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The Houseboat Story

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The Houseboat Story
Personal Narrative

Informant:
Jeff was born and raised in Utah. He is the youngest of four and has two children of his own. He is also my dad. Jeff is a more of a quiet person but always has a funny story or something to say. Almost every time I talk to him, he tells me about an experience he had or something that happened to him. He is someone who seems to always need to be in control. Jeff is known as someone you can call if you need help with something. If he doesn’t know how to do it, he will teach himself how to do it. Growing up, his family frequently boated or took trips to Lake Powell. Jeff is someone who focuses on his family.

Context:
This piece of folklore was collected while over a facetime call. He was sitting in the living room while watching TV when he told me this story. This is one of my dad’s favorite stories to tell, especially to new people. In my early childhood, we would often go on trips with my dad’s brother Doug and his family. These trips would often bring stories that we still tell today. This story comes from one of the last family trips we all went on together before my Uncle Doug and Aunt Kelly were divorced. After the divorce, the family trips seemed to stop. During our family gatherings now, which are few in number, this is one of the stories that is recounted the most.

During the time I called my dad, he was sitting in the living room and my mom was in the other room on the phone. Had my mom been in the room, she would have added her portion or perspective of the story. She and I were in the same room when this incident happened and we remember how we felt and what we saw happen.

Text:
Jeff: Fourscore and forty years ago...

Me: [laughing]

J: No, we went down to Lake Powell, and we were all done with our Lake Powell trip but we had to take the boat in and when you take the boat in you have to gas it up. So, we go in and the boat was probably a, 48-foot boat. Maybe. Maybe 45-foot boat. So then Uncle Dougy, he’s giving it gas and we go past a wakeless thing, Uncle Dougy’s still going fast, and I was sitting in the back, standing in the back, with my hand against a fiber, er, against a fiber glass thing, um, or a plastic side of it, a plastic siding and Uncle Doug did not slow down going for the gas dock. And he was going straight at it. [uses right hand to represent the boat going straight] Straight at it. And the dock was here [holds up left hand] and Uncle Dougy was going that way [uses right hand pointer finger to signal which way the boat was going], and he was going way too fast,
and then all of a sudden, and I saw it and I was like “He’s going too fast…” And then, all a sudden he SLAMMED into the dock, and all the speed boats around there went ‘vwhmm’ [uses both hands to show the various directions taken by the boats] and took off. [Begins to laugh] ‘cause they didn’t want to get their boats crashed by the crazy dude. So my hand hit the plastic siding and broke it cause it hit so hard. So then I went up to the front, and I asked Uncle Doug, I said “Do you want me to drive?” and he said, “yeah” [said in a short, sheepish tone]. So then I went and took the boat back out and brought it back in. Slow, and we slowly did things.

Me: But there was nobody there in your way!

J: And so the boat when we got it was 45-feet and when we took it back it was 44-feet. ‘Cause Uncle Dougy crashed half of it in. So that’s the story of the house boat down at Lake Powell.

Me: That’s good.

Texture:
As stated before, this is one of Jeff’s favorite stories to tell. The most important part, or the punch-line of the story is when he states that the boat was 45 feet and is now 44 feet. When we first told this story, we would tell others that the boat lost a few inches. This gradually increased to feet. During the telling of the story, my dad is smiling and laughing when he remembers certain instances such as the crashing and my uncle’s reaction. When this story is told with our family members, he becomes more animated in the telling of it. Another aspect that usually happens when retelling the story with family is that those who were there often add their perspective of what happens. The story often isn’t told by one person, but instead multiple people at one time. This story reminds us of happier times within our family and so it has become a beloved story. We no longer have many stories of this sort, so the retelling of this story is comfort and a positive thing for our family. Although I know this story well and have retold it myself, I still laugh at the parts that one would usually laugh and smile during the telling of it.

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