

## CHAPTER 9

### For Jimmy," My Dad" Jimmy

One team of boys was two Mikes. I'll call them Mike A. and Mike B. One was very quiet and I'm sure he did more than lurk with intent to loiter to get into the weekend program. The other was a very bright and witty fellow. He kept moral high. He always had a come back to everything you said. He was great to listen to, an early Don Rickles. However this took its toll on the staff. There was no way to get this kid to shut up. Yes, I really admired him. Just when things got rough good ol Mike B. had something hilarious to say. I have a picture of him flinging some of his food overboard with his fork. This was shocking to me because I was always being yelled at to not waste food. Yet here stood this boy taking one fork full at a time and tossing it into the river followed by a comment on it's quality, or lack there of. It was this boy who invented our washing machine. Of course or clothes got dirty and needed cleaning. Mike B. started a laundry business. He would charge from .05 cents to .15 cents to do a load. He simply put some soap in your pockets and or your socks, and crammed your clothes into an onion or potato bag and drag it over the side for about ½ an hour. What amazes me is that he never lost anything and it worked. What scares me is that today he maybe designing parts for airplanes.

Winona, MN. And on our way to LaCrosse. We were held up at lock and dam #7 and the weather was getting rough again. We were ready this time and had all our gear tied down ahead of time. It is a good thing because this storm almost did us in. We stayed in the channel but we really took a thrashing. The new steering cable held fast and we kept in control of the raft. Right about then the horse trip seemed like the best idea. I heard someone yell out "Who's idea was this?" but not one person onboard cried or said that they wanted to go home, by golly we built this thing and we were going to make it to New Orleans.

We arrived in LaCrosse Ws. And Jack came aboard. Then we headed up river a ways to Taylor Island and made camp. That had to be one of the greatest nights that I spent on the trip. Jack and the staff kept us up all night telling us tall stories and jokes. We sang songs and seemed to forget about the weather. At this point the staff may have been trying to soften us up to tell us that we may not make it. But after watching us work as a team they decided to go on. And that we did. We were now 150 miles from home.

Next morning the weather was great we had our clothes hung out to dry and we were off . We stopped just above lock and dam #8 at Genoa, Ws. And climbed the bluffs and looked up and down the river. Gee, what a view, you can see three states from the top of the bluff, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and now we would enter Iowa . We were really under way .

Lynxville, Harpers Ferry, Prairie Du Chien, and then Guttenberg, Iowa. We stopped for supplies and looked around town. As people heard of our arrival in some of these towns they would come out and greet us and many took us on tours. We rode in everything from cars, a Boy Scout truck, a school bus, and yes even a paddy wagon. Many people gave us food or if it was a Sunday and we had attended church, many times we would have a picnic with the congregation after the service. This was due to Jack being the point man and stirring up publicity for us. As usual the people received three cheers.

Dubuque, Iowa. What a great city. I had seen pictures of a cable car from there, and Eddie and I went off to find it. It cost .05 cents to ride up and down the bluff. What a great memory.

Bellevue, Savanna, Fulton, Clinton, Clinton II. What a stop. The mayor was at the dock to greet us and so was the local newspaper. We were taken on a tour of the MoorMan research company. Acres and acres of land used for seed experiments. All of their research was for

farmers and agriculture. They gave us a feast in the company cafeteria. I don't understand why they were so nice to us we sure weren't ever going to buy any of their seeds. It was a great time and got us away from the river for the day. That evening there was a carnival in the streets of downtown Clinton and we were invited to stay. We were given free passes to every ride and free hotdogs and pop. I am sure that none of us had ever been given the red carpet treatment in our lives before. It felt good and made us feel important. During the carnival many people stopped us and asked questions about the raft and the river. It sure was great to be liked by so many people we didn't even know.

Then LeClaire, and the quad cities, Moline, Bettendorf, Rock Island, and Davenport, next stop Muscatine Iowa.

Right out of lock and dam #16 is Muscatine, Iowa. On the docks there was a group of people waiting for us. We were given tours of two button companies. Muscatine was then known as the button capitol of the world. Most of the buttons were made out of mother of pearl. How fascinating to learn how these items were produced. I still have the samples that were given to each of us.

Burlington, and then Fort Madison, IA. We landed in Fort Madison and there was another crowd waiting. Wow, we were getting famous. We had a tour of the state prison by the warden himself. We got to talk with the inmates and I'll tell you one thing, after that tour I knew that I never wanted to end up in a cell, ever.

We also toured the Schaffer Pen Company. Each of us got to hold a 100 ounce gold bar that was used in the making of some of the ink pens. They gave each of us a cartridge pen and pencil set. I gave this to my mother after the trip and she still uses it to this day.

There is a lot of history connected to this part of the river and we learned of the Mormon crossing 100 years ago from Nauvoo, IL. That is where we headed for next.

As we left the marina at Fort Madison there were huge black clouds ahead and we thought if we hit one more storm that would be the end. Closer and closer and all of a sudden they hit us. Not rain clouds, but clouds of Mayflies, worse than any storm. We could not see across the deck and they were in our hair and everything else. We covered ourselves with our mosquito netting and tried to stay in the channel. This lasted for about an hour, but it seemed like forever. For days after the river and the city streets were covered with dead Mayflies and holy cow did they stink.

Nauvoo was a nice town and we had a tour and picnic and went for a swim with some of the kids from the area. There was a sunken towboat here also and we dived all over it.

Keokuk, Iowa, lock and dam # 19 the largest on the river . We were in awe. It was a 29-foot drop and had the largest locks on the river. We were now entering Missouri. We had our sea legs and were on our way to becoming sailors.

Dean Felsing, Crew member of the Unsinkable

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