

What Got Me Into Canoeing?

Article URI

www.boundarywatersblog.com/?item=what-got-me-into-canoeing

Author

Mike and Sue Prom

Site URI

www.boundarywatersblog.com/

Published: February 27, 2010, 8:49 am

I was recently asked this question by a fellow [blogger](#) and area resident Bryan Hansel. I figure the only way I'm going to write about it is if I do it in a blog post or two or three as I'm not getting around to it any other time.

My first experience with a canoe was as a Girl Scout in Central Minnesota. The troop went out to Peck's Farm to do an overnight camping trip and there was a small river on the property. I remember walking down to the river bank, seeing some girls struggle while getting in or out of the canoe and then I'm pretty sure I walked away. I don't remember actually canoeing but if I did get into a canoe then it was either traumatic and I repressed it or it wasn't an awe inspiring moment.

The next opportunity I had to go canoeing was during High School. We were fortunate to have Lake George right across the road from our school and we actually got to go canoeing for gym class. To say I didn't take gym class seriously would be an understatement. I loved to pretend I was left handed in gym class and my goal was to never break a sweat.

Lake George wasn't much of a lake. It maybe had been one day but over the years it had been filled in and a large fountain was placed in the middle of the lake and a small one on the edge of the lake. Geese and ducks loved to hang out there year around preventing areas of the ice from freezing solidly enough for skating.

My canoe partner the first day of canoeing gym class was Cheryl. My blonde haired, blue eyed, 80's big haired girlfriend. Between her and I if a match would have been lit anywhere near our heads there would have been a small explosion from all of the Aqua Net Hairspray it took to keep our hair in the position we had carefully sculpted it into in the wee morning hours before school. Our makeup job took almost as long to apply as the ceiling work on the Sistine Chapel. We were girls doing our best to look good while most likely looking really awful with blue eyeshadow and a streak of blush that looked like warpaint but that's what we did when we were young.

Oh it would have been easy to just get into the canoe and paddle around the lake mindlessly but it would also have been boring. I wanted anything but boring that fine spring day and of course I craved attention. What better way to get attention than to almost tip over while getting into the canoe?

One thing I have always loved about Cheryl was her loud voice and her ability to say whatever she was thinking. This came in handy during her years of transporting criminals from jail to prison in her later life. Oh how I loved to aggravate Cheryl and hear her yell and that is exactly what she did as I pointed the canoe towards the fountain.

She hollared at the top of her lungs threatening me with every stroke I took. I somehow managed to learn how to steer in those first moments of canoeing because I carefully angled her end of the canoe beneath the pounding water of the fountain.

To say Cheryl screamed wouldn't come close to what came out of her mouth that beautiful day. I'm sure it wouldn't be appropriate to write what she yelled either. I just remember the look of horror on her face and her long, blonde locks dripping the recycled water from the fountain.

Lake George was the toilet for all local waterfowl including the many geese I mentioned earlier. It was nothing like the water of a Boundary Waters lake and you would never have thought about swimming in it. It had a particular smell to it that only a lake that collected water from the run off of a busy town would have.

After I was sure every stitch of her clothing and body had been soaked I attempted to get out from beneath the water pounding fountain but not without receiving a severe drenching myself. I tried to convince the teacher it was my first time in a canoe but just like he didn't believe I was left handed he didn't believe it was my first canoe ride.

That memory still makes me smile especially since it still makes Cheryl furious when I bring it up. She knew it wasn't an accident that I beelined for the fountain that fine day all of those years ago. Who would have thought that silly high school girl would some day become a canoe outfitter in Northern Minnesota?

Not me, not my gym teacher and certainly not Cheryl.