

They also stressed that time was a factor and that you really didn't have that much time to live in such frigid waters. A thought of hypothermia was going through my mind and is probably setting in as I was thinking about it. I knew I had to act quickly but my boots were like cement blocks and I couldn't get them off, as I had tied them well

with the laces on the front and the special laces at the top of the boot to keep the snow out. I tried to lift myself out of the water onto the ice. Then it happened to me, just like it did with the dog; the ice gave way and I fell back into the water. With each failed attempt my chances for survival were diminishing. Being completely exhausted and out of breath before I even went into the lake I knew I was not ready for the task of trying to pull myself out of the water.

I felt pretty confident the second attempt, as I know I was becoming more experienced, but the ice broke just as quick as the first time with my weight. Blondie was still crying in the background and I felt so sad for her but my thoughts and concentration needed to be focused on getting myself back onto the ice. Third attempt was also a failure, there is just nothing to grab, I couldn't kick, and I was tired, wet, cold, and ready to give in to Mother Nature. Then the thoughts went through my head of my children, my new found love and Fiancée Sheree, our plans and life together, heck I am only 53 years old! Suddenly, I remembered what Jeff Corner said to me last year when he fell through the ice snowmobiling at Miller Lake about rolling onto the ice, so somehow I managed to lift my leg onto the ledge of the ice and kind of pulled and roll myself up. Many thanks to Jeff for his coaching.

Once on the ice, I rolled and rolled not wanting to stop for fear that the ice may break again and if it did I knew I would succumb to the frozen icy waters of Lake Huron. Tired and defeated I headed back to the cottage. I didn't look back once and I fell quite a few times as I was soaking wet, exhausted, and the ice was slippery. Upon entering the cottage, I ripped the boots, clothing off me in a big heap on the kitchen floor, couldn't breathe, had a terrible pounding headache, and went into the bathroom and threw up.

Shaking, I called both the Coast Guard and O.P.P who were unable to do anything as they did not have the resources and said it was too dangerous to go out on the ice.

Finally, I took a hot shower, put on a bath robe, went downstairs and sat next to the wood burning stove. It was like I was in heaven and appreciated the immediate heat it put out, and then called Jack who came over right away. We discussed what had happened and assumed that the dog was coerced out to the lake by coyotes. They probably came between the dog and the shore, surrounding Blondie and forcing her to head out into open water. There would be no other reason for the dog to venture that far out.

In reflection on what happened...if I did make it with the canoe out to where the dog was would I have been able to lift the dog out of the water? Would the canoe have tipped over putting us both in an area of thin ice? If I did manage to get the dog into the canoe, how would we get out of the water back onto safe ice? I did have rope but who was to come out to save us? Jack did not check his phone messages when he came in from searching for his dog, so no one knew we were out there. The weather was -15 with heavy winds and 4 inches of snow coming that night.

We would have frozen to death in the canoe or drowned. In the morning and for the next couple of days the lake was invisible due to the blowing and drifting snow so we would have never been seen. Today, Feb. 4th as I am writing this, the lake has iced right in with no visual open water.

Looking out over the lake and its beauty has changed and has put a different outlook on life for me. Please, if your pet is out on the lake, think about the "what ifs". Call the authorities, don't try to save them yourself or with other people as you may all go in. Losing a canoe, and having a water logged cell phone is one thing, but having God at your side and a firm piece of ice "Priceless"

My thoughts & prayers go out to Jack and his girl "Blondie"

If I can be of any help, or talk to anyone who has experienced the same, please contact me at dew4now@yahoo.com

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