

Atrevida: Living History


Herreshoff. The name is spoken in revered tones at yacht clubs around the globe, which is why it is so sad to hear that one of the renowned naval architect's 104ft masterpieces *Atrevida* (formerly *Wildfire*), built in 1923, was sold as scrap in 2002. Luckily, instead of that being the end of the noble sailing yacht's saga, with the story closing out as the yacht's steel hull rusts completely through in places until there is nothing salvageable left, this is a story of rebirth. Designed at the peak of Nathaniel Herreshoff's creative genius in 1922, the steel schooner - originally called Project 891 - stands out as one of the last great builds of the Herreshoff family. The boatyard was sold the year after its launch. *Wildfire*, as Project 891 was subsequently christened, commissioned by then New York Yacht Club commodore Charles Harding for \$76,000. A princely sum for the then 95ft racing sailboat with its massive 20ft 6in beam and 12ft 9in draft, which was well repaid when the yacht went on to win the 1924 Schooner Cup and several other important regattas for Harding. The yacht changed hands twice more before being renamed *Atrevida*. First it

was acquired in 1950 by Jorge Bhering de Matos who sailed the yacht to Brazil, then by Dirceu Fortouta, under whose ownership the yacht spent four-and-a-half decades entertaining the world's elite out of Rio de Janeiro. Elvis Presley, Rita Hayworth, Henry Kissinger, and of course many presidents of Brazil all enjoyed the yacht's impeccable craftsmanship while brokering large deals and discussing world politics. Unfortunately, golden ages never last. The yacht's history becomes a bit murky at this point, with a series of uninspired, even detrimental renovations. By 2002, the once-proud yacht, which had almost sunk due to the holes in its hull, was deemed scrap. Then along came Gilberto Miranda, who purchased the rusting beauty, hired Manoel Chaves as project manager and had *Atrevida* moved to MCP Yachts shipyard, where it would be under the team of Geraldo Tomazoni as production manager, Augusto Guerra as main parts designer, and Abe Rosemberg as overall supervisor.

The refit began to take on epic proportions as Miranda was determined to restore the yacht to her former glory. The Herreshoff Museum in Bristol, England was repeatedly consulted, as were engineers at MIT. Finally, in March 2004, with the original plans in hand, the work began. Without detracting from the boat's historical significance, modern conveniences were discretely installed. These include air-conditioning, electronic navigation and computerized monitoring systems, bow and stern thrusters with wireless remote controls, remote-control sail hoisting, and a desalination system, to name a few. The necessary exterior antennas and such were placed near the top of the mast to keep their visual impact to a minimum. These 21st century enhancements are balanced by a laundry list of original specifications. For example, the original

wooden bowsprit had been replaced with a steel model in intervening years. During the refit, it was replaced once again, this time with a mahogany beam per the original architectural drawings. Reclaimed mahogany from houses of a similar era and other sources was used throughout the yacht to give it a true period look and protect this valuable wood resource. Beveled glass and early 20th century-style curtains make the saloon and living spaces feel like stepping back in time. Crystal-fronted cabinets and capitone-covered settees follow Herreshoff's imaginings. Just over three years later, in August 2005, the fundamental English engineering and style as retold through fine Brazilian craftsmanship, allowing *Atrevida* to once again take her place on the international scene as the Grande Dame of the seas that she is. -SL



SPECS 

- Length: 104.99ft
- Beam: 20.18ft
- Draft: 12.8ft
- Engine: 1 x 550hp Mercedes diesel
- Speed (max/cruise): 13/9 knots
- Design: Herreshoff
- Builder/refit: Herreshoff/MCP Yachts

CONTACT

MCP Yachts
Tel: +55 13 32615327
www.mcpyachts.com



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