

Growing Up with Bob Ridders

When I met Bob in seventh grade in our home town of Milwaukee, he was laughing about getting caught in the woods without any toilet paper. A poison ivy rash takes a long time to heal.

Experiments in physics and chemistry played an important part in our lives in Shorewood High School. We made a zip gun out of a car antenna, and its bullet severely dented our water heater. Black powder was easy to make, but when we tried to make nitroglycerine, the concoction boiled, and we threw it into a snowdrift.

Spending money was earned by life guarding on Lake Michigan. Lifeguards dug deep holes in the sand to bury dead fish. One sport was for two guards to jump into the hole, and each try to get out while forcing the other back in. Bob was wiry and very good at these pit rumbles.

We instituted the New Year's Eve *sans*-suit swim in Lake Michigan. We couldn't understand why others didn't join us.

In preparation for college we took a night-school course in typing. Our mothers thought we were such good boys that they should fix us snacks for after our typing class. Soon we got bored with the class so we went to the movies and then collected our snacks.

During our joint campus visit to Carleton, Bob split up when a student blew a simple geometric proof. We decided to go to Grinnell.

Bob and I and our fellow Grinnell classmates Phil Grimm and Jon Groteluschen spent a spring vacation in New Orleans during our Grinnell years. We were low on money, so we decided to sneak Bob into a drive-in movie. Bob was cut by the trunk lid and needed stitches. They were free since Bob's dad was a doctor.

We took a canoe trip into Canada. Again we were low on money, so we checked ourselves into the jail in Ely, Minnesota. We thanked the jailer in a Christmas card.

Bob was best man when Jeanette and I were married.

After graduate school at Northwestern, Bob taught Industrial Engineering at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. His courses were difficult, and he laughed at the derogatory graffiti about them on the walls of the campus restrooms.

The cops pinched Bob when he rode his motorcycle through a campus flower bed in Amherst.

Amherst is at a low altitude, so when Bob visited New Mexico he was a little out of breath. He couldn't admit this, so in a climb into the high country he took an uncharacteristic interest in plants, streams, flowers—anything to rest.

Our parents retired to the same subdivision in Arkansas. After Bob got sick, his dad arranged for us to take a canoe trip on Arkansas' Buffalo River. Bob joked about his illness and how it was a perfect foil against insurance salesmen. He died a few months later.

Peter Lysne