

Emma Toft set down boy's adventure with a deer

The late Emma Toft sent the following to Albert Fuller, Milwaukee Public Museum and one of the founders of the Ridges, in 1951. It was published then in the museum quarterly, *Lore*, and was sent to us by Lee Tishler. The boy Thor is Atty. Thorval Toft.

A BOY, A BOAT, AND A DEER

Thor, a lad of 15, came to our home on his way to hunt ducks one sunny Indian-summer morning. Taking his gun, shells, and a round bottom boat he set out for the head of the bay where he often hunted ducks that fed on the wild rice. His parting words, "I'll be back for lunch," sent me into the kitchen to prepare his favorite dishes. As it drew nearer to mid-day and I was waiting for him to return, I thought I heard a call. Listening intently I was sure someone was calling as though for help. I ran outside and there he was standing in the boat. Something was pulling it. When I saw that the something was a deer. It would head toward shore and, as soon as it reached shallow water where it was able to walk, turn about and strike out for deeper water again. I hurried to a small point of land, hoping the doe and her burden might come nearer the shore at that point, for the water is deep there even close to the shore. She finally did land, and I grasped the stern of the boat while Thor tumbled out.

Together we dragged the frantically struggling doe high up onto the shore. Her only means of defense was to strike at us with her sharp hoofs. It was only after we had subdued her by choking her with the rope that she finally surrendered to our efforts so that we could remove the noose from about her neck. She lay there on the shore completely conquered, allowing us to stroke and caress her.

"Could she be injured?" I asked as the deer continued to lie there. Should we notify the conservation warden? However did this happen?" Thor stood there, intently considering what best to do. He told me then how it happened. The deer was swimming in the water near the boat and he threw the boat rope at it, with a degree of success that surprised him. It had fallen directly over her head, and she simply took the boat and its passenger with her in tow. She had zigzagged back and forth through the bulrushes the entire distance. When she approached the shore and shallow water where she could walk, she became more fully conscious of the rope around her neck and turned back toward deep water, towing the boat behind her. Perhaps exhaustion due to the exertion or pulling the boat caused her to again head for shore, only to find that monster still following her. So there she lay, watching our every movement with her large, brown, liquid eyes, not making any effort to move or get away, finally we put our arms about her beautiful body and tried to raise her to see if she could stand on her lovely slender legs again. As soon as she felt solid ground beneath her feet, she shook herself once and then, with a single bound, was at the edge of the woods, she paused just long enough to look over her shoulder. She was free once more and soon she would be resting in the cool quiet of the virgin pine forest.

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