



“Crossing the Atlantic as it was getting dark, she asked: “When are we going to anchor for the night?””

The Captain

Jon Spiller



Age: 45 **Place of birth:** Gosport **Current yacht:** *Lady Christina* **Crew:** 13 **Previous yachts:** *Lady Christina I* (now *Candyscape*), *Philanderer*, *Leander*, *Moonmaiden II*

What was your first taste of the sea?

In North Wales, sailing my dad's Enterprise dinghy. Sailing has been my passion from a very early age. I love to sail my own yacht *Scehawk*, a Sigma 41, which I keep at Jolly Harbour in Antigua.

Which ports do you most look forward to visiting?

There are too many! But Bonifacio, Corsica, is a hidden gem of a place, Capri is *bella*, and Valletta in Malta is magnificent. Nevis is a fabulous shape for an island – and has such a great golf course.

What are your favourite onshore hangouts?

Eating dinner on the front in Portofino on a warm evening takes some beating, although lunch at Harmony Hall in Antigua is a close second. But really anywhere my mountain bike can give me a workout!

What is your most exciting experience?

Sailing my own yacht across the Atlantic. I bought her in Spain and went across with a couple of mates in 2005. It gave me a great feeling of achievement in spite of having crossed that ocean many times in other yachts. My only regret was that I couldn't take my dad with us.

What do you enjoy doing in your leave?

Sailing my own boat. I've a local lad called Delroy who looks after her for me, and normally I get out in her for about six weeks a year.

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

Size! There has been a mad rush to build ever-bigger boats – not a trend I personally feel is a good one for private yachting.

What do you like most about your current yacht?

The thousand-and-one little ideas from the many experienced people that we managed to incorporate into her. She is very quiet and built like a battleship. Claus Kusch knew a thing or two about building solid, quality yachts. *Lady Christina* is the last one of a line including *Eco*, *Leander*, *Tatoosh*, *Le Grande Bleu* and *Senses* – need I say more?

Which is your favourite on-board toy?

We have three International One Metre RC sailboats, which creates fierce competition among the crew. We have our own *hammam*, too!

What would you change about the motor yachting industry?

I would like builders and equipment manufacturers to stop making overcomplicated yachts. We are not putting men on the moon! Reliability should be the watchword. The last thing you need is a vessel that is difficult to maintain. On *Lady Christina* we made a conscious decision to keep to the tried and tested wherever possible.

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

Actually, it was from a crew member who was new to yachts and the sea. We were commencing our crossing of the Atlantic and as it was getting dark she asked: “When are we going to anchor for the night?”

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

As a young officer on board a gas tanker in the Golfe du Lion in midwinter – I couldn't believe that such a ship could get thrown around like that in the Med.

Who is the most eccentric member of your crew?

I think you have to be slightly odd to choose to work at sea, so it is probably me!

What's the most stressful part of your job?

Trying to meld the wishes of the guests with the demands of the boat, port captains, the weather, and the scores of other variables. I have to pretend that all's well even when it isn't.

What's the next big thing in yachting?

The virtual captain! Seriously, I think it will be rotating crew rotas.

Any advice for an aspiring captain?

Don't make a habit of letting people down, and don't forget to enjoy what you do. Pick the best company or person for the job in hand, but maybe give a small company a try because you might be surprised.

Who would be your top five fantasy charter guests?

Coldplay, Princess Diana, Clint Eastwood – that would impress my family, and the girlfriend's family from Australia!

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

We all have the same risks to cope with. I am glad to say that considering the number of yacht movements and the diversity of the cruising grounds, incidents on professionally crewed yachts are few and far between.

And yours?

No comment – my next boss might be reading this!

Lady Christina under the command of Jon Spiller is available for charter through Edmiston at €400,000pw. Currently in the Caribbean, she returns to the Med for the summer, chartering for up to 12 guests. Tel: +44 (0)20 7495 5151. Website: www.edmistoncompany.com. Portrait photo by Frances Howorth