

In 2003, as a passionate seafarer, he bought a Linssen Grand Sturdy 470 AC. He has completed many voyages since then. However, his finest voyage was in the summer of 2010, across the Mediterranean, including the Ligurian Sea. A varied voyage slicing through calm blue waters, but also battling heavy seas when the mistral was blowing. Henk Los, president of Sobina bv, and his wife Sobien from Leende enjoyed the voyage to the full.



“The west coast of Corsica is always treacherous”

Former seafarer Henk Los is very attached to his Linssen Grand Sturdy 470 AC

TEXT GABI DE GRAAF; PHOTOS HENK LOS

Henk Los has been sailing since he was small. As the grandson of an inland waterway and coastal vessel owner, he often sailed with granddad during the holidays. Later on, Henk was often on his sailboat in his free time. *“We have made many long voyages to places including the Baltic, the Bay of Biscay and England. However, when we realised that we*



a Grand Sturdy. And they were also wary of extensive maintenance and rust problems. “However, a Linssen Yacht is so well-coated that you can go for years without having to do anything. Despite the huge salt impact. Our home port is Beaucaire in the Provence. It’s a days sailing from Port Napoléon near Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône. Port Napoléon is also a good boatyard where we stay for a week almost every year for below waterline maintenance. And it’s a great point of departure for a Mediterranean cruise.”

Petit Rhône

As Henk says, the home port of their Grand Sturdy MATHILDA is Beaucaire. It was also the point of departure for an exciting voyage made by Henk and Sobien from 28 June to 22 August 2010. The first port of call was Port Napoléon. Henk and Sobien sailed via the Canal du Rhône à Sète to Le Petit Rhône and then on to the Rhône itself. As the Rhône estuary is unnavigable, they sailed via the lock in Port-Saint-Louis to Port Napoléon, which lies on the Golfe de Fos. *“Almost as if we were home again”*, Henk noted in his logbook. After a day doing odd jobs, Henk and Sobien sailed for Bandol, which is about 45 miles away. It was a very calm voyage with little wind. Bandol is located in a tranquil bay, protected from the wind by rolling hills. On arrival, Henk and Sobien were allocated a berth along the boulevard. *“Very nice.”* Particularly because – according to Henk – the best rosé in the Provence can be found in Bandol.

“...The Mediterranean is their home...”

were using the engine more and more because it was easier, we decided to part with our sailboat. After all, sailing is physically taxing.”

But what was I to do next? *“I took the advice of an acquaintance. He knew only one type of boat in the Netherlands that would suit an old sailor, and that was a Linssen.”* And he was right. Henk and his wife immediately fell for the sturdy steel yachts of Linssen Yachts. *“Former sailors want an appealing, sturdy ship, not an iron”*, Henk explains with a smile. On 31 August 2003, the Grand Sturdy 470 was christened and given the name MATHILDA. *“Named after my mother. A plucky lady who had to suffer a lot”*, says Henk sadly.

At first, Henk and Sobien were somewhat wary about the change from a sailboat – a polyester Nautor’s Swan 40 – to

Porquerolles

Despite the delicious rosé, it was an early start the next day as the MATHILDA was departing for Porquerolles, the largest island of the Hyères archipelago. *“A splendid island; it’s just like one huge nature reserve”*, says Henk enthusiastically. *“It has an impressive rocky coast, almost like a fjord with many inlets, but also splendid beaches, a beautiful botanical garden with splendid palm trees and a small village with the same name as the island. I would recommend it to anyone as a sailing destination.”* It turned out to be a popular island because the harbour was full and at first, the Grand Sturdy had to

drop anchor. They finally found a good berth and five care-free days followed. Henk and Sobien enjoyed quiet walks along the beach and swimming at Plage d'Argent with its silvery white sand. Small chores were also carried out. Henk wrote in his logbook: *"Did a lot of odd jobs: new lead on the table lamp, new rail on the gangway and fenders repaired and pumped up."* After five glorious days on Porquerolles, the couple headed for Fréjus, where they had reserved a berth for two nights. In the end they stayed for six nights because Henk had to wait for a new USB flash drive for his Internet connection, which had been sent from the Netherlands as his old one was broken. *"Ha ha, it was supposed to take two days and would be in Fréjus on Tuesday 6 or Wednesday 7 of June, but it didn't arrive until Monday 12."* Fréjus, a Roman town, has a former military harbour from where you can look out over the fertile alluvial plains that separate the Massif de l'Esterel from the Massif des Maures. The town has an important historical and architectural heritage and is renowned for its art and culture. *"In other words, six nights in Fréjus was a blessing in disguise,"* Henk explains. *"Five minutes from the beach, perfect accommodation and very nice harbour staff. What's more, a berth in the harbour was relatively cheap, 70 euros per night."*

A paradise called Monaco

The next planned stop was Saint-Laurant-du-Var, but Henk was unable to obtain confirmation for a berth so he had to look elsewhere. He found a place in a harbour near Monaco, in Cap-d'Ail. *"Dirt cheap",* says Henk cynically, *"150 euros a night. Mind you, we didn't want to miss the opportunity to visit this inexpensive paradise."* As one of the daughters of Henk and Sobien works in Monaco, they couldn't sail by without stopping. After mingling with the jet set in a scorching Monaco, the voyage continued to Finale Ligure on the Floral Riviera in Italy. *"When you mention the name Floral Riviera, many imagine an idyllic coastline. Nothing could be further from the truth. The many greenhouses are something of an eyesore."* The Finale Ligure harbour is very small. *"But on a previous voyage I didn't give up and eventually managed to get in. We became friends with harbour masters Fabio and Antonio",* says Henk enthusiastically. *"If I want to go back to Finale Ligure, I only need to call a day in advance and they will arrange a mooring."* Because of the length of MATHILDA, we were moored between the fishing boats and we became friendly with the crews. They showed their hospitality by surprising us with wine, cakes and other tasty treats.



"...Splendid views of beautiful bays with picturesque villages..."

After a fond goodbye to Fabio, Antonio and the fishermen, Henk and Sobien sailed for San Lorenzo, where their daughter Cathelijne with her partner and the children were waiting to join them with the LUCKY SWAN, Henk and Sobien's previous boat. In San Lorenzo, Henk helped to make the LUCKY SWAN ready for sailing and on Wednesday evening the family sailed for Calvi on Corsica, a 95-mile voyage. At first, there was little wind, but later a moderate breeze came up. *"A very special voyage and we even had a whale as company. He swam close to the boat and spouted great jets of water from his blowholes. A giant of a mammal, so Sobien quickly steered away from him and increased the speed, because you don't want to collide with a whale like that"*, Henk recalls. *"What an experience!"* There were not only whales, but plenty of dolphins and tuna too. *"You sometimes see twenty to thirty tuna leaping through the water."* On arrival in Calvi, there was no place free in the harbour. There were, however, many moorings to tie up the boat. But a strong mistral was expected which meant being tied up at a mooring would be no laughing matter. The family therefore decided to leave immediately the next morning for Macinaggio.

Strong mistral

The mistral raged and the sea was rough. The LUCKY SWAN, which was also towing a dinghy, was not making much headway. On the other hand, the Grand Sturdy with stabilisers was experiencing no problems and battered its way through the waves. It was decided to sail for Saint-Florent, as Macinaggio was still more than 40 miles away. However, the harbour master of Saint-Florent could not guarantee a place,

so what now? The family was almost at the most northerly point of Corsica, and the sea was pounding the rocky west coast. It would be calmer on the other side of Corsica. Henk called Port l'Île-Rousse, which they had just passed. *"A small harbour, but you never know"*, says Henk. *"And surprise, sur-*



**"...A very special voyage
and we even had a whale as company..."**

prise, we were allowed in." The LUCKY SWAN berthed at the fuel pump quay and the MATHILDA was tied up on the outer jetty. *"And we were in luck. It turned out to be a nice place with a lovely bay, ideal for sailing with the little Optimist."*

A few stormy nights followed with high winds and gales. *"So we decided to stay put and await events"*, Henk explains. *"The*



"...Strong breezes and gales and thunderstorms all over the place..."

west coast of Corsica is always treacherous.” Fortunately the boats could stay a few days, even if that involved having to make concessions. Francis, the fuel pump attendant, asked the family to go and eat at a certain restaurant. If they mentioned his name, they would be given a free aperitif....and they could stay another night. *“As it happened, the restaurant was good; delicious food and a perfect vino bianco.”*

Stormy Corsica

On Monday 26 July, the wind dropped, so the Los family prepared to sail for Macinaggio. However, during the day, gale force winds blew up again, just as they were near the northernmost point of Corsica. *“Salt, salt, nothing but salt”,* Henk wrote in his log book. *“We had to round Cap Corse, which was no picnic.”* The Grand Sturdy made progress, but the LUCKY SWAN was having difficulties. When they finally arrived in Macinaggio, there was work to be done. *“All that salt had to be removed. That wasn’t possible in a single afternoon, so we had to continue the next morning.”*

Fortunately, it was glorious weather the next day. So as soon as MATHILDA was shining brightly in the sun again, the Los family sailed for the island of Capraia. *“A splendid location with a nice town.”* There was no place in the harbour, but that was no problem as there were a whole series of protected moorings outside the harbour. The harbour master sailed around to help tie up the boats using both fore and aft lines. All the moorings gradually filled up. Every boat had a dinghy and there was plenty of swimming. *“We joined in too, and it’s great to dive in from the swimming platform. We therefore decided to stay till the next day”,* Henk says. *“It was a very relaxed day. Swimming, sailing and eating pizza in the evening on the quayside.”*



Read the next instalment of *“The west coast of Corsica is always treacherous”* online (www.linssenyachts.com/sp), with many extras.

If you would like more information about this exceptional voyage, we will happily contact the Los family for you.

E-mail us at info@linssenyachts.com.



For Henk and Sobien Los from Leende, sailing is the be-all and end-all. Henk Los was bitten by the sailing bug when he was given his first sailboat at the age of 15. When he met his wife Sobien in 1954, she was immediately confronted by Henk’s passion for sailing. Luckily, Sobien was happy to join him on the water and a year later they bought their first vessel: a wooden sailing boat. Later on, their three daughters also got the sailing bug, which was hardly surprising given that they learnt it at their mother’s knee. Their oldest daughter even joined them on their expeditions in their open sailboat while she was still in her cradle. In due course, they bought a boat with a cabin. All holidays in future years were spent on the water and the Los family explored the North Sea, the Baltic, the Channel and the Bay of Biscay. Just over three years ago, Henk and Sobien Los switched to a motor yacht: a Linssen Grand Sturdy 470 AC. The Mediterranean is now their home, where they enjoy the weather and their Linssen Yacht.

