

In Deep Waters

Ever since I was a toddler, I have had an unusual phobia of water. It is a fear of bodies of water, not water in general. I always knew that I was afraid of the water, but I never understood the reason why a sudden panic would come over me. Eventually, my mother made the reason for this panic known to me. I was quite surprised at the story she told me, especially since I had no memory of this occurrence.

I was about three year old, and I did not know how to swim yet. My father was in our pool cleaning it. My brother was also in the pool swimming. I was told sternly by my father not to come off the steps in the pool because I did not have my floaties on.

As any three-year-old would do, I did not listen to my father. Being the adventurous child that I was, I jumped down to the next step, slowly making my way into the water. My imagination started to kick in as I pretended to be a twirling ballerina; only I did not have the grace and balance of one. When I proceeded to twirl my way down to the final step, I ended up twirling my way down to the bottom of the pool.

My brother was the first to notice me. He quickly yelled to my father that I was drowning. In the mean time, I began to kick and tried to grasp for oxygen, but I was only breathing in and swallowing the pool water.

Finally, my father followed the path of my brother's finger, which was pointed at me, and I was rescued. He pulled me out of the pool and laid me down on the ground. Filled with relief, my father saw I was conscious. My mother said I had fluid in my lungs from the water that I had swallowed when I tried to grasp for oxygen. She also said that I had popped blood vessels, called cat scratches, on my face from straining to breathe.

In the end, I came out all right. I had no memory of this horrible experience. Instead, I have always had an unusual fear of the bottom of the pool. For example, when I would swim in the deep end of a pool, I would begin to panic because I could not feel the bottom. Holding on to the side of the pool gave me a feeling of security.

Another possible explanation for my phobia could be the horror-filled *Jaws* movies that I used to watch as a child. I never had nightmares from these movies, although I developed a fear of going in large bodies of water. Even taking a step into the ocean scared me.

When I was twelve years old, my family and I took a vacation to Maui, Hawaii. The ocean was gorgeous, but since I was scared of the water, I would not go in. My father literally had to drag me into the ocean. I screamed and kicked to no end. Instead, my mother would take me to the hotel pool so I could swim.

On that same trip, my father and brother went scuba diving and snorkeling. Again, I refused to go. This time it was for an even greater reason. It was because of *Jaws*. From watching these movies so often, I developed a fear of sharks. Since they lived in the ocean, I feared the ocean and even the pool water, believing that *Jaws* would burst through the pool drain at any moment to attack.

In relation to my fear of the bottom of the pool, I feared the bottom of the ocean. There are no walls to hold on to in the ocean as there are in a pool. The water was opaque, making the ocean floor not visible. This only helped to worsen my fear.

As I look back on these significant events, which occurred in my childhood, I realized that to this day I am still faced with such terror and mistrust for the ocean and whatever it contains. The only simple conclusion I can make is that *Jaws*' victims were

pulled underwater to be killed, which may be some psychological link back to me straining for breath underwater. The nervousness and alarm that overcomes me sets in when the water takes control over my body. The effects of my drowning experience combined with my frightfulness of *Jaws* have kept me from enjoying life's pleasures and what nature has to offer.

This impact was made on my life fifteen years ago. Trying to overcome it feels impossible and promising to is a lie. Whether my fear is based off my near death experience, or because I watched *Jaws* one too many times I'm not sure. What I do know is this fear is real. The fright does not effect me in such a way that I cannot continue on happily in life. I find myself laughing about my fear of *Jaws*, and I find myself lucky to be alive to laugh about it.