Boat leaves Lake Keowee

Great pains taken to deliver Matriarch to new owner

BY MIKE EADS
THE JOURNAL

SOUTH COVE — The Matriarch has ended its reign on the waters of Lake Keowee, but not without a bit of drama on the way to a private buyer in Wilmington, N.C.

Referred to by locals as "The Wine and Cheese Boat," owners Jan and Peggy Hadley had hired the 72-year-old Echo 57 motor yacht out for parties, weddings and other gatherings for several years. It was also the venue for many of the couple's family gatherings with their children and grandchildren.

The couple recently decided to put it on the market, all of the good times notwithstanding, due to the upkeep demanded for such an old craft and to free up Jan to spend more time on the other vintage boats he plans to renovate.

Peggy called the sale "bittersweet," but Jan seemed to be ready to move on. He admitted to mixed emotions about the Matriarch – which he acquired several years ago and had shipped across the country from Washington, then spent more than a year and a half rebuilding with help from his son-in-law Michael Gordon.

"Jan and I have touched every last inch of that boat inside and out," said Michael with pride, noting that at top cruising speed – 35 mph – it produced a 4-foot wake big enough to surf.

Despite all of the sweat, toil and family history, Jan sounded ready to move on as he watched crews from Greenville's DCMC Crane Rental get ready to move the Matriarch out of Lake Keowee and the Hadleys' lives forever.

"It wouldn't make it to Tahiti, but we will," referring to their plans for a South Pacific vacation funded by the proceeds from the sale of the Matriarch.



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The Matriarch comes to rest upon a trailer Thursday after a nearly five-hour effort to extract the 72-year-old motor yacht from Lake Keowee. Owner Jan Bradley sold the boat to a private buyer in Wilmington, N.C.

BIG MOVE

Thursday was the day for the big move. DCMG set up a 400-foot extendable crane on the small causeway next to the beach in South Cove County Park for what should have been a simple mission: swing straps over the top of the Matriarch, lift it up out of a few feet of water along the rip-rapped shore and on to a waiting trailer. Work started just before lunch and was supposed to end just after lunch – the key words being "supposed to."

By 2 p.m., Hadley was concerned with the movers' plan to lift the oak-framed boat covered with cedar: two straps just inside the bow and stern. The Matriarch has twin 903 cubic-inch Cummins diesels smack in the middle, creating a rather heavy center of gravity for the 50,000-plus pound boat that would not be directly supported by the crane.

Pacing the shoreline, Jan told his wife and son-in-law, "I'll be damned if I'd lift it like that, but it's not my boat anymore."

He called his first mate Brandon Sprague's cell phone, trying to get him to convince new captain Jed Galloway to have to the movers add support straps under the boat's center.

That led to some haggling between the moving crew, Jed, Brandon, Michael and Jan, but the decision was made to go forward.

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SUCCESS

Hadley watched pensively with Peggy, Michael and the rest of their family as the crane began to lift the Matriarch out of the water an hour later. Almost immediately, a few of the cedar planks near the top of the deck railing cracked noticeably, drawing groans from the Hadleys and the rest of the dozen or so onlookers.

The crane operator kept going, slow and steady. The splintering stopped with those few planks and the Matriarch continued its climb in tact. It drifted over the shore and above the parked trailer, with no more creaks or cracks evident. The crew on the ground kept firm grips on their guide ropes and, within ten or so minutes, the Matriarch came to a safe, quiet rest onto the waiting trailer.

Jan was finally able to exhale.

"Everything is in doubt until it's done," he said. "There's always a little trepidation, but I'm no longer responsible for it."

The Matriarch will be stored locally for a few months. Jan and Brandon have been contracted by the new owner to do some renovations to the boat prior to its being shipped over to Wilmington Beach for its new life on the Atlantic Ocean. Once that work is done, he and Peggy will take that Tahitian vacation.

Jan is far from done with boats, however. He has several vintage crafts he's working on, plus is always for hire to other boat owners. He displays his work on his website, www.nautilusrestorations.com.

"I'm not a sitter ... my projects are never ending. I'll die with something incomplete," he said.

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A few dozen onlookers gathered Thursday in South Cove County Park to watch DCMG Crane Rentals of Greenville extract the Matriarch from Lake Keowee. The 72-year-old motor yacht has been sold to a private buyer in Wilmington, N.C.

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