

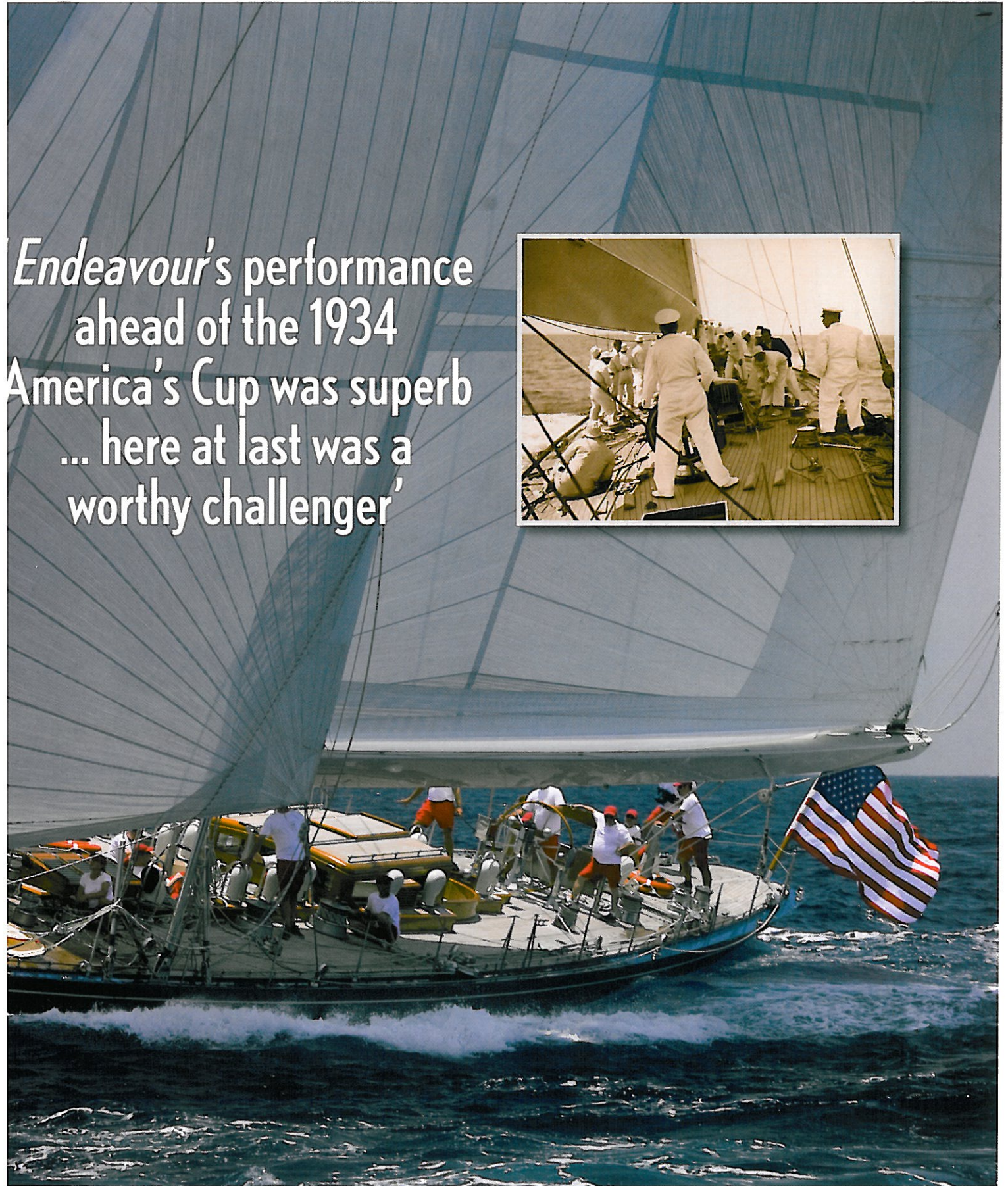


Endeavour

Print International



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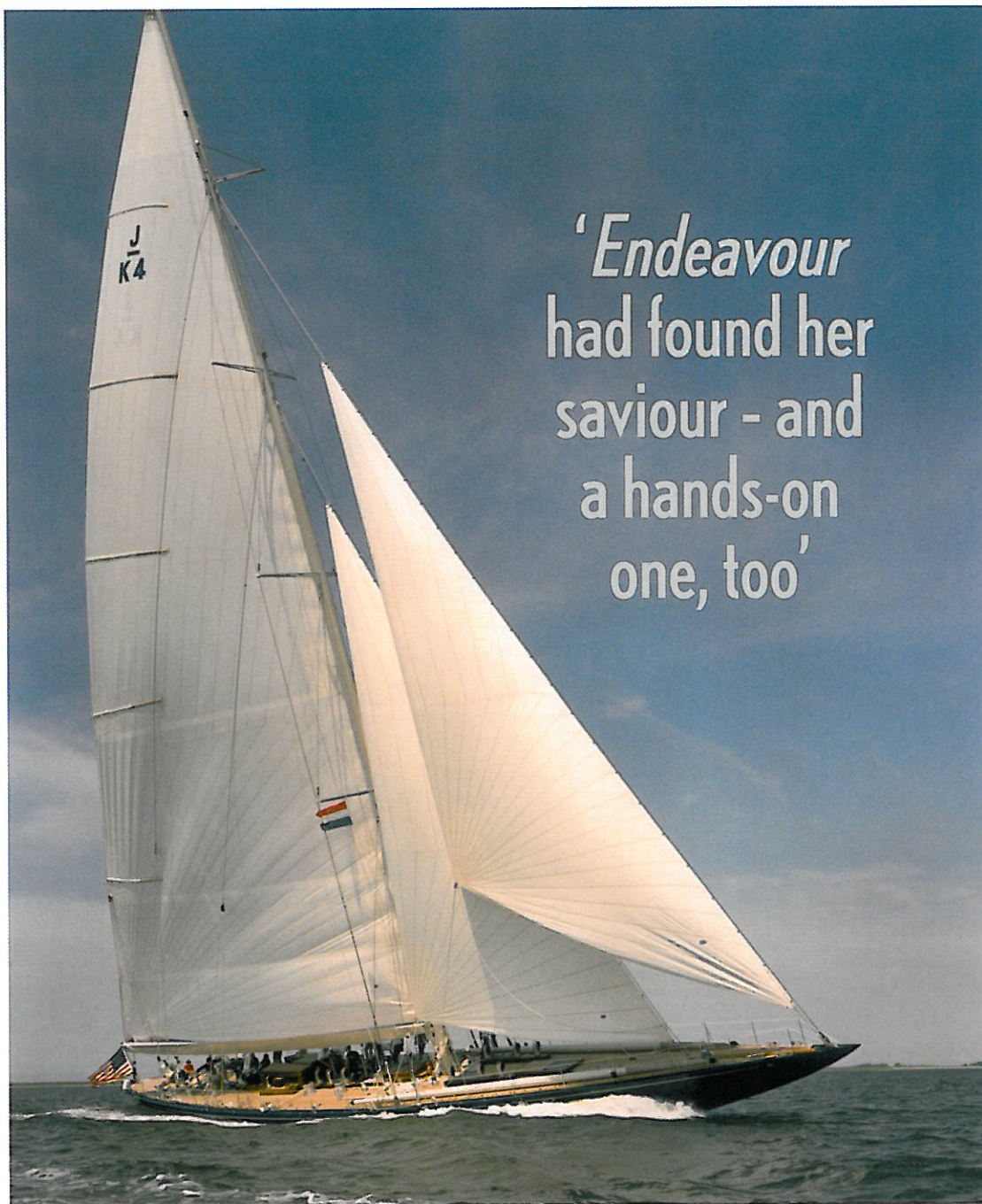


most evocative of the great British racing yachts of the pre-war era, *Endeavour*, the 'Darling Jade', is uniquely beautiful and one of the best yachts of all time.

Commissioned by aeroplane magnate Thomas Sopwith, she was drawn by Britain's top yacht designer, C E Nicholson, but Sopwith, consistent with his hands-on role as helmsman and his access to state-of-the-art aerodynamics, contributed

substantially to her technical prowess. If the hull was Nicholson's work, the rod rigging, wind speed and direction indicators and other firsts were those of Sopwith's right-hand man, Frank Murdoch.

Endeavour's performance ahead of the 1934 America's Cup was superb. British attempts to regain the Cup had long been thwarted but here at last was a worthy challenger. Then, as if destined to heroic failure, mismanagement set a course that



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Rescued from destitution half a century after her heroic failure in the America's Cup, Endeavour sails again in all her classic beauty

would doom the yacht to defeat. With some justification, *Endeavour's* professional crew asked for extra money for the extended season they would serve but Sopwith refused. A brilliant amateur crew was formed instead and the challenge was back on course. The racing against Vanderbilt's *Rainbow* was keen, but just as *Endeavour* developed a leading position Sopwith threw away the race series through poor tactics. Seemingly all difficulties had been overcome only for defeat to be snatched from the jaws of victory. The aftermath was perhaps even worse for British yachting. Murdoch's technical developments were too visible to be kept secret, and Nicholson, perhaps determined to save his personal prestige, gave a copy of *Endeavour's* lines to the designer of *Rainbow*, W Starling Burgess. With all the advantages so painstakingly developed now thrown away, the result of the 1937 Cup was in effect settled in the days that followed the defeat of *Endeavour*. The yacht raced for only four more years, with the last of them seeing her back in US waters acting as trial horse for

Sopwith's doomed *Endeavour II* challenge. However, while there she scored a win over the American Super J and 1937 Cup Defender *Ranger* – an achievement no other J had ever managed. For nearly 50 years *Endeavour* clung to a precarious existence. She and her younger sister were sold off by Sopwith and their lead keels were removed. Plans to convert *Endeavour* into a cruising yacht fell through, as did a number of rescue attempts while she was laid up at various locations on the South Coast of England. The last of these saw her moved to Calshot Spit, and it was there that Elizabeth Meyer discovered her. She had not come seeking to buy *Endeavour*, just to see the supreme leviathan, but the yacht had found her saviour – and a hands-on one, too. The steelwork was carried out in situ before the project was relocated to the Royal Huisman shipyard, and in 1989 Meyer unveiled her achievement to an astonished world. She had succeeded against all the odds, and *Endeavour* was back, her original beauty fully revealed.

William Collier

