

# Broken But Not Defeated

*Judy Harrington*

"We will be closing the doors on this division of the Whirlpool Corporation by mid-year of 2012." This was the announcement last October that sent my life reeling out of control. It plunged me head-long into sheer panic, which then led to mind-numbing denial. "This can't be happening," I thought. But indeed it was.

For practically all my life, I've done nothing but build refrigerators. Since I graduated from high school 39 years ago, I've never really known a lifestyle other than factory work. However, Whirlpool's corporate CEOs have made the decision to close down the U.S. factories and relocate in Mexico.

Fortunately, I have had some life experiences and struggles that have taught me about endurance. One of my most important discoveries came after a decision I made on a mountaintop two and a half years ago. I lay there shivering and plotting my escape route. More than once, I wanted to give up. I came close to passing out. But I knew if I did, that would be the end of me. No one would find me among the briars and small ledges where I lay.

## The Mountain

Yes, it seemed rational to go hiking that day with only my camera for a companion. I did that often when I was seeking a quiet refuge. I counted on the camera's lens to distract me from my anguish, and on this day, my grief for the loss of both my parents.

My brother laughed at my impulsive decision to hike to the overhanging cliff we nicknamed



*Judy Harrington building refrigerators...*

"Cave Rock." As kids, we had spent many hours there. Sometimes Mom or Dad joined us for peanut butter and jelly picnics. What wonderful memories awaited me beneath the protective shadows of the overhang!

My short hike wound along a county road for a half mile, then turned sharply up a wooded hillside. It took forty-five minutes to navigate around the brier thickets and ledges to reach the topside of the ridge where we once picnicked.

Lounging on a rock near the fire pit, I reminisced about how many marshmallows

it had burnt, and the number of hotdogs it had roasted during its existence. I marveled at how little the shelter had changed over the years and gave thanks to an ancient Barbie doll, who had remained behind to be its housekeeper. I found a renewal of spirit lingering inside the stone fortress that lifted my gloom. Several snapshots later, I began my trek homeward.

## The Accident

I'd not traveled far before I met the ledge that would lead to catastrophe. I knew the ledge would be slippery due to the incline and the dampness under the autumn leaves. I considered my options: go through thick briars on either side or re-climb the hillside behind me and look for an easier way. I opted to brace my right foot on the ledge and step down with my left.

Thus began my life lesson. My left foot slid, and gravity pulled my body weight behind it.

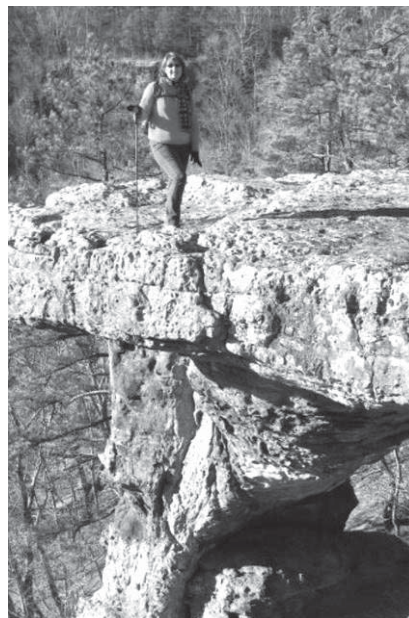
My right foot locked in place, a numbing sensation shot through my ankle, and I found myself seated on the ledge staring at the awkward position of my right foot.

## The Decision

I didn't know if it was badly strained or broken. But I knew I wasn't walking down the mountain. This is when I made my decision: I would get myself down the mountain. I would not give up until I found help. I rolled onto my left hip and began the slow process of pulling forward with my heel and pushing downward with my elbow.

I disciplined myself to keep moving like an inchworm, stopping to rest when I couldn't tolerate the struggle any longer.

After two hours, I encountered my next obstacle. The clearing was overgrown with wild grass.



...and hiking in the mountains.

I couldn't wait there for help. If I passed out, no one would see me. I was chilled and shivering from the damp ground. Also, I was probably closer to going into shock than I wanted to admit. I had to remain awake and get myself to the road. So, I crawled on hands and knees over gravel and briars toward the road.

While I lay there summoning my last ounce of strength, I heard the sound of an approaching car. I sat quickly, waved my arms, and screamed for help. The car passed me, then backed up.

## More Mountains

I had broken two bones in my foot and two in my leg. The surgeons

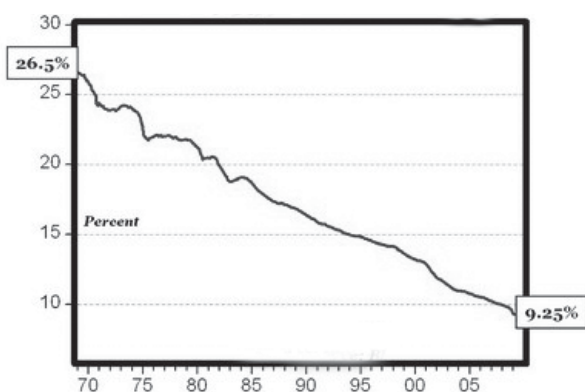
reconstructed me with a long pin across my foot and a titanium plate with nine screws to rebuild my ankle. But more importantly, my self-image underwent a major reconstruction as well! I realized that I can accomplish whatever I am forced to face. I no longer doubt that I have the resilience to succeed.

My current enrollment in adult education is just one more mountain trail to be mastered before I enter college this fall. At first I thought it was impossible to do anything other than build refrigerators, but now I'm training for a new career. I find myself saying, "Bring on the mountain, I'm prepared for this hike!" I've resolved to face this challenge, crawling every inch until I achieve success. I absolutely refuse to lie on the hillside and accept the failure option.

Judy Harrington is currently a student at Fort Smith Adult Education Center in Fort Smith, AR. She plans to attend UAFS (University of Arkansas, Fort Smith) in the fall to pursue a career in Medical Billing and Coding, coupled with a Business Administration degree.



**Manufacturing Jobs as % of U.S. Total  
January 1969 to March 2009**



**Write a true statement** summarizing the information you see in the graph.

**Discuss** why these changes have happened.

**Source:** The Bureau of Labor Statistics <bls.gov>.