

## PERIL ON THE LAKE

By Susanna Fries

On a hot summer day, there's nothing more refreshing or satisfying than skimming across the waters of Sacheen Lake in your motor boat. The wind in your hair. The sun beating down on you. The hum of the motor... until it stops, in the middle of the lake and your husband says with a chuckle, "Oops. Out of gas."

As he sits in the captain's chair calmly, my mind starts to race. Our daughter, barely a toddler at the time, is on the boat, along with my husband's cousin and his wife. I go into a 'panic, we must solve this problem now mode'. Like a sailor scouting for icebergs on the Titanic, I look to see how far we are from shore. Ah, ¼ mile. I estimate how far a hike, once I get to shore, it is back to our cabin where I can grab the gas can. Ah, perhaps one mile. I realize I'm in my bare feet, but having run the road many times, I know it won't be too hard on them. Once I grab the gas can, I can also grab my shoes from the cabin, hike back to where our boat is, and by that time, perhaps the crew on board will have rowed to shore. In a matter of seconds, I have come up with this BRILLIANT plan, and loudly proclaim the obvious and logical solution to our problem: I CAN SWIM!

Everyone looks at me and laughs. I say it again, "No, really, I can swim! I was a great swimmer in high school and I can swim to shore and get the gas." My plan is no longer met with laughter, but with silence and a puzzled look from everyone, as if it is the craziest idea they've ever heard. I am shocked. Here we are, in the middle of the lake, stranded. With a toddler. In the heat. We have no food. We have no water, except that which surrounds us. Who knows how long we can survive!

Suddenly, out of the blue, two boats come racing towards us, and both, with friendly folk on board pull up and say, "Hey, ya' outta gas?!" "Do you need a tow?" My husband looks at me and laughs, "Yes!". And just like that, we're handed a rope and the Good Samaritans on the lake tow us back to the cabin.

Since that 'life-threatening' day, whenever we are in dire straits, my husband tells people, "Don't worry, she can swim." And he gently, then lovingly reminds me that on Sacheen Lake, if you run out of gas, you just sit there, quietly, in your boat and in minutes someone will pull up alongside you and ask if you're out of gas and need help. Yes, it's that kind of lake. No swimming necessary. Your neighbors (even the ones you don't know) are happy to help out.

WARNING: do not try this on any other lake