

Inheriting



the Sea

In some families, it's a watch.
In others, a coin collection or a trove
of old masters. But for a few, the most
prized heirloom is the boat they've
spent a lifetime of summers sailing.

Marina Garghetti recalls many idyllic summer days aboard her family's Baglietto, *Solimar*, but one in particular from the early 1970s stands out. "The sea of Tigullio was teeming with tuna," she says. "My sporty mom had equipped the boat for deep-sea fishing, even though it wasn't a fishing boat." Garghetti, then in her early teens, and her two younger sisters headed out with their mom and the boat's captain, while her father, Franco, was stuck in the office in Milan.

The captain piloted toward an offshore fishing hole, so active the ocean's surface boiled with the tunas' feeding frenzy. "We caught fish after fish," Garghetti says. "The tuna leaped out of the water when they took the bait, and we fought and fought to pull them in. It was such a thrilling day."

The mother and daughters landed so many tuna that seagulls followed them back to port, mistaking *Solimar* for a fishing trawler. At sunset, in a scene right out of a Fellini film, the family gave away the haul to local schools, restaurants and friends. "It was still a small seaside village then," she says, "and we all knew each other."

Solimar has been a fixture in the Santa Margherita Ligure port outside Genoa since the 59-foot vessel was delivered in 1973. The family took yearly summer-vacation cruises on the Mediterranean to Corsica, Sardinia, Elba and the Aeolian Islands. Garghetti, now in her sixties, recalls anchoring in coves, where the family slept onboard, visiting small fishing villages and enjoying sunsets all over Italy. "They were some of the happiest days of my life," she says. "They brought a sense of cohesion to our family."

So much so that Garghetti has kept the 49-year-old yacht in pristine condition, partly as a memory bank, partly because of her love of the sea, but mostly as a shrine to her parents, who instilled that love in her. Today it looks out of sync, almost like a relic, beside more modern vessels, but it's as shipshape as when it

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was brand-new. Garghetti still goes out on *Solimar* nearly every summer day, and her daughter and her sisters' children and grandchildren have all enjoyed vacations aboard. “The scent of the wood on the boat's interior, the layout of the cabin, the cockpit where we've shared so many meals—they allow me to pass the experiences I had with my parents to my daughter,” she says. “Our story has been handed down from father to daughter, and I hope my daughter will love the boat as much as I do and pass it to her daughter.”

Yacht owners typically focus on the latest innovation, the next best thing, upgrading to ever-newer, larger vessels. But there are others—a tiny but passionate minority—who view their boats as heirlooms, similar to multigenerational summer homes, where the walls preserve precious memories. “These boats are not toys,” says Anselmo Vigani, a partner at RAM, a refit center on Italy's Lake Iseo that maintains almost 100 vintage Rivas for owners. “It's an object that reminds you of fun, happy moments. It's the same boat you went on with your parents. It gives you the same feelings, even though it might be 50 years later. Most of our owners will never sell them.”

Summers on the Riviera

Jonathan Showering's first memories of his family boat, *La Mouette*, remain as vivid now as when he was four years old in 1966. It was a gleaming mahogany Aquarama Super with burnt-sienna upholstery—a boat his parents bought to occupy their six children during summer holidays in Monaco. “It was the coolest thing I'd ever seen,” he recalls. “The lights in front were set into the hull like eyes, and the chrome bowsprit had a crocodile smile. You could always spot our Riva as it came around the headland.”

La Mouette, or “the Seagull” in English, was a standout, according to Showering, even among the beautiful wooden boats that filled the floating docks of Monte Carlo's Port Hercules. The Aquarama was the icon of highly sought-after Rivas—floating fashion statements owned by Sophia Loren, Brigitte Bardot and King Hussein of Jordan, among other movie stars and royals—but the Showerings used it as a family runabout for waterskiing, day tripping to Saint-Tropez or just noodling around empty coves. “We have a picture of five of the six us waterskiing together behind the boat,” he says. “I think it bent the ski pole.”

“Joe the Boatman” was the family's hired captain who took them on the day trips, with balmy nights on the water watching fireworks explode over the harbor. “When I was five, I was allowed to sit on Joe's lap and steer the boat on my own for hours,” he says. “For years, I studied his every move like a hawk. I was 16 before my father let me drive.”

For Showering, whose family spent most of the year in the UK, where his father, Keith, served as chairman of the drinks company Allied Domecq, the summers became a blur of blissful, halcyon days that stretched into decades, a bonding—though he'd be loath to use that word—between siblings and parents. That's quite a trick with six kids on a 27-foot boat, with a cockpit measuring 49 square feet. “I don't recall any issues between us when we were on the boat,” he says. “We loved every second.”

Fifty-six years after embarking for the first time, Showering, 59, has not missed a summer aboard *La Mouette*. After his father died in 1982, the family held on to the vessel, and Showering, its most frequent captain, later gifted the Monaco experience to his wife, Emily, and four children. “We brought each child on the boat like Moses's basket, soon after they



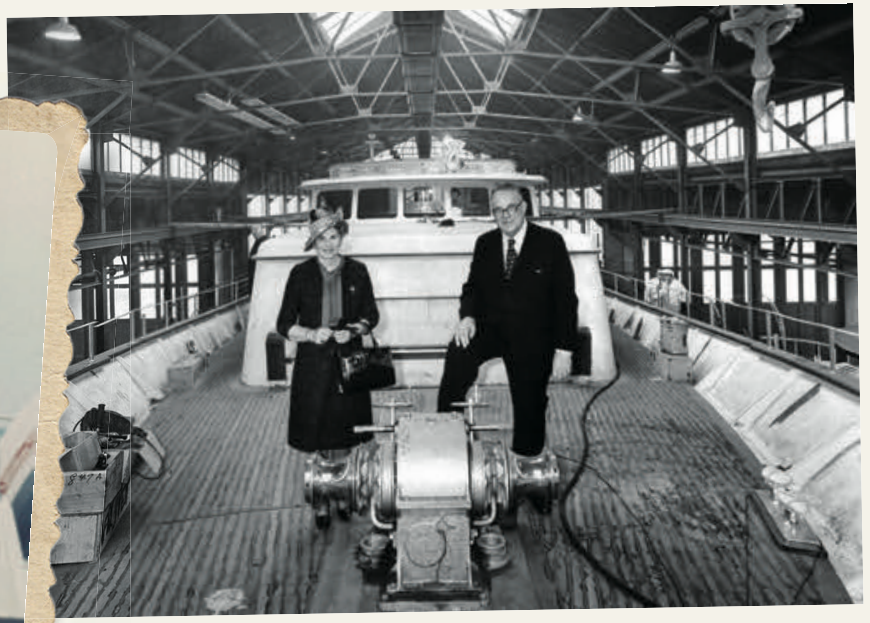
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Showerings' *La Mouette* at the end of the 2018 Riva Trophy race; a fashion shoot aboard the Wirtz family's Blackhawk; Virginia and Arthur Wirtz during Blackhawk's build in Aalsmeer, Netherlands; Marina Garghetti's *Solimar* in Varazze, Italy, 1973; Jonathan Showering (second from right) waterskiing with four of his siblings in the late '60s.

were born,” he says. “They fell asleep immediately with the water's motion and noise of the engines.” The kids have since grown up doing the same things he and his siblings did a half-century earlier.

The eldest, Eleanor, 29, has photos of herself onboard in her dad's arms at about three months old, but her most vivid memories are of standing side by side with her siblings, Lily, Grace and James, on the passenger seat, holding on to the windshield, while her dad drove. “We'd do that everywhere we went,” she says. “We really used to enjoy it, jostling for position, until we got too big to stand next to each other. It's what my father used to do as a child with Joe the Boatman.”

Eleanor says part of *La Mouette's* allure was connected to her father. “It was a special part of his childhood, so it felt special to us doing what he did on the boat and visiting the same places,” she says. “The boat almost feels like a living thing. We all have the same reverence for it.”

The kids all learned a routine to tie up the craft whenever they docked, a choreography that they follow to this day. Showering taught each child to pilot the boat when they came of driving age. They share his love for the boat's tactile qualities—the smooth mahogany, the soft upholstery—as well as the throaty rumble of the V-8 engines.



“The days on *La Mouette* are my most special memories,” Eleanor says. “We never got bored. We’d go to Italy and France for lunch, arriving on this beautiful, glamorous boat. We were always very proud of it.” On other days, each child selected their favorite pastime. Eleanor enjoyed being the first boat in the Bay of Roquebrune, where the children would eat croissants and swim with fish. Grace reveled in waterskiing, Lily liked being pulled on the inflatable water toy, and James just loved to be at the helm. “My mother liked it best when we were lying and sunbathing quietly,” Eleanor adds.

There were also adventures: Four years ago, Showering, Emily, Eleanor and Lily took a wild ride from Monaco to Saint-Tropez in a race that is part of the Riva Trophy, the annual owners’ rally—against larger, modern, fiberglass Rivas. “My dad thought we had the best boat and wanted to win,” she says. The waves were so high *La Mouette* repeatedly went airborne. Eleanor was next to her father, reading the charts, while her sister and mother sat in the back. “We arrived completely soaked, salty and exhausted,” she says. “We managed to win but only got the prize for ‘Oldest Boat’ because our race number had fallen off the side. None of the other boats had any idea what we’d

been through. They were just cruising along, sipping Champagne.”

Now that everyone has a career, the summer holidays in Monaco are shorter, but the clan still spends three weeks there engaged in their beloved marine outings. Nobody has outgrown the *La Mouette* experience, and nobody expects to. “My children all want the boat,” says Showering. “They’ve never known a summer without it. They’d be devastated if it ever left the family.”

Arthur’s Boat

For the Wirtzes, a prominent name in Chicago, the 123-foot *Feadship Blackhawk* symbolizes the clan’s history. It’s also a 51-year-old living monument to the family patriarch, Arthur Wirtz, a real-estate and liquor mogul who bought the Chicago Blackhawks in 1954 and an ownership stake in the Bulls in 1972.

While the sports teams brought Arthur fame, and the liquor business a

fortune, the *Feadship* was his magnum opus. “He spent many hours designing that yacht after the office closed,” says William Rockwell “Rocky” Wirtz, Arthur’s grandson, president of the Wirtz Corp. and chairman of the Blackhawks. “He drew every square inch. When it launched in 1971, it changed the *Feadship* look for nearly a decade.”

Arthur’s last wishes specified that his heirs keep the boat, his wife Virginia’s 1961 Rolls-Royce and the family’s original land-grant farm from 1875 in Mundelein, Ill. “No mention of the Blackhawks or any of the other businesses,” says Wirtz. “Those three things he identified as his legacy. To him, they represented a man of humble means who was able to show he did well in the world.”

Blackhawk was a novel design and, at the time, the world’s largest sportfishing boat. Arthur wanted to fish from the cockpit but have a formal dining room in the saloon for family time and business entertainment. (Arthur and Virginia befriended former President Lyndon B. Johnson and his wife, Claudia “Lady Bird” Johnson, taking them on tours of South Florida.) That combination of luxury and sportiness, though common in yachts now, was decades ahead of its time.

Today the interior looks almost the same as in 1983, when Arthur passed away: parquet floor in the dining room, mahogany paneling, sea-serpent fixtures in the head, floral artwork by Lê Pho personally chosen by Arthur for the four staterooms.

“He was a big man, six feet, five inches tall, who loved his air-conditioning,” says

“It was long and elegant for its day, with that unusually large mast. It looked like a racing Ferrari in the harbor.”

Wirtz, 69. “It still gets cold enough in there to hang meat.” The family has modernized many systems and employs a full-time crew of four to look after it in South Florida, but it remains Arthur’s boat.

“It’s a time capsule—almost like walking into my great-grandparents’ home,” says Danny Wirtz, Rocky’s son and CEO of the Blackhawks. “We try to be unassuming, so even talking about us having a yacht makes me uncomfortable. We see it more as a family heirloom.”

Danny, 44, recalls the first time he was on the boat, in the early 1980s, when his grandfather Bill Wirtz took his children and grandchildren on a weeklong trip to the Exumas. “I was in complete awe, being able to eat, sleep and play on that amazing vessel,” he says. “Grandpa Bill would take us on these big adventures in the Whaler tenders, *Power Play* and *Slap Shot*—to diving holes, secret beaches, coral reefs. He was fearless—we’d go through storms, broken engines, getting lost.” But mostly he remembers Bill—Arthur’s son—adopting a new, happier persona on the boat. “He always wore a suit in Chicago,” Danny says. “But on the boat he was relaxed in his bathing suit—really in his element.”

Danny and his kids, Juniper and Rosemary, along with his sisters and their children, have continued the trips to the Exumas on *Blackhawk* and, more recently, cruised to Harbor Isle in the Bahamas. “It’s special that the fifth generation is able to experience it,” he says. “It’s the last touchpoint we have of Arthur.”

The First of a Famed Fleet

In the 1970s, Serafino Ferruzzi commissioned a yacht that would come to inspire one of the most storied pedigrees in racing. The Italian industrialist couldn’t even sail, but he wanted a fast boat for his son,



FROM TOP: Aboard *Blackhawk*; Max Ferruzzi (at the helm) and his crew on *Il Moro di Venezia I* during a regatta, 2018; La Mouette in Beaulieu-sur-Mer, France, 2017.

Arturo, and son-in-law Raul Gardini. *Il Moro di Venezia I*, designed by Germán Frers, was one of the world’s most inventive racing sloops when it launched in 1976. It was a clever disrupter in the Italian Maxi Yacht class and progenitor of eight successive *Il Moro di Venezias*, including five America’s Cup competitors, each dreamed up for the clan by Frers to be ever faster and technically more sophisticated.

Serafino made a deal with the two younger men: If he bought the boat, they would have to run the family’s agro-empire, Ferruzzi Finanziaria, for the other two. When it launched, *Il Moro di Venezia I* quickly morphed from a snappy reference both to Shakespeare’s *Othello* and two 15th-century giant bronze statues in Venice into a sailing legend: The yacht’s 92-foot mast towered high above others in the racing fleet. And it was fast, very fast, even in light winds.

“The boat was an experiment,” says Massimiliano “Max” Ferruzzi, Serafino’s grandson and the current owner. “It was

long and elegant for its day, with that unusually large mast. It looked like a racing Ferrari in the harbor.”

Six years old when the boat was delivered, Ferruzzi, now 51, recalls its first, highly unusual shakedown cruise, a vessel’s first extended outing. “It was 10 p.m. and we were at dinner, and my father and his 20 friends decided to try the boat for the first time,” he says. “My cousin and I came with them, but we soon fell asleep in the cabin.”

Come morning, instead of waking up in the harbor, they found themselves hundreds of miles away, sailing off the coast of Yugoslavia. “It became a 20-hour adventure—made more so because the captain, Angelo Vianello, had only stocked wine, no water,” Ferruzzi recalls. “There were no phones at that time, so my mother and aunt were worried sick. But we got home safely.”

Il Moro di Venezia I went on to win the 1977 Channel Race in the UK and the Miami-Nassau race the following year. In 1980, the brothers-in-law sold *Il Moro di*





John N. Allen drives his 1926 Hacker Craft 22-foot Black Jack.

Venezia I after *Il Moro di Venezia II* was race-ready. That next-gen yacht soon began to win, too. “My uncle Raul always said never put too much passion into a boat, since a better one would always come along,” says Ferruzzi. “But my father was sentimental and felt like it was *the* family boat.” (Gardini later fell out with most of the clan and, amid a bribery investigation, died in 1993 in what was ruled a suicide.)

In 1985, Arturo repurchased *Il Moro di Venezia I* and converted it into a cruiser. “He was done with racing,” says Ferruzzi. “It was too extreme for him.”

Ferruzzi himself had often crewed on the racing yachts but had never skippered one—that was a job, he thought, only for professional sailors. That attitude changed after Arturo gave him the vessel in 1996. Ferruzzi restored the boat to its former racing glory, with a new jib and rigging enhancements that made it even faster. In 2013, he began to compete in Maxi events and classic challenges, relying on 20 sailing friends as crew, rather than pros. Now at the helm, he loves the adrenaline surge of race starts, jockeying for position, reading the wind and figuring optimal strategies. “The situation’s always in flux, and you’re looking for solutions,” he says. “It’s intense and exciting, and I learn something new with every race.”

The craft was the season champion of the Panerai Classic Yachts Challenge for the Mediterranean circuit in 2013, 2015 and 2018 and has won 14 other Maxi races. “My father told me we’ve won more now than when *Il Moro di Venezia I* first launched,” says Ferruzzi.

His 18-year-old daughter, Emma, also loves the boat, serving as crew during races and going on month-long cruises with her father and friends during the summer. “I always want this boat to stay in the family,” he says. “At some point we may build *Il Moro di Venezia X*, but at this point, the original *Il Moro di Venezia* is enough.” ●

HACKER CRAFT: JIM WANGARD

Antique Water Show

Not all vintage-boat owners have inherited their vessels. Two Minnesota neighbors are among those who seek out old beauties instead—and who have amassed staggering collections of classics.

When Lee Anderson bought his first antique boat, a 1938 Chris-Craft Resorter, in 1985, he named it after his wife, Katharine. “When I was a boy, my dad had a wooden boat on the lake in northern Minnesota where we spent the summers,” says Anderson, 82. “I always wanted one. After *Katharine*, I kind of got the bug.”

Forty-five boats later, Anderson still owns the 19-footer—which he describes as “not terribly valuable” but one he’ll never sell—as well as the definitive collection of vintage North American boats, with many valued in the millions. Anderson is now focusing on pre-World War II one-off race boats, such as the 1924 *Baby Bootlegger*, which won the American Power Boat Association Gold Cup in 1924 and 1925,

and storied models from then rock-star builders, including Gar Wood and Hacker, and even rarer Canadian mahogany brands. To make the cut, a boat must have a history so intriguing that it makes other collectors jealous. “Scarcity is what’s important to me,” he says.

Anderson houses 10 vessels in a special wing of his home on Gull Lake, Minn., that doubles as a showroom, with tracks that lead down to the shore so he can launch them during the summer. He keeps 12 others in the water under canopies. “I don’t like the boats to not be used,” he says. “I try to keep them all going every summer.” Anderson is regularly seen piloting two or three different woodies per day around the lake.

On the same chain of lakes lives John N. Allen (the men’s Naples, Fla., homes are close by each other, too), who also owns one of the country’s largest and rarest collections of classic wooden boats. “I’d see Lee running those boats

before anyone else was interested, and it kindled my interest,” says Allen, 67. His first acquisition: a 1929 Gar Wood triple-cockpit in 2001. “That was 29 boats ago.”

Allen’s collection includes the two oldest Chris-Crafts in existence—both dating to 1922—and a 1926 Gar Wood 33-foot *Baby Gar* called *Bolo Babe*, powered by a V-12 Liberty engine. He’s now restoring *Teaser*, an almost 40-foot-long fast commuter that in 1925 beat the 20th Century Limited train in a race along the Hudson from New York City to Albany. Allen declines to pick his favorite, though it might be easy to guess. “*Princess Paige* is a 1926 Earl C. Barnes named after my only daughter,” he says. “It’s the closest thing I’ve ever seen to a jewel box on the water.”

Allen considers himself a steward of the rare treasures. “So many valuable boats have been destroyed over the years,” he says. “I take a lot of pleasure in restoring them and moving them into the future.”

THE LAKE EFFECT

In landlocked Switzerland, two boatyards on the shores of Lake Zurich have carved reputations for craftsmanship for more than a century.

BY
ADAM H. GRAHAM

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
CLARA TUMA





A hull in progress at Boesch's production yard in Sihlbrugg, Switzerland



On Switzerland's banana-shaped Lake Zurich, two coasts gaze across the placid water at each another. The international, sunset-dappled eastern shore is famed for its terraced vineyards laced with walking trails, splashy swimming *badis* and celebrity residents, including Tina Turner and Roger Federer. Aptly called the *Goldküste*, or Gold Coast, it's a prime spot to dip your Vilebrequins into the lake while charging your Tesla, dozens of which line the residential streets. (It's Switzerland's number-one selling car, after all, beloved locally for its engineering, not its status.) The opposite, western coast is decidedly more Swiss, with modernist 1950s Reform churches, a chocolate factory and old mills converted into art spaces. It's enveloped by the shade of its own mountain a few hours earlier than its neighbor each evening, earning it the nickname the *Pfnüselküste*—the Sniffle Coast.

If you think the east coast is better than the west, you've failed the ultimate Swiss litmus test: the ability to identify discreet luxury. Sure, the show-pony Gold Coast has beautiful sunsets and split-level homes surrounded by sunken fire pits and infinity thermal pools. But

in this tiny nation, luxury and quality are whispered, not shouted, and the flashiest is seldom the best. It takes a trained eye to understand the austere appeal of the Sniffle Coast. For starters, much of it is outside Canton Zurich, in an area notorious for its tax breaks. Because of that lucrative perk, many heritage Swiss businesses planted themselves here long ago and haven't budged since.

Two such *Pfnüselküste* enterprises have been embracing this philosophy for over a hundred years. Wooden-boat builders Pedrazzini Yacht and Boesch both specialize in handmade wooden runabouts and rely almost exclusively on a hyperlocal, discerning Swiss market for sales.

In short, what makes the two Swiss companies stand out is that they work solely in wood, not fiberglass. Even iconic Italian runabout boatmaker Riva stopped using wood for its hulls in 1996. But the competing Swiss yards offer additional, nuanced differences. Boesch, for instance, uses a cold-molded technique with laminated high-tech plywood from West Africa. What may be more important to appreciate is that the amount of time and labor required by both companies to design and manufacture their vessels is immense. Properly

drying the various woods—teak, pine, mahogany—can take up to a decade, for example. This level of “slow craftsmanship” is something the industry rarely sees anymore.

Pedrazzini's runabouts are forged of mahogany and swathed with 20-plus coats of lacquer. (The exact number is a trade secret.) As their name suggests, the boats feature understated hints of Italian design. In Pedrazzini's words, they're “bespoke,” which is why a basic shell of these classics starts in the six-figure range. The company produces no more than six vessels per year, each requiring over 4,000 hours of labor.

Pedrazzini is located in the village of Bäch, just over the line in Canton Schwyz. In the early 1960s, it was rumored that the yard was visited by an off-duty John F. Kennedy. The commander in chief—who frequently cruised around Cape Cod on the presidential yacht *Honey Fitz*—was evidently eager to test-drive a Pedrazzini. (The company is characteristically mum and says it has no record of such an event.) Back then, Bäch was known for its farms, mostly fruit and nut orchards with voluminous cherry, walnut and plum trees stretching down the meadows past half-timbered homes to the lakeshore.



Today, modernist lakefront apartments and summer homes outnumber fruiting trees, but Pedrazzini remains tucked into a small, shady cove, one of the last few working shipyards on the lake.

“The key to our success lies within the roots of our family, which include both Switzerland and Italy,” says Alessandro Pedrazzini, who represents the fourth generation involved with

expertise for 108 years. “Our aim is that Pedrazzini boats are passed on from one generation to the next,” says Pedrazzini, citing vessels that have been in the same families for over 90 years. Most of the company’s boats remain on Swiss lakes, though many navigate other European lakes and coastlines, and in recent years they’ve gained popularity in North America.

FROM LEFT: Alessandro Pedrazzini and his father, Claudio, from the fourth and third generations, respectively, of the family business; Pedrazzini hulls under construction; the company’s Vivale Veloce, the first model Claudio designed himself, on Lake Zurich.

and other ancient Bronze Age “pallafite cultures” occupied Switzerland from 5000 to 500 BCE and relied heavily on boats. Today there are 56 UNESCO-listed submerged archaeological sites across the Swiss Alps that remain waterlogged witnesses to this alpine maritime culture. Subsequent waves of occupying Celts and Romans were equally nautically minded. Julius Caesar sailed up the Rhône. Celtic swords and sailing vessels are frequently pulled from the lakes by underwater archaeologists today.

Long before roads, ski lifts and trains seamlessly and hyper-punctually connected Switzerland, boats also traversed its formidable mountains via the country’s numerous rivers and lakes. During the golden era of alpine exploration, Queen Victoria, Mary Shelley, Goethe, Charles Dickens and other celebrity visitors traveled through Switzerland by ship.

In the contemporary era, perhaps in an unconscious nod to the country’s tradition of superior horology, Swiss boats exude quality, but they take some unpacking to fully discern.

Boesch and Pedrazzini stand apart because they offer a “classic” look that is “nearly as easy to maintain as a fiberglass hull,” says Gerald Guetat, a boat histo-

“Ultimately, the success of our design comes from the fusion of Italian flair and style with Swiss craftsmanship based on quality and precision.”

the company, founded in 1914 by his great-grandfather Augusto, who immigrated to Zurich from Lake Como, Italy. “Ultimately, the success of our design comes from the fusion of Italian flair and style with Swiss craftsmanship based on quality and precision.”

Switzerland has long been a byword for quality, and the company embraces a philosophy that focuses on the highest levels of mastery, which has made it a bastion of traditional boatmaking

Unlike Italy’s modern history of yacht building, with its 1950s Portofino glamour, 1980s superyacht excess in Viareggio or the Italian-lakes cool of Riva and other runabout makers, Switzerland’s shipbuilding narrative is more subdued, but it’s no less historical. Despite being landlocked, the area has a nautical tradition dating back thousands of years, to an era when Neolithic peoples lived in stilt-houses at the edges of lakes and rivers all through Central Europe. These



rian and author of several books on classic wooden examples. “A complicated timepiece is no longer something people know how to use, but it’s still exciting to wear Paul Newman’s chronometer on your wrist even if you’re not timing a lap in Daytona. It’s the same with wooden boats today. They’re a pleasure to use but require little knowledge on how the boat’s hull really performs.”

boats, but in watchmaking, chocolate production, banking and engineering. In turn, they absorbed Swiss culture. “Discretion is to the Swiss what hand gesturing is to Italians,” says one boat owner who wishes to remain anonymous. “The immigrants who came to Switzerland had the skills of the trade, but they had to learn the Swiss art of discretion.” Pedrazzini excelled in this regard, par-

strategic position on the lake allows it to accommodate its local customers via a marina in summer and a service facility for winter storage and repairs. (Boesch also owns yards on three other major Swiss lakes, primarily for moorings and maintenance.)

“When my great-grandfather Jakob was starting out on his own in 1920, he was basically doing what every other boatyard in Central Europe was doing: building boats on order,” says Markus Boesch, who, like competitor Alessandro Pedrazzini, is the fourth-generation head of his family business. “The client described what he wanted, and Jakob or his foreman would make a few sketches and drafts in order to illustrate a possible project. All these boats were built with traditional methods.”

After World War II, Markus’s grandfather Walter traveled to the US to look for engines and studied the famed assembly lines in Detroit’s automobile industry. He introduced the concept of serial production to the European boat industry with the small runabout Boesch 500 in 1953, a sleek model that drew high-profile buyers in the 1960s, among them Udo Jürgens and Romy Schneider. The design was a game-changer. In 1964, his father Klaus intro-

“Back in the 1970s, when Pedrazzini was sourcing our Boesch Marine engines through our yard, every time Alessandro’s grandfather came to pick up the engines, he had to bring the cash to my grandmother.”

After the two World Wars, Italians escaping the devastation in Italy poured into Switzerland to find work, many bringing their artisanal skills with them. Bäch became one of the country’s hubs of immigrants and, eventually, *secondos*, first-generation Swiss born to émigré parents. To outsiders, Switzerland might seem like an insular nation. But it was these waves of migrants that helped create and develop modern Switzerland’s reputation for luxury, not just with

tially just by remaining a small outfitter. Boesch’s wood-shingled shipyard in Kilchberg, almost 15 miles north of Bäch, is a time capsule of old Switzerland. It’s directly across the street from the Lindt chocolate factory, where the scent of sweet confections regularly permeates the air. A loan from the Lindt family after World War I helped Jakob Boesch take over the yard where he’d started working a quarter-century before. Like Pedrazzini, Boesch’s



duced the Boesch 510 with what he termed BLT—Boesch Laminate Technology—a proprietary technique that bonds together layers of mahogany plywood to create a more stable, torsionally rigid body. Since the late '60s, all Boesch boats have been constructed with this method.

And now, the company is coming full circle, with a renewed focus on one-of-a-kind designs. “Bespoke is more and more important to us,” Boesch says. “About the only boats we build as ‘standard’ are our demo units for boat shows and test drives. We usually do one refit per year as a ‘showboat’ in our classic department.” And in that Swiss tradition of circumspection, he adds, “We have a history of doing things first before talking about it, and this separates us from others in our industry who use a lot of computer animations and renderings of new projects to attract potential buyers. We build prototypes first and then make photos and video shoots.”

Boesch, which builds only 15 vessels per year, focuses on withstanding weather and wear. Its boats have been numbered consecutively since 1920, and 3,000 of nearly 4,000 are still on water today. The vessels are increasingly known as perfect water-ski craft,

designed to be low-noise and low-wake. Guetat chalks up Boesch’s success to “long-term relationships with lake residents.” But the boat historian discourages considering either Boesch’s or Pedrazzini’s business model in the context of the yachting industry. “These yards belong more clearly to the market of high luxury goods made by hand, on a very small scale, like a jeweler or a bespoke watchmaker, or a leather good craftsman in Florence, Italy,” he says.

Boesch emphasizes instruments and gauges on the panel, making its partnership with Swiss watchmaker IWC Schaffhausen a natural collaboration. They introduced their first co-branded runabout model, which features a hull painted in gold at the waterline, IWC designed the gauges and instruments, as well as a celebratory watch, the Aquatimer Automatic Edition “Boesch” caliber 82110, with a skeleton case and a rotor featuring an 18-karat-gold propeller medallion, limited to 100 pieces.

Any longtime Pedrazzini owner would never switch to Boesch, as those boats might seem too austere. And vice versa for Boesch buyers, who shy away from the other’s shinier, sexier designs.

FROM LEFT: Markus Boesch in the Kilchberg workshop, which dates to 1895 and where workers repair and refit boats built from 1950 onward; a new Boesch Sunski 625 at the boatyard; a fully varnished Boesch 970 St. Tropez de Luxe; a dashboard, with special gauges designed for the company’s centenary in 2020 by IWC Schaffhausen.

“These boats appeal to a special type of client,” who value the workmanship and customization, says Katharina Poroli, CEO of Poroli Special Boats, which has offices in Mallorca, Düsseldorf, Munich, and Ascona, Switzerland, on Lago Maggiore. “Both brands belong to the history of Swiss boatbuilders, and on the Swiss lakes you can still find many of these very exclusive boats.”

Any rivalry is now a friendly one. “Back in the 1970s, when Pedrazzini was sourcing our Boesch Marine engines through our yard, every time Alessandro’s grandfather came to pick up the engines, he had to bring the cash to my grandmother,” Boesch says. “Today, we live and work on the same lake, have respect for each other’s work and even go to dinner together at the boat shows.”

And both yards lean into the particularities of their home base. As Pedrazzini says, “We do not see the aspect of being landlocked as something negative. Boat craftsmanship is deeply engraved into Swiss culture—just look at the Alinghi,” the Swiss team who built and sailed the vessel that won the America’s Cup in 2003 and 2007, becoming the first European crew to capture the historic prize. “We Swiss just love to build things that excel.” ●