



The 120-foot Heesen *La Bella 2* was repaired at Fort Lauderdale Shipyard after a towing company claimed salvage rights to her. PHOTO/LUCY REED

## Intended to save boats, salvage laws ruin, too

By Lucy Chabot Reed

April 25 started out as a nice day. The skies were clear and there was a small chop on the glistening waters of Miami's Biscayne Bay.

Perfect day for a sea trial. With a broker, a potential owner and the man's wife on board, Capt. Paul Canavan opened his 120-foot Heesen up to 46 knots. Then he heard a bang. He stopped all the engines, flushed out the jets and had gotten under way again when his engineer reported they were taking on water.

Canavan called the U.S. Coast Guard to advise he intended to drive the *La Bella 2* onto a shoal. An experienced captain of these jet boats, Canavan knew a sandbar would help plug a hole in the relatively flat hull. At least, he said, it would prevent a sinking and buy him some time to figure out what to do.

"I knew once I got on that sandbar I would be OK," he said.

Within minutes of driving on the shoal, several towing companies arrived. And before Canavan knew it, people from one of the companies were on his yacht.

Canavan and his engineer accepted their help to dive under the boat and help patch the hole, and then at high-tide the next morning, to pull them off the sandbar.

It was then — 24 hours after the incident — that Canavan discovered the tow boat company considered their efforts salvage and planned to request hundreds of thousands of dollars in payment.

"After 30 years as a captain, I should have known better," Canavan said.

What Canavan didn't fully understand are maritime salvage laws, which are made up of case law handed

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## Enforcing hours of work/rest may hurt charter industry

By Lisa H. Knapp

As the sun rises, so does most of the crew of a 105-foot charter yacht. The smell of fresh blueberry muffins fills the air, indicating the chef's nocturnal presence.

The first mate grabs a shower, scrapes the hair off his face and rushes on deck at 5:59 a.m. to chamois dewdrops.

Breakfast is at 8 a.m. The guests want to go diving, so the mate gets the gear ready. By 9:30, the captain says, "Stow the scuba. The wind blew from the other direction and they're going fishing. We leave at 10:15."

The mate leaps onto the tender and starts bait. The chef and steward scramble to get a take-along lunch ready, but are inwardly relieved; a fishing trip means they might get a quick nap at noon.

The guests return for cocktails at

4 p.m., eager to have their fresh catch for dinner. After clearing the gear and galley, it looks like it might be an early night. The last guest is served at 2 a.m., muffins and sun coming up in less than four hours.

This is a typical day on charter. Most crew members work at least 14 hours a day with guests on board, more when the guests want to be entertained.

"Working on a yacht is akin to working on stage; it's showtime," said Kristen Cavallini Soothill, owner of American Yacht Institute in Fort Lauderdale. "You're working for the world's elite. There are no 10-minute breaks for every four hours worked or two days off after five."

A crew member's ability to work long hours may not only be governed by personal stamina and guest desires, it may be against the rules.

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## Captains have love/hate affair with management companies

FORT LAUDERDALE — Welcome back to the Bridge, *The Triton's* monthly gathering of captains.

While the attendees are identified in a photograph on page 7, individual comments remain anonymous to encourage frank and open discourse. The discussion was facilitated by *Triton* Editor Lucy Reed.

We gathered this time to discuss yacht management companies and their role in the operation of yachts. Though it wasn't planned this way — and no one knows

the topic for discussion until after they arrive — the room contained one captain who owns and operates a yacht management company and another who used to run one.

"Yacht management companies are, in some instances, fantastic, and in some instances, the worst," one captain said. "If you have a captain who's gone up the ranks and has management skills or experience, [the yacht management company is] just backing up the captain."

One captain objected: "For a captain with management experience, there's absolutely no need for them."

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FROM THE BRIDGE

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