

# The Man behind the bursary: Paul Sinclair

## How did you get started in the RV industry?

My family has always been in the RV business. From 1989, they owned and operated an RV parts and service facility. Naturally, as most family businesses are, I worked alongside my parents from a (very) young age. Having little intention to remain in the family business, I went to study Economics at the University of Calgary. After I graduated, there were limited opportunities in my field. I then decided to further my technical skills and enrolled in the RV service technician apprenticeship program at SAIT and became a journeyman.

In 1997, I was ready to move up and bought the business from my parents. In late 2001, I was acquired by Bucars RV Centre and brought on to manage their service department. I held that position until 2013 when I opted for a different challenge in their finance department.



## What did you enjoy the most about working in the service department?

The ultra fast-paced and busy environment really gets your adrenaline going. I saw myself as

The ultra fast-paced and busy environment really gets your adrenaline going.

a juggler as I needed to be able to deal with multiple projects and people at the same time. The employees and customers alike, either require advice or consultation, throughout the day, every-day. It can be very stressful during the busy season. But, seeing happy customers always serves as a reminder of why we're in this business. That is, to help bring joy to people.

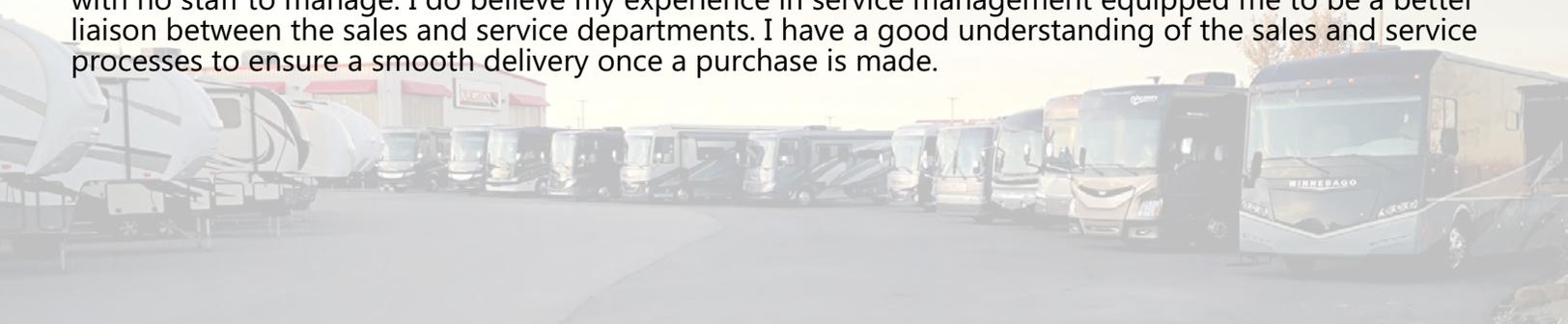


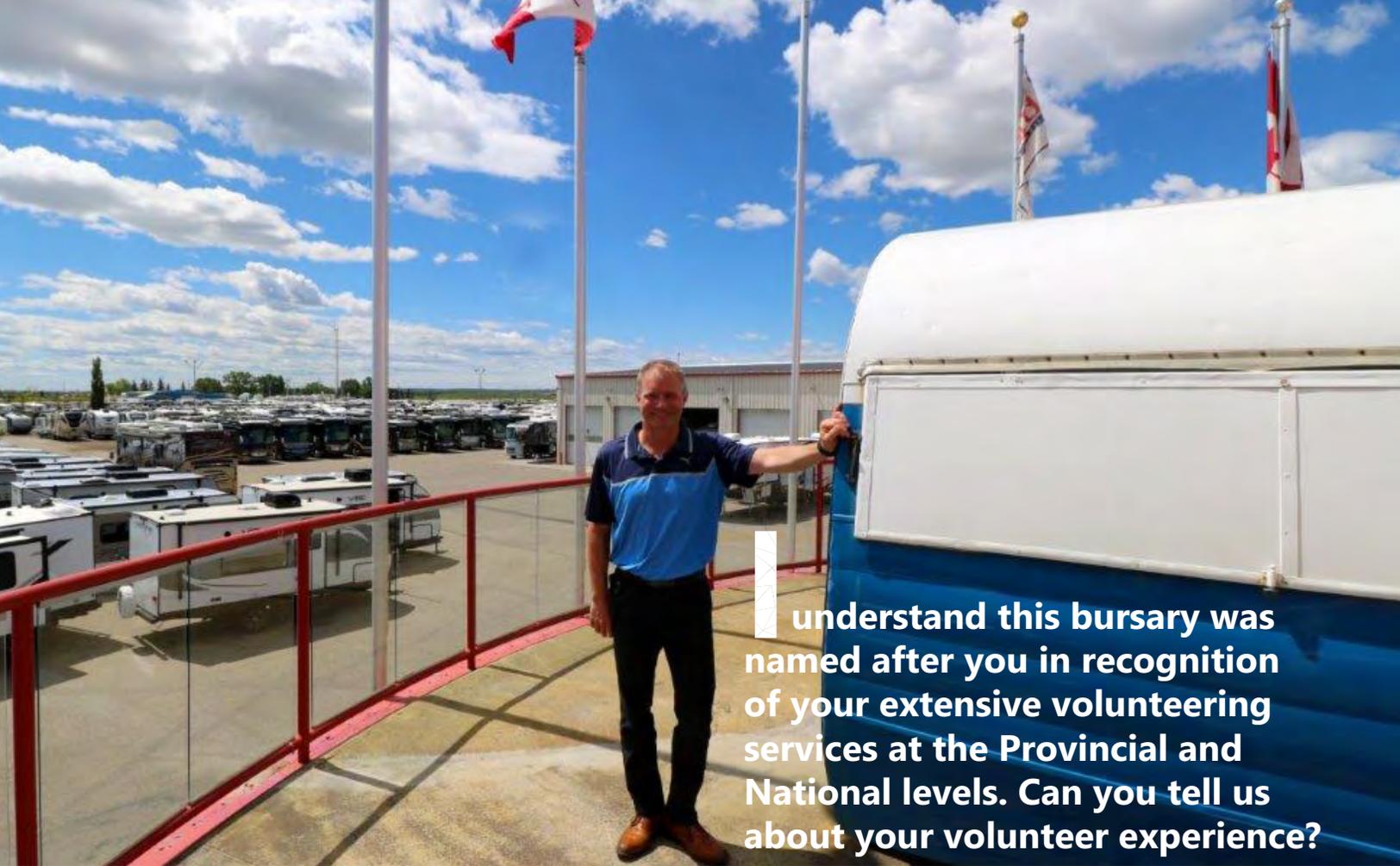
In my current role as a business manager, I am at the initial stages of helping customers imagine how to spend their vacation in the RV. Whether sales, finance, service or parts, each of us plays a vital role in helping that customer get a bit closer to realizing their ultimate family, couple or friend vacation. It's great to be a part of that planning journey.

## How has your role evolved within the dealership? What prompted that change?

After twelve years in RV service, I decided I needed a new challenge. Fortunately, there was an opportunity within the same dealership. That was when I moved over to the business office.

It took some retraining to shift my focus and thinking from service to finance. There was not a big shift in how to deal with and manage customer service. But, obviously, the nature of the work is very different, with no staff to manage. I do believe my experience in service management equipped me to be a better liaison between the sales and service departments. I have a good understanding of the sales and service processes to ensure a smooth delivery once a purchase is made.





I understand this bursary was named after you in recognition of your extensive volunteering services at the Provincial and National levels. Can you tell us about your volunteer experience?

I was involved in various volunteer capacities. At the Provincial level, I was on the RVDA of Alberta board and eventually became the President. I was passionate about education and apprenticeship development not just in Alberta but across the country. Back in the day, it was called the Tec-Can program, similar to the Trouble Shooter Clinics. RVDA would develop and create the curriculum and offer workshops where there is demand. It was a huge undertaking but the dealers and technicians were really appreciative of the initiative.



I was part of the local and provincial apprenticeship committees in Alberta throughout the 1990s to promote and develop apprenticeship training and help gain the Red Seal endorsement. At the time, the trade was not a recognized Red Seal trade anywhere in Canada. BC and Alberta were the only two Provinces working to have it recognized by the certification body. A small group of dedicated RV industry personnel developed the exams and criteria and presented it to eventually become a Red Seal designated trade. As the RV service technician trade was

always a compulsory trade in Alberta, majority of the dealers also supported it to be endorsed by the Red Seal program. Alberta dealers saw and faced stiff competition with many skilled trade sectors and wanted the RV technician trade to receive more recognition and hoped the Red Seal endorsement would heighten the status.

It was an honour and pleasure to serve as the Education and HR Committee Chair for RVDA of Canada for ten years working with industry colleagues for the improvement of technician training and promotion of the trade through the creation of the brand, RV Careers. During this time, I also enjoyed working as part of the CSA committee to harmonize the Canadian CSA Z240 standard with the NFPA1192 standard in the US for recreational vehicles.

Having served on various boards and committees, the RVDA of Alberta board established a \$500 bursary in my honour in 2005 to be presented to graduates of the RV service technician apprenticeship program at SAIT. To date, the RVDA of Alberta has offered over \$132,000 in this annual bursary to the graduates. I applaud the association to continue to offer many financial aids and incentives to apprentices.

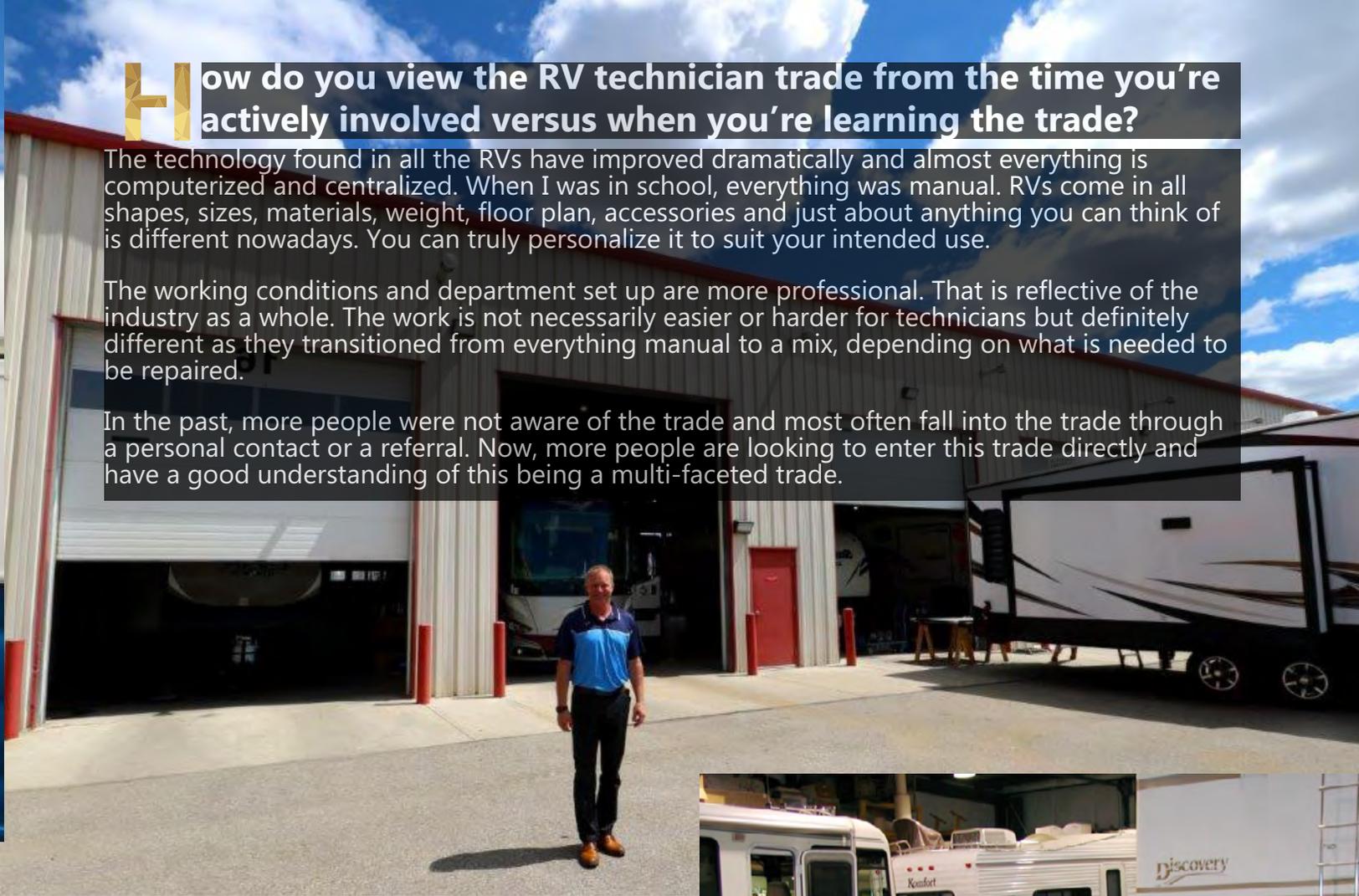
**To date, the RVDA of Alberta has offered over \$132,000 in this annual bursary to the graduates.**

## How do you view the RV technician trade from the time you're actively involved versus when you're learning the trade?

The technology found in all the RVs have improved dramatically and almost everything is computerized and centralized. When I was in school, everything was manual. RVs come in all shapes, sizes, materials, weight, floor plan, accessories and just about anything you can think of is different nowadays. You can truly personalize it to suit your intended use.

The working conditions and department set up are more professional. That is reflective of the industry as a whole. The work is not necessarily easier or harder for technicians but definitely different as they transitioned from everything manual to a mix, depending on what is needed to be repaired.

In the past, more people were not aware of the trade and most often fall into the trade through a personal contact or a referral. Now, more people are looking to enter this trade directly and have a good understanding of this being a multi-faceted trade.



## What advice would you offer RV apprentices to succeed in this trade?

This trade may not be your common household trade such as electrician or plumber but it includes both of those trades and twelve other ones.

Everyday is a different day. If you like a varied work environment, electrical, plumbing, and construction then this is the trade for you. This trade challenges you to think outside the box and be a good problem solver. It is never boring.

**This trade challenges you to think outside the box. It is never boring.**