

## Belief in angels proof against lightning, bullets, bats and banes

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DOVER-FOXCROFT — She's been shot at, mugged and has had a bat tangled in her hair.

If that doesn't make your skin crawl, Jeanne Rogers, 58, also has been struck by lightning twice, has fallen into a manhole and off a cruise ship, was nearly strangled, and she unwittingly helped Fred Rogers, the late star of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, get naked.

"People think I'm a little paranoid when I walk a mile to avoid a manhole or won't walk under a ladder," Rogers said during an interview this week. "There's so many things I won't do because I know what can happen."

While Rogers dispels the target-on-her-back theory, she does believe she has an angel perched on her shoulder.

"I do worry. Things do happen to me even though I'm careful," she said this week, standing among an eclectic collection of new and used clothing, colorful jewelry, handbags and whimsical items in her small consignment and gift shop on River Street.

A bushy mass of long, reddish curls frame Rogers' round, cherubic face. A floor-length broomstick skirt and a billowy blouse cover her short frame. Her arms, neck and fingers are adorned with silver. "I'm like a magpie. I go for anything shiny," she explained.

Although her given name is Jeanne, she's known locally as Pixie, a nickname her father gave her when she entered the world with a giggle and wearing a mop of curly hair.

It is that hair that has attracted birds over the years and even snared a baby bat. Rogers had been delivering cosmetic orders in Middlefield, Conn., on foot with her young son when the bat became snarled in her hair. She recalled her son crying out, "Mommy, funny bird, mommy, funny bird."

Frantic, Rogers went from house to house to find a man who would remove the bat. Instead, doors were opened by women who screamed when they saw the bat. Each time they screamed, the frightened bat dug its claws into her scalp and urinated, bringing tears to Rogers' eyes. Help came when an acquaintance who had just returned from grocery shopping thrust her car keys at Rogers so that Rogers could use her car. She told Rogers she would watch her son while she got help, according to Rogers.

"I drove like a bat out of hell," Rogers said, chuckling over her choice of words.

Rogers said she went to a local veterinarian who placed a mesh bag over her head and sprayed smoke inside to make the dehydrated bat fall asleep. Then the hair around the bat was cut and removed.

"For three months, I wore a beret until my hair grew out!" Rogers exclaimed. It also was a month before she could wash her hair without saying "ow, ow, ow."

That pain, however, was nothing compared to the suffering she endured from being struck by lightning. Lifting up her skirt a little, Rogers exposed a badly damaged bare foot.

The bolt of lightning struck her 36 years ago when she was waiting for a bus in Hartford, Conn. It blew off both shoes, burned a hole larger than a quarter through her right ankle and melted her pantyhose into her flesh, she recalled. The blow to her foot damaged the nerves, making it unbearable to have it covered, Rogers said. Her long skirts conceal that she typically goes barefoot, including outside in the snow, she explained.

Two years later, a metal bangle bracelet on her arm attracted a bolt of lightning, but her injuries were much less severe, Rogers noted.

The mother of three grown children believes she has been sorely tested by the unusual events in her life that included falling from a cruise ship.

Rogers, then 18, took a rainy day cruise to Martha's Vineyard with a friend and her family. Wanting to get snapshots of one another with the round life preservers on board, Rogers backed up too far on the wet planks and slipped over the railing and into the water.

Expecting the boat to stop and rescue her, Rogers said she was horrified to see it move farther away. Later she learned her friend had gone for help, but had fallen on the wet deck and knocked herself out. When her friend came to, she inquired about Rogers and then remembered that she had fallen into the water. Rogers said she was in the water holding onto the life preserver for what seemed like an hour before she was rescued. The water was cold, but "when youâ€™re scared, youâ€™re very warm," she noted.

Rogers was warm the day she was mugged. She said she was running an errand for an employer in Hartford, Conn., when three thugs accosted her. They grabbed her pocketbook but when one of them went to remove a silver bracelet her sister had given her, the 5-foot, 3-inch Rogers struck the big thug so hard in the nose he blacked out.

"The other two threw my pocketbook on the ground and ran because they thought I was going to hit them," she said. She has never carried a pocketbook since.

"I was raised when somebody hurts you, you hurt them back," Rogers stated. To do that she must see her attacker, which wasnâ€™t the case when a bullet narrowly missed her head several years ago while she was horseback riding in Atkinson with her husband.

It was her husband, whom she since has divorced, who allegedly tried to choke her to death in 1981, Rogers claimed. Thinking he had killed her in a drunken stupor, Rogers said he actually left a note to her mother apologizing for killing her daughter.

"When I get hurt, I laugh. You donâ€™t know if you should laugh with me or call an ambulance," Rogers said.

Rogers wasnâ€™t laughing, however, when she mistakenly pulled a cord on the swim trunks of the popular television show host Fred Rogers.

"I was so mortified," she remarked. Both were in a YMCA pool in Hartford, Conn., when the name "Rogers" was paged over the intercom, Rogers recalled. Neither knew the other and both clamored to get out of the pool to answer the call. It was then she unintentionally pulled the cord and down went the trunks.

Rogers said she continued to answer the telephone call, which was for her. Upon her return, the lifeguard informed her who it was she had exposed. Ever the gentleman, Rogers said the television personality actually apologized to her for getting in her way.

The Dover-Foxcroft woman said she knows there is a purpose for her life, aside from undressing a television star and serving as a target for other humans and Mother Nature, sheâ€™s just not sure what it is.

"Dying doesnâ€™t scare me, but living scares the crap out of me," Rogers said.

## About the Author

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