

Taking Aim

Description

This is a piece of personal journalism that I wrote for one of my classes, and I very much enjoyed writing it. So, I hope you enjoy reading it as well ðŸ™,

A few years back, I decided to try something new.

When people say that, they will usually buy new clothes or shoes, or perhaps go to a different type of restaurant. Not me.

No, back when I worked the summer at Camp Wahanowin as the head of Nature, I decided to try something I had always dreamt of doing, but never had the chance. Something I had only seen in movies and read about in books.

I wanted to learn archery.

Something about the feel of an arrow in your hand, the weight of a quiver on your shoulders, and the sound of a bow as you released the arrow into the air enthralled me.

I was determined to learn.

So, at breakfast one day I approached the head of archery, Brandon, and asked if he had any free time this morning to give me a lesson. He looked at me for a moment, smiled a crooked smile, and told me to be there for second period.

After breakfast I walked towards the Nature building, which was a large outdoor paddock with a small shed where I kept all the animals. Or, as the kids began to affectionately call it, "Creepies and Cuddlies," due to the wide variety of creatures I had in my care. I fed and cleaned the cages of all the animals, everything from a chinchilla and rabbits to a ball python and tarantula.

Once done, I grabbed my water bottle, locked up the animal shed, and cut across the baseball field towards the other side of the camp, where archery was located.

Archery was by far the largest area in the camp, and was comprised of two large fields at its front and back, and a large wooden wall between the two, covered with hay.

In front of the hay were three large and pristine archery targets that had yet to be hit by arrows. Looking around, I noticed Brandon re-stringing a bow under a tent, listening to the soothing music of the Beatles.

After handing me the bow, Brandon grabbed a handful of arrows, placed them in a quiver, and walked towards an orange line spray-painted on the grass.

He then demonstrated the proper way to hold the bow, notch the arrow, and how far to draw back the string before releasing it.

“Aiming,” said Brandon pointing at his near-perfect shot, “comes after learning how to shoot.”

“How very Zen,” I quipped, as I grabbed an arrow with yellow and orange feathers.

Imitating what Brandon did, and channelling my inner Robin Hood, I pulled back the string, made sure my elbow was kept straight, and released.

TWANG!
“OW!”
THWACK!

I dropped the bow and looked at my left arm. My inside forearm was red and raw from the string of the bow hitting the exposed flesh. And even worse, my arrow had not even hit the target. It was a good six feet to the left.

Laughing, Brandon handed me a piece of leather with two straps.

“I forgot to give you an arm guard,” he said with a wink, “to protect your non-draw back arm. But, you’ll never make that mistake again, will you?”

Wincing, I strapped the piece of leather to my injured forearm, and tried it again.

TWANG! THWACK!

Three feet.

“Take a breath before you fire, and exhale as you release the arrow,” said Brandon, channeling his inner Yoda.

“Yes sensei,” I chuckled.

Calming myself, I drew another arrow out of the quiver and notched it onto the string. Taking a breath, I drew it back and closed my right eye, focusing my left on the yellow bullseye.

TWANG! THWACK!

I couldn’t believe it; I had actually hit the target. It was the outer white rim, of course, and only worth one point, but nonetheless, there was a hole.

I continued to take more arrows from the quiver and fire them at the target, while Brandon fixed the various broken bows and arrows that were in a large pile inside the tent.

We continued with this routine over the next few weeks. My improvement was slow, but steady. Brandon would watch occasionally, giving me pointers here and there, but pretty well left me alone to hone my skill.

One day at Nature, while I was about to feed a rat to the ball python the campers lovingly named Mr. Squeeze, Brandon stopped by and told me some interesting news.

“There’s going to be a councillor-only archery contest before camp ends,” he said while staring at the snake dislocating its mouth to feed on the frozen rat. “You should enter, you’ve definitely improved.”

“How long do I have to practice?” I said anxiously.

“About a week or so. You in?”

“Definitely,” I said, smiling.

I decided to keep on practicing as hard as I could, and hope that I would do well.

I practiced whenever I could fit it in, whether it was dawn, lunchtime, or dusk. I was committed.

When the day of the competition finally came, for pure fun, I had gone to the drama department and was dressed in a rather appropriate costume: Robin Hood.

The competition proceeded in rounds like most do, and either by pure luck or sheer skill (I’m still not sure which), I ended up in the championship round. It was, hilariously, between different heads of camp programs: Swimming, archery, nature, canoeing and riflery.

We lined up in a row, pulled arrows from our quivers, and took aim at our own individual targets. The closest one to the bullseye would win.

I closed my right eye, took a deep breath while I pulled the string back, and released.

TWANG! THWACK!

Category

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2. contest
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