

PHANTOM OF THE FANTOMIE

ONCE THE WORLD'S MOST LUXURIOUS YACHT, THIS CLASSIC VESSEL WOULD BECOME THE CROWN OF THE WINDJAMMER FLEET BUT WOULD MEET A TRAGIC END

BY R.W. WARD

During 2009, a most interesting era in sailing ships came to a sad conclusion. After six decades, all the assets of Windjammer Barefoot Cruises went up on the auction block at Miami — over 10,000 items went down under the auctioneer's hammer. It was the last indignity in the depressing saga of Windjammer. The company, a British Virgin Island corporation, had not declared for bankruptcy in Florida by auction time. However, Florida's Division of Corporations listed Windjammer as inactive and the state's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services reported that the company had not been officially licensed to sell travel in Florida since November 2007. At that point, it had cancelled most of its fall sailings in the Caribbean, leaving many paid-up "jammers" — the term for loyal passengers of Windjammer — with neither a cruise nor a refund.

The auction took place in the company's sprawling Miami offices and it appeared that the place had simply been abandoned during the course of one day. Computers were still running on their desks while the personal items belonging

to employees — family photos, calendars, business notes — were tacked on divider walls. Photos of the Windjammer fleet — the *Legacy* (294 feet), the *Yankee Clipper* (197 feet), and the oldest at 81 years, the *Polynesia* (248 feet), and the *Mandalay* (236 feet) lined the hallways.

The building had been sold at auction during that October

for \$2.82 million to a Miami developer and that was enough to pay off the mortgage-related debt stated a lawyer who represented two members of the Michael Burke family, owner of Windjammer. Everything in the building was auctioned off and that money was set aside to be used to purchase storage for decades



The hedonistic 2nd Duke of Westminster was devoted to hunting, fishing, and chasing women while living a life of incomparable luxury. He was one of the world's richest men but he would also go on to fight on the front lines in two wars.



The magnificent sight of *Fantome* as it heads out on a Windjammer cruise.