

## CHAPTER 16

For the boys and girls of Mogilev.

The original crew was now headed for home. I got to tour New Orleans all over again with the new crew. All together I spent twelve days in that great city. The raft was again seaworthy and we were off. Across the lake, through the canal and one lock, and onto the Mississippi. What fun to watch these new “Green” guys as they took the wheel and learned the ropes and way of the river.

Our goal was to be home in the same amount of time that it took to get down the river. Well, ha ha ha. Remember we only made 12 M.P.H. on the way down and now we were fighting the current with a bent raft. We were making only ten miles per day. At that rate I think we would still be out there today trying to get home.

I enjoyed sharing my knowledge of the river with the new crew. At times they would listen and then at other times they would not. Like me they had to learn the hard way. These boys were older than the first crew and sometimes they did not like to be told what to do or how to do it by younger kids like me. I have seen this attitude ever since then in people who just start a new job or are just learning to drive. I call people like this “know it alls”. You will run into these people everywhere you go in your life and even though I don’t pretend to know everything when I offer advice I get a lot of static from this type of person. For many years I was a trainer for a large warehouse company and I would like you to know that even though I was as nice as I could be to these people most of them were never invited back to work the next season. We must be able to take advice from people who have been trained in certain areas and we must listen to our parents and loved ones. Believe me they want to help you to be a success as much as you want to be one. The staff onboard that summer also taught me to be patient with the new guys as they were patient with me I hope to pass this along even today.

During our battle to go upstream we burned out two more motors. The Scott outboard Company was right there to give us new ones. That made a total of five engines. A cost I would estimate at close to \$20,000 in today’s money.

It took us ten days to reach Baton Rouge only 100 miles up river from New Orleans. We knew we would never make it. A meeting was called and Jack broke the news. The new guys weren’t as attached to the raft and they had had their fun and were ready to go home. I was disappointed, but I knew that it would be impossible to travel any more on the Unsinkable. We stayed in Baton Rouge and packed our gear and arrangements were made for us to take the bus home. I don’t remember the trip home I must have slept. It was nice not to keep a lookout and let some one else do the driving. I do remember stopping in Chicago, IL. And the staff warning us not to take off. No one did.

You may have noticed that each chapter has been dedicated to some one. These are or have been real people. Some are famous and others not so famous. Each one of these people has been a hero to me at one time or another. I believe we should all have heroes. Not to worship but to look up to and for inspiration. I know a man who drove a hostess cup cake truck for 40 years. This man does not even know that he is a hero. He is one of my heroes because in all the years that he drove that truck he never complained about his job. He has a nice wife and three kids my age. When he was younger he and his wife took in foster kids until they could be placed in permanent homes. Perhaps you have a hero or better yet you may even be a hero. A hero does not have to be strong or rich or black or white they just have to be some one you admire for any reason. They can be a relative or a stranger it is up to you. See what you can come up with and maybe you can start a hobby of collecting heroes. I’ll even bet you could be a hero if you don’t

think you are one then start to think of ways that you could be one. You don't need to sail down a river like I did to be a hero and that trip did not make me a hero, but I do hope that I am a hero at least to my own children.

The raft was hoisted onto a barge and brought back to Minneapolis. There it was dismantled and the barrels were sold for \$2.00 each. The motors were returned and the logs that we kept were also turned over to the Scott Company. We salvaged what we could and scrapped the rest the raft was no more.

Dean Felsing, Crew Member of the Unsinkable.

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## **EPILOGUE**

It was the beginning of the school year 1961. I had just turned 15 and was in ninth grade. "What did you do on your summer vacation, Dean?" ..... "Ya, Right". It was also back to the weekend program.

There we sat in a small room, about 15 of us kids and two or three staff members, it was announced to us that we needed to come up with a plan for next summers vacation. We were told that if we did not come up with a plan we would spend the summer as guests of the Hennepin County Home School in Glen Lake, Minnesota.

Yes, there was another raft trip in 1962. Instead of going to New Orleans the trip was from Minneapolis to St. Louis and return. We traveled on a manufactured pontoon boat donated by Kayot. It was also factory modified to our specs, an extra, shorter, pontoon was factory installed between the starboard and the port pontoons. We had a real seat to sit on to drive from. Scott donated two more motors. They were smaller only 28 horsepower with a different pitch. They worked fine. This pontoon was used again in 1963 while I attended summer school.

In 1964 the Weeres Company of St. cloud, MN donated an enormous five-pontoon platform. We built the superstructure from donated materials and would you believe an aluminum roof? Two more motors were given to us, again by Scott, They were very small, only 14 horse each. They were called Ox motors and were experimental and they had a power pitch and 12inch blades on the props. These worked just great. I had graduated from high school in June and was no longer in the weekend program. All of the staff was new and so was the crew. The County asked me if I would go along and be the cook. They also paid me a stipend of two dollars per week. This was quite an honor for me and I jumped at the chance. I hope that the county never finds out that I would have paid them the two bucks and still have done the cooking.

Each of these trips was as much fun and exciting as the first. Altogether I logged just over 5,000 miles on the river and passed through each lock at least five times. I made life long friends and memories. The river changes every day, just like you and me. It never gets boring. Just after the last trip in 1964 I joined the Navy. Compared to the raft trips the Navy was a piece of

cake. I have waited almost 40 years to tell this story and indeed it has been a labor of love. Most stories wind up with, “The End”, but not this one. Thank you.

Dean Felsing, Crew Member of the Unsinkable.

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