



Photograph by Frances Howarth

“He signalled me to push his huge Armani-clad bodyguard into the water!”



The Captain

Paul Bickley

Age: 41 Place of birth: Gisborne, New Zealand Previous yachts: *Kimberly II*, *Natori*
Current yacht: *Latitude* Number of crew: 13

What was your first taste of the sea?

I joined an ex-Taiwanese deep sea stern trawler as a deckhand at the tender age of 18. We were working out of Hobart in Tasmania, learning to tie bowlines and clove hitches around the mess table leg. I was following the family tradition of a career fishing for orange roughy in the Southern Ocean. It was a harsh environment to start with but, looking back, a thoroughly enjoyable time in my life.

Which ports do you most look forward to visiting?

New England and Maine in the USA. And backing down into crowded St Tropez and Portofino always gives me a buzz! The owner of *Latitude* has mentioned a desire to cruise in Scandinavia, which would be great.

What are your favourite onshore hangouts?

I love sitting round the pool back home watching my daughters having fun. Before the children came along, it was the Quarter Deck in Fort Lauderdale and the Soggy Dollar Bar in Saint Maarten.

What are the biggest changes you've seen in the industry?

The technological advances in the IT/AV sector are growing at an alarming rate. And larger tonnages mean that more and more demands are now being placed on captains and management companies to maintain yachts' Safe Manning Certificates.

What do you like most about your current yacht?

The bridge, which is spacious with great workstations. I also like the stem-to-stern access through the tank deck. The crew are a great asset, too – we have had the same crew for 14 months now.

Which is your favourite on-board toy?

The Sea-Bobs and two Laser sail boats are always popular, but I'm predicting that our new 'Jet Surf', a jet-powered surfboard with a top speed of 45 knots, will be a great hit.

What would you change about the motor yachting industry?

Refresher courses. You have to keep abreast of the latest advances, and *Latitude* is the yacht that first launched the Diamond Collection introduced by Fraser Yachts. It sets a benchmark of excellence that will be good for the entire superyacht industry. [Read what happened when we joined a Diamond Collection training session on page 66.]

What's the most curious request you have had from a guest?

I've had several! Once a guest arrived on Wednesday and demanded that he got a suntan in time for a wedding on the Saturday. When I showed him the weather charts, he did not react well. Another guest

decided she wanted the carpet and artwork changed for the duration of her charter. My favourite was when a film-star guest was swimming around the yacht. He signalled me to push his huge Armani-clad bodyguard, who was standing at the end of the passerelle, into the water. And yes, I did as he asked!

What's the worst weather you have encountered on board?

Fishing in the Southern Ocean as a winter blizzard howled across an icy steel deck: the winds whipped up to 60 knots. And a voyage across the English Channel in thick fog was pretty bleak and worrying.

Who is the strangest and funniest member of your crew?

Borat, our crazy Croatian second engineer, can be very dangerous in a funny-but-scary way on occasions!

What's the most stressful part of your job?

Being handed a relatively thin envelope at tip time and wondering if it contains 50s or 500s! In truth, I don't really suffer from stress.

What's the next big thing in yachting?

I think we'll see smaller engine rooms as power plants become better designed. And the waters around China, Russia and India will open up.

Any advice for an aspiring captain?

Listen and learn. Go to trade shows, attend seminars and don't be afraid of telling it like it is. And don't expect too much too soon: yachting is a great industry, but you need dedication to succeed.

Who would be your top five fantasy charter guests?

Kiwi rugby league legend Ritchie McCaw, Bob Marley, Napoleon Bonaparte, Sir Peter Blake and my late father. I'm not sure they would all get along, but as they're all my heroes, I'd have a whale of a time.

What's the biggest cock-up you've seen another captain make?

I once saw a captain forget to unplug the shore power cable as his yacht left the berth. Shocking!

And yours?

I once told a young deckhand to throw the fenders over the side, then had to watch them all floating along in a line behind me.

Captain Paul Bickley was talking to Frances and Michael Howarth on board *Latitude*. The yacht is available for charter through Fraser Yachts for €203,000pw (low season) and €231,000pw (high season) in the Mediterranean. www.fraseryachts.com