

ENJOY THE SEASON

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There are three summer segments that leap to mind as being the most enjoyable over the span of my forty-eight years. The first began while I was still in single digits. It can be simply entitled "Having Fun". The second was during my college years. I'll tag that one, "Teaching Others to Have Fun". The third is now. It can definitely be labelled, "Re-learning to Have Fun".

Having fun didn't take much effort for kids in the 1950's, especially during the summer. Although I enjoyed school and seeing my friends every day, summertime was special, too.

For seven straight summers, my dad, mom, older sister and I made the drive from the southeast corner of Wisconsin along the shore of Lake Michigan to Door County, The Peninsula, Wisconsin's "thumb", for a week of doing neat stuff. Dad looked forward to his fishing jaunts around Green Bay (the actual bay, not the city). Mom got to do the same things she did for us at home. I think she got the short straw, but maybe it was enjoyable for her to do the same things but in a different setting. Penne, my sister, was eager to search for and check out kids her age, especially boys, and, of course, to shop. I either hung out with Dad or took off by myself to explore.

The water was usually too cold for swimming, and when it wasn't, the polio scare kept us on terra firma. Fortunately, I love just being in nature. I spent hours watching, studying, learning. I was happy to hang over the end of a pier watching fish in the clear bay water. Bullheads really scared me, though. I have Dad to thank for that.

"Bullheads live near the lake bottom", he'd preach. "When fishing, keep your hook up away from their level. If you ever catch one, call me right away. Chances are that it will swallow the hook and maybe the sinker. You won't be able to remove

them by yourself. Don't even try. If one of those stinging moustaches touches you, it will feel like that part of you is on fire."

I proved him to be right about the level at which bullheads live and about their swallowing the tackle. I always assumed him to be correct about the stinger business.

Squirrels, skunks, bats, raccoons, birds, fireflies, spiders, flowers, great towering pines, "shooting stars", aurora borealis. I was in awe of it all. Thanks Dad and Mom.

Teaching others to have fun occurred during the summers around my college years. I majored in physical education and minored in biology. Teachers were in demand in the late 1960's, especially those in P.E. Now before you conjure up images of overbearing jocks, I tell you right off that I AM DIFFERENT, some of you already know. My philosophy is education through the physical, not of the physical. Healthy intellect and physical well being run parallel. Exercise, problem solve, have fun. But enough.

Counselling at a summer camp was a logical progression toward my professional teaching. Camp Marimeta is an eight week summer camp for Jewish girls aged seven through sixteen. At that time it was run by Edna Wasserman who was a towering 4'11" of love. The camp is on the shore of Lake Meta in the north central Wisconsin town of Eagle River. It houses eleven cabins, a lodge, mess hall, activity hall, boat house, stables, tennis courts and rifle and archery ranges. I was actually paid to be there!

The setting, the scores of activities, the state of the art equipment and the gourmet food meant little without the most important factor - the girls. They were all delightful, eager to learn and to assist each other. They put on Sunday services that drew adult

tears. Their campfire readings touched us all and made an everlasting bond. "Meatballs" this ain't.

The counselors rotated the nightly watch patrol from 8:00 to 10:30. The cabins formed a huge semi-circle with a sidewalk in front. On my patrol nights I often stopped to aim my flashlight beam into the ebony sky. Not that my pathetic torchlight could compete with myriad stars, but I was hopeful. When the night is ink black and the only sounds are from crickets and toads, one's imagination can become very active. Lowering my gaze to the vast activity area that the cabins bordered, I envisioned a craft, not of this world, floating down and settling on the dewy grass. For five summers I envisioned, hoped even prayed. What a welcome "they" would have had. Thanks Mrs. Wass.

After college graduation, I worked legit jobs during the summers. Teaching contracts were for nine months. I didn't earn enough teaching at a private school to travel during the summers. So, I worked.

When I left teaching, it felt weird working at the same job year 'round. A week vacation? That's all? Two weeks after five years? Oh, that makes everything peachy. Okay, teaching spoiled me. Rather, the time off from it did.

I was raised to believe that the next important thing to follow faith, family and education is work. And when I do something, it's always over 100%. So, I guess you could say that I became a workaholic. At least my husband would.

Most of us have been around for thirty years. We are living through drastic societal changes of global proportions. It's a blessing to have a job. I am the last to admit that I carried it too far. I was forgetting how to have fun, recognize humor, laugh. From the start, the job was mentally demanding and physically exhausting. I underwent three knee surgeries in four years just to stay on my feet. After that, I felt my mind slipping away. It was more than burn-out. I was packing a bag for La-La Land.

For months, hubby Ray asked me to attend Snaffu socials with him. I reasoned that it would be an added strain to try to be pleasant around strangers. It would be no different than at work. It wasn't until he actually became angry (Ray?) and explained that I needed the "down time" with intelligent, sane folks that it hit me. The main reason he wanted me there wasn't for himself, but for myself.

What I found after attending my first social is recorded in Annie Katz's Area 51 #1 under "Confessions of an interloper". I now attend Snaffu functions as religiously as life permits. The monthly socials hosted by Annie and Joyce are the highlights. And the summer months add an exclamation point. The sparkling pool, the northwoods setting, the people....

I thank Ray for knowing me better than I know myself and for caring. I thank Snaffutes, particularly Annie and Joyce, for saving my sanity (and possibly my marriage) and for teaching me how to have fun again.

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