



ERIN  
HARREL

of Cape Coral has a Ph.D. in education and is the mother of three children.

# Mother's Day memories...

Some **should** be forgotten!

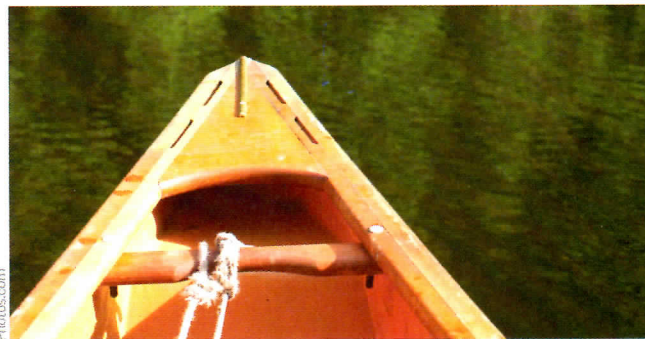
I can hardly believe Jude will mature to the age of 12 this year. I remember so fondly chasing him at the park while trying to push Riley, now 11, on the swings. I remember each Mother's Day and the wonderful times in between. I often reflect upon joyful memories of leisurely playing at Three Oaks Park for hours at a time.

When Maggie (now 6) arrived, my sister's oldest boy, Wyatt, was born. Jude and Riley started school, leaving time for Casey and I to play and shop with the little ones. Oh, just the thought of shopping seems dreamy!

Nowadays, I can hardly catch my breath, let alone shop. On top of working full-time, my husband, Greg, and I run from the school pick-up line to lacrosse fields to Irish Step Dance practice and performances.

Mother's Day is the one day a year I get to pick what we do, and without argument, the gang must fall in line and participate in the activity of my choice. At least, that is my theory about Mother's Day.

Last year, I put my theory to the test: I decided we



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would spend the day canoeing the Peace River. It sounded like such a great idea! Just Greg and I and the kids canoeing peacefully down the river listening to the birds playing as the current carries us along. I envisioned us singing "Kumbuya" or church hymns along the way. It was going to be pure bliss!

Reality: After a two-hour drive, we arrived at the Peace River Outfitters in Arcadia. The kind gentleman rental shop suggested we rent two canoes, but we opted for one so that the family could really bond. This was the first of many mistakes that day.

We managed to get ourselves and our picnic lunch in the canoe without tipping over. But paddling was a different story.

My husband insisted I was paddling wrong, and I

in turn assured him I had grown up canoeing and knew exactly what I was doing. We still disagree about why we couldn't make the canoe follow a straight line. Yet, we both agree the 20-mile-an-hour headwind was to blame for the canoe not moving forward or randomly doing 360 degree turns.

The real icing on the cake was last year's driest season in history. Yes, we went without checking the weather! We quickly learned that portaging (I learned that is the term for "carrying") the canoe with three children inside was not easy. "Why were the kids in the canoe instead of helping?" you ask. After they saw their first gator, they refused to get out. I couldn't blame them. I was scared to death myself, but I couldn't show my fear.

After all, canoeing in these conditions was "my" idea.

Had we opted for the five-mile canoe path, we might have made it back before dark. However, I wanted to ensure we had plenty of family bonding time, so we (okay "I") chose the 10-mile trek. We finally made it back to the canoe rental shop and couldn't wait to turn the canoe back over to its rightful owner.

The canoe adventure will never be forgotten, but unlike the great play dates and park memories of the past, it doesn't yield warm and fuzzy feelings.

This year for Mother's Day, I think I will just count my blessing that my children are happy and healthy. Maybe we will join my sister and family at the park or just barbecue at home.

Whatever we — "I" — choose to do on Mother's Day this year, one thing is certain: My family is not going to let me forget that paddling in the alligator-infested, drought-ridden Peace River in 20-mile-an-hour headwinds for eight hours straight was "MY" idea last year.

A very Happy Mother's Day to all! 