



RENIRA PACHUTA OBSERVING OZAUKEE

Author attributes character development, inner confidence to adventure travel

When local travel author Jon Helminiak was a boy, the typical five-day family vacation to Florida or Disneyland was not for him. "My father had a rather adventurous streak in him," he explains. "Back in the 1960s, we went to places that very few people had even heard of ... islands such as Grand Cayman, Barbados or Curacao in the Netherlands Antilles. Many of the air strips were still gravel, and difficult to get to. And because there were few hotels on the islands, we usually stayed in local guest houses."

The kind of adventure travel that Helminiak experienced during his formative years obviously struck a chord within, because he continued seeking out places not frequented by the typical tourist. He went on international programs and lived with families overseas, and he led wilderness trips in his teens, including one to Canada during which he and his group not only battled a raging river and upturned canoe, but lived to tell about it. "These experiences taught me more about myself and my capabilities, and gave me more confidence than anything I'd ever learned in a classroom," he says.

In the years that followed, Helminiak's love of different cultures and other lands took him to more than 58 different countries, resulting in the April release of his book called "Nothing Routine." Published by Seaboard Press, "Nothing Routine" whisks readers on a magic carpet to virtually every continent in the world. Helminiak describes it as a "compendium of travel essays," talking about his unusual experiences in remote locations, different methods of travel, and the very unique people he met along the way.

Now that his book is receiving kudos from all who read it, Helminiak has more time to focus on his next goal — that of starting a nonprofit organization to encourage and subsidize travel for youths and their families who otherwise could not afford such trips. "There are millions of dollars available for college scholarships," says Helminiak, a former assistant chancellor for development and alumni relations at UW-Milwaukee. "But as far as I know, there's not a penny available for wilderness experience or international scholarships (for adventure travel) for young people." Incidentally, he's not talking about sitting in Munich and drinking beer for a week or lounging on a beach in Cancun, but instead is thinking more along the lines of trekking for three weeks through the tribal villages of Northern Laos, sea kayaking the coast of Sweden, or living with a family in rural Africa. "These are the kinds of experiences that are equally as important to your future success, perspective and character development as higher education," he stresses. "I view them as going hand-in-hand."



Submitted photo

Author, instrument-rated pilot, certified open water scuba diver and professional photographer Jon Helminiak, canoeing on Inle Lake in Burma (2003).