

Webisode #5 - "Living the Dream" (For More Webisodes - Scroll Down) Videos provided by National Geographic and Ameriprise Financial

The first Black Boaters Summit shoved off in 1997 with 10 boats and 100 participants, and it's been growing ever since. After ten years, Paul Mixon and Bill Pinkney have taught hundreds of African Americans about the wonders of sailing. But, says Mixon, the dream is just beginning.

Background:

When Paul Mixon, 65, got hooked on sailing 30 years ago, he never expected that one day he'd be the organizer of a popular annual flotilla in the British Virgin Islands. But his instant love of the sport gave rise to a dream of introducing sailing to more African Americans, long a minority in the sailing community.

"Since the industry is missing the boat, not targeting African Americans," he said, "why don't I target African Americans and have them go sailing with me?"

Mixon's good friend, Captain Bill Pinkney, 71, had his own sailing dreams. In 1985, remembering *Call It Courage*, Armstrong Sperry's classic adventure tale, Pinkney began planning a remarkable solo voyage around the world. It would be the ultimate inspirational legacy to leave his grandchildren.

In August 1990, at the age of 54, Pinkney left Boston on his 47-foot (14-meter) cutter, *Commitment*.

Opting for the more challenging southern route, his journey took him to Brazil, Australia, South Africa, Uruguay, and Bermuda—and through tropical storms, 70-mile-an-hour (110-kilometer-an-hour) winds, and 55-foot (17-meter) waves. After 22 months and 32,000 nautical miles, he sailed safely back to Boston's harbor.

"Bill is the real deal," says Mixon. "Not only did he circumnavigate the globe alone, but he chose the most difficult passages in the world."

As the first African American to sail the world alone, Pinkney's voyage was followed by hundreds of schoolchildren via computer and on satellite radio and television.

"I ended up not with two grandchildren but 30,000 grandchildren," he says.

After being introduced by a mutual friend years ago, Mixon and Pinkney planned how they could work together to attract African Americans to sailing. Mixon used his entrepreneurial skills to organize the effort, and Pinkney used his reputation as a master sailor and a positive role model to draw people to the trips.

Today Mixon, of San Francisco, and Pinkney, who lives in Connecticut, share their sailing dreams with others through the Black Boaters Summit, an annual summer event in the British Virgin Islands.

"It was an uphill battle to try to convince people to get out on the water with nothing more than a sail and a rope," says Mixon. In fact, according to Mixon, many of the participating sailors could not even swim and had no previous exposure to open water. "At the end of the day it's very rewarding to see the smiles on the faces of our first-timers."

The summit initially tested the waters with only ten boats. Now in its tenth year, it has grown exponentially. At one recent summit, 280 sailors participated on 24 boats. All of the boats' captains are African-American men and women who have made sailing their sport. It's evolved into a network that has created many friendships and six marriages.

Pinkney sums it up: "You can't make fantasies happen, but you can make your dreams come true. That's what I'm most proud of. I turned a dream into a reality—not just for me, but for a lot of young people as well."

Webisode #1 - "Dreaming"

Paul Mixon and Bill Pinkney both grew up in Chicago and both went into the Navy. But they were strangers to each other. Find out how a mutual love of sailing and a desire to make a difference brought these remarkable men together.

Webisode #2 - "Planning the Dream"

Bill Pinkney was a sailing legend who wanted to leave a legacy for his grandkids. Paul Mixon also loved sailing and wanted to introduce the sport to other African Americans. See how these kindred spirits joined forces to create a mutual dream.

Webisode #3 - "Spreading the Word"

In many ways for Paul Mixon, starting a Black Boaters Summit was like sailing into the wind. It meant, among other things, overcoming stereotypes about African Americans and sailing, and finding and signing up qualified black captains. But with sailing legend Bill Pinkney as a beacon, the dream got under way.

Webisode #4 - "Achievement"

Paul Mixon scoured the Internet and boat shows for captains and participants in his inaugural Black Boaters Summit. With the allure of sailing hero Bill Pinkney, the promise of adventure in a beautiful setting, and a price that was right, the summit set sail in 1997.

