

Aerial Launching Speech

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. We are here today to celebrate a remarkable achievement by one of our RSYC Members. Franz Harstein has completely rebuilt the beautiful classic sailing yacht that you see before you and we will be formally re-launching her shortly. I am pleased that so many club members and sailors are here today to take part in this event. But first I would like to tell you a little of the history of Ariel and of the project.

Ariel is named after an old clipper ship which had come close to winning The Great Tea Race of 1866. She was designed and built specifically to take part in the Transpacific Yacht Race or Transpac, an offshore race starting in San Pedro, California and ending off Diamond Head in Hawaii, a distance of around 2,225 nautical miles. Started in 1906 and hosted by the Los Angeles Yacht Club, it is one of yachting's premier offshore races. The event is famous for fast downwind sailing under spinnaker in the trade winds. In the 1950's it took the fastest boats around 11 days to complete the race.

In 1951, a man called Alexander McCormick sailed the *Sea Witch* to victory in the Transpac, which spurred him to get a newer boat to win another Transpacific Race. Since the *Sea Witch* had been designed by Angelman and Davies, McCormick turned to them for help with the new boat. Angelman – who had built and designed boats for more than 50 years, was known as "The Grand Old Man of Pacific Yachting." He based Ariel's design on Sparkman & Stephens' *Stormy Weather* but shortened the stern in his version.

A whole string of Sparkman & Stephens designs consistently won races since the mid 1930s. The best known, was *Dorado*; then *Stormy Weather*, *Sonny*, *Blitzen*, *Edlu*, *Skylark*, *Comet*, *Argyll* and *Santana* - all classic yachts that have now been meticulously restored and are sailing and racing in the classic circuit in the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. *Ariel* was finally constructed at C. E. Chapman's yard in Costa Mesa. Launched in February 1953, she entered the Transpacific Yacht Race in June that year but did not win.

After that, *Ariel* changed hands five times, being based in San Francisco and Los Angeles. In 1990, *Ariel* made her way to the Marquesas Islands, then Kota Kinabalu, Australia and then back to KK. Slowly deteriorating, she was found in Lumut in the year 2000, appearing to be nearly at the end of her useful life. The new owner spent five years trying to refurbish the boat in Thailand.

An Englishman took over later. His plan was to get her totally shipshape in Indonesia but during his journey at sea he made it only as far as Port Klang, with *Ariel* badly leaking and the engine giving trouble. Franz found her in 2011 on our outer pontoon; tall mast and majestic, but very much neglected. An earlier survey had said that *Ariel* would only need a little bit of work. However, he found termite damage everywhere, many beams hollow, thin wood plates glued on to disguise the damage, and many frames broken or rotted.

To quote Franz there were only 2 options: It was either TLC or a chainsaw. Already having made a commitment, the love for the yacht and its shape won out and a total restoration was planned.

To share with you a little about Franz; he completed an apprenticeship at a German shipyard, honed his skills restoring apartments in Los Angeles, and undertook boat building in Singapore. Franz's motto is "what I can draw, I can make" and that enabled him to undertake the restoration.

Since 2011 another German tradesman, Yan, helped for the first three years, especially during the work on the frames, hull and deck. When he left, Franz employed the help of two men from Sri Lanka, who came initially unskilled. They were taught over the next few years, to the point that they made the deck hatches and some of the furniture by themselves with very little guidance.

Basically all the measurements were in existence from the original plans and could be followed, or sizes extrapolated from photos. This proved difficult however with the stern of Ariel, as all reference points had been lost. The stern was so rotten that it literally fell apart when the boat was moved. The new stern, built and shaped in place, turned out to be more 22 Inch longer than the original.

Now a few details of the restoration:

- *Ariel* has been rebuilt from the “waist” up. The rudder and keel are the only original parts which have been retained.
- The deck, bulkheads, furniture, etc. were all removed first.
- 116 bronze floor sections were removed, sanded and checked, and only two needed to be recast.
- Most of the original bent Oak frames were removed. The new frames are laminated Asian Hardwood.
- To accommodate this, a steamer was built under the boat, to bend and laminate the frames in place with the addition of the West System Epoxy.
- Following the leads of the Sparkman & Stephens restorations, the boat now has double planking – 5/8” of Western Red Cedar inside and 5/8” of Mahogany outside.
- The original teak deck slats were used whenever possible and a layer of lightweight African marine ply installed over them, with a further layer of marine ply epoxied on top.
- The original teak furniture and deck hatches had to be replaced because of the loss in the fire, so Franz re-constructed all of the internal furniture in mahogany.
- *Ariel* still has the original wood mast but it has been previously repaired, so Franz has the timber to build a newer, lighter mast in store in Singapore.
- *Ariel* now has a new Westerbeke 55 engine and a ZF gearbox.
- The weight of the whole boat is now estimated to be 16 tons, the original design net weight, compared with 19 tons when she came out of the water with all the junk that had accumulated over the years.
- *Ariel* is now nearly complete, but there is still work to do on the upholstery, cooker, and some electrical and plumbing issues.

So now you know a little about the yacht and the project it is time to get her back in the water. After the official launch we plan to take her around to the Club pontoon and will arrange for you all to visit the yacht in groups. Miza will make a visit list, so please give her your names if you want to look around Ariel, and also tell her if you need to leave early. After the ceremony here you are invited to the Club terrace, where there are light refreshments and you can observe the yacht from above.