

“No matter who you meet and what they do, try to keep a good relationship with them.”

The captain

Rafe Palladino

Age: 43 Place of birth: Smithtown, Long Island, USA

Previous yachts: *Cajun Princess*, *Bon Bon* Current yacht: *Harbour Island* Number of crew: 12



Harbour Island

What was your first taste of the sea?

As a lifeguard working at the Longboat Key resort on the west coast of Florida. The sailing instructors on the catamarans seemed to have much more fun than the lifeguards so I switched jobs. I took lessons in sailing and windsurfing and enjoyed sailing small boats when the wind was too strong for others. I liked boats so much that I went to sea school and worked as cadet on commercial ships, moving grain and cargo to relieve hunger in Africa. I began delivering yachts in my leave and slowly yachts became more important than ships for me.

Which ports do you most look forward to visiting?

Marigot Bay – no matter how windy it is outside, it is always calm in the bay. I like to listen to the birds and the evening sounds only found on tropical islands. The beaches of Anguilla are special, too.

What are your favourite onshore hangouts?

I love spending time in Portofino. My favourite restaurant there is Da Puny, where I take a table outside, pour a glass of rich red Tuscan wine and watch the scenery and the people passing by.

What's the one place in the world you'd like to cruise to?

Tahiti. I love tropical islands, but have never been to the Pacific on a yacht. Crossing it on a freighter is just not the same!

What do you like most about your current yacht?

She is so quiet. I have not run many full-displacement yachts but I was surprised to hear how silent she is when under way. There is no furniture noise and even in a very heavy sea the lower deck is peaceful, compared with some yachts I have sailed in. The owner is a young family man and his yachting philosophy suits me well.

What would your ideal yacht be?

Professionally I would want one with separate areas for crew and passengers, so they could move through without seeing each other. This yacht is perfect for that, but not so big that crew management becomes a problem. Personally, I would be quite happy with a sportfishing boat rigged for diving.

What would you change about the motor yachting industry?

If I could change one thing, it would be to develop a standardised system for commercial yachts that would be the same for all of the various classification societies. The MCA has developed the Large Yacht Code but there is no standard in place for the classification societies, and many of them still require that yachts comply with rules applicable to other commercial vessels, creating confusion and

expense. A standardised system would reduce class surveyors' workload and save the yacht owners money.

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

We were under charter in the British Virgin Islands and had a guest craving good fish'n'chips. Our chef did his best but we still found ourselves hopping from port to port in search of the best the area could offer. For the record, we found them at Pusser's in Tortola!

Who is the funniest crew member you have had?

I had a deckhand on a previous command who was pretty funny. I remember being approached by him once at anchor. He had a mask, snorkel and fins in his hands and said, "This is what I like to call an organised dive." He then threw everything overboard and jumped over the railing into the water. As he surfaced he looked as if he was expecting applause, not noticing that all his snorkelling gear was on its way to the bottom. He soon became known aboard as 'Organised Diver'. Now he is an accomplished captain, but I still call him that when I see him – or 'Organised' in mixed company!

Any advice for an aspiring captain?

No matter who you meet and what they do, try to keep a good relationship with them – you never know when you will meet again. To crew joining a yacht, I would say try not to compare your last yacht with your new one and keep an open mind. It is possible that your new captain may teach you some better ways of doing things.

Who would be your top five fantasy charter guests?

I'll go with Frank Sinatra's Rat Pack. Having Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr, Joey Bishop and Peter Lawford aboard would be a charter to remember. I guess we'd have to stock up on plenty of Jack Daniels. What a swell party that would be!

What's the biggest mistake you've ever made as a captain?

Once, readying to get under way, I told the crew to let go all mooring lines on the starboard side, came off the dock and moved off the slip with the engines clutch speed ahead. A few moments later I felt a slight tug and soon a crew member shouted that we were dragging a broken wood piling with one of our mooring lines on the port side. It seems we forgot about that one! A good lesson to learn: always check your outboard side.

Captain Rafe Palladino was talking to Frances and Michael Howorth on board Harbour Island. The yacht is available for sale at \$54.9 million and charter from \$425,000pw through IYC. www.iyc.com



Photograph by Frances Howorth