



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 083 – Sailing Into Deep Waters with Paul Trammell
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00:05

Welcome to the Athena Wellness podcast, the show that invites you to take a seat around the community fire and listen to stories that inspire. I'm your host, Kathy Robinson, author, coach and founder of Athena Wellness, a company that's dedicated to supporting you on your journey to live more wholeheartedly.

00:30

Hello and welcome to Episode 83. Thanks so much for joining me.

Have you ever dreamed of leaving your current life behind to sail the tropics? I know I have. When I was in my 30s I remember buying every book I could find on couples who did just that. They bought a boat, learned to sail and set off for the islands.

I did my research and found it was actually doable. Thankfully, I aligned that dream with my innate personality preferences, and realized that my Taurean Earth nature would not be a good match to living on the water full-time.

My guest today, Paul Trammell, did a similar assessment, but he came to a very different conclusion. And he takes us on a story-filled journey from growing up in West Virginia, to becoming a teacher for a brief period of time, before settling on the northern Florida coast as a musician and a carpenter.

When Paul decided to get sober, he promised himself a one week sailing class as a reward when he reached his one year sobriety anniversary. That trip was the gateway to the life he lives today as a writer and a sailor, living aboard his boat full-time.

Here's what we cover:

- An overview of Paul's journey that brought him to being a full-time solo sailor;



- The decision process to completely leave his old life behind;
- How sobriety supported turning his dream into a reality;
- A glimpse into the depth, presence and intentionality of the solo sailing life; and
- What big dream is on his horizon.

Paul was incredibly generous with his time, so this is a long episode. But it's rare to come across someone who turned his dream life into a living reality. And what I love about Paul's approach is how he designed his life to align with what matters most to him: nature, adventure, creativity, and solitude.

This episode is sure to give you some inspiring and practical ideas on how to redesign your life to live more wholeheartedly and turn your dream into a reality. And as always, I'll put links to Paul's contact information, his books, podcast and his socials in the show notes.

And now onto the show. I hope you enjoy the conversation.

Kathy

Paul, welcome to The Athena Wellness Podcast. Thank you so much for being here.

03:29 Paul

Oh, it's my pleasure. Thanks for having me.

03:31 Kathy

So please, share a bit about who you are and what you do.

03:35 Paul

Well, I live on a sailboat and I'm currently in Panama. And I'm an author. I left land two years ago yesterday, it was actually two years.

Kathy

Wow, congratulations.

Paul



Yeah, I bought this boat two years ago in Massachusetts. And a few months before that, I sold my house, which I had owned for probably 20 years. And that was the big break from living on land. I sold the house and bought the boat and haven't really been back.

I've lived on the boat the whole time. I've had to live on the boat, you know, in a marina a couple of times, and on the hard when the boat's out of the water when I'm working on it. I had to do that for about eight months at one point. But other than that, I've been sailing in the Bahamas and now Panama.

04:23 Kathy

Unbelievable. We're going to get into life on the sea. But tell me a little bit about life on land before you decided to become a sailor. Where did you grow up and how did you make a living as an adult before doing what you do now?

04:37 Paul

Well, I grew up in West Virginia and went to college in Melbourne, Florida, studied biology. I didn't really know what to do after college. So my senior year I applied for graduate school at WVU, my home state of West Virginia. I went back and spent three more years in school.

I still really wasn't sure what to do for a profession. I ended up teaching school for one year and that was probably the worst year of my life teaching ninth grade at a boarding school (laughter). It just was not for me.

I ended up moving back to Florida and getting a job as a carpenter. And I had a variety of jobs in the beginning of my first five years or so in Florida, but carpentry, which was always sort of a backup job, ended up being my career because my main dream when I was living in Florida for 23 years was to be a musician. And carpentry is a good job for an aspiring musician because you can sort of set your own schedule and you never have to work at night.

So I was a musician for 20-23 years, guitar player in various bands and eventually that all sort of changed all of a sudden when I quit drinking. And then I developed, all of the sudden I had a new dream, which was to be a sailor and a writer.



I spent a few years planning and preparing and trying to figure out how to make that work and eventually, you know, two years ago, pulled the trigger and left land for good, hopefully.

06:15 Kathy

Hmmm. It sounds like the two things that you were doing, carpenter and musician, come in very handy in your life now - being able to do what you need to do onboard as well as entertaining yourself. So it sounds like that was a good prelude.

06:29 Paul

Oh, yeah. To be a sailor, you really have to know how to fix things because there's nobody else out here to do it for you. You can't just hire somebody to work on your boat. I mean, sometimes you can, but it's extremely expensive if you can find someone and if you're out at sea, there's nobody, it's just you.

So you have to have some kind of mechanical inclination just to do it at all. But to have been a professional carpenter, I'm able to do most of the work on my boat. Otherwise it wouldn't have been possible. It's just too expensive to hire someone to do that kind of work. Anything that has to do with a boat is like double the price of what it would be otherwise, labor included.

07:14 Kathy

Have you ever been in a position where you had to MacGyver something, you know, like duct tape and toothpaste and...

07:21 Paul

Oh yeah. Oh, you bet, you bet I have. I was sailing from North Carolina to the Bahamas when I just bought this boat. I'd had the boat for about three months and I've been working on it quite a bit, but it's an old boat, it's a 1972. And I was probably 300 miles from land on the other side of the Gulf Stream, sailing south from North Carolina straight to the Bahamas and the alternator quit working.

Now you can sail without an alternator but you need to have electricity because you've got instruments running and at night you turn your lights on. So you need electricity.



Now I've got solar panels, so I should have been alright, however, during this passage my solar panels were always sort of facing away from the sun, so they weren't charging the battery. So I had to do something.

And, you know, one of the things that I could have done was turn and go back to the United States and go into a marina somewhere and buy a new alternator, so that was one of the plans. But I was just determined to get to the Bahamas. I did not want to have to do that.

So the alternator quit working because the positive terminal post broke off. So where the big fat wire connects to it, connects it to the battery actually, so it was not it was not able to charge the battery because the connection of the wire to the battery broke off. It's a post, it's like steel, it's basically a bolt that sticks out of the alternator. It's sheared right off, right flush with the alternator so there's no way to put that wire back on.

So I had some time to think about it. I had a day or two before the batteries were going to run all the way out. And finally I got an idea. I tried various things, various things that didn't work. (laughs) Finally, I got an idea.

It was a calm evening and I thought to myself, you know if I could drill a hole in that post, I could drive a different screw into it. And then I could somehow attach the big wire to that screw. So I got out my drill and the smallest drill bit and very carefully drilled a hole in the center of the broken post. And then I made the hole bigger and bigger until I was able to drive a wood screw straight from my trim carpentry days. A stainless steel wood screw that I drove into the hole of the steel post and then put the wire on that. And then wrapped a bunch of copper wire around it to connect it and then put an alligator clip on top of that, and then wrapped it up with tape.

I mean, it looked ridiculous. But it worked, at least until I got almost to the Bahamas and then it broke again. (laughs) It got me there. I made it to the Bahamas. I pulled in with no alternator.

And you know, I think one or two things broke every day on that trip. I didn't have all my lights working, the alternator didn't work, lots of things. I didn't have gas, my gas stove quit



working because the solenoid broke. Yeah, I had to MacGyver a few things on that trip. And that's common.

10:24 Kathy

Yeah, I'd say all that goes into the tank right now. The next time that happens, it's like, "Oh, I know what I could do." You're learning as you go.

10:31 Paul

Yeah, you bet. You bet. You gain experience that way. And, you know, the funny thing is, you tell a story like that to someone who's been sailing for a long time, and it's just something they've heard a hundred times and something they've done. Because it's common for that sort of stuff to happen. It's difficult for anything to exist on a sailboat in a saltwater environment, always getting shaken and rocked and bounced around. It's a tough life for any kind of equipment on a boat. Things don't last very long.

11:00 Kathy

Mmhmmm. So tell me, growing up in West Virginia, how did a kid growing up there get so interested in water and wanting to live on water? Or was that the driver?

11:11 Paul

Well, when I was very young, we lived in Louisiana. And at one point, my father had his own sailboat on Lake Pontchartrain in New Orleans. He got interested in offshore sailing. And he took me on, he would occasionally go on an offshore trip, like from Florida to the Bahamas, and about once a year for a few years. And you would either take me or my brother, we would alternate.

So that's how I was introduced to it. And I'll never forget the first time that I saw the ocean, 360 degrees of ocean and no land. You look around and you don't see land, like that's a big deal to a kid, or to anybody, but especially to, you know, a 10 or 12 year old.

I remember waking up and coming upstairs and looking around and not seeing land for the first time. And it was just amazing to me. You can kind of see the curvature of the earth. There's no land anywhere, it's weird. And you can kind of picture a map of the world and where you are on it.



And it still gets me, you know, when I'm out there. Every time I'm out there, I think the same thing. I think, well, I'm on this little patch of the earth, that's roughly seven miles in radius, you know, 14 miles in diameter is what you can see. A 14 mile diameter circle, and there's no one else in it, it's just me. It's my own little private patch of the earth right now. It's an amazing feeling. And I've never forgotten that, that feeling of it as a kid of seeing that.

So that was my introduction to sailing. When I went to school in Florida, I got way into surfing and scuba diving and really fell in love with the ocean. And to me, the ocean, the big attraction of the ocean to me really is just that it's nature. It's like the woods, you know, forest, but it's just massive. It's two thirds of the earth. It's huge.

You know, I love being deep in nature, whether it's the forest or the ocean, and the ocean is the deepest you can get into nature. In my experience, when you're 300 miles from land and there's no one around, you have this feeling of being extremely deep in nature, more so than I've ever felt in a forest

13:30 Kathy

What are some of the, maybe one or two, of the deepest connections that you've had, whether it was with another creature or just the natural elements. Can you describe one or two of those moments that, even after all of these years and all of this time, it still takes your breath away in awe.

13:48 Paul

Sure. I've had some great wildlife encounters. Some have been terrifying and others have just been just awe inspiring and wonderful. And one of the wonderful, well gosh, two come to mind.

One is sailing, same trip I was just talking about where my alternator broke, I was having a really nice day. I was standing up at the helm steering the boat. And so I'm looking out. When you're steering the boat, you're looking at the ocean for hours at a time. And all of a sudden, a whale jumped out of the water out in front of me, just all the way out of the water, just out of the blue. Like you haven't seen anything for days and all of a sudden, this huge creature the size of a school bus leaps all the way out of the water and did it three more times. And you literally just cheer and yell, "Whoa!" It's just an amazing sight.



And then another time that was really cool. I was diving, freediving, in the Bahamas and snorkeling on a reef, Sandy Key, it's a protected no fishing area, a nice protected reef. And I saw something big and dark, you know, a big dark shadow in the distance coming in my general direction. And I thought, "Oh, wow, what's this gonna be?" You never know what you're going to see when you're in the ocean, it could be anything.

My first thought was it was a manta ray, because it was really big and close to the bottom. And then I realized it was an extremely large spotted eagle ray. Not just one, a whole school of them, probably a dozen, and they're like eight feet across.

You know, it's a ray. So it looks kind of like a manta or a stingray, but the tail is long and whip-like and like 10 feet long. The rays are spotted, like a leopard. And they have, the funny thing about eagle rays is they have a body underneath the wing. So most rays are kind of flat and they have no kind of, there's kind of a lump of the body above the wing and that's it.

The eagle rays have a body of, almost like a dolphin under the wing and they have a head that sticks out in front of it. So they have a face. They have this funny goofy looking face. And they're huge and they look like alien spacecraft. And they glide just above the bottom slowly. And I was able to swim with them.

Kathy

Oh wow.

Paul

And swim along with them and swim down to them and to get right up next to them. And you can see that they're stingrays. They have a barb, they have this big barb the size of like a large hunting knife, right by their tail. It's jagged and you see it and you know, like, "Okay, don't get close enough to make these things nervous." (laughs). You know, rays are not aggressive, they're passive animals. And they have that weapon, but it's defensive. It's not an offensive weapon, it's defense. And they'll let you swim right next to them. You just don't do anything stupid, like grab a hold of them. So that was just a wonderful wildlife experience.

16:45 Kathy



It's one thing to MacGyver an alternator, it's another thing to MacGyver yourself, right?

16:52 Paul

(laughs) Yes, absolutely. You know, I've got some serious first aid kit onboard. And I do everything in my power not to have to use it.

You have to be very careful living on a sailboat. You have to move slowly. You have to always hold on. You have to always think. When you're offshore and you're sailing and the boat's rocking and moving around you, you don't just stand up and do something. You think about what you're going to do and you think about all the steps involved in doing this.

And this can be something as simple as moving from the cockpit to down below. You don't just get up and do it. You think, "Okay, I'm going to go down below. First thing I'm going to do is grab a hold of this and then step the right leg over there," and then I think about all the steps and then I do it.

And I try to do things like that the exact same way every time. So that you get your safe method and then that's what you do every single time. Because if you make one mistake, especially when you're sailing by yourself, you can make one mistake and all of a sudden you're overboard and your boat is sailing away from you and you'll never see your boat again and you're treading water.

I carry a PLB (personal locator beacon) on my life jacket so I could, hopefully, be rescued because of that. It's a satellite SOS device. But still, I would be treading water for a day, two days, (laughs) just hoping.

So, like I said, you do everything you can not to fall over. My life jacket also has two tethers with clips on the ends of them and I'm always 100% of the time wearing that life jacket even when I sleep. And when I'm not down below, I'm always clipped in. I'm always clipped to something. I'm always attached to the boat. It's kind of like wearing your seatbelt in a car. You just, I just do it all the time. So, always trying to be safe.

18:39 Kathy

Mindfulness and presence abounds, right? You have to, there's no choice.



18:45 Paul

It is, you have to be. You have to be very present, very in the moment. And there's a lot of time for meditation and just being clear-minded and just staring at the ocean. There is an endless amount of that when you're offshore.

And sometimes there's a lot to see, sometimes there's dolphin. Sometimes there's strange things jumping out of the water. There's usually nothing, usually you're just looking at waves. But the waves are constantly moving and it's this bizarre landscape that is always in motion. And every day you see the sunrise and every day you see the sunset. And if it's not cloudy, you see stars every night. If it's a clear night, you see stars like you'd never believe, so many and sometimes shooting stars are pretty common to see. I saw 13 shooting stars on one of my passages in the Bahamas this year. Fantastic. You know, it's wonderful to see that many.

19:40 Kathy

What's so amazing is that, you know, the way you're describing your life, a lot of people will be listening to this and it seems like it's so unusual. But what's really unusual is that the rest of us, we're in this constant motion just like you are, and we are oblivious to it. You're just noticing it. You're in a place where you can actually see that and experience that. It's all happening around us, too, but we're just so involved in whatever life is bringing us. So I just think that's a fascinating parallel.

20:15 Paul

Yes. I've really simplified my life. You know, it's just me and the boat. And there's no driving to work, there's no traffic, there's no cars. There are no people distracting me all the time. Being a writer, I'm self-employed now. And yeah, I live a life where there's almost nothing to distract me.

I also live a life that's almost completely stress free. Which is something I've always sort of selected before, you know, throughout my life. One of the reasons I didn't like that one year of teaching was because it was incredibly stressful.



And I just don't want that at any price. I'd rather be poor and stress free and happy than have a steady job that I hated. That's really something I'm not willing to do at all is have a job I don't like. Because that's where you spend all your time.

21:09 Kathy

And you have made these huge, huge changes. And these changes don't happen overnight. I mean, you were teaching a couple of decades ago, right? And then you had all of these other jobs, you bought a house, you were putting down roots. So when did this start to take shape? What was that decision making process like - selling your house is not a small decision, right? So how did this all kind of come together?

21:33 Paul

Yes, there were definitely some key turning points in my life. And there were two major turning points that led to where I am now.

The first was, I was at a party. And I saw a friend who did not have a drink in his hand. And I said, "Hey, Jim, how are you doing?" My friend Jim, he was smiling. I remember he looked nice, like he had on nice clothes. And I said, "Do you want a beer?" And he said, "No, I quit drinking."

And I had known at that point that I needed to quit. There had been a couple of years that I had consciously been thinking about, like someday I've got to quit because I drink way too much.

So Jim told me he didn't drink and I said, "Wow, you know, how, how did you do it? And why did you do it?" And Jim said, "Well, my brother died." His brother was younger than me at the time when he died. And his brother died from a lifetime of heavy drinking. He died of internal organ failure, a long slow, miserable death. And that was something that clicked in my head right then and there.

The next day, I was terribly hungover, had a bad day, skipped work, watched Netflix all day, ordered a pizza from Domino's that almost made me throw up. You know, that was my rock bottom, which is not very rock bottom at all compared to most people, you know. That's not a very impressive rock bottom, but for me that was it. Like I'm skipping work, I'm basically watching TV all day and I don't watch TV, but Netflix is as close as I get to it.



And I said, "This is it - I've got to quit." And I did. And that's a whole story in itself but I quit drinking right then and there and never went back. That was key turning point number one.

The second one came almost a year into not drinking. I was looking for big adventures. I had always been an adventurous person, but all the heavy drinking and partying I'd been doing sort of took the place of that. The more I drank, the less I got into the wilderness because I had to have a cooler full of beer. You know, I couldn't go backpacking. I didn't drink liquor. I drank beer. I can't go backpacking as a heavy beer drinker, unless I'm hauling a cooler, so...

Kathy

Rolling a keg...

Paul

Yeah. So I would go, you know, car camping instead of backpacking. And so anyway, I'm looking for big adventures and somebody suggested the Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia. It's a 650 square mile wilderness area that's all swamp and there are canoe trails throughout the swamp. And there are platforms, there are probably a dozen platforms spread out over 650 square miles, a dozen platforms that you can camp on.

And so the way you do it is you call the office and they help you pick a time because only one group is allowed on each platform at a time. So we scheduled a five day canoe trip for me and every day you paddle your canoe about five or ten miles. And at the end of the day, you find this platform, it's just out in the middle of nowhere in a swamp. It may or may not have alligators on it and you set up your tent and camp.

24:57

It was fantastic. It was deep wilderness. It was a huge adventure. And one morning, I think it was the second day, I'm paddling along and I had this feeling like, "Wow, this is so much fun being nomadic, moving every day. I'm on the water."



I'm like, "This reminds me of something. This reminds me of something wonderful. What is it? What is it? What is it? Oh, it reminds me of being on a sailboat. It reminds me of the first time I looked around and all I saw was water."

Because now I'm looking around and all I see is this marsh in the swamp and alligators and I'm moving. I'm on a boat. And it was like a lightbulb went off in my head. I have to be a sailor. I need to get back into sailing.

Sailing is the big adventure that I've been looking for. That's what it is. And now that I don't drink, I can do it. Because I knew I wanted to be a sailor. But you can't when you have to drink a 12 pack a day. You just can't do it. You can't bring enough beer. You can't sail offshore drunk. Even people who drink and who sail don't drink when they sail offshore.

So that was a big turning point. After the Okefenokee trip, I went home and I got on Amazon and I found a book, a nonfiction sailing book. In fact, I remember which one - it's called *Get Real, Get Gone* by Rick Page and Jasna Tuta. It's kind of a step by step, how to quit your job and buy a boat, live on a boat, you know, it sort of walks you through that whole process.

Well, that was just the beginning. I read every nonfiction sailing book I could get my hands on and learned a lot just by doing that. And then for my one year sobriety gift to myself, which I'd been saving cash for, I bought a one week sailing class. And that really lit the fire.

I went on a couple of trips. I found a couple of offshore trips with other people I was able to do. One of them was through Crewbay, a website where you can, as somebody who wants to sail but doesn't have a boat, you can find boats who need crew. I sailed from St. Lucia to Puerto Rico with a guy I met through Crewbay.

And then soon after I got home, one of my friends invited me to go to the Bahamas with him and another guy. That was a funny trip. The guy who owned the boat didn't know how to sail at all, literally at all. My friend knew how to sail and I kind of knew and between the three of us we made it happen. There was some Macgyvering on that trip, too. (laughter)



But anyway, that year I bought my first sailboat. So the same year I took my one week class, I bought a 30-foot boat in Tampa, Florida on the west coast of Florida. I spent two months working on it and learning how to sail it, learning how to sail by myself.

That was my first time sailing by myself, too. I learned how to singlehand, also heavily influenced by books. There's a book called *Singlehanded Sailing* by Andrew Evans, which is just chock full of information directly how to sail by yourself, how to sail a boat offshore by yourself, how to tack, how to jibe, how to sleep, how to eat – just such good information, it's like the bible of offshore sailing singlehanded. And not just offshore, he also races.

And then gosh, other books that were extremely influential Bernard Moitessier, a French singlehand sailor wrote a lot of good books. *The Long Way* is the classic and it's about him entering the very first singlehand around the world non-stop race in 1968. No one had done it before. Nobody had sailed around the world alone non-stop unassisted before and so there was a race to see who could do it.

He would have won. He got all the way... It started and finished in Falmouth, England. And he got all the way around the world. And the route is south to the Cape of Good Hope. And then around the Southern Ocean all the way around the world in the Southern Ocean around the south of everything. And then back to England. He got all the way around and decided not to go back to England but to continue and to go all the way, all the way around again in Tahiti. (laughs) He decided he wanted to go to Tahiti instead of England so he sailed around the world one and two thirds times, even though he could have won the race. Anyway, he wrote a book while he was doing that called *The Long Way* and that's another classic book that's influenced a lot of singlehand sailors.

29:30 Kathy

But isn't that the point that it wasn't about the race? That's the learning, it's not about the race. Like, "You want to know what? No, I want to go here and I can." I mean, that's a wonderful lesson in itself.

29:45 Paul

Exactly. That is exactly the point. You get out on the ocean and it doesn't really matter so much where you're going. Often the wind changes direction while you're out and you have to go somewhere else. That happens to me in the Bahamas all the time. You leave one



island thinking you're going to a different Island and halfway there, the wind changes direction. You either have to take the sails down and turn on the engine and motor against the wind and the waves to where you want to go or you just change course and go somewhere else. And there's a lot of islands there. Why not, you know? So I just go where the wind blows.

Kathy

Hmmm, literally.

Paul

Yeah, that is the point, to enjoy yourself and to go where you want to go.

30:29 Kathy

So you take that week sailing lesson, you go out and you buy a boat that same year, work on it, learn how to sail mostly through books it sounds like but then you have to get it back to where you were living, which was a solo journey, right?

30:49 Paul

Yes, St. Petersburg to St. Augustine via the ocean is 1000 miles. And that's a trip I'll never be able to repeat. It was just such a wonderful adventurous experience full of unknowns.

Now I left St Petersburg not knowing if I was going to enjoy sailing offshore by myself, not knowing if I was going to be able to sleep, not knowing if I was going to be terrified at night. You know, my first night at sea alone, like am I going to be scared to death, is this going to be awful, am I going to hate this? (laughs) Am I gonna be seasick? Am I going to be able to sleep at all?

My next destination was the Dry Tortugas. So I cut it up. I got the 1000 mile journey into three legs. It was St. Pete to the Dry Tortugas, Dry Tortugas to Miami, Miami to St Augustine. And I wrote a book about it. It's called *Becoming a Sailor*. And it was a fantastic journey. I loved it.

You know, there were some scary points. But I loved being offshore, I was able to sleep no problem. Now I only sleep 20 minutes at a time when I'm offshore. And I've got instruments to detect other boats. And it sets off an alarm on my boat and they have, most other



boats have the same thing. It's called AIS. So it alerts both of us to who we are, where we are, whether or not we're going to run into each other, how close we're going to come, what our relative speeds are, there's a lot of information to work with.

And you kind of set the parameters to set off an alarm. So I typically have the alarm go off if I'm going to come within a mile and a half or two miles of somebody else. The alarm wakes me up, hopefully with about 15 minutes before and you figure out whether or not you need to change course or you just call him up on the VHF radio.

You've got the name of the boat right there on the instrument, call him right up and talk to him. Because it's often a tanker or a cruise ship or a cargo ship, you know. Cargo ships and tankers don't, they can't really change course, they're too big. They're going 20 knots sometimes. They're like 1000 feet long sometimes. They're not, they can't really change course. You have to make sure they don't hit you. (laughter)

But they're very professional. You call them on the radio, they're very happy to talk to you and to help you decide if you need to turn port or starboard or sometimes they'll decrease their speed, you know, to make sure you don't hit them, they can do that. And they can change course. It's just an extremely long, slow process. Cruise ships, I've had cruise ships offer to change course before. Everybody on the ocean is very professional and very happy to talk.

But on my second night of that first trip, I came across a fleet of shrimp boats, one of the most difficult things to come across because they're busy, they're fishing, they have right of way because there are fishing boats, they're dragging huge nets, they're changing directions. And there's like a dozen of them all zigzagging around this huge area that encompasses the entire horizon. You look at them, you can't really tell what you're seeing because they don't have the typical red and green lights. Most boats have lights you can look at and interpret which direction they're going. Not so with the shrimp boats.

And I was timid and a novice and I don't think I called any of them on the radio, which is what I should have done. I should have gotten right on the radio and started calling them. But I didn't and it was pitch black night and the wind was blowing about 20 knots and I'm a total novice. I'm trying to go around these shrimp boats.



At one point I thought a boat was trying to run me down. I finally got to where I thought I was going around him and I saw this boat change course. And I thought to myself, "This guy is just coming right at me, what do I do? What do I do now that the engine is running at full power, the wind is pushing me. I can't go any faster."

I was just exasperated and I was exhausted. Then I realized, "Oh, I'm looking at his stern. He's going away from me." Thank goodness. (laughs) I got around the boats and pulled into the Dry Tortugas the next day and dropped anchor and took a nice long nap. And then after a few days I left and had probably one of the best sailing days ever.

35:17

The second day of that trip, I was in the Straits of Florida, the area between the Florida Keys and Cuba. And it was a bright sunny day and the water was just this gorgeous bright blue color. There were seagulls flying around eating things. I remember there was a ton of Portuguese man o' war in the water. They're purple and they float. They look like they're not something you want to see when you're in the water.

But when you're in a boat, they just look like little purple jewels on the water floating around decorating the water and I was on a nice point of sail and just cruising along, having the greatest time. I remember just thinking, "This is exactly what I came for. This is wonderful. Way, way out here, fifty miles from America and another fifty from Cuba."

That was a fantastic journey. It really was. I had some scary moments going around Cape Canaveral. Yeah, I look back on it. I wasn't in any danger, but it was rough. And it was cold. It was January. It was rough seas and contrary winds. And when the wind blows against the Gulf Stream current, it creates nasty waves quickly. So I had some uncomfortable times. But I eventually got around that and got all the way to St. Augustine, pulled up to a mooring and caught the mooring and tied off. And it was like magic.

I bought this boat on the other side of Florida and somehow I had gotten it there. And it just seemed really surreal. You get those feelings every now and then on a sailboat that it's just so surreal sometimes to realize how much distance you've covered on this wind powered craft that just moves along without making any noise. It's kind of magical.

37:03 Kathy



So you have this amazing, your first voyage, and it solidified this vision of, "Yeah, this is what I want to do." You dock and now you're back in St. Augustine. So what happens, were you sure at that point in time? Like, yep, house is going on the market and this is what I need to do. What was that planning like?

37:24 Paul

Well, at that point, that was a few years before the house went on the market. At that point I realized this is a great thing. I love it. That was a 30 foot boat. It wasn't big enough. I mean, I could have lived on it. But it wasn't really big enough to live on. But definitely, the dream was happening.

And I spent a lot of time thinking about how I was going to make it happen. Because you have to make money. We all have to make money one way or another. And I didn't have a good plan for how to make money while living on a boat. That was the big thing I had to figure out.

And I think it was that year that I wrote my first book, *Alcoholics Not Anonymous, A Modern Way to Quit Drinking*. And when that book started selling to strangers, when I realized there are actually strangers buying my book, like people that don't know me. I figured my parents probably bought the first 10 or 20 copies. I figured some relatives bought a few too but after 50 or 100 books sold I realized there are legitimate strangers buying my book and that made me realize, "Okay, I've got to keep this going." So I wrote *Becoming a Sailor*, which was about the trip we just talked about. And that book did really well and still sells fairly well.

And what really solidified the question of "Can I live on a boat and be comfortable?" was in 2018, I sailed that same boat to the Bahamas and spent two months sailing around the Bahamas. I wrote a book about that too. It's called *Journey to the Ragged Islands*, that's probably my best seller.

That was a fantastic adventure and when I got home from that I remember thinking I could have stayed indefinitely. I wasn't tired. When you come back from camping for a week or so, you know, you're dirty, your clothes all smell like smoke, your back kind of hurts because you haven't been sleeping very well and you're stiff and you've got blisters on your feet maybe. You're so glad to be home.



Well that didn't happen on this trip. I remember thinking like, "Yeah, I feel fine. I feel I could have stayed on the boat another month, two months, a year. I can live on a boat. Like, it's clear now, I can live on a sailboat."

And since my books were selling, especially that one that took off and sold really well - I mean, I say really well relatively. I'm not talking about making serious money here, but well enough to keep me going. And that's when I started realizing there's a good chance I could be a writer and a sailor just like Bernard Moitessier, who wrote *The Long Way*. That's what I really wanted to do - sail to interesting places and write about them.

So the dream was alive at that point. And I figured, if I can keep writing one book a year and they keep selling this well. Now, I do a lot of math, we're talking, you know, grade school math here, but that's all it takes to figure out if a plan is going to work or not. And I estimated how much money I'm going to need to live on. You know, you just add up how much food you eat, what that costs, and what your bills are. And what you're going to spend on diesel and water. And figuring out how much a boat costs to own is not straightforward at all. That's kind of the big variable. But it started looking like it could work.

And eventually, you know, I had been sober and everything was changing. One of my strategies to staying sober is to do everything differently. Don't just change that one thing about yourself. It's a big change, you're a different person. And you need to remind yourself of that, you change as much as you can.

If you're going for a big change like that, it's going to be hard to maintain. It's good to have other symbolic changes that remind you, you know. It's symbolism - using symbolism to convince yourself that you are different now. You will not go back to the person you used to be.

41:15

I can't go back to that person. I am the same person obviously, but I can't go back to that old habit of drinking heavily and smoking. I was a pot smoker, too. So I'm totally sober now. Coffee is my only addictive drug. (laughs)



You have to reinvent yourself to quit drinking, to quit an addictive drug. And it's an opportunity. It's an opportunity to reinvent yourself. You can change other things for the better. So I started losing interest in being a musician. It wasn't as much fun as it was before. And I wanted to live on a boat and sail and be nomadic.

So eventually the time came - finances kind of came to a point where I was able to fix up my house and get it ready to sell. And I put it on the market aggressively and sold it. I didn't hold out for the highest dollar. The timing was right. I had done the math. I needed a certain amount of money to buy a boat and to give myself enough time, enough of a cushion, to start making a real living as a writer.

I do math every month and every month I look at how much money I've got, how much I'm spending, how much I've spent per month since I started living on the boat. And then figure how many more months of money do I have? How much longer do I have?

I also have a Plan B. If my bank account gets down to a certain low threshold number, I have to go back to land, buy a truck, buy a bunch of tools and go back to work as a carpenter. But I've got about five years before that happens. I don't spend very much money at all here. I live at anchor.

The only fixed bills I have are for communication, you know, my phone and for a satellite device that helps me communicate when I'm offshore. And it's also a safety device. And those two bills, food, occasionally I have to buy diesel. That's it. It's not very much at all. It's about \$1200 a month. And that includes buying some stuff too. That's what I've spent on average, so far, and per month netting that includes buying things for the boat, too.

So the plan is afoot right now. I'm going to publish a book on October 20. My next book is called *The Joy of Living Clean and Sober*. And I'll have a novel out called *The Gold Box* fairly soon, too.

43:54 Kathy

I'll link up all of these books in the show notes so folks can take a look and see what you're doing there.

Paul



Thanks.

Kathy

You mentioned something that I thought was really fascinating. You actually answered a question that I was going to ask. When you were talking about being out with no one around you for all those miles. And what came to mind was I wonder what it's like when you do have to re-engage with civilization, because that's "real life." You're out there and you're feeling part of everything connected with everything that's around you. And then you come back to pop culture really. (laughs) I can't even imagine the dissonance.

But when you were talking about sobriety, and I think this is fascinating, your approach is you change *more*. You change to the maximum. So you're changing everything around you so there isn't that dissonance of "I'm trying to wedge myself back into a life I had but I don't do this thing anymore." Your suggestion is, "No, you change everything that's around you." And I would think that would make it easier than to re-engage as you need to.

45:08 Paul

Well, yes, I mean, as far as remaining sober, one of the biggest issues we have is triggers, things that remind us of our drinking past and encourage us to go back to it. And those are all things in your past in your life. It's going to be driving past the liquor store. It's going to be your friends who you used to go to the bar with. It's going to be little things you don't realize, the things in your house that you see, they're all part of your old habits.

Selling my house and moving like that's, that's perfect, just everything's gone. It's all different. Nothing reminds me of my old bad habits. You know, that's like the extreme. If you're really serious about it and you're having trouble, like just move, just move somewhere different.

Show up, everybody you meet, let them know, "I don't drink." And therefore, no one in your new town associates you with alcohol. They all know that you don't drink. You know, when people come onto my boat, I had a friend over for dinner last night. I had to tell him, please don't bring any alcohol.

My boat is the sanctuary. There's no temptation on my boat. So yeah, the more you can change, the better I think it is. Get a new wardrobe, change your hair, grow a beard...



46:28 Kathy

I tried that, it didn't work for me. (laughs)

46:32 Paul

Yeah (laughs). And you have to make new friends, too. You don't have to ditch all your old friends. But some of them are not going to want to hang out anymore. And even though they still like you, even though you're still their friend, they might, they don't, most people don't know what to do.

Like when you quit, most people don't know how to treat you. They don't, they're not sure if you want to be invited to their Christmas party because everybody's going to be drinking. They might think you just don't even want to go. The truth is I want to be invited to the party. And, if I come, I'll come early and I'll leave early. Because I don't want to be there when everybody's really getting drunk. But I'd still want to come and say hello.

So that's how you treat your newly sober friends. Go ahead and invite them. But do not offer them a drink. Do not encourage them to drink. Be supportive. The friends that I've kept have been the people that have been supportive, you know, and encouraging me.

I love social media for this, you know? Social media has got its ups and downs. And it's sort of the whipping boy for a lot of things, too. But Facebook has been fantastic for getting sober. I just put up a post yesterday thanking everybody who's been helping me and I was 80 months sober yesterday.

Kathy

Congratulations!

Paul

And I probably got on the first day, you know, more than 50 people, even people I don't know, encouraging me. And some of them are saying that I helped them to get sober. It's just fantastic. I love Facebook for that kind of exchange of information and that kind of support.



And I have friends who've come out that they're sober on Facebook. And that's why I titled my first book, *Alcoholics Not Anonymous*. I don't have anything against AA, it just wasn't for me. I made up my own method. And I believe in today's world, it's better to be the opposite of anonymous, to come right out and tell everybody you're doing it. That way you're accountable to all of them. That way you're gonna feel like a loser if you go back to drinking, because you're gonna know all these people you told you were sober.

So it helps, it helps you stay. And it helps you, when they support you, and they tell you, "Good job I'm proud of you, keep going." All that helps. It's a very difficult thing to do. And the more support you can get the better. For a lot of people AA is the way to go. It just wasn't for me.

49:14 Kathy

You know, as people get deeper with their lives, you're doing it through sobriety, others are doing it through maybe simplifying their lives or making other changes. It feels like the thing that is scariest are those first moments when they're really alone with their thoughts. You know, it's just you and the fact that you don't have that drink there anymore and you don't have the social constructs anymore and it's just you.

Do you feel like that's where sailing was helpful for you because it's an active meditation, right? You're steering this boat, you're out there. There's more to it than just being in that quiet. Do you think that that was part of your recovery and how you adjusted to this new life that you created?

50:03 Paul

Absolutely. Sailing was one of the many substitutes to drinking. And substitutes are an important part of getting sober. And I'm sure it's an important part of any kind of big change in your life because you're gonna have this big empty spot.

I mean, I drank every day, obviously. So every day, in the beginning, you're going through withdrawal. And for a long time, you're going through a lot of anxiety and your emotions go crazy. You might be angry, you might be depressed, you might have a lot of energy that you didn't have before. You have to be ready for all that. You have to have substitute activities ready to go at any minute.



I had a gym at my house with weights and punching bags and I would go out there and hit the gym. And I would take off. I live near the beach so I would often just take off running, put on some headphones and crank up some loud, aggressive music and run to the beach.

And then I started ocean swimming. Ocean swimming is scary. I love to swim. Swimming in a pool is fun. Swimming in the ocean and dark water where you know there's sharks and you can't see them, (laughs) it's scary.

But when you're going through the beginning of not drinking, I had a lot of energy and a lot of anger. And that was a perfect outlet for it. Just get right in the water and be scared and swim and set a goal. I'm going to swim from here to that lifeguard tower that's half a mile away. It got to where I was swimming a mile in the ocean.

And it's just a great outlet. You get out of that water and you feel wonderful, you feel fan-freakin-tastic. And on top of that, now you've picked up healthy activity, you're getting stronger, faster, more healthy. You've turned withdrawal, a terrible thing, into something positive.

And then I went the next step. You have to meet new people when you're going through this big change. I met the St. Augustine beach lifeguards because they do, in the offseason, in the winter, they do a Saturday morning mile swim. Like 9:30 in the morning, they all meet at the lifeguard station and the public's welcome to join them. I was the only public (laughs) and sometimes it was two of us, sometimes it was five or six of us. Sometimes it was bitter cold and with a rough ocean. People are out surfing in six foot waves and it's cold and nasty and we would put on wetsuits and get right out there and swim a mile and feel wonderful about it. And it's in the morning so nobody's drinking. We'd sometimes go to the cafe afterwards and have breakfast and coffee together. And you know I met healthy, active people. So yes, that's substitute activities.

Sailing was a big substitute. It was also a substitute for all the fun I was having as a guitar player in a reggae band. I know we even went on tour a few times. Those were big time party moments. They were lots of fun, but I couldn't do it anymore. Going on tour with a band sober is not nearly as much fun. In fact, it's not fun at all. (laughs)



That's one of the things you come to realize - if something's only fun when you're drinking, it might not be as fun as you thought it was. It's not, actually, it's not as fun as you thought it was. So performing on stage was always just as much fun except in the very beginning. Now you don't have that crutch of alcohol and marijuana, too. Oh my gosh, performing on stage sober the first time was terribly difficult. And then it happened again because I quit smoking weed a year later and it was the same thing all over again. Oh my gosh, I'm not even high now. (laughs) I have to get up here and play guitar, in front of all these people?! Oh my...

Kathy

How do I do this?

54:23 Paul

Yeah. So I had to kind of relearn how to do that. But I also became a better guitar player. Because the alcohol and the weed makes you think you are a lot better than you really are. (laughter) You might be playing really sloppy and think you're killing it and think the crowd loves it. And the more sober you get, the better you get because you realize what you're really doing and what you really sound like and you can really analyze things better.

And you have more dexterity. Alcohol takes away your dexterity a lot. And the weed, too. The marijuana on the one hand, it kind of frees your mind to maybe be more creative or to not be distracted by your surroundings. But on the other hand, it kind of cripples the mathematical part of your mind. And it cripples the short term memory. And you need those things to play guitar, you need to remember stuff. Music is math, it's sort of a form of math.

So I became a much better guitar player sober. But unfortunately, the only part of it I enjoyed was the actual stage performance. I didn't enjoy band practice anymore. I didn't enjoy traveling to play, that was not fun at all. So I gave all that up. I had to quit the band in order to do what I'm doing now. That was a huge change.

But now, writing is my creative outlet. And it's a whole new wonderful experience. I mean, absolutely mind encompassing. You get into creating with words. You're creating what's happening in someone else's head. Which is what music does, too. I wrote music. We were



an original band and you are creating emotions, you're creating a sound that brings out emotions in people and it makes them dance and smile and have a good time. And we played reggae - fun, happy music. That was a lot of fun.

But writing is very similar. You are creating a whole world, a whole alternate universe, you're creating it. And it's a wonderful experience. You finish a book and publish it and send it out there. I don't have any children, but I imagine it's a lot like having a child, that those books are going to live on after me.

56:44 Kathy

Absolutely. And you're inspiring people in another way.

Paul

Yes.

56:50 Kathy

You know, you still have that connection.

Paul

Yes, yes. You're inspiring people in a healthy way and I certainly try to make people's lives better through my books.

57:00 Kathy

Mm hmm. And it's far reaching, right? I mean, there may be that feel good moment when you're playing music. But now, this has broader reach, you have global reach now. Which I'm sure is very different than playing room of folks, which is amazing.

57:14 Paul

Oh, it is. Yes. You know, the influence I have now is on a whole different level. Playing music, it makes people happy right then and there, you know, a dozen people or 100 people or 1000 people. But it doesn't change their life, it doesn't put new ideas in their head. And I'm not even in control of that, the singer writes the lyrics. So he might be singing about something I don't necessarily agree with. I'm not gonna say anything, because that's his, that's his part of the music, you know, let him do what he wants.



But now I can come right out and say exactly what I think and influence people in ways that I think is positive. And it is very far reaching. Books are sold in multiple countries. And there's thousands of people out there reading them and hopefully being inspired to step outside of their comfort zone and do something incredible and change their life in a positive way - either chase their dreams or quit drinking.

Or just like I said, to step outside of your comfort zone. That's what's really important. That's a huge important message. Most people live in their little comfort zone. And it might not even be that comfortable, it might be stressful, but it's still their comfort zone. It might not be their ideal life at all, they might not have ever thought about what their ideal life is. I don't think people spend enough time thinking about what really makes you happy. And what your ideal life really should be.

I try to think about that a lot. For instance, what makes you happy? Well, you can start by thinking, "When am I happy? When am I smiling and happy?" and come up with three or four or five different times or activities or things that make you happy. And then think, "Okay, well why does that make me happy?" And then you'll see overlap between some of the things. And it's that overlap that's the key message.

For instance, for me, being really happy would be riding a mountain bike in the forest, you know, very happy doing that. Scuba diving would make me happy. Just a basic example right there. You've got two things that happen outdoors. Alright, there's the overlap - it's the outdoors. Is it riding the bike that's really cool? Is it the breathing through an underwater apparatus? No. It's being in nature, that's what it is.

So that's just a quick and easy example. But if you go through all your life and think about all the things that make you happy, figure out what they have in common, then you can start getting towards the real root of what it is that makes you happy and then you can start designing your life to maximize that.

And that's what I've done. I have absolutely maximized nature, adventure, creativity and solitude. I really enjoy solitude. I'm alone. I'm a singlehand sailor because I'm single. (laughs) I've never been married. I've had lots of girlfriends, they've never worked. They've all come, those relationships, have all come to an end for one reason or another.



But I really enjoy being alone. I enjoy the peace, the quiet, the solitude. I enjoy being on the ocean at night by myself, looking up at the stars, steering the boat, feeling the wind and the waves and the rudder and the keel and becoming a part of all that and looking up at the stars.

Like we're a star intersects with my mast, for instance, I'll stare at that, and that's how I'll steer you. I mean, you look down at your instrument to know if you're going in the right direction, then you learn and you find a star that's in that right direction. And then you follow that star. It's fantastic. It's so much fun. And as the night wears on, as stars move, and you have to keep picking different stars, but you end up steering about feeling the wind and the waves and the keel and the rudder. And looking at the heavens while you're doing it. And it's quiet, and all you hear is the water moving across the hull and the wind moving across the sails. And there's nothing like it. It's fantastic. And that's what I love and what makes me happy. That's one of the things

1:01:24 Kathy

When you're steering by starlight like that, I'm sure you're getting some thoughts about where to go next and what to do next. So let's talk a little bit about life today. Is there a seasonality to it? How do you determine where you want to explore?

1:01:39 Paul

Yes, the seasonality is hurricane season, you do not want to be in the path of hurricanes. Not everybody follows this. There are plenty of sailboats in the Bahamas right now, for instance, just hoping not to get hit. But that's why I'm in Panama. I was in the Bahamas during the winter. That's a good time to be there. Nice weather. There's no hurricanes.

I arrived here in late April, right before hurricane season started. So I completely got here before that because I am outside the hurricane zone here. They don't come this far south, you know, Panama is safe from hurricanes. So I'm here for all of hurricane season and come December, I'll head back to the Bahamas. That's Plan A and my plans are always subject to change. I could, all of a sudden, decide to go through the Panama Canal and go to Mexico.

1:02:31 Kathy

Or go to Tahiti! (laughs)



1:02:32 Paul

Yeah. Yeah, Tahiti, who knows? Alaska, Hawaii.

So that's the seasonality, you need to avoid hurricanes, you need to avoid the northern North Atlantic in the winter. It's too stormy. Yes, seasonality is very important. And it all has to do with bad weather. We're basically avoiding bad weather. You don't need to go looking for bad weather on a sailboat, it's going to find you eventually anyway. And it's no fun.

Sailing can be the most wonderful thing in the world. And it could also be the most terrifying, miserable thing in the world, too. It can really go either direction. If it's cold and rough and too windy, it's the most difficult thing in the world. You know, it's just extremely difficult when it gets cold and windy and rough seas.

You can just ask yourself, "Why am I doing this? I would really like to be in a house taking a hot shower right now. Lay down in a bed. And I'm not. I'm out here on the ocean. It's cold. And I'm wet and I'm miserable. And I'm scared. And the boat is banging and moving. I can hardly do anything without holding on and I want to throw up." (laughs) It can get that bad. It can get worse than that. Your boat can sink and you can be in a life raft.

I've just interviewed, I have a podcast, too, and I interviewed a guy just the other day who spent, I think he said, 26 hours in the water offshore.

Kathy

Wow!

Paul

His boat hit a container. Cargo ships have those huge containers that look like train cars. They fall off all the time.

Kathy

Oh, no kidding?

Paul



And some of them float. Or they float right below, the worst ones float right below the surface. It's hard to imagine them floating, but they're airtight containers. They might have buoyant stuff inside of them anyway. And if they're hovering right around the surface of the water, you can't see them especially at night. Boats hit them sometimes and sink.

His boat, he was on a twenty-one foot racing boat trying to go all the way from Europe to the Caribbean. On the third day, he hit something and his boat sank most of the way, it was still hovering at the surface. But he wasn't able to even get on his boat. He was in the water with a lifejacket on for 26 hours with a VHF radio in his hand. Every two hours he called a mayday and eventually somebody answered.

Kathy
Wow.

Paul

It was a cruise ship. It was a great story. It was a cruise ship that answered. He was able to see their smoke on the horizon. He couldn't see them, but he could see their smoke. So he directed them, he told them which direction to come. And they turned towards him. And eventually he was able to see them and direct them right to them. And they dropped down a ladder and he climbed aboard. It was a cruise ship full of American retirees.

Kathy
Wow.

Paul

And eventually the captain asked him to come to a dinner and give a speech. And that led to a speaking career. The guy makes a living now speaking, giving motivational talks. Isn't that a great story?

1:05:33 Kathy
It's an amazing story. Wow.

1:05:36 Paul

But that's how bad it can be. You can be treading water for 26 hours or, of course, it gets much worse than that, too. But we don't have to go there.



1:05:45 Kathy

Actually, can you give us an example of a typical day? It's hard for us to imagine, if we don't live on a boat, of what you just said – you always have your life vest on when you're sailing and you're only sleeping for 20 minutes at a time if you're in open water. So just give us a sense of what that rhythm is like.

1:06:02 Paul

So a typical day when I am making an offshore passage, and a passage meaning you're crossing the open ocean between two places, I try to sleep during the day, as much as possible, which is difficult and I end up sleeping more at night than I do in the day. But I'm always trying to tell myself, "Okay, there's no one around, the boat is steering itself, there's nobody around, there's nothing to hit, I should take a nap right now."

So I often just sort of tell myself to go below and take a nap. And I use a countdown timer on a watch that counts down 20 minutes then the alarm goes off. And it actually keeps running the timer. It's a cool feature called countdown timer. After 20 minutes, the alarm goes off and it starts counting down the next 20 minutes without you doing anything and it'll go off again 20 minutes later unless you make that stop. So that's what I use.

Twenty minutes later, I wake up, and I'm talking about just going down below and laying down with all my clothes and my life jacket. I never take my boots off. I mean, I'm often barefoot, but I never take anything off, that's the point. Because you could be asleep and the AIS alarm could go off, or the boat could jibe and you've got to get up and do something. And you don't want to have to go find your life jacket. Because what you're going to do is go up without it. So you just leave it on.

So I lay down with all my stuff on and the first two or three days, it can be difficult to fall asleep. But after a day or two, it becomes very easy. So we'll say we're four days into a trip, go down below, lay down, instantly fall asleep. Wake up 20 minutes later, kind of groggy, sometimes you're a little confused, but you wake up, you realize you're on a boat, you're very motivated to get up and go see and go look around because you're moving. And you go up and you look around and you make the call, "Do I take another nap right now or do I hang out in the cockpit?" And sometimes I'll nap two or three times in a row. If it's nighttime, I might just nap over and over again. It's hard to tell how many times it is.



And then I'll spend a lot of time reading. I've got a Kindle, so I'll sit in the cockpit and read. I'll often put out a line and fish. I will often just stare out at the ocean. Up until just this year, I was always steering the boat when I was awake. And I would set an electronic autopilot to steer while I was sleeping. But that uses a lot of battery power. So this year I bought a hydrovane which is a wind powered autopilot. It's a large mechanical device that hangs off the back of the boat and it has what looks like a small sail sticking up. And that small sail you point directly into the wind. So if the boat moves off course, it flops over because the wind hits it from the side. When it flops over it turns a rudder, it has its own rudder and that steers the boat back on course.

Kathy

Interesting.

Paul

It doesn't use any electricity. It's a fantastic magical device that's hard to even imagine. I look at it and I still don't really understand how it works. (laughs) Even though it's a very simple mechanical device, it's hard to imagine that it works and it does. And that sucker steers the boat for days at a time very well.

So I've been relieved of having to steer so I spend a lot of time, like I said, reading, making sure everything is okay on the boat, looking around and checking to make sure all the mechanical things, all the mechanical fittings and little cotter pins are in the right places and the lines are right and looking at the sails.

The wind is usually changing slowly in one direction or another, it's usually moving a little bit. So you're often looking at the sails and trimming them, letting them out a little bit or taking them out a little bit. If the wind is really variable, it's gonna go up and down in speed, so you have to take the sails in, make them smaller, you have to reef them. That can be a lot of work. So sometimes I'm working a lot, sometimes I'm just chilling out reading.

1:09:58

Like on the way here from the Bahamas, I was hanging out reading. It was not a whole lot of work for days at a time. It's really relaxing. I've had other passages where I'm working



hard a lot of the time. I'm pulling on lines, using a lot of force and effort and strength, wearing my hands, having to wear gloves, because I'm having to pull on these lines, trimming the sails because the wind is changing. If you're sailing upwind, for instance, and it's 20 knots or 25 knots, it's a lot of action, the boat is going up and down waves, just constantly leaning over 15 or 20 degrees, everything's difficult, just moving is difficult. You might have to reef the sails, you might have to crank hard on winches, pull on lines, it can get difficult.

So it can really be a wide variety of things, just like I was talking about earlier. It can be really pleasant and relaxing, it can be a lot of work. Sailing in the tropics, it's never cold (laughs), so I like that. But if you go up north you can add cold weather to all that and then sometimes you're getting sprayed with water. And when the boat's crashing through waves, it often sends up spray that sometimes feels like someone's throwing buckets of water at you. So that can get rough.

But when it's a good time, it's a lot of just hanging out in the cockpit, watching the world go by and taking naps. But sleeping 20 minutes at a time is not ideal. It's just what we have to do to make sure you don't run into something. That's about the amount of time it would take to have a head-on collision with someone coming straight at you from just beyond the horizon. That's where the 20 minutes comes from.

1:11:45 Kathy
Gotcha.

1:11:46 Paul

If there's a cargo ship going 15 knots and he's just over the horizon and you can't see him, he's gonna be on you within 20 minutes.

Now we have electronics to help us out there. Every commercial ship has AIS, I have AIS, our boats are communicating with each other that way, letting us know where we are and who we are. I mentioned that earlier. But I also use radar. So if there's a boat that does not have AIS, my radar will tell me, hopefully, that I'm about to hit something.

So I'm using those two things also. But sleeping longer than 20 minutes, you're really pushing your luck. The point I was trying to make, though, is you are not 100% sleeping 20



minutes at a time, you're not even close to it, you're more like 50% mentally and physically. So you're always feeling a little weird. You're okay, I'm all right, I can go 20 minutes at a time, seven days in a row. That's as long as I've ever been. So I can do it and I'm fine. But you're a little, you're a little slow.

So when you have to reef the sails, when you have to do something, you stop and think about it before you do it. And I run through all the steps in my head, especially if it requires leaving the cockpit and going forward, then you really have to make sure you don't make any mistakes. You remind yourself of all your safety protocols. You go through all the steps about what you're going to do mentally and then you go and do the first step and that leads to the second and the third and you get the job done.

Because my first sailboat had hank-on sails, which means every time I had to make the headsail smaller. For instance, the wind picks up. Imagine you're sailing along at night, you've got your biggest headsail up, the wind's 10 knots, it's peaceful and wonderful. And then the wind picks up and it's 15 and now your boat is leaning way over, the rails in the water. You've got too much sail up. You've got to make that headsail smaller.

So you have to go down below, get a smaller sail, which is a big heavy bag, then drag that to the front of the boat on the deck at night when you're crashing through waves. Then you have to take down the sail, which is this huge thing, and the wind's blowing, the boat's crashing in waves, to take the sail down. Unhank it, unclip all these clips, wrestle this gigantic sail into a bag, clip on the new sail, raise it - this whole process is a lot of work. It's scary and it takes about 45 minutes. You better think out all the steps ahead of time before you go do something like that.

Now I have roller furling to do the same thing. I simply release one thing and pull on something else from the cockpit and the sail gets smaller. (laughter) Roller furling, the sail rolls up on itself and you control it from the cockpit. It's fantastic. It's so much easier. But the point being - sailing offshore by yourself, sleeping 20 minutes at a time, you're at about 50% mental capacity and physical capacity and you need to take that into consideration before you do anything.

1:14:52 Kathy



So let's wrap-up with talking a little bit about what's on your horizon. What's the next big dream for you?

1:14:59 Paul

The next big dream for me is to sail to Newfoundland, Canada, the big island off Canada's northeast coast. For those who don't know what Newfoundland is, it's a large mountainous island with a lot of wilderness. There are not many places in the world where you have coastal wilderness. Most places in the world, most coastlines in the entire world are populated with people and houses and cities. So if you want to find wilderness from your sailboat, there aren't that many places to go.

The Bahamas is one of them. There's a lot of uninhabited islands in the Bahamas. And Newfoundland has a lot of fjords, deep, long, narrow channels that you can sail up into with mountains on both sides of you and end, typically, with a river at the end of it and a place to anchor.

I mean, just imagine, 1000 foot rocky mountains rising straight up out of the ocean on both sides of you. Wilderness, green trees, waterfalls, a river at the end of it. I would like to see that. And there's a lot of that, Newfoundland is covered in that.

There's also whales and all manner of seabirds. And there's also cold and fog and strong winds and things that make sailing difficult. But I would really like to experience it. That's a big goal. That's one of the reasons I bought this boat. It's a boat that is sort of designed for those sorts of conditions. So I would love to go to Newfoundland.

I would also like to go to the Azores. For those who don't know what the Azores are, those are islands owned by Portugal, about seven or 800 miles, I think, west of Portugal. They're just out in the ocean. They're volcanic mountains, beautiful places known for having great culture and flowers, known for having lots of flowers. If I'm not mistaken, that's where hydrangeas come from. There's a lot of wild hydrangeas there. And the house I sold to buy this boat was on Hydrangea Street so...

1:17:16 Kathy

You're coming full circle.



1:17:19 Paul

Full circle, yeah. In fact, I have an aloe plant on this boat from the house I sold. And that plant, I put it in a pot in 2018 and took it to the Bahamas, the same plant. I put it in a pot in 2018, took it to the Bahamas, used it for sunburn daily. And when it was almost gone, it was one little sprig of green plant left, it fell off the back of my boat into the ocean when I was anchored. And I thought, "Well it's done, it was about dead anyway." And about an hour later I thought, "No, there's still one leaf, it's like one more sunburn treatment. Why not go get it?"

So I jumped in the water and got it. That plant is still alive. It's on my boat right now. It recovered from that, (laughter) recovered from being underwater overboard.

Kathy

Plant overboard!

Paul

Overboard underwater for an hour. It's like an immortal plant.

Yeah, so I would like to go around, do the big loop around the Atlantic - the Azores to the Canaries to Cape Verde, back to the Caribbean, do a big loop. But mainly, I just like sailing to interesting places.

I don't have any big goal to sail around the world. A lot of people ask me since I'm in Panama, "Are you going to the canal?" Well, I haven't seen the Atlantic yet. I haven't seen all the Bahamas yet. I haven't seen Canada or the Azores or Europe. There's no reason for me to go through the canal yet. Maybe in the future I will but around the world is not a goal. Enjoying my time on the sailboat is the goal.

1:18:58 Kathy

Mhmm. I love that. There's this nice balance of curiosity and contentment, which is very unusual. That just feels good.

1:19:08 Paul



Yes, yes. Being content is important, you know. Reducing your wants and needs and appreciating what you've got. And putting yourself in a place where you can and do appreciate what you have.

I'm very lucky to be where I am right now. I love it here. Panama is a wonderful place. Bocas Del Toro is a fantastic place to be on a boat. It's very, very easy living here. It's the same weather every day. It's always the same temperature. It's either cloudy or not cloudy, so it changes a little bit there. But it's not as hot as Florida. You know, Florida summers are getting up to 100 degrees regularly. Here it doesn't get over 86. My thermometer and my posts never read more than 86. It's very nice. I like it.

1:19:57 Kathy

Excellent. Well, we're all living vicariously through you, Paul. Can you tell our listeners how they can get in touch with you and how to get your books.

1:20:06 Paul

Well, the easiest way is through my website, that's PaulTrammell.com. And you can find links there to all my books for sale. And you can also go straight to Amazon and type in my name and find them that way.

I also have a podcast and you can find that on my website, a sailing podcast. You can find me on Instagram at Trammell.Paul. And YouTube, PaulTrammell.

1:20:35 Kathy

Perfect. I'll link all that up and... Wow, I feel like I've been on an amazing voyage.

Paul

Oh, great!

Kathy

So thank you so much for taking me along, for sharing that. It was a really wonderful conversation and I really appreciate your time this morning. Thank you for being here.

1:20:49 Paul

Oh, you bet it was my pleasure. Thanks for having me.



1:20:51 Kathy

Wishing you a safe, safe journey.

Paul

Thank you.

1:20:59

Thank you so much for joining me today. I know there are many ways you can spend your time. Thank you for choosing to spend it with me. Until our paths cross again, be kind to yourself and show your Warrior Spirit some love.

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