honors finish] is still a high point in my sailing experience because it confirmed all I had hoped for in DORADE—a real sea boat that could go to windward with out-and-out racers.”

That winter, DORADE's mainmast was shortened, and her bowsprit and heavy bulwarks eliminated. To quote Adkins, “She had found her wonderful balance” in time for the 1931 Transatlantic Race, in which she was, by far, the smallest yacht and the only yawl. Competitors, including some of the best-known names in yachting, and most critics thought her fragile and criticized the organizers for allowing her to enter such a daunting race. Her crew, which included Rod Sr., his sons Rod and Olin, and their Bermuda Race veterans Jim Merrill, Johnny Fox, Ed Koster, and Buck Moore, had an average age of 22. Indeed, Fox later wrote, the British press referred to Olin as the “boy skipper.” DORADE raced nearly 3,000 miles in 16 days at an average speed of 7.83 knots. The result at the Plymouth finish line was nothing short of astounding: DORADE had finished two days before the next, much larger competitor. She and her crew were to spark a revolution in ocean-racing yacht design.

Olin later wrote in *The Rudder* (May 1936) that he aimed to design an ocean racer that would also serve as a cruising yacht, most of which at the time were designed for coastal sailing. He cited John Alden's Bermuda-winning schooner MALABAR IV “as the lightest and cleanest lined fisherman type yacht,” and Herreshoff's NY 40, MEMORY, converted to a jib-headed yawl, as the strongest “representative of the yacht type.” Both yachts, and Starling Burgess's 1928 NINA, Olin believed had influence on ocean-racer development and on his design of DORADE. But it was George L. Watson's DORA of 1891 that Olin, late in life, discovered was of a hull design “strikingly similar to the boat that emerged as DORADE.”

The reader will welcome Adkins's account of the early years of racing successes, Atlantic passages, and accolades for DORADE and crew. But for most East Coast sailors, his details of DORADE's next half century on the West Coast of the U.S. will be a new treat. She continued her racing success in the Trans-Pac and the Swiftsure races. One hard-to-believe story recounts her risky offshore passage in the middle of WWII from San Francisco to Seattle. Apart from this apparently huge risk, DORADE was always loved and cared for by her eight owners in both San Francisco Bay and Puget Sound. In 1982, the icon of St. Francis Yacht Club racing, R.C. Keefe, organized a match race against another early S&S yawl, SANTANA, with Tom Blackaller at SANTANA's helm. Because SANTANA had mizzen trouble at the start, Bob Keefe decided to strike DORADE's mizzen. Adkins writes, “When Rod Stephens later saw pictures of the race in *Sports Illustrated*, he was very critical saying, ‘I strongly suggest

that she never be sailed without using her mizzen.”

The fondness of both Rod and Olin for their creation spans 80 years. Olin raced DORADE in Italy during her Mediterranean years from 1997 to 2006. When Mitch Neff, then-president of Sparkman & Stephens, found an American to buy her and bring her back in 2006, Adkins's account of Capt. Paul Buttrose's maneuvering with Italian customs officials to let DORADE be exported is too hilarious to reveal here.

Olin sailed on DORADE after she had returned home to American waters. In 2008, his health failing, he was able to watch her from the race committee boat as she won the Castine Classic Yacht Race. At the gun he declared, "This is the best 100-year birthday present there could ever be!"

Doug Adkins has collected and compiled important documents, some of which are published here for the first time. Both author and publisher share a magical understanding and appreciation for the subject. The book is a history, but words without the splendid graphics—historical and contemporary photographs, and drawings—would only partially tell the story.

Bob Scott is owner of the Sparkman & Stephens-designed New York 32 FALCON which, on the 75th anniversary of her launching, won three first-place trophies in the 2011, 432-mile Marblehead-to-Halifax Race. Among her prizes was the Over the Hill Gang trophy, for the fastest boat with an average crew age of over 50.

Hemingway's Boat

Everything He Loved in Life, and Lost, 1934–1961

Hemingway's Boat: Everything He Loved in Life, and Lost, 1934–1961, by Paul Hendrickson. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, New York. 532 pp., \$30. Available from *The Wooden Boat Store*.

Reviewed by Tom Lunde

Paul Hendrickson's *Hemingway's Boat* is an account of Ernest Hemingway's life centered on his love of fishing and his boat, PILAR. Big-game fishing was a physical challenge when Hemingway entered the sport in the late 1920s, and it remains one today. It was a relatively new endeavor popularized by Zane Grey and a few others. Hemingway was an innovator with his technique of overcoming the urge to reflexively set the

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