

My Life in Sports

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As a kid, I thought I was not 'sporty.' Sure, I could roller skate and walk on my stilts, but I was a complete failure in Gym. Having no depth perception, I could never tell where that damn ball was during a softball, volleyball or dodge ball game. In kick ball, one of those unpredictable balls hit me full in the face. Fortunately it deflated or I could have ended up with a black eye or worse. And forget basketball! The only way I passed gym was by learning all of the rules so I could do well on the few written exams.

You would think that I could at least do gymnastics, but unfortunately I had no skill in that area either. I could barely do a cartwheel.

What I could do well at was archery. Archery mainly depends on form. Once you have the form, your arrows cluster and you just have to adjust the point you are aiming at. Of course, we only spent a paltry week or so on this, much to my annual disappointment.

What I could do was ice skate. There was a rink that was flooded every winter at the local country club, so I would beg my mother to take me out there every winter weekend (and in the evening if I could talk her into it!) My friends tended to cluster around skating rather than skiing which was also offered, using the drumlin that edges the property. (The place is actually called the "Drumlin's Country Club.") That took more expensive equipment than just a pair of skates. I have no idea what the lifts cost then. At any rate, my friends all skated rather than skied and that is critical when you are a young teen.

I enjoyed canoeing, both as a teen and as an adult. As a kid, all of my canoeing was done with the Girl Scouts, either at camp or with my Senior Scout troop. The troop was a fantastic group of girls with a terrific leader, Mrs. Roderick. I would go climbing in the Adirondack Mountains from Scout camp every summer and then our troop would go camping and climbing during on the long Columbus Day weekend. My troop would river canoe every spring because the water would be high enough after the spring thaw. There is no sound more exciting than the roar of upcoming rapids. Bob and I still get out in the canoe at my cousin's cottage on the Salmon River – no rapids there.

Now back to winter sports.

When I moved to Madison to work, one of my new coworkers, Dot Havens, having recently returned from working in England, was really gung-ho on skiing and needed a buddy to go with. I assured her that I knew nothing about skiing but was willing to learn. She, for her part, was willing to teach. Thus began a long and glorious adventure. In addition to skiing locally, we went on week-long ski trips annually for the next 45 years. Ultimately we both joined the ski patrol. Obviously, Dot proved to be a good teacher, but she always skied with more skill and grace than I ever developed. I finally reluctantly gave up skiing with the onset of the Covid pandemic.

In addition to skiing, there was my flirtation with ski diving, but that is another story.

Now I just spend my physical energy gardening. That can hardly be called a sport, but at least it is exercise. I guess we are forced to evolve with age. But at least we are left with stories to tell.