

Dec3

Swim, II

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As a small child, I was frightened of the whole world. It didn't seem like it at the time, though. I was bashful. I was shy about meeting new people or speaking in public. I was needed at home so couldn't participate, much, in group activities. I was late in learning to ride a bike. I didn't learn to swim, or skate, or drive until I was an adult. Then, as a grown-up looking back, I realized I'd been afraid.

As a parent, I didn't want my daughters to take on that fear, or to grow up without challenging themselves. They went to preschool story-hour, Mom and child craft classes, Brownies and Girl Scouts, gymnastics, ballet lessons and roller skating. I enrolled them in swimming and water-play classes when they were very young; they could both swim well before they reached school age.

I took swimming classes then, too. My sisters, Brenda and Cheryl, did, too. We went to the Boy's Club in downtown Lapeer, where there was an indoor pool. It was an old building that had started its life, I think, as a church. It smelled predictably of chlorine, and there were high windows letting in filtered light. I started with the class titled "Absolutely Terrified." I did not feel absolutely terrified of the water, but I was nervous about what they would expect of me...better to start slow. As it turned out, it was a good place to begin. Though I could go underwater without panicking, I was never comfortable having my face in the water. That was where this class started.

Simply learning to be comfortable face down in the water, to open my eyes, control my breath and let my body relax was life-changing knowledge. Learning to keep my body in alignment, and my limbs close, allowed for forward momentum. That had *never* happened when my back was curled to keep my head above the water and my arms and legs were flailing around in every direction. I learned the breathing techniques and several simple swim strokes. I learned to dive.

After class, my sisters and I would shower and dress, pick up our children, and meet for lunch. During the summer, we packed a big salad, and went to the park to eat. Later, I continued taking Swimming Classes as part of the physical education requirements at college. My technique and stamina improved. Still, those first classes at the Boy's Club are the one's that stay foremost in my mind. For me, the first brave steps toward new knowledge are the most memorable.