



Text: Gabi de Graaf-Weerts; Photographs: Jaap Vreugdenhil / Hennings Yacht-Vertrieb

CLOSING THE BOOK ON SAIL

THEY HAD HAD A DECADES-LONG LOVE AFFAIR WITH THEIR SAILBOAT, BUT EVENTUALLY THEY SWITCHED TO A MOTOR YACHT. THEY WILL BE COLLECTING THEIR LATEST ACQUISITION ON 1 APRIL, A GRAND STURDY 500 AC VARIOTOP® DIAMOND. AND THAT AFTER HAVING SAILED FOR JUST ONE SEASON ON A GRAND STUDY 410 AC. A WORLD WAS OPENING UP FOR SAIL FANATICS DICKY AND JAAP VREUGDENHIL FROM GARDEREN.

Of course, nothing beats sail for Jaap Vreugdenhil, now aged 73. After all, it had been his first love since his 14th birthday. He grew up among four sisters and lived in Driebergen close to the Marine Corps barracks in Doorn. “A marine would regularly come by to take one of my sisters on a boat trip”, says Jaap Vreugdenhil with a smile. “The marines had great sailboats moored on the Loosdrecht Lakes. That’s where my love for sailing was born.”

And he continued to love sailing. Initially, Jaap Vreugdenhil would hire sailboats in Friesland or at the Loosdrecht Lakes. He later bought his first sailboat, a Sharpie, with his brother. With a hint of sadness in his voice, Jaap talks about his time in Putten, where their boat lay, moored to a concrete block. “Using my father’s roadmap, we once sailed via Lake ice IJsselmeer to Lake Alkmaardermeer. We just peered at church towers to see whether we could identify the town we were passing so that we could set our course.

Over the years, both the boats and the cruising area became bigger. “My last sailboat was a Grand Soleil 46.1.” The waters on which Jaap and Nicky Vreugdenhil used

to sail where the North sea, the Wadden Sea and Lake IJsselmeer. “The last sailboat trip I did was with three friends from Dover to IJmuiden. After we had left Dover, we received a storm warning and diverted to Ramsgate. This was fortunate, as the wind eventually reached Force 8. After three days, the weather improved and we decided to leave the harbour. After three hours at sea, we received another storm warning. However, there were no proper harbours nearby, only the lee shore but we didn’t want to do that. So we sailed on to the port of IJmuiden and were happy once we were in the lock there. It was a very intense experience, which was part of the reason why we decided to close the book on sail”, recounts Jaap Vreugdenhil.

But what was he to do next? Jaap Vreugdenhil did still have a small sloop but wanted to be more on the water. Because Dicky Vreugdenhil already had some experience of motor yachts, it was proposed that they should hire a motor boat the following summer. But they didn’t get that far. “That spring we went to spend a weekend at Château Neercanne near Maastricht and therefore

passed Maasbracht on the way”, Jaap explains. “We’re coming up to Linssen Yachts. Shall we get off the motorway for a bit?, I suggested. We immediately received a warm welcome at Linssen Yachts and there were a lot of very beautiful boats there. Within two and a half hours, we were leaving again – with a boat”, grins Vreugdenhil. Their first trip on the Linssen Grand Sturdy 410 AC was from Maasbracht to Maastricht and back. “We moored in the Marina at Maastricht to have a look round the town. That would not have been possible with a sailboat.” A world was opening up for Jaap and Dicky Vreugdenhil. “A very beautiful and attractive world”, the former sail fan adds. “The cruising area is so vast and intriguing. Glorious landscapes; the gravel pits in Limburg, the Meadows in Germany, the wine-growing regions in France. Just having a pint in a Belgian town”, says Jaap Vreugdenhil in a lyrical manner. “My advice to sailboat users is therefore: don’t leave it too long before you buy a motor boat. I should’ve done it five years earlier, as there is so much of the inland waterways that I want to see.” Dicky Vreugdenhil adds: “It’s also much more convivial with a motor yacht. On a sailboat, you have less contact with people when on the water. Now we often take our bikes on board so that we can explore the area around a marina.

Jaap and Dicky Vreugdenhil are therefore enjoying to the full the inland waterways that they can now cruise on. But cruising with a motor yacht also takes some getting used to. For example, you have to cope with busy shipping routes. “Once we had collected the Grand Sturdy 410, we wanted to sail up the Waal through the lock at Weurt. Then we heard through the VHS set: ‘Are you that little yacht? Do you want to go upstream on the Waal?’, a voice asked. ‘Push boat De Veerhaven is approaching and large tug-pushed barges are coming downstream. I would just wait, if I were you’, came the advice. The De Veerhaven came past and I thought: I’ll go behind it. I’m not bothered by these barges. I’m sailing on the starboard side after all. Well, it was just as if a whole factory was passing by. The whole boat was dancing up and down, we were just like a diving duck. We had much less trouble

with this in a sailboat because the sail presses you down into the water.”

Eventually, Dicky en Jaap Vreugdenhil had several wonderful trips along inland waterways at home and abroad. “But I think the IJssel is the most beautiful, especially the part where there are not yet any basalt blocks. It’s so idyllic, with cows right down to the water’s edge.”

This will soon be followed by many more trips on the Grand Sturdy 500. Fortunately, motor yachts have a much longer season than sailboats, because there is no shortage of ideas: to the heart of Berlin, for example, or to Denmark. “Think of the fragrant lavender fields in France or the fields full of yellow sunflowers. You can admire them from your motor yacht. Then we want to travel to the south of France via the wine festivals. We want to leave the boat there so that we can pop up and down again every so often to break up the winter.” But first there is still enough for the Vreugdenhils to discover in the Netherlands: “We still want to visit Terschelling, Delfzijl, the cheese market in Alkmaar and of course Putten. That’s where I started with my little sailboat, moored to a concrete block.”

Grand Soleil 46.1



In 1968, Jaap Vreugdenhil (73) took over his father’s packaging company and started a milk powder trading business. In 2002, Jaap Vreugdenhil acquired two milk powder factories from Nestlé, after which the business also started to manufacture. Nowadays, Vreugdenhil Dairy Foods exports its products to no fewer than 110 countries. Jaap Vreugdenhil is now enjoying his retirement with his wife Dicky (67) and the freedom that recreational boating offers.

Grand Soleil 46.1

Linssen Grand Sturdy 410 AC

Linssen Grand Sturdy 500 AC Variotop®

