

Dockwalk

The Crew issue

October
2018

**DRESS
FOR
SUCCESS**
The latest
uniform trends
and tech

CREW WITH A CAUSE

Crewmembers who
go above and beyond

FLYING HIGH

Form vs. function in
onboard helicopter ops

A NEW REALITY

The ripple effect
of *Below Deck*

BUCKING THE TREND

Non-traditional gender
roles in yachting

PLUS: The feel-good wish list and discovering the Balkans

SWALLOWING THE ANCHOR

Are you ready to lose your “golden handcuffs” and move ashore?

by Chris Caswell



It's one of the toughest decisions that yacht crew, particularly those in senior positions, eventually must make, and it's no surprise that they call it “The Golden Handcuffs.” You're living a life of adventure, traveling the world aboard a luxury yacht, and best of all, getting paid to do it! You don't have to worry about those mundane landlubber bills such as food or rent, and everything is provided for you aboard the yacht. But whether you realize it or not, every yacht crew has a “sell-by” date, just like a carton of milk.

Everyone has a different reason for putting down roots and departing from the yachting life at sea. For some, it's to start a family (or spend time with the family you rarely see). For others, it's a chance to start a career ashore, while more than a few just get worn down by the long hours. For one, it was simply because he wanted a dog. Another said she wanted Saturdays and Sundays, not to mention Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Everyone leaves sooner or later, but how you plan toward that date can make all the difference in your future. The choices are many, and the skills learned aboard yachts can often transfer seamlessly to



me, and spoke to a lot of people,” says Liam Dobbin, managing director of yacht crew and estate staff recruiter wilsonhalligan. “I knew I didn’t want to have children while at sea. My dad was away at sea while I grew up, and [he] regretted missing me growing up.”

Rupert Connor, founder of Luxury Yacht Group, is frank. “For me, the move was not well planned,” he says. “I had a plan to be at sea for five years longer than I actually remained but, due to human needs (I got married), I made the choice to move land-based much earlier than I had expected.”

Karine Rayson, a former yachtie who now provides crew and leadership training with The Crew Coach, says, “Crew who do not think through their exit strategy are faced with a difficult re-integration period. Do not leave it to the last minute!” The Crew Coach offers a free phone consultation to crew transitioning out of yachting, as well as help with résumés and coaching for moving ashore.

Getting Set Financially

For Mark Elliott, now a charter and sales consultant for IYC, “I had been thinking about it for a couple of years and saved up two years’ salary to become a broker. Spent that money in the first year!”

“Good judgment comes from experience, and experience, well, that comes from bad judgment,” says Hollins. “I did little financial planning, but I studied and focused on both the transferable skills and non-transferable ones. I found this exercise to be vital.” Dobbin says he “pushed money into my mortgage the year before leaving and took stock of my spending lifestyle.”

Connor admits to being a “pretty decent financial planner” and had put a large percentage of his earnings into real estate investments or savings, “so when I made the move ashore, I had sufficient reserves to not be too stressed about where the next paycheck was coming from. That didn’t prevent me from having some very lean moments in the early years of Luxury Yacht Group! For me, the risk was worth it and sometimes you just have to take a risk and jump in.”

Rayson, who was only crew for a short while, says, “I’ve always had a clear vision of what I wanted to do with my career and how much I’d need to kick start it. I set targets for myself and diligently saved away a percentage of my income. If I had worked longer in the industry, I would certainly have engaged a financial advisor.”

As a former superyacht captain, Alec Cunningham advises that crew should, “save at least half of your salary” before departure.

Tough Decisions

“Leaving the life at sea is not easy: the comforts, the high adventure, the security, the income,” Hollins admits. “Leaving the pinnacle of one career to go to the bottom of the next is tough, but the decision was made easy by yearning for change. There are things that one can do

shoreside careers. Many crew have become yacht or charter brokers, leveraging their experience to advise their clients. Knowing what makes a good crewmember also lends itself to joining crew recruitment or yacht management companies, while one former yacht engineer now runs a yacht service facility. A yacht chef launched a very successful gourmet food truck so he can spend time with his family. Venturing outside yachting, one husband/wife team now manages their former boss’s estate in The Bahamas, while an experienced chief stew opened a flower shop catering to high-net worth clients.

To get a sense of what you face when you “swallow the anchor,” we talked to former yacht crew who have successfully made the transition.

Planning the Move

Aeneas Hollins, now director of yachting at The Marina at Christophe Harbour on St. Kitts, took the planning in steps. “A good ‘halfway house’ is full rotation,” he says. “I started my exit plan by going three months on/off rotation. This gave me the opportunity to freelance, think about life ashore and where, put my affairs in order, and study.”

“I planned moving ashore for a year, I made sure I had a cushion behind



ashore you cannot do at sea. Also, by the thought that if I did not leave then, perhaps I would struggle later.”

“[It was tough to leave] the ultimate adventure lifestyle,” answers Elliott. “When I made my move, I was captain and helicopter pilot for one of the premier yachts and was having a blast. It is a great sense of accomplishment when you’re at the top of your game being a captain. It was tough for me to leave being a captain.”

“Yachting is hard – you sacrifice a great deal of your personal liberty to have a career and, for me, I was giving one hundred percent when I was at sea to the sacrifice of personal happiness,” Connor points out. “Once I realized I could not give one hundred percent to my yacht-owning employer, the decision to move ashore was easy. I had a passion and energy for being a yacht captain, but my twenties disappeared to the yachting life.”

Facing the Unexpected

“It is harder and takes longer to adjust than you may expect,” says Hollins. “While there are skills that are transferable, there are others you now have to learn. Our traits as successful yachties can be a hindrance in the real world and in corporate life.”

Rayson had a specific surprise: “One of the difficulties I experienced was getting approval for rental properties. I didn’t have a rental history to qualify for the tenancy applications.” For Connor, it was more basic. “I had to learn how to make money,” he says. “Yachting is a great education in spending to achieve great results, but it gives you very little training for how to generate a product or service with value that someone will pay for.”

Everyday tasks surprised Elliott. “Everything is paid for by the owner,” he says. “You have to get used to going to the hardware or grocery store and paying for yourself.” Dobbin says that when leaving a senior position, “You are stepping into a new environment where you sometimes start at the bottom. You have to gain people’s respect and approval.”

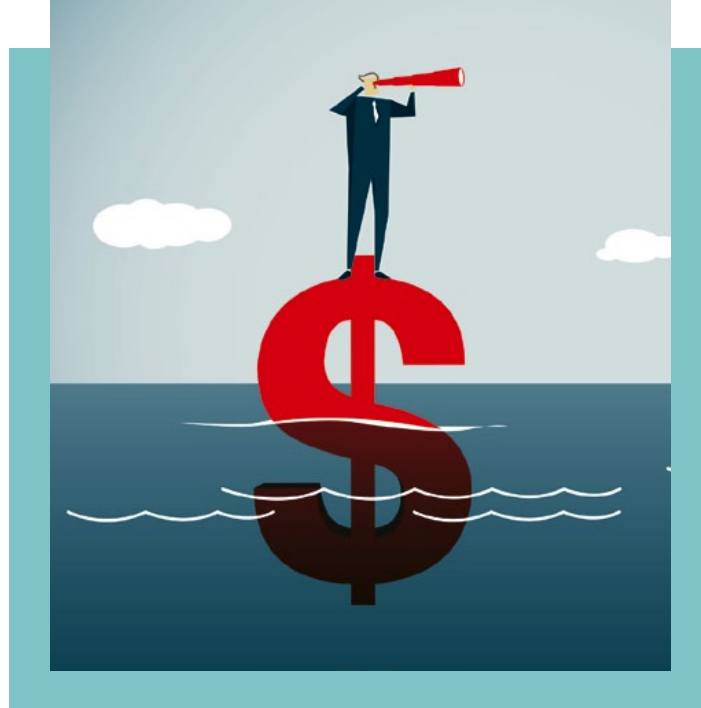
Michael Howorth captained yachts up to 88 meters, and moving ashore meant starting a career in journalism, but he admits that, “At first, it was hard to buy my own toothpaste!”

One chief stew, who asked to remain anonymous, offered her own take on moving ashore, “I see fingerprints everywhere! And I miss the chief engineer, who could fix everything for me!”

Going Places

“I knew that I was going to remain in the yachting industry,” says Connor, “so back then, there were two options: Antibes or Fort Lauderdale. I chose Lauderdale for family reasons. It’s easier to work in the shore side of yachting now (with the Internet), and we hire team members anywhere in the world as long as they have a good Internet connection.”

“I went to sea looking for somewhere to stop and lay my hat and had no idea I would spend some twenty years at sea before I landed on the shores of my dream island (St. Kitts and Nevis),” Hollins says. “Due diligence is required. Does the place you choose tick all the boxes and have opportunity?”



“Moving land-based gives you opportunities to grow and satisfy human needs that you simply cannot do at sea. Live your life!”

Smart Moves

Hollins is clear about planning, “I kept my eye on the prize, worked through the tough times, visualized my future, and followed the vision to reality,” he says. “In yachting, working with one boat/one boss was the smartest route to success, in my opinion. I have continued this by working ashore for the owner of my last command (S/Y *Andromeda La Dea*) for eleven years now and counting.”

Connor sums it up succinctly: “The smartest thing in one word: listen. Before starting Luxury Yacht Group, I spoke and met with any yacht owners willing to give me their time to discuss my ideas. I was truly blessed to receive some amazing input from

some of the smartest business leaders in the world today. The snippets of advice that I received have stuck with me over the past twenty years and helped guide my personal and professional development. I am forever grateful to those individuals who so generously gave me their time and advice.”

For Howorth, a budding sideline as a yachting writer gave him a launch pad. “When I decided to quit... there was already another career in the

wings,” he says. “I think that’s key to the stepping ashore process. It was not tough to make the switch because it was happening slowly all the time.”

“Getting into yachting is a lot easier than getting out, so plan your exit and follow that plan,” says former yacht captain Keith Stewart. “Don’t just bail out of yachting without some shoreside options or an actual job, because the money goes a lot faster than when you’re on a yacht.”

One item mentioned by every ex-yachtie was to “get your CV in order, updated, and professionally edited.”

Words of Wisdom

“I am fortunate to work alongside some of the best people in this industry, so I would have to say surround yourself with the best people you can find and build positive relationships with everyone you meet,” says Connor. “Always remember that the number in your bank account is just a number. Moving land-based gives you opportunities to grow and satisfy human needs that you simply cannot do at sea. Live your life!” Elliott is also clear, “Make a commitment and move forward with it. Never look back with any regrets. Be ready for a huge lifestyle adjustment with bills to pay!”

Rayson advises her crew clients to, “Make sure you have a positive peer group to lean on. Crew transitioning to shore life have experienced bouts of depression and anxiety during the transition period.” Cunningham adds, “I preach the message ‘never depend on what you think is a good relationship between yourself, the owner, and his depreciating asset. Build equity in yourself and always have a Plan B for when life throws you hard on the rocks.’”

“Use your network,” says former yacht captain Bill Castle. “You’ve made friends in your world, so tap into their knowledge. It might be yacht brokers, charter brokers, crew recruiters, or best of all, owners themselves who are successful business people.”

The final advice from crew who have made the transition successfully to shore life was echoed by Hollins: “Go for it when you are ready and don’t look back!”