

The seven lives of
SEA CLOUD



A windjammer writes history



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The SEA CLOUD’s life story is more thrilling than some novels. She was built in 1931 in Kiel at the request of a Wall Street broker. It was his wife, Marjorie Merriweather Post, who shaped the SEA CLOUD’s character. After the ship’s sale in 1955, there were several dark chapters in the history of the once glamorous private yacht - until she was bought in 1978 by a group of Hamburg-based shipowners and businessmen and given a new life.

A masterpiece of shipbuilding becomes a floating palace.

Today’s SEA CLOUD was built in 1931 at the Krupp family shipyard in Kiel according to plans of the renowned American contractors Gibbs & Cox. After her launch in the last week of April, the largest private sailing yacht of that day was christened the HUSSAR. As the largest sailing yacht ever built, the four-masted barque was commissioned by one of Wall Street’s wealthiest businessmen, E. F. Hutton.



His wife, Marjorie Merriweather Post, heiress to a huge fortune and herself a successful businesswoman, designed the luxury yacht, with its then black hull, completely according to her liking. She dedicated at least two years almost exclusively to this task.

She rented a large warehouse in Brooklyn, drafted a full-scale diagram of the ship’s

interior and arranged carefully-chosen antiques as they should later be displayed in her own and the six other luxury cabins. It is no wonder that the décor was later exactly as she had imagined - and fascinates guests even today with its personalized style. The HUSSAR was built for one purpose: to take the Huttons in their customary luxury to all those places they felt their presence was desirable, whether for representative or business reasons or simply the plea-



sure of travel and adventure. The HUSSAR spent at least nine months of the year at sea - and the Huttons set course for such exotic destinations as the Galapagos Islands, Hawaii and the Mediterranean. However, the sweet life beneath white sails was soon overshadowed: Marjorie Merriweather Post and Ed Hutton’s marriage fell into crisis - and in August 1935, the pair divorced.

A new life under a new name.

One day after the divorce, Ed Hutton signed over the HUSSAR to his ex-wife, who loved the ship more than anything. As a kind of final stroke under her two failed marriages, Marjorie had the yacht registered under a new name: The HUSSAR became the SEA CLOUD.

After the painful separation from her husband Marjorie quickly found comfort in her old friend Joseph E. Davies. He was a successful attorney and served as the economic advisor to President Wilson during the peace negotiations in Versailles after World War I. Her wedding to Mr. Davies on 15 December 1935 gave Marjorie’s life a new direction: From now on, she was engaged not only in the circles of business tycoons, but also in the world of politics and diplomacy. In early 1937 Davies took over the office of the American ambassador in Moscow. The SEA CLOUD was now called to Leningrad as a floating (and nearly surveillance-free) diplomatic palace - and the social duties the SEA CLOUD had to serve increased once

again. Marjorie knew perfectly well how to socialize in diplomatic circles. Prominent Soviets gladly accepted her invitations to learn more about the western luxury lifestyle.

And the SEA CLOUD also played host to a number of royals through the years, including the Swedish and Belgian royal families. Over time, however, setting sail



from Leningrad became more and more dangerous due to the large number of warships in the eastern waters. Davies was called upon to serve as the US ambassador to Belgium in June 1938 and the SEA CLOUD left the USSR.

A sacrifice for the nation.

Most guests on board the SEA CLOUD pay no attention to the small, white plaque with five brass stripes, mounted on the front of the wheelhouse under the bridge. Only a few know: each stripe stands for a half year of active military service for the USA.



The patriotic act of Marjorie and her third husband, Joe Davies, is widely referred to as a heroic sacrifice: The SEA CLOUD, in place of a son, would go to war. Actually, the couple had tried to sell their ship just before the USA entered the war. By this time, however, the market for this kind of luxury goods had collapsed. The United States were pulled into the war by the attack of the Japanese on Pearl Harbor at the end of 1941. Shortly thereafter, the Navy started acquiring private yachts

to strengthen the fleet and began to outfit them to patrol, search for submarines, and monitor weather.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was a close friend of diplomat Davies, at first rejected „military service“ for the SEA CLOUD on the grounds that the yacht was too beautiful for such a deployment. But by 1942 the USA could no longer afford this kind of nicety. Symbolically chartered for one dollar, the Coast Guard took over the SEA CLOUD, removed the masts and the bowsprit and had the boat painted grey. Not much was left of the impressive luxury yacht. Outfitted with guns and anti-submarine weapons, she cruised the waters around the Azores and south Greenland under the name IX-99. As a floating weather station, the ship sent current data to Arlington, Virginia every four hours.



“Well Dear, there goes your baby.”

While all other yacht owners lost their ships in the war or sold them to the Navy, the SEA CLOUD was the only private luxury ship of its size still underway at the end of the war. On 4 July 1946 Joe and Marjorie along with seven friends set course for the Florida coast. The yacht had to make do without its masts, but it was painted brilliant white and the golden eagle once again adorned the bow.

In the summer of 1947 the rigging was reassembled. In 1949 the SEA CLOUD received a new set of sails, which, even for millionaires, was difficult to get at the end of the war. The reconstruction of the SEA CLOUD took almost four years in total. From the top floor of a Palm Beach hotel, Joe and Marjorie waited anxiously for the return of their rebuilt ship. As it finally appeared in its entirety on the horizon, Joe said to Marjorie, “Well, Dear - there goes your Baby.”

And Marjorie got right back to the task of maneuvering her “baby”, and therefore herself, back into society’s circles.

The biggest and most beautiful yacht in America appeared mostly on the east coast of the USA. Joe Davies, who suffered from seasickness, was glad to no longer have to explore unknown waters. Now he could concentrate on his friendships, such as with the dictator of the Dominican Republic, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo. The dictator had been on board more often than any other visitor and had already cast a very wishful eye on the yacht.



Temporary retirement for a “Queen of the Seas”.

For months, Marjorie searched for a buyer for the SEA CLOUD. Her desire to sell the SEA CLOUD piqued the interest of the man who had been invited on board more often than any other guest: Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Montinas, the brutal head of the Dominican Republic. In 1955 Trujillo took over the ship - and gave it a new name: ANGELITA.

The presidential yacht was mainly used by his son Ramfis during his time studying in California. Hollywood stars such as Zsa Zsa Gabor and Joan Collins were welcomed on board, earning the ANGELITA the name “floating fun house” in the Yellow Press. The ship made headlines again after Trujillo was assassinated on 30 May 1961. While the country was being shaken by a revolution, the ANGELITA sailed toward Cannes with his body, a number of Trujillo family members and an enormous amount of cash. Just before the Canary Islands the ANGELITA received a radio message. The new government forced the crew to turn back.

The expensive heirloom was renamed PATRIA and again put up for sale. Five years later the PATRIA finally returned to American hands. The buyer was Operation Sea Cruises Inc. based in Panama. Its president John Blue sent the ANTARNA - the ship’s new name - to Naples to have her completely restored. Upon her return to America, however, there was a financial

dispute with the American authorities - and the ship was temporarily docked.

Then 26 year-young Stephanie Gallagher entered the picture. She and her husband Charles were obsessed with the idea of „Oceanic Schools“, where students would supplement their academic studies with an at-sea program on board large sailing ships. „Oceanics“ paid the outstanding accounts and fees, but John Blue kept the ship’s papers.



However, this didn’t stop Stephanie Gallagher from setting sail. From now on, the “pirate” was pursued. Wherever the ANTARNA stopped, John Blue was already there to take back “his” ship. In Panama, Blue finally boarded the ship with lawyers and policemen. The ship was searched for drugs, cut off from the fresh water supply and generally harassed until the Gallaghers gave up and disappeared.

The renaissance of an extraordinary yacht.

For eight years the ANTARNA suffered the destructive sun and high humidity of the tropics in the harbor at Colón - even for such a sturdy yacht as the ANTARNA, this was an unreasonably long time. But despite no longer being “in business”, she was not forgotten by enthusiasts of great sailing ships.

One of them was the German Hartmut Paschburg, a ship’s captain and economist, who had breathed new life into old sailing ships before. He recognized that the ANTARNA, despite her poor condition, could be freed from her agony. Together with a group of Hamburg-based businessmen, he acquired the luxury yacht - and at once gave her back her old name: SEA CLOUD.



But Captain Paschburg’s most difficult task lay ahead: He had to get his new acquisition across the Atlantic. Mid-July 1978, Paschburg and 38 other adventurous men and two women flew to Colón. Together with Panamanian helpers, they worked the next months to make the rotting yacht halfway seaworthy. Mid-Octo-

ber came the call, “Cast-off!” - and the SEA CLOUD set course for Europe. And on 15 November 1978, the time finally came: The SEA CLOUD sailed into the Hamburg harbour, where she was greeted by thousands.

The new owners were emotionally torn when they saw their yacht. It soon became clear that much more money would need to be invested than they had planned. In February 1979 the SEA CLOUD was taken

to Kiel, and at the Howaldtswerke-Deutsche Werft AG, the successor to the Germania-Werft shipyard, the extensive repair and reconstruction work began. Eight months later the SEA CLOUD took her first cruise under a new flag. And the magnificent diva has been at home on the world’s oceans ever since.

Back in new glory.

Between November 2010 and April 2011, the windjammer legend SEA CLOUD was brought into line with new SOLAS regulations (SOLAS = Safety of life at sea) at the Motorenwerke Bremerhaven (MWB) shipyard. For the first time in 33 years the four-masted bark was on display again in all its glory at the Überseebrücke in Hamburg from 2 to 13 May 2011 and took part of the Hamburg Harbour Birthday arrival and departure parades.

Her latest refurbishment has given her aura an even brighter sheen. Everyone who encounters her feels her majestic pride and is enchanted by her captivating beauty. For many, the SEA CLOUD is the true highlight of every journey, and an incomparable one at that.



SEA CLOUD II

The perfect blend of nostalgia and technology

On 6 February 2001 the time had come: In the harbor of Las Palmas, godmother Sabine Christiansen broke a bottle of champagne across the bow of the gleaming white barque and proclaimed: "I christen you the 'SEA CLOUD II'". Years earlier, the project got underway to give the legendary SEA CLOUD a modern sister. But before the SEA CLOUD II could take her maiden voyage, a few obstacles had to be overcome.

The adventure begins.

In 1994, the legendary SEA CLOUD passed into the hands of Hamburg-born businessman and shipowner Hermann Ebel and his partner Harald Block. Interest and demand quickly increased, and Ebel and Block decided that it was high time for a newly built ship.

The standard for the new ship was already set: If the new SEA CLOUD II was to sail the Kiel waters with her legendary sister, she could only be a true windjammer with five-star luxury on board. And one more thing was beyond doubt from the start: The

second ship from SEA CLOUD CRUISES should also be a square rigger. Because only a square rigger can give passengers the best possible sailing experience.

After these major factors were decided, more questions arose: Would it be possible to construct a square rigger for sailing with the fewest number of crew? And would it be possible to find a shipyard to build such a ship at a justifiable cost? Hermann Ebel and his team set out to search. The adventure of the SEA CLOUD II had begun.

An important moment for the handcraft.

The rigging is the soul of a sailing ship. It determines if man is equipped to compete with wind and waves. In Europe today there are only a few contractors capable of rigging large sailing ships. The necessary handcraft skills are nearly extinct in the computer age.

While searching for an appropriate partner for the SEA CLOUD II's rigging, SEA CLOUD CRUISES discovered the city of Wolgast on the Peene river. There, shipbuilder Detlev Löll runs a construction office and shipyard under the name Navicom. The SEA CLOUD II was a special challenge for him and his team. After all, this was about rigging the all-time largest barque.

Piece by piece, boat and shipbuilders, welders, turners and smiths in Wolgast produced the complete upright and run-



ning gear - a bewildering and fascinating mixture of more than 13 miles of rope, steel wire and plastic cable. In the meantime, a sail maker in Poland produced 24 new sails. The masts were built at the Spanish shipyard. Simultaneously across Europe, pieces of a gigantic puzzle were created, and they were just waiting to be put together.

"We want a classic barque."

From the start SEA CLOUD II was planned as a "genuine" barque - a three-masted sailing ship with two fully rigged masts and a spanker. SEA CLOUD CRUISES decided on a traditional, manually set rig, as was custom in the 20th century. During planning, reference was made to the 1908 standard work by Mittendorf on this topic - the "bible" for square riggers to this day.

It soon became clear: Even in the planning stages, the construction of such a sailing ship is a complicated matter. The regula-

Step by step on the drafting table, the SEA CLOUD II became a real ship - now they just had to find an appropriate shipyard.

The first partner for the SEA CLOUD II's construction was a Finnish shipyard. The teamwork was successful at first, and the SEA CLOUD II was commissioned in Finland. But difficulties arose: The shipyard's district government could not or would not offer bank guarantees for the necessary downpayment. Work was interrupted, and finally the partnership was terminated. A stroke of luck for SEA CLOUD CRUISES, because the shipyard went bankrupt shortly thereafter.

Now the search for a shipyard began anew. Soon came talks with the Astilleros Gondan, S.A. shipyard in Figueras. Established in 1925, they had built an excellent 25-year reputation

but had not yet constructed a large, luxury sailing ship for cruises. As the shipyard put in their bid for the SEA CLOUD II, they also had an interesting new ship on their launchway: The Spanish Nautical Ministry had contracted Astilleros Gondan to build a sailing ship for training. Captain Bodo Franz, chairman and technical director of SEA CLOUD CRUISES, quickly went to evaluate their future partner. Although there were some reservations, his appraisal was generally positive. And the Spanish shipyard received the order to build SEA CLOUD II.

Champagne for a dream come true.

The custom of christening a ship is 300 years old. Originally it was a test of courage for newly hired seamen. They dove from the deck about 15 yards into the ocean - this later evolved into christening, and was adopted by the church in the 18th century; Ships should sail the oceans with God's protection and blessing.

For the SEA CLOUD II the big day came on 6 February 2001 - twelve months later than originally planned, but now with symbolic meaning. Because 70 years earlier her older sister, the legendary SEA CLOUD, was christened at Kiel's Germania shipyard.

On the day of her christening the SEA CLOUD II stood at the wharf of the Canary harbour city Las Palmas, beautifully polished after a stormy Atlantic crossing. And after an equally turbulent flight godmother Sabine Christiansen arrived on time. The TV host had been the first choice of owner Hermann Ebel - and the journalist and SEA CLOUD enthusiast eagerly agreed.

Introduced by her colleague, longtime news anchorman Wilhelm Wieben, she spoke, "I christen you the 'SEA CLOUD II' and wish you and those who sail with you across the world's oceans, a good trip



always and ever six inches of water under your keel" - and with a skillful swing, Sabine Christiansen broke the champagne bottle into a thousand pieces across the ship's bow.



tions of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) played an important role, as did fire safety and stability regulations.

"We were practically pummeled by regulations", remembers Hermann Ebel. And the first plans did fall through: "With all of the exits, the SEA CLOUD II would have been a floating staircase!" But finally a path appeared: Ship architects drafted a hull and rig; and interior designers from Partner Ship Design in Hamburg joined the team as another important member.

Recommended reading:



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