The World’s Greatest Goal Achiever – John Goddard

“There’s something about the human spirit that when you accept challenge and work on it and have deadlines and capture your potential, it’s astounding what you can do.”
—John Goddard

Have you ever heard an adult complain about all the things they wish they could have done in their lives? What about hearing an adult tell you not to waste your life like they did? Or tell you something like, “If only I could go back in time, then I would . . .”

We know you heard about him at SuperCamp, but we thought it would be fun to look again and refresh our memory about this man who was the greatest goal achiever in the world! We learned about him in an article some years ago—his name is John Goddard. In the article he was quoted as saying, “When I was fifteen, all the adults I knew seemed to complain, ‘Oh, if only I’d done this or that when I was younger.’ They had let life slip by them. I was sure that if I planned for it, I could have a life of excitement and fun and knowledge.”

As a teenager John Goddard tired of hearing people complain about all the things they should have done in their lives, and made a decision to live his life differently. One rainy afternoon this inspired 15-year-old boy sat down at his kitchen table and wrote “My Life List” at the top of a yellow pad and then wrote down 127 goals. It wasn’t long before he started ticking them off. His earliest accomplishments were the easiest ones: learning to type; becoming an Eagle Scout; learning to play the piano, the flute and the violin; riding a horse in the Rose Parade; going on a mission; building his own telescope; running a mile in five minutes; and learning to water and snow ski. As he moved down his list, his goals got more difficult, but he still accomplished them: exploring the Nile River; studying primitive cultures in the Congo; climbing Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Ararat; learning to fly a plane; visiting the Taj Mahal; skin diving to forty feet and holding his breath under water for two-and-a-half minutes; learning to speak French, Spanish and Arabic; reading the works of Shakespeare, Plato, Aristotle, and others; becoming proficient in the use of a plane, motorcycle, tractor, surfboard, canoe, microscope, football, basketball, bow and arrow, lariat and boomerang; and retracing the travels of Marco Polo and Alexander the Great. In his twenties he became the first man to explore the entire length of the Nile River by kayak. These are only a partial list of all Mr. Goddard wanted to accomplish—and did. He became a celebrated adventurer and lecturer. No long before his death in 2013, he was still working toward visiting every country in the world, reading the entire Encyclopedia Britannica, and visiting the moon!

Have a look at the full list of John Goddard’s goals here: www.johngoddard.info/life_list.htm. It’s incredible to think that a fifteen-year-old would even dream that some of those things on his original list were possible. Incredibly, not only did John Goddard achieve 110 of those original goals during his lifetime, he added 600 more goals over the years and accomplished many of those as well.

And now . . . why not start your list of goals! Check out our next article—Mid-Year Goal-Setting Check-In—for a different approach to goal-setting.