

Topic: How

How Different my Life Might Have Been if . . .

*by Liz Gibbons*

A few days ago I was looking for something different to read and saw a book that I had read many years ago on the bottom shelf of one of my bookcases. It was *A Year by the Sea* by Joan Anderson. I had resonated with that book, and flipping through it I saw that I had drawn brackets in the book's margins alongside sentences or passages I liked. The author's year came about when her husband was offered a job in another city. Their two sons had both recently married. Joan looked at her marriage and realized it had become stagnant and with her role as mother over, she decided she needed to nurture herself. She told her husband she was not going with him but was going to spend some time at the family cottage on Cape Cod. Rereading this book got me to thinking of the times when I wanted to pursue a new adventure, but catered to my husband's wishes or family demands as I could not see a way to fit in my dreams. To add to this reminiscing this week, I also saw an interesting short movie on Waldorf Schools. I had considered at one time getting training to be a Waldorf teacher, but there were no Waldorf Teacher training schools near where we lived. Enchanted by the way the children were being taught I reflected on how different I might have developed if I had been educated in a Waldorf school. Steiner realized we learn with our whole body, so movement was an important aspect of the curriculum as also was creative expression. I also recalled when we lived for a short time in Arkansas, I investigated enrolling in an occupational therapy master's degree program which would entail me traveling something like 125 miles to spend the week at school and return home each weekend. But we ended up having to move from Arkansas to Atlanta. Of all my dreams, occupational therapy is the one I believe I would have enjoyed most. I felt I would be inspired by each patient's special needs to develop techniques and solutions to enable them to live life to their fullest despite an injury, stroke, or other impairment. I had not been aware of this field until many years after I finished college.

I wonder how different my life would have been if I had followed some of those dreams and developed their concomitant skills. My life has been satisfying in many ways, and I was very fortunate. Yet, I was greatly influenced and molded by growing up in the 1930's and 40's when women were taught not to rock the boat and expected to stand by your man, regardless of your own dreams. Too many women lived through their husband's lives instead of creating their own. As Anne Morrow Lindbergh said, "For if it is a woman's nature to nurture, then she must nourish herself." In this stage of life with the power of youth long gone, I reflect on what I do have and the interesting circuitous twists and turns my life took. Life, like a kaleidoscope, is always changing. The trick is to welcome and work with the changes, and not against them.