



Masters OF THE Megayachts

THEY WORK FOR SOME OF THE WEALTHIEST PEOPLE — piloting multimillion-dollar motor yachts to the world's most exotic ports. They share deck space with celebrities, top politicians and business leaders. And they get paid well, about \$1,000 per foot for yachts of 100 feet or more.

That's the topside of being a megayacht captain. Now for a look below-decks.

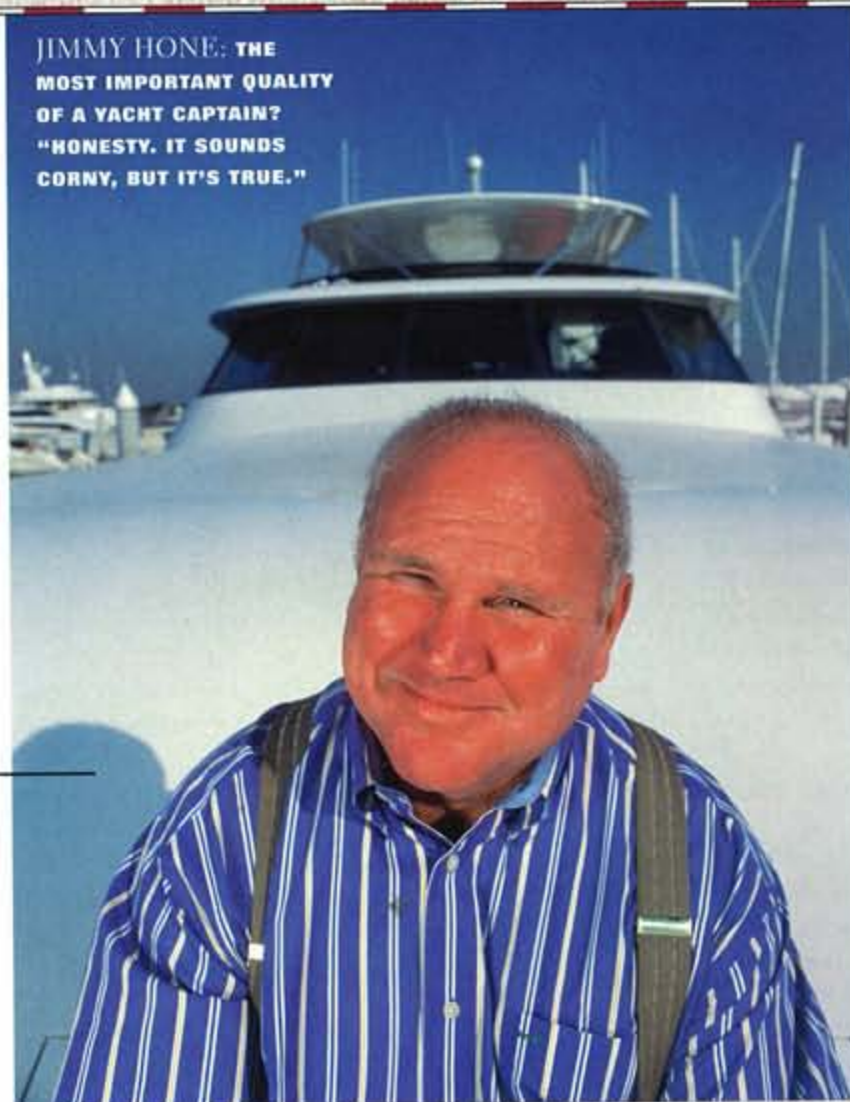
Their job description includes such wide-ranging tasks as planning the itinerary for a months-long cruise, hiring and training the crew and negotiating with owners and contractors to build or repair a yacht. They dock, fuel, provision, mediate, monitor and manage. They foster good times, skirt bad weather and quell hot tempers. They locate the nearest landing strip for private jets and the nearest hospital for ailing guests. They take responsibility for every soul aboard, around the world, around the clock.

And they drive the boats. For very particular bosses. With one unblinking eye focused on the bottom line.

"You're working for the top 1 percent," says Capt. Jimmy Hone of Palm Beach. "A lot of them are self-made people. They know exactly what they want and what they don't want. You're always trying to give them what they want without giving away the whole farm. If the cow gets too expensive and doesn't give enough milk, the cow gets sold...It's a big mistake made by a lot of guys that there is insurmountable wealth and you can spend

By Elizabeth Rahe

JIMMY HONE: THE MOST IMPORTANT QUALITY OF A YACHT CAPTAIN? "HONESTY. IT SOUNDS CORNY, BUT IT'S TRUE."



MICHAEL PRICE

like a madman."

Then there's the crew. It takes finesse to put six to 12 people — many young, inexperienced and from different cultures — in close quarters 24 hours a day for several months and keep them motivated.

Once in a while, it takes more than finesse.

During his days skippering yachts, Capt. Duane MacPhail had his share of crew challenges. His experiences prompted him and his wife, Donna, to launch Palm Beach Yacht Crew, Placement and Management, a staffing and yacht operations agency. Late one evening, when MacPhail's yacht was anchored off St. Bart's, a deckhand decided to take a late-night trip in a 14-foot boat. He had been

on night watch, so they didn't realize he was gone until morning.

"We rented a plane to look for him, because we thought he may have broken down and drifted out to sea. We found out later the guy took the dinghy all the way to St. Martin to see a friend."

MacPhail located him two days later through police in St. Martin. "I had his bags with me, and he was immediately discharged and flown home. This was unfortunate for the guests in St. Bart's, because the yacht could not legally leave until our original crew was accounted for. Not a bad place to get stuck, though."

Yet for all the juggling and hassles, the long hours and relentless demands, the captains we spoke with aren't complaining. To the contrary, they seem to embrace the challenges. They just can't get over their taste for salt.

JIMMY HONE

AGE: 46

HOME PORT: Palm Beach

YACHT: *Lucky Seven*, 112-foot Westport motor yacht.

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE: Third-generation captain who grew up spending summers in Greenwich, Conn., winters in Palm Beach. He's been a captain 20 years.

MARITAL STATUS: Married to

Maureen, one daughter, age 6.

BEST PART OF THE JOB: "There are a lot of best things. Travel and the challenge of traveling. Some people say they like to travel, and they get on a plane and go where the plane is taking them. We spent last summer and fall cruising off France, Italy and Greece. I had to get the boat over and plan the itinerary. I had to have a pretty good idea of what the owners like. Would they enjoy the aquarium in Genoa or to go to San Remo for the pasta? I had to set up dockage, arrange fueling. There's quite a challenge to making it come out all right."

GREATEST CHALLENGE OF THE JOB: Leaving his wife and daughter. "When I was 39, I finally married, and we have a 6-year-old daughter. They come to meet me quite often, but sometimes there are months in between. That didn't used to be an issue. [He laughs.] I messed things up when I married the chef."

MOST IMPORTANT QUALITY OF A YACHT CAPTAIN: "Honesty. It sounds corny, but it's true. You're in a constant travel environment — it's a small world and a long life. You can equate that to any job in the world. It's not rocket science. But in the corporate world, if you work for Bill Gates, there might be 200 people between you and Bill Gates. If you're on the boat with Bill Gates, there is no corporate buffer. Honesty and integrity are paramount."

RAY SHORE: "YOU HAVE TO HAVE A FEELING FOR WHAT PEOPLE WOULD LIKE AND GO WITH THAT. DRIVING THE BOAT'S THE EASY PART."



INTERESTING TALES: "We had a dinner party for *Yachting* magazine with 60 top CEOs. The boat next door was having a Hillary Clinton fund-raiser. There were all these Republican business leaders docked right next to Hillary. It was very interesting."

UNUSUAL (AND LONG-AGO) DUTIES: "I used to get a call from this one man — he would give me a code word, and I would either leave out the pictures of the wife and kids or hide them all. We had the same first name, so when these women would call, he could say to me, 'I told you not to take calls at work.'"

CAPT. RAY SHORE

AGE: 46

HOME PORT: Davie

YACHT: *Excellence III*, a 188-foot Abeking & Rasmussen motor yacht.

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE: Captain for 27 years; a lifetime on the water. "I grew up on boats. I'm from Newport, R.I., and there wasn't a lot more to do there. We had a small boat on Goat Island. I had an even smaller one to play with. After one too many winters on the pilot boat, I decided to look for a job on a yacht and stay where it's warm. I was 18 — been here ever since."

MARITAL STATUS: Married to Maria; four children, ages 7 to 17.

IS IT TOUGH TO BE A CAPTAIN WITH A FAMILY?

"My wife is very understanding and hard-working. For the longer trips, the kids get to travel and meet up with us. When we were building our previous boat, the family spent a couple weeks in Holland. It opens a few more interests to the kids."

ANY WOULD-BE CAPTAINS IN THE BROOD? "They definitely love boating, but I don't know if any of them want to ship out."

BEST PART OF THE JOB: "Meeting different types of people in different types of places. It's always changing."

GREATEST CHALLENGE OF THE JOB: "Keeping people interested in owning boats. My goal is to let them have some fun, show them the better places to go. I like my passengers to expect the unexpected. If the weather is questionable, let's go someplace else."

FAVORITE PORTS OF CALL: "On the East Coast, Newport or Nantucket. In the Caribbean, St. Bart's or the Grenadines. In the Med, just about anywhere."

INTERESTING TALES (OR NOT): "We try to keep it boring when we're going on our long crossings."

MOST IMPORTANT QUALITY OF A YACHT CAPTAIN: "Flexibility — being able to adapt to any situation and dealing with people. It's all about people — guests and crew and contractors and owners. Maybe someone's having a tough day or they're not wild about the place you're going. You have to have a feeling for what people would like and go with that. Driving the boat's the easy part."

DO YOU LIKE DRIVING THE BOAT? "Love driving the boat."

ties, businessmen. You get to travel and experience luxurious locations you couldn't afford to visit on your own. And the owners pick up the tab."

GREATEST CHALLENGE OF THE JOB:

"Keeping the crew motivated. We do that by giving extra time off, giving the crew use of some of the toys...if they have the skills and license. We send them to school and have on-board training. We have had mates and deckhands who want to become captains. A lot of it is just stroking them. You have to be careful how you criticize. There's a job waiting for them in two hours if they leave. They know that."

MOST IMPORTANT QUALITY OF A YACHT CAPTAIN:

"Patience, patience, patience. And a good sense of humor. You have to be able to shrug things off. The people I deal with can be finicky — owners, guests, crew members. Lock six people together for three months and it takes

a lot of patience, goodwill and a sense of humor. It's like a marriage. You have to play together well, argue within boundaries."

JOB DESCRIPTION: "Captains wear many hats, from engineer to concierge to confidant. But there's a common thread among captains. We're all workaholics."

DO YOU ENJOY YOUR WORK? "The day I stop enjoying it is the day I leave."

CAPT. HOPE FIENE

AGE: 50

HOME PORT: Fort Lauderdale

YACHT: *Rosamond*, an 86-foot Burger motor yacht (not quite a megayacht, but close). She also free-lances as a captain on other yachts.

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE: Has had her captain's license since 1981.

HOW DID YOU GET TO BE A CAPTAIN? "I lived in Tucson, Ariz., and at 25, I woke up and decided I wanted to live by the ocean. I moved to St. Thomas...worked for a water-sports shop. I started doing half-day sails, going to St. John. I learned on the job. I read and talked to everybody and watched everybody. I had a lot of good mentors. To learn to be a captain, you have to eat, sleep and drink boats."

MARITAL STATUS: Single. "I'm still interviewing men...He would have to have a boat."

FAVORITE PORTS OF CALL: "Anywhere there's a nice beach. The Virgin Islands...my favorite island is Nevis."

BEST PART OF THE JOB: "No day is ever the same. There's no routine except the routine that you make. I used to joke about doing charters that the biggest decision was

whether to go clockwise or counterclockwise around Tortola. It's a very active and fun thing to do. When people are on board, you're in entertaining mode. If something breaks down, you have to figure out how to rectify it as soon as you can so you can continue. No matter what happens, you have to fix it. The navigation is easy — get from point A to point B without hitting anything."

GREATEST CHALLENGE OF THE JOB: "The people management. Sometimes the owners or charterers are not that clear about what they want. You have to make sure you get all the information."

MOST IMPORTANT QUALITY OF A YACHT CAPTAIN: "Being open to new situations and new challenges. Not getting stuck in a rut by saying we've always done it this way."

CHALLENGES OF BEING IN A MALE-DOMINATED BUSINESS: "People often come up and say, 'Can I talk to the captain, please?' But that's not really a challenge. I let it all roll off me. Once they see you work, they give you respect. If you're going through a crew agency, they will tell you, 'They didn't ask for a woman.' The reason they didn't ask for a woman is just that they're expecting a man in this position. There's a perception that a woman doesn't have mechanical skills, but I've taken the time to learn about boat systems and how to operate them. Captains on large vessels have engineers and outside contractors to deal with large-scale mechanical issues. Because I haven't had an engineer, I've had to do a lot of the work myself."

OCCIDES

MARK DIEKMANN

AGE: 34

HOME PORT: Palm Beach

YACHT: *Lady M II*, 145-foot Intermarine motor yacht. Last summer and fall, Diekmann supervised the multimillion-dollar refit of his former charge, the *Morgan Star*, at Rybovich Spencer boat yard in West Palm Beach.

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE: Captain for 10 years. "I've been on boats my whole life — grew up on the water in Jupiter. Got my first boat when I was 14."

MARITAL STATUS: Single. "I am married to this vessel. Anyone else comes second to this job."

BEST PART OF THE JOB: "Getting to play with these boats. I feel like a little kid. It's an absolute privilege to drive these vessels around. And you get to meet the most interesting people — politicians, celebri-



HOPE FIENE: "PEOPLE OFTEN COME UP AND SAY, 'CAN I TALK TO THE CAPTAIN, PLEASE? ... ONCE THEY SEE YOU WORK, THEY GIVE YOU RESPECT.'"

JUDY SLOAN REICH

MICHAEL LAUFER