

Chapter 5. Realising a Dream

Joan Reinhardt-Reiss, *Running Around!*

Barbara Lindemann, *Reflections on Retirement, Eight Years In a Raft* (2013)

Running Around!

Joan Reinhardt-Reiss

Years before Title IX*, athletic girls were classified as tomboys; my badge of pride. In sixth grade, I was a top handball player. We played against a concrete wall, and our gloveless hands whacked a deflated rubber ball.

As a California adult, competitive tennis was my game. However, the social mores of country-club tennis never suited me, and at age forty, I began running around the block – in tennis shoes. When I described this to a horrified jogger friend, he exclaimed, “Joan, you need real running shoes!” Who knew? That footwear led to “fun-runs,” half-marathons, and my first marathon.

Unbeknownst to me, this race was a “cherry pick” meaning a small event with no serious competition. As I ran, a spectator occasionally shouted “Third woman!” Convinced that bystanders confused shorthaired females with men, I was shocked to cross the finish line as first woman!

Hooked on the sport, a dedicated coach trained some of us aspiring females. I became a nationally ranked female marathon runner in the forty to forty-five age group. The New York marathon was a particular joy since my hometown parents drove to different vantage points to watch. Mother always told me not to beat the boys, but her tune changed quickly. She knew all my sub-three hour finishes and quickly pulled those numbers out at cocktail parties much to the chagrin of other guests.

When my marathon times decreased, I decided to increase miles. Endurance was my strong suit, so training focused on ultra-running events. “Ultra” refers to any distance beyond the 26.2 marathon miles. First came fifty-mile trail runs where I often won my age group. Then I decided to enter the athletic event of my life – the Western States Endurance Run – a 100-mile trail run from Squaw Valley to Auburn.

Living in Sacramento, I was close to the Sierra trails and with others spent weekend hours

* Refers to Title IX of the Educations Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §1681. This is a federal law prohibition discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education programme or institution.

running sections of the race. Western States run began at 5 a.m. with a Squaw Valley mountain climb. The goal is to run under twenty-four hours and win a silver buckle. In the process you climb mountains and even cross a river. Your friends come to various points with favorite food and drink, although there are also numerous “aid” stations with nourishment and libation. As the temperature reached 110 degrees Fahrenheit in the deep canyons, my quadriceps were struggling. At sixty-two miles, each runner is allowed a pacer since aside from the early winners, most of us finish in darkness. My friend Howie met me, but I was off the twenty-four-hour pace. We struggled through the night and finished at 25:32.

Knowing my time could improve, I entered and trained the next year. At age fifty-one, I ran 23:44 earning my silver buckle! Howie and I cried at the finish line. My physical self was pushed to the edge, but the exhilaration flooded my fatigued body.

Joan Reinhardt-Reiss sports a renaissance resumé -- walking and sometimes running on overlapping paths: writer, athlete, public interest advocate in environment and health, NPR commentator, traveler, and grandmother. At sixty-one, she completed the 124-mile bicycle event in the Sierras known as the Death Ride. Now seventy-six, she still cycles and downhill skis. Additional details are available at jrreisswriter.com.



Photo credit: Gay Wiseman



Joan Reinhardt-Reiss in 2014. [Photo credit: Nancy Rubin]

Reflections on Retirement, Eight Years In *Barbara Lindemann*

My children expected me to fail retirement. Now, eight years into it, I give myself an A+. They would probably agree. I loved all of my thirty-four years teaching U.S. History at Santa Barbara City College. My children knew how much satisfaction I derived from the whole teaching

process, and even the committee work was not something I found burdensome. What was getting me down was the constant pressure of grading papers. Besides, I wanted to retire while I was still feeling successful in the classroom. The curious part is that I have never regretted the decision nor have I missed college teaching.

First, I had to justify this new free time. Saying I had earned leisure, as people liked to assure me, did not work. Leisure would be boring. Rather, it was like a recent college graduate asking, “now what?” or a full time homemaker seeing the children leave home and asking the same question. However, in this transition, unlike those, there was wonderful freedom — no economic pressures and few social pressures. I could make of these remaining years what I wanted.

What I wanted was community involvement, more time with my friends, intellectual stimulation, and opportunities to enjoy the rich cultural life of Santa Barbara, if not the world. I found all those, and now know that within and beyond these activities I need challenges and growth; piano lessons fill that need.

Fortunately, I was and continue to be healthy and maintain good exercise habits, yoga, hand weights, bicycling twenty to forty miles with good hill climbs, and rigorous hiking. Most of these activities I do with friends and family members.

A rich cultural life was here for the taking. I have travelled (separately) with friends, husband, and daughter to Asia, Europe, North, Central and South America. I attend concerts by the world's best musicians as they come through Santa Barbara on tour. I belong to a Spanish language book club that meets weekly to discuss Latin and Spanish literature in Spanish, and another that meets monthly to discuss contemporary and classic novels in English

It was more difficult to find a good fit from the many options for community volunteer work. Among other things, I'm on two boards and work as a docent with the Community Arts Music Association, teaching music appreciation units to fifth graders in local public schools.

Which brings me to the most important part of my retirement: resuming piano playing after forty- some years of barely touching it. I was a fairly advanced player by the time I graduated from college. Unable to imagine life without a piano, I bought a little upright when we moved to Santa Barbara, which sat unused in the corner of the living room. Career and family filled my days, and I didn't like fumbling through pieces with unpractised hands, nor did I have any energy remaining in my disciplined life to put in consistent practice time. I promised myself I would take it up again on retirement. But would I really want to by then? I gave myself a year of playing through old music, and decided, YES, I really wanted to. I bought a very good used grand piano and found a wonderful piano teacher who is around ten years older than I am and still teaching a full studio of students ranging in age from five to seventy-two. I try to practice seven

to eight hours a week. I've done some chamber music with other amateur musicians and joined the local Piano Club.

I don't enjoy performing, but I love the time alone at my piano, with endless challenges, goals seemingly always just beyond my reach. It is a wonderful mind stretcher as I struggle to understand the harmonic structures. It is an excellent way to keep in check arthritis of the hands; it engages all the senses and carries me away from ordinary cares.

In my volunteer activities I enjoy a feeling of competence achieved through the years of my professional career. On the piano I am a slow learner and mastery constantly eludes me. Paradoxically, it is the latter that is the most fulfilling.

During her teaching career at Santa Barbara City College, Barbara Lindemann introduced courses in the History of American Women, an interdisciplinary course on Women's Studies, and the History of U.S. Immigration. She was a founding member of the local chapter of NOW (National Organization for Women) in the early 1970s and founding member and past president of the Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee (established 1987). She currently is V.P. of the Board of the local Planned Parenthood Action Fund.



Barbara Lindemann in 2014. [Photo by permission]