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OWNER

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THE LEGACY OF THE FLEET

– WORDS BY REBECCA TAYLOR AND IMAGES
COURTESY OF THE OWNERS AND FEADSHIP

Formally created in April 2013, the Feadship Heritage Fleet (FHF) continues to expand its campaign to create a community among like-minded Feadship classic owners. Rebecca Taylor caught up with members Rembert Berg and Chapman Ducote, as well as the chairman of the FHF, Victor Muller, at the Historic Grand Prix of Monaco this summer to discuss their pathways to ownership and why classic remains king for them.

The FHF was borne through a few owners of classic Feadships that thought there should be more of a community surrounding their owners. “The idea came from the three founding board members of the association, including myself, and was done with the endorsement of Feadship,” says chairman of the FHF Victor Muller. While any owner of a Feadship built prior to 30 years ago is eligible, the group is seeing a remarkable increase in interest. “Within its first year of operation, 36 owners have become members of the association, attending the various events we’ve organised,” says Muller. “The fleet of these historic Feadships is very diverse, as

are their owners. However, it is their shared passion for their yachts that unites them.”

Two such owners are Rembert Berg, who completed an extensive refit on his 23m *Serena* in 2011, and Chapman Ducote, who along with wife Kristin became the first American members of the FHF this spring with their 25m *La Vie Vite*. “Both Rembert and Chapman are very active members of the FHF and have enjoyed some of our events to the fullest,” says Muller. “While they show some commonalities in terms of age, business interests and a love for speed, it is the peace that they find on board of their classic Feadships that bring them and the other members together.”





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SERENA

“Completely by chance, I saw *Serena* sail by and drop anchor off the coast of St Tropez,” Berg recalls, admitting that he wasn’t looking to enter the world of superyacht ownership at all but was intrigued by this Feadship. “I really liked what I saw and went for a swim to get a closer look. I got chatting to the owner and, before I realised it, I was negotiating the price.”

Seduced at first sight, Berg fell for the “sexy” Carlo Riva design of the limited Caravelle series and the traditional build quality of a Feadship De Vries. His intention was to continue using her in the exact shape she came in but a couple years after purchasing her, Berg decided to carry out an extensive refit.

“After two seasons of intense sailing between the Balearics, Corsica, Naples, Montenegro and





Croatia, I sat down with my captain and we drew up a work list,” he explains. Upon realising the extent of work to be carried out, they ended up with a list 21 pages long and in need of a yard to carry out the refit. “We visited a few yards in Malta, Palma and Croatia, but when I was getting the original plans at the De Voogt offices in Haarlem, the Netherlands, someone suggested I speak to the De Vries family to carry out the refit. I have to admit I hadn’t considered them at first as I assumed she was too small of a yacht and thought that, in any case, I wouldn’t be able to afford it.”

It was upon his warm welcome from the team that things changed. “I met with Sijbrand De Vries about my plan and he suggested we set up a temporary ‘Feadship school’ with 25

students in different disciplines, guided by the team there to help carry out the works,” he recalls. Refit became rebuild and as a result of 43,000 hours of blood, sweat (and “no tears”), Berg was thrilled with the result. As for owners looking to complete their own refit, Berg has some sage words of advice.

“If possible, use the yacht for at least a season before undergoing any works as you’ll want to understand how you use the yacht,” he advises. “Give yourself time to prepare for the refit and understand what the outcomes will be; select the best yard you can afford and work with the team to explain your goals and visions; get your captain involved from the beginning and visit yourself as often as possible.”

Ultimately, says Berg, if you maintain open lines of communication, everyone will remain on the same page. As for Berg, he found the whole process to be incredibly stimulating: “If it goes well, it can be one of the most satisfying periods during ownership – a project like this gives a lot of energy and is a rewarding challenge.”

Berg’s enthusiasm and love of *Serena* is evident from the moment you meet him and in any conversation the subject invariably turns to the yacht, with the owner jumping at any opportunity to discuss his love of life on board. Berg enjoys the party life when able to spend time on board, calling her his “floating bar”. “Since the refit, I’ve travelled all over,” he says. “From Scandinavia, through Scotland, to the Caribbean and Cuba; the whole coast of America, New York and back over to the Med this season.”

LA VIE VITE

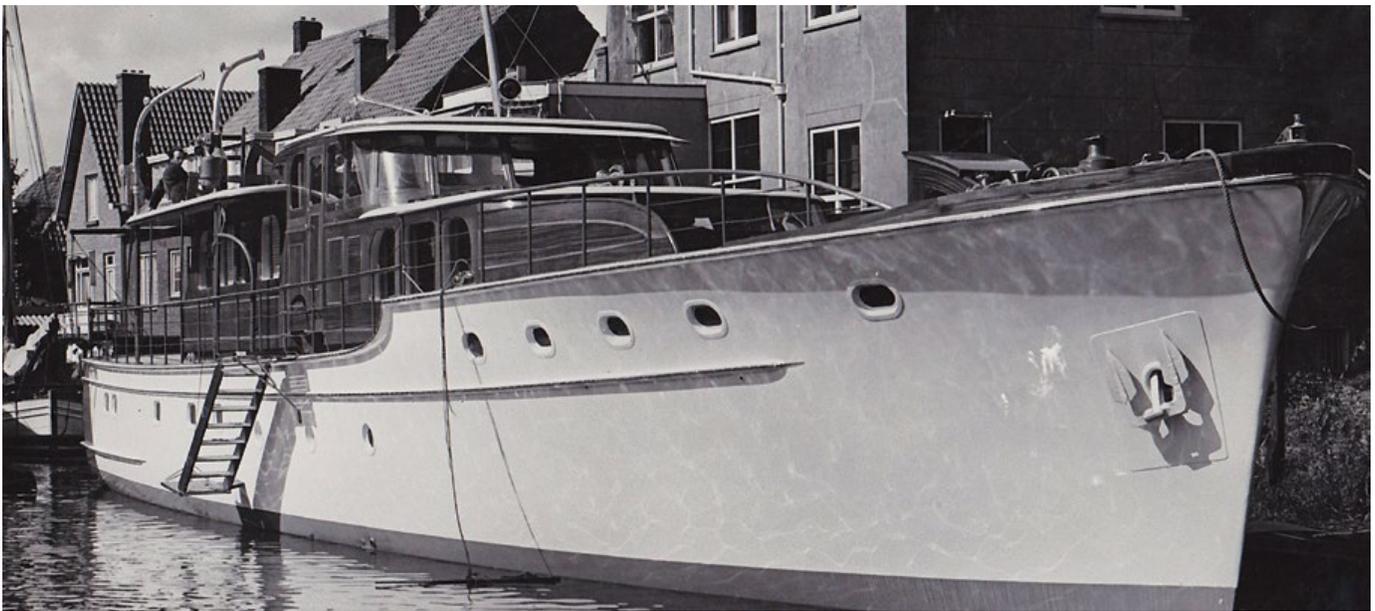
Fellow classic owner Chapman Ducote has likely spent just as much time in life on the water as on land. A self-proclaimed “serial entrepreneur”, Chapman embraces the fast-paced life with his wife, Kristin, and confesses to “sometimes biting off more than the average human can chew”. While entering into the world of classic Feadships may seem slightly contradictory for someone like Chapman, he is keen to show how it makes perfect sense as a way for him to balance out his career in race car driving and his regular spearfishing trips on his Delta powerboats off the Bahamian coast.

“I’ve always had a fascination with the old and new,” says Chapman. “I have a number of classic cars but also some fast modern ones; I’ve always had newer, faster racing boats and it wasn’t until a few years ago I started to consider something a bit bigger.”

Kristin says that she had her own reasons for leaning toward a more classic yacht. “As an author, I really enjoy and find plenty of inspiration when writing on board a yacht with some history and heritage,” she says. “So we thought we could find a larger yacht to keep behind the house as a writing studio, guest house and to do a bit of cruising.”

Long time admirers of the Feadship brand, Chapman and Kristin personally viewed them as somewhat cost prohibitive and Chapman was unsure if he wanted to undertake a large refit. “It was once we stumbled upon the 25m *La Vie Vite* [launched in 1952 as *Anahita V*] that all of those assumptions changed,” he says. “We knew it would be a big endeavour, but it’s a piece of history and we simply couldn’t pass that up.”





It was after attending their first FHF gathering earlier this year that the Ducotes really began to get involved with the brand. “I’m a fan of pedigree and quality – both of which I get with a Feadship,” Chapman explains. “But more than that, you get a real sense of family at the FHF events and as the only FHF American members, we’re making an effort to bring more events to the US where the member base continues to grow.” As owners of the brand’s first real yacht over 50ft, they are committed to maintaining her image and putting the proper time and work into refitting her. “She is in need of some real TLC at the moment,” Chapman shares. “Our goal is to have the work done by the next Historic Grand Prix in two years’ time, and to hopefully work with Feadship to honour her historical significance and maintain the brand quality.”



Opening page: (top) yachts from the Feadship Heritage Fleet at the Historic Grand Prix 2014 in Monaco, (bottom) *Serena* after her refit.

This page: (top left) *Serena* in 1964, (bottom left) owner of *Serena*, Rembert Berg, (top right) *Anahita V* now *La Vie Vite*, (middle right) Chapman and Kristin Ducote, (bottom right) Chapman and Kristin Ducote and Victor Muller, chairman of the FHF.

A LIFESTYLE LIKE NO OTHER

Both Berg and Ducote agree that yachting offers a lifestyle like no other. For Berg, while he loves a good party on *Serena*, the escapism and quiet he is able to achieve on board is something special. “One of my favourite trips done on board was a nine-day, near-isolated tour through Cuba,” he says. “There were unspoilt waters, great fishing, swimming, diving and the feeling of being truly at one with nature.” Ducote admits that there is no such thing as the perfect yacht, but says that he knows he is much happier and relaxed when on the water. “I think that’s why people spend so much money in this industry,” he concludes. “It offers unparalleled time to relax and rewind.”

As more owners come forward, the FHF will continue to welcome and embrace fellow heritage lovers. “Members of the FHF are able to learn from one another in terms of itineraries, maintenance and refit, crew, finance and other interests and issues they have in common,” says Muller. “The board is keen to further develop the association by expanding the services we provide our members and further fill the event calendar with memorable FHF events.” □



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