

The Story of Me: Part Two

As life continues, one has opportunities to pursue many different activities- some become life-long pursuits, some fill a need or desire at that period of one's journey and some just in the spirit of adventure. Some choices enrich one's life, some choices consume one's life, some choices are detrimental to one's life. Nonetheless, these choices make us who we are.

Therefore, these are the choices that I made-----

Horses

After we moved to Waukesha, I started swimming at the YWCA. They sponsored a get-away for women at a Girl Scout camp in Wild Rose, Wi. The programs varied from ballet to crafts including horseback riding.

The session was 4-5 days, all meals were included and your time was unstructured. You could attend the various sessions or sit and read at your leisure. The accommodations were quite rustic to be kind- bunk beds, etc.

I had taken lessons while I was in grade school (wearing Aunt Lil's boots-the toes stuffed with paper.) Beyond that, it did not occur me to pursue this hobby. I immediately fell in love with the sport, the horses, the barns, et al. When the Y camp ended, I found a barn in the area and continued to take lessons. The classes were for adults but I was the oldest in the group. For me, it was a diversion from my every day life. We were running the business at that time which was all-consuming. When I was with my horse, that was all that was on mind. It is a wonderful stress reliever.

I never owned a horse. Ownership of a horse is a costly time-consuming way of life. It is an investment that bears no return but pleasure. So, I limited my passion to leasing horses.

My first venture was Vic, an old former champion saddle bred. He was gentle, easy to ride and had no bad habits. I paid the owner for the privilege of feeding, combing, brushing, picking his hooves and exercising him several days a week. He was a delight.

My next horse was housed at a different barn. MUD (My Ultimate Dream) was smaller than Vic but with a wonderful comfortable gait. She had one little bad habit-she spooked whenever a foreign object like a leaf would cross her path. But she basically was easy to control.

After MUD's owner no longer leased her, I was on the search for another horse. One day, I was trying a new horse and made the unfortunate choice to join my friend on a trail ride-not a wise choice without knowing the horse.

We were headed away from the barn when the horse smelled smoke in the distance. He began dancing around so I dismounted. Just as my feet hit the ground, the horse spun around and bolted for the barn. As he turned, he knocked me off my feet and I hit the ground. It was soon apparent that my wrist was broken. My fellow rider took me to the hospital. I rode after that but not as regularly.

Two weeks after the break, I became ill with what was ultimately diagnosed as rheumatoid arthritis. I was hospitalized for 10 days and on bed rest for 2 months. Eventually, there was no trace of that disease for which I am very thankful as it is a debilitating

condition. Although it has never been medically confirmed, I felt that the broken wrist triggered the rheumatoid episode

Swimming

My passion for swimming began as a young child of 6 years old at the lake behind the grade school in Pocantico.

The lake was small and spring-fed surrounded by a wooded area. There was a shallow side where a small sandy beach was provided for little people. In a deeper area, a concrete dock was built with a diving board. Our coach doubled as the physical education teacher in the school. Our lessons began after the school year ended for the summer. Coach Davidson was a tall, slender, handsome man who had reportedly trained for the Olympics.

Swimming lessons began in the shallow, sandy beach area. As we progressed, we moved to a deeper part of the lake, then to the diving board and finally swimming across the lake to the cold, mucky place where the spring entered. We did not spend much time there returning to the concrete dock as quickly as possible.

We spent all of our days in the summer at the pool. Joe, Dot and I all learned to swim there as well as Mom and Dad. Mom was more interested in getting a tan and visiting with friends and Dad was only there on weekends. It was a great way to spend the summer. Since the town was so small, most of our friends were there as well. As we got older, Mom took us to Rye Beach where there was a "real" pool and a rocky spot overlooking the ocean. We enhanced our tan with baby oil and iodine. Sunscreen was unheard of.

Since we had no pool at our high school, there was no opportunity

to pursue swimming as a sport. Even in college, swimming was a recreation. I never considered it as a competitive endeavor. Truthfully, team sports did not appeal to me at all. Competing with one's self seems more rewarding.

After college, our lifestyle included swimming in lakes, at beaches and Y facilities. Chick has humored me although it is not at the top of his list of activities.

In the early years, there weren't many opportunities to swim. When Mike was two years old, we lived in Waukegan, Ill., swam at the YMCA and played at the beach on Lake Michigan. We joined a mother-child swim group and met some good friends there.

Portage nearly duplicated my early swimming experiences. There is a small lake and beach there which became a gathering place for moms and kids-perfect for the kids to enjoy and to gossip and get a tan. (It was still o.k. to get a tan at the time.)

I started to more seriously swim laps when we lived in Waukesha. I joined the YWCA and swam early on the morning before we went to work. For me, a life-time night person, this was a true sacrifice. Swimming was sporadic for a few years until we came to Ca.

I found the Y and have fulfilled my passion. I swim every day when possible. For me, it is effortless exercise and I will continue it for the rest of my life.

Timeshares

While living in Waukesha, Chick became interested (or obsessed) with tennis. Through that activity, he became acquainted with Burt Woyahn and his wife, Jean. They are natives of Waukesha and graciously included us in their social circle and introduced us to many Waukesha people. Jean had been a real estate agent for many years. During those years, she became involved in the time-share evolution-selling condos for one-week segments at a given resort. This particular resort was on Hilton Head Island in South Carolina, largely know for golf and tennis. It seemed to well-laid out, had nice amenities but mainly, was right on the beach. Burt and Jean decided to purchase a week of time after Jean took a trip to see the property. Of course, the idea of all that time on the tennis court and on the beach had great appeal so we bought into it. In retrospect, it could have been a disaster for us but, over the years, has opened a wonderful door for us to the world of travel. Economically, the wizards of finance have pointed out the error of our ways but the benefits for us have far outweighed the disadvantages. At the time of our purchase, we did not take vacations so this forced us to take the time.

Here are the gains:

1. We spend time in an unfamiliar section of the country or the world.
2. We have a week right on the beach.
3. We have experienced a culture of the U.S. previously unknown to us-the lowlands of South Carolina.
4. We have exchanged weeks to travel to Germany 3 times,

France, Belgium, Flagstaff, Ariz., Palm Springs, Ca. many times and on the beach in San Diego.

5. We have had family reunions with my sibling's families-highly unlikely without the availability of HH since we all live in different corners of the country.

6. We were able to keep in contact with Burt and Jean since we moved away from Wisconsin.

We have some wonderful facilities and some not-so-wonderful, especially in Europe, but always an adventure.

Travel

My desire to travel didn't surface until my middle years. Perhaps the business trips that we took after we were involved with Trier's widened my horizons but the first trip that I took outside of the US really was an epiphany for me. There are so many places to explore that I am sad for people who do not care to go beyond their own life experiences.

Tracy was an exchange student at the University of London in 1987. Chick, as usual, made it happen financially so, off she went to a life-altering experience for her and an impetus for Scott and me. Scott went to London to meet Tracy and her friends for a tour of several countries and I took the opportunity to visit earlier while she was still attending school. We decided to visit the land of our ancestors-Ireland. There is surely a thread of continuity in our gene structure which is palpable when one is in the aura.

I have daily journals recording my succeeding trips: the trip to

Cabo San Lucas by myself, trips to Germany after Chick was convinced to do it, Baja trips to see the whales, to France and Paris and my most memorable trip-an African Safari-which I would do again in a heartbeat. All these trips were possible because Chick worked his magic with the finances. As I have said, I have the ideas and he makes it happen.

The Pink Elephant

When I was a member of the Lively Arts Council in Portage, we sponsored a "talent" show for scholarship money. The purpose of this group was to encourage arts and culture in the community. The variety show was to be a showcase for people to use their talents.

Nancy Kinney and I decided the show needed some originality. Consequently, we planned a dance-as a pink elephant. We worked on the steps for weeks-well, more hysterical laughing than serious work. Our artistic friend designed the costume which was a chicken-wire frame covered with paper mache' and painted pink, of course. I was the head and Nancy the back end. We thought we had it down pat. The choreography wasn't that difficult-after all, what did we know?

The performance was at the high school and drew a good crowd. The big moment was here-we were ready-but someone played the wrong music! We stumbled through as best we could and , to be honest, no one else knew that we were in trouble.

When the show was over (we didn't win), we thought it would be a shame not to extend the life of this magnificent creature, so we went on the road. What better place to perform than in some of the local bars. Off we went, Nancy and I , husbands in tow, to the

seedy part of town near the railroad tracks. Mike entered the bar first asking if anyone had seen a pink elephant, then we appeared. The response was underwhelming, the patrons barely looked our way! Maybe, they had seen more than they needed.

The whole process was such fun that it is one of my best Portage moments.

Occupations

My work record is not one filled with exciting, desirable and uplifting "positions". Since I had no far-reaching goal for which I was striving, the particular job fulfilled a particular need at the moment-the need to earn money.

Circumstances dictated many of my jobs. Our village was several miles from any sort of employment opportunities and transportation was the first hurdle to overcome. One had to be 18 in the state of New York to obtain a driver's license. We only had one car and buses were slim to none.

My very first job was clerking at a record shop in Tarrytown. This opportunity presented itself during the summer after high school graduation and before college. I'm not sure how the transportation worked out but, to my delight, this shop was located in the same block as the corner hangout of the 52-20 club. This was a group of WWII vets that were taking advantage of \$20 a week for 52 weeks from the government before they had to get a job or go to school. So, they congregated on the corner of Broadway and Main. I was mad for one member of that group so I couldn't be happier. I spent a great deal of time sweeping off the sidewalk in front of the shop to see and be seen! (My passion was unrequited, by the way. School started at N.Y.U.

and my job ended.

After the move to Wisconsin, We (Dot and I) discovered that the fields and fields of corn that we passed on the drive, had to be "de-tasseled." This was achieved by walking up and down between the rows of corn and pulled off the "tassels" growing out of the top of the corn to prevent the corn (which is called sweet corn, by the way) from going to seed. The farmers hired busloads of high school students, drove them to a field and put them to work. I thought I would surely be chosen to be a supervisor, escaping this miserable task. But, to my dismay, the organizers didn't see the potential-could it be that we were New Yorkers and had never seen a cornfield before? One day was enough for me-the heat was oppressing, the leaves of the corn cut into the skin and if that didn't get you, the mosquitoes did. My little sister stuck to it til the bitter end.

We moved to Wisconsin during the summer so I couldn't enter the University of Wisconsin as a resident until the second semester in February. Getting a job seemed preferable to lounging around so said my parents. My previous work experience hadn't qualified me for much but then working for J.C. Penny's didn't require much. I took a job as a clerk in the dress department. The clientele was hardly into high fashion-I was not into housedresses. Not a perfect match, which showed in my paycheck. We were paid a basic salary plus a percent of sales. I never reached that amount, the management wasn't impressed with my performance or my whistling and we parted company.

One of my short-term jobs had to be embarrassing for my dad. He arranged an interview for me with the supervisor of one of the offices at Fisher Body. In accordance with my limited experience, I was hired as a file clerk. Of all the boring jobs in

the world, this ranks right up there. The supervisor soon realized that the amount of energy expended by me on this job was leading nowhere and he gently suggested that I might be happier elsewhere.

While in Madison, I always needed money. My parents paid for my tuition, but there was never enough spending money. I found a job in the Horticulture Dep't. counting seeds! The seeds were on a little tray and I counted them out as directed. I did not know or care where they went after they left my hands - I just wanted the money to spend.

Becoming engaged was a good thing and a bad thing. Since getting married was the universal goal of all young women of that era, that was the good thing. The bad thing was the fact that my dad decided that all financial support for college could be suspended because I was to begin my real career-being a housewife. He felt that secretarial school would have been the better choice. In retrospect, I made no effort to finance myself for the final semester so I must assume the blame for that decision.

Chick was going to school that summer so found a place to stay and a job working in the Social Security Administration as-you guessed it - a file clerk(probably because of previous experience.) As the summer came to a close, it was time to make a decision since my living quarters were in a sorority house, which I had to vacate when school started. Without further ado, I quit to go back home. My department head was furious-not because she hated to lose me, but because I wasn't following the RULES of giving two weeks notice.

With a wedding in the near future, getting a job in Janesville was a necessity. I found a job in a dress shop a little more trendy

than J.C. Penney. I was hired as a bookkeeper. Now, math has never been my best subject but I plunged in as if I knew what I was doing. The manager was straight from the heart of NYC with an accent to match. He spent most of his days walking up and down the sidewalk gauging the volume of shoppers. He and his wife were totally unsuited for a small Midwestern town.

Not until we moved to Evanston, did I work again.

Since we were only able to rent one room in the house of a Northwestern professor, there was not much housewifery to do, I got a job. The Chicago suburb environment was an entirely new, exciting experience for us. The job was in the Accounts Receivable dep't of a very upscale women's store in downtown Evanston. Imagine my delight in having all those wonderful clothes and shoes at my disposal at a discount! Again I was working with figures and operating and bookkeeping machine but I loved my job, my boss, Agness was a gem and I was surrounded by fashion. What more could I want?

(Note: One day while volunteering at Mission Trails Visitors Center in San Diego, I was chatting with a co-workers. In our exchange of backgrounds, I discovered that she was the granddaughter of the owner of the store and knew many of the people that I worked with. This was some 50+ years later and thousands of miles away!)

When we got to Flint, we still had only one car so any job required dropping off/picking up. I applied for a job with the telephone company but I was told, upon testing that I only had 10 per cent hearing in one ear resulting from a mastoidectomy when I was 4-5 years old (before penicillin.) The test was very hi-tech- holding a pocket watch various distances from my ear-but official enough to be rejected. The AAA didn't care about my hearing as long as I could route a trip with a marker upside down on a Triptic (the

map was upside down-not me!) That job lasted until I wanted a weekend off and the unpleasant woman running the office said no so I said yes and quit! (This is getting to be a pattern.)

My next job was with Chevrolet Parts and Service. This was located in a very large office operating a key-punch machine. This machine punctured small perforations on a card covered with rows of numbers. We punched in the numbers then verified them using a long thin metal stick through the stack of cards. This job involved a little more activity than the filing job. But, we were in a factory-like atmosphere and the union mentality soon took over. We sat in our chairs, coats on, purses and lunch boxes in hand at one min. before 5, ready to bolt as soon as the minute hand clicked on the 12.

We had planned on having children but after one miscarriage and test results confirming that it was unlikely that we would produce any, we started the process of adopting a child.

In the interim, I hired for a job at a bank near our house as a bank teller! In spite of my poor aptitude for figures, I did love to count money! This was a small bank with few tellers so our duties included helping customers inside and outside the bank-at the drive-up window. One day, a man presented me with a sizable check but, gosh, someone had stolen his wallet with all his ID! As naïve as I was, the bank manager ("Scatch" Curtis as he was fondly called) was even worse and OK'd the cashing of the check! Off he went with \$1300 of the bank's money-undoubtedly laughing all the way! We received a visit from the local PD the next day-seems the perp had stolen the checks from a car dealer. How thankful I was that I had gotten permission from the manager! This job ended when the adoption called to say that we had a boy!

So, my housewife-ing began in earnest lasting many years. We had never planned on two paychecks. In that era, mothers stayed home. There was a short period of time when we would refer to my use of time as a job. When we lived in Portage, several friends and I thought it would be great fun to start a jeans shop (a la Limited etc.) This became a popular concept in that time of rock-n-roll and free spirits. Amazingly, that trend continues. Notice that I said "fun" because it never entered our minds that we should be thinking business. Well, we jumped right in, with an astounding lack of knowledge about running a business. There was a lot of work to be done to accomplish this.

We rented a 2nd floor space on the main street of town. It required the co-operation of family and friends to transform this empty space into a usable, attractive sales space. Chick spent many hard hours cleaning the mortar from a brick wall, we painted and called on our creativity to liven up the area. We invested little money, depending on the solid credit rating of one of the very wealthy partners, who referred to this adventure as "play money."

Going to "market" was such an educational experience. In Chicago, there were booths and booths of clothes on display. We had no idea how to shop, what to shop for, how much to buy-just 3 women in a giant shopping spree! Each one of us had different tastes so decision making wasn't easy. The salespeople quickly caught on to our hay-seedness and did not spend a lot of time with us. We were buying a dozen while other buyers were buying dozens. Our other trips to market-Chicago and Minneapolis were not as nerve-wracking as we were prepared for the lack of interest I us. But, the three of us were hardly faceless in our hometown-I was the principal's wife, one was the wife of a

banker, one was the wealthiest woman in town. And we were not adverse to shaking things up a bit. My jeans had been plasticized and hung over the street for signage to the Pantomine. We ran an ad in the local newspaper which read "Come up and get into our pants." Alas. They didn't and after limping along for a few years, it was sold. Could it be because we would close for lunch on a whim or weren't serious to make it a success? However, we had moved out of town by then thus ending my career as a forerunner of fashion!

Fashion was not in the vocabulary of my next job. Chick was disillusioned with education during his last position as Principal of Waukesha North High School and decided to pursue a different career. Owning his own business was the choice. That lasted 22 years-good and bad, up and down. It has been said that one may truly free in your own business. I do not agree with this statement-demands from customers, dependence on employees, deadlines to meet, meetings to attend. These factors are all consuming and confining.

But, there are positives in everything we do in life:

- We had the opportunity to travel, which opened many doors to us.
- Learning the many tasks that we had to perform.
- Relationships with people: employees, customers, suppliers

The sale of the business was a tremendous to me. Retirement is truly freedom. It was an amazing thing to me that retirement does not mean that you services are no longer needed. There are many places where retirees are sought. One such place was the Convention Visitors Center in San Diego. A staff was hired to assist the meeting managers of each convention to perform tasks

such as crowd control, attendee sign-in, monitoring rooms. The assignments were never long and at your own discretions. I did this for five years. By then, the thrill was gone and I had more important things to do, like bridge, books, lunches, dinner parties, yoga and swimming.

We also started proctoring when we fully retired. That is: assisting and monitoring exams for the California State Bar twice a year and exams given at two law schools- California Western and Thomas Jefferson. These activities were short term and sporadic but provided the stimulation, which is important for good health and a little money.