

DOWN THE CREEK

without a paddle

By JIM TAYLOR

Rick Stevens was about to leave his West Linn home when his wife told him to wear a lifejacket if he went down to the dock and not to let Luna, their Blue Healer dog out on it. It was late afternoon when Rick left to check on their house and property on the Siletz River, about eight miles above the Highway 101 bridge. It was storming and the river was flooding.

He arrived at the house about 6 p.m. in a driving rain storm and 50 mile per hour winds. After turning on the lights in the house he looked out back toward the river. In the ambient light from the back porch he could see a large tree had washed down the river and was caught on his dock. He knew he had to try and dislodge it before more debris piled up and swept away his dock.

Throwing on his wood jacket and baseball hat, Rick headed out, followed by Luna, his ever-faithful dog.

The stuck tree was a fir, three to four feet across with large limbs protruding skyward.

Using his shoulder he pushed on the nearest limb slightly moving the tree. Luna has been standing on the dock and when the tree moved she jumped from the dock to the tree. Rick immediately waded out a little further, hung onto a limb with his left hand and reached out as far as he could, grabbing Luna and tossing her back onto the dock.

Now, all was good except the inertia of saving the dog had dislodged the tree. Because of its long limbs sticking up, the current caused the tree to roll over. A broken limb caught Rick under his arm, catching his jacket and tossing him across the tree into the river. He quickly crawled onto the tree with was now swiftly going down the flooded river. He yelled to Luna on the dock to stay. So she quickly jumped in, swimming after him. As she was going by, he was able to grab a back leg and hoist her onto the tree.

By now, he was passing his neighbor's house and saw them watching television in their front room. He yelled for help over

The GREAT Outdoors

and over, but the wind, rain and river, they couldn't possibly hear him. He was soon out of sight of any lights and in complete darkness, holding on a small broken limb to stay on the only hope he and Luna had.

His first thought was to stay calm and he was concerned for his dog, and she for him, as she kept licking him. Suddenly the tree came to a stop. The long limbs were acting as a keel, getting stuck on the river bottom. He could hear other logs and debris piling up against his tree-raft, finally creating enough pressure to break the river bottom's grip and send them down the river. This happened many times. Occasionally a log hit them so hard it knocked Luna into the river. Being completely dark, Rick could do nothing for Luna.

Rick remained calm through all this but was heart sickened for his dog. Although it was unseasonably warm for January—in the high 50s—he was beginning to be concerned about hypothermia. The water was cold, he was soaked, a potential fatal situation. It occurred to him that if he died, swept down by the river and possibly out to sea, nobody would know what happened. He was determined not to let that happen.

All through this he kept trying to see the river bank. It was so dark he could not see his own hand. At last, after a couple of hours in the river, a single, far off light appeared to the north, beyond where the paved road should be. He thought he could make out the silhouette of vegetation about 25 feet away. Was it his imagination or was it real? He knew he was running out of time, so he decided to go for it. Kicking off his boots,

he went into the water, leaving the tree that had both nearly killed him and then saved him.

After swimming a short distance he reached the bank and crawled up to level ground. He could no longer see the far off light. In total darkness, with only socks on his feet, he slowly began to navigate toward where he thought the road should be. Feeling along with his feet and hands, he slowly advanced through brush and trees until he came to what felt like a gravel road. Following the road by feel only, he came to what felt like asphalt. Knowing he needed to go right at this time to get back to his house. This part of the road is very curvy and many times he walked off the road only to have to find it again.

He walked blind for what turned out to be more than two miles, he saw the lights of his house. His pace quickened and he reached his front door. It was after 10 p.m. Not one car had come down the road the whole time was walking back.

The wind was still blowing but his power was still on. He was shivering and very cold. He needed to get out of his wet clothes and into a warm shower. After undressing in the utility room, he opened the back door to put his wet clothes on the back porch. There, curled up was Luna. He never felt so relieved and happy. And he still had his baseball hat. All was good.

There is a lesson to be learned from this story. If your wife tells you to wear a life jacket down to the river, wear it. If your wife tells you not to let the dog on the dock... don't! Wives are always right.

HAZARDOUS WASTE DISPOSAL

These go here!

Not here!

Household Hazardous Waste Facility
3250 Deer Park Dr. SE, Salem
Thursdays and 1st & 3rd Tuesdays 8am-3:30pm

For more information, visit:
mcrecycles.net

Prepare for unexpected power outages with a Generac home standby generator

REQUEST A FREE QUOTE!
877-557-1912

FREE 7-Year Extended Warranty*
A \$695 Value!
Offer valid February 15 - June 6, 2021

Special Financing Available
Subject to Credit Approval

*To qualify, consumers must request a quote, purchase, install and activate the generator with a participating dealer. Call for a full list of terms and conditions.

Salem Friends of Felines

Cat of the Week

Name: DUCHESS, Age: 2 1/2

HISTORY: She showed up at the shelter May of last year. She had 6 kittens that were all adopted. They are a little confused with the rest of her history because the previous owner who filled out the form didn't make themselves clear about the cat.

PREFERRED HOME: Duchess is very shy but loves affection by being petted. She doesn't do well with other pets or small kids. The owner needs to be patient with her, as she takes time to warm up to others.

We have moved! Our new location is 4157 Cherry Avenue, Keizer • 503-362-5611