

ATTITUDE AND ALTITUDE

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“Just go to the top, so you can see down,” guide Paula urged me at the beginning of a short, steep hike at Zion National Park.

I smiled gamely and bade her continue on the path. Why worry this buxom blonde mother of six, grandmother of five, and half of the husband and wife team leading thirty-nine of us on a ten day Road Scholar trip during which I discovered the fantastic state of Utah?

So there I was, hugging a path whose left side, on the way up, is perilously close to an alarming drop of who knows—or wants to know—how many miles. If one could bear to look. I could not. I get queasy just writing about it.

I had hoped this ten-day trip whose brochure promised we’d “discover five national parks, three national monuments, and examine towering cliffs, buttes and arches and wouldn’t walk more than two miles a day” would help me overcome the drastic fear of heights I’ve always had. Hey! I can do that! I walk more than that many days at Seabury!

Heck. I couldn’t even walk up the Washington Monument with my family. Or climb to a lookout point at Gettysburg. Or hike Mt. Tam in California with my brother. I told myself this trip could be helpful and, of course, I didn’t have to take scary, for me, hikes if I didn’t want to.

Talk about fantasy and wishful thinking. The hike I mentioned earlier was at ZION NATIONAL PARK, during which my friend and roommate held on to me, part of the time. But I did it. This was on the second day of our trip, so I thought it might be the beginning of a trend. Ha! Things only got worse, and I would have to stand far back from the edges of incredible lookout spots. But it was still awesome.

Why, I asked myself, was I panting so much, finding stairs difficult to climb, and needing to drink so much water? The answer, of course, was the high altitude. 9000 feet is far from what I’m used to. So are 7000 or 5000 feet. The elevation in Bloomfield, CT is a comfortable 138 feet. So at least I have an answer to that question.’

I have to face the fact that I also need some attitude adjustment at this point in my life. I turned eighty-two on the last day of the trip. There are some things I no longer can, want to, or should do. So face it, Kayla, you’re no longer the girl you used to be. In fact, you’re no longer a girl!