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The gift of time, almost ended

My youngest child just turned 22 and soon will head off to Vermont to finish college.

Bobby apparently agonized for weeks, then finally asked my wife what he possibly could do for Father's Day. I already have enough toys. I don't have enough space to put more toys, and a college student's budget doesn't necessarily include a whole lot of money for such occasions.

So I was delighted to find out I was being given the gift of time. What more could a father ask for?

In fact, he said that in addition to spending time fishing on our boat and travelling around the lake at our leisure, he wanted to take care of the necessary chores for an overnight trip.

I'd been wanting to do this for a few years. Boy, did we get more than we asked for!

Despite the fact that the fish had turned off, we had a great time motoring down to Oak Orchard, travelling down the river and, ultimately, deciding that dinner at the Black North Inn was even more appealing than dinner on the boat (like ham and cheese sandwiches, etc.). We found a dock.

After dinner, we headed out and drifted in water that was about 80 feet deep, and the stars were truly spectacular. Gas, \$170; supplies and bait, \$80; the gift of time ... priceless.

Realizing it was not feasible to anchor at that depth, we headed back and anchored in 20 feet of water. The bad news is that the boat had so much stuff scattered around below deck, we had to bring it all up and store it on the seats and areas where one normally would travel on the boat.

The boat rocked, but finally by about 1:30 or 2 in the morning, we fell asleep. Since my head was near the bow, I was awakened a short time later by much louder noises, and suddenly realized the boat was moving very differently than it had been when I drifted off a short time earlier.

The good news is that I woke up. Still half asleep, I went up on deck, saw whitecaps crashing at the bow, and cringed as I looked at our piles of "stuff." The wind was so intense that, in retrospect, I am certain a small craft advisory must have been issued by the Coast Guard while we were asleep.

I yelled to my son to let him know we had to get out of there quickly. I didn't want to put him in even more peril, so I foolishly went out on the bow to try to pull in the anchor.

The wind and waves were so strong that I couldn't budge the

rope. He steered us toward the anchor as best as he could, while I tried to yell over the wind and the crashing waves to point out where the anchor actually might be.

The boat began to heave up and down so fiercely he was afraid I'd be thrown overboard and the boat would crash down on my head. When I finally retrieved several fathoms of anchor line into the boat, the bow heaved up with the next wave and ripped the rope through my hands. I thought of "The Old Man and the Sea."

I had to pull with both feet braced against the railing. Inch by inch, foot by foot, eventually we pulled in the anchor. I thought about my shoulder, my PT and daily exercises — and was sure I'd have to have Dr. Maloney re-do the surgery. (That would be no problem — he's a great surgeon.)

But then we had the task of finding our way home at 3:30 in the morning, in partial moonlight. The trip back to the marina seemed to take about four years but, in reality, we finally tied up at close to 5 in the morning.

It was almost sunrise and we joked about heading out again to fish. By the time I crawled into bed, my knees were still shaking, and I finally realized just how close we had come to becoming a morning headline.

Since all's well that ends well, it was the best Father's Day gift I could have hoped for. It would have been nice if the fish were biting, but that merely was an excuse for us to spend time together. Other than the fact that we might have better anticipated the ever-changing Lake Ontario weather, I wouldn't have traded that trip for the world.

I'm already uneasy with the fact that he'll be heading out of state in three weeks. In addition to that, I am suffering from separation anxiety neuroses specifically inherent to my own personality. Let's just say I couldn't have gotten a better gift — the gift of time.

I'm also glad the gift didn't end in the middle of the waves at 3:30 in the morning. Although he typically has no need to read my columns, I'm making sure to send him this one with a simple message: Thanks, Bobby.

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