

"NORSEMAN," Waltis notebook 2025, part 1

In memory

On April 12, we received the sad news that our long-time friend Willy had passed away after a long illness.

In 1980, he and his dear wife Esther were among the very first guests to sail on the NORSEMAN on the Odyssée. At that time, there was neither the Club Norseman nor the club membership cards. We didn't found the CN association until 1981, and Willy proudly received his membership card with the number 0390 from me. The guest numbering had started with 0375.

The two were guests for decades, not only on the NORSEMAN, but also on many of our expeditions around the world. Both were divers with heart and soul.

The reason I am writing this is that, after my report at the time about the resurrection of the NORSEMAN, the two of them expressed their wish to help restore the NORSEMAN to its former glory with an extraordinary donation.

Willy and Esther are therefore the actual initiators of our sponsorship campaign. In accordance with his last will and testament, his remains are to be returned to the sea, the eternal fishing grounds, from aboard the NORSEMAN. I feel obliged to do so.

Sunday, May 5, 2025

We set off once again in our trusty Land Rover for Elba, this year for the 60th time. Back then, on May 1, 1965, we opened our EUROSUB diving school in Barbarossa Bay. Over the years, this place has grown dear to our hearts, and we still feel at home here during the summer months.

Sunday, June 15, 2025

I receive a WhatsApp message from NICOLA, apparently the new skipper of the NORSEMAN. The situation is this: there is a mountain of sails, but no one knows what to do with them. Of course, I had left a folder full of drawings, sketches, and instructions on board concerning the rigging and the sails. But like so many other things, this important information seems to have disappeared into thin air.

Be that as it may, I was eagerly awaited. The first group of guests, again all young girls and boys from all over Italy, were already on board. Next to them on deck was a pile of sails still folded up.



I never would have dreamed that I would ever lend a hand with the sails on the NORSEMAN again, but now it was time to rekindle my memories of times long past. First, we had to figure out where hundreds of meters of rope, dozens of sail eyes, cow's mouths, and grillos belonged.

But practice makes perfect! Once you've figured out the main eyelet on each sail, hoisting them is quick work. A dozen hard-working helpers watched my every move with eagle eyes and lent a hand.

An hour later, we had hoisted all the sails, then brought them back down and lashed them down in proper sailing style. After that, I showed the landlubbers how to roll up the rope, the long lines, and

the benches. After all, the entire rig has a total of 680 meters of rope, which must be properly stowed on the four nail benches. After two hours, I said goodbye to the entire crew and wished them a safe journey.

Four weeks have now passed and the crew is working well together. They take turns working one, two, or three weeks at a time.

The students change every week and are each assigned to a member of the "Diversamente Marinali" are picked up at the harbor and taken to the ship. There they meet and get to know each other for the first time. The first thing they have to do is take off their shoes, because we know from experience that no one is allowed on board with shoes on!



This is followed by the assignment of various tasks on board. It's especially exciting when it comes to kitchen duty, when everyone finds out who will be working with whom every day will be working in the galley to feed the ever-hungry guests?

Nowadays, vegetarianism is a priority, but not everyone is happy about that. The comments in the daily Facebook report bear witness to this.

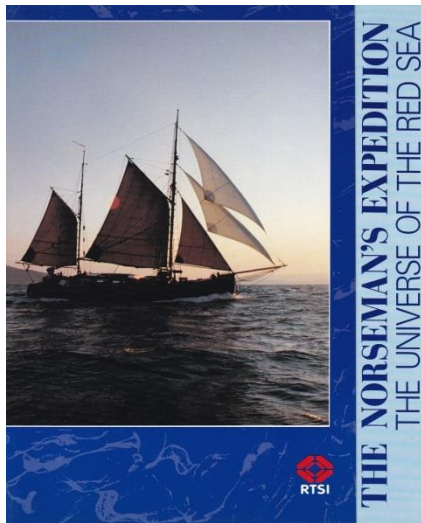
A lesson is also devoted to safety on board. Everyone is assigned their own red life jacket and must learn how to use it.

The Legambiente representative who looks after the students and teaches them about nature and environmental protection also changes each time. On board and on land, there are daily seminars and knowledge transfer sessions, e.g., about the sea turtle project. These lessons often take place in Cala di Mola (Gulf of Porto Azzurro), where Legambiente operates a station.

Every day, a small group is assigned to search the beaches for traces of sea turtles and/or their eggs. Unfortunately, the results have been disappointing so far, as too many tourists flock to the beaches around Elba during the season. This is in contrast to the island of Pianosa, where visitor numbers are limited and only one beach is open for swimming. A small refuge for the rare sea turtles.



My visits, on the other hand, always involve two things. First, the captain always asks me to tell the landlubbers the story of the legendary "NORSEMAN." It began with the Wolf brothers' idea to sail around the world, followed by the adventurous transfer of the ship from Denmark to Basel. The five-year conversion of the former commercial vessel to its current state and always the same question: where did I first encounter the NORSEMAN?



One of the highlights was definitely the trip to Sharm-el-Sheik in the Red Sea in December 1983.

One reason for this was the realization of the 13-part TV series "Norseman – University of the Sea."

This popular science series, in which each episode is dedicated to a separate underwater topic, was translated into four languages and broadcast on many TV stations around the world in the 1980s and 1990s.

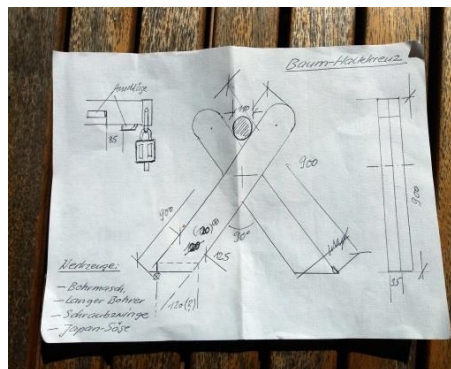
The other reason was to extend our SINAI Safari land program with an additional week on the Norseman.

This also marked the end of our successful SUBEX Sinai winter programs, which ran from 1971 to 1984. And the NORSEMAN sailed back to Elba.

The other reason for my weekly visits on board is still my desire to restore the ship as far as possible to the condition we achieved over all those years of painstaking work. Parts are still missing, as the following example proves once again:



Current condition



My sketch



Desired condition

This keeps me busy in my small but well-equipped workshop in Barbarossa.



However, every week I can also enjoy the little things that prove that my words are being taken seriously. The longer it takes, the tidier the NORSEMAN looks. The large amount of rope is no longer lying carelessly in a pile, but is now neatly lashed down on deck, ready for use.

The two white foresails (jib and flying jib) are slowly reaching the end of their life, according to Nicola, the comandante. Unlike the three large red sails, these have never been replaced.

We had used these relatively rarely. However, they are made of much lighter fabric and are now actually getting quite old.

But thanks to our gold ducat treasure chest, which now has a respectable stock again, I can give the "Diversamente Marinai" hope for support once more.

We have already been able to achieve a great deal. The new 100-meter anchor chain has been attached, broken ropes have been replaced, and the small power generator has long since become an indispensable tool, along with many other things. All thanks to your help!



Skipper Nicola (right), Elena, the nature park guide alongside yours truly, plus a total of nine students

The current crew on board reports daily on Facebook about their activities, from cleaning beaches to sailing lessons, nature trail excursions, etc., and last but not least, of course, about the great swimming fun on board.

Let's hope that the sea gods continue to smile on the NORSEMAN and that there is always a hand's breadth of water under the keel!

In the second half of the trip, we plan to extend our radius to other islands. Let's wait and see what surprises await us.

Until the next notebook, best regards,

Walti

Commander on standby