

## CHAPTER 7

For Joseph Spano

Rise and shine. Thank goodness the weather had cleared up and the sun was out. Everything we owned was soaked even the driftwood we gathered wouldn't burn. For breakfast we had cold cereal and apples or bananas, and rolls. Some one made a bucket of orange juice. If things were dry we would cook bacon and eggs or have hot oatmeal. Eddie and myself would get up early and catch a bunch of frogs some days and have frog legs and eggs for our breakfast. We really knew how to live. Some of the boys caught fish and ate them. For lunch we usually had sandwiches on the raft and if we were in a town we were given fifty to seventy-five cents to buy our own food. This was plenty of money back then and you could get a hamburger, fries and pop and still have enough to buy a candy bar later. As for the rest of the food we were given what we called "commodities". This was free food from the government for welfare people and seeing that all of us were poor we qualified for the commodities. Most of this food was good but to this day I can't eat pinto beans. Some of this food was peanut butter, canned meat (like Spam only worse), cheese, flour, sugar, pinto beans, and my favorite powdered milk. Yuk!

We wanted to stay and dry out but we were behind schedule and in need of repairs. Jack left us again and we agreed to meet in Lake City MN. Half-way through Lake Pepin. There was little to no current and we only made about 4-5 M.P.H. It took 3 hours to get to Lake City. We were too heavy and something had to go. One of the boys suggested the anchors could be tossed but we decided to keep them. They would come in handy for tying up the raft at night if you wrapped them around a tree with long lines. It was decided that the footlockers would go. This would lighten our load by about 400lbs. This was difficult for us because we had each made our own and they were all unique. Jack scrounged some army surplus duffel bags and we stowed our belongings in them.

We stopped in the Lake City marina, this is like a parking lot for boats, and the staff gave us some money for lunch and some volunteers helped to repair the raft. After several hours and having explored all there was in Lake City it was back to the newly repaired raft.

Wow, new railings, new chicken wire, new screens and some great handy man from town fixed the steering cable, heavy duty. We were off we gave three cheers to the folks at the marina. One boy would yell, "Hip, hip" and the rest of us would yell "Hurray". We repeated this three times, it was our way of saying thank you. It was the first of many hip hips.

The going was still slow as we still had the footlockers on board, and we were in the middle of the lake. Soon we reached the area where the Chippewa River enters the Mississippi. We were back in the current and in the channel. Now to find a place to camp and cook our first supper on shore. We found a sand bar and tied up the raft. We used the footlockers for the fire.

Dean Felsing, Crew member of the Unsinkable.

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## CHAPTER 8

For Emil Koivisto

After a goodnight rest we ate and broke camp. Did I mention how wet we were? Did I mention the canvas roof and sides? Well, things were drying out now and do you have any idea how much canvas shrinks when it dries? The flaps that covered the sides once reached the floor but now were at least 6 inches from the deck. In case I forget to tell you later; by the end of the trip the canvas did not even reach far enough to cover the screens. In all it shrunk over 2 feet.

We were always stopping for bathroom breaks and this was slowing us down. We decided that a toilet would be nice. With that we chopped a hole in the deck in the front right corner of the cabin and built up the sides with 2x4s and then topped it off with a toilet seat. At this point I believe every fly on the river got wind of this great invention and after ten days you could not get within two feet of that corner. It may have taken only 5 days for this to happen I don't remember but I do remember it had to go. So we flushed the toilet down itself and covered the hole in the deck with a piece of plywood.

This came in handy. You see in the marinas it was illegal to fish, for at least two reasons. First the marina owners did not want their customers to get hurt. Second, fishing line can really ruin a prop or your motor. This never stopped us, all we had to do was lift the plywood and we could fish as much as we wanted to. Ah yes nothing like catching your lunch in a toilet.

One of the boys we called Froggy, he was a dead ringer for the boy Froggy on the little rascals. I knew him for over a year before I learned his real name, Bob. This kid was funny and a hard worker. He was not afraid of any thing and a great crewmember. One day an item of his went overboard when a wave caught us by surprise. I think it was his cup and it washed right off the back of the raft. You never saw a kid get so upset. After several items of clothing and miscellaneous stuff washed over, we decided that a look out was needed to watch the rear and stop things from ending up in the drink. This was a job none of us wanted. If an item was lost due to your negligence you were in a heap of trouble. This included tearing up your tent in the middle of the night or a severe thrashing from the person whose item was lost. This happened a few times. But after a while nothing got off that raft. By the way this person also had to wear a life jacket at all times just in case he had to dive after something or lost his balance.

Some of the gear we had aboard was donated for experimental purposes. One such item was a mosquito repellent that was invented by two brothers and they gave us two cases of this stuff to try out. It was called Zizz. This stuff sent a signal to every mosquito within an entire five county area. The only way you could kill a mosquito with it was to clobber it with the bottle. Not only did it not work, it stung your eyes worse than mace, now don't ask me how I know that.

A few of the boys smoked cigarettes and some of the boys stole these from one another. One day a fight broke out over a stolen cig and off all things used as a weapon they chose Zizz. I never saw such a fight in my life I think every one on board got into the fray. Yes even the staff got into this one. One of the reasons for this was that even a drop of Zizz would make your face burn and the stuff was flying everywhere and if you got it on you, you had to strike back. Every one had at least two or three bottles of Zizz and it was terrible. Some of us jumped over board just to stop the stinging. We all had red faces for quite a while after and we had to pull ashore to wash up and get our sight back.

Our staff confiscated all of the Zizz and tossed it overboard. Now we had to use our fists we were told. Or learn not to steal from one another. Ya right, I still knew where there was a few bottles of Zizz.