

The Day I Nearly Drowned

The hate crimes, racism, and political division of 2020 started, for me, five years earlier at the neighborhood Fourth of July boat parade. I nearly drowned that day. Floundering in the green-grey water in my light-blue suit and heels, I realized for the first time that our country was in big trouble. I would not be here to tell the tale if Gilligan had not jumped in for the rescue, or if my husband, Jake, hadn't talked the cowboy into holstering his gun.

We live on a cove on Old Hickory Lake in Tennessee, in a neighborhood of haphazardly renovated 1960s cottages with back yards that slope to the water. Ducks and geese roam free here, and turtles soak up sun on rocks along the banks.

Every July 4th, neighbors decorate their pontoons and speed-boats, dress in American-themed costumes and have a parade. Afterward, we drink beer and Champaign and feast on tomato pie, grilled corn and tiny hot dogs wrapped in crescent dough. After a few beers, we sing "This Land is Your Land" and "God Bless America" in a sloppy, heart-felt show of patriotism. One family wins "best of show" and receives \$1000 for charity.

Jake and I have dressed in the past as the Statue of Liberty and Uncle Sam, a gangster and his moll, and Sonny and Cher. The Rogers family comes every year as the cast of the 1960s TV sit-com, Gilligan's Island, with Ed Rogers as Skipper, barking orders through a megaphone. His wife smokes long cigarettes in her silky Ginger gown. But there is no Professor. Everyone knows Ginger is supposed to be with the Professor.

In 2016, Jake and I dressed as Donald Trump and Hilary Rodham Clinton. The costume idea came when Jake performed an impromptu Trump impersonation at a party. The crowd howled. Jake has the same build as Trump and can mimic perfectly the pouty lips and thoughtful head nodding. Jake and I are democrats, but he makes such a good Trump we couldn't resist.