



'In our new boat, there is nowhere we can't go'

Over the course of 56 years, the winds of society, work and family responsibility dig your anchor deep. When the time comes to sail off on a new adventure, it's hard to shrug off life's tentacles as, like *Gulliver's Travels*, there are many threads that need to be severed.

My wife Tracey and I are doing just that; setting sail this autumn on a circumnavigation that will, we hope, take us to some of the remotest and most beautiful parts of this globe. To do this, our lives need to be rebuilt on a new foundation; the practical building blocks of our voyage are vital. The right boat and support systems to sustain it can be make or break. Logistics, from getting the right charts and medical kits, down to licenses to go to Antarctica, financial mechanisms to manage exchange rates, and spares to ensure self-reliance in remote places, all need to be put in place. It is, however, emotional mortar that will hold this structure together.

Emotionally there is a lot to reconcile, with parents, children and friends. Life seems to be made of chapters and we have always lived the chapter of the time to the full without looking back at the last or wishing away time for the next. Life is here, now; that cup of tea steaming away, the birds chirping in the trees. We have a duty to live it, we all do, but empathy is essential.

The transition from one chapter to the next is subtle but often clear on an intuitive level. The kids left home a while ago but we remained the mothership that they orbited. Last year there was a shift as we started to orbit their growing independence. This signalled a greater level of freedom and the horizon beckoned with good grace. We want to open this chapter before grandkids, at a time in our lives when we still have the vitality and courage to take the leap and make a go of it rather than lay down regrets that will sour the next chapter, which will be enhanced by reflection, not remorse. Spend your money on experiences, not things – make memories.

Over the years, we have rebuilt four houses and built two. This labour, which we have greatly enjoyed, has been cashed in for the boat of our dreams; a Land Rover of the sea with a BMW interior. We still

pinch ourselves, for we never dreamt that we might one day own such a thing as a Garcia Exploration 45. I can sit with a glass of red in one hand and an inflatable globe in the other and there is nowhere that we can't go. This is what *Pearl* offers – the world is our oyster.

Pearl, named in celebration of our 30th anniversary, embodies a lifetime of love and zest for living. We love travel but hate to leave home, so we will take home with us. She will always welcome visitors, and the characters we meet will enrich as much as they entertain. Five years seems a long time but we want to sweep up the glamorous jewels set in the stunning blue hues of tropical seas through to the rough diamonds of more remote locations. Antarctica, Alaska and South Georgia all call in their own way. Tracey loves wildlife and

rather than watch it on the telly, we want to sit by an inquisitive penguin, walk amongst an albatross colony and toast Shackleton's grave in South Georgia.

We don't have a plan. We have an aspiration for this to be a way of life rather than an achievement or race – some human construct that feeds off deadlines or parameters laid down for others to measure. We will trim our sails to unknown quirks of opportunity as they rise up over the horizon.

I well remember thinking, as Dad trundled off to the big barbeque in the sky, 'Blimey, we're next in line.' His example whispered, 'Live it to the full.' It's an echo we hope to leave for our kids, with *Pearl* underlining this essential lesson to a good life. They can parachute into this amazing experience at any time – it's their trip too.

What will we do when we get back? It's frightening but at the same time invigorating. We'll always be able to eat, I can dig holes to make ends meet. It's this truth that helps us combat the innate insecurity that society promotes. The hamster wheel that wastes life is dressed to look seductive. Fear of the unknown is the greatest tragedy of life.

Clearing out the attic is so liberating. Over time, it fills with what we now call the constipation of life. Does stuff serve you or do you serve it? The tipping point is subtle as material subservience becomes a comfort. It's the easier option and why not? The world beyond our modern construct is challenging but also more rewarding and more colorful. It tastes better and offers fulfillment. Set those sails.

FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN IS THE GREATEST TRAGEDY OF LIFE, ESPECIALLY IN SAILING

