

FOLLOW THAT DREAM!

by
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The whale breached. Though it was a few hundred yards away, it felt intimate.

“Well, that’s it,” I thought. “It’s okay if the world ends now, I’ve had The Experience.”

But, there was more. Three times the humpback made its glorious display, did a massive splashdown and dive. They can weigh 40 tons. How deep did it go to amass the power to lift that bulk out of the water? They calve in the Caribbean in the winter. Was her new-born down there watching? They can live 95 years. How old was she?

We were one hour into our maiden voyage on our 24ft sloop off the island of St. Eustatius. The contrast between vessel and whale did not enter my conscious thought. There was only the all-encompassing, “Dreams can come true!”

When Rauf and I had met the year before we had many mutuals. At 29 we were each in the process of reaching for our respective dreams. Mine was to live on the ocean, his was to sail around the world. Neither wanted house and children. We shared a winter of skiing and partying but remained timid of merging dreams until the rendezvous in Miami airport on an April afternoon. We were each surprised the other was actually there.

Rauf left his small music studio to his partners and stored his possessions at his mother’s house. I’m of a different nature. I sold to my partners my percentage of the restaurant we’d opened earlier that year, not caring that I had barely enough to cover debts and buy my ticket. I sold or gave away all I owned. At departure I had one soft travel bag of clothes and Opei the Shih-tzu.

We arrived on the island of St. Maarten with about \$200 between us. I won’t pretend it was easy. Rauf sang and played guitar in bars and restaurants, and we both crewed on boats that serviced the tourist trade. Then Rauf sold a piece of land he’d inherited. It was just enough

to buy little 'Kitchema'. She was a quality performer, locally built, with sails and nothing more. We moved aboard with Opei and two island cats, Cayenne and Henri'. A friend gave us a compass, we carried water in plastic fuel cans, a bucket served as toilet, baths were in the warm Caribbean, wind provided movement, the sun and moon light. The whale's blessing was a good omen, launched our dreams.

Fellow cruisers are a varied lot, but in common is that twinkle of wanderlust that enters the eye when they recount their first tentative steps toward making The Dream a reality. There were the two Canadians who built their catamaran, sailed to the Caribbean, lost the boat in a storm, and contentedly settled into island life. There was the South African couple and their 10yr old daughter who put everything they had into building their boat, sailed across and started a new life in the Caribbean. Their plan was to sail on around the world after a few years of replenishing funds. He was a carpenter, she worked on charter boats. One American couple in their 40s simply cruised around. The kids had moved away and he had retired early due to health. The point is that they reached out for The Dream.

Two surgeons from Canada did as well, but they waited until they were 65 to retire and move to New Zealand where they had their boat built. Within a year they sailed to Papua New Guinea where both had malaria, his very serious. They settled into Australia, the dream to circumnavigate the Pacific abandoned. They had been so close, but had waited too late in their lives.

Our circumnavigation took 7 adventure-filled years. To pay for it we did a wide variety of jobs wherever work was available and had charter guests join us in various parts of the world to fulfill *their* dreams. The point is the reaching for it. Whether you want to climb a mountain, retire to Bora Bora, write a book, eat curry in Bombay, or fish for a week in solitude at a nearby lake. The fear of trying is the first boundary to cross, the research and/or planning is the next. Our atlas is disintegrating with all the world travels our fingers did before we ever set sail.

The point is . . . Go for it!

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