

Ed

Almost any given day, you can find 84-year-old Ed Lormand sitting on his porch, his eyes fixed on the vast expanse of blue that lies before him. The Atlantic Ocean. He's owned a home in the coastal city of Fernandina Beach, Florida for almost 60 years.

A man of many trades, Lormand went to college at The Julliard School, and then went on to teach at Dekalb Community College in Georgia. He got his pilot's license early on in life.

But he has always found himself at peace with the sea, ever since he watched his dad use an 11-foot dinghy to fish for oysters in his native Louisiana. He purchased a sailboat of his own 46 years ago, a 28-foot, single-engine and single-masted boat he named "Lormand's 2nd Folley."

It was around the time of this purchase he began reading some books on sailing adventures in order to find the best boat possible.

It was the books that inspired him to achieve one goal: Sail solo across the Atlantic. He made the 4,385-mile trip in 1977, and brought precious cargo with him.

When the state of Georgia learned of Lormand's trip, they entrusted him with carrying a proclamation of recognition to the Queen of England for ruling the country for 25 years. The state made him an admiral in the Navy, the first honorary admiral since Henry Kissinger.

Lormand began the transatlantic sail in 1976, and made it as far as Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, when storms took out one of his sails. He knew missing a sail could put him in danger if he kept going. "I've got a choice to make now," he said recently. He could either sail on to Europe and run the risk of being short of sails, or come home. "First of all, I may not make it" he added. He decided to turn around and sail the six-day trip back to Fernandina Beach.

He tried again for a second time in 1977. His trip had many ups and downs. At one point, he realized he was bleeding internally. He passed out and woke up covered in blood from his underwear to his ankles. "The first thing I did was make a tape to my wife, telling her what I was going to do, and that was continue on," he explained.

Lormand's wife, Fran, trusted that he would stay safe. The two had been preparing together almost every weekend in the seven years leading up to the trip. They would drive back and forth from their weekday house in Atlanta to their house in Fernandina Beach to make sure the boat was ready, and to prepare for every possibility of what could go wrong. "We had done a lot of sailing, and I think by the time he did it he was prepared for what he had to do, and I was prepared for what I had to do," she explained. "Mostly, I thought he was just out there having a good time sailing."

He successfully landed the boat on the island of Guernsey, in the English Channel, 42 days after leaving the US. It was in Guernsey when he saw Fran again for the first time. "When Fran showed up on the walkway the next day, I grabbed her, I and I was like a damn cat. Couldn't let her go." He spent the day with her in Guernsey, and then the two flew to London.

His trip across the Atlantic with the proclamation earned him a trip to Buckingham palace. The two arrived during changing of the guards, and received a police escort to the palace. Lormand even got to sign the royal guest list.

43 years later, Lormand still sits on his seaside porch and reflects on the trip. “You know, if you go across this way up here about 4,000 miles, you’re gonna hit either Ireland, or England,” he added.