

Livin' the Dream

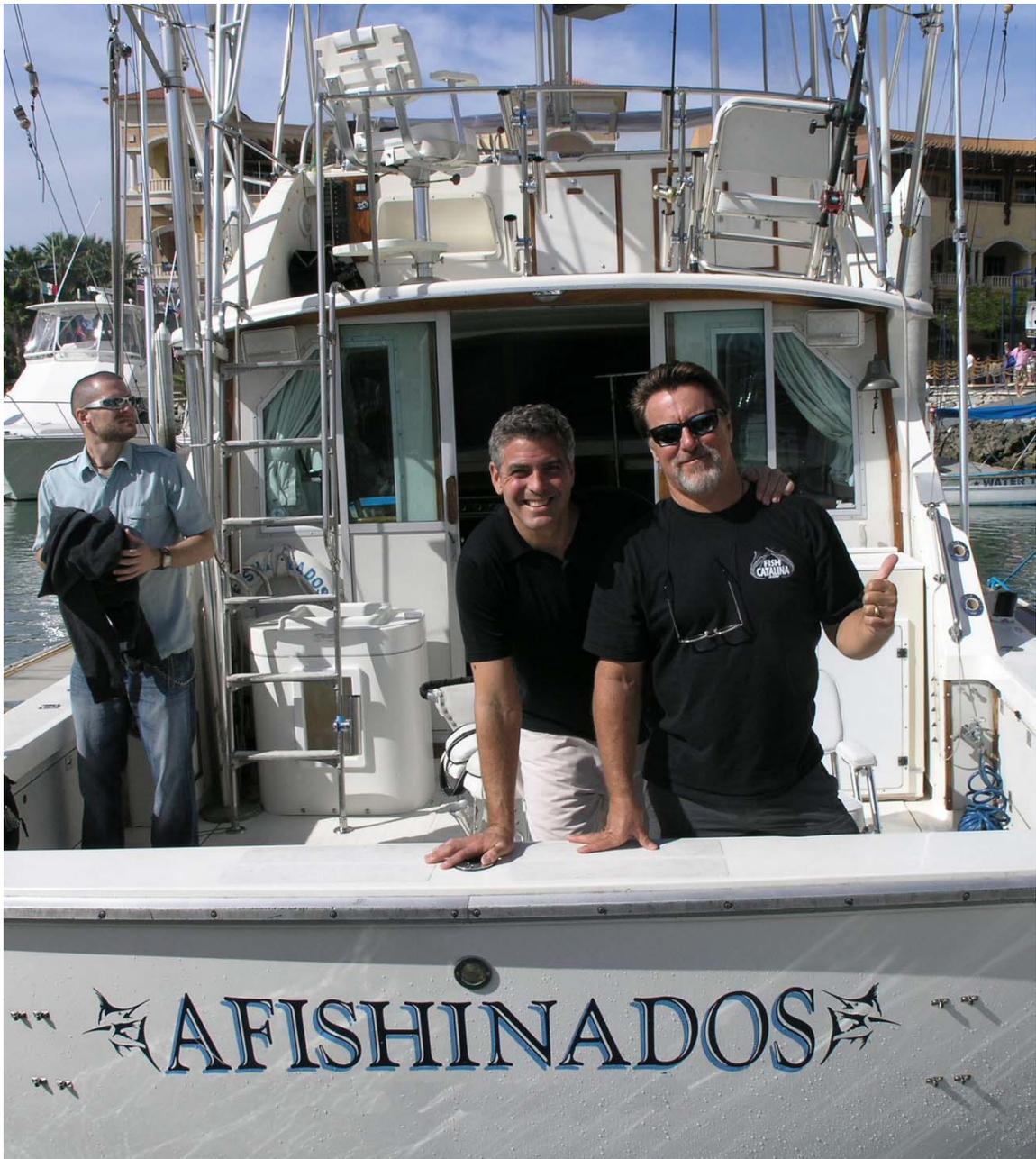
By John Afishinado King

My buddy Paul has a saying, and he has a knack for throwing this little saying out there right at the 'special moment'. Every journey into the blue has its special moment; whether it is when we are slowly motoring out of the harbor on a moonless night with nothing but darkness on the horizon and the stars above, or in the middle of a ripper bite, or after landing a nice fish or even while watching the last vestige of the sun as it steamily sinks into the Western sea. Even on days when the ocean is grumpy or downright rough and the wind is howling and you ask yourself how did I get here...even on those days, there is usually a 'special moment' such as when you make the turn into the protection of the harbor. One look at Paul and I know what's coming as a big grin creeps across his face and he blurts, "Livin' the dream baby!"

I made the decision to 'Live the Dream' about seven years ago. I had done the traveling salesman thing for a number of years and had the good fortune of building a company and selling it for enough money to quit talking and start living my dream. Everybody's dream is a bit different, I am sure. Mine was to toss the suits and ties, sell the traveling suit case, put on the shorts, Hawaiian shirts and flip flops, then try to make a living in the marine industry.

The plan has been going along fairly well, but there are days when the charter business is not what I had hoped, the fish are not biting, the customers are not fun. There are days when I feel like I am grubbing for every buck to cover the nut. My kids are heading off to college and we are discovering that an education is a lot more expensive than our financial plan had assumed. The bottom line is that I have made the transition. I am writing fishing stories, doing charters, running fishing tournaments and enjoying the marine life, but I am also spending more time than I had hoped just trying to figure out how to keep it all together. So, when I got a call from a friend with an offer to make a couple of bucks with my Captain's license, I was immediately interested.

I listened as my buddy said, "We are doing a photo shoot and we need a floating dressing room and water shuttle to get our talent to the shoot and back. Are you interested?" "Absolutely," I said, "It sounds fun." I did not even bother to ask who the 'talent' was going to be. I kind of figured it was better to not ask. The day of the shoot came and I was sitting on my boat with the engines running. We were under a schedule to get to the shoot by 9:00 a.m. The production folks showed up at the boat as planned, in tow with three beautiful women and one man. I recognized them immediately and was introduced to the ladies and to George Clooney, 'the talent'. "We're gonna need a bigga boat," I joked.



George requested permission and stepped aboard, then assisted his entourage. I climbed to the bridge deck and George looked up and asked, “Mind if I come up Captain?” “It’s your boat, come on up” I replied. We got underway and George was obviously enjoying being on a boat. It turns out he has one in Italy and that he can never get enough time on the water. I asked if he wanted to take the wheel, “You bet!” he replied. As I offered him the helm I had to remind him “Just don’t take her down like you did the Andrea Gale in The Perfect Storm.”

I have to admit, I am not “star struck”, in fact I generally think that it must be a real pain to be famous. But George Clooney, on my boat, now that is cool. I had to tell him about

the impact that *The Perfect Storm* has had on me and my fishing buddies. We inevitably mimic his lines from the movie when he is asking the young co-star, "So, you wanna be a sword fisherman..." We have created our own slightly off-color version of many of his lines from the movie and of course, when we are talking about going long for tuna or marlin, we cannot help but suggest to each other that we are heading for the "Flemish Cap." George Clooney, on my boat, now that *is* cool.

This guy is the ruler of his universe. He has power and influence. He is a wealthy, handsome bachelor that is adored by just about all women everywhere. He is the epitome of the modern star with all the trappings, a house or two in all the best places of the world, gorgeous women hoping for his attention, a daily figure on the cover of multiple magazines, and a guy with a reputation for being fun-loving and easy to get along with. On top of it all, he seems to have a good sense of who he is and he is pretty happy about life. This is a guy you could enjoy just hanging out with.

From the moment that we met, George was asking questions. He seemed genuinely interested in knowing about the boat and about my life and what I do and how I spend my time. I figured that he was preparing for another movie and was just doing some background research. Then he went silent for a bit. We stood on the bridge with the boat purring along a beautiful stretch of coast, just two guys enjoying a moment on the ocean. Then George looks over at me and he says, "You really got the life, my friend, you're living the dream."

I had to bust out laughing. His use of the line was so perfect and so shocking, for a moment I thought my buddy Paul must be on board. Even more shocking was to have a guy like George Clooney, who is on top of the world, share his sense of envy for the life I lead. Just as our fishing trips all seem to have these special moments that define the trip, so do our lives. I have to admit, George is right. Even when the fish are not biting and the customers are not fun. Even when the publishers do not want to buy my stories or the sponsors are reticent about supporting my tournaments. Through it all I have to admit, if you get a chance to chuck the suits and do something you love...do it.