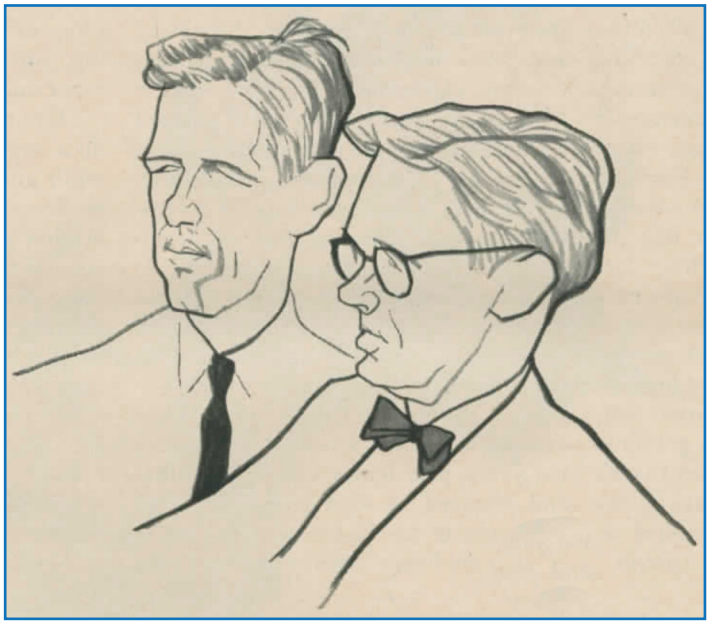
Up from Corker

Morton M. Hunt, The Newyorker, September 1957
(Part I)

Early in the summer of 1920, Roderick Stephens, the president of Olin J. Stephens, Inc., a prosperous coal company in the Bronx, decided that his house in the borough's Mott Haven section was not the ideal place for his family to spend the hot weather months. Accordingly, he set out with his brood for Cape Cod, where he had rented a cottage on Sandy Neck, a quiet and isolated peninsula that shelters Barnstable Harbor from the open waters to the north. To get the mail and do their shopping, the Stephenses somehow had to get to the town of Yarmouth, which was two miles away in a direct line across the harbor but ten miles away by road if there had been a road. A boat was clearly a necessity, so Mr. Stephens, whose interests had previously been limited to selling coal and dabbling in Bronx civic affairs, bought a sixteen-foot sloop, named **Corker**, and a one horsepower outboard motor, which he assumed would push her along if she got becalmed. Then, one morning, leaving his wife and five-year-old daughter, Marite, behind, he boarded Corker with his two sons- Olin J. II, who was just twelve, and Roderick, Jr., who was not quite eleven and set sail for Yarmouth. For about an hour, all three delightedly experimented with handling the tiller and sails, and admired Corker's easy progress across the water. Then, without warning, the boat slowed down and came to a halt. They lifted moistened fingers to the wind, waggled the rudder, fiddled with the sails, and poked about with an oar; Corker mutinously refused to budge. The three mariners began to suspect that they were aground, and this suspicion was confirmed when the tide ran all the way out, leaving them high and dry on the broad sand flats of the bay. "Well, boys," Mr. Stephens said cheerfully, "we might as well walk home for lunch and come back for her this evening." So they furled the canvas, took off their shoes and socks, and trudged a mile across the wet sand to their cottage, not in the least humiliated or disgruntled, since they took it for granted that the same sort of thing was always happening to sailors everywhere.

More than once during the days that followed, Stephens and his sons walked home across the sand flats. Then, as they watched the less earthbound maneuverings of other sailboats on the bay, they came to realize that walking home was not the usual lot of every sailor, and they took to studying harbor charts and scheduling their trips at hours when the tide would favor them. Moreover, by trial and error they learned a few rudimentary things about handling a small boat so as to make the most of a light or variable wind. Mr. Stephens, who was then thirtyfive, resisted any urge to run things himself, and let the boys do practically all the sailing for the most part lending his weight only to hoist the mainsail. His idea was simply that he didn't want either of his sons to grow up into such a duffer as he had shown himself to be. As it turned out, few fathers have hit upon a happier way of training their offspring. Not only did Stephens' self-effacement enable his sons to leave the duffer class far



Rod (blinking eyes was his attitude) and Olin Stephens

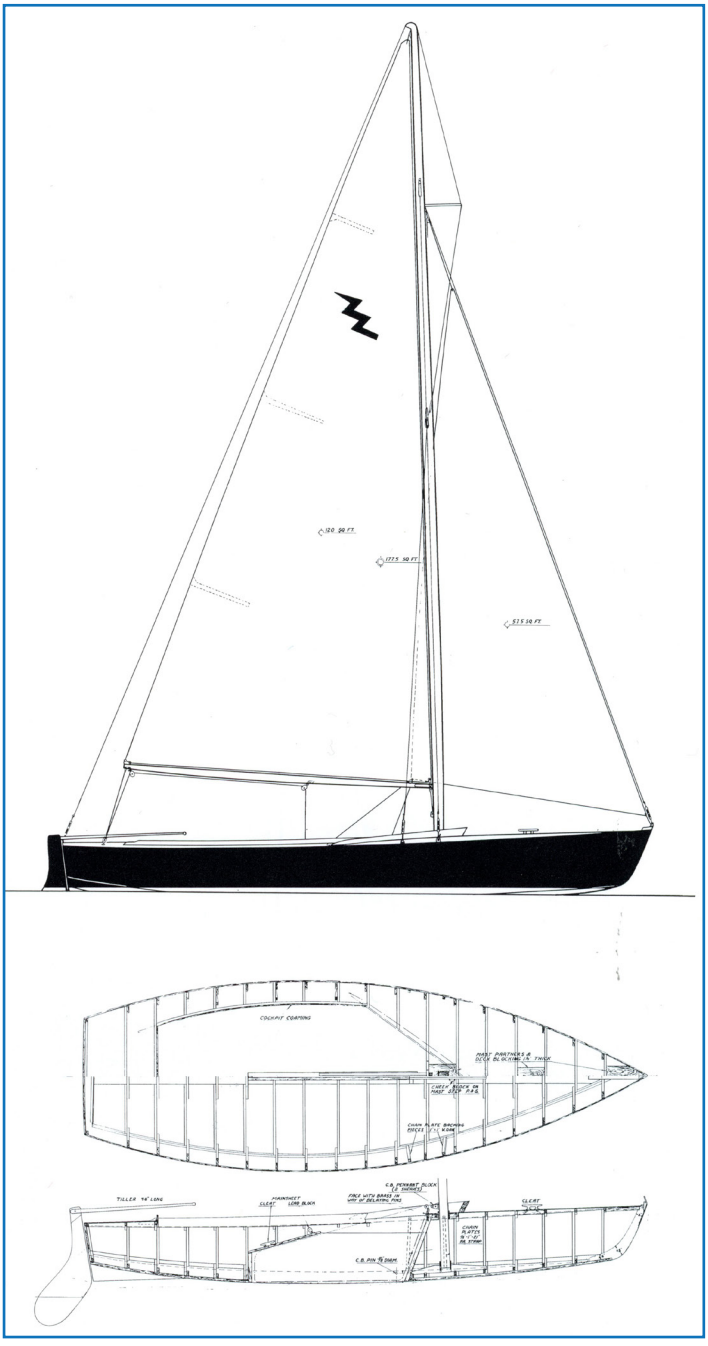
behind but it determined the careers that both of them have successfully pursued all their adult lives, to the point of becoming just about the best there is in their closely related professions, Olin as the chief designer for Sparkman & Stephens, Inc., a New York firm of naval architects, yacht brokers, and marine insurance specialists, of which he is also the vice-president, and Roderick as the company's field engineer, who supervises the construction and outfitting of the yachts his brother designs.

An immediately arresting characteristic of the Stephens brothers, both of whom are married and live in Scarsdale, a good eight miles from the nearest anchorage on the Sound is that each of them appears to be perfectly suited, physically and temperamentally, to his part in their collaborative enterprise. Olin, now forty-nine, is a man of intellectual inclinations, who wears tortoise-shell glasses, speaks through rather compressed lips, and, in general, has the air of a professor of literature at a small New England college. Roderick, at forty-eight, has the clean-cut facial planes and the narrowed, that are part of the conventional concept of the true sportsman; small, firm of muscle, and lean of flank, he is an amiable life-of-the-party whose happiest hours are spent working on or cruising in sailboats. Olin's idea of a perfect morning is one spent at his desk with a slide rule, some graph paper, and a scratch-pad, going over the tryout data of a scale model of a new hull. Roderick's idea of a perfect morning is one spent in blue jeans and a pea jacket at the helm of a boat on a test sail in the waters off City Island, with maybe a couple of opportunities to haul himself up the mast and adjust some flaw in the rigging. It is a combination of talents and traits that has paid off. During the nearly thirty years the brothers have been working together, sailboats bearing the small metal plaques that identify their work have won more than three hundred and fifty major trophies. In all, they have been responsible for about a thousand designs for pleasure craft, most of them sailboats ranging from dinghies that can just nicely carry four people across an inlet to stately yawls and ketches that can graciously carry a dozen passengers across an ocean, plus a number of power cruisers for clients of a less sporting nature, and they also have a variety of commercial and military vessels to their credit. This year, Sparkman & Stephens (Drake Sparkman, the president of the firm, is in charge of the business side of things) has been commissioned to design thirty-seven sailboats, with a combined value of close to two million dollars, of which the company will receive the naval architect's customary ten per cent. Although this is a good deal less than half of the firm's prospective income for the year, it represents by far the most challenging part of its business.

Even under ideal weather conditions, sailboats probably rank second only to the oxcart as the slowest form of transportation employed by man. The swiftest of them (thought to be the shallow-draft bilge-board scows of the Minnesota and Wisconsin lakes) can make no better than twenty knots, or about twenty-three miles an hour-and then not always in the direction intended by their skippers, and many a yachtsman has spent whole weekends making no knots at all with in hailing distance of his home port. From this, it might seem that sailboats would rank only one step above oxcarts in arousing the true sports-man's competitive instincts. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth. The minute any two yachtsmen board their boats for a quiet sail around the bay, they are almost certain to be overcome by a desire to race. The Stephens brothers have long endeared themselves to their clients not only by providing them with boats that win races but by demonstrating that they themselves share the universal passion for competitive sailing. While some naval architects keep the seats of their trousers dry by resting them firmly on their draftsmen's stools, the Stephenses have always delighted in getting the seats of theirs soaking wet on the spray-swept decks of racing yachts, whether engaged merely in a midafternoon sprint around a nearby buoy

in the Sound or in a gruelling transatlantic contest, and their seamanship is so superb that several prominent yacht owners have put off entering major races until they were assured of having at least one of the brothers in their crew.

On deck and in the thick of a race, the Stephenses run true to form; it is almost as if they had been type-cast by an excessively literal-minded Hollywood producer. No matter how acute the crisis of the moment may be, Olin sits calmly at the tiller, quietly calculating the strategic advantages of a starboard tack, perhaps, or pointing out to someone, in the steady voice he preserves even during times of intense inner excitement, the effect of the boat's low resistance characteristics on its ability to go to windward. Roderick, meanwhile, is in ceaseless motion, dashing fore and aft as he shifts the sails in response to every change in the wind, scrambling up into the rigging to scout the surface of the water for signs of a better breeze elsewhere, barking orders like an Ivy League Captain Bligh, and, in general, showing up in the field glasses of rival skippers as the most animated subject on the horizon. Typically, the brothers were in the thick of things during last year's Bermuda Race, the biennial run from Newport to Hamilton Harbor that is the Mille Miglia, the Kentucky Derby, and the Senior Prom of the yachting world, all in one. Olin, whose interest in sailboats is so objective that he prefers not to take on the responsibilities of owning one, went along as second mate aboard **Bolero**, a celebrated seventy-three-foot trophy-winning yawl he designed shortly after the war for John Nicholas Brown, at that time an Assistant Secretary of the Navy; Roderick competed as the skipper of his own boat, **Mustang** a forty-five-foot sloop his brother had designed twenty years earlier. Typically, too, twenty-seven of the eighty-nine starting boats were of Sparkman & Stephens design, as were the first four boats to arrive in Bermuda, Bolero being first of



Lightning, one design, S&S design # 265, 1938

all. And so were seven of the first ten boats to finish on corrected time (that is, with racing handicaps figured in), including the over-all winner, Carleton Mitchell's thirty-eight- foot yawl **Finisterre**. Of the twenty-one trophies that were handed out, thirteen went to boats bearing a Sparkman & Stephens plaque.

Neither the great depression, which temporarily eliminated the demand for expensive sailing craft, nor the Second World War, which cut off the supply of pleasure boats at the source, appears to have in any degree diminished the atavistic urge that leads men to take to the open water in boats propelled by nothing more dependable than wind and currents. Lloyd's Register of American Yachts, an incomplete roster but the generally accepted authority on the subject- listed twenty-eight hundred sailing yachts in 1938 and four thousand last year. These figures are indicative of the change that has come over the sport of yachting since the days when J. P. Morgan is supposed to have said that any man who asks how much it costs to own a yacht can't afford one. They do not, however, even begin to indicate a much more drastic change that has come over the whole sport of sailing since the war: the fact that the increase in the number of sailing yachts has been overshadowed by a far greater increase in the number of smaller sailing craft. The sailing yacht so big that it requires a crew of a dozen paid hands is practically extinct, and the sport is being taken over more and more by enthusiasts of moderate means, who go in for so-called one-design day sailers-small boats built to standard specifications, like the houses in many suburban real-estate developments-which aren't intended to venture far from home, much less stay out overnight. Of the hundred or more major one-design boats in this country, two of the most popular are the **Blue Jay**, a sturdy thirteen-foot centerboard sloop that Olin designed in 1947, and the **Lightning**, a spry nineteen-foot centerboarder that he designed in 1939. As far as the Stephens brothers are concerned, the less said about the Lightning the

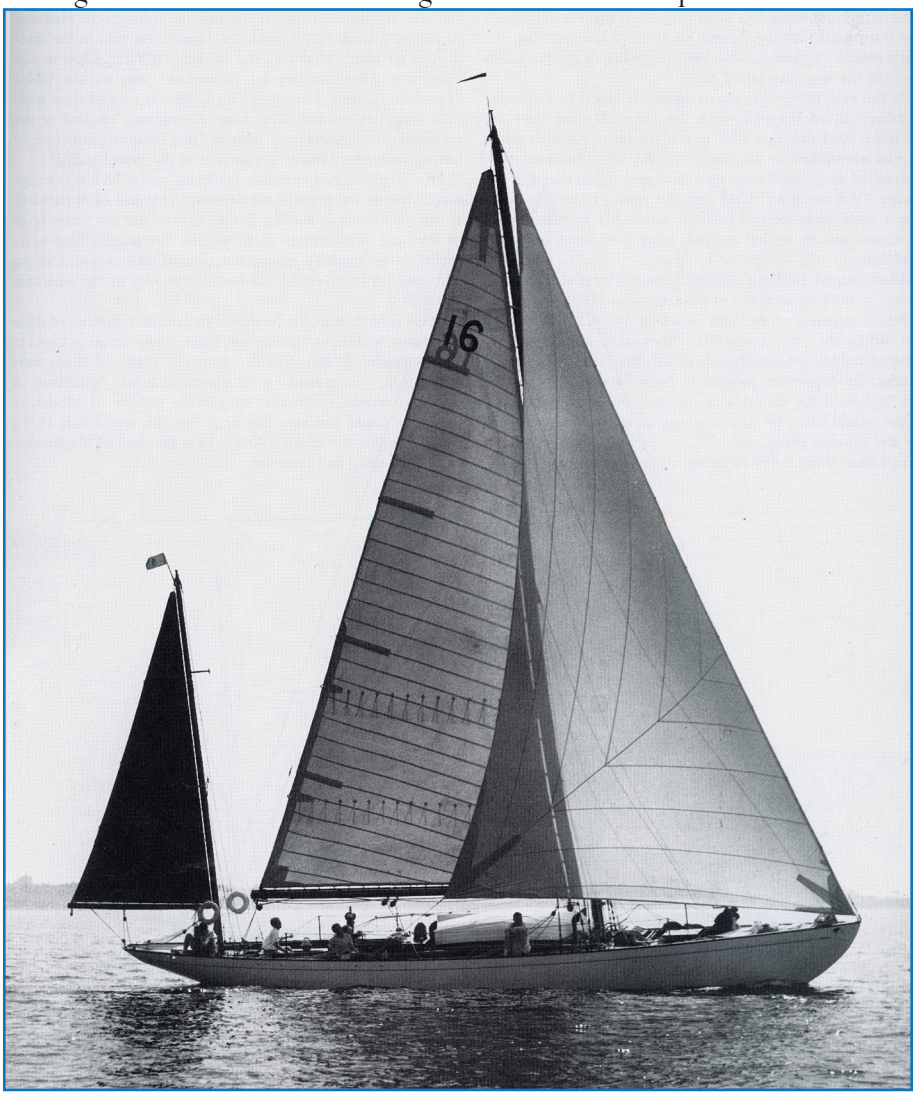
Blue Jays, one design, S&S design # 805, 1948

better. This is not because they oppose it as symptomatic of the democratization of sailing, which it conspicuously is, but because Sparkman & Stephens, failing to appreciate the potential size of the market, let the plans go for a few hundred dollars to the Lightning Class Association, a nonprofit outfit made up of Lightning owners all over the world, Italy, Hawaii, Peru, and elsewhere. To date, some sixty-seven hundred Lightnings have been sold, and it does not cheer Sparkman & Stephens to reflect that if the company had held on to the plans and charged its established fifteen-dollar royalty for each Lightning to reach the market, it would by now have realized a little more than a hundred thousand dollars on this design alone.

Since it is impossible to say in advance what sort of inexpensive class boat may strike the public fancy, Sparkman & Stephens prefers to rely for the major part of its sailboat business on well-to-do customers who want yachts, rather than day sailers, and want them designed to suit their individual tastes. Sailing yachts, as a rule, run anywhere from thirty feet up in length, and most of them have at least four bunks, a complete galley, toilet facilities, electric lights, and an auxiliary motor. At present, the average Sparkman & Stephens yacht costs in the vicinity of forty thousand dollars, and one of the company's most recent jobs cost at least seven times that. The brothers decline to identify this boat, but it is common knowledge that one of the biggest and most elaborate yachts they have launched in some time is Laurance Rockefeller's ninety-four-foot ketch **Wayfarer**, with accommodations for nine passengers and a crew of six. Among other yachtsmen I with whom the Stephenses have had cordial and profitable relations are Harold S. Vanderbilt, R. J. Reynolds, Henry S. Morgan, H. B. DuPont, Winthrop Aldrich, Chester Bowles, Thomas J. Watson, Jr., and Stavros Niarchos, the Greek shipowner, who in 1946 commissioned them to refit the hundred-and-three-foot British schooner Eros, which he had recently bought. But it is another sign of the times that Olin and his staff of about a hundred assistants have in recent years also been designing many extremely prosaic vessels, such as tugs, mine-sweepers, and coastal tankers and freighters-indeed, four-fifths of his staff is regularly assigned to such jobs, and that these are more profitable to his firm than pleasure craft. Although work of this sort scarcely lifts the heart of a confirmed sailboat man, it is a tonic for Sparkman & Stephens accountants; with a total payroll of no more than a hundred and twenty, and with almost no requirements in the way of raw materials, the firm realizes from its combined brokerage, insurance, and designing activities a gross income of around a million dollars a year.

The season after the family had its enlightening experiences with Corker, the Stephenses returned to Sandy Neck, and Mr. Stephens bought a considerably larger boat, a twenty-six-foot day sailer called **Token**. The previous summer, Corker's size, the greenness of her crew, and simple prudence had restricted the family's sailing excursions to the waters of Barnstable Harbor, and, for the time being, this had seemed enough-setting out in the morning with a jug of milk and some sandwiches (put up by Mrs. Stephens, who did not care much for sailing and usually stayed home with her small daughter), spending a long, sunny day coasting along the protected shores, stopping on a deserted sandy beach for lunch, and then, perhaps, running home ahead of a late-afternoon thunderstorm and wading ashore browned, bleached, weary, and wholly content. Now, however, the reassuring dimensions of Token and a growing feeling of confidence in their abilities as sailors prompted Stephens and his sons to begin laying plans for something more ambitious-a one-day, forty-mile junket down to Provincetown and back, with not only the whole family aboard but half a dozen friends as well. Actually, they were still rank novices or they never would have taken so many people along. At Mrs. Stephens' insistence, moreover, a local lighthouse-keeper was added to the party at the last minute to act as paid skipper. "All in all, it was just what

I've since come to call 'a drowning party, Olin said the other day. "There were simply too many bodies and too little boat." Pushed by a favoring wind, Token made the trip to Provincetown well enough, and everybody went ashore and had lunch. Soon after the group started back, however, it became apparent from the look of the sky and the waves that the boat was running into a gathering storm. As the wind and sea began to fling Token about and make her rigging groan, first Mrs. Stephens and then, in increasingly rapid succession, Marite, the guests, Stephens, the lighthouse-keeping captain, and the two boys lost their composure. The men reefed the mainsail; then they lowered it altogether and bounced around under the jib alone; finally, buffeted by the wind and the waves and getting nowhere, they dropped the jib, wildly flagged a fishing boat, and were towed in disgrace back to Provincetown. It was a day rich in lessons, and neither of the Stephens brothers has ever had to be towed into port again. As one summer followed another, the Stephenses discovered that sailing, like most other addictions, demands ever more intensive, and expensive, indulgence. In 1922, Mr. Stephens joined the American Yacht Club, at Rye, and bought his first yacht, a little yawl, no longer than Token but equipped with a cabin, bunks for four, and a galley. He and his sons took possession of the boat at Riverton, New Jersey, on the Delaware River, and spent three days sailing her to their home waters in the Sound; it was their initial exposure to the kind of existence that enchants the sailing yachtsman- whole days and nights afloat, free from ordinary cares, and without even the need to put in to shore for refuelling. Back home, the boys and their father pored over Coast and Geodetic Survey charts in preparation for week-long cruises, and soon they were navigating the Sound from end to end. In



Dorade, S&S design # 7, 1929

1924, Mr. Stephens moved on to a very heavy ketch that was marvellously stable but discouragingly slow; then, in succeeding summers, he switched to a light cruising sloop, to a neat, swift schooner, and to a volatile six-metre racing boat. By the time the boys were out of their teens, they had had some experience with almost the entire range of modern sailing craft. Their father had progressed reasonably well, too, and though he referred to himself as just an extra hand, they had taught him carefully, and sometimes even let him take over the tiller. He acquired the durable tan of a seasoned yachtsman, and his friends in the Bronx began to feel that he had permanently turned his back on coal.

Almost from the very start, the Stephens brothers approached sailing in conspicuously different ways. Olin, doodling in his textbooks at school, filled their margins with scribbled sketches of yachts, and he had a tendency to pass up his homework in favor of books and magazine articles about boat design; Roderick preferred to build working models and sail them in ponds. Aboard the family boat, Olin had the cooler head and showed the better judgment as a navigator and racing tactician, while his brother, far more physically adept, became singularly skillful at trimming the sails, the fine art of constantly readjusting the canvas so as to get the most drive out of every fugitive breeze. In a momentous discussion that the brothers held while they were in their middle teens, it was formally agreed that thenceforth, instead of taking turns, as they had been doing, Olin would be the skipper at all times. and Roderick the first mate. "After that, I got more fun out of sailing, because I was always on the move, busy with the sails," Roderick has recalled. "And Olin liked it more, too sitting at the tiller and running things. When I finally got a boat of my own-nearly twenty years later, and first raced her to Bermuda, Olin came along and I made him the skipper. I wish I could do that more often."

As far as the Stephenses are aware, they have no nautical heritage other than that provided by their paternal grandfather, Olin J. Stephens, who once won the national single-scull championship on the Harlem River. Not long afterward, he put down his oars and joined his father's coal company, which at one time was the second largest in the city and which remained in the family until 1929, when Roderick Stephens, Sr., sold it. Both Olin II and Roderick, Jr., were born in their parents' Colonial style house in Mott Haven, Olin in April, 1908, and Roderick in August of the following year. In 1913, the family moved to Scarsdale, and both boys went to school there. By the time Olin was eighteen, it was quite clear that neither he nor his brother was going to join the family's coal business. Before graduating from high school, in the spring of 1926, Olin, at his parents' urging, went up to M.I.T. to look over its well-known department of naval architecture. He soon began to suspect that practical experience at the tiller was probably worth more than formal instruction, and his suspicion was reinforced when a professor who interviewed him showed him some plans he had drawn up for an ocean racing sloop; as Olin studied its lines, he felt instinctively that it would move with all the fleetness of a garbage scow. Nevertheless, again to oblige his parents, he entered M.I.T. that fall. In the spring of his freshman year, he came down with an attack of jaundice, went home to recuperate, and, on regaining his strength, announced firmly that he was not going back. He put in a few months studying drafting, trigonometry, and boat design on his own, and then got a job in the office of Henry J. Gielow, a New York naval architect, where he was assigned to make tracings of diesel powerboats. This was such a sordid chore for a lover of sail that he almost at once began casting about for something more to his liking, and he soon found it a position as a draftsman in the office of Philip L. Rhodes, an outstanding sailboat designer, who now ranks as one of the Stephens brothers' few serious rivals.

At the age of nineteen, barely a year after forsaking M.I.T.,

Olin made his profession's equivalent of a Town Hall début when the authoritative magazine Yachting published a design of his for a six-metre sloop. The significance of this achievement was not lost on his father, who, however his interest in coal may have dwindled, had not lost any of his business shrewdness. One day in the summer of 1928, after allowing time for the achievement to sink in, he invited Drake Sparkman, a young acquaintance of his who was already a successful yacht broker, to lunch with him and Olin at the Larchmont Yacht Club. Sparkman, who had been in business for about a year, had decided to expand into naval architecture and was looking for a designer. As Mr. Stephens had hoped, Sparkman had seen Olin's design in Yachting and had been suitably impressed; moreover, in various yacht clubs on both sides of the Sound he had heard reports of the youth's rare abilities as a sailor. Now he was surprised, though by no means unfavorably, to find that this youthful salt was not a hearty extrovert but a rather reserved fellow with a decidedly studious look about him. Although no boat designed by Olin had yet been built, Sparkman, relying largely on intuition, offered him an informal partnership, with the understanding that if things went well it would become a formal one in a little over a year, when Olin came of age.

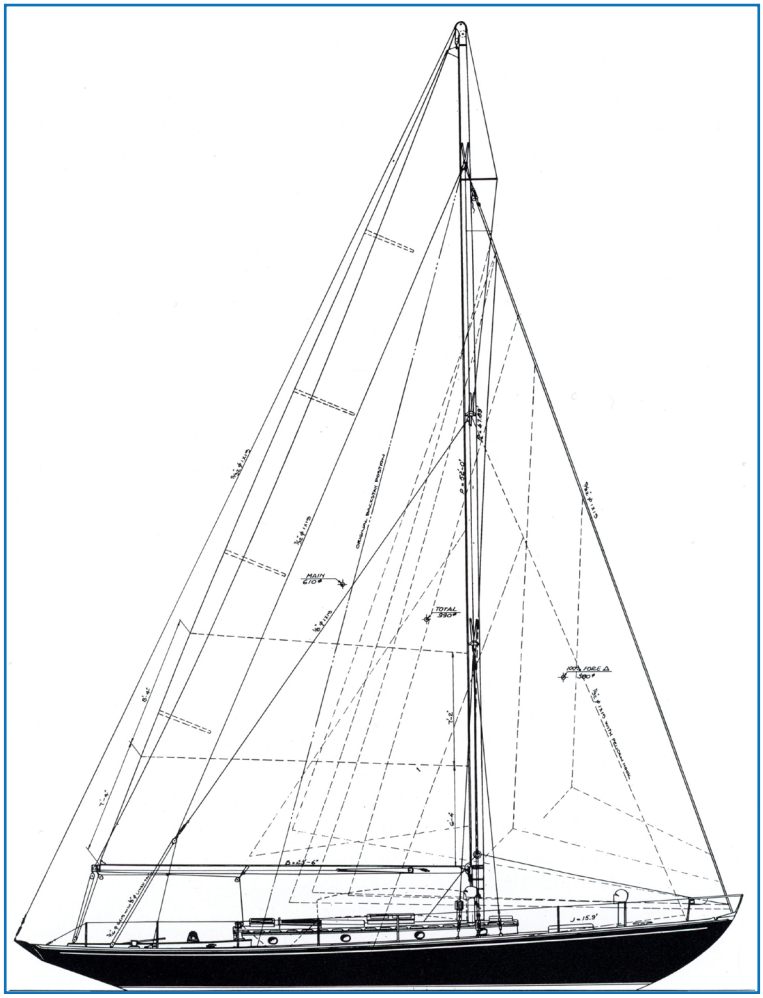
Sparkman installed his new designer at a drafting table in a corner of his own office, at 11 East Forty-fourth Street (he still conducts the firm's brokerage business there, but Olin and his staff now occupy a floor and a half of the building at 79 Madison Avenue), and then set about scaring up something for him to design. Hearing that the Junior Yacht Racing Association of Long Island Sound was thinking of ordering a class boat for its teenage members, he approached one of its officials and said, "I understand you want a junior boat. Well, then, why not have it designed by a real junior? I've got a partner who's still not old enough to vote." The argument struck the official as a remarkably cogent one. Olin designed a twenty-one-foot sloop for the Association, and the Juniors ordered about twenty, some of which are still beating around Manhasset Bay. The persuasive Sparkman next talked a Stamford businessman named Arthur P. Hatch into a much bigger deal for Olin a commission to design a small cruising sloop. Since this was to cost something like thirty-five hundred dollars and Olin was still little more than a novice, Sparkman would seem to have brought off a miracle of salesmanship, though the fact that Hatch was a close friend of his could have had something to do with it. In any event, the sloop, later christened **Kalmia**, took shape on Olin's board during the winter of 1928-29, slid down the ways in the spring, and delighted Hatch in every particular not least by winning in her class in that season's Gibson Island Race, from New London to Gibson Island, Maryland. Sparkman breathed a great sigh, and drew up papers making the firm a corporation and Olin its vice-president.

Still, the Sparkman magic obviously couldn't work every day, and Olin sometimes found things slow at his drafting table. To design Kalmia, which required more room than the Forty-fourth Street office could provide, he had rented space in the drafting room of the late Henry B. Nevins' well-known City Island boatyard, and now he began doing some odd-job drafting for Nevins in his slack periods. Roderick, who had entered Cornell in the fall of spent the summer vacation of his freshman year hanging around Olin's City Island retreat and rubbernecking in the boatyard. There he met Nevins, who liked him and offered to take him in and teach him the boatbuilding business from the keel up. After that, Cornell never had a chance. Roderick served an apprenticeship in every department of the yard, from the mold loft, where hulls were given their basic shapes, to the rigging department, where stays, halyards, and sail-handling gear were made up. Soon he was well on his way to becoming a highly qualified boatbuilder.

Both brothers might long have remained professionally

landbound had it not been for their father, who again was taking a shrewd view of the future. Off and on for years, he and his sons had been comparing ideas for the perfect ocean-racing yacht, and the composite mental picture they had evolved was of a light, sleek, finelined yawl, a craft brashly different from the heavy, lumbering deepwater sailboats, justly known as "modified fishermen," that were then in vogue. In the fall of 1929, in an inspired attempt to establish Olin almost overnight as a leader in his field, Mr. Stephens, with cavalier disregard for the crumbling stock market, proposed to underwrite the cost of such a boat from designs drawn up by his son. When all the bills resulting from this proposal were in, they added up to twenty-eight thousand dollars a very substantial sum of money to risk in those pinched times, but one that, for several reasons, Mr. Stephens has never regretted spending.

The most attractive bid for the job of building the yawl was submitted by the Minneford Yacht Yard, on City Island, especially since the management allowed Roderick to act as general foreman. Taking a leave of absence from the Nevins yard, he personally supervised even the most minute details of the boat's construction, watching as each plank, each keelbolt, each screw went into the hull. The vessel, named **Dorade**, slid down the ways in the spring of 1930, with all three Stephenses tensely looking on, and disconcertingly settled three inches deeper in the water than the waterline Olin had figured on. Today, such a miscalculation would deeply distress him, but he was not then the experienced perfectionist he is now, and he simply rectified his error by having a new waterline painted three inches higher on the hull.



Mustang, NY32 one design class, S&S design # 125, 1935

Dorade was fifty-two feet long over all and thirty-nine at her self-designated waterline, but yachtsmen forgot about statistics when they caught a glimpse of her, for she was breathtakingly slender and obviously very light. By all the existing standards of ocean racing, she should have been dangerous to sail in rough weather. Olin thought otherwise, believing that the yacht's slimness, which he had counterbalanced with a deep keel, would enable her to knife effortlessly through the waves, instead of pounding against them, as the heavy, broad-beamed ocean racers of the period did. And this, he was convinced, would make her at least

as safe as her contemporaries and a lot faster.

Sailing Dorade here and there about the Sound, the three Stephenses were well satisfied with her performance; admittedly, she was a trifle "tender," or quick to heel over, in a blow, but she was by far the most high-spirited and beautifully balanced boat they'd ever handled. In June, they took six friends aboard as crew and entered the Bermuda Race-their first attempt at deepwater competition. Setting out in the midst of a tightly packed fleet of forty-two starters, they sailed Dorade for all she was worth, and four days later, after struggling through some rough seas and suffering a setback when a navigational error, the result of a broken sextant, led them off course, they overtook seven rivals in the final hours of the race, to reach St. David's Head in sixth place chronologically and in third place on corrected time. Veteran yachtsmen were astonished and respectful. A writer in the magazine Boats predicted that Dorade's performance in the heavy weather and her showing at the finish would soon "alter the whole concept of the ocean racer and make a profound change in the face of the sailing world of her time."

A year later, in the summer of 1931, the three Stephenses really came into their own, achieving international renown in sailing and nonsailing circles alike when this time assisted by four additional crew members, all of them in their twenties, they won a transatlantic race with Dorade. Arranged by the Cruising Club of America and the Royal Ocean Racing Club of England, the race got under way on the Fourth of July, with Newport as the starting point and Plymouth as the finish; ten boats were entered, and Dorade was the third-smallest and seemingly the least sturdy of the lot. Olin, as Dorade's skipper, ignored the tactics of his rivals, who headed at once for the beneficial current of the Gulf Stream, and chose a shorter route to the north, notwithstanding the hazards of rough weather and ice. No ice appeared, but fog, high seas, and strong winds made. the crossing a strenuous one. What with the grinding physical labor and the incessant day and night anxiety as the hard driven boat strained and shuddered along plunging forward or rolling sidewise to bury her bow or boomend in a wavethrough dark waters that might at any minute crush them against an iceberg, the crew had a sufficiently rugged time of it during the seventeen days of the trip.

Early in the evening of the seventeenth day out of Newport, Dorade, crossed the finish line off Plymouth Breakwater. No one was on hand to greet her, and the crew felt rather let down, but before long the official reception committee put out from shore and came aboard with the explanation for the tardy welcome: Dorade had completed the race so far ahead of the expected arrival of any of the contestants that nobody was prepared for the occasion. It was indeed a stunning victory. Dorade had a handicap of forty-six hours over the largest entry, Landfall, which was the second boat to arrive, reaching Plymouth Harbor two days later. On corrected time, Dorade beat Landfall by nearly four days, and she eventually proved to have soundly whipped all the other contestants, including boats with greater handicaps than her own. Newspaper editors in the United States, delighted to be able to vary the dreary diet of depression news they had been feeding their readers, played up the story of Dorade and her predominantly youthful crew. And no newspaper took greater pride in the accomplishment than the Bronx Home News, which, with pardonable chauvinism, declared in an editorial, "It shows that not only is Dorade as good a sailing ship as there is afloat, but that in the Stephens family the Bronx has three expert seamen."

The crew of Dorade stayed on in England long enough to win the Fastnet Race, one of Britain's most illustrious sailing events-six hundred miles from Plymouth to Fastnet Rock, off the southern coast of Ireland, and back and then, after crating the yawl for shipment home, boarded the White Star Line's Homeric for New York. The liner ar-

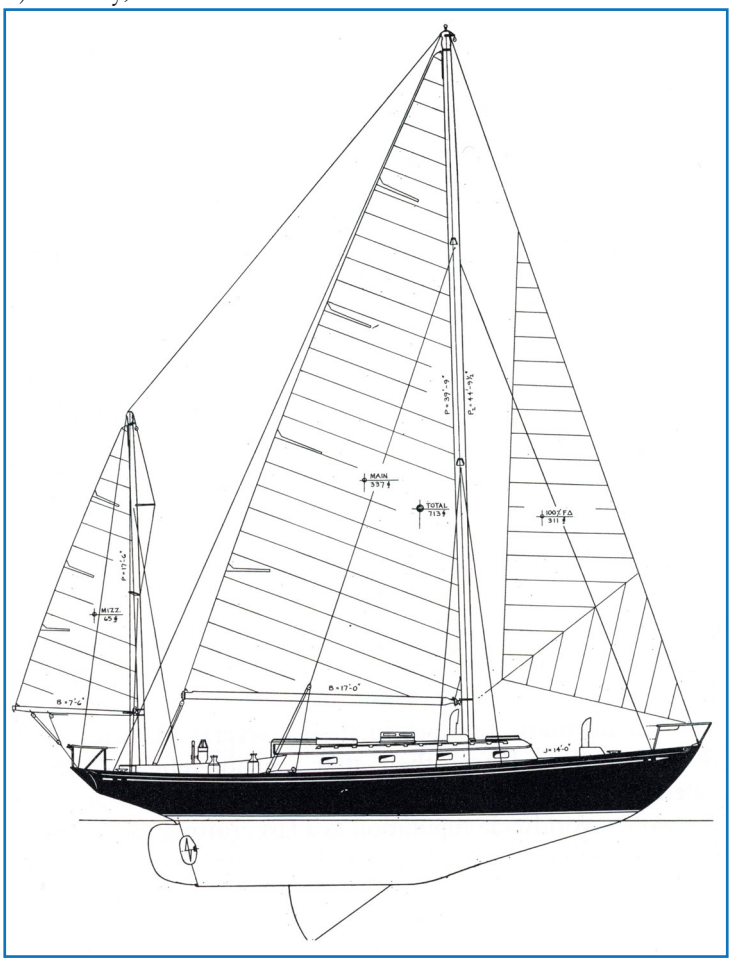
rived here on September 2nd, and was met at Quarantine by a flotilla consisting of the city's official greeting launch, Macom, with a reception committee from City Hall aboard; a Navy tug with the Department of Sanitation band blaring away on its deck; several police launches; a fireboat; and a hired tug flying large banners emblazoned with the message "Welcome Rod Stephens-N.Y. Coal Dealers." The Dorade's crew were transferred to the Macom and taken to the Battery, and then, in open touring cars pelted by ticker tape, up Broadway to City Hall, where they were welcomed by Acting Mayor Joseph V. McKee. Speaking for Mayor James J. Walker, who was away somewhere at the moment, McKee pointed out that the boat in which Columbus crossed the Atlantic was twice as big as Dorade. Later on, the Bronx staged a reception for the crew that made the Manhattan ceremonies seem pallid.

The elder Stephens did not have to wait long for assurance that his investment in Olin's career was a sound one. Even in 1932, when there was barely a ripple in the yacht market, the young designer was kept moderately busy. His biggest job that year was to design a ninety-thousand-dollar schooner, called **Brilliant**, for Walter Barnum, a project that at least paid the rent of the Sparkman & Stephens office. The following year, business began coming in with a rush. Olin was called on to design an eleven-foot class-boat sailing dinghy for the junior members of the Larchmont Yacht Club; a yawl, **Stormy Weather**, along the lines of Dorade, for Philip Le Boutillier, the president of Best & Co.; and seven other sailboats, including a seventy-foot yawl, for various affluent individuals. With no trouble at all, Olin induced his brother to give up his job at the Nevins yard and join him as S&S's field engineer an assignment that soon proved to be no sinecure, for by the early summer of 1934 no fewer than twenty boats designed by the firm were under construction, in half a dozen yards up and down the Atlantic seaboard. Meanwhile, the brothers' sailing exploits were continuing to publicize the firm's name effectively. (A fellow yachtsman once testily accused them of being mere "ocean-racing jockeys-professionals in the game for the money," but he may have been merely expressing a loser's viewpoint.) Together, they raced Dorade to Bermuda in 1932, and took first honors in her class; in 1933, Roderick sailed the boat to England, won another Fastnet trophy, and proceeded to bring her home in twenty-one days, an exceptional westward passage for so small a vessel; and two years later he skippered Stormy Weather in another transatlantic race, winning easily, then mopped up a third Fastnet Race, and sailed home, his fifth transatlantic crossing under canvas.

In 1934, the conservative yachting periodical Rudder called the twenty-six-year-old Olin "**one of America's outstanding yacht designers**," and added, "The day does not appear far distant when he will be called in to create a defender, or, mayhap, a challenger, for the America's Cup, the dream of every naval architect." As usual, Rudder had not gone out on a limb. One day in August, 1936, Harold S. Vanderbilt, the outstanding American big boat sailor of his time, got Olin on the telephone and, after telling him that the New York Yacht Club had received a challenge for the America's Cup from the Royal Yacht Squadron, of Cowes, asked if he would be willing to collaborate with the well- known naval architect W. Starling Burgess in designing a yacht to defend the celebrated trophy.

More money has probably been spent by British and American yachtsmen in the course of their century-long rivalry for possession of the ugly baroque silver pitcher, worth about five hundred dollars, that is known as the America's Cup than on any other competitive sailing fixture. The whole thing started in 1851, when, before the eyes of Queen Victoria, **America**, a schooner belonging to a New York Yacht Club syndicate headed by John C. Stevens, won a sixty-mile race, open to all classes of yachts from all nations, around the Isle of Wight. The trophy was put up by the Royal Yacht Squadron of England, and at irregular

intervals during the ensuing hundred and six years British challengers have tried fourteen times, with no success, to return it to their country. America's Cup races in recent decades have been nothing like the come-one-come-all affair at which Victoria was a mortified spectator. For one thing, they are held on this side of the Atlantic. For another, only two yachts, one of them representing the United States and the other the challenging club, compete, and they are built according to certain agreed-on specifications. (In recent races, for instance, their waterline length has been limited to eighty-seven feet.) Usually, a few of these racers, known as J-boats, are built in each country before a race, and the best one is chosen as the contender. J-boats-truly beautiful creations, with their long, graceful hulls and their towering masts and thousands of square feet of sail, are the most costly of sailing craft to build and maintain. (Sir Thomas Lipton, the English tea merchant, is commonly supposed to have spent an average of a million dollars apiece on his five fruitless attempts to recapture the Cup.) But as a rule their hour of glory is brief, for they are planned with just one end in view, and most of them become obsolescent after one Cup race and are retired in favor of something of even more refined design.



Finisterre, S&S design # 1054, 1954

At the time Vanderbilt called up Olin, he had already defended the America's Cup twice, in 1930 and 1934, with yachts designed by Burgess. Faced now with the challenge of a new boat, **Endeavour II**, owned and sailed by T. O. M. Sopwith, the British airplane manufacturer, he wanted the best and most original brains he could get to design a defender, and the most adept sailors he could get to handle her. Having seen the Stephens brothers in action, he strongly implied to Olin that, as part of the deal, he and Roderick must consent to serve on the crew. Olin hardly had to consult his brother before accepting.

Olin and Burgess agreed to design two hulls each, then test five foot models of all of them in a tank and determine which of the four to concentrate on. The tests were conducted over a period of six weeks in the fall of 1936, and when, at length, the collaborators made their choice (they had a gentlemen's agreement not to disclose which of them had designed the hull they favored), they both settled down to an arduous period of working out refinements and pondering the multitude of detailed structural problems they would have to solve if the finished yacht were ever to sail as they wanted her

to Simultaneously, Roderick set about working up a deck plan, plotting the location of winches, cleats, blocks and leads, and other parts of the rigging; the sail, handling gear, which had been either invented outright or drastically adapted from existing types, was so extraordinary that veteran yachtsmen, studying a model of the finished boat on display in a showcase at the New York Yacht Club, are still astonished by it. The hull of **Ranger**, as the yacht was called, cost Vanderbilt about a hundred and forty thousand dollars; two masts (the first one carried away in a storm) cost him eighteen thousand apiece; and the expense of new sails and the salaries of a largely professional crew before and during the race has been put at an additional hundred thousand. Vanderbilt sailed Ranger only one season (she was then laid up, and in 1941 was finally junked for scrap), and someone has estimated that she cost him twenty thousand dollars an hour to operate as a Cup defender.

Ranger's hull, a slender steel one, a hundred and thirty-five feet long over all and weighing a hundred and sixty-six tons, slid into the Kennebec River at the Bath Iron Works, in Maine, on May 11th, to the cheers of several thousand spectators, including the Governor of the State. Both Stephens brothers spent most of the summer aboard the vessel, tuning her up in practice runs, racing her in preliminary trials against two other J-boats, **Rainbow** and **Yankee**, that were candidates for the privilege of taking on Sopwith, and, at last, after she had easily beaten them, racing her in the big event itself. The brothers were among the six amateur members of the crew. Roderick was in charge of the yacht's complement of twenty-six paid hands, who provided the beef when it came to setting and trimming Ranger's vast expanse of sail, and Olin was reserve helmsman, spelling Vanderbilt at the wheel and alternating with him as chairman of Ranger's Committee on Tactics. Earnest and unobtrusive, he hardly moved from the afterdeck all summer long, staring intently this way and that through spray-fogged eye- glasses as he prepared for every conceivable contingency. He might, for example, spend a whole afternoon plotting how, in a given set of circumstances, he could "blanket," or "backwind," another vessel, racing maneuvers that call for an almost reptilian combination of patience and cunning. "Whenever there was an obvious move to make that summer, at least four people would immediately point it out to Vanderbilt," Roderick said not long ago. "If nobody was sure what to do next, Olin would tell Vanderbilt what he thought was the best bet, and he almost always turned out to be right." As for Roderick himself, as supervisor of the paid crew, he was responsible for seeing to it that the headsails and spinnakers, adding up to more than a hundred thousand square feet of canvas were broken out and set with split-second precision. He also had to keep a constant check on the myriad mechanical contrivances, from the bilges to the masthead. Wearing scarlet breeches, with an assortment of tools flapping from a belt around his waist, he seemed to be everywhere at once.

The Cup match was to be decided on the basis of four out of seven thirty-mile races held off Newport between July 31st and August 5th, 1937. During each race, hundreds of pleasure craft, carrying spectators, journalists, and newsreel cameramen, followed the two big boats around the course. The first four races ended with Vanderbilt's yacht crossing the finish line well in the lead, and the America's Cup remained in this country. When it was all over, Sopwith faced the newsreel cameras and said heartily, "I would like to congratulate Mr. Vanderbilt and his organization and the designers of Ranger for having produced the best J-class yacht that has ever been built."

Ranger was also the last J-class yacht to be built. Most yachtsmen of recent years, eroded by taxation, have been governed by J. P. Morgan's axiom when it came to J-boats. It would cost at least three times as much to build such a boat today, and Sparkman & Stephens' current prosperity, therefore, derives from craft of more modest pretensions.

While the Stephens brothers are naturally gratified by the present widespread interest in sailing, the trend toward smaller boats saddens them, and so does the apparently incurable weakness of many of today's yachtsmen for automatic gadgets. "Of course, we still get a few big jobs from time to time," Olin told a recent visitor to his office, after wistfully recalling some of the majestic giants of yesteryear. "Like **Wayfarer**, the new Rockefeller ketch, which is intended to carry a paid crew of six. As a matter of fact, I still ask all our clients if they intend to have a paid crew, I need to know, in order to plan a boat's layout, but most of them look astonished at the very idea." He sighed, removed his glasses, rubbed them with a piece of tissue, and, replacing them, continued, "I used to love to specify brass fittings, but now I mostly call for chrome plating, because nobody has the help to keep brass polished. And, much as I disapprove of automatic steerers and electric bilge pumps, I have to put them in for clients who must do all their own work when sailing. I suppose I really shouldn't complain, though, since more people are sailing than ever and our yacht designing business is bigger than ever."

Roderick, too, suffers an attack of nostalgia now and then. One day at City Island last spring, while getting Mustang ready for the season, he got to talking about the launching, a couple of years ago, of Carleton Mitchell's Finisterre. "Mitchell put on a really fine show," Roderick said. "He was proud of the boat, because her design had already caused a sensation among sailing people. He invited hundreds of guests up to the launching, at Seth Persson's yard at Saybrook, quite a few other boat designers and just about everybody else of importance in sailing. Well, yachting is changing, and the difference betweeen that launching and the one they gave Ranger is a pretty fair sign of how much it's changing. The yard at Saybrook didn't have much paving, and we all got our shoes muddy; Seth's a fine boatbuilder, but his shop is just a little old red barn. The Governor wasn't there, and there wasn't any swarm of boats gathered around, and there were only a few banners and a little bunting. Someone ordered up a load of champagne, but there were no ice-buckets to cool it in, so they put the bottles in a couple of old wheel-barrows and packed ice all around them. What with all the whiskey that was being handed out, though, nearly everyone forgot about the champagne, and most of it was never even opened. Now, there's something you'd never have seen in the old days, I can assure you that."

Part II

Over highballs in the Larchmont Yacht Club one Saturday night a month or so ago, a veteran of nearly twenty five summers on Long Island Sound remarked to a group of companions that he'd never seen anything quite like the Stephens brothers. Nobody at the table had to be told that he was talking about Olin J. Stephens II and Roderick Stephens, Jr., an incomparable team in the field of designing, outfitting, and sailing deep-water yachts; in fact, very few people who own a sailboat bigger than a dinghy have to be told who the Stephens brothers are. "The thing about those boys that when you see them handling a big boat, Olin at the helm and Rod swarming all over the deck and up the rigging-you'd think they were identical twins," the yachtsman went on. "Talk about teamwork! But that's the only time you'd think they were twins. Olin's a year older than Rod, and they don't look a bit alike, and when it comes to character, they're about as different as an Eskimo and a Frenchman." No dissenting opinion was heard from his companions at the table. The remarkably disparate tastes and temperaments of the two men have long mystified people in the yachting world. Roderick, they feel, is the more understandable of the two. He is miserable away from boats and salt water, and when he is deeply involved in what is his avocation as well as

his vocation, he takes his sailing both seriously and lightly. On the one hand, he sails his own forty-five-foot sloop, Mustang, with driving determination in as many racing classics as he can find time to enter; on the other, he is an enthusiastic member of a group of convivial Westchester and Fairfield County yachtsmen who call themselves the Cruising, Boozing, and Snoozing Club, and has won three of the eleven one-man-to-a-boat races, known as the Singlehanded Creepstakes, that the club has run off to date. His favorite work of art, moreover, is an oil painting of Mustang, faithfully copied from a photograph. Altogether, the clubhouse analysts agree, Roderick is the very model of a proper yachtsman. But how, they ask, does one explain Olin, a man whom many people consider the best boat designer in the country but who by preference spends his weekends on a landlocked New England farm, who owns no boat, who numbers few yachtsmen among his close friends, and who has been tutored in modern painting by Yasuo Kuniyoshi, among other artists, at the New School for Social Research? Even the forthright world of yachting, it seems, has its enigmas.

For the past twenty-eight years, this particular enigma has been an extremely valuable asset to Sparkman & Stephens, a Manhattan firm of naval architects, yacht brokers, and marine insurance specialists that is currently doing a gross business of around a million dollars a year. Olin is vice-president of the firm and its chief designer, and Roderick is its field engineer, seeing to it that the boatbuilders follow his brother's specifications to the letter and making his own recommendations about the installation of the vessel's rigging. (Drake Sparkman, the president of the firm, has all he can do in taking care of the business side.) Together, the brothers have been responsible for planning and turning over to their clients in tip-top condition sailboats ranging in size from bathtub-size knockabouts that sell for a few hundred dollars to ocean cruisers that cost over a quarter of a million. Two of the most popular classes of small racing boats, the Lightning and the Blue Jay, originated in their offices, and nearly a thousand one-of-a- kind larger racing boats, sailing yachts, and power boats have originated there, too, as well as a variety of tugs, minesweepers, coastal tankers and freighters, and other plodding but useful craft. Both brothers believe that a considerable part of their success can be attributed to the very differences between them that perplex most of the people who know them well, whether professionally or socially.

At forty-nine, Olin is a man of middling build who wears tortoise- shell glasses and has an abstracted manner, which he accentuates by running his fingers through his hair when he is thinking hard. In 1930, when he was a fledgling naval architect in Sparkman's office, he designed Dorade, a fifty-two-foot yawl that-with capital provided by his father, Roderick Stephens, Sr. was built under Roderick, Jr.'s, supervision. Dorade caused a good deal of headshaking in yachting circles when she came down the ways, for in concept she was totally unlike the standard deep-water yachts of the day, but then, in July, 1931, Olin and Roderick and their father sailed her in a transatlantic race to England and won it with shattering ease. She was sold five years later, and since then Olin has never owned another boat. He participates in a few races each year as a member of the crew on other men's boats, but he approaches these events with a detachment that has convinced at least one yachts- man that sailing is not a matter of sport with him. "All he wants to do is study the boat in action, so as to learn how to make the next boat he designs sail a little faster" this critic complained a couple of years ago, after trailing a Sparkman&Stephens yacht that Olin was helping sail in a race. "It's just a matter of business with him."While it is certainly debatable whether Olin puts a dollars-and-cents value on his racing, there can be no doubt that ever since the summer of 1920, when he, together with his brother and father, first stepped into a sailboat, a hand-me-down sixteen-foot sloop called Corker, his interest in sail

ing has been more thoughtful than emotional.

Even in times of emergency aboard ship, Olin remains dispassionate and serene, approaching every problem as if it were an exercise in pure logic. The only time his father or his brother can remember seeing him even momentarily ruffled was twenty-six years ago, when, after winning the race to England with Dorade, all three Stephenses stayed on to compete in the Fastnet Race, a six-hundred-mile British yachting classic. Just before going off watch one evening during the Fastnet, Olin, who, by agreement, has been the skipper in the family ever since his teens, issued strict orders not to shorten sail, and then disappeared below to get some sleep. Presently, the wind began to pick up, and soon it had turned into something of a gale. As the yawl rushed on through the mounting seas, straining and creaking under her generous spread of canvas, both Rodericks became increasingly worried, and finally one of them went below to wake the skipper and urge him to change his orders. Olin went on deck to have a look for himself and, after studying the wind and the waves and thinking over his drafting-board calculations, announced laconically, "We'll carry on as we are." A moment later, a particularly vicious gust hit the boat. Olin lost his footing, and would have skidded overboard if he had not grabbed a lifeline just in time. "Oh, all right," he said as he hauled himself to his feet. "You can take off the spinnaker." Then he went below again. His concession was vindicated, however; even with reduced sail, Dorade won the Fastnet.

Neither Olin nor his wife the former Florence Reynolds, of Scarsdale, whom he married when he was twenty-two- nor their two sons (one of them is in the Signal Corps just now, and the other is in high school) care especially for sailing. To be sure, Olin belongs to two yacht clubs, but both, though they have great prestige, are of the sort that maintains neither docks nor moorings the New York Yacht Club, which has quarters on West Forty-fourth Street, and the Cruising Club of America, which has nothing but a mailing address. The farm where he and his family spend their weekends consists of a hundred and thirty acres near Sheffield, Massachusetts, eighty miles from salt water. Most of the year, he lives in a pleasant Colonial-style house in Scarsdale, where he and his wife entertain infrequently, asking only a few friends in at a time. Among those who are likely to be invited are an architect, the director of an art gallery, and several painters, but no yachtsmen. Indeed, the subject of boats rarely comes up at these gatherings. John Heliker, a Greenwich Village artist who was Olin's first painting instructor and has known him well for ten years, paid him a visit last summer and chanced to start leafing through a scrapbook he had seen lying on a shelf in the living room; he was amazed to come upon some newspaper accounts of the voyage his host had made in Dorade a quarter of a century earlier. "Olin, this is marvellous!" he said. "You were quite a lad, weren't you?" Olin smiled diffidently but said nothing, and the conversation moved on to other matters.

About thirty years ago, Olin picked up a copy of a yachting magazine one night after dinner in his parents' home in Scarsdale, where both he and his brother were brought up and went to school, and, after scrutinizing a watercolor painting of a sailboat on its cover, announced to his family that he could paint a better picture than that with no training at all. The next day, he bought a box of water colors and confidently set about painting his own picture of a sailboat. To his chagrin, it wasn't anywhere near as good as the picture on the magazine cover; in fact, it was hardly recognizable as a sailboat. Over the next two decades, Olin diligently, if intermittently, tried to teach himself to paint, striving to produce pictures of the old barn-and-fishing-wharf genre, but he never succeeded in coming up with results that any school would care to claim.

In 1943, annoyed by his failure to show improvement, he resolved to seek instruction, and, without saying much about it to Roderick, began attending a one-night-a-week

painting class that Heliker, an Abstract Impressionist, was conducting in a fourth floor cold water flat in the Village. It was at Heliker's suggestion that he took some lessons from Kuniyoshi at the New School, and he is currently studying under Easton Pribble, a painter who lives on the second floor of Heliker's building. Under the influence of these preceptors, Olin has abandoned barns and fishing wharves and is working comfortably in the Impressionist, abstract Impressionist, and neo-cubist styles. He recently did a seascape of a rocky point near the mouth of the Kennebec River, in Maine, that is a familiar landmark to yachtsmen accustomed to cruising those waters, but it is doubtful whether any of them would recognize Olin's version of it. There is little chance that they will be put to the test, however, for he doesn't mention this side of his life to sailing men, and even if he did, they would probably go right on thinking that the world's most beautiful work of art is a fresh new copy of a Coast and Geodetic Survey chart.

Olin is not only a painter but a collector of paintings. He has been buying modern art off and on since 1939, and now has about twenty pictures, including a Maurice Prendergast, a Marsden Hartley, and a John Marin. His other aesthetic preferences reflect the same general outlook, and so do his intellectual interests, Bach and Bartók, Maritain and Kafka, and lectures on philosophy and cultural history by Heinrich Blucher, also at the New School. Not surprisingly in a man of such tastes, he favors automobiles of foreign make, his stable at the moment consisting of two Mercedes-Benzes and a Volkswagen.

Roderick, the other half of the team, is a keen-eyed, gregarious, and alarmingly athletic man, who plays the accordion and loves parties of the sort at which accordions are welcome. He is one of the very few living men who have crossed the Atlantic five times in a small sailboat. In 1933, two summers after Dorade's triumphant first voyage, he sailed her to England and back, winning another Fastnet Race while he was over there. During this trip, he ran into some spells of nasty weather, which made it just that much more enjoyable from his point of view. At the height of a heavy blow one night, for instance, a strut known as an upper mainmast spreader broke. While most yachtsmen would have been content to wait the storm out for repairs, Roderick thought this was the ideal time for action. With a bag of tools strapped to his belt, he had himself hoisted some forty feet up into the howling darkness, lashed himself to the mast, and spent an hour fixing the damaged spreader. When he got home, the Cruising Club of America awarded him its Blue Water Medal, for "an outstanding offshore voyage, well-conceived and well-executed"-a medal that most ocean-going yachts- men regard as the highest honor there is.

Roderick is duly appreciative of his medal, but he cherishes with equal pride three cheap deck mops testifying to his victories in the Singlehanded Creepstakes. (He has finished first seven times, but boats with bigger handicaps than Mustang's have reduced his victories to three.) The Creepstakes is an invitation affair open to sailboats of all kinds big and little, fast and slow, the only stipulation being that each entry must be sailed by a crew of one. Mustang, which Olin designed in 1936, ordinarily requires the services of six or seven robust yachtsmen to handle her in a race, but this drastic shorthandedness simply makes the Creepstakes even more entertaining to Roderick; he delights in first straining mightily to hoist her sails and winch them in and then leaping about the empty deck like a waterbug as she sails. More often than not, the other contestants even those in considerably smaller boats-approach the finish line spavined, haggard, and numb. By the time they have crossed it, Roderick is usually already back at his mooring, full of song and bounce, and preparing to plunge into the water for what he calls "a brisk turn to tone up the old phy- sique."

Toning up the old physique means a lot to Roderick. Like his brother, he is of medium height, but he has always been

leaner and more rugged. For years, he played amateur ice hockey with the Jamaica Hawks at Madison Square Garden, and he is still adept at figure skating. An early riser, he is careful about what and how much he eats, and in general he takes the same alert interest in his physical condition that he does in the well-being of his yachts. He does not smoke, nor what is quite remarkable, in view of the traditions of the sport to which he has dedicated himself does he drink. (Olin doesn't drink, either, but abstinence seems more in keeping with his rather astringent disposition.)
The Cruising Club of America, which, even if it has no home it can call its own, is possibly the most exclusive sailing association in the United States, advises its members to ask themselves several questions about candidates for admission, among them "Would you enjoy the company of the candidate, glass in hand, in the cabin of a small yacht?" The members have been enjoying Roderick's company in such surroundings since 1936, despite the fact that the glass in his hand is invariably filled with milk. He is by nature the sort who requires no alcohol to fit into a whiskey-and-soda crowd; indeed, in the cabin of a small yacht his company is likely to be considered more enjoyable than that of anyone else present as, his accordion slung over his neck, and a camp-councillor smile on his clean-cut, handsome face, he asks "What'll it be next?"
"How about 'When I Wore a Tulip'?" someone may shout. "I don't know all the chords for it, but let's give it a try," Roderick will probably reply, tossing off his hooker of milk. "Here we go!"
Roderick is a member of six yacht clubs the American Yacht Club, the Cruising Club of America (former commodore), the New York Yacht Club, the Off Sounding Club (former commodore), the Storm Trysail Club, and the North American Station of the Royal Swedish Yacht Club. He is recognized as an authority by the editors of periodicals specializing in his field (the magazine Yachting has published a number of long articles of his bearing such nonsense titles as "Pointers on Handling Light Sails," "Suggestions on Spinnakers," and "Further Thoughts on Nylon Sails"), and his advice is constantly being sought by equally enthusiastic but less gifted sailors. One Saturday morning a couple of summers ago, the telephone rang in his home -he lives in Scarsdale, too- and on answering it he found himself talking to a client aboard a yacht some hundreds of miles off Cape Hatteras, who was calling ship-to-shore to say that he was having trouble in a race and what should he do next? Roderick can no longer recall exactly what he told the man, but it may have been something like "Before you douse the spinnaker, overhaul the halyard, flaking it down starting with the bitter end." He talks like that.
Roderick remained a highly eligible bachelor until 1947, when, at the age of thirty-eight, he married Marjorie McClure, of Scarsdale, a girl whom he had known since his teens and who has become almost as fond of sailing as he is; their honeymoon gave her a good notion of what her married life would be, for it was a seven-hundred-mile cruise from Florida to North Carolina aboard a boat that Roderick was bringing north for a friend. They have a nine-year-old daughter, Betsy, who first boarded Mustang in a basket at the age of three weeks. After she became mobile, she did her sailing encased in a balsawood life preserver and roped to Mustang's lifelines; now she is beginning to take her place as a useful, if lightweight, member of the crew. At present, Roderick, when he is not racing, spends practically every weekend during the season cruising on Mustang with his wife and daughter. A few years ago, however, there was an eighteen-month interlude during which he partly forsook his favorite diversion to build- with the paid for help of only a power shovel and a few hours' worth of carpentry and paperhanging the house he and his family now live in. From long habit in supervising the construction of boats, he was so finicky about the quality of the materials he used that the local lumberyard owner finally exclaimed, "Look, Mr. Stephens, this building

doesn't have to float!" The décor of the house emphasizes its owner's almost total absorption in sea and sail. Dinner is served on Wedgwood plates with sailboat motifs, a brass clock in the study tolls the time in bells, rather than hours, and most of the pictures on the walls are unmistakable representations of ships under canvas. To a guest who once remarked on the difference between this kind of art and the paintings that Olin treasures, Roderick said, "You have to ask to find out what his are. I like a picture to look like something."

Although Olin and Roderick live in the same town and are extremely fond of each other, their divergent interests preclude their getting together much after hours. Sailing, of course, has been a common denominator for both men ever since their first fumbling days aboard Corker, but while sailing occupies Roderick's working hours, his leisure hours, and, very possibly, his dreams, Olin regards it not as a hobby or a sport but as an intellectual problem, to be dealt with, as much as possible, indoors. When he is not immersed in Kafka or his Mercedes-Benzes or his painting, his evenings may be devoted to pondering the basic difficulties peculiar to his profession. It both fascinates and nettles him to realize that designing sailboats is still-and perhaps will be for a long time-in the intuitive stage of development, comparable to that of automotive engineering when Henry Ford was a boy; the designer of a yacht, upon completing a set of plans, is even less certain about how the finished boat will perform than the designer of an auditorium is about what its acoustics will be like. Electronic computers are no help; to a large extent, the shape of a yacht's hull is simply a matter of hunch and instinct on the part of the individual designer. And yet, haphazard though the art of designing sailboats is, it is not quite as haphazard as it once was, and Olin feels a special pride in the fact that he can claim part of the credit for what im- provement there has been along this line.

A century ago, the "cod's-head-and-mackerel-tail" formula was popular with many designers of sailboat hulls, who felt that the outlines it so graphically stipulated were the ones best adapted to cleave the water neatly. Then it gradually became fashionable among designers to advance more scientific sounding formulas, based on the lines of yachts of proved ability. All too often, though, no matter how scrupulously a designer adhered to a formula, the boat turned out to be a dud. Around 1900, in the hope of avoiding such disasters, some designers began backstopping the formulas by building scale models of boats before they advanced beyond the drafting-board stage, and testing them in so-called towing tanks. But even this was little help, since no one had drawn up an accurate set of coefficients that would translate the news received from the towing tank into solid facts for the designer to work on.

Early in 1932, Professor Kenneth Davidson, a naval architect on the faculty of the Stevens Institute of Technology, in Hoboken, decided to try to work out a closer relationship between towing-tank promise and ultimate performance. His idea was simplicity itself: he would compare, in minute detail, the behavior of a certain vessel under actual sailing conditions with that of a model of the boat under exactly simulated conditions in the Stevens towing tank. To help with his field work, Davidson needed an expert sailor who knew enough about sailboat design to make relevant observations and record them with hairsplitting accuracy, and, having read of Olin's success with Dorade, he called up the young man and asked him if he would like to help. Olin was delighted to, and during the fall of 1933 he spent many weekends stopwatch in hand and pad and pencil by his side, and often accompanied by the Professor, sailing about in **Gimcrack**, a thirty-four-foot sloop of his own design, to collect the required information. When all the returns were in, Davidson worked out a set of factors that must be applied to the readings of towing-tank instruments in order to arrive at an accurate interpretation of the tests. Thanks to this study (Olin later received an

honorary M.S. from Stevens for his contribution to it), tank testing is now regarded as a fairly reliable means of predicting the performance of the finished boat, and most yachtsmen, when ordering a boat of unusual design, throw in the precautionary fifteen hundred dollars or so that it costs to build a scale model and try it out in a towing tank. It is a further testimonial to the soundness of Davidson's corrections that they are taken seriously even though, with a superb ivory tower disdain for public ridicule, he named them the Gimcrack Coefficients.

At first, a good many naval architects suspected that Davidson's name for his coefficients might be an apt one, because ever since the America's Cup Race in 1901, towing tanks had had a notorious record of inaccuracy. After that race for which the British sent over their ninth unsuccessful challenger, in an effort to take home the cup that the schooner America had won in a race around the Isle of Wight in 1851, the designer of the British entry, who had relied on a towing tank in planning her, grumbled that he only wished the designer of her rival had had access to the same facilities. The opportunity to dispel the entrenched prejudice against towing tanks came in 1936, when Harold S. Vanderbilt commissioned Olin Stephens and W. Starling Burgess to collaborate on the design of Ranger, which, the following year, thwarted T. O. M. Sopwith's attempt to win the America's Cup for Britain with **Endeavour II**. Burgess and Olin each designed two hulls, and five-foot scale models of these were given a series of tryouts in the Stevens tank. The two designers, often joined by Vanderbilt, spent many long afternoons in Hoboken, loping along the sides of the tank as they tried to keep up with an overhead crane that was towing the models under various prearranged conditions of wind and heading. When Olin and Burgess had at last decided which of the four seemed to have the best prospects, they returned to their drafting boards and devoted their combined talents to working out engineering details, and the boat that emerged from this joint effort beat Endeavour II in four straight contests. Shortly after the final race, Sopwith graciously praised the designers of Ranger for having produced the finest yacht of her class that had ever been built, but a couple of weeks later his disappointment got the better of him, and he groused to a reporter that he had been beaten because Burgess and Olin had resorted to tank testing, and that sailboat design in the United States had become a matter of "cold-blooded science."

With this, even those who had been most skeptical of towing tanks developed respect for them. Some yachtsmen even swung to the other extreme, taking the position that the secret of boat design lay in the tanks themselves, and not in the abilities of the men who tried out their models in them. In recent years, Olin has heard this claim so often that he can barely bring himself to reply to it. "The tank can't design a boat," he told an acquaintance wearily the other day. "It can't draw a single line on the drafting board. It only answers questions, and the designer must know the right questions to ask. And there are a lot of questions it can't answer, too, such as what specifically is at fault in an unsatisfactory model. All it can tell in such cases is what the total result will be under given conditions. When I go over to Hoboken to watch a model being tested, and I see that there's something wrong with it, maybe I'll shave a sliver of wood off the bow, to fine it a little, or glue a splinter on amidships to add displacement. Then, if things go better, I'm glad, naturally, although I always wish there were some more scientific way of doing it. But the tank can't provide that. Sailboat designing started out as ninety per cent art and ten per cent science, and someday, let's hope, it will be just the other way around. We're only about halfway there now."

Probably in large part because of his identification with tank testing, Olin received more of the credit for Ranger's victory than might ordinarily have been expected, since Burgess was the oldest and by far the more expe-

rienced of the two designers. In any case, after the race Sparkman&Stephens moved rapidly forward to become one of the biggest firms of its kind in the nation. There was, however, another factor contributing to the public belief that Ranger was primarily Olin's creation. At the outset of their collaboration, he and Burgess had agreed not to reveal which of them was responsible for the hull they

Rating = .95 ("L" ± "Bm." ± "Dra." ± "Disp." ± "S" ± "F" − "I") × "Bal. R" × "Prop."

and

$P_2 = \sqrt{(l/.95)^2 - B_2^2}$ where l is length of luff or leach, whichever is greater.

ultimately chose to go ahead with. Until recently, many yachtsmen felt certain that the hull was one of Olin's, on the ground that Ranger bore a much closer resemblance to racing boats he had previously done than it did to any of Burgess's earlier work. Both designers steadfastly refused to discuss the subject. Burgess died in 1947, but the mystery remained a mystery until about a year ago, shortly after it was reported in an article in Sports Illustrated that Vanderbilt, who had been in a better position to know the answer than anyone besides the designers themselves, believed Ranger's hull to have been based on one of Olin's two models. Olin then composed a letter to Vanderbilt that set the unofficial record straight. "Briefly, the model #77c, from which Ranger was built, was a Burgess model," he wrote. "To Starling's credit, he scrupulously carried out the agreement we made not to name the individual responsible for the lines of this model. Until now, I have felt justified in taking the same position. Possibly I should not have kept quiet for so long, as I have apparently misled you, and possibly others, although not intentionally."

As it happens, Olin may yet be able to claim that he has designed an America's Cup Race winner from start to finish. The first America's Cup Race in twenty-one years has been scheduled for next summer, and he has been commissioned by a syndicate of New York Yacht Club members to design a prospective defender all by himself.

Yacthsmen willing to concede that it is the designer who designs sailboats, and not the testing tank, have spent many hours developing theories to account for Olin's success. One yachting writer asserted not long ago that it is the result of a study he made, at some unspecified time, of the swimming habits of fish, which inspired him to produce boats of such flexibility that they actually wriggleor, in their fashion, swim through the water. "I deny ever having studied fish," Olin said when this article was called to his attention. "Not that I have any objection to the way fish get around, but it simply wouldn't be helpful to me. Their problems are totally different from a sailboat's. For example, one thing that fish don't have to worry about and sailboats do is the bow wave that all surface craft create as they push through the water; this inevitably limits a boat's speed unless she has the enormous resources of the fastest power boats. What happens is that at a certain speed, and the longer the boat, the higher that speed is the boat finds herself travelling uphill all the time. Up the slope of her own bow wave, you see. For practical purposes, this is the top speed a sailboat can attain. Well, at least that's one thing we can figure out mathematically in advance. Another is how much of the hull is going to be underwater, and therefore subject to a high frictional resistance. Total displacement and total sail area are also matters we can get down in black and white, and so is something we call the prismatic coefficient a complicated matter that no fish ever has to concern itself with."

A faint smile appeared on Olin's face, and then faded as he continued, "The hitch is that all these factors, and a few others like them that we can really pin down don't get us anywhere near a scientific approach to sailboat design. There are still far too many variables and combinations of

variables interacting in countless ways so many that working out precise formulas for all of them seems practically hopeless. The shape of the bow, the shape of the bilge, the total displacement, and so on will, of course, affect the performance of any given boat, but just how much, and how they will affect each other, remains a matter of judgment-often not much more than guesswork, really on the part of the designer. And just as we may think we've got that fairly well under control, everything is thrown completely off the instant the boat heels over, as sailboats do, naturally, if there is any breeze at all, and to a constantly shifting degree, because this alters the whole intricate system of interrelationships. And the velocity of the wind and the expanse of sail exposed at this angle and that introduce two more sets of variables. There simply isn't any scientific theory that covers all these considerations. And then they talk about fish!"

Considering the complexity of a boat designer's task, his tools are pitifully simple consisting principally of some flat flexible plastic strips, called splines, some small lead weights, called ducks, and pencil and paper. When Olin-who, with a staff of a hundred assistants, works in offices at 79 Madison Avenue, arrives at a crucial stage of a design, he plots a series of points on a piece of drawing paper to indicate the general shape of whatever section of the hull he is concerned with, and then gently bends a spline, holding it in position with an occasional duck, until it passes through all these points in a curve that he believes will offer the minimum of resistance to sea water flowing around it. Theoretically, an infinite number of slightly varying curves can be drawn to connect any one set of points; the intuitive selection of the most efficient curve is what makes one boat designer better than another. After Olin draws in the line of the curve he has chosen, he removes the spline and repeats the operation with another set of points, and eventually he comes up with a spidery network of outlines that a shipbuilder can translate into a three-dimensional hull.

Neither Olin's professional life nor that of any of his competitors is made easier by the perverse way yachtsmen have of incessantly pestering designers to provide them with faster boats and then tamely submitting to handicapping systems that neutralize the advantages of their new speed. In this country, the most widely used of these handicapping systems, which are devised, of course, to facilitate racing among yachts of various kinds, is the Cruising Club of America's so-called Measurement Rule, a formidable twenty-seven-page document that requires a yachtsman to delve into his boat's physical characteristics as though he were a doctor giving a medical checkup, and that is filled with impenetrable directives, of which the following are typical:

After half an hour spent trying to crack the code in which the Rule is written, a distinguished yachtsman once said, "Only the Measurement Rule Committee, a few naval architects, and God Almighty understand what it means." The Stephens brothers, neither of whom could be induced to remain in college beyond his freshman year, are members of this select group, Olin as one of the few naval architects referred to, and Roderick as an informal consultant to the Measurement Rule Committee, but Olin, at any rate, wouldn't mind a bit if there were no such group to belong to. His first great boat, Dorade, light and slender, was altogether revolutionary in a day when most designers of cruising yachts were playing it safe by turning out plans for only slightly refined versions of the old, beamy New England fishing vessels, and conservatives thought that it would be suicidal to take her out on the open ocean. After Dorade had proved herself, the Measurement Rule Committee began changing the Rule to give slower boats a better chance against her, and it continued to do so with such diligence that in the end almost everything about Dorade was penalized. In 1954, Olin designed Carleton Mitchell's yawl Finisterre, making her broad beamed and

shallow compared to Dorade, and giving her a retractable centerboard in place of the latter's deep fixed keel; instead of knifing through the waves, as her predecessor did, Finisterre rides over them. In her first two years of racing, she has won practically all the big ones, and already the Measurement Rule Committee has vigilantly altered its formulas to minimize her advantage.

"The Rule isn't always helpful to the designer," Olin remarked to a friend not long ago, marvellously understating the case. "It's intended to give any reasonably good boat a fair chance in a race, but it has discouraged the building of more boats like Dorade. Yet Dorade is as good a boat as she ever was she can slice through a leftover slop of a sea, go to windward very well, and steer nicely under all conditions. But nobody would order a boat like her today. I'm proud of Finisterre, of course, but personally I prefer the way Dorade moved. She was a lovely boat to sail." His voice trailed away on a note of sentimental reminiscence.

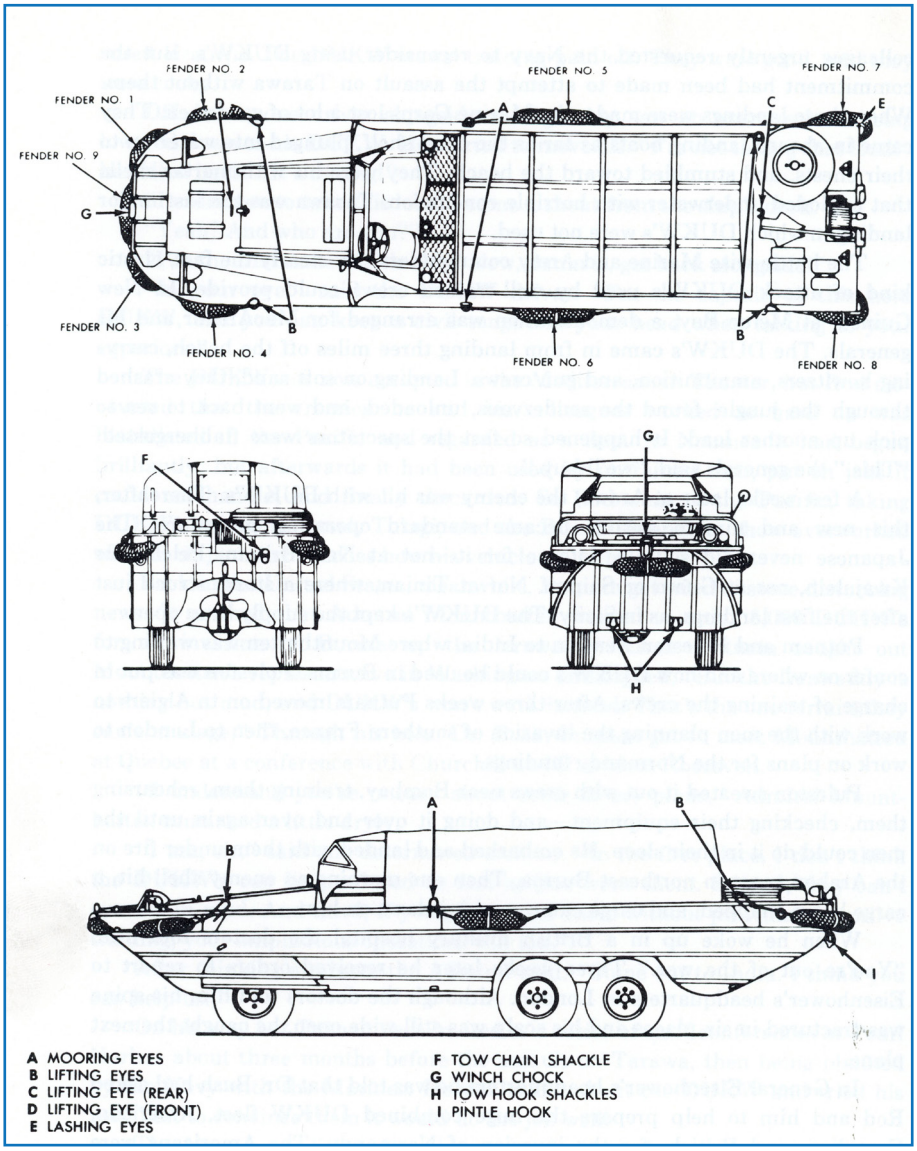
Although much of Roderick's work for Sparkman & Stephens is of the comfortable kind in which there is definitely a right way and a wrong way of doing things, it has some phases in which, like his brother, he has to rely on the kinesthetic sense to the almost total exclusion of the intellect. Sails, for instance, are even less susceptible than hulls to orderly scientific analysis; on the rare occasions when some physicist has attempted to spruce up the untidy subject of sail aerodynamics with the help of vector diagrams, his efforts have been of little help to practical sailing men. These critics point out that sails are elastic contrivances, which shrink under some conditions, stretch under other conditions, yield to wind pressure under all conditions, and probably never hold exactly the same shape for more than an instant durng a whole day's sailing. Olin, like all other naval architects, is aware of the futility of attempting to reconcile all these variables with pencil and paper, and he prepares only a two dimensional sketch, or "plan outline," of the sails for the boats he designs, leaving it up to the sailmaker to put in as much belly as he thinks proper. The sailmaker does some thinking and studying on his own and then turns out a full suit of sails, but by the time the boat is delivered to the customer, these are likely to have been carefully edited by Roderick, as a result of his trial sailing. Roderick also devotes a good deal of attention to contraptions like winches, cleats, fairleads, halyard blocks, swivels, and snatch blocks, and while he, or anyone else familiar with such esoteric hardware, is able to tell at a glance whether they are sound or defective, there can often be a difference of opinion about how they should be installed. Part of his job is to design the rigging layouts for Sparkman&Stephens boats, and here, too, it is essential that engineering data be supplemented by the intuition of an old salt.

Sparkman&Stephens has its field representative supervise the building of every yacht it designs a service included in the firm's fee of ten per cent of the yacht's cost, and this means that Roderick must do a considerable amount of travelling, not only to boatyards up and down the East Coast but to some abroad. He makes it his business to keep an eye on every step in the building of a boat, checking up on the quality of the wood used, satisfying himself that the bolts and screws are placed where they should be, and, as the hull takes shape, comparing its dimensions with his brother's design to make certain that this is being faithfully followed. He almost always personally adjusts the mast's stainless-steel shrouds and stays to a proper, balanced degree of tension. He also goes up to the masthead in a boatswain's chair generally a forty-to-sixty-foot haul, to pass on the installation of turnbuckles, tangs, sheaves, spreaders, and all the rest of the paraphernalia aloft. "It's really part of my job," he recently told a client who had just witnessed this acrobatic performance and had expressed surprise that a man of his age could do it so easily, or, for that matter, should attempt to do it at all. "And besides I find it a good way of getting a little exercise now and then. Still,

the years do pass, you know. Why, back in 1937, when Olin and I were in Ranger's crew for the America's Cup Race, I used to go up the rigging hand over hand, without using my feet, let alone a boatswain's chair. I couldn't do that today. But I was only twenty-eight then, and I guess I was showing off."

When Roderick is at sea, he likes to do for himself what less energetic men are perfectly willing to let machinery or a paid crew do for them. "Automatic devices and labor-savers just aren't right," he told a client this spring. "They cost too much, they make noise, they complicate essential maintenance, and they delude you into a false sense of confidence. What's sailing for, anyhow? I much prefer to do things by hand. I enjoy pumping out the bilge. It's good for me." He refuses to install in his own boat anything like an automatic steering device, a radio-telephone, or an electric water-pressure system. His dislike of such things was greatly reinforced a few years ago, on a rare occasion when he put his faith in one of them. Coming into Sand Hole, a tiny cove on Lloyd Neck, Long Island, he was using a fathometer, an electronic depth indicator, and ran firmly aground during an outgoing tide. As his boat, hour by hour, slowly rolled over on her side in the mud, some passing blackguard snapped a picture of her and mailed it to Yachting, where it was published. It was as though Frank Merriwell had been arrested in a vice raid.

For all his dislike of gadgets, Roderick, as a good sailor, believes in making himself as comfortable as possible on board a boat, and he realizes that keeping everything shipshape and in good working order is the best means of accomplishing



DUKW, "the truck that goes to sea"

this. “You can be absolutely miserable if the little things go wrong,” he says. “Say it’s a rough day and people have tracked a lot of water down into the cabin. A man does his trick at the helm and then comes below-cold and wet and hardly able to wait to get into some nice dry clothes. Just then the boat rolls heavily, the latch on a locker doesn’t hold as it should, and all his dry clothes fall out into the wet. He’s likely to hate sailing from then on.” To make sure that people do not hate sailing in Spark- man&Stephens boats, Roderick examines the latches on their lockers as attentively as if they were part of the rigging, and is just as insistent that they be in perfect working order before he pronounces a boat acceptable. He has also, over the years, made some contributions of his own in the way of equipment intended to keep people fond of sailing, including a ventilator arrangement that carries air, without the usual complement of water-below decks, a fitted canvas hatch cover that keeps bunks dry even in the roughest seas, and a semi-retracting bunk that allows greater cabin space by day. He tries out most of his ideas on Mustang and then, if they come up to his expectations, describes them to Olin, who has made several of them standard fixtures in Sparkman&Stephens boats.

Before a boat is delivered to a client, Roderick takes her out for a trial. After sailing her long enough to feel confident that she handles nicely, he turns the helm over to someone else, in order to make an intensive study of her sails in action. Roaming the deck restlessly, he squints along the edges of each sail, from time to time whacking the canvas with the flat of his hand, and perhaps he will scramble part way up the rigging to view things from a different angle. On returning to the dock after one such inspection a few months ago, he went to see the sailmaker and told him, “The spinnaker’s a dandy. Looks just fine. So do the Genoa and the mizzen. But the working jib is too drafty. I’d like to see you flatten it a bit, near the head. While you’re at it, why not reshape the luff to allow for a slight sag in the headstay? The main looks pretty good, but it could use a bit of easing along the lower leach, and then we’ll really be in fine shape.”

Coming from Roderick, observations of this kind are listened to with the greatest respect by sailmakers, for more than one authority has called him “just about the best sail trimmer alive”, meaning that he is a master of the art of continually readjusting sails, in response to every fluctuation of the wind. This requires a ceaseless series of rapid-fire calculations, involving the capacity of a particular boat to cope with an environment of sea and air that is never the same from one minute to the next calculations that have little to do with the brain but are, for the most part, the conditioned reflexes of a delicately attuned nervous system. “After a good sailor has trimmed sail, a sailor in Rod’s class can retrim and pick up a fifth of a knot,” a connoisseur of the art once remarked. “He always becomes aware of the need for retrimming well ahead of anyone else. I honestly believe that if Rod was off watch and taking a snooze on a boat that was only medium well trimmed, he’d wake right up and be on deck in a minute.”

Notwithstanding his intimate knowledge of the structure of sailboats, Roderick never tries to design one; for a while during his boyhood he sketched a few, but he soon saw that Olin was much better at it, and quit. The only vessel he has ever had a hand in designing proved to be such an extraordinary object that some people might doubt whether it could be called a boat at all. This is the two-and-a-half-ton amphibious military truck, officially labelled the **DUKW** and better known as the **Duck**, which he helped design during the Second World War, and which General Eisenhower called “invaluable” in assault landings, because of its ability to chug toward shore on the surface of the water and, on reaching the beach, to change from a floating, propeller-driven conveyance to a terrestrial, wheel-driven one and keep right on going.

The beginnings of the Duck date back to the latter part

of 1941, when the National Defense Research Council asked Sparkman&Stephens to join in a collaborative effort to design and develop an amphibious truck. The vehicle ultimately materialized, and Roderick was one of the men principally responsible for the design of its all important watertight hull; in addition, he served as a consultant on the drafting of plans for the various parts, such as the propeller and rudder, that the vehicles needed for the watery phase of their existence. Impatient with the niceties of formal drafting technique, he made freehand sketches of the hull as he visualized it, and turned them over to engineers for General Motors, which had also been asked to help out on the project. When the engineers said they couldn't work from such elementary designs, Roderick supervised the construction of some cardboard-and-plywood mockups of the hull. The engineers continued to grumble at the unorthodox procedure, but they got the idea and set to work building several pilot models. Roderick did most of the test driving of these models. Once, piqued by some high-ranking Army officers who had ridiculed the Duck as impractical and unseaworthy, he drove one of the machines down the beach near Cape Hatteras at the height of a storm and, in full view of his critics, plunged into the Atlantic and headed out to sea, giddily cavorting over seven-foot waves. Before long, unhappily, the spray somehow reached the ignition, stalling the engine. His hull, however, was so seaworthy that, carried along by the waves, it bore him safely back to shore, where he dried off the ignition and tried again, with the same results. The observers still didn't have a very high opinion of the Duck's potentialities, but the mere fact that Roderick had survived these voyages at all impressed them with the merits of its hull. Later, a better means of shielding the engine from moisture was developed, and Roderick put out to sea in one of the improved models, this time during an equally wild storm on Cape Cod. Far from stalling, he went to the rescue of seven Coast Guardsmen in a patrol boat that was aground on a sandbar a quarter of a mile off Highland Light. The Army changed its mind after this feat, and the manufacture of Ducks on a mass production basis was begun. The Duck played an important part in the Allied landings on the beaches of Sicily and Normandy, as well as in several assaults in the Pacific Theatre, and Roderick was awarded the armed forces' **Medal of Freedom** for his contributions to the vehicle's development.

While the third nautical Stephens Roderick, Sr. no longer sails much in the literal sense, he sails a great deal in a perhaps even more enjoyable fashion, covering greater distances with greater enthusiasm than either of his sons, for the races he participated in aboard Dorade are still vivid in his memory, and hardly a day goes by that he does not relive at least some moments of them. In 1929, he sold the firm of Olin J. Stephens, Inc., a coal company in the Bronx of which he was the prosperous president (it put him in a position to finance hibius building of the twenty-eight-thousand-dollar Dorade at a time when the stock market crash was making that kind of money very scarce), but he continued to occupy himself with various business ventures until about a year ago, when he was overjoyed to receive an offer from his sons to join them in Sparkman&Stephens. Since then he has been employed by the firm as its administrative assistant.

White-haired now, and over seventy, Mr. Stephens is dignified and gentle in manner, and bears a strong resemblance to Alfred E. Smith in his later years. He lives with his second wife (he and the first Mrs. Stephens were divorced in 1933) in an apartment in Peter Cooper Village, where his dearest treasure is six hundred feet of 16-mm. motion-picture film taken, mostly by him, aboard Dorade during her great race across the Atlantic in 1931, an event

considered so important at the time that her victorious crew, upon returning to New York, was accorded a ticker-tape parade up Broadway to City Hall. Friends who drop in at Mr. Stephens' usually find that he can be persuaded without much urging to run off this record of the voyage for their benefit, and as the picture unfolds, he heightens its drama by identifying the persons and objects in each scene and describing the circumstances under which the scene was photographed, speaking in a voice that increasingly conveys a feeling of the excitement of that long-ago adventure. (While Mrs. Stephens is tolerant of her husband's undiminished passion for boats, she has had her fill of Dorade's exploits, and as a rule she retreats to a television set in the bedroom when the film starts to unwind.)
As Mr. Stephens throws the projector switch, he leans eagerly forward in anticipation of the first image to be flashed on the screen, and his face becomes taut with much of its former vigor and zest, as if he were actually back aboard Dorade, waiting for the starting signal on that summer morning more than a quarter of a century ago. "Here we are at the Ida Lewis Yacht Club, in Brenton's Cove, Newport," he says. "It's the Fourth of July, the day of the start. Now we're being towed out to the start by a little auxiliary sloop owned by a friend. That's because we had no motor in Dorade, you understand. That cutter in the background is Highland Light, and the big ketch is Landfall. They both worried us. They'd been built specially for this race, and they were a lot bigger and faster than we were. Now we're nearing the starting area. There's George Roosevelt's Mistress and Water Gypsy, and Ilex and that's **Skål**, designed by Phil Rhodes. The rest of those boats are spectators, coming along to see us get off. It was a really fine spectator fleet, and we're all trying to look just as smart and lively as we can.
"There's Brenton Reef Lightship, marking one end of the starting line. These shots show how we're all cruising around under sail now, jockeying for position. It's a muggy day, hazy and warm. Rather a shame, I like a crisp, clear day for the start of a race. Now it's just a few minutes before noon and we're all coming around onto the port tack to head for the starting line. Very tense business you daren't cross ahead of the gun, but it seems terribly important to hit the line just on the button and get off half a minute ahead of the other fellow. Of course, with three thousand miles to go, it doesn't make much difference, but it seems to while we're waiting. Now we're coming up on the line, and now there we go! Off to a good start second across, right after Mistress.
"This is a while later. There go the other boats in the distance. We won't see them again until we meet in England. They're all pinching off southeasterly to make for the Gulf Stream, hoping it will give them a boost on their way. We're the only ones who are going to risk the ice and fog and rough weather on a true Great Circle course, past Newfoundland. Olin and Rod and I decided on that months ago, but we kept it top secret. We didn't even tell the other members of our crew, four young friends of Rod's and Olin's, until we were over the starting line.
"That's Rod, throwing the first of his many milk bottles overboard. He had to do without fresh milk after the fifth day out, and he considered that the worst hardship of the trip. Now we're having lunch on deck, our first meal on board. That bald-headed young fellow is Eddy Koster, our cook, and a mighty good one, too. We ate ninety-four of his flapjacks one morning. Here I am, making baggy-wrinkle-unravelling old rope ends to use as chafing gear. I do look odd in that gray felt hat, don't I? Not very nautical, I'm afraid. The boys called me Commodore, and I had a proper skipper's cap aboard, but the felt one was more comfortable.

"This is either the second or third day. You can see the whiskers beginning to sprout on the boys. It's a good day; the breeze has just freshened and we're moving along nicely. This one, now, shows everybody peeling potatoes,except me. There I am reading aloud to amuse the others. Can't remember what the book is. Probably something about cruising technique; we all have one-track minds at this point.

"Now we're just off Cape Race, Newfoundland, in medium bad fog. It's our sixth day out. See that thing looming up in the fog? We've just heard a foghorn and I've grabbed the camera to get a shot of whatever it is. Now it's coming quite close much too close, really and you can see it's a tramp steamer. Last boat we'll see for over a week. Good thing the fog wasn't any thicker. Now, this view is a beauty, isn't it? It's looking down from the upper spreader of the mainmast. I didn't take it-Rod did, after scrambling aloft with the camera. It gives you an idea of how small our boat was for an Atlantic crossing how narrow. And then this shot from alongside looks as if it must have been taken from another boat. But it wasn't. Rod climbed out over the water on the spinnaker boom, hanging down by his hands and feet, like an ape, to take it. These are dolphins. They sported all around the boat for hours on end. A wonderful thing to watch. And look at this sunrise. You don't see anything like that on land. A man really feels alive at a time like this.

"We're just bowling along now. We're in a heavy Atlantic swell, and the boat is rolling. Both booms mainsail boom and spinnaker boom are dipping into the water. Did you see that? Watch, now, first one boom and then the other. In weather like that, getting my rest wasn't easy-my bones ached from being tossed around in the bunk. I fixed that with Rod's accordion stuffed it in between me and the side wall. It made some odd moans when I squeezed against it, but I kind of got to like them. When a boat rolls and wallows that way, it puts a terrible strain on the rigging. One night, it got so bad that the spinnaker halyard let go. Whole sail fell in the water. It was all hands on deck, pulling and hauling to save the sail, and we did, too. Too bad I couldn't get any shots of that, but, of course, it was pitch black.

"Here the boys are lowering away the spinnaker by day, because there's a chafed spot in it. They're doing a very clumsy job. Anything but good racing technique. All right, that's better now. This is Rod, sewing up the chafed spot. Mighty good man with sails, that Rod.

"How's this for really rolling along? Isn't that something? We've got a rail breeze one that puts your rail right down to the water. The off-duty watch had to sleep in the leeward bunks; in the windward ones they kept falling out onto the floor. Look how Johnny Fox is fighting the tiller. You don't see much of me at the tiller or anywhere else, because I took most of the pictures. But I worked right along with the rest of them, even though I was an old man of forty-six. We hit eleven knots sliding down some of those long rollers, and logged plenty of miles per day. When you push like that, you're apt to catch a good bit of spray. That's why we all have our oilies on. But the boat stayed dry as a bone below decks. She's light and buoyant. No solid water is coming over her decks-just spray.

"Wind's shifted now, and we're on the starboard tack. It's the fourteenth day, and nobody's sighted us since that tramp steamer eight days ago. We don't know where the other boats are, but the way we're skimming along makes us pretty happy. We do look like a pretty cheerful bunch, despite the cold wind and the spray, don't we? There I am at the tiller at last, Rod took the shot. You can see I'm still wearing the gray felt hat.

"Now we're approaching the steamer track as we get close to England. In a moment, you're going to get a thrill, just as we did. Look sharp! There! There she is the steamer George Washington, Captain George Fried commanding. She's the first ship we've seen in eight days. What a moment! They're running up code flags to tell us our position, and

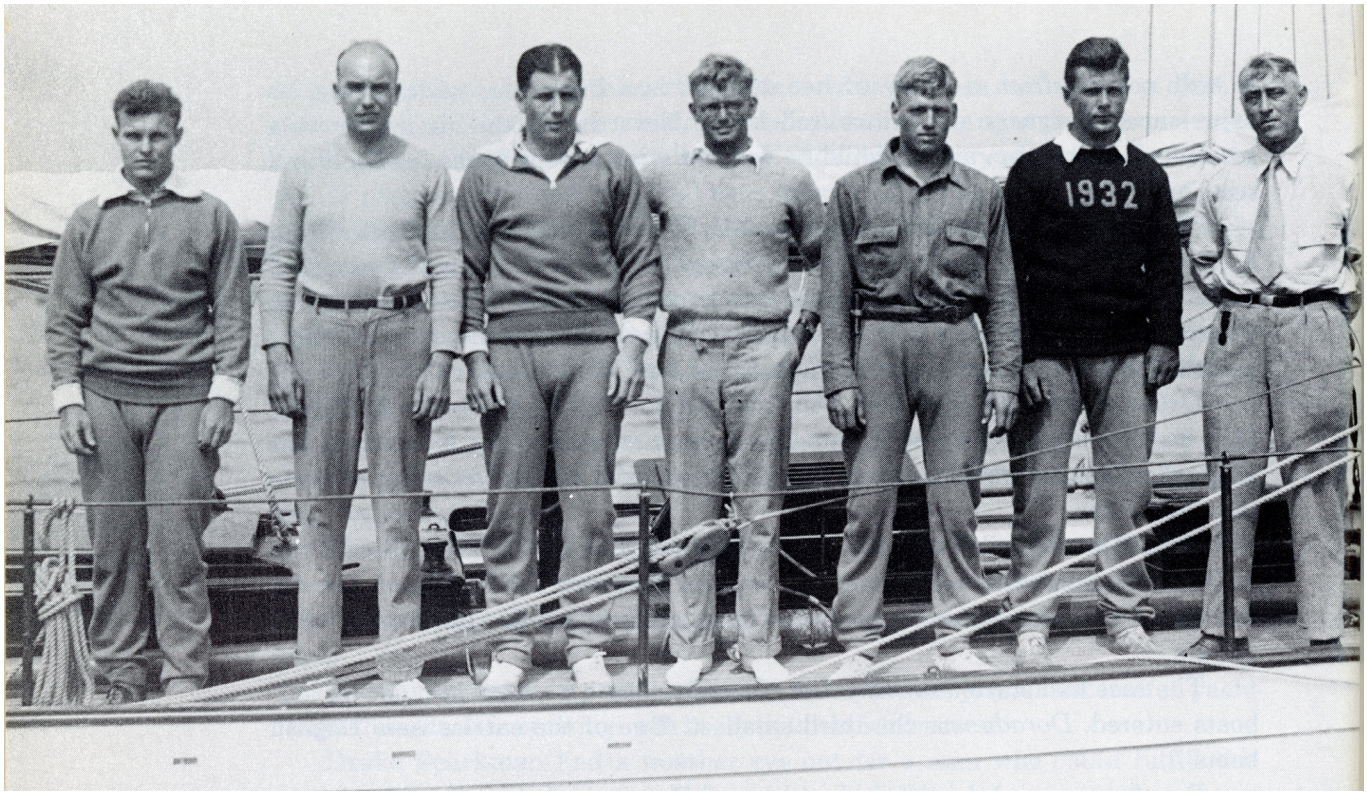
it turns out that Olin's navigation has been perfect; we're three quarters of the way across. They get their flags up and down so fast the boys can hardly find what they mean in the code book before they're gone again. Now we're running up our own signals to answer. There she goes now, off to America. As a parting shot, Rod is sending up the flags that say, 'We wish you a pleasant voyage.' I think that's rather a good touch, don't you?

"This is July 19th, and we're hustling right along. The distances we're making! A hundred and ninety-three miles one day, a hundred and ninety-eight the next, then two hundred and ten, then two hundred and three. We all feel marvellous. And here's Jim Merrill taking down the mizzen staysail for the noon reading of the sun. There Olin and Jim are shooting the sun. We had two sextants aboard. That's me again, jotting down the chronometer readings as they call 'Mark.' I look moth-eaten-it's the gray streaks in my beard. There's the fellow with the prize beard, by the way, Johnny Fox, and appropriately enough his beard was red and bushy. "We're getting very close to England now. It's warmer, and there are fishermen around. Everyone is very tense, waiting for the landfall, all except Olin. Here it is 6 P.M. on July 20th-our sixteenth day out. Olin has calculated our position from the noon readings and told us we'll see land, the Scilly Islands, off Land's End-by 6:30 P.M. Then he went below and simply fell asleep. That boy! Cool as a cucumber. The rest of us are staring eastward until our eyes are about to fall out." At this point, even now, the narrator's eyes strain toward the screen as he raptly awaits once again the great moment. And then the flickering picture shifts, and he continues tensely, "Now watch. Here it's nearly six-thirty, and Olin has just come up from his nap and ordered Rod to climb the mast and have a look. There goes Rod up the wire cables with his bare hands. Now he's on the spreaders. Now he's clear to the top. Watch him! Watch him!… Ah! He's shouting, 'Land ho! Two points off the starboard bow!' What yelling, what cheering! We were a happy crew, I can tell you.

"Here we are the next day, getting ourselves cleaned up and squared away to look trim when we enter Plymouth Sound. This is just after we've passed Lloyd's Signal Station and run up flags asking them where we stand in the race. They whipped up a set of flags, and Rod thumbed through the code book and then screamed out the message: '**You are first**!' Lord, the bedlam! We shouted and danced, we fired off a clip of bullets from a .45, and then we rushed below and ate a huge bowl of fig pud- ding with hard sauce. Too bad I didn't get any of our celebration on film, but I was too excited to think of taking pictures. The shot I really should have taken was one of Olin. While the rest of us were leaping around like idiots, he was just quietly standing there, smiling like the Cheshire Cat.

"And now here we are at last, passing Plymouth Breakwater. The lighthouse over there at the right of the picture is one end of the finish line. None of the other boats are in sight, Lloyd's must have been right. Matter of fact, as it turned out, the nearest boats are two days behind us, and with our handicap, because we're so small, we've won by almost a four-day margin. It's history-making. In fact, we're so ahead of schedule that nobody is around to greet us. Afterward, I had to laugh when I read what the New York Times said about our arrival. It said, 'British yachtsmen aboard the Britannia and other boats raised a great cheer for the American yacht.' You see anybody cheering? Nobody was anywhere around except that grizzled old boy there passing by in his beat-up fishing boat.

"Now, finally, here comes **Jolie Brise**, the official welcoming cutter of the Royal Western Yacht Club, to tell us that from reports they've received we're far and away the winners and to guide us to our mooring. And this last shot, taken two days later, shows Landfall and Highland Light arriving, thinking themselves winner and runnerup. Then they see us cruising about just inside the finish line. Some surprise! They were quite unhappy, as you might imagine. Well, that's it. End of film. Want to see my pictures of the Fastnet Race we won that same summer?"



Dorade Crew (Roderick Stephens Sr. first on the right)