

Guglielmo “Willy” Persico 1939-2018

It is with deep sadness that we report the death of Willy Persico, founder and president of South African shipyard Southern Wind, who was 79 years old. Persico passed away in Genoa, where he had lived since 1970. The yard relates that he had a long-held concern about a serious illness, which he kept hidden even from his closest collaborators with his habitual tact and discretion.

“He was active and proactive up to the very last moment,” says Marco Alberti, Southern Wind’s general manager since 1994. “We hope people remember him as a special person with strong values – full of honesty and elegance and who ran his business with passion.”

Persico was born in 1939, the scion of a notable Neapolitan family. He graduated from the University of Naples with a degree in chemical engineering in 1963. In 1990, after a distinguished career in the energy industry, he became president of Rodriguez shipyard in Messina, which specialised in fast ferries and hydrofoils. An experienced sailor, the same year he commissioned a sailing yacht to be built in Cape Town, South Africa, and then decided to take over the shipyard. “It was a crazy decision, but I have never regretted it,” he said on the yard’s 25th anniversary in 2016. He renamed the company and founded it as Southern Wind Shipyard in 1991.

Alberti and his team members were made to feel like they were part of Persico’s family. “He built a special crew, and we are very close knit,” he says. “Many of his managers, like myself, have been here since the very beginning. It is thanks to his passion, commitment and foresight that over the past few years he diligently developed with his trusted team – and left detailed plans for – the transition towards a new leadership, so that Southern Wind will be able to continue his precious heritage and vision,” says Alberti.



At a rate of about three yachts per year, Southern Wind has delivered 52 yachts in all, from 72 to 110 models. Persico valued his collaborations with designers Bruce Farr, Reichel/Pugh and Nauta Design. Southern Wind’s current flagship is the 110 *Thalima*.

Passionate and dedicated until the end, Persico once said: “I believe ageing doesn’t exist if you don’t think about it and keep playing with boats.”

SOUTHERN BELLES: THREE OF PERSICO’S FINEST CREATIONS



The SW72, penned by Bruce Farr, is a yard classic. This 1996 hull *Far Il Kind*, is still a thing of beauty.



The innovative SW102 *Farfalla*, launched in 2014, performs even in light Med breezes



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