

CASE STUDY

EUGENE SPARROW

ELIZABETH SPEAKS TO EUGENE SPARROW

AS WE START TO PONDER, AND PLAN OUR OWN 'BESPIRING', READING AND HEARING ABOUT OTHERS EXPERIENCES CAN PROVIDE US WITH INSPIRATION AND IDEAS ON HOW WE MIGHT LIVE OUR NEXT CHAPTER TO ITS FULLEST. IN MY CONVERSATION WITH EUGENE HE SHARES HOW HE STARTED THINKING AND PLANNING HIS BESPIREMENT MANY YEARS AGO AND HOW HE IS NOW LIVING HIS BEST NEXT CHAPTER. READ ON FOR EUGENE'S PLAN, IDEAS AND TIPS FOR NEW BESPIRERS.

EF: Tell me about how you ended up at this point?

ES: I decided early, probably about 22, that I wanted to retire by the time I was 50. I realise not everyone starts thinking about it that early. For me it started with having enough money to retire. It's something I'm really passionate about. As I got older I started being more deliberate in my thinking and planning. I'm now 49 and have been 'bespired' for 20 months. I could have potentially retired earlier but I actually really loved my work.

EF: You mentioned you did some planning around elements other than finances what did that look like?

ES: While my focus was on the wealth creation, which is one of my strengths, I had observed some of my clients going through the process of early retirement so it was really interesting to have live examples on what worked and what didn't. Some things that worked for me were: I made sure I had written goals, I tried some new things in advance ie sea kayaking so that I wasn't embarking on something new that I might find out I didn't enjoy. I also spent more time with my family. I didn't want to end up finishing work and them not knowing who I was and therefore not wanting to spend time with me when I had it!

EF: What were the areas you focused on?

ES: The key areas for me were finances (obviously), how to still do some of the work I really enjoy, my family - going fishing with my dad, keeping up my social life, filling my time and exercising. Previously I had been really reactive to situations especially my social life but I became much more proactive and made regular plans with people.

EF: What does that look like for you in practice?

ES: I have a regular lunch with a group of old friends which means I keep up my social connections. Every day I start the day with some sort of exercise - a run, or a walk, maybe some weights. I tried pilates with my wife but I think I'll leave that to her! I still have about a day a week working with my long term consulting clients which is great because it keeps my mind active and I really enjoy my work.

*'Bespiring' to describe the next phase after 9-5 work, at whatever age/stage you are. A time where you're creating your bespoke world that inspires your next chapter.

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EF: Did you find the transition from full time work challenging?

ES: I know some people do find it difficult however, I think because I was so looking forward to it and had planned it with achievable goals etc it was an easy transition for me. I felt liberated and really enjoy the flexibility of working a little and enjoying the rest of the time to focus on other things that are important to me. I had visualised the last day of work so I was really excited about it. One of the challenges though is being prepared if things don't go as you expected. I thought I would get in a lot more travelling but then covid hit. It's important to ensure you have a balance of different activities. Interestingly, the work was a late addition. I had intended to finish work completely however, I continued because I really enjoyed it and I'm so glad I did.

EF: How have things worked with your family now you're around more?

ES: We did talk a lot before hand about our different routines and what would work. We're really conscious about not getting into each others space too much and we are busy in our own circles which is really good. I actually thought we'd spend more time together! It means I can do more with them like go to the supermarket and parent teacher interviews.

EF: How do you ensure you continue to achieve things when you don't have a specific deadline.

ES: Here are some key points that keep me personally motivated - I'm a continual goal setter, so things like increased annual daily move and step targets on the apple watch keep me enthused. I ensure every day (particularly mornings) I do what I enjoy. For me that's exercise, for others I've spoken to, it is having a nice healthy breakfast with coffee and watching the AM show. This ensures almost every day I jump out of bed keen to crack into it. A dog has definitely helped - must get up early every day to walk and feed the dog. I often have in the diary what I'm planning to do for the next week / month ahead as well as my 1-2 days consulting work, this is also stuff I really enjoy, Maybe a kayak to Devonport, a bike ride, a few days visit to the folks out of town, a lunch / drinks session with mates, and so on -I keep an eye on the weather forecast when planning the week ahead - so if some bad weather is approaching, I will plan indoor stuff I enjoy instead.

EF: What advice do you have for someone thinking of embarking on the next chapter?

ES: I have no regrets about leaving the 9-5. I am a home body though so maybe that helps. I like cooking and playing cards with my daughter. Writing things down really helped me and reading /talking with others about their experiences.

EF: Is there anything you would do differently?

ES: I would have eased off work and gone from 4-3-2 days per week. There's a real opportunity for employers to consider how they ease people out of full-time work. Oh and I hadn't planned for the arrival of a dog!