

Leo Savelkouls and the Motor Tank Ships Ventura



Leo Savelkouls and Robert Zimmerman on board of the Ventura

Leo Savelkouls was one of the first to benefit from the MER-Franchise formula, 25 years ago

“I like something new”

Leo Savelkouls was already a sailor on board of Robert Zimmerman’s ship in 1968. “So we already knew each other when I took over the Mobil Oil 21 in 1984 with his guidance. We coated the ship, named it MTS Mercurius and sailed, transporting chemicals“. The charterer was Rheinfacht.

The Mercurius was the first ship to which the MER-Franchise formula was applied. A special method of hire purchase. The formula wasn’t called as such until later, though. Leo Savelkouls was more or less the first client of the formula. The 1.500 ton ship sailed under the Swiss flag. “The judicial ownership was in hands of Robert Zimmerman. Trust is key in a cooperation like this. I knew Robert well, so this was no problem. I always got the information I needed: Mercurius is a very transparent company.”

Money was not only invested in the purchase of the ship. “A ton worth of money was invested in the repair. I would advise young people to take into account that the start-up costs often turn out higher than expected.” That is one of the reasons that coaching by Mercurius Shipping Group is very welcome when starting your own enterprise.

Leo Savelkouls sailed continuously with a captain and two sailors. “It wasn’t until later, that we switched to 14 days on board / 14 days off board. That is something I haven’t changed since: people need time off as well.”

After two years, the ship was sold. The story of Leo Savelkouls’ career: “I like variety, new things. If I don’t do something I want, I regret it later on.”

And of variety Leo gets enough! He bought a ship with a colleague, again with guidance from Robert Zimmerman and Mercurius. “It didn’t work out with the colleague, so I stepped out after two years.

Still, I am confident that it is possible and advantageous to buy a ship with a group of captains. Once you've divided the tasks, it should be easier to manage everything."

Unfortunately, it didn't work that time. Leo Savelkouls spent 3.5 years working on board of ships of Mercurius; until he bought his own (double hulled) tanker in 1992 based on hire purchase (MER-Franchise). The high interest rate of the mortgage and uncertain prospects, however, made him sell the ship 2.5 years later to Hamburger Lloyd. In 1996 he bought a new ship again: the double hulled tanker Ventura, again according to the MER-Franchise formula. In 1998 he sold the ship in order to buy a new tanker. Two years later he sold that ship to Gerrit Boon.



Ventura

Leo Savelkouls never worked alone; he managed his company together with his wife Marian. "Without a financial director like her it would have been a lot more difficult."

In 2001 a new Ventura was launched, this time made of stainless steel, a length of 86m and a width of 11.40m. "Ventura means prosperity, I thought that was a nice name for a ship." In 2004 he ordered the third Ventura ship, with even more volume and a length of 110m. For the time being this was the last ship, because the ship was sold last year and even though he invested in a few ships with Robert Zimmerman, he is not sailing at the moment.

The 57 year old Leo Savelkouls lives in Appeltern now, in the Land of Maas and Waal. He has three children of whom one is active in shipping. A chef, a beautician and one son works in the passenger transport.

The cooperation with Mercurius for Leo works very naturally and creates a huge advantage for an entrepreneur. "Mercurius has contacts with the banks en with clients. That concept has never changed. If you would have to do all those things yourself, you would have to spend at least 3 months ashore!"

At the moment Leo assists in the completion of newly built ships for clients of Mercurius. "As a captain, experienced shipper and entrepreneur, I know what has to be done for a client in the shipyard."

He also wants to invest in a new ship again: "Naturally, in times of economic downturn, one should buy a ship."