

Teacher calls Redford, world's oceans home

By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

When she was a very small girl, Darlene Poecel planned regular trips across the field from her home to the creek. Even then, it was well-planned and had a goal—collecting bugs or counting fish—and she regularly planned her horizons.

Nothing has changed much, although Ms. Poecel has been a teacher for several years in the Redford Schools. Nowdays, she snorkels and scuba the oceans of the world, photographing sharks in the Cayman Islands and staring into the blue-blue eyes of a scallop or a fish.

"I learned a long time ago that if you keep expanding your horizons life will always be an adventure," she said. "I discovered the ocean in Florida when I was twelve and I've been expanding my horizons ever since."

During the last 10 years, Ms. Poecel has snorkeled the waters of Europe, Ethiopia, Kenya, South America, Japan, Fiji, Russia, Romania, the Galapagos Islands, or as she put it, "Any place where there's water."

When she got used to snorkeling, she expanded to deep-sea diving and then to underwater photography. Her newest adventure is running river rapids.

"SNORKELING GIVES me freedom," Ms. Poecel said. "You snorkel on the surface with a mask and

a tube, which is quite different from diving with a tank, but most of the seas' wildlife is in the first 35 feet of water and it's clear, you can see an entire world."

"Every place has its own underwater coral and its own landscape."

She first explored the deeper ocean when she went deep sea fishing off the coast of Venezuela, where she spent more time being seasick than fishing.

The idea of tackling deep-sea diving was firmly planted by then, however, so she now dives in all the exotic seas

she can, which likes to move on to new adventures but doesn't have any urge to scale the Himalayas, or put herself in life-and-death situations.

Travel is fun, she said. "Wherever I go I try to things and keep on doing old ones. My interest in wildlife hasn't changed since I did those field trips as a small child."

"I explore it and photograph it whenever I find it. There is nothing quite like the experience of staring at a scallop the waters off Florida, and discovering that it has blue eyes."

Shades of Paul Newman.



Darlene Poecel takes control of the wheel off the Florida coast. At left, she prepares to take a dive.



TRAVEL LOG of Iris Jones

Memories—best souvenirs

Everybody has a different definition of adventure. I like to capture wild memories of people being very human in faraway places. One of my best trophies is a mind-picture of a group of boys gathered high in the Himalayan mountains in Nepal singing "Santa Claus is Coming to Town."

The outing was designed as a one-day sample of a trekking and camping expedition. It had rained for eight hours, so the campsite was up to my calves in mud.

At the top of the great slopes of 9,000-foot Mt. Falchoki loomed above us, and a distant view showed that mud is why we associate with oriental pictures; mist down the slopes filled with tall, narrow trees.

As I slogged down the muddy hill from the camp, I saw a field below and a spread of red and yellow pup tents on the slope beyond. The field held a dining tent, a group of local country musicians, a ring of the local villagers and a large group of boys from the Catholic school on the hill.

Father Martin Coyne of Chicago and Brother Karpinski of Detroit had led them down the hill to meet a group of Americans. All but two of the boys were Hindu, although they wore typical western dress.

The boys gathered around us to ask questions in their well-learned English.

"You should stay until tomorrow," one boy said. "Tomorrow we have a festival on this field. We're going to sing songs from every country in the world."

"Do you want to hear our American song?" asked another voice from the back of the group.

I nodded yes.

"It's 'You better watch out, you better not cry... you know?'

Without thinking, I began to softly sing. "You better watch out you better not cry..." Immediately, the whole group joined me.

You may have a stately dolphin, a tiger rug or some other souvenir of adventure, but I have a wild memory in my mind of that moment.

There I was, 8,000 feet up in the Himalayan mountains of Nepal, with 200 Nepalese school boys gathered around me on the edge of a high mountain field, all of us singing at the top of our lungs: "SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN."

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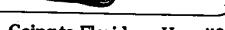
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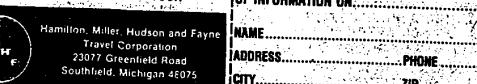
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