

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas recalls working at a girls' camp in Maine*

Interviewer: Was hiking a popular pastime?

Marjory Stoneman Douglas: Well, at one point in my life, I think the summer of my junior year in college; I got a job as counselor for a small girls' camp in Maine. Well, in college we just walked miles and miles and miles. We didn't call it hiking in those days; you just went for long walks. You walked for fifteen miles at a time, sometimes even in the very cold weather. Go somewhere for a picnic; we did a lot of hiking and that sort of thing without... we didn't backpack or anything, we just took long walks. Then when I was counselor of a kids' camp in Maine, and I, going up on the boat from Boston with the girls and the people that run the camp on Long Lake in Maine, I suddenly realized at that time, I couldn't swim. I'd been in and out of the water all the time, but somehow I never really learned to swim, and I suddenly realized I was responsible for these kids swimming and I'd been in canoes and all that without really being... I doubt very much that I could have drown, really, I'd been in and out of the water so many times, but I was not, technically, a swimmer. Fortunately, I had read a newspaper account only a few days before, it must have stuck in my mind. It said in a perfectly simple way to learn to swim or to teach swimming is to do a dead man's float, you know, learn to float flat out with your face in the water, pick up your face and swim, that's all. So by George, when I first got up to the camp, I took myself around the corner of the little pier and did a dead man's float and found myself swimming, you know, any kind of a dog paddle. You know, I had all the kids in camp swimming in twenty minutes; nothing to that. And then we all learned to swim together, as it were, we learned different strokes and I knew about that in general, and, you know, a dog paddle and a breast stroke and an Australian crawl and all that, so we were all swimming in no time. And I knew about canoeing, anyway, and I had them all canoeing and all that and we didn't do anything with sailing boats, just canoes. And we did a lot of hiking that summer. We went hiking and spent, we went hiking up Mt. Monadnock, spent the night sleeping at the top of the mountain, things like that. Just a small girls' camp, so it was a small group, so it was great fun. So that was my really first professional interest, and I never did it again, really, but... Down here this wasn't hiking country in those days, it was swimming, of course, and a great deal of dancing in the open air. Saturday night dances at the Roney Plaza, and you'd end up by going swimming and going for breakfast somewhere. So every Saturday night, dances were marvelous in the moonlight with a good

band and so on, so that was really, swimming and dancing were my chief exercises. Swimming, dancing and canoeing, you might say.

Interviewer: That sounds marvelous.

MSD: Well, it was, it was...

Interviewer: You went all night?

MSD: It would go on as long as you could stand it, as long as you wanted to. Nobody could stop you. If you wanted to go in swimming then put some clothes on and go and have breakfast in the early morning, you could. Or you could quit at any time you wanted to. There was no regular rule about it. I very rarely stayed up till dawn, because I'd get sleepy. But even after I built this house, we, a lot of us, would be doing that swimming and dancing business from here, from Coconut Grove.