

## **CAN YOU CANOE?**

**by Marie Coady**

**Can you canoe?**

**That is the question...being asked by my children these past few weeks. You see, my husband and I bought a canoe, and this startling event has sent my grown children into a tizzy. They are sure we have lost our minds.**

**After all, at our age?**

**My mother always said, "Our faults are never so awful, as when we see them in our children". But what I didn't expect is that I would live long enough to witness our children becoming us. It's downright scary.**

**Keep in mind these are the same children, who when they were teens and were asked where they were going always said, "Out." This in spite of the fact they had a suitcase gripped in one hand and a car full of giddy contemporaries in the driveway shouting, "Par-ty! Par-ty!"**

**From what I can gather this role reversal transcends nationality, race and religion. We discovered this recently while having dinner with friends visiting from England. They almost fell off their chairs laughing when we told them of our children's reaction to our recent interest in canoeing. Then, with their most highly trained, Henry Higgins diction, they told of their recent experience with their twenty-two year old son.**

**Seems they had gone on a cruise and assumed giving their son the cruise's itinerary would be sufficient. But as it turned out, news of a hurricane brewing somewhere in the western hemisphere---which they knew nothing about---set their son to pacing and worrying. When he finally couldn't stand it anymore, he tracked their vessel down on the ship to shore radio and demanded to speak to the captain. Imagine their surprise when they were summoned to the captain's cabin to allay their son's fears.**

**When they arrived home safe and sound and explained to him how embarrassed they were by the whole affair, he claimed he was only getting even for the time they arrived at his dorm unexpectedly and climbed over sleeping forms to deliver clean laundry. It appears turnabout is fair play. When I first made our canoe announcement to my children via e-mail, it set in motion a flurry of activity. Some of this e-mail blizzard was forwarded to me, I presume to show their concern.**

**My original message to them said simply:**

**"Just a note to warn you that Dad bought a canoe. We plan on taking the canoe out on Horn Pond this Sunday." Love, Mom**

**Number one son replied first saying:**

**"Why don't you just let him run around the house with a pair of scissors, that way he can get all this out of his system. Meanwhile, I'll notify the authorities."  
There was also this P. S.:**

**"Remember, one lean the wrong way, and you're swimming."**

**Number two son just had one word to say---all in caps and bold print:  
"OMIGAWD!!!"**

**My daughter had a different reaction. A purely motherly one. She went out and bought us life jackets and delivered them to the house. I'm sure, although she didn't say so exactly, that she didn't trust us to get them on our own, because, as she left the house, she remarked: "Now I can sleep at night".**

**When I informed the boys that we now had life jackets and would be extra careful, I assumed it would ease their anxiety. Instead it elicited this return e-mail:**

**"Make sure Dad actually wears the life jacket. You know how he is. He'll think as long as he has one nearby, he's all set. Ask him how out of breath he is when he brings the laundry up from the cellar. Then ask him how he intends on swimming fifty to one hundred yards to shore if the boat tips?"**

**Cute, huh!!**

**At first, I was insulted. Then I remembered they were raised on phrases like: "You could put someone's eye out with that" and "If Jimmy jumps off a roof, does that mean you can too?"**

**No way we were going to let this Nervous Nellie stuff deter us though. So we launched our "unsinkable" canoe onto Horn Pond as planned this past Sunday, paddling into the afternoon sun. I thought we acquitted ourselves quite well, in spite of the fact we still have some way to go before we can paddle cooperatively.**

**There was one small incident that made me a bit anxious. I'm going share this incident with you, because I know you'll keep it to yourself.**

**When I finally consented to leave the safety of the shoreline and satisfy my husband's curiosity about what's left of the "island" in the center of the pond, we did have one little scare. Just as we were nearing the "island", a sudden gust of wind roared at us from an unexpected direction and took our canoe wherever it wanted to go. We paddled like crazy, but it made no difference. We were blown around like a toy. I had flashbacks to all the Horn Pond sailing accidents I'd read in old news accounts. Many of them occurred on the easterly side of the island in almost the exact spot where we had our little scare. Sailboats were regularly capsized by unexpected wind gusts in that**

**vicinity of the pond. For one swift instant the ghosts of Miss Jessie Croucher, Miss Etta Parr, Webster Potter and Edward O'Rourke loomed large in a fleeting flashback.**

**Now, every conversation with my children ends with the admonition: Be careful.**

**That's my line. I've had a the monopoly on "Be careful", "Zip up your jacket" and "Drive safely" for years, and I'm not sure I like having them thrown back at me. But I have the perfect way to get even. It's guaranteed to set their well-straightened teeth on edge.**

**After our little adventure on Horn Pond, I e-mailed this message:**

**Dad and I spent two hours on Horn Pond, and were still alive to tell the tale. We are now ready for bigger and better things. A little whitewater, perhaps?**

**Love, Mom, or She Who Paddles.**

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