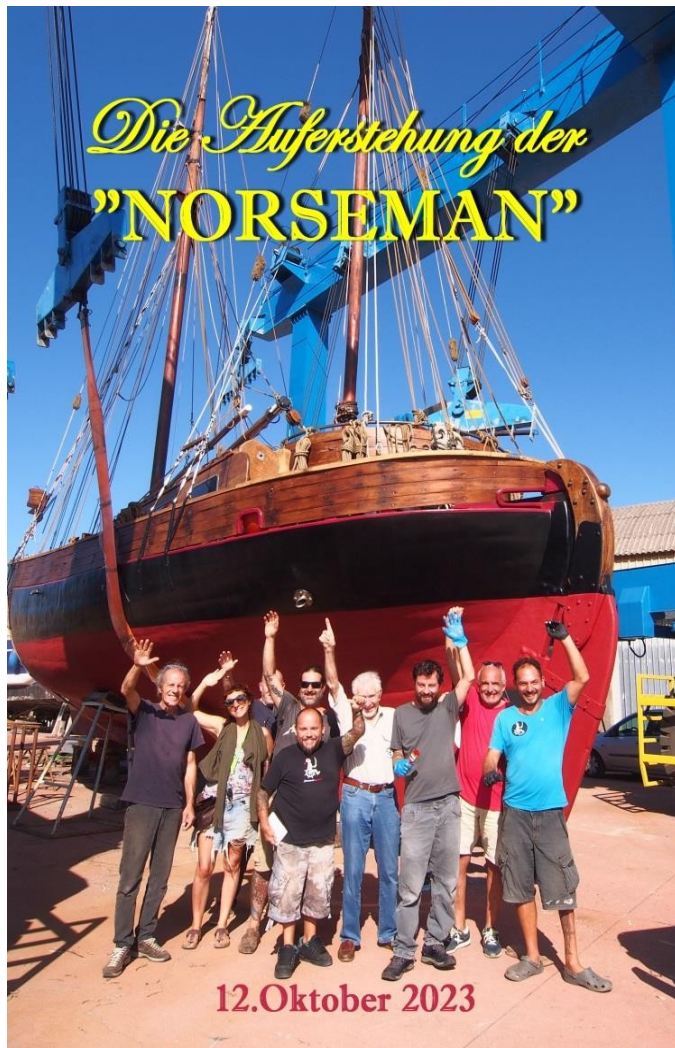


The story of the NORSEMAN resurrection



In April of this year, a phone call from Elba immediately made me wide awake. On the other end was a LUCA I had never heard of before. He was happy to finally to have "found" me. He told me that he had taken over "NORSEMAN" together with 3 other friends and that this had resulted in a hundred questions for me.

The fact is that the ship was parked ashore at ESAOM, the large shipyard in Portoferraio, by the then owner at the end of 2019.

Since then, we have been able to observe the slow deterioration of the ship from our car every time we have passed by, as the "Norseman" was at the mercy of the wind and weather without being covered with canvas. A death sentence for a ship made of wood.

At the beginning of May, we set off for Elba as usual, this year in its 58th year. Soon afterwards, I met with LUCA, who informed me of the following facts: His group is called "Diversamente Marinai" (the different sailors) and consists of 4 people. The reason for the "otherness" is the fact that all members have a physical disability. The group, founded in 2010, defied their disabilities and became enthusiastic sailors. They underwent training and became the first physically disabled sailing instructors in Italy.

The purpose of their organization is to offer other disabled people (including paraplegics) the opportunity to spend their leisure time and vacations on a sailing ship like "ordinary" people. The demand has grown year on year and their conventional sailing ship was too small for this. The group therefore began looking for a larger ship that was suitable for their needs. They also sent their inquiries to various shipyards.

The management of the ESAOM shipyard drew the attention of the Diversamente Marinai to the "NORSEMAN". They were aware of the enthusiasm of these people and the decaying ship as a potentially suitable replacement for their activities.

What followed were inspections and takeover talks. The fact was that a mountain of debt in the high 5-digit range had accumulated as a result of years of lying idle at the shipyard.

To improve his personal budget, the former owner had sold all the ship's accessories such as GPS chart plotters, echo sounders, marine binoculars, residual light amplifiers, fenders, etc., etc., everything that was not nailed down.

But that's not all, because all the diving equipment, including the compressor, has also disappeared.

The navigation compass, the lifting crane for small loads (made by me) from VA and the aluminum diving ladder specially designed for the "NORSEMAN" were also dismantled and sold. This is listed in order to describe the tattered condition of the ship and to explain the facts in an impressive way.

The shipyard management and the interested parties hardly needed any convincing to persuade the owner to hand over the ship's documents and agree to the deal to hand over the ship in return for the waiver of the accumulated shipyard debts.

A first look inside the ship was sobering. Rainwater had seeped ashore over the years and an "oily puddle" stood over half a meter high in the bilge, in the saloon, in the engine compartment and in the stern.

After taking over the ship at the end of 2022, the new owners first began to drill several large holes in the lowest part of the hull from the outside along the entire length of the ship to the right and left of the keel in order to drain off the water that had penetrated.

What followed was months of shipyard work of the usual kind: sanding, priming and repainting the now weathered paint and varnish on the hull, superstructure and masts. In addition, the new concept for the ship no longer provided for the use of high-voltage current and therefore the power generator and all AC-powered units and devices were removed and replaced with DC devices (12V and 24V).

However, skilled, professional craftsmen were needed for all this work. Not necessarily for sanding and painting, but rather to overhaul the ship's engine and all associated installations. The entire electrical lighting and monitoring system was also replaced, and new instruments and displays were installed where necessary. A new toilet also had to be installed.

A ship mechanic (now retired) from the Elba car ferries, who was about to retire, took on this great challenge - a stroke of luck!

But the "Diversamente Marinai" are also all talented craftspeople and work hard whenever their daily work commitments allow, usually in the evenings or at weekends.

The "Diversamente Marinai" have been registered as a non-profit institution since their foundation and are closely associated with the "Legambiente Toscana" (www.legambientearcipelago.it)

Legambiente is an Italian non-profit environmental protection organization founded in 1980, of which there are now around 1000 local groups in Italy with a total of more than 115,000 supporters. Legambiente runs environmental campaigns against marine pollution, for clean beaches, against air pollution, protection for sea turtles, and much more.

The Elba section of Legambiente also supports projects such as this one by Diversamente Marinai and works closely with them.

The projects with the "NORSEMAN" are diverse. Primarily, however, the aim is to offer disabled people the opportunity to experience day and multi-day cruises on a real sailing ship. The same people will also be offered the opportunity to volunteer on board. The aim is to investigate marine pollution, conduct marine science seminars, etc., etc. But real sailing courses on board are also planned for the future.

It all sounds logical, but as I am all too familiar with the maintenance costs of the "NORSEMAN", I asked not least about the financing of the same. The cornerstone was that the ESAOM (shipyard) handed over the ship to the group free of charge, as apparently did all the handling with the large crane. Similarly, no shipyard berthing costs will probably be charged in future.

With a bank loan guaranteed by Legambiente, it has been possible to pay for the repair work to date and the materials required for this, such as paints, varnishes and technical equipment. It goes without saying that we have been and will continue to



All work on the ship was carried out free of charge by the company itself.

However, many accessories are still missing. When I mentioned the totally rusted anchor harness, they shrugged their shoulders and said there was no money in the budget for it for the time being. I spontaneously agreed to sponsor a new anchor chain and the necessary forging work on the damaged anchor.

But there are still at least 200 meters of special Spunflex rigging for the sails to replace. In addition, a few gallons of BENAR oil, a wood coating that is resistant to ultraviolet rays (sun), and dozens of other consumables are needed to restore the ship to its former glory.

If any of you would like to make a contribution towards the materials needed, please get in touch with me. I don't want to hand over cash, but rather buy the required materials myself, always making sure on the spot what is currently needed and what accessories are desired and would be useful.

The "Diversamente Marinai" have a great environment and many additional, useful helpers. I was able to see this for myself. The new berth of the "NORSEMAN", in the former EDILNAUTICA shipyard, could not be more ideal. It offers easy access for the upcoming work, especially in the inner ship, without having to climb ladders or scaffolding.

Work on and inside the ship will continue throughout the winter. The first trips with guests are planned for spring 2024. I will continue to be available to the team throughout the winter for any further questions, thanks to the internet. I am very pleased that, after the unsuccessful start-up, the

I am glad that the story finally turned out well and that the "NORSEMAN" is thus guaranteed a worthy continued existence. It's also nice to know that I'm welcome on board at any time.

I hope that my report has satisfied your curiosity about "your NORSEMAN" for the time being. I will be happy to answer any further questions you may have. Diving from aboard the ship will no longer be possible, however, as other tasks await the ship in the future.

Ship ahoy and best regards



Walti, Comandante (ret.) and the entire new crew.