

# THE EAST HAMPTON STAR

SHINES FOR ALL

## Mystery Pyrotechnics

*Yacht owner sends up \$40,000 display off Montauk*

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Montauk received a holiday gift Saturday night courtesy of a yacht that sailed in over the weekend. Its owner reportedly paid upward of \$40,000 for a spectacular fireworks display that was launched just outside the jetty at about 9:20.

The yacht, called Quantum of Solace, was itself a huge attraction as one of the biggest luxury yachts to have come to the hamlet. For the



A fireworks display for an unidentified owner or charter client aboard the Quantum of Solace, a 171-foot yacht registered in the Cayman Islands, was an unexpected treat for many in Montauk on Saturday night.

Janis Hewitt

entire day Saturday gawkers drove down to the end of Star Island Road to see the vessel where it was docked in two local dragger fishermen's spaces for fueling. The fishermen were reimbursed for the inconvenience with cases of beer.

Word was spread on Facebook about the private fireworks show. Many thought it was a Montauk Chamber of Commerce event, but the chamber put on its own fireworks display on Monday, the Fourth. Both displays were handled by Fireworks by Grucci.

The yacht owner, who had obtained a mass-gathering permit to erect a tent on the grounds of the yacht club for a private party on the same night, had asked to launch the fireworks from Lake Montauk, but East Hampton Town officials turned him down. The permit application for the fireworks was sponsored by the Montauk Yacht Club and signed by Ed Rubio, a Grucci employee.

"The lake is too fragile for something like that," Supervisor Bill Wilkinson said. "We were also concerned with the piping plovers and losing control of the traffic because the police were handling three other fireworks events on that night."

Mr. Wilkinson said the permit, issued for state waters outside the jetty, came from the Coast Guard station in New Haven. "He took it outside the town's jurisdiction," he said of the yacht owner.

Jason Walter, the senior chief of the Montauk Coast Guard station, confirmed that the permit was issued from New Haven and said he had a copy of it. The New Haven port has jurisdiction in waters from Montauk Point to New York City, he said.

"The only issue was that the barge did not use the approved location to launch the fireworks," Mr. Walter said. "There were no safety issues, and over all the event was safe and successful."

Travis Cortopassi, the senior chief in New Haven, said the display was a "perfectly legal" event. Reached by phone Tuesday, he declined to give the boat owner's name. "I can tell you that the name of the company that put it on was Grucci."

The day after the event, talk of it was rampant in Montauk. The display was elaborate and went on for more than 20 minutes. People stood on both the east and west sides of the jetty and filled the parking lot at Gosman's restaurant to watch. Others could see it from their houses and from beaches near the harbor area.

The Montauk chamber's fireworks Monday night were a bit fogged in but no less spectacular. Diners poured out of restaurants and swarmed Montauk's Main Street to watch the display at an impromptu street party. Motorists coming upon the crowd in the middle of the road didn't know what to make of it. Some of them were shouted at for driving too fast but most slowed down and maneuvered through the crowd safely.

People have been stopping in at the chamber to say how great the fireworks were, Karin Wanag, a chamber employee, said.

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by **ehrez** | July 8, 2011 - 4:07pm

The general consensus on the dock is that the yacht is chartered by, if not owned by, the owner of Montauk YC. The commercial fisherman who sublet their dock space on the Town owned commercial dock, which is leased yearly at a fraction of its actual worth to subsidize fisherman on the taxpayers' dime, should lose their lease and the Town should go to the next boat on the long list of fisherman who covet those spots. Beer or no beer, they do not have right to sublet those commercial dock spots. No mention was made of the fact that the mega yacht took on 40,000 gallons of fuel over the weekend from home heating trucks which was recently, strictly, prohibited publicly by the Town Board. It has been said, again on the dock, that the boat is headed for Europe and tanked up for the voyage at the Town's commercial dock. As for the fireworks, as long as they got a permit and observed sound safety practices I say bring it on, and do it annually. Anything to attract tourism in the dock area would be most welcomed by local merchants and service providers. We went from Star Island to Devon that night by boat, which was excellent, but if we could have saved the fuel costs and stayed in our own waters we would have. I don't think the fireworks are the issue here and the Board is missing the big picture.