



*Photo courtesy Capt. Bernie Weiss*

**Captain Bernie has had countless sea miles slip beneath his keel and knows whereof he speaks. Listen to his simple message.**

## You don't have to be a pro to act like one

There's a mystique about some boat captains, whether they be professional or recreational. The mere title "Captain" often confers a sense of responsibility, leadership, and authority. No one is born a captain; some sailors acquire the leadership qualities naturally, and a few never acquire them at all. Most of us must work hard to earn our stripes.

But you don't have to be a professional captain to act like one and, in your own heart of hearts, earn the honor and respect for yourself. Whether you run boats for fishing, sailing, racing, cruising, or, as in my case, yacht delivery, it is easily accomplished. Here are some pointers:

**Gather good crew.** Boating is a social activity, so unless you're going solo, invite likable people. Encourage everyone to engage with one another and jump into the conversation and the action. A special skill (e.g., navigator, spinner of salty stories, comedian, cook, line tender, sail trimmer) is an asset, but ev-

eryone should be capable of friendship, companionship and fun. Select carefully; leave the bad actors and tedious bores on the beach.

**Act like a mature, responsible captain.** No yelling at the crew; treat them with respect. Smile. Yes, it is possible to smile, be friendly, and still be serious about the risks and adventures of going to sea. It's my "Be Nice To People" policy. Encouraging and supportive advice works better than invective, yelling, and criticism.

**At sea, give everyone a specific job.** Even a simple job will do. Coil and stow the docklines. Grind a winch. Read stories to the kids. Pick up the mooring. Tend bar. Weigh the anchor. Check the engine's lube oil level. Even a child can steer a boat ("Just aim for that cloud; it's OK, I'm right here beside you."), although, of course, the serious responsibility of navigation, safety, and general supervision of activity re-

mains yours. But here's the point: People who are not active on a boat quickly zone out on their iPods or Blackberries. That's not fun boating.

**Teach and train.** If you ask someone to do a job (e.g., "We're about to tack; you've got the starboard sheet."), and there's some resistance, demonstrate, carefully, in advance of the actual need. Invite questions and discussion. Avoid the fancy sea-jargon; use plain language. A lot of lessons on boats can be learned in similar fashion to lessons on surgical procedures: Watch one, do one, teach one.

**Take good care of your crew.** If you do, they will take good care of your boat. "Good care of your crew" means offering personal training, safety gear and instruction, proper equipment and tools, ample food and beverage, and crew husbandry. Those of us who were Scouts remember studying for the Animal Husbandry merit badge: On a boat, the principles of crew husbandry are much the same, because aren't we all animals? Don't push your crew beyond their limits of strength, knowledge and endurance. Promptly reward their good work. Prepare them for the worst (while hoping for the best). Do not deliberately expose anyone to danger. And remind everyone to keep something in reserve for the unforeseen.

**Don't be a dictator.** Every captain shoulders the responsibility of making decisions, either by consensus or by fiat. But up to that point, broaden your perspective by inviting opinions and observations from your crew. Collectively, they may bring as much or more experience and wisdom than you to the point of a decision. Moreover, the fact that your crew contributes to the decision-making process helps them "buy in" on the resulting effort.

Because the sea is a hostile environment for most humans and boats, everyone on deck should be attentive and alert at all times. Sober, too. If your crew is drowsy, easily distracted or losing focus, send them below. Fatigue (which contributes to sloppy work and poor judgment) is the single biggest contributor to accidents and injuries at sea.

**Share the experience.** Everyone wants to enjoy a good time, and surely you can demonstrate and explain how easily this is accomplished.

So . . . You really don't have to be a professional yacht captain to act like one. Just do it!

*Captain Bernie Weiss is a delivery skipper based in Stamford, Conn. His company is Atlantic Yacht Delivery ([www.atlanticyachtdelivery.com](http://www.atlanticyachtdelivery.com)). When not at sea, he imparts his knowledge, in a wide range of seagoing topics, in lectures and seminars.*

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## Edgewater 205CC

LOA 20'6" • Beam 8'6" • Disp. 2,800  
150 HP Yamaha  
In stock 14'-23' models.



150 HP Honda 4 stroke



## Bristol Harbor 21CC

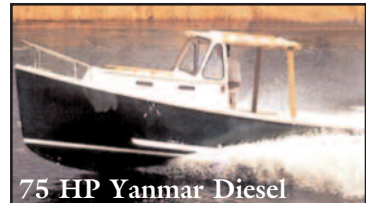
LOA 21'3 5/8" • Beam 8'5"  
Draft 14" • Weight (dry) 2,575 lbs.



Honda 4 Stroke

## Bristol Skiff 17

LOA 17' 2" • Beam 6' 6" • Disp. 675 lbs  
Max HP 40 HP • Passenger Weight 900 lbs.



75 HP Yanmar Diesel

## Pompano 21

LOA 21' 3" • LWL 20' 6" • Beam 7' 0"  
Draft 2' 0" • Weight 2,400 lbs.

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