



Lakes Region Weekly

Good Morning Lakes Region – Q&A with Joan Lunden

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NAPLES - Joan Lunden, the former longtime co-host of "Good Morning America" who now spends the summer in Naples, wants other women to experience the way life should be.

And for Lunden, the longest-running morning news show host in history who is still very much active in multiple media and business ventures, "the way life should be" can be found in Maine, in late summer, at the four-day camping retreat for women she now runs on Long Lake.

Since marrying Jeff Konigsberg, owner and director of Camp Takajo in Naples, Lunden has spent most every summer at the Naples boys camp, located off Route 35 on the eastern side of Long Lake. For more than 50 years, the camp has offered boys the classic Maine experience in a full seven-week program.

With the retreat, called Camp Reveille, Lunden wants to bring that classic camp experience to busy women, along with modern niceties such as great food, spa treatments, and jewelry-making. Now in its sixth year, the camp convenes Aug. 18-21.

In this interview with Lunden, conducted in her lakeside home at Camp Takajo, the well-known journalist and longtime women's health spokeswoman shares more about why she started Camp Reveille, her busy life with seven children and how she spends her time in Maine each summer.

Q: How did Camp Reveille get started?

A: I would come up here - this is my 17th summer now - and by the end of the summer I would look around and realize that I was my healthiest, my fittest, my most relaxed, my happiest, that I was one with nature. So I needed to figure out how I can make this available to other people. So I looked around. I'm all over the country talking to women's groups. I work on all of these programs for American Heart Association, I'm constantly reaching to women with all these health initiatives, helping them understand how they can keep healthy and how to balance their lives between work and motherhood, and Jeff, my husband, said have at it. It's some of the best weather of the season after the summer camp lets out, and he was totally in support of it.

So, me not being one who just talks about something, we put it together. The very first year, which was six years ago, we hosted 150 people. We didn't charge anybody, and it was our premiere year where we really put the template down. And it so far exceeded my expectations I can't even begin to



Joan Lunden at her camp

Joan Lunden, the broadcast journalist, leads campers on a walk during last year's Camp Reveille. Lunden, who lives in Naples during the summer, founded Camp Reveille in 2006 after realizing how healthy she felt at the end of each summer spent at her husband's boys summer camp on Long Lake. (Courtesy photo)

tell you. We're still doing the same thing now, but each year we add on new things because we have a lot of returning campers and you like to add new things for them.

Q: Who comes to Camp Reveille?

A: Everybody from all over. Right now, we've already got people signed up from at least 16 states. There are a lot of mother-daughter sets, sisters, a lot of girls who went to college together, groups of friends. And then I always have a couple dozen women who come alone.

It's also an interesting new way for people to get away. A lot of women come here and say, I've never traveled anywhere alone before. And if I go to a spa, when it comes to dinnertime, I have to walk into that dining room by myself and that's not an easy proposition for a lot of women. Here, they realize they're coming to camp and they're going to be in a group. Everybody goes to dinner together. It almost gives you permission to come alone, because you're never really alone. You're in a group of women. So it's an interesting new way for women to travel and get away and get that spa experience.

But they also get a camp experience, and that's almost something that's unbuyable. Camp's for kids. You know, the old saying, youth is wasted on the young. Well, it would be so nice if we could go back to camp again when we were adults. And in this case you can. About 50 percent of the women went to summer camp, and that half can't wait to come back. The other half has no clue, don't know what to expect.

Q: Are camp-goers corporate CEOs needing a break from their busy lives?

A: Yes, and they're also busy mothers of four kids who just pick up and drop off at every lesson you can think of. And they are also incredibly busy and overwhelmed with taking care of everyone else in their lives, and they need a break, too.

Q: So it's women who need a break? That's the common thread.

A: I hate to say this, but almost every woman needs a break. Women by nature are, in my opinion, nurturers. We're wired that way. We're almost not happy if we're not able to be caregivers, to be perfectly honest. We'll gripe about it, but it's our nature to do it. Unfortunately, we're not always so terrific about taking care of ourselves. And I lecture all the time, you've got to take care of yourself. You have to take care of your own health, and your own mental health and getting some rest and getting reenergized and getting some exercise into your own life so you feel like you're actually making a commitment to your own future.

And I think the magic of coming to Reveille, which I probably only realized after I opened it, is the emotional strength when you get a group of 150 women together sharing their stories, sharing their life experiences, sharing their struggles they've gone through and how they survived them.

Q: Where do these conversations take place?

A: There's an incredible Indian Council Ring that seats 600 people that Jeff had built. And we have a huge campfire up there, but certainly those conversations don't go on just there. They go on at every meal, they go on at every six Adirondack chairs that get pulled together. They go on between women sitting next to each other making necklaces. They go on down on the benches of all the women who are cheering on their friends on the climbing wall. They go on everywhere. And that camaraderie is something that's just not found in everyday life, particularly for women.

Q: What's offered?

A: I offer a myriad of choices. At any given time throughout the day, there's probably three or four or maybe a half-dozen things going on. Zumba, tennis, climbing wall, jewelry, ceramics. But we make sure they're always something else going on that's peaceful, such as meditation. But we also have fun stuff like facials.

Q: Sounds like some needed pampering. Do any of these people feel a little guilty for taking time for themselves?

A: That's a big thing we deal with. Women have a very difficult time giving themselves permission to go on a getaway that's for them. But I'm here to tell them, when you do this for yourself, you go back happier, reenergized, relaxed, you've had a chance to talk to adults and share how you deal with things.

Q: Why is it called Camp Reveille?

A: We were trying to figure out what to call it and Jeff said one day, "I've got it. You wrote a book called 'Wake-Up Calls' and you're always talking about how people never seem to hear the wake-up calls in their life and if they did they'd be much better with dealing with change, so why don't you call it Reveille, a wake-up call in you life."

And I think camp is a wake-up call to every single woman in her own way. It may just be that she's a frenetic worker and she all of a sudden realizes, wow, that was fun and it was good to slow down and relax for four days. Or it may be somebody who's been promising themselves to get in shape and they got me started. It might just be that someone comes and realizes the benefit of being with other women and how it made them feel better. And they go back into their lives and they look for that in their lives.

Q: Are there any other programs like this?

A: There's one group down in Florida, they're called Miami Bombshells, and they have a camp, but there aren't really many people, if any, doing what I'm doing. SpaFinder, which is an online site; kind of like what Kayak is for flights, SpaFinder is for spas and girl-getaways. And they've done a lot of stories on us, because they say, you're incredibly unique. This is such a trend that seems to be viable for the future because for one thing, you're getting to buy the experience of going back to camp and being a kid again. That's really what this is. It's \$999, but it's four days and includes all your meals, and it is really good food.

Q: You've paid your dues. You're the longest-running morning talk show host in history, right, with 20 years at Good Morning America? So you, better than most, know what it's like to need to relax.

A: And not to take the time to relax. Years, a decade, if you looked under workaholic in the dictionary, you'd be like, oh, hello Joan Lunden!

Q: Since you seem so happy not being so busy, do you regret living that lifestyle for so long?

A: No, you can't regret anything. The day I got the call from my agent, I was working as an anchor and reporter for Eyewitness News in New York. I got the call right before going on the air, and he said, "You got the job as co-host of Good Morning America." Thirty minutes later I got the call from my gynecologist saying, "You're pregnant with your first child." So, you know, it all kind of just happened. And when it happens that way, you just put one foot in front of the other and you just figure out how

to do it. Sometimes I look back on it and say, wow, you got up at 3:30 a.m. for two decades and had three kids How'd you do that? That's not possible. But somehow you make it possible.

Q: What is your role at Camp Reveille?

A: A lot of people put their names on things, but like Jeff is to Camp Takajo, I am to Camp Reveille. I'm out there in the midst of everything. I lead a walk every morning. I'm out there at every lunch going from table to table. I speak. I pop in and out of different classes. I want everyone to feel like they took a Zumba class with Joan!

Q: You're hosting Camp Reveille among many other roles right? What else are you doing nowadays?

A: I'm working about as full-time as anyone can work. In April I covered the Royal Wedding for FoxNews. I have a line of home goods on QVC. I am launching a line of cookware, Twizt, this September on QVC and we're bringing over a line of appliances called Smart and Simple, it's my label. It's taking things you use in your kitchen but making them simpler. I have many, many projects I'm involved with.

Q: Tell us about your family life.

A: The little twins are 6 years old, Kim and Jack. They're going into first grade and they go to Center Day Camp in Windham. They get dropped off every day at 9 a.m. and we pick them up at 4 p.m. and they love it.

And then Kate and Max were 8 years old on June 10, and they're both in camp. Max is in camp here and Kate is in camp over at Tripp Lake in Poland. Jeff owns Tripp Lake Camp and his sister runs it.

And then I have three older daughters. I have Sarah (Krauss). She is 23 years old, and works as the assistant to the president of Bravo TV. Lindsay (Krauss) is 28 and works for my company, Joan Lunden Productions. And then Jamie is 31 and she is in New York City and works for Think PR.

Q: I've heard of Joan Lunden sightings in the area, one notable one being at Walmart, where someone told me you had just been in buying diapers for your twins. So what do you think of the Lakes Region? Do you go into Naples or Windham much?

A: For the longest time I'd come up here and I would be in this little cocoon of camp, and while it's wonderful, I would never get out. Now I'm very aware of the area and I'm very much a part of the fabric of the area. We do our shopping, either at Hannaford in Bridgton or we're at Walmart, or we go into Portland. A couple days ago, we went to Toys-R-Us. We went to the Maine Mall. We had dinner at On the Border. I love going to the Christmas Tree Shops. My oldest daughter loves Mexicali Blues in Raymond.

We also love going to dinner to different restaurants: Black Bear Café, Sydneys. We went to Bob's Seafood in North Windham night before last. They have great fried scallops. It's not a fancy atmosphere but good seafood. I always say the best lobster rolls are at Sandy's Flight Deck. Just awesome. I think some of the best nachos you'll ever find in the world are at Rick's Café. And every Fourth of July, I am upstairs and on their deck for dinner and watching the fireworks. Every Fourth of July. All our youngest campers at Takajo are in the Naples Fourth of July parade and we're right there in it marching with them.

Q: Do people come up to you and ask, "Are you Joan Lunden?"

A: Yep, all the time. But everybody is very nice and I'm not the kind of person to say leave me alone, ever. I feel like I was attached in a unique, interesting way to all of them. I had all these people that shared in my having three kids. They shared my joys, they shared my sorrows. And they wrote to me and still write to me.

We had fireworks here on July 5 and within minutes after the fireworks I had messages on Facebook saying, "Hey Joan I'm across the lake from you on Long Lake, great fireworks." I mean, I hear from people. People up here are so nice.

Q: I've never interviewed a reporter before, especially not one with your experience. So, I've got to ask, you interviewed people for 20 years, is there anything I missed?

A: I don't really think so. I think we covered everything. But if I had to add one more thing it would be that a lot of these women who come in for Reveille, most of them haven't been to Maine before. But they are absolutely blown away by the beauty of this place. I mean, Long Lake is 11 miles long, 1 mile wide and at sunset it does not get any more beautiful. I upload a pic of this lake almost daily to Twitter or Facebook and it's the same lake, but it's just so darn beautiful.