

# A Short-Lived Celebration

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VT-10

After completing a cruise, what could be more fun than water skiing and tubing with a couple of friends?

It was the first time we had used the boat since the previous summer when I gained recognition as "King of the Tube"—a title that wasn't hard to attain or to maintain. All you had to do was to stay on the tube while someone put the boat through a series of rigorous turns and speed changes. The driver's goal was to lose you and a competitor to centrifugal force and massive boat wakes. For most people, the challenge was tough, but not for the "King of the Tube."

A buddy and I were going head to head for the first time in more than seven months, and both of us had decided only a near-death experience would settle the title this year. The driver and the passengers in the boat couldn't believe the punishment we were absorbing. Just as I thought the driver was getting ready to hand over the steering console to someone else, my buddy fell. I was overcome with joy, knowing I would hold the title for at least one more week.

I decided to rub my buddy's face in the agony of defeat. I turned around on the tube and hoisted the champion's salute, letting him know I owned him. I could see the disappointment in his eyes.

When I turned back the other way, it was as though a greater power had decided to teach me not to be a sore winner. I caught such a wallop in the face that I thought someone must have gone by



in another boat and hit me with a 2-by-4. The only thing I could get out was, "Stop the boat!"

Once the boat had stopped, I checked my pearly whites and was relieved to find I still had all of them. I slid down into the water but held on to the tube in fear of passing out; I was seeing stars, and it wasn't even close to nighttime. When the driver came around and picked me out of the water, I realized my injuries were worse than I had thought. The first clue was that everyone was being attentive to me. The second clue was that I couldn't open my right eye.

As I learned, the towrope had parted and snapped back, hitting me in the face. We returned to shore, and my buddy raced me to an emergency room, where doctors put five stitches in my eyelid and four in my eyeball, then told me I was lucky to still have sight in the eye. I also had enough rope burn to make even "King of the Tube" never want to see (no pun intended) a ski rope again.

This freak incident might have been avoided if we had inspected our equipment before using it. I urge you to check yours—while you still can see. 

*The author was assigned to HSL-46 when he wrote this article.*