

Finding the Path to a More Abundant Life

The morning air was crisp, and the sky so clear that many stars hung twinkling still, stubbornly visible, now hours after dawn. The northern gust swept bitterly across the frozen fields of soy-bean stubble and whipped against the swampy banks of the meandering bayou. The rippling waves lapped eagerly at its ice crusted edges. Certainly it was a fine morning to pester the unsuspecting puddle ducks huddled up behind what little break the tree-line provided.

Adrenaline had carried me and my brother Heath quite a ways that morning, and now along our return, our legs violently threatened a work stoppage. We halted briefly, laboring for each gulp of air that stung our hungry lungs.

"There's the truck," I panted, nodding to far bank. "Let's just cross here."

Heath pondered the suggested short cut, but immediately shook his head.

"You're crazy," he exclaimed, "The bridge is just a few hundred more yards down."

My eyes narrowed, "Well, you do what you want. I'm crossing here."

I cinched up my hip waders and stomped down to the water. I wasn't going to have my judgment questioned by some twelve year old punk, six years my junior. It only steeled my resolve.

Splashing right in, I immediately realized what had prompted dad to give me these old waders. A stinging trickle coursed down from a hole near my right shin and quickly floated my poor little toe-sickles. The muddy bottom seemed awful unpredictable too, so I slowed down a mite and began to contend for a surer footing with each new step, cautiously pressing on.

The wind picked up near the midway point and I admit, a little panic set in, so I turned to see if Heath had my back. He was nowhere in sight. I was alone. A frosty wave splashed over the top of my waders.

"I better turn around," I grumbled to myself.

Just then I heard Heath banging around up by the truck. The thought he had been right irked me to no end. So I steeled my resolve and decided to press on. Three steps later I went over both boots. The word 'Exhilarating' doesn't quite capture the enormity of that moment. Immediately my teeth began to chatter louder than a little league baseball team. My breathing echoed the rhythms of a Latin Lamaze class. To top it all off, my waders tugged on me now like a pair of concrete pants. Forget resolve. This was about survival. I had to press on!

Heath, obviously forgetting I still had a gun in my hands, took this grand opportunity to repay me for all the taunting I had ever dished his way. I wanted to respond but my lips were completely numb. Then, it happened. SPLOOSH! I stepped in a sink hole and plunged completely under except for my dad's shotgun, which I held just above the surface. Heath recounts how it looked like a parascope.

While under water I had a little time to think, like how stubborn I'd been, and how much I would like to float back up and breathe again. I don't know- maybe it was just the thought of getting my hands around Heath's neck, but suddenly I found an overwhelming desire to live. I pressed on, walking underwater, across the bottom of that old bayou like a frozen Swamp Thing, finally making it up the far bank and collapsing in a shivering wet heap.

Obviously some short cuts aren't all they're cracked up to be. I should've learned my lesson right there, but unfortunately I spent a good many more years bottom dwelling before I finally laid my resolve down long enough to give my heart to Jesus. He's shown me a path that leads safely home, while keeping my powder dry along the way. I try to listen to Him now, and follow His time tested principles found in the Bible. (*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.* **Psalms 37:23 KJV**)

But anyway- That was quite a chilling experience on the bayou that day. I still shiver just thinking how my stupid pride caused me to wade out over my head like that. I could have found myself thawing out by the fires of hell that day!

Have you found the bridge that passes over to Life? If you look to the cross you'll find it. Make sure to choose that path.

- Guy Sheffield 12-08-06