

Walking on Water

By Mike Harris

The year was 1939, I was feeling full of myself, having just become a cutter with a union card and a ninety dollar a week salary. Two years earlier I had bought my first new car, a 1936 left-over DeSoto and had paid cash. I still feel the glow of plunking down \$996.00 and getting the car at the dealership all shiny and filled with gas. Yes! That was a special feeling. It was quite a step up from a 1929 Model A Ford with a rumble seat.

I was showing off when one of my peers, Harry Rankin, said, "Cool it and stop acting like there's nothing you can't do! The next thing you will say is that you can walk on water!" To which I said, "Maybe I can!" Harry replied, "All of us here will put up \$100.00 that say NO WAY, Mr. Smart Guy! PUT UP or SHUT UP!" So I said, "This summer in Pelham Bay Park on the first Saturday in August, I will walk on water."

I never realized that these so-called friends really couldn't wait to see me fall on my face, but I was committed. The rules were established, I was to wear shoes or sneakers and to walk upright on the water.

When I returned to my own place, I looked in the mirror, and called myself a damn fool. The man who supposedly performed this feat did not have modern science to help him, but I said to the mirror, "Mike give it a shot. The most that can happen is that you will have to swim to shore and get laughed at, which is what you deserve."

I thought of tying inflated water wings to my shoes but realized it would not work. I kept thinking about how I was going to walk on water, and was determined to give it some kind of a try. My subconscious kicked in and I remembered in the magazine called "Popular Science" there was a report of a high school project that was successful. A boy made a contraption with which he was able to walk on water. After some research, I got a copy of the magazine. *YAH WHOO!* Maybe I was not going to fall on my face. The story and the plans of his contraption, along with detailed drawings, were all there in front of me, with suggestions for modification to fit the size of the user.

So the winter passed and I kept my mouth shut. The most vociferous peers, Harry and Izzy, kept riding me all winter and I let them. Maybe I was going to have the last laugh. Only my friend Phil would not join in the ribbing. When Harry asked him how I was doing, he answered, "I do not know any more than you, but I know Mike. Do not sell him short."

The day the pool opened for the summer I contacted the swimming coach, told him my secret, and asked if we could try out my contraption. Intrigued, he allowed me to use the pool and we found that it worked. On the first Saturday in August, with all my peers in attendance, I walked on water with the help of my feet in pontoons made of wood and oilcloth. I collected the \$100.00 and Harry and Izzy ate crow. After all the ribbing I had taken during the winter and spring, I admit I was not very nice about my victory.

