

John Goddard- The World's Greatest Goal Achiever

From early childhood I had always dreamed of becoming an explorer. Somehow I had acquired the impression that an explorer was someone who lived in the jungle with natives and lots of wild animals, and I couldn't imagine anything better than that! Unlike other little boys, most of whom changed their minds about what they want to be several times as they grew older, I never wavered from this ambition. (John Goddard)

The author of that statement is most known for his amazing "life list" of accomplishments. At the age of fifteen John Goddard listed 127 goals he wished to experience or achieve in his lifetime. The list is impressive and audacious, but the results have been truly incredible. With his permission, I would like to share his original 127 goals and subsequent accomplishments, identified by the check marks of completion.

Explore:

1. Nile River
2. Amazon River
3. Congo River
4. Colorado
5. Yangtze River, China
6. Niger River
7. Orinoco River, Venezuela
8. Rio Coco, Nicaragua
9. The Congo
10. New Guinea
11. Brazil
12. Borneo
13. The Sudan (Nearly buried alive in a sandstorm)

Study Tribal Cultures in:

14. Australia
15. Kenya
16. The Philippines
17. Tanganyika (Now Tanzania)
18. Ethiopia
19. Nigeria
20. Alaska

Climb:

21. Mount Everest
22. Mount Aroncagua, Argentina
23. Mount McKinley
24. Mount Huascarán, Peru
25. Mount Kilimanjaro
26. Mount Ararat, Turkey
27. Mount Kenya

28. Mount Cook, New Zealand
29. Mount Popocatepetl, Mexico
30. The Matterhorn
31. Mount Rainier
32. Mount Fuji
33. Mount Vesuvius
34. Mount Bromo, Java
35. Grand Tetons
36. Mount Baldy, California
37. Carry out careers in medicine and exploration
38. Visited every country in the world (visited 122 already).
39. Study Navaho and Hopi cultures
40. Learn to fly a plane
41. Ride horse in Rose Parade

Photograph:

42. Iguacu Falls, Brazil-Argentine border
43. Victoria Falls
44. Sutherland Falls, New Zealand
45. Yosemite Falls
46. Niagara Falls
47. Retrace the travels of Marco Polo and Alexander the Great

Explore underwater:

48. Coral reefs of Florida
49. Great Barrier Reef, Australia
50. Red Sea
51. Figi Islands
52. The Bahamas
53. Explore Okefenokee Swamp and The Everglades

Visit:

54. North and South Poles
55. Great Wall of China
56. Panama and Suez Canals
57. Easter Island
58. The Galapagos Islands
59. Vatican City (saw the Pope)
60. The Taj Mahal
61. The Eiffel Tower
62. The Blue Grotto
63. The Tower of London
64. The Leaning Tower of Pisa
65. The Sacred Well of Chichen-Itza, Mexico
66. Climb Ayers Rock in Australia
67. Follow River Jordan from Sea of Galilee to Dead Sea

Swim in:

68. Lake Victoria

- 69. Lake Superior
- 70. Lake Tanganyika
- 71. Lake Titicaca
- 72. Lake Nicaragua

Accomplish:

- 73. Become an Eagle Scout
- 74. Dive in a submarine
- 75. Land and take off from an aircraft carrier
- 76. Fly in a blimp, hot air balloon and glider
- 77. Ride an elephant, camel, ostrich and bronco
- 78. Skin dive to 40 feet and hold breath two and a half minutes underwater
- 79. Catch a ten pound lobster and a ten inch abalone
- 80. Play flute and violin
- 81. Type 50 words a minute
- 82. Make a parachute jump
- 83. Learn water and snow skiing
- 84. Go on a church mission
- 85. Follow the John Muir Trail
- 86. Study native medicines and bring back useful ones
- 87. Bag camera trophies of elephant, lion, rhino, cheetah, cape buffalo and whale
- 88. Learn to fence
- 89. Learn jujitsu
- 90. Teach a college course
- 91. Watch a cremation ceremony in Bali
- 92. Explore depths of the sea
- 93. Appear in a Tarzan movie
- 94. Own a horse, chimpanzee, cheetah, ocelot and coyote
- 95. Become a ham radio operator
- 96. Build own telescope
- 97. Write a book on the Nile expedition
- 98. Publish an article in *National Geographic* magazine
- 99. High jump five feet
- 100. Broad jump fifteen feet
- 101. Run a mile in five minutes
- 102. Weigh 175 pounds stripped (still does)
- 103. Perform 200 sit-ups and 20 pull-ups
- 104. Learn French, Spanish and Arabic
- 105. Study dragon lizards on Komodo Island
- 106. Visit birthplace of Grandfather Sorenson in Denmark
- 107. Visit birthplace of Grandfather Goddard in England
- 108. Ship aboard a freighter as a seaman
- 109. Read the entire Encyclopedia Britannica (Has read extensive parts in each of the 24 volumes)
- 110. Read the Bible from cover to cover
- 111. Read the works of Shakespeare, Plato, Aristotle, Dickens, Thoreau, Poe, Rousseau, Bacon, Hemmingway, Twain, Burroughs, Conrad, Talmage, Tolstoy, Longfellow, Keats, Whittier and Emerson (not every work of each)

112. Become familiar with the compositions of Bach, Beethoven, Debussy, Ibert, Mendelssohn, Lalo, Rimsky-Korsakov, Respighi, Liszt, Rachmaninoff, Stravinsky, Toch, Tchaikovsky, Verdi
113. Become proficient in the use of a plane, motorcycle, tractor, surfboard, rifle, pistol, canoe, microscope, football, basketball, bow and arrow, lariat and boomerang
114. Compose music
115. Play *Clair de Lune* on the piano
116. Watch fire-walking ceremony (in Bali and Surinam)
117. Milk a poisonous snake
118. Light a match with a .22 rifle
119. Visit a movie studio
120. Climb Great Pyramid of Cheops (Egypt)
121. Become a member of the Explorers' Club and the Adventurers' Club
122. Learn to play polo
123. Travel through the Grand Canyon on foot and by boat
124. Circumnavigate the globe (four times)
125. Visit the moon
126. Marry and have children (2 sons, 4 daughters)*
127. Live to see the 21st century

Now that you have read this incredible list, consider your goals. I am not suggesting that we all set our objectives as high as John Goddard. I will say that if he was successful in achieving all of those life aspirations with his resources of time, energy and money (and, by the way, he was completely self-financed, working to earn money for each of his adventures) then is it possible that you can accomplish far more than you presently imagine?

Committing to specific goals is an act of faith and courage. Yet, it is a requirement for you to experience "Success in Action." Furthermore, when you establish compelling goals, you engage a mysterious force that magnetically attracts the people and experiences necessary to accomplish your objectives. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true. If you neglect making conscious choices about what you want your life to become, you will experience an ambiguous existence, enduring whatever happens to you or becoming a part of someone else's plan for your life. *If you fail to plan you are planning to fail!* I believe Napoleon Hill was the first one to offer people that advice, and it's as true now as it was then. Despite truckloads of literature on the subject, most people have never learned how to set effective personal and professional goals. Few have made goal-setting a regular part of their steady diet. Some people even have a pinch of psychological resistance to getting goals in writing.

You Never Know Who's in Your Audience.

Really believe in your heart of hearts that your fundamental purpose, the reason for your being, is to enlarge the lives of others. Your life will be enlarged also. (Pete Thigpen)

On March 22, 2002, I was at the Nashville airport, having just completed a presentation for Southern Motor Carriers. It went fantastic, and I was still charged with performance energy as I prepared to head home. During my program, I had shared the story of John Goddard's amazing life list of accomplishments with my audience. As usual, this hit home and helped set the tone for my message—we all can achieve more in life if we commit to compelling, exciting goals.

I was through the security checkpoint and trying to get a quick bite before my flight when my cell phone rang. I glanced at the caller ID, and it said, "Private." I answered, "Hi, this is Dan." And the voice on the other end, one I had never heard before, said "Hello, Dan. This is John Goddard." My pause was longer than normal, as I processed this information.

"John Goddard?"

"Yes, Dan. I hear good things about you."

You see, six months prior I delivered a program for the National Association of Student Councils in Charlotte, NC. The auditorium was filled with 500 high school students who were gathered to learn leadership skills and set goals for their lives. I decided this would be a perfect situation to share the story of John Goddard's amazing life.. After the presentation, one of the students approached me and introduced herself as Renee. She thanked me for the program and especially for talking about John Goddard.

"You see," she explained, John Goddard is my Great Uncle."

Once again, this illustrates one of my favorite mottos. You never know who's in your audience.

Renee and I corresponded by email several times after that initial meeting. In one of my notes, I shared with her that it was one of my life goals to meet her uncle. Renee then decided to take action, and that is why Dr. John Goddard was calling my cell phone.

"I just returned home from a lecture tour and received the most wonderful letter from my niece, Renee. She told me about you and was quite impressed. Tell me, Dan, how do you use my story in your presentation?"

I explained that I use the story to illustrate the power of setting goals for your life.

"I think the problem is that most people don't set their goals high enough," he said. Then he asked, "What do you think?"

It seemed strange that *he* was asking *me* what I thought. Let's just say I was a little intimidated. "Well, Dr. Goddard, I think that is true. And I also think that people don't understand the power of writing down their goals."

"Of course," he said, "it all starts there. When you write them down, you make them real. And, by the way, please call me 'John.' Let me ask you, Dan, how many goals do you think I have accomplished by now?"

He was testing me. Putting me on the spot. Fortunately, I knew the answer, as I had researched his life, and I was aware from my reading that he had accomplished 108 of his goals. But, I decided to guess slightly lower to flatter him. I said, "Well, John, if you could have accomplished 100 your 127 goals, what an amazing life you would have led. How many have you done?"

Then John Goddard said something that I will never forget. In a sharp tone, he said, "Dan, I wrote that list when I was fifteen years old. Surely you don't think that is all that I have aspired to do."

I nearly dropped the phone. Then, he explained that his life list was now 600 goals. And, at this point, he has achieved 520. Implied in this statement was a question to me: “How are you doing?”

At the conclusion of our conversation, John asked me to fax my biography, so that he could learn more about me and what I do. He said, “I’ve never met a man I couldn’t learn from.” Now, I was more than a little intimidated. But when I returned home, I faxed the information. I also sent him a video of my presentation. He called me immediately and was very supportive and encouraging. He said that he was extremely impressed and that my programs were unique, creative and exciting.

Then, he paid a compliment beyond all others when he said, “You know, Dan, I think that you and I are kindred spirits.” Our friendship grew with more phone calls and letters. He sent me his book entitled *The Survivor: 24 Spine-Chilling Adventures on the Edge of Death*. It’s a collection of stories- all of them recounting the times he almost died while in pursuit of his goals. It’s a very exciting read and includes stories of dodging hippos in the Nile and Congo, nearly drowning in river rapids, scaling down a treacherous cliff in Catalina, CA and experiencing a forced crash landing in a small aircraft.

On May 16, 2002, I was able to check another goal off of my list when I met John Goddard. We visited together for more than two hours. We started our visit at his California home where we talked about life, and he showed my friend, Philip Solomon, and me his many treasures from world travels. Each piece of art, tool, weapon or photo he showed us unveiled another amazing story. I got the sense we could talk for days and not scratch the surface of the tales he could share. John showed us models and photos of the many high performance aircraft he has piloted. My admiration grew by the minute. Then, we went to lunch at his favorite Mexican restaurant and talked some more. John Goddard even picked up the check. Yet another “check” off his list.

Our friendship has grown since that first meeting. Twice, we’ve been hiking together in the mountains of California. We talk frequently on the phone. And, John Goddard has played a major part in the advancement of my career. He contributed the foreword to my book and has offered a steady supply of encouragement to complete all of my ambitious goals.

It has been said, if you want to be great, surround yourself with great people. In my estimation, there are none greater than John Goddard. He is truly a model for achievement in life. He is a perpetual student of nature and people, extremely curious and inquisitive. Most striking, though, is his humility. For all of his accomplishments, he is still very approachable, and has a remarkable ability to make other people feel special and important.