



ICE PRINCESS

Combining ice fishing with the joy of marriage.

By Mike Raykovicz

Mary Lou and I almost didn't make it to our first anniversary. Shortly after we were married, we each made a serious mistake that almost ruined our newlywed bliss. I committed the first blunder by foolishly asking her if she'd like to go ice fishing with me, and as far as I'm concerned, she made the more grievous error by saying yes.

Normally I went ice fishing with one of my friends (or "playmates" as my wife calls them), but I was faced with having to go alone on the upcoming holiday weekend. I racked my brain thinking of whom I could ask, when it occurred to me to ask my bride. One night after dinner, I decided to risk it. "How would you like to go ice fishing with me tomorrow?"

Mary Lou looked at me as if I had announced I was having an affair.

"Ice fishing? Have you lost your mind? I think standing in the cold every weekend has made your brain mushy," she said.

"Why not? You love fish, and besides, the weather will be warm tomorrow."

"Twenty five degrees is not warm," she fired back. From the response, I sensed she was weakening. She had actually responded to my question with words, rather than hysterical laughter.

"Okay, I'll go, but only if you promise to take me home if I get cold."

"Deal," I said quickly.

As I was sipping a cup of coffee, my wife waddled into the kitchen looking like the Pillsbury Dough Boy.

The alarm went off at 5:45 a.m. I was on my feet in an instant. I touched Mary Lou's shoulder and she immediately disappeared beneath several layers of cotton percale as quickly as a night crawler retreating from the beam of a flashlight.

"Wake up, hon."

"What time is it?"

"Quarter to six."

"It's the middle of the night for crying out loud," said a muffled voice.

Knowing I'd probably meet with this sort of resistance, I had cleverly set the clocks ahead an hour so that my wife

would be ready in time to get to the lake before daylight. She didn't know it was only 4:45, and I wasn't about to tell her.

As I was sipping a cup of coffee, my wife waddled into the kitchen looking like the Pillsbury Dough Boy.

“Uh, don’t you think you might be a little overdressed?” I asked.

“If I’m going out in this weather, I’m going to be dressed for it,” came the sleepy reply.

Actually, Admiral Byrd probably took less clothing to the South Pole, but I wasn’t about to argue.

“Would you mind helping me with my boots?”

“Why?” I asked.

“I can’t even bend over,” she replied.

Small wonder. The way she was dressed, I wondered how she could breathe. Mary Lou finally sat down with a cup of coffee, but I knew it was time to go.

“You finish your coffee and I’ll warm up the truck,” I offered.

I don’t know how long I waited with the heater on; I guess it was the first few drops of perspiration that alerted me that more than a reasonable amount of time had passed. I was about to

check on her when she appeared at the door and announced, “I have to go to the bathroom.”

“There’s a Porta-John at the lake you can use. Let’s go, it’s getting late.”

“You must be a few fries short of a Happy Meal. I’m not taking off a glove, much less anything else to use a portable outhouse in the dead of winter or at any

“Tea! You want tea? For your information, I brought a thermos of coffee, not a lunch wagon!”

other time for that matter. Gee, it sure is dark this time of the morning.”

My clock trick had yet to be discovered.

Thirty minutes later we were at the lake. Because of the balmy temperature, I knew the holes from the previous day’s fishing wouldn’t be frozen too solidly. Handing Mary Lou my prized ice spud, I instructed her to start chipping open a few holes while I got the remaining equipment out of the truck. The spud was

a beauty. I bought it many years earlier with money I earned running a trap line. It not only had a great heft but it could take and hold an edge like a fine knife. It was a prized piece of equipment.

Suddenly, an awful thought occurred to me. Too late! I turned just in time to see my spud disappear through the ice. I had forgotten to tell Mary Lou to put the

rope loop around her wrist so the spud didn’t slip through her hand when the hole opened. I couldn’t speak. My prized ice spud was now serving as bottom structure for the lake’s fish.

I walked the short distance to where my spud disappeared and stared down the hole. My spirits soared when I saw it stuck in the mud only three feet below the bottom of the ice. To make the situation even better, the braided



To my wife, a frozen lake at sunrise was anything but inviting.

Michael J. Cavanaugh



Susan Shafer

Ice fishing tools of the trade.

polyethylene rope floated above the handle. It became apparent I might be able to recover it.

Remembering I had a length of tow chain with a hook in the back of my truck, I walked over to get it while Mary Lou took my place peering down the hole. Perhaps she thought it would float to the surface. Returning with the chain I said, “Don’t worry Hon, you have a cup of coffee and I’ll have it back in a jiffy.” I deserved an Academy Award for my phony cheerfulness.

“Mike?”

“What?”

“I think I’d rather have tea.”

“Tea! You want tea? For your information, I brought a thermos of coffee, not a lunch wagon!”

“Gosh, you’re grumpy. Why are you getting so upset over an old iron stud?”

“Spud!”

“What?”

“Spud! It’s called a spud!”

“I thought you called it a stud.”

“Trigger’s a stud. This is a spud.”

“This Trigger friend of yours—he sounds like trouble.”

“Look, just have a cup of coffee while I try to get my spud.”

I got on my belly, stuck my head in the hole and lowered the chain. After a few attempts I was able to catch the floating loop and pull the spud back to the surface of the lake where it belonged. Finally, I could begin fishing.

I set the last tip-up and checked each hole as I walked back to join Mary Lou for a cup of coffee. All was in good order and every one of my minnows was wiggling faster than a Hula dancer. I knew it was just a matter of time before the first flag went off.

“Mike?”

“Yeah.”

“I’m cold.”

“Cold? Whaddaya mean? We just got here!”

“We’ve been here an hour and a half, and I’m telling you I’m cold!”

“Nonsense. You can’t be that cold. Besides, a little discomfort builds character.”

“Bull,” came the icy retort. “You promised to take me home whenever I got cold, and I’m cold.”

She had me. Ordinarily, “cold” to Mary Lou was anything less than 80 degrees. Reluctantly, I picked up my gear as Mary Lou waited in the truck.

Later that evening, my wife said, “Actually Honey, I enjoyed going with you this morning.”

“You did?”

“Yes, but would you mind terribly if I never went again? I don’t like the cold.”

Working on Academy Award number two, I tried to look disappointed. “Oh, all right, I guess,” I said, suppressing a grin.

Mike and Mary Lou **Raykovicz** have been married 44 years, and went ice fishing together once.