



Photo by Volker Borkewitz

STATSRAAD LEHMKUHL with full sails on the way from Newcastle to Bergen in the 1993 Tall Ship Race

The Seidls

The incredible but true story of "artist captain" Albert Seidl and his two sons Marcus and David

In wintry temperatures, the wind whipped across the North Atlantic at 40 knots per hour as the STATSRAAD LEHMKUHL set off on its return journey from the States to Bergen in Norway.

Captain Marcus Seidl and his brother David, First Mate on board the Statsraad, led the tall ship with its 20-strong crew. On board were 150 cadets from the Norwegian Naval Academy, who had just won the Tall Ship Races. They were caught between a warm high-pressure area from the south and a cold low-pressure area coming from the North Pole. These were the best conditions for a "perfect storm".

The Seidls were able to see exactly what was going on from the weather data and tracked their position by satellite. They decided not to reduce the sails in this heavy weather and 124 hours later achieved what no tall ship in recorded history had ever done before: they

sailed 1,548 nautical miles in this time, which corresponds to an average distance of around 300 nm per 24 hours. The Statsraad thus set a world record. This was in November 2016 and brought the "Boston Teapot Trophy" for the Statsraad once again. This record has still not been broken. Captain Seidl said this was the result of good sailing conditions, a talented crew and "a bit of luck".

"First and foremost, it's an incredible achievement that we managed to sail so far and so fast," said Marcus, who described the journey as "extraordinary". "I've never experienced anything like this."

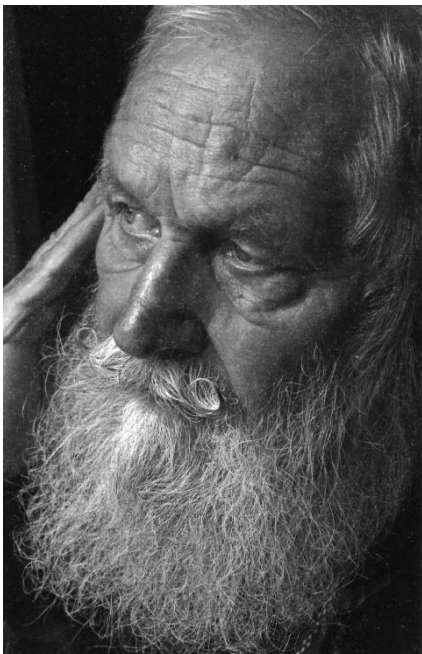
The STATSRAAD LEHMKUHL, which had been a training ship of the German training ship association for the merchant navy since it was commissioned in 1914 under the name GROßHERZOG FRIEDRICH AUGUST, went to England after the First World War, which the



German Empire had lost, as reparations - like all ships over 1,300 GRT. She was purchased by the Norwegian Shipowners' Association in 1921 for 425,000 NK, put into service in 1923 as a sailing training ship under the Norwegian flag by the Bergen Training Ship Foundation and operated by it until 1966. The barque was named STATSRAAD LEHMKUHL after Minister Kristofer Didrik Lehmkuhl, who made the purchase possible.

So today we are celebrating two anniversaries: The Norwegian barque has borne the name of its protagonist Lehmkuhl for 100 years. That was in 2023 and 14 January 2024 marks the 110th anniversary of the launch on the slipway of the Tecklenborg shipyard

stared at a toothless man with a scarred face and realised that a machete had already been put to his throat. Pirates! The boys screamed and were held against their will for almost an hour, not knowing what would happen to them. While the pirates were plundering the ship, Albert suddenly heard the sound of machine gun fire. The shouting on deck grew louder. The pirates tried to escape. Some jumped overboard, others got into the boats they had come in, two lay dead on deck. The captain of a Norwegian steamer, who happened to be watching the ILLAHEE through his binoculars, had alerted the harbour police, who immediately went into action.



Albert Seidl (left) in his ages – Marcus Seidl as young captain 1995 – David and Marcus Seidl on board STATSRAAD LEHMKUHL (right)

in Geestemünde. In the presence of the Grand Duke of Oldenburg, the barque was christened GROßHERZOG FRIEDRICH AUGUST for the German School Ship Association.

But back to the Seidls, Marcus and David! How did they come to be what they are today, globally recognised officers of the oldest windjammer in service? Let's rewind 56 years, when the Seidl brothers set sail from Vancouver (Canada) on a 19-metre ketch, the ILLAHEE, which their father, the artist Albert Seidl, had built himself.

Sailing along the Pacific coast and through the Panama Canal, they reached the Colombian harbour of Santa Maria. The boys, now five and six years old, were greeted with joy in every harbour they docked in, as word had spread of their reputation as "father and two young sons on a sailing world tour". One peaceful evening in the harbour under a starry sky and full moon, which could only be enjoyed, Albert suddenly sensed that something was very wrong because he heard footsteps up on deck. When he stood up, he

After sailing around South America for months without encountering pirates again, Albert and his small crew made another life-changing decision: they sold the ILLAHEE, flew to Europe, looked for a larger ship and continued their adventures. With Marcus and David in tow and their partner Gerhard Schwisow, a seaman from Hapag Lloyd, they found their ship and worked for almost two and a half years on the island of Smøla near Kristiansund, building the wooden Hardangerjakt from 1896, a type of sailing ship that was often used in the salted herring trade between the Norwegian fjords. They christened the jakt, which had now been converted into a barquentine, BARBA NEGRA.

Historically, the most famous Hardangerjakt was the 21-metre-long Gjœa, built in 1872, with which Roald Amundsen was the first to explore and sail through the Northwest Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific in 1903-1906.



The fantastic stories that Marcus and David like to tell date back to this time:

While the ship was being rebuilt, the boys loved to get into a small dinghy and go out fishing. Their father was always amazed at how successful they were, as they always came back with buckets full of fish. After several successful fishing trips, they could no longer keep their secret to themselves: They had found a place where there were so many fish that they could scoop them into the bucket. They had discovered a fish farm.



The **BARBA NEGRA** build up from an ancient Hardangerjakt (right)

Once the **BARBA NEGRA** was seaworthy, they sailed to the harbours of the Baltic Sea from 1971 onwards to make their ship accessible to the public and present it as a floating art gallery with their father's original works. Albert Seidl was an artist: born and raised in Germany, Albert studied art at the University of Fine Arts (Folkwangschule) in Essen / Germany. Albert then emigrated to Canada at the end of the 1950s. His former student friend went with him. Marcus and David were born in Vancouver. Albert finally met his second wife Alice in a Danish harbour. She became the heart and soul of the crew.

In 1976, the Seidls accepted an invitation to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the USA with the Tall Ship Parade in New York. They decided to cross the Atlantic on the **BARBA NEGRA**, which then became the oldest tall ship in the parade. It was in New York that Albert married his second wife Alice in a pirate costume. Finally, they accepted an invitation from the city of Savannah (Georgia) and chose the city harbour as their new home. The **BARBA NEGRA** became a much-admired sailing boat on River Street for more than 20 years. Alice still lives in Savannah today, Albert passed away in 2019.

Marcus and David were eventually able to start their own sailing lives (see box), attending navigation school in Norway during the season, then returning to



Savannah to sail and work with and on the **BARBA NEGRA**, as well as helping Gerhard Schwisow build docks for wooden boat construction.

"Our job was to hold the creosote-impregnated wooden piles straight and steady with our hands while a large pile weight was dropped over our heads to drive them into the marsh bottom," Marcus recalls. "It was lucky we didn't get hurt, but we would never do anything like that again today."

The Seidl brothers decided to return to Norway and sign on to the **STATSRAAD LEHMKUHL**. Marcus also met his future wife Brit Anita from Norway via the barque. She came on board as a volunteer.

"I remember the first time I met her on board the Statsraad in Bremerhaven," he says. "She had finished school and her mother encouraged her to take the sailing adventure. She came across as a nice young girl with cowboy boots. I was sitting on deck fixing a sail and had hurt my foot on a boom, so I was limping when I got up. She wasn't interested at first because she told her friends about a really nice guy she'd met, but he had a wooden leg."

But it was true love, as the couple have been together for over 30 years. Eventually, Captain Marcus and Brit Anita married and she sailed with him on board for almost 17 years, despite frequent seasickness. Then their daughter Alexandra was born, who was three weeks old on her first voyage and lived and sailed on board the **STATSRAAD LEHMKUHL** for many years.

To say that Marcus and David have travelled more nautical miles than Sir Francis Drake, Captain Cook and Magellan combined is almost an understatement. In the last 35 years, they have crossed the Atlantic 27 times. In 30 years, the Seidl brothers - Marcus as Captain and David as Chief Officer - have never lost a life at sea. They have crossed the infamous Bermuda Triangle and battled 20-metre-high waves. They have welcomed the Norwegian royal family on board, as



Brit Anita and Marcus marriage

well as Queen Silva of Sweden and Prince Albert of Monaco. They are not only well known among the captains of tall ships, but also among many trainees. These brothers didn't just dream about what they wanted to do with their lives - they just did it!

And why? "The adventure and the end result," explains Marcus. "Every trip is full of events, from the light shows of sunsets and moonrises to the giants of the seas, the whales, including dolphin shows by day and night."

People from all over the world have sailed on the STATSRAAD LEHMKUHL. Marcus and David love to educate young people in particular and give them something for their lives. Everyone who leaves the boat after a cruise takes a memory with them that they will remember for the rest of their lives.

As an old sailor once said: "We don't live from hour to hour, but from second to second when we sail."

Addendum: The text is by Randolph Stewart, published around 2018 in the local press of Bluffton, South Carolina, translated, retranslated and supplemented by Volker B rkewitz.

Thanks to Marcus and David Seidl for answering some questions and contributing the photos.

Marcus Seidl	David Seidl
Born in 1963	Born in 1964
in Vancouver (Canada)	
Married since 1995 One daughter	Married since 2002 Two sons
Norwegian citizen since 1994	Dual citizenship Norway and Canada
Maritime training and ranks	
CHRISTIAN RADICH Maritime School 1980 Officer training in T�nsberg 1985 Master's licence in Bergen 1993 3rd officer until 1986 - 1st officer until 1990 - Chief Officer until 1994	
Currently on the STATSRAAD LEHMKUHL	
Captain since 1994	Chief Officer since 1994
Seasons on ILLAHEE 1968 - 1969 BARBA NEGRA 1973 - 1983 CHRISTIAN RADICH 1983 - 1986, including 6 months cadet training STATSRAAD LEHMKUHL since 1986	



King Harald from Norway on board STATSRAAD LEHMKUHL after One Ocecean Expedition in 2023, welcome captain Jens Hiroth and Marcus Seidl