

## A FEW CRUMBS SHORT OF A SMART COOKIE

*Marsha Henry Goff*

My sister-in-law Jenny once said that I was “one smart cookie.” I can absolutely guarantee she wouldn’t have said that if she had known how many foolhardy risks I have allowed her brother to talk me into taking.

Take, for example, white water rafting. Given again the choice of climbing a mountain or shooting the rapids, I think I’d opt for hiking boots. But that day I chose a half-day’s river journey through some Godforsaken canyon in Colorado, thinking that at least I’d be sitting down.

Of the eight aboard the raft, only Ray and I, and the guide who steered us through the rapids, spoke English. Our fellow terrified passengers were five German tourists with one German-English language dictionary between them. And, while Ray and I were dressed in shorts, T-shirts and sneakers, the Germans were all wearing rubber wetsuits. I felt they were overdressed for the occasion, but it turned out they knew two things that I didn’t. One, Colorado river water is icy. Two, we were going to get very up close and personal with it.

Our guide positioned the Germans in the front and middle of the raft and seated Ray and me at the back. We were already floating down the river when he referred to our positions as “suicide seats.” I quickly learned that when you sit in the back of a raft you are always five feet above the water or two feet in it.

Just when I was thinking that I could probably abort the adventure by jumping out of the raft and swimming for shore, the guide advised, “If you become a swimmer, point your feet downstream so you don’t bash your brains out on a rock.” That picture was bad enough, but he continued, “However, if you see a jam of logs and sticks ahead of you, flip over and swim so you can crawl on top of the pile instead of being sucked under it and drowned.”

About that time we hit seriously rough water and all of us learned that screaming is a universal language. Ray and I survived the experience with only moderate sunburns. “May we borrow some of your sunscreen?” apparently is not a phrase contained in the German-English dictionary.

Perhaps not as dangerous—but certainly equally terrifying to a bat-a-phobic such as I—was a trip with Ray and the kids down into Marvel Cave at Silver Dollar City. I’m scared of bats. I’m scared of rabies. And everyone knows that bats carry rabies and live in caves.

The tour guide announced cheerfully, “This is the day’s first tour and some bats will be coming back to the cave, so if you’re in a place where the ceiling is low, just duck and they’ll fly right over you.”

Sure they will! The woman behind me asked solicitously, “Do you have a scarf, Dear? Bats frequently get tangled in women’s hair.” *Whoa!*, I thought, *All I need is to have a frantic rabid bat tangled in my hair.*

In a low narrow tunnel, someone behind me yelled “BAT!” I hit the floor of the cave like a Marine hitting the beach at Iwo Jima. Only a Marine would get up and move forward. I stayed frozen to the floor. “Get up!” Ray said, “People can’t get around you.”

“Is the bat gone?” I asked shakily while hugging the floor. Turned out yelling “BAT!” was someone’s idea of a joke.

Later that same summer, Ray talked me into riding an amusement park roller coaster that looped upside down. Just before we got on the ride, a light rain began to fall and most people (the smart ones) left the park. I hated that ride and couldn’t wait for it to end and when it finally did, the man in charge said, “Since there’s not a crowd, we’ll give you another ride. If you want off, raise your hand.”

I never wanted anything as much as I wanted to raise my hand, but I couldn’t because I was busy leaving my fingerprints in the safety bar. Ray—but no one else—could hear me chanting under my breath “Want off . . . want off . . . want off.”

“Smart cookie?” You be the judge. But, personally, I don’t think so.