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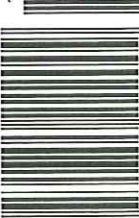
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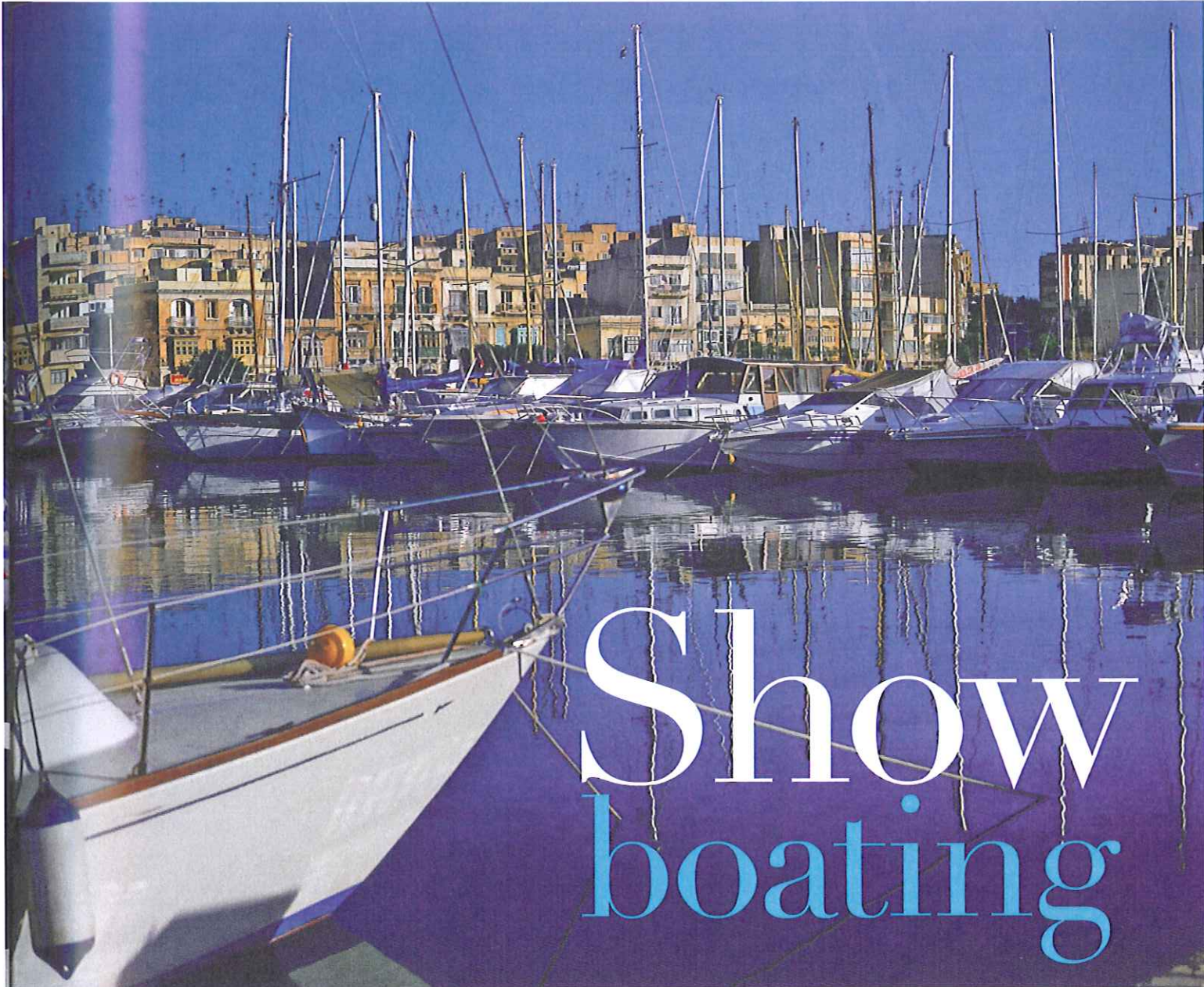
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Show boating

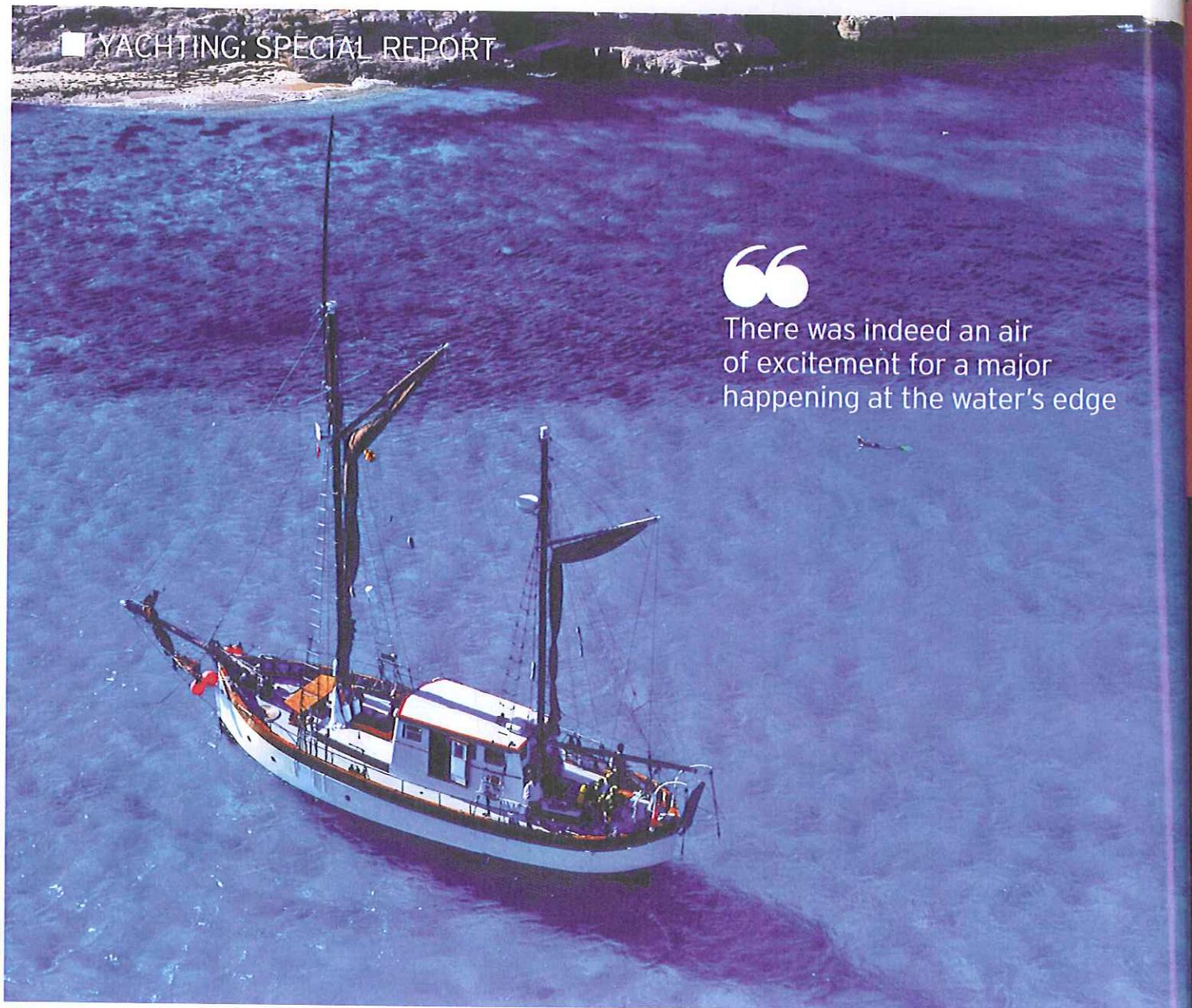
You could say that Malta is one of the world's oldest sea-faring nations; it certainly is one of the most deeply-rooted and established in the Mediterranean. George Papagiorcopulo reviews the island's largest boat show

SINCE THE TIME of the Phoenicians in the first millennium, Malta has always been a strategic maritime location; it's little wonder why. Set in the clear limpid waters of the central Mediterranean, the Maltese Islands continue to delight any yachtsman, even today. The island's 200km coastline is indented by harbours naturally sculptured out of the islands' soft limestone, the main one, mother of all indents – Marsamxett harbour. Here, against the stunning background of Valletta's centuries-old fortifications that climb proudly well above the shoreline – as if to continue to protect the city and its inhabitants as in days gone by – there was indeed an air of excitement for a major happening at the water's edge. The venue was the brand new Grand Hotel Excelsior, a magnificent setting for the island's very own Boat Show – in true maritime tradition that has gilted Malta's history over millennia. I caught up with John Formosa, organiser of the Valletta Boat Show, to find out more.

"We contracted out all the players to make sure our event has something for everyone," Mr Formosa

told me as we sipped chilled beer at the Excelsior's water's edge. "I can tell you that the response we had from companies was tremendous." He added, "We've been working on this for a very long time – since when we first realised that there is a void in our island's maritime calendar, in fact. We believe that Malta hasn't had its own boats-in-water show for far too long. I have no doubt that this year's event has been a great success, and it has attracted local and foreign boat enthusiasts. There's even more to come, too. Our intention is to develop this as a premier event on the international boats and yachting calendar, and we are already working on some exciting new plans for next year." The first Valletta Boat Show was organised in Malta, right in the heart of the Mediterranean, under the official patronage of the newly set-up Yachting Services Trade Section of the Malta Chamber of Commerce & Enterprise, and also of the Royal Malta Yacht Club.

For four magical days in September, the impressive yacht marina at the brand new Grand Excelsior Hotel in Floriana has been transformed >>



There was indeed an air of excitement for a major happening at the water's edge

into a boating haven for this first Valletta Boat Show, packed with everything for boating enthusiasts and their families and friends. The Show, which was also organised with the kind collaboration of a number of specialised local firms, including Bank of Valletta, Belair Properties, Citadel Insurance, Cutrico Services and Firetech Marine, is a spectacular day out for everyone with a passion for water and all things boating.

What a venue! The Grand Hotel Excelsior is a monument to ever-changing times, blending contemporary vision with the rich history that graces Marsamxett Harbour and Valletta. Moored within its picturesque yacht marina, the in-the-water feature boats at the first Valletta Boat Show certainly appealed to all generations of boating enthusiasts. Back on dry land, various boating-related products and services, selling everything from navigation equipment, furnishings, clothing, dinghies, safety equipment, and everything else, were on hand to explore at the show.

If you were looking to buy a boat and berth it in one of the splendid marinas that this island offers, kit one out with the latest equipment, or simply interested in getting a feel for boating to further savour this island's high-end lifestyle, experts were on hand to guide visitors, answer questions

and provide useful information. There were some great prizes up for grabs for the visitors too, including some great weekend breaks and dinners, compliments of the Grand Hotel Excelsior.

Buying a new boat?

There's no better place on the island to discover the very latest boats on offer, all under one roof, so to speak – in a splendid open-air marina, actually. Many of those who represent internationally known boat brand names appeared, guaranteeing a marina-full of new sailing and power boats for everyone to see. Valletta Boat show is certainly the place for you if you'd like to explore them all and compare offers before taking that all-important buying decision. In addition, if you need new parts, and want to make sure your boat's ship shape and ready for your next sail or adventure, Valletta has it all. Do you have all the latest gear? Top brands, technical clothing, and chandlery were all available – laid on for you to uncover, to make sure you have the right gear for the right conditions.

For refreshments, and a place to just sit and watch the world go by, there is plenty on offer throughout the days and evenings as well, with stylish and vibrant snacks on hand. ■

Let's meet



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