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00:06 Speaker 1: Alright, this is my first attempt at a podcast for the conscious entrepreneur. And one person who has driven me to do this, to be an entrepreneur, to find my own path by example has been my own father, who I see as the water entrepreneur. So, I am with him here today in my studio and would love to hear his story. So, Mike, from what I know, you went to school at U of M with an architecture degree. And when you left, you opened up a scuba diving shop in northern Michigan, what drove you to do that?

00:49 Speaker 2: Actually it started long before that. It started with, as a child, doing the usual things to make money, I cut grass, I shovelled snow, delivered newspapers, all those usual things. But then when I was at scout camp, I was interested in camping equipment, so I found out that you could buy wholesale if you had a sales tax license. So, I got a sales tax license and bought the camping equipment at wholesale, and sold some to my friends.

01:30 S1: At what age was that?

01:32 S2: 16. So, then I went... But I was involved in water all my life, I was on the swim team as a kid, lifeguard, swimming instructor at camp, scuba diving, snorkeling during the summers. And when I went to U of M I had the opportunity to take a diving class at college, and did that and became an instructor, but we ended up buying our diving equipment from a local supplier who sold out of his home. And he, when I went there to buy a mask and fins, said that he was going to be leaving town. And I said, "Well, would you sell your business?" And he said yes, and so I bought it. And I was selling diving equipment from my apartment in Ann Arbour for at least two years, maybe three, before I decided to move to Traverse City. And of course, water had been my passion and I already had a dive shop, so this just made it official.

02:37 S1: How did you know that this was the leap you were gonna take? What drove you to love water, and give up everything and draw unemployment every winter to go for it?

02:50 S2: Oh I didn't draw unemployment, I had other jobs during the winter. But my love of the water, and love of diving and I had already been selling equipment, so the most exciting thing was to be able to teach other people as an instructor, and to get a boat and shipwreck hunting. And ultimately a side scan sonar, and a dive shop, and chasing your passion.

03:22 S1: About how many people would you say in your estimation, looking back, did you pass on that love for water to, through sailing, through scuba diving, through all those jumping on the bus down to Florida to get on a boat, is it pretty huge?

03:42 S2: Probably. I operated Scuba North from '71 to 1980, so I'll bet we taught in the neighborhood of a 100 people a year. And then took dozens of diving/sailing trips to the Bahamas. But when I sold that, we became Sail North, we had already been the sailing business for several years as a division of Scuba North. So, it kinda continued teaching sailing lessons, we had a sailing rental fleet on the beach, small boats, as well as a charter fleet, big boats, up to 36 feet. And then I founded Traverse City Community Sailing, which is a non-profit organization that teaches youth and adults to sail. And we teach on the average 350 students per summer, and have for 20 years, last year was our 20th anniversary.

04:38 S1: Now, it sounds to me like you are definitely just built to be an entrepreneur, that you don't even think about it, it just happens. And you've influenced a lot of people because of it, what would you tell other people who have that innate dream, or love of something that might put too many fears in front of them, or think that it can't happen? I know you did that for me.

05:06 S2: Well, if you start young, you're naive, so that's my first advice. You're not scared when you're young, you're invincible, so with no fear, you leap. As you get older, you develop more fears I suppose, but still, if you're passionate and you're willing to dive in with everything you've got, you'll learn what it takes to be the best at whatever it is you're doing.

05:36 S1: Incoming call, we forgot to put it on silent. He's gotta take it, entrepreneur calls. Okay, we're back. I just have one more question for you Mike, what does water mean to you now?

06:01 S2: Water still runs through my veins, just about everything I've done in my life has something to do with water. So, my current project is a river-front town home development on the Bourbon River downtown. So, even all of my business dealings really have had something to do with water, and all of my passions have to do with water. Fly fishing, canoeing, SCUBA diving, sailing... Well, I guess bird hunting doesn't really, but...

06:32 S1: Your daughters?

06:33 S2: And my daughters. Oh, yes. Water was so much a part of my life that my three daughters each inherited middle names having to do with water. Lindsey Sea, Chelsea Bay, Allison Brook. So I guess that says something right there.

06:50 S1: Well, thanks for giving me your time, and I love, love, love hearing your story. I learn a little bit more about you every day, and we'll talk to you soon.

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