



They say the two happiest days in a person's life are the day he buys a boat and the day he sells it. I got the owning of a boat out of my system when I was young. I had read a book about old Florida called "The Lion's Paw" and at the age of ten I decided to take \$125 from my savings account and buy a ten-foot metal boat with a three-horsepower Johnson from a guy who lived out near the Everglades. My friends and I would drag the boat and motor about a block to the nearest canal and troll around the city of Ft. Lauderdale. Later, though, my father became involved, and we would load the boat into the back of the family station wagon with the tailgate down to put in at a boat ramp or even, on calm days, right into the ocean in the very early morning before many people were up.

At Christmas time, 1971, Dad decided that as a Christian witness for that year, he, my sister and I would join the Ft. Lauderdale Christmas boat parade on the Intracoastal Waterway dressed as Santa and his two elves. He had talked Dunkin' Donuts into donating 200 donut holes which were each wrapped in a religious tract and secured with a rubber band. The idea was that we would follow along behind the parade throwing the donuts/tracts to the people who lined the shore. The fact that we would be in a ten-foot boat contending with the wakes of very large yachts did not deter Dad. Through his mother, he had obtained permission from the Commodore of the Yacht Club to participate, so we were good to go.

We put in at the boat ramp at George English park and waited in a cove for the parade to go by. It was a little windy that evening, so there was a little bit of a chop on the Intracoastal before it even got there. Then the big boats came through, decorated with fancy lights and with people partying on the decks. When we tried to pull in behind the parade, the wakes were so strong we were in danger of capsizing from the very beginning. Water was coming in over the sides and most of the donut holes got wet in the bottom of the boat. We were close to the seawall at Birch State Park, so we maneuvered closer where the wakes appeared to be cancelling each other out and the water was not as rough.

It was at this point that the propeller struck a submerged object and broke a shear pin leaving us dead in the water. The only good thing about this was that the parade went on without us. We had to row the boat over to the seawall, the top of which was about six feet above the water's surface. Then the motor had to be lifted up onto the top of the wall so that the shear pin could be replaced. At this point, it's necessary to picture two elves lifting a 75-pound motor up on to the seawall while Santa Claus, cursing a blue streak, reaches down to pull the motor up from above.

We got the motor fixed and reinstalled, then we navigated around some of the local canals looking for people to whom we could throw donut holes. Most of them were soggy and had to be thrown away. As I have gotten older, I have realized that this entire incident took place because Dad was, at that time, in a manic state. At the time, though, we didn't know anything about bi-polar disorder or that he was suffering from it. We just figured it was simply the way he was and that we just had to deal with it the best way we could.