

Ken Keefe

A lifelong sailor who has made a life he loves: boats and racing

By Victoria Terheyden

Like many sailors at StFYC, Ken Keefe grew up in a sailing family. But not every sailor knows boats like he does. Here in the Spotlight, professional boatbuilder and world class racer Ken Keefe shares his passion for keeping sailing strong for future generations.

Mainsheet: How long have you been an StFYC member?

Keefe: I have been a member for 44 years. I joined because I loved boats and sailing. My dad (**Staff Commodore RC Keefe**), uncle (**Staff Commodore Jack Keefe**) and grandfather (**John Harold Keefe**, a founding member) were all members.



A young Keefe at the helm of Bolero

MS: How did you become involved in sailing?

Keefe: Through my dad. I have pictures of sailing on Bolero with him at five years old, tied to the mast. When I was a teenager I used to take the bus after school from Marin to the Club to go sailing.

MS: What has been your most memorable sailing experience?

Keefe: I have two: my first America's Cup on Defender in

Newport, RI and sailing with my dad from Bermuda to the States when I was 14.

MS: What was your most memorable moment while on an America's Cup team?

Keefe: While representing the St. Francis Yacht Club in 1987 on "USA" in Perth we were the only boat with two rudders, (one in the bow!). We developed this concept and were able to make the final four boats. We might have been the second fastest boat in Australia with a bit more time—who knows what could have happened.

MS: Do you have a sailing role model?

Keefe: Olin Stephens, Conn Findlay, Dennis Conner, Tom Blackaller, **Paul Cayard** and, of course, my dad.

MS: What racing plans do you have for the future?

Keefe: 2016 will be a great year. On the docket: Antigua Superyacht Challenge, Key West Race Week, Loro Piana Superyacht Regatta, St. Barths Bucket, Les Voiles de St. Barths, NYYC Annual Regatta, NYYC Summer Regatta, Edgartown Race Week, Nantucket Race Week, Maxi Worlds and the Swan Cup in Sardinia.



The TP52, Vesper, racing in Portugal

MS: Tell us about your upcoming European racing plans.

Keefe: For five years I have been racing on and managing the TP52 Vesper. **Jim Swartz** is the owner and helmsman in all our events. We have had great success with the boat all over the world, finishing second in Capri at the Med Cup last year. In 2013 Vesper was 4th at the TP52 Worlds.



Ken Keefe has been a member for 44 years

I have just shipped the boat to Liverpool, England and she is being trucked to Cascais, Portugal where we will be sailing in the Super Series with 13 other TP52s. We finish racing on Sunday in Cascais, and on Monday, mast out, keel off and the boat is on a truck to Les Voiles St. Tropez. The boat will arrive on Saturday. On Sunday, keel on, mast up and test sail; we start five days of racing on Monday. (What could go wrong!) We have a solid team, a well prepared boat and will be racing against boats seven years newer than Vesper. Personally, I will also be racing against people I have raced against my entire life, which really enriches the level of competition.

MS: Describe sailing in one word:

Keefe: Challenging.

MS: When you are not sailing, what are you doing?

Keefe: Spending time with my wife of 30 years, Kerry!

MS: Anything else you would like to add about sailing, or life?

Keefe: Sailing involves boats, but it is the people that make the memories! I have been blessed with a lifetime of sailing with and against great friends and incredibly talented people in every corner of the world.

One of my greatest accomplishments is being one of the owners of the KKMI Boatyards. Boat repair is hard and dirty work that can be detrimental to the environment when the facility is not correct. We have built our boatyard in Sausalito to be fully compliant with the Clean Water Act. No water can reach the Bay without being filtered and treated. As a lifelong sailor, I am not only grateful to have my work be my passion, but am also grateful that I can contribute to an area where myself, my sailing teammates and all those who are involved in the sport can safely enjoy the water. 🇺🇸