

# SUPERYACHTING

## It's a WoMan's World



Patricia Caswell First Officer aboard *Latitude* talks to Frances and Michael Howorth about succeeding in what is commonly seen as mainly male environment.

It should not be true, but the statistics speak for themselves when you make statements like Superyachting is a man's world. Look around you and count the number of girls that work on deck or in the engine room. Why is it that girls are not already serving as Electrical and IT officers, why is it there are so few lady Captains in command of superyachts? The fact is those who work in superyachts seem to think the stew should be a she, that a girl's place is doing the laundry, changing beds, laying the table and serving the food. But they are wrong. Captain Sandra Yawn is in command of *Lady J*, Captain Carol Benbrook drives *Sedation* and Sue Mitchell shares the command of *Atmosphere* with her husband. It does however take spirit to buck the trend and someone who is doing that well, is Patricia Caswell, a feisty 32 year old Aussie who sails as Chief Officer aboard the Benetti built, 52 metre, *Latitude*. The yacht she serves in is a hard working charter yacht and was the first ever to be selected to become part of the Diamond Collection marketed by Fraser Yachts Collection. This is the first initiative of its kind in the superyacht market that reassures potential charter guests that crews have had extra training and that the service levels onboard their yachts are truly outstanding.

### First Hand Experience

Patricia has encountered first hand some of additional challenges faced by being a female in what many think of as a man's world. She told *On Board*, "The initial foot in the door each time has been the hardest but once you work with people they soon realise that you are good at your job and it is not about gender. The physical side is also something to bear in mind but you don't have to be all muscles you just have to figure out a different and smarter way to do things." "I don't really stress too much but I find the co-ordination of so many variables can certainly raise the blood pressure. I guess that's why the checklist was invented." "Boats are getting bigger and the ports are getting smaller so we tend to be putting boats into very small berths with no room for error. When there is only one metre clearance on the bow and 2metres on the stern to turn around a boat and manoeuvre you certainly need to trust all the information coming over the radio."

### Plain Sailing

Trish, as she likes to be called, first went to sea professionally in 1996 signing on with a company called Southern Cross sailing. "I worked on all company sailing vessels ranging from 68ft to 127ft. I started as a stewardess and then worked my way out onto deck. In 2000 I delivered *British Defender* an 83ft Whitbread yacht from Palma, Spain to Australia and by 2002 had completed the Master Class V. "Luckily I was able to have Southern Cross the Americas Cup Challenger as my first drive as Captain" From 2004 she sailed as 1st Mate aboard *Suakin* a 36 metre Expedition Vessel staying with her for three years. "I sailed over 55,000nm with *Suakin* as watch leader including 4 Suez

Canal transits, 5 Indian Ocean passages, and 3 Atlantic Ocean passages. I learned a lot of manoeuvring and boat handling skills on this vessel and stood in for the Captain during his absence." In 2007, starting out as 2nd Mate aboard *Haida G* the 70 metre Classic. She was promoted to Chief Mate after just a month. "During my time onboard I was trained by the Captain to manoeuvre the vessel controlled by traditional telegraphs requiring a lot of skill. I also stood in for the Captain during his leave carrying out the Captain's duties."

She passed her MCA Masters (3000gt) certificate in 2009 and joined *Latitude* in the following year. "The yacht had just changed ownership when I joined so I was involved in the setup and implementation of the Bridge and Deck procedures, ISM and ISPS systems as well as training the crew about sailing as the owner has high profile racing sailing teams."

"I have been lucky to work for amazing owners who travel the corners of the world and it is always most exciting to pull into a new country and port and explore the coastline, islands and culture, this I will always be thankful for. I still also love pulling into old ports with old friends berthed nearby and catching up on stories over a cheeky vino."

"Without a doubt the biggest changes I've seen in the industry is the growing professionalism and training standards. The industry is getting to a level where onboard and ashore training is promoted and part of the job as opposed to something that you had to leave your job to do. The understanding and use of ISM has helped the onboard training side of this with all departments onboard."

### Girl Power

"I also think there are more females coming through the ranks in the traditional 'Male' oriented position where Captains and owners are becoming more accepting and comfortable with this. Fewer are the days where you get that wide eyed look when someone asks you what you do or when you pull a boat into a berth and the entire dock stops to watch you. "Not without a lot of flack from my friends I made the conversion from sailing to motor yachts about 7 years ago. As a consequence I enjoy being able to practice sailing as my hobby and sport without thinking of it as work and having a sailboat onboard is my favourite water toy. There is such an array of toys available now it is a constant job to keep up with what is up to the minute technology and what could be great for the guests. Luckily we must test all of these to make sure they are all that is written on the label!"

"If I could change about the motor yachting industry I would change the way junior training is run in most departments. With a busy boat it is difficult to juggle and make the time but it is one of the most valuable tools onboard. I would set more training and higher entry standards for some departments and positions.

When it comes to giving advice for a girl aspiring to get ahead in yachting Patricia has this to say. "Once you get that foot in the door it gets easier, learn from everyone around you and remember it's not about being a male or female it's about doing your job well. Be confident, work hard, have fun with the job and keep your contacts, they will prove to be invaluable in time." Seems like sound advice from someone who really knows.

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