

Mary Beth Danielson's

Prairie Dog Quadrilateral

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*“An adventure is an inconvenience rightly considered.
An inconvenience is an adventure wrongly considered.”*

G.K. Chesterton

Quadrilateral: “How do we know if something is true?”

- Scripture – Whatever document we hold as True. For most Americans, that is the Bible.
- Tradition – The history of how people have handled themselves and structured their comings and goings in situations of ordinary and extraordinary life.
- Reason – The logic of the world around us, i.e. the Sciences.
- Experience – Our own paths through life; what has and has not worked for us.

Dear Friends,

I had a four minute adventure on Friday afternoon that I am still thinking about with amazement.

Remember Friday? How crazy-wild windy was that!!

A website I check fairly often is this:

<http://hint.fm/wind/>

If you like the place where science intersects with your life, you will probably like this map. You can tap on the geography where you live; it brings the map down to a very personal report of wind speeds in your town.

On Friday the wind map of the US was a visual I'd never seen before. There was a straight trough from Texas to Michigan's Upper Peninsula. On both sides of it, the country was almost solid white for what would have been 500-1000 miles. Gale-force winds were almost everywhere.

Here in Wisconsin we entertained winds that were holding steady at 30-40 mph, with gusts up to 55 mph. These winds, coming straight down Lake Michigan from the north, created astounding waves. In the middle of the lake, waves were reported to be 20-25 feet tall.

Here in Racine waves were so tall that when one walked onto North Beach, the lake was "higher" than the beach. I've never seen anything quite like it – looking out at the lake and the lake was taller than me!

I usually leave work early on Fridays to compensate for extra-long Tuesdays (when I facilitate an evening group). So this past Friday

afternoon Len and I drove to North Beach to see what we could see.



I put on my winter boots; acrylic-fur lined, water-proof to my ankles. I feel invincible in these boots since my feet don't get cold or wet.

We got out of the car and hiked to the beach. Len was wearing regular shoes so he stood high on the beach, taking pictures.

I wanted to get closer to the action, whatever the action might be. And I had the boots, so no problem. Right?

Waves had been coming far ashore, the sand was wet. I walked towards where the regular shoreline would be, aware that at some point a few inches of water would wash towards me.

Which it did - when I was still 40-feet from the shoreline!

Holy Cow! Those few inches of water became 6" of water, and then knee deep, boom, just like that! Forty feet from the shore line, a foot deep wave - and it was a rip current!

I've lived next to Lake Michigan all my life. Ludington, Indiana, Chicago, and now Racine. Which means I've heard about rip currents since I was a kid.

"Be careful of Lake Michigan, it has strong currents. Beware of under-tows. There can be danger when the wind above the lake snags waves and builds currents just as strong under the surface."

Yeah, I knew all that, but I was 40 feet FROM the lake, just hankering to hear the roar. I didn't

put on my boots and drive to the lake to sit in the car!

Len was taking those pictures so he never heard me yell when that rip current grabbed my ankles and legs. I looked at him and waved with some alarm, but he was aiming the camera towards the lighthouse.

I breathed deep. I knew I was probably safe, but this was no time to take that for granted. I also knew that when one is caught in a current, go with it, don't try to cut across it. So I adjusted my direction, tried to walk with the current off towards my right. By now I was in water past my knees and my boots and pants were soaked. I just kept breathing calmly and walking, sloshing towards higher ground.

Len saw me but couldn't hear me yelling that I was stuck. He took some nice photos, you'll see them soon.

This picture makes me laugh nervously even now. This is as close as I have gotten to mortality lately.



Soon the water rushed back out, I was moving higher, and it was a fiasco that didn't happen. I had wet jeans, drenched boots, and an astounded sense of what had just happened around me. Another few inches, that current would have pulled me down.

Well, Friends. It's Sunday afternoon now and my boots are still drying on the front porch.



Here are some of the other photos that Len took.





I feel grateful that even though one should never try to put themselves in harm's way -- I got to experience rip currents on Friday afternoon. I can still feel that sudden whoosh of astounding power grabbing my legs. All that power was right in the lake that has been my neighbor all my life. I was lucky to be there, but to not be overcome.

I wonder if an adventure is when we get to experience what's around us all the time?

Next time a strong storm blows – I promise I will stay 80 feet from the shore instead of forty.

But I will go to be close inside the glory of a wild storm again.

MayaWorks

If you live in this area - get ready now for the Adventure of Fair Trade. There will be a MayaWorks sale at Wilson's Coffee and Tea on Friday and Saturday, November 21 and 22. Pat will be there much of 11/21 and I will be there much of 11/22. If you want to see what the products are ahead of time (or if you want to order on-line and have them shipped straight to your home) check out:

<http://www.mayaworks.org/>

Wilson's is at 3306 Washington Ave, Racine.

Boat of the Week

Early this week Len took this photo. Nicer day, huh?



The tug is the Karen Andrie and the rest of the boat is the Endeavor. It sails out of Muskegon. In case you are fascinated by ships on Lake Michigan: <http://www.boatnerd.com/>

Flowers of the Week



The flowers are turtleheads that bloomed weeks ago; I was cutting some away for the winter and liked the shape of them.

Somebody else was also fascinated....

A Worry

As some of you know, the Prairie Dog Quadrilateral began as weekly notes sent to the mom of my friend Kathryn. To maintain her

privacy, I won't state her name here, but let me repeat: she is a kind and beautiful older woman. She laughs like little bells ringing and she has the gift of making folks feel special. She's in the hospital today with an infection. Let's hold a warm and healing thought for her and her worried family, okay? And in her honor: She *loves* cats.



Have a good week, Friends.

Mary Beth