

Dared to Share ... Shared my Dares by Jean Sanford Replinger May 20, 2018

I was 3 in 1931 (Depression years) when my father died. Mother had to work.

Because brother Jim (14 years older than I) was physically handicapped, we had a young hired girl during the day until I was old enough (age 9) to care for/work with him.

We lived in Ladysmith, WI, a lumbering town of about 3000. Life was shared/simple.

From age 3 on, I spent my days outside, considering trees, birds, grass, leaves, the sky, cracked sidewalks, puddles, streams, flowers, neighborhood children, my tricycle and dog, Goofus, as companions. I was a happy child, up early, ready to fill the day with joy of living.

At age 9, Jim and I became companions and my life/education expanded to include taking my brother to swim and canoe the Flambeau River. Including, as well, the many projects Jim dreamed up from reading and his exceptionally creative mind. He did not walk; had limited use of his arms and hands, so I was the hands-on implementer of projects including, among many other things, raising chickens, making rope, making dried soups, making kites, making a handgun, developing blueprints, sustaining a rural paper route, building a tractor from an old model T and Model A, etc. In summer we would drive to our wilderness cabin where I would carry him to a chair from which he directed me in clearing land or building his various projects. In winter I would take him, by toboggan the last ½ mile to our cabin to do indoor cabin repair jobs.

This is the background (all woven together) that gave me a deep knowledge, confidence in and love of the outdoors and my own range of skills. Subconsciously I was also experiencing the rich (two-way) rewards there are in working with people with disabilities.

Fast forward to my choice of life work. I knew [I wanted to help people be and stay healthy and I knew time in the outdoors and physical activity there were important in that recipe](#), so at the U.W.-Madison, my four year studies qualified me for medical school and/or teaching health and physical education.

I chose to delay the medical school choice until I had taught for three years. After 3 years of teaching and gaining acceptance (all expenses paid) to 2 medical schools, I decided to work on a Master's Degree in Subconscious Learning/ Physiological Psychology, a newly gained interest.

This new interest grew from my observation of health gains and sustenance in group trips I lead by foot in the Smoky Mountains and in leading multi-week bicycling trips in U.S., Canada and overseas.

In many ways, I now see these trips (and my leading of them) were the beginning of my SHARING of DARING. It started because [ALWAYS when I found an experience fun, fulfilling, perhaps educational, I always wanted to share it in case others would find it a way to a sense of healthy self and relations, as had I.](#)

I was on the faculty at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio 1950-53; out for grad school the 1954 school year, and back on faculty in 1955.

In 1956 I was recruited to develop and direct (then a new venture) an Outdoor Education Center on 1000 acres of wooded land adjoining the Antioch College Campus in Yellow Springs, Ohio. The directive was to develop programs in which the outdoor experience there would enrich the guest group's individual and collective goals. Primarily, during the school year, we scheduled 6th grade classes to come for one week and use the outdoors as the learning resource. On week-ends we scheduled a wide variety of agencies and programs. I directed this Outdoor Center until 1967.

MORE BACKGROUND! By 1958, I had led about 14 week-long hiking trips with students in the Smoky Mountains, a 1-month bike trip in New England, a 2-week bike trip in the Canadian Rockies, three 6-week bike trips in Europe plus taught wilderness camping at two girl's camps.

In the spring of 1959 I led my first canoe trip in the Boundary Waters. I was besotted. So back I went with a group in summer, then fall and then a winter camping trip for the week between Christmas and New Years.

It was during this time that I first learned about the Outward Bound movement through a chance meeting of an Outward Bound instructor from England. I was especially interested because I bemoaned the lack of giving our Center guests a deeper involvement in their outdoor experience. [The kind of experience I had so benefitted from as a youth, i.e. climbing trees and cliffs, walking in streams, canoeing, eating and sleeping outdoors, etc.](#)

So I immediately extended my stay overseas (between shipboard work assignments) and visited two Outward Bound Schools in England.

BESOTTED!! I knew we had to have such an opportunity in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW).

I phoned former Antioch teaching colleague, Bob Pieh, from Quebec (as soon as my return ship reached the Continent). That's when he told me of his similar Outward Bound dream and work to date. He then invited me to come join him (in summer 1964) to assist in the embryonic start-up of Minnesota Outward Bound School (MOBS) in Ely. I did so and helped teach in the men's program that summer.

It was during summer of 1964, at a National Outward Bound Board meeting in Ely, that I asked and was reluctantly given permission, to direct a program for girls in 1965. That part of the story is elsewhere.

In 1965 I spent many week-ends and teaching vacations in the Twin Cities doing radio shows and speeches promoting the first (1965) course for Girl's/Women.

About Daring and Sharing

I am deeply honored that you chose me for this Award recognizing my role in the Outward Bound experience for WOMEN and for people with disabilities.

It has caused me (and you have invited me) to look back on the challenge this was in a world not yet used to or welcoming to capable women. There were varying degrees and kinds of risk and daring for a female in putting yourself forward to a task then (as even now).

More amazing, to me, If you succeeded in achieving a leadership role you were (sometimes unknowingly) a much sought after role model for many aspiring and capable young women. I really did not know the extent of this role I played until well after I retired, when someone started work on my biography and he shared some of the testimonials he was receiving. They both informed and humbled me.

I now see where I took some quite significant risks ... and DARED at several levels. And in so doing, enabled/encouraged many young women (as well as men) to step up to their abilities. I'm glad for that, but reluctant to take any credit for that which is theirs. That was part of the resultant health benefits I wanted to offer in these opportunities for all who participated.

I am deeply grateful for my choice of sharing outdoor experience as a route to helping people gain or sustaining health. I've never regretted turning down medical school.

Continued ... For now ...

Over my professional lifetime did I experience rejection of services or ideas offered? Yes! Was I sometimes rebuffed or turned down in varying degrees. Yes!

When that happened, when possible, I sought to learn what I could from the experience. Sometimes I came back with a better understanding and sometimes I judged it a better use of my energy to let it go and “take a road less traveled”.

Jean Sanford Replinger (May 20, 2018)