

# Rod Stephens *Innovator*

# Hall Fam

***"Automatic devices and labor-savers just aren't right. They cost too much, they make noise, they complicate the essential maintenance, and they delude you into a false sense of confidence."***

**D**uring the course of a distinguished career spanning the better part of the last five decades, this back-to-basics philosophy has earned Rod Stephens the distinction of being one of the foremost marine engineers of his time.

Born August 7, 1909, he has been involved in sailing since he was 11. In 1928, he left Cornell University to join the well-known Henry Nevins boatyard in City Island, New York, determined to learn the art of boatbuilding from the keel up. A year after joining the Nevins yard, he collaborated with his father and brother Olin on a boat that would revolutionize the concept of the ocean racer.

Working to Olin's design specifications, Rod supervised every detail of the new yacht's construction. She was a brash approach to ocean racing boat design — at 52 feet overall and with a displacement of 37,800 pounds.

Launched in 1930, *Dorada* went on to win several long-distance races, some with Rod at the helm. The yacht placed first in a trans-Atlantic race from Newport, Rhode Island, to Plymouth, England, finishing in a then-remarkable time of 17 days despite being the third smallest entrant. *Dorada* also chalked up impressive victories in Bermuda and Fastnet races, and in 1933, Rod Stephens won the prestigious Cruising Club of America Blue Water Medal for an 8,000-mile voyage to Norway and back in the swift yawl. It was for this boat that Rod designed the device that has made the yacht's name a part of boatbuilding vocabulary: the ingenious water-trap "Dorada" vent. This invention marked the first time

ever that belowdeck space could be ventilated in bad weather and still kept dry, and the descendant of the original concept continues to be one of the most efficient and widely used methods of on-board ventilation in existence.

In 1934, when Rod left the Nevins yard to join Sparkman & Stephens as a field engineer, he spent much of his time on the water, testing and refining spars, rigging, sails and deck layouts. Generations of cruising sailors have reaped the benefits of much of his thoughtful advice on such topics as boom vang, slotted head stays, sheet-lead angles, heavy-weather techniques and rig fine-tuning.

He and brother Olin worked hand in hand at Sparkman & Stephens, yet their personalities and approaches to the sport of sailing remained remarkably diverse. Together, they made S&S one of the most celebrated naval architectural firms in the world.

Rod Stephens' pre-World War II years were devoted to J-Boat rigging and deck layouts; since 1937, when he conceived a deck layout for *Ranger*, the America's Cup defender that defeated T.O.M. Sopwith's *Endeavour* in every race, he has contributed time and energy to some facet of every America's Cup Race.

But his genius was not solely confined to the world of cruising and racing; in 1941, after the outbreak of war, the National Defense Research Council asked Sparkman & Stephens to design an amphibious assault vehicle. The successful result was widely used during World War II, and for his contribution to the project, Rod was awarded the distinguished Armed Forces Medal of Freedom.



During his sailing career, Stephens has completed three eastward and two westward Atlantic crossings, four times as skipper. He won the Fastnet Race three times. In 1949, he was elected commodore of the Cruising Club of America and earned accolades as an accomplished seaman who was respected by sailors around the world.

Now in his 80s, Rod Stephens still finds the energy to make regular appearances at the Sparkman & Stephens office in New York. And in spite of his

roster of racing accomplishments, his philosophy embodies that of every cruising sailor. "My idea of getting off in a boat," he says, "is to get as far away from telephones as possible." With over 100,000 sailing miles behind him, Rod Stephens has put more distance than most between himself and the phone company. And with his countless contributions to the nuts and bolts of life aboard, he has earned his place as a benefactor of cruising sailors everywhere.

Peter Ingram

(4-9-88)

It was moved and VOTED that the following criteria be used for determining Honorary membership.

1. Candidates shall be living former members. Candidates shall be proposed by the Flag Officers to the Board of Governors for recommendation for election. They need not be a member at the time of selection.
2. Candidates shall, in the opinion of the Board of Governors, have performed outstanding service and in general, made a significant contribution to the operation, image and stature of the Club.
3. Recommendations for Honorary Membership shall reflect the Board's intention to recognize outstanding service, retain the interest of, and honor such former members who have made extraordinary contributions to the Club and to this extent, attention should be given to those who have resigned under the Motorboat rule.
4. In general, recommendations for Honorary Membership shall be limited to one (1) per year.

Note: Please add to your booklet of precedent setting decisions.

ATTACHMENT  
HIGHLIGHTS OF ROD STEPHENS SAILING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
|                | ***** 1931 *****                              |
| Dorada         | Won Trans Atlantic two days ahead of fleet    |
| Dorada         | Won Fastnet                                   |
|                | ***** 1932 *****                              |
| Dorada         | Bermuda Race 1st in class B                   |
|                | ***** 1933 *****                              |
| Dorada         | Won Fastnet                                   |
| Dorada         | Won CCA Blue Water Award                      |
| Dorada         | Won Trans-Atlantic race                       |
|                | ***** 1935 *****                              |
| Stormy Weather | Captain for Trans-Atlantic race which he won  |
| Stormy Weather | with Pete Leboutillier                        |
|                | ***** 1937 *****                              |
| Ranger         | sailed on J boat 135' which defended cup      |
|                | ***** 1939 *****                              |
| Vim            | 12 Meter aftergrd for Vanderbilt              |
|                | ***** 1940 *****                              |
|                | OSC became member                             |
|                | ***** 1945 *****                              |
| DUKH           | Awarded Medal of Freedom for design of amphib |
|                | ***** 1946 *****                              |
| Mustang        | 45' NY32 sail #17                             |
| Mustang        | Bermuda 2nd class B with Ed Raymond in crew   |
| Mustang        | OSC 1st A1 (with 15% penalty)                 |
|                | ***** 1947 *****                              |
| Mustang        | Marblehead Halifax                            |
| Mustang        | OSC 5th A1 (10%)                              |
|                | ***** 1948 *****                              |
| Mustang        | OSC 1st A1                                    |
|                | ***** 1949 *****                              |
| Commodore      | CCA   |
| Mustang        | OSC 3rd A1 (10%)                              |
| Mustang        | OSC 2nd A1 (15%)                              |
|                | ***** 1950 *****                              |
| Mustang        | Bermuda 2nd class B                           |
| Mustang        | OSC 2nd A1                                    |

ATTACHMENT  
HIGHLIGHTS OF ROD STEPHENS SAILING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

|                |                                    |
|----------------|------------------------------------|
|                | ***** 1951 *****                   |
| Rear Commodore | OSC                                |
| Mustang        | OSC 1st A1 (10%)                   |
| Mustang        | OSC 3rd A1 (15%)                   |
|                | ***** 1952 *****                   |
| Mustang        | Bermuda Race 1st class B           |
| Rear Commodore | OSC                                |
| Mustang        | OSC 4th A1 (13%)                   |
|                | ***** 1953 *****                   |
| Vice Commodore | OSC                                |
|                | ***** 1954 *****                   |
| Vice Commodore | OSC                                |
|                | ***** 1955 *****                   |
| Commodore      | OSC                                |
|                | ***** 1956 *****                   |
| Commodore      | OSC                                |
|                | ***** 1958 *****                   |
| Columbia       | Sailed on 12 Meter as deck officer |
|                | ***** 1962 *****                   |
| Mustang        | Bermuda 2nd class B                |
|                | ***** 1964 *****                   |
| Constellation  | 12 Meter                           |

(4-2-54)

RESOLVED, to accept the recommendation of Rear Commodore Roderick Stephens, Jr., for determining what is a Motor Sailer in the following manner:

Take the ratio between the square root of the sail area as it would appear under the Off Soundings rule and the load waterline length. If the ratio is less than .8, the boat would tend to be under-rigged, slow under sail and hence should be classed as a Motor Sailer. Between .8 and .9, if the boat has a centerboard or reasonable keel area, she could be considered a sail boat. If the ratio is over .9, it can be presumed the boat sails moderately well and may legitimately be classed as a sail boat even without a centerboard and with somewhat less than normal draft. Other factors which should be considered include lack of adequate lateral plane unless supplemented by a centerboard, and perhaps lacking provisions for outside steering. Even though the sail area ratio might be satisfactory, these factors might properly classify a vessel as a Motor Sailer.

(0-20-EE)