

Dad's Memories

Fishing Partners

From an early age, my dad was interested in teaching me how to fish for trout ...and then I think he felt he'd have a fishing partner for life—and he did. One of my earliest fishing memories was of Dad and I fishing in King Lake. It was about a half mile hike from our place up to King Lake behind us. It's a fairly good sized lake and we fished it often, mainly in the late afternoon or Saturday evenings after dinner. There was always a half sunk raft there that somebody had made and we'd pole out into the middle and fish for an hour or so. The fishing was never particularly good but it was fun and relaxing.

My dad had come up with an odd fishing setup that he liked to use in lakes and ponds. It consisted of a lightweight spinning reel and pole hooked to a teardrop shaped bobber and then a six foot leader leading to a dry fly. Our favorite fly was a mosquito. Anyway the bobber provided just enough weight to make a good cast to 30 or 40 feet away. Then you'd reel the bobber in slowly and repeat until a fish hit the mosquito.

With the spinning outfit, you could place the bobber where you wanted it with extreme accuracy and it worked very well. One time I eagerly described the setup to an avid fly fisherman and he almost began to cry and then he got angry because to a pro fly fisherman, it is sanctimonious for anyone to fly fish like that. In the 1980s, our beaver ponds filled up and became a real source of fishing pleasure for my dad. We had a small plastic rowboat and he and I would fish it regularly. Personally I have caught and released so many fish from that pond that I don't need to fish anymore!

When I was old enough, Dad decided that every summer we'd go on a backpack hiking trip somewhere in the northwest mountains. One year it was the Olympics, the next Mt Rainier and after that the cascades and on it went. Every year I looked forward to the annual shopping trip to REI for backpacking supplies and to look at the latest camping equipment. I think dad had one of the lowest membership numbers. He'd belonged to REI for quite a while.

After a few years, Dad invited his dentist friend and his son Rick along with us. It was great fun and the dentist made a big deal of growing a beard and building a hand crafted pole shelter every night for the two dads. Rick and my tent was often in the wrong place, on a side hill, in a rut but we didn't care, we were on a mission to find who could catch the most fish.

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Fishing Partners –cont'd-

It came to a head one summer while the four of us were hiking in the Olympics. Rick and I had been fishing a particularly good hole in the Quinault River and there was a really big fish in there that would take our hook and line every time we dipped it in.

We were going back and forth to get another hook from one of the dads when they finally said ENOUGH. We'd used most of the supply and still the fish had not been caught. So with one last hook we caught that fish, a large wild trout the size of a salmon called a Dolly Vardon. The four of us had it for dinner that night and it was excellent.

The Salmon Bakes

During the 1960's my dad began to have large post office - office parties up here. He and two of his friends, Fred Lombard and Bob Clifton had bought property from the La Conner Swinomish Indian tribe and were able to obtain as many king salmon as they wanted. The Indian friends had also shown them how to BBQ salmon over an open fire using a contraption made of saplings and chicken wire. As these office parties progressed they became crazy and fun.

One time dad and his friends came up with an idea where Fred would conjure a fountain of water to come up out of the fire pit in the middle of the party. Six months earlier they had buried a pipe from the woods to the edge of the fire pit and rigged it to an old WW2 hand fire pump. I was tasked with pumping furiously when the signal came. Everyone was suitably impressed. There would be games and drawings. Some times the games were rigged... like when one egg in the egg toss was hard boiled. and one time there was a door prize which was a door off of an old car..

Later the door prize became even stranger when it consisted of the head of a salmon mounted on a plaque. The winner had to promise to bring it back the next year – and.. it had to be kept frozen in a freezer for the whole year. One game that was hilarious was the art of water witching. Dad and his friends began to have contests on who could find water around the picnic area.

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Salmon Bakes cont'd

They would cut a special forked stick for anybody who wanted to try and suddenly there would be five or ten adults walking around aimlessly holding forked sticks. It came to a head when one of his friends came up with a way to tell how deep the water was. This guy (I cannot remember who it was) would use a crowbar. One of those crowbars with a hook on one end. He would walk around with the crowbar balanced on his index finger. When the crowbar sensed water below, it would slide down his finger until it hit the hook, and then he would count the number of times it would swing back and forth and then he'd tell you how many feet down the water was. Of course nobody knew if the guy was right because nobody ever drilled to see if he was correct. ..until my dad built a house up there in 1990.

The Water System

When you go to build a house in Snohomish county, before they give you the building permit, you have to show that the house has a source of water. Dad said no problem, he knew exactly where to drill. There was no question about where the driller should drill. He found the spot where his friends had all assured him there was water at forty or fifty feet and that was where the driller began. Well Dad finally had them stop at 140 feet through solid rock. There was water but not much, maybe 3 gallons a minute they thought.

We plumbed it to the house and used it in the early 1990s but the water tasted like minerals and was really not usable. But then we hit on the idea of running a waterline from a spring that dad had discovered shortly after buying the property in 1958. The spring was located about 250 feet up the hillside and we had built a trail to it. Our family used it as a "destination" on hiking tours with friends. The local lab tested it and it was 000 for purity and bacteria.

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Water System –cont'd-

We maintained a tin cup hidden there over the years and many people were amazed at how fresh and clean it tasted. Dad and I put together a plan to pipe it to his house. We even thought that there might be enough pressure to not even need a pump. It was a huge project and we didn't really have the right tools to run a ½ mile pipeline underground, but we did it anyway. It worked well and supplied his house and later mine with gallons of fresh and clean water for many years.

The Primus Stove

When I was fourteen, my parents decided to do a ten week trip to Europe. The plan was to buy camping equipment and a new Volvo from the factory and spend the next ten weeks touring western Europe. The camping equipment was all Swedish made including the instructions on how to put up the tent. Dad and I figured it out and had a huge laugh while erecting it for the first time with the wind blowing. The propane camp stove was another thing.

It had two refillable cylinders and a came with a booklet in Swedish on where to have them refilled in many European cities and towns. Anyone who has used a propane camp stove or BBQ knows that the propane bottle will run out in the middle of a meal and you always need to have a spare ready to go. Somehow my dad was able to find the refilling places no matter what town or country we were in.

As I think back now, I am even more impressed than I was then. There were no Google maps or GPS in those days and he'd find these places (in a Swedish book) on back streets of towns all over Europe where any other person would have given up. There were times when we did run out and when we were in Yugoslavia we purchased a small one burner stove that ran on regular gasoline. It only had three for parts and we never completely trusted -- it but it worked.

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The Game Warden

In the 1990s I met a pilot that owned an Bell47 helicopter. (It's one of those like on M*A*S*H, with a big plastic bubble) He used it as an air taxi business and one day I asked him if he'd be willing to drop my dad and myself and my daughter Shannon at a remote lake in the cascades for a week. He said "Yes" and we soon decided on Lake Isabelle, a remote lake about ½ hour flying time from here. As we were planning the trip, Dad asked me if I was going to get a fishing license. I told him "no" it was a remote lake, far from any roads. A few weeks later, Dad, Shannon and I were deposited on the sandy lakeshore beach and we began putting together our campsite. Shannon found an old wooden rowboat in some weeds and we fashioned a set of paddles.

The next day we paddled out to the middle of the lake and began fishing. After a while, a float plane began circling the lake and then we saw it land. As it began taxiing toward us, I told dad it was probably a game warden and that "all three poles" were his! He looked at me with a grin and we all watched the plane getting closer. When it got to us, the door opened and the pilot greeted us with a "hey there!" We laughed and the guy turned out to be a private pilot with his new "kitfox" plane on floats. We rowed ashore and brewed a pot of coffee and had a great chat with the guy. We always had a good chuckle when recalling the trip and our close call.