

## Thank Goodness for *the* Life Preserver

After our previous outing it was a miracle my grandpa let us borrow his boat again. It would likely take another miracle for this little 35 horsepower Johnson to pull one of us up on skis. I was nearly full grown in those days, and my little brother Heath was sprouting an inch every meal.

“You gotta give it full throttle,” I growled after the third time of being drug face first around the lake. I was beginning to feel like an old shrimp net. I’d pulled muscles I didn’t know I had, and lost my swim trunks twice. (Thankfully I’d dug around and been able to find them, hiding in a most uncomfortable place.)

Heath killed the boat engine, rolled with a wave, and looked at me sideways over the steering wheel. “Why didn’t you just let go of the rope dummy?”

It was a good question.

“Just go back and get my skis,” I quacked. My sinuses were so soaked my eyeballs were floating.

Truth was, I really didn’t know much more about skiing than Heath. All my big talk was just parroting the whoppers I’d overheard our dad tell. According to him, he and my uncles had skied behind a worn out old twenty-horse with nothing more than a piece of old trot line and a boat paddle. As Heath was heading out I yelled, “And throw me that boat paddle. Don’t you know anything about skiing?”

After the boat paddle fiasco I decided to let Heath have a go at it. To his credit, it only took him a couple of muddy lake water inoculations before he was clamoring to get back in the boat.

“Maybe you could pull me from a standing position,” I finally suggested, “Like off of a dock?”

Heath shrugged. Within minutes I’d saddled up and waddled over to the edge of some fellow’s houseboat, ready to revolutionize the sport.

“Whoa, wait a minute” I cried, noticing Heath was pulling the slack out of the rope. “Just get a big running start!” It was a command I would narrowly live to regret. The next thing I remember I was flipping my eyelids back down and gurgling the word, “Help.”

Heath reached down to rescue me when his eyes suddenly went wide.

“Dude!” he cried, “Where’s your trunks?”

“Don’t worry,” I replied, “They’re in there.”

Despite that setback, we continued to try every hair brained idea we could think of. Nothing seemed to work. Finally I just got plain mad. “Daddies a big liar!” I yelled. “Take her up to full speed Heath.”

He could tell I was rankled a mite because he didn’t ask any questions. When those 35 horses were whining for all they were worth I casually stood up, and jumped overboard, rolling like a rag doll tossed out of a crop-duster. Heath circled quickly and came back, looking a bit perplexed. “Did you mean to do that?”

“Well brother,” I reasoned, breathing heavily, “If we can’t ski, at least we can experience the thrill of the fall.”

But anyway- Through this, and many other experiences, I’ve learned even the best laid plans will often leave you flat on your face. Sometimes our hopes and dreams just seem to bog down right when we think we’re about to rise up in life; ask ole’ Peter. Peter must’ve thought he was ‘all that’ when he stepped out onto those choppy seas at the Lord’s command. He did pretty well the first few steps, but then he took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink. Many count the whole episode as a failure, but I don’t. (I think it’s a good policy not to pay too much attention to criticism coming from the boat.) What Peter did was actually pretty amazing. I tried the same thing with a running start and ended up looking like an old Evil Kneivel re-run!

Heath’s lingering question still haunts the memories of my youth. “Why didn’t you just let go of the rope Dummy?” I guess it was because I was just doing all I knew to do. Unlike Peter, I hadn’t yet trusted my life to *the* ‘Life Preserver’. (*The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. Psalms 121:7 KJV*)

From now on I’m riding in the ark with Jesus. Why don’t you? There’s more to life than experiencing the thrill of the fall.

-Guy Sheffield 1-05-07