

Chapter 12

Project Adventure: A Brief History

Dick Prouty

Project Adventure

Can any of the insights traditionally gained in a wilderness Outward Bound setting be learned in the course of a twice a week 45-minute high-school physical education program? Can lessons about how to solve problems in a group learned in a physical education class be transferred to cooperative work in a biology class? Can new physical activities be invented to help students to go beyond previously set limits to risk taking? Can public school teachers and counselors learn to use a cooperative style of education which challenges them to be a bit more vulnerable to the students? . . . And learn to like it? Can students help solve problems for groups in their communities, serve real needs, and learn valuable curricula and social lessons in the process?

In 1970 these questions were beginning to show up in the conversations of educators interested in reform. The Outward Bound movement had stirred real interest in using a new set of methods. Jerry Pieh, the young principal of Hamilton-Wenham Junior-Senior High School in Hamilton, Massachusetts, was one of those asking such questions.

As a young graduate student of education, Jerry had helped his father, Bob Pieh, start the Minnesota Outward Bound School in 1962, and had shared the excitement of

those early years. This experience had given Jerry a strong appreciation for the power of the Outward Bound approach. As principal of Hamilton-Wenham Junior-Senior High, Jerry was in a position to examine those questions in a practical way. He and colleague Gary Baker wrote a three-year development proposal to the federal office of education that would try to answer the question of how to "mainstream" the Outward Bound process into a secondary public school setting. He called the new program *Project Adventure*.

In attempting to bring Outward Bound strategies to a school setting, Jerry Pieh was returning to the basic roots of Outward Bound. The founder of Outward Bound, Kurt Hahn, was foremost an educator, with roots in the classical private schools of Germany and Britain. Hahn felt that the classical school curriculum was not enough for the development of the whole child. His work with the Gordounstoun School in Scotland during World War II had led to the establishment of the first Outward Bound School and later to the worldwide Outward Bound school movement. Hahn's original impulse, however, had been to work within the confines of a traditional school. Jerry Pieh sought in his Project Adventure (PA) program to bring these ideas back to the setting in which they were first practiced. This had been done before: Lincoln-Sudbury High School in Lincoln, Massachusetts, had an Outward Bound-type course in the late 1960s, for example. That particular program, however, was taught by Outward Bound staff, not by public school teachers. Such activities, however, tended

to be isolated from the standard curriculum and were almost totally dependent on teacher interest. Pieh wanted more than that. He sought to have the Outward Bound *process* become a part of the standard high-school curriculum.

The funding of the Project Adventure grant in 1971 allowed Jerry to hire key staff with Outward Bound backgrounds and to begin the planning of a new curriculum approach. Many teachers were involved in the planning of this grant, and involved themselves in Outward Bound and other training experiences. Teachers, Project Adventure staff, and administrators then set to work writing and experimenting with curriculum. The largest component was focused on tenth grade physical education, but English, history, science, theater arts, and counseling were also explored in the context of what came to be known as "adventure activities."

Bob Lentz was the first director of Project Adventure. Bob had been a teacher, a principal, and had worked at Outward Bound as director of its teacher training programs. Bob also had a deep understanding of the power of the experiential learning process. Here he describes one of his original insights about the effect of an experiential-internship program on students:

We got back report after report on these kids about what a lively, alert, intelligent, responsible student this is. And you would visit the student on his project and my God, he was alive, and alert and responsible. You'd look through his records and ask teachers about him and the answer you'd get was, "wasn't alive, was lethargic, wasn't alert, wasn't responsible." A kid would come back off his project—for a few days he'd be alive and alert, then his old behavior would come back. That simply said to me, we're missing some vital things here.

Bob found in the Project Adventure curriculum a way to help students become more "alive, alert, and responsible" inside schools, and to institutionalize the process. As Josh Miner and Joe Boldt say in their history of Outward Bound in 1981, "No other innovative educational proposal spinning off from Outward Bound has enjoyed a greater success with the educational establishment than Project Adventure." The reason for this success was the willingness and ability of PA and its staff under Bob Lentz's leadership, to work with teachers and schools, empowering them to institutionalize the curriculum changes.

The nature of these curricula changes were creative and profound, yet not so dramatic that the teachers could not relate them to their existing schedules and class objectives. The original Hamilton-Wenham model was an interdisciplinary concept that focused on the sophomore class. Every sophomore took a yearlong Project Adven-

ture physical education class that went through a sequence of innovative warmups, trust-building exercises, initiative problems and low- and high-ropes course elements. Two basic goals were constantly sought and reinforced: that the students would learn how to solve problems in a group more creatively and efficiently; and that preconceived barriers to what was possible often held both the group and the individual from increasing achievement. Concurrently, the curricula in the sophomore's English, social studies and biology classes had units written by their teachers that reinforced the same goals in pursuit of traditional academic course objectives. For example, a student may have learned that the value of planning to use the resources of the group, and keeping a watchful eye on the time allotted for the task were both necessary to the successful accomplishment of an initiative problem. In biology class, the same student may have put both of those learnings into use again as he or she planned how his or her learning group were to gather data for its investigation of the fresh water swamp behind the high school. The student would finally participate in the adventurous "Swamp Walk" where his or her data-gathering role in the small cooperative learning group of her class would have been negotiated before the trip. Later, the students would use class time to work in groups to prepare the report.

Other classes would have similar experiential units, using cooperative group strategies. Two- to three-day camping trips that used the environment of the camping site to learn course objectives were valuable as peak experiences where students "put it all together." For example, the annual trip to Acadia National Park in Maine allowed the biology students to gather specimens for their saltwater tide pool unit. The Hahn service ethic was honored and fused with learning objectives in cross-age tutoring projects, recycling projects, and other activities done for credited learning classes coordinated by PA staff.

Evaluation

During the second and third year of the grant the program was submitted to a rigorous evaluation by one of the full-time staff members, Mary Smith. Finished during the third year of the program, 1974, the evaluation covered the full sophomore class that took the program each year—224 in 1971 and 231 in 1972. Six instruments were administered preprogram and postprogram application. The instruments were the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, the School Climate Survey (based on David McClelland's Classroom Climate Survey), two different kinds of student survey, the AAPHERD physical fitness test, and the Rotter Scale of Internal Versus External Control. The specific goals of the evaluation were as follows:

1. to improve self-concept, confidence, and sense of personal competence among participants;

2. to increase psychomotor skills especially in the areas of balance and coordination; and
3. to overcome pervasive passivity, apathy and uninvolvement among students.

The full evaluation report showed strong positive results with statistically significant changes on the Tennessee and the Rotter and consistently strong qualitative data. *Qualitative data* is the evaluation term for those individual reports that come from various types of participants. The following statement is from the qualitative write-up section of the 1974 report: "Not as shy as I used to be but I am still quite shy. Have stayed after school more to get involved in other things. Got up enough courage to stand in front of about 20 sixth grade kids and conduct a lesson." The "change in self-concept" that the evaluation indicates somehow makes more sense through this girl's comments than through the dry numbers. This particular comment from what might be termed a reluctant participant in the physical education component, demonstrates the type of carryover in "involvement" and "courage," to use the girl's own words, I have found to be typical of an average student's participation.

National Demonstration Site Award

The strong evaluation results were responsible for the award in 1974 by the federal Office of Education of National Demonstration School Status and subsequent National Diffusion Network Model program status and funding for dissemination. The National Diffusion Network (NDN) was a new Office of Education program founded on the belief that excellent programs that have had a rigorous evaluation should be shared nationally, with the original teachers of the new program sharing the methods with other teachers directly. From 1974 to 1981 the Hamilton-Wenham School District received a dissemination grant each year from the NDN to subsidize the "adoption" of the PA model by other schools nationally. As director of the PA dissemination effort for the Hamilton-Wenham Schools, Bob Lentz each year set a goal of how many adoptions were likely to occur and how they were to happen.

It is no exaggeration to state that the NDN years literally put Project Adventure on the map nationally. The interest in the PA program was strong anyway, and with a nationally based program with assistance offices and some funding available in each state, the "disseminating" of the PA model was made much easier. The "adoption process," as the NDN language put it, happened in many different fashions. A typical adoption path would be as follows: a teacher would hear of a great new program (PA) from a friend or at a convention; the teacher would call PA and learn about the NDN and about PA workshops offered; the teacher would convince her administrator to contact the

nearest NDN state facilitator's office and apply for a grant; the teacher and perhaps several associates would take a five-day PA workshop in either the physical education or academic model; if a ropes course was necessary PA staff would construct it on-site, usually partially funded by the NDN; follow-up assistance and training would occur over the next year. By 1980 over 400 schools in most of the states of the country had adopted at least one component (academic or physical education) of the original PA program at Hamilton-Wenham.

Involvement in the NDN process required that the PA staff be a bit more accountable and rigorous in the spreading of the PA model than they otherwise might have been. Follow-up surveys, tracking of the adoptions numbers, tracking of the "key elements" in place at each site, evaluation of workshops, and a review of the strategies in dissemination efforts that had and had not worked were required on annual reports for funding extensions. The key elements concept was especially helpful. The idea was to identify what elements of the original adoption were responsible for the significant evaluation results, and be able to target the trainings of new teachers and staff at adopter sites so that the evaluation results could in principle be replicated. The key elements checklist was then available to a state facilitator, or anyone, who could visit an adopter and see what was occurring or not. The original Hamilton-Wenham program had been a large and complex effort and most schools would not ever reach that level of adoption. A variety of the key elements checklist as devised by Bob and his staff are still used today by the PA staff as a valuable teaching tool and vehicle to think about what they are really talking about when they say, "Adopt the program."

Key Elements of an Adventure Curriculum

In developing your curriculum, the following components should be an integral part of the final product. It is, however, appropriate to stress some elements more than others, depending on the curriculum you plan. The qualities that make up the adventure approach curriculum include:

1. A sense of adventure, unpredictability, drama and suspense. This tone may emerge from the situation (a cliff, slum, or canoe trip) or from the teacher who builds drama, anticipation, suspense and mystique into the learning experience for students through stories, comments and even humor.
2. A consistently high (but accomplishable) level of expectation demanded and created by both the intrinsic and external forces. Students need to be convinced that not just anyone could have done this, and that the teacher *cares* that the goal is reached.

3. A success orientation in which growth is supported and encouraged and in which the positive is emphasized. Encouragement is one crucial ingredient in resolving the conflict between high expectations and the need for a successful experience.
4. An atmosphere of mutual support in which cooperation, encouragement and interpersonal concerns are consistently present.
5. A sense of enjoyment, fun and the opportunity to laugh at a situation, each other and oneself.
6. An approach to learning which makes use of group problem solving, which allows for a variety of personal contributions and which presents problems that can't ordinarily be solved individually. The rewards are set up for group effort rather than individual success or competition.
7. The use of a learning laboratory that is more complex, more engaging, less predictable and less familiar than a school classroom.
8. The merging of intellectual, social, physical and emotional learning and development.
9. A significant amount of cognitive work related directly to abstractions and questions previously developed in the classroom, or subsequently to be developed.
10. The combining of moments of active involvement with moments of personal and group reflection and evaluation. An awareness that teachable and learnable moments are unpredictable but necessary ingredients in the curriculum.
11. A definite organization and structure which define the limits of the experience and states expectations but within which the participants have freedom to make decisions, choices and even mistakes.
12. An economic and structural reasonableness which allows the curriculum to effectively compete for dollars and other resources within an educational economy which is limited in its resources. Neither too long, too exotic, nor too expensive.

Adventure-Based Counseling

The potential for the use of the Project Adventure activities with the special needs populations of the schools had always been recognized by the PA staff. Self-concept improvement is basic to the needs of most special needs students. Work with these students was not a first priority, however, as the PA model was intended to be a comprehensive school model affecting all the students. But there

was significant work in early years in two ways: first was the Action Seminar at Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School, an interdisciplinary four-period class which drew on a wide mixture of students (outlined under the same title in the Project Adventure book *Teaching Through Adventure*). This class was taught by PA staff members Jim Schoel and Steve Webster. Those students participated in adventure activities, group construction and craft projects and community service. No formal assessment of the students prior to entry was made, but quiet referrals ensured that half the students were experiencing trouble in school and required an "alternative" form of instruction. The action seminar concept was later carried into the Gloucester public schools where it was incorporated as the Gloucester Museum School, and later as Project Alliance.

The second expression of adventure counseling was an outpatient therapy group at the Addison Gilbert Hospital, Gloucester, Massachusetts. Beginning in 1974, Paul Radcliffe, a PA-trained school psychologist, worked under the supervision of Phil Cutter, and teamed with Mary Smith, a PA staff member, to conduct a weekly two-hour adventure group. The hospital therapy group concept, with its intake and consultation process, was subsequently incorporated into the Gloucester Public School's psychological services, and was called the *learning activities group*.

The development of the adventure-based counseling (ABC) process into a curriculum equivalent to the earlier interdisciplinary work at Hamilton-Wenham took place with the funding of a Massachusetts State Department of Education grant in 1980-1983. Paul Radcliffe and Bill Cuff worked with personnel from Gloucester, Hamilton-Wenham, and Manchester, Massachusetts, to refine the process of intake, grouping, staffing, activities selection, and staff training. This development grant was significant in that it put the PA work with special needs students in schools on the same footing as the original PA work. The evaluation was extensive and again showed significant gains on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale in students in three systems over two years. On the basis of the evaluation, the Massachusetts State Department of Education awarded the program validation as a State Model Program.

The development of the ABC model and its formal evaluation really accelerated a trend that had been there in seed form from the beginning. The NDN had encouraged the dissemination of the PA model beyond schools into all types of *educational service providers*, the bureaucratic term for camps, youth centers, clinics and really any place where an educational function was occurring. The first adventure-based counseling workshop was offered in May of 1979, and the response was strong with over 30 persons attending the four-day workshop. Persons from residential clinics and hospitals, therapeutic camps and drug treatment centers attended, as well as school counselors, psychologists and alternative school teachers. The adaptation of the program's activities to all these sites continued after

this workshop, and the movement of the PA outreach into these types of organizations increased.

Transition to Independence

I had first met Bob Lentz in the fall of 1970 when Jim Schoel, one of the original four PA staff, introduced me to him. Jim had been one of my instructors on an Outward Bound teacher practicum course that had been run by the Hurricane Island School out of Bartlett's Island off Maine the preceding summer. As a social studies teacher and director of an experiential education program at the neighboring Manchester schools, I worked closely with both Jim and Bob through the 1970s organizing adventure-type programs in both the Manchester and Gloucester schools. The adventure work was involving, frustrating, and exciting; often all at the same time. When we started an early ABC group in Manchester for kids in difficulty in the junior high, I had some of my most meaningful teaching times. In late 1979 Jim, Bob, Paul Radcliffe and I began meeting to write a grant to develop and refine the ABC model. I enjoyed the challenge of writing the grant, and was intrigued by the possibilities of helping PA grow. I applied for a leave in early 1980 and Bob and I agreed to terms of employment.

In the spring of 1980, Bob Lentz announced that he was resigning as director to assume the principalship of Groves High School in Birmingham, Michigan. After nearly 10 years with Project Adventure at Hamilton-Wenham, Bob was ready for a new challenge. The chance to influence change in a public school in the position that research showed had the most direct influence, the principalship, was just such a challenge. He left Project Adventure in good shape, with a new NDN cycle of funding, the good will of the host school system, a strong reputation for quality, a group of experienced key staff and a system of helping a complex program adoption process happen with minimal problems. Most importantly, he left with a feeling of accomplishment because the original goal of devising a system to mainstream the goals of Outward Bound into schools had been advanced significantly. Not that there wasn't *plenty* of work left to do, he told us.

Karl Rohnke assumed the director's position after Bob left. Karl had been with PA since its start and in many ways was the most well-known staff member. As author of the PA text *Cowstails and Cobras*, Karl had brought to the many readers of that book a real hands-on understanding of the techniques, methods and spirit necessary to implement the physical education curriculum that had started at Hamilton-Wenham. Karl's creative abilities had guided the evolution of the ropes course elements and the games, stunts, and initiatives that were the core of the curriculum. Karl's ability to play and have obvious *fun* in a workshop was invaluable modeling for teachers and staff being trained. Karl enjoyed using these strengths and con-

tinued as director to construct courses, lead workshops and write up new curriculum ideas. Karl was also decisive in letting us know what he did not like about his new role; thinking about budgets, organizational issues and paperwork hassles. He and I agreed about a year after I started that I would assume the director's role, and he would concentrate on what he did best, which was writing, researching new activities and ropes course elements, and leading workshops.

The early 1980s were tough times for education of all sorts. The Reagan revolution was causing increasing cutbacks in funding for schools. The "back-to-basics" movement in public schools was increasing and giving people who wanted to get students to learn in new and creative ways a few more hurdles to jump. Yet, in spite of the mood, the flow of people to training workshops for PA and on to subsequent adoptions continued. The PA budget as part of the Hamilton-Wenham schools in 1981-82 was \$345,000, of which only \$55,000 was federal money from the National Diffusion Network. The remainder was revenue from workshop fees, ropes course construction and the sale of supplies and books. There were five full-time staff members in the Hamilton offices. In addition, Alan Sentowski, who had been a biology teacher at Hamilton-Wenham and a key early staff member, had started a satellite office in Savannah, Georgia.

In a series of meetings in 1981, PA staff decided with the Hamilton-Wenham administrators that it would be best if PA were to separate from the school. The growth of PA had surpassed expectations of the school, and while justly proud of the spread of their home grown product, they felt it best for the increasing growth to go on separately. The decision to separate seemed to fit for everyone as the PA staff also sensed that PA had the potential to grow in new and important ways and that this could best be done independently. In the next year an amiable agreement was drawn up, a board of directors chosen by me and Karl, and the formal incorporation of Project Adventure Inc. as a nonprofit 501-(c)(3) organization was made in September 1981. The articles of incorporation affirmed that the main purpose of the new corporation was the dissemination of PA programs. We had chosen to continue the basic direction that we had been operating under at the school, but now there was a sense of anticipation that new possibilities awaited.

Steady Growth

The original grant in 1970 had funded a staff of five to work closely with the Hamilton-Wenham staff. The staff of PA in 1981 was six full-time staff, and an additional 10 certified trainers. Certified trainers were encouraged by the NDN as teachers who could teach training workshops nationally with the same "fidelity" as original staff but with more cost-effectiveness. The staff of PA in early 1989 was

37 full-time persons, with a National Certified Trainer staff of 50 that included facilitators with expertise and practical experience in all workshop areas. The growth since separation has been continuous with an increase in revenue each year averaging over 30 percent. The sources of revenue—now they are called *revenue centers*—are in the same categories as they were in 1981 workshop and training, catalogue sales, ropes course construction, and grants and contracts for research purposes. The organization has continued to serve the schools who wanted to expand an existing program or start a new one. The momentum of the word-of-mouth advertising of the existing “installed base” of PA school programs was strong. As teachers and administrators moved on to new jobs, they often took their favorite program with them. Both Jerry Pieh, as headmaster of Milton Academy, and Bob Lentz, as principal of Groves High, had PA help them implement a program. Important new work was also done in urban schools in Cambridge, Savannah, Pittsburgh, Columbus and New York as the ability of PA activities to motivate for achievement and develop group cooperation proved effective for the multiethnic populations of urban schools.

Although work with schools continued to grow, the main reason for the growth of PA was the staff's ability to work with a variety of organizations other than schools and to help them customize a program for their needs. Through the 1980s, PA staff worked with camps, youth agencies such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, therapeutic agencies, drug and alcohol treatment centers, psychiatric hospitals, colleges, conference centers, corporate training centers, children's homes, job-training centers, outdoor education centers, and state agencies. Throughout this expansion of the audiences that the PA staff served, the continuity of the early training models served as a starting point for new work, and the in-house expertise of the organization contracting with PA for assistance was used to draw out a customized program.

While the range of groups served by PA seems wide, the trainings have followed four generic models: adventure programming, which served physical education and recreation programs; adventure-based counseling, which served therapeutic programs; academic programming, which served classroom academic programs; and staff development programming, which served educational and corporate adult training needs. Project Adventure has an entry level workshop in each area which uses essentially the same activity base with some modifications. Each workshop, however, is taught by PA staff or certified trainers who have experience and expertise in the program area which the workshop is addressing. By the end of each four- to five-day workshop, the participant is ready to design a more expansive program with more specified training, and often is ready to start a modest program in his or her area.

Southern Office

One of the key supports of the growth of PA in the 1980s was the southern office. Alan Sentowski had begun the office at an outdoor education center in Savannah in 1980. The office was moved in 1984 to Atlanta to take advantage of the central location of Atlanta. One of the important groups being served by the southern office in 1984 was the Georgia Department of Youth Services (DYS). Cindy Simpson, a school psychologist, had attended a PA workshop in 1981 and gone on to develop a community-based six-week program for juvenile offenders in the state. Working closely with Juvenile Judge Virgil Costley of Covington, Cindy had developed a program that used a tightly structured adventure-based counseling approach and infused it with academic support, parent counseling, and career counseling. An evaluation of the program from 1983 to 1986 by the Georgia DYS showed that 94 percent of the youths that started the program finished and that the recidivism rate was 15 percent for the three years after the program.

In 1984 Cindy joined Alan Sentowski in the Atlanta office and teamed up with staff associate John Call who coordinated construction and technical trainings. The Atlanta office relocation proved to be a good decision as the small staff began to experience a rapid increase in the demand for PA services soon after the move was made. Alan left PA in June of 1985 to pursue other interests, and Cindy Simpson took over the leadership role. The growth in staff and services rendered has continued and accelerated under Cindy's leadership. The development of innovative community-based direct service models such as Challenge has become a research and development specialty of the southern office. An alternative school model, and a jobs training model were started successfully.

By 1989 the southern office had 16 staff and accounted for about one-third of the total PA budget. All of the functions of the Hamilton office were carried on in the southern office with the exception of the catalogue sale of ropes course equipment and PA publications. The growth was made easier by the move of the office in the summer of 1988 to a new site in Covington, Georgia, 30 miles southeast of Atlanta. With the help of Judge Costly and Pierce Cline, another member of an advisory board that PA had formed for the southern office, Cindy had managed to acquire in 1987 an unoccupied former Elks Club lodge on a five-acre pond. Located on a total of 70 acres, the 12,000-square-foot building was renovated, and housed the Atlanta-based PA staff and programs by the fall of 1988.

Therapeutic Program Growth

The history of PA clearly shows that as the organization works with other client organizations to help them implement a PA program, the resulting customizing process often

breaks new ground. The unique issues and needs of the client result in modifications and new designs of existing PA models that often can then be used by other organizations of a similar type that PA helps. This process has clearly been at work in the dissemination of the ABC model. Therapeutic institutions that ranged from public schools to therapeutic camps to counseling centers to residential treatment facilities and psychiatric hospitals implemented a variety of the ABC model in the 1980s.

One of the more important early ABC adoptions was as a result of PA's work with the Institute of Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia. In 1981 four staff of the therapeutic recreation department led by Rick Thomas attended an ABC workshop in Hamilton. A grant by a local benefactor to the hospital, one of the oldest and most respected psychiatric institutions in the country, had paid for the training and later for the ropes course that PA staff constructed on the rolling grounds of the hospital. Under the leadership of Rick Thomas who worked closely with PA staff Paul Radcliffe and Jim Schoel, the Institute began to use the ABC model with a short-term residential adolescent group. The hospital evaluations of the patient's progress in the program were excellent. The therapeutic recreation department has worked with the clinical staff of the hospital to expand the program to other groups including mixed diagnosis adult treatment groups, drug and alcohol groups, and eating disorder groups. The schedules and length of the ABC activities in these groups are somewhat different, but they all occur on the grounds of the hospital and often include the ropes course.

Rick Thomas has some interesting comments on why the ABC model works so well in the hospital setting:

We want to help patients be more independent, decrease their feelings of helplessness, and get away from the idea that someone else has the secrets about their well-being and who they are. We try to educate patients about their strengths, not looking for pathology. The people we see need experience in doing differently, to experience themselves as different. They're not ready for insight. They need to be brought up to another level before they acquire that. They need to learn by *doing* first. They simply do not have the ability for abstract thinking. Generally, if they do abstract, it is merely a form of intellectualization, with few feelings attached. As Glasser says, "Act differently, even if you don't feel differently."

Rick's comments help explain the power of the ABC model to help the psychiatric patient. The 1980s saw PA work with hospitals and other residential care facilities on an increasing basis. By 1989 PA staff had helped over 100 hospitals implement a variety of the ABC program. The

use of an integrated adventure-based hospital program was becoming more widely accepted in the psychiatric field by the end of the 1980s, and the increased refinement of the program was proceeding rapidly. Cindy Simpson from the southern office and Paul Radcliffe from the Hamilton office teamed to lead PA's efforts in this emerging area.

The need for a PA text for the emergence of the ABC field began to be critical as the number of trainings and requests for assistance increased in the early 1980s. In 1985 we received notice that the Culpepper Foundation of New York City had funded our proposal to research and write a new text for the ABC field. The book was written in a collaborative effort with Jim Schoel assuming the lead author position and Paul Radcliffe and I assisting. Jim had one full year funded by the grant to research, interview and write. It took another unfunded year of work by the three of us to complete the book, but when it was finished, we were pleased with the result. We had a text, *Islands of Healing*, that would guide all those workshop participants at the more than 300 institutions of some sort that had an ABC model and others in the field to share the results of more than a decade of development work. It was a fitting complement to *Cowstails and Cobras* and the other PA texts for the other models, and should, we thought, more firmly establish the credibility of the model for all practitioners.

Executive Reach, Corporate Training

In the late 1970s, Karl Rohnke and Bob Lentz had taught education courses at Boston University in adventure education and had met Tony Langston of the faculty. They discussed and planned how to use the PA activities base with the business school classes that Tony was beginning to work with. Tony went on to start a corporate training program at Boston University. The new program, Executive Challenge, found a good reception in the high-tech clients of the Route 128 area in the late 1970s, and quickly became the leader in this new way to work with corporate training: nonwilderness trainings using the range of initiatives, and ropes course elements. Other consultants began to hear of the success of the Executive Challenge model and began to approach PA for assistance in developing a program. As a result of these inquiries, PA staff began to think seriously in 1983 about this emerging area and how it fit into PA's organization.

In the winter of 1984, PA staff received a call from a human resource group at Digital Equipment Corporation. They had heard about PA's programs and wanted PA to design a team-building workshop for their work group. Paul Radcliffe and I worked with the team leader to design a four-day workshop. The result was a great success from the work team's viewpoint. A three-month follow-up visit on-site revealed improved communication, levels of trust,

and an ability to take an initiative involving risk with more confidence. A 20-minute video was produced with Digital's help, and was designed for both Digital and PA use.

PA staff did work with other Digital groups as a result of this initial effort, and decided that PA should develop the capability to do corporate training. In 1985 Ann Smolowe joined PA to help develop and market a PA corporate model. Ann had a varied background that included a business school background, three years working for the American Stock Exchange, and a complete thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail. Most importantly, she had a strong desire to bring innovative outdoor training to the corporate setting. Our mutual goal was to develop a PA staff development model that would allow us eventually to have the capability to train others in adventure-based corporate training skills. In addition, we hoped to be able to generate revenue from our direct service efforts with companies to help our overall mission in other areas.

By 1989 PA had developed a significant track record with a number of larger Fortune 500 companies as well as smaller firms. PA had developed customized trainings around the themes of encouraging innovation, culture change initiatives, multiskill retraining, leadership, risk-taking motivation, as well as a more standard team-building option. The ability to train others easily because of PA's overall mission had helped define some of the trainings. Frank Iarossi, president of Exxon Shipping in Houston, had heard Elizabeth Ross-Kanter of the Harvard Business School expound on the need for companies to master change, and had become convinced of the need for his company to begin to change its culture. PA contracted with Exxon Shipping in 1987 to train teams of company facilitators, who in turn led all 1,000 employees through a one-day team building and skill training that was part of a larger week-long training for all employees, designed by an outside consulting firm. Exxon Shipping was on the way to becoming less hierarchical, less rigid, more able to identify problems earlier and work toward their resolution. In a modern technological environment, the supertanker captain no longer had all the answers or even a knowledge about what many of the problems were. Specialization of knowledge and skills made flexible work team strategies a must.

The Activity Base

All the program models in the world wouldn't work if PA staff did not have an effective arsenal of activities that could be used to accomplish the program aims. The games, prop and nonprop initiatives and challenge ropes course elements that the original staff modified and created for the short 50-minute physical education sessions at Hamilton-Wenham were responsible for the ability of all the subsequent programs to be able to work on-site, indoors if necessary, and to imbue almost any training curriculum with

the aims and energy of the PA learning goals. The constant renewing of this activity base and the refinement of the skills training and assessment methods that were necessary as the numbers of adoption sites and participants mushroomed were two key tasks that have helped sustain PA's growth.

One of Karl's strengths is the ability to create new activities and the enjoyment he gets from doing so. An environment of creativity, of pushing for the new modification or of putting together two previously separate things, has been important to renewing our base. Karl also works easily with others creating and likes to give them liberal credit, always important in developing new things. PA now has a 50 element repertoire of ropes course elements, including the following notable PA inventions: Wild Woosey, Mohawk Walk, Proutys Landing, Pamper Pole, Hickory Jump, Seagull Landing and the Flying Squirrel. The first indoor elements were built in the Newburyport, Massachusetts, gym in 1972, and by 1985 every outdoor element had been constructed in some sort of indoor environment also. The refinement of the technology and equipment for the ropes course has been constant with the following at one point being an innovation: galvanized cable, throughbolting, strand vices, telephone poles and accompanying guy technology, custom-made pulley systems for the belay cable and for the zip wire. The invention of new activities was even more pronounced in the initiative and game area, and the publication of *Silver Bullets: A Guide to Initiative Problems and Adventure Games*, was a notable benchmark for the organization. The possibilities continue to expand as PA has become a gathering point for others' ideas in this area.

The direct construction of ropes course elements for others was a service of PA as early as 1972 when Karl built the first PA indoor climbing wall for Newburyport High School. Since then the direct construction of elements for others has become one of PA's key services. PA built over 100 courses in 1998 and provided repair and safety check services at many more. Located all over the United States and in Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Europe, these 100 will join the approximately 1,000 courses PA has constructed since it started. PA runs a catalogue supply service for materials to construct courses and to resupply the existing courses with rope and other equipment. One of the more recent developments in the way PA helps people construct has been the creation of the package, Challenge-by-Choice. This is a manual with accompanying two hour video tape and telephone support which gives a willing person the instructions necessary to construct a low ropes course. *Cowstails and Cobras* had construction information of an informal type in several chapters but by the mid 1980s, it was out of date. Construction help is now available from PA only through Challenge-by-Choice or direct service by PA staff. PA is the clear leader in the field of initiative and ropes course design and

construction and PA remains committed to continuous improvement in both areas.

The safety of the activity base had always been important. But as the numbers of programs grew, questions on safety and liability issues came more frequently. The second level workshop, Advanced Skills and Standards, first designed and taught by Steve Webster in 1982, was a successful offering that focused on ropes course technical skills, program management and design issues and possible rescue techniques. In 1981 and later in 1986, PA staff conducted a survey of adopting sites and published what was called the Ten and Fifteen Year Safety Studies. Both showed a level of accidents, defined as a day out of school or work through an injury, at a rate below that of the standard public school physical education program. In addition, there were no reported accidents of the severely disabling variety that were everyone's concern. These studies proved valuable when the field of outdoor adventure experienced the general liability crisis of 1985-87 with particular hardness. PA staff were able, with the help of these studies, to forestall many programs from losing insurance, but the problem of obtaining insurance was difficult for some areas of the country. In 1987 with the help of a new site-specific and voluntary accreditation program, PA staff were able to convince a top-rated insurance company to offer liability insurance for all accredited programs. A new generic manual for ropes courses and initiatives has been written by Steve Webster. The accreditation program uses the manual as a guideline for acceptable technical skills and safety issues.

Planning for the Future

In 1985, at the urging of a key PA board member, PA staff worked with an outside consultant to implement a long-range planning process for PA. The staff assessed strengths and weaknesses, looked at mission, set objectives, and designed strategies and action plans to make the objectives happen. After some discussion, PA arrived at this statement of its mission:

The mission of Project Adventure Inc. is to be the leading organization helping others use adventure education as a catalyst for personal/professional growth and change.

The key phrase is "helping others use." By this, we at PA mean that we consult, train, and empower others to *start*, *maintain* and *improve* PA program models that use our innovative program base of games, initiatives and ropes course elements. Direct service such as our existing programs with youth at risk, schools, and corporate groups will continue to grow and be a source of important research and development opportunities, and revenue stability; but the primary focus of the organization is to help other organizations use PA models to promote growth and change in their students, clients and organizations.

There is a definite trend worldwide toward incorporating adventure activities into educational and training programs. The main reason for this trend is the recognition that team synergy is a major driving force in both economic productivity and social change possibilities. To help both educational and training institutions address these realities with creative new models is PA's principal long-range goal. PA's unique access to many types and levels of organizations allows us at PA to accent the catalyst role of our mission, and to help communities of interest develop among those we serve. Our focus on a clear mission has helped PA grow strongly since 1985 and it will be even more important to maintain as we head into the next decade. To help this focus, PA staff have begun to use the phrase "bring the adventure home" to describe both the mission goal and the process of encouraging an adventurous challenge-by-choice attitude as a goal of all programs. There are definitely many possibilities ahead and we at PA are committed to continue choosing our challenges with the same spirit of fun and adventure that has been our trademark from the beginning.