

Fishing November 2023

I was never much for fishing but I am always intrigued enough to read about it but very seldom do I dabble in it myself. I read with interest the other day that a North Dakota fisherman caught a record walleye in South Dakota. Aaron Schuck broke the record in the 'hook and line' category when he caught a walleye that weighed 16 pounds and 8 ounces on Lake Oahe. Oahe is the 4th largest reservoir in the U.S. It stretches 230 miles from roughly Pierre to Bismarck north of the Oahe dam on the Missouri River in central South Dakota.

My old farm broadcasting partner, Colonel Jon was an avid fisherman and he loved South Dakota fishing. He could recite state records for most of the fish species. Col and I each had a trailer at Breske Bay on Lake Waubay in northeast South Dakota for a number of years. There was the time when Col Jon was fishing with a guy named Toby who also had a trailer at the same campsite. Toby was a big fisherman, literally and figuratively. Toby weighed well north of 300 pounds. One day, Toby and the Col were fishing on the east side of the bay when big Toby caught a carp. I know enough about fishing to know that was not the game fish he was looking to catch. He pulled it up and out of the water when Col Jon says that looks like a state record, that thing must weigh 35 to 40 pounds. Toby said, nope, I don't want my name associated with any carp, state record or not and he threw it back in.

After I read about the big walleye caught on Oahe, I had to look up what the current record is for a carp in South Dakota. Turns out its 37 pounds and caught on where else...Lake Waubay. I figure it was the one that Toby threw back into Waubay. I never doubted Col Jon's ability to tell me what a fish weighed before it was actually weighed. That's the experience of his lifetime of fishing. He did the same thing with cattle. That came from being a world-class livestock auctioneer for many years.

My fishing experience or lack thereof goes back to my youth when we would go to the old wooden bridge that was part of the Concord Township road by our farm. The bridge was between the Louie Wenzel farm and the Bob Rhodes farm. The township took the bridge out in the 60's and never replaced it as the road came to a T by the Rhodes farm. So they just put up a dead-end sign by highway 56.

I was told that bullheads sting if you touch them. Years later I learned that they don't really sting but they can poke you with sharp spines concealed on their top and sidefins. But I wasn't about to lose a hand or any other appendage, so I never touched any kind of fish. That is until many years later. When I became the Farm Director at KDHL radio in Faribault, I was told by the then owner Jack Hyde that the farm director was to attend and report on the Governor's fishing opener. So in May, 1988, Jack and I head to Detroit Lakes for the fishing opener. We had pretty good luck catching some walleye on a windy day. The guide, who lived on the north side of the lake, along with Jack Hyde and me, hit our limits. It was great fun and better yet, no bullheads.

I did use bait to catch these walleye. I know my sister Sylvia would ask if I was. She remembers I would as a young kid, because of those errant rumors that bullheads could kill you, would often fish without bait so as to not have to deal with a bullhead or any other kind of fish. But at the 3 different Governor's openers I attended, I would actually grab ahold of the fish and take it off the line and onto a stringer.

The 1989 Governor's Opener was held at Breezy Point Resort near Pequot Lakes. The 1990 Governor's fishing opener was held in Grand Rapids. It was during this opener that Governor Rudy Perpich signed legislation that would make it a misdemeanor if you were caught spreading the invasive Eurasian watermilfoil from one lake to another. You had to wash your boat and trailer, much like years later when you washed for zebra mussels. One member of the media went through the salad bar that evening and he swore that the salads had Eurasian watermilfoil in them. We just told him to wash his salad bowl before he goes out to the lake again. And if it was milfoil in the salad, it was rather tasty.

After those experiences, my only other fishing was on Lake Waubay with Col Jon a few times catching walleye and white bass. Fortunately, there was no carp nor were there any bullheads.

Keep scrolling for some pictures...



Call it home field advantage but my guide the year I went to the Governor's Fishing Opener in Detroit Lakes lived right on the lake. He knew where the fish were going to bite



In-Fisherman Company was a sponsor of the Opener when we traveled to Grand Rapids. This was the patch they put jackets that were used that day on the area lakes.

I don't know if it helped us catch more fish but it certainly didn't hurt to look the part of a fisherman.



At my first MN Governor's Fishing Opener in 1988 at Detroit Lakes, I had the opportunity to learn from a fishing professional, Tom Zenanko. Tom, in 2015, was inducted into the Freshwater Fisherman's Hall of Fame. His tips paid off as I mentioned, I got my limit that year at the opener.