

# 13/ *Adios Wins in 1956, and We Remember Dorade*



Pre-race activities orchestrated excitement to new heights the week before Swiftsure 1956. Sea Cadet projects benefitted when Navy League Officials and Sea Cadet parents sold memberships, with the proceeds going toward Cadet activities. Each new membership contained a guess on the finish time of the first boat home in the yachting classic. Closest guess won a small dinghy.

A circus gaiety prevailed in the Inner Harbour where 23 yachts, worth at least \$1 million, assembled for the rendezvous festivities. The Elks Clown Band was followed by Sea Chanties, sung with gusto from the deck of *Black Dog*, this year, replete with piano. (Quite an item to manhandle aboard a yacht.)

Communications had improved as, for the first time, continuous progress reports could be relayed, thanks to the Island Tug and Barge company's generosity in loaning their 205 foot salvage tug *Sudbury* and the use of her communications equipment.

The race itself was one of the most exciting on record. *Adios*, *Dorade*, and *Maruffa* engaged in a windward battle to the mark ship, rounding the Light within 20 minutes of one another at 1 a.m. despite almost non-existent winds. By morning, *Adios* and *Maruffa* picked up the first fingers of the morning westerly, and rode it to a substantial lead. By the time the full westerly had filled in, they had disappeared from view of the fleet.

It was a two boat match down the strait, as *Adios* and *Maruffa* continued their stretch dual. *Maruffa* finally overhauled *Adios* as they came abreast of Jordan River and held her slim lead all the way to the line. *Maruffa* ghosted across in 30 hours to capture the new *City of Victoria Perpetual Trophy*. Donated by the city, it is still given to the first vessel to cross the line without the benefit of handicap.

In spite of the light going around the Lightship early Sunday morning, there had been plenty of action on the outbound leg, Saturday morning. *Oriole* had split her mainsail vertically and was forced out, as were the two *Yankees*. The 40 foot cutter *Yankee Doodle* withdrew with a blown out main, while the 44 foot *Yankee Clipper*, manned by a crew of young Sea Scouts from Seattle, had put in to Port

Angeles with a parted main stay.

Other action saw *Adios* overrun her spinnaker and lose precious seconds cutting it free. *Dorade* sailed into a hole and was passed by *Gossip*, *Kate II*, *Ono*, and *Tasco II*. Flagship of San Francisco's St. Francis Yacht Club, this latter yacht had been sailed up the coast by Tom Short, to try his experienced hand at Swiftsure, aided by his most enthusiastic crew member, his wife.

Design progress was apparent in 1956, when the pressure from such new boats as *Kate II*, *Ono*, *Zingara*, and *Totem* made it apparent that a new era was dawning. California had produced the high priests of the design revolution and, in a sense, the Fifties decade is the story of their successes. However, the shift was gradual. In the beginning, certainly the stalwarts of yesteryear still dominated on the start lines, little realizing that they were inexorably sliding into oblivion.

Chief among these old timers was the reigning Ocean Queen, *Dorade*, fondly remembered by Humphrey Golby:

"It is only once or twice in a decade that a truly remarkable design captures the imagination of the yachting world. Such a yacht was created in 1930 when Olin Stephens laid down the lines for *Dorade*. Stephens called on all his skill and drew heavily on the success of his Six and Eight Metre designs. He was determined that *Dorade* would be the living embodiment of all that was known to be fast in a deep sea racing yacht.

"*Dorade's* slim, deep hull slid into the water the same year that Swiftsure began, but it was to be 20 years before we saw her here on the West Coast. To say that *Dorade* was a forerunner of things to come, is an understatement. She was the fastest ocean racing yacht of her day, and her design proved to be so advanced that it carried her to victory after victory for the next 20 years. Her mahogany hull was strong and light, and built with the flexibility and care of a racing dinghy. To save the weight of traditional teak, *Dorade* even had cedar decks. The deck layout was simple, with ample space for the crew to work. The split headsail rig, her lifetime trademark, was designed to make fast sailing possible in any kind of weather, day or night. The interior was

clean and utilitarian; even the bunks were specially designed, narrow and deep, to give rest to weary crewmen on long passages. The galley was so simply and ingeniously set up that it was possible to prepare hot food and feed the men, no matter what the weather. There was no engine, just the best of proven equipment to ensure that *Dorade*, come hell or high water, would be among the finishers.

"The Trans-Atlantic race of 1931 was her first big test and she cut two full days off the record in her run from New York to Plymouth, beating many boats double her size. *Dorade* made the headlines: her jaunty, powerful profile appeared in yachting journals around the world. While in England, she entered the Fastnet, and with Rod Stephens at the helm, completely dominated the fleet of much bigger boats. Now, there was no stopping her. She won her class in the 1932 Bermuda Race, although she missed the overall by a scant margin. Then, it was back to England in 1933 and another Fastnet win. At this time, she was bought from the Stephens brothers by James Flood, who continued to race her hard, bringing her to the Pacific Coast in 1936. In that year, she took the Trans-Pac in her stride. By now, her list of trophies was long and studded with stars. She had now conquered the oceans of the world. *Dorade* was a household word.

"It was inevitable that sooner or later, *Dorade* would come to the Pacific Northwest. This happened at the end of World War II, when she was bought by Seattle's Franklin Eddy. 1947 marked the first of her many Swiftsure. Although overall honours eluded her in many a gallant battle with the early giants of Swiftsure, she captured AA class honours in 1951, 1952, 1954, and 1964.

"But, win or lose, *Dorade* brought her magic name, her shining international record, and her rugged power to Swiftsure, her very presence making it a more important and more widely recognized open sea yachting event. We all knew that when *Dorade* came to Seattle, the best of her racing years were already behind her. The days when the skill and youth of the Stephens brothers and their marvelous crews, and later the dedication and determination of James Flood, had carried her far beyond her designer's fondest dreams. Now, she was a middle-aged lady, with an engine and many added comforts. Some of the fire and drive was gone, but *Dorade* had only to be there to thrill all who were privileged to see her.

"As I stood in the spring sunshine, in 1978, and looked at *Dorade* as she lay, retired, at her dock in the Seattle Yacht Club, my mind ran back across the years of this historic yacht's many contributions to the sport of competitive sailing and of her indelible imprint on the evolution of the modern racing machine. Looking just as she looked 48 years ago when her keel first tasted the Atlantic, *Dorade* lay at rest in the morning sun. The deck is clean and sparse; the cockpit small by today's standards; the rigging old fashioned, but the feeling of power is still there. In spite of the few small winches, she still has the look of the thoroughbred that she is. The unmistakably raked wooden spars and double headstay rig still say, 'This is *Dorade*.'

"In the first postwar PIYA Regatta, a no-host affair, the clubs met at Orcas Island. *Dorade* was there, and I was loaned to her as an extra hand. This informal regatta, insofar as I can remember, was held in 1946. I was entranced just to be on board *Dorade*. The way she moved and the way she went to windward was uncanny. At one point, I was down below as we came about, tacking back and forth in the narrow channel. The memory of what happened has remained with me over these many years. As *Dorade* came around, the stainless steel strapping that ran from corner to corner of the trunk cabin eased momentarily, and as the strains came on the new tack, one strap hummed taut, while the opposite number hung slack. At that moment, I realized that the old girl was so limber that she had comfortably eased her remarkably flexible hull to accommodate the new tack.

"The final chapter in the *Dorade* story will never be written, for her records will live forever in the hearts of all true sailors. When Franklin Eddy died, he left *Dorade* to the Mystic Seaport Museum for preservation. However, the Mystic Seaport authorities could not finance this project without further endowment for maintenance. Since there was no provision in the will for such funds, *Dorade* was offered for sale. A former Seattle-ite, Tony Lopez, now engaged in his family's California wine business, stepped forward to buy her so that she would remain permanently in the Seattle Yacht Club."



DORADE / KENNETH OLLAR

SLICING TO WINDWARD