

Goin' Fishin'

*A Report by the Always-Right reverend Doctor
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Spring was fishing time. The ice was thawing from the lakes, the river was open again, and Ma was throwing us out of the house on a regular basis. We knew it would soon be time.

About the second week of May, after the May flowers (Trailing Arbutus, or *Epiggaea repens*, for those technical people) had withered and before the wild strawberries began to bloom, we began to watch. We would play down by the frog pond, out in the blueberry field, in the old gravel pit, or out in the Pine Forest, but we were always on the lookout.

On the lookout for what?

I'm glad you asked. On the lookout for the tank truck from the fish hatchery.

We were fishermen, but we were not proud fishermen. We didn't care how we got our fish, as long as we got them. What did it matter, as long as we could come home with a string of fish? We could brag just as well as if we had actually used talent to haul them in.

Every year (with maybe one or two exceptions), the state stocked the river with fish. Nice fish, too. Rainbow Trout. The big green truck would go out the road past the house. The uniformed State Fish Hatchery man would wave as he went by. We would wave and act as if we didn't care. We would watch until he was out of sight, and then run like scairt rabbits for our fishing poles – alder branches with a piece of twine attached, and a bent-up wire or safety pin for a hook. One thing about stock fish. They were used to eating grub that had been provided for them by someone else. They would bite on anything that remotely resembled food. And when they were dumped into the river by the truck man, they were confused because they had never had so much room before. So they just swam around in one place for a day or so and waited for someone to feed them. What a deal for a couple of ace fishermen.

Normally, we would be polite and wait until the truck had gone back down by the house before we aired up the tires in the old bikes, jumped on, and peddled our little hearts out for the two miles up the dirt road to the river. A couple of times we were so excited we forgot to ask permission from the proper authorities, and found ourselves in serious trouble. But up the road we went.

Leaving the bikes at the top of the hill, because we didn't want to shoot the rapids in them, we plummeted down to our destination beside the river. Normally, we could still see lots of friendly fishies still swimming around in the small pools of water where the rocks protected them from the full force of the current. It was there that the expert fishermen placed a piece of a worm on the end of a hook and dropped it in the water. If it took more than a few seconds to get a bite, we became frustrated. But that was not usually a problem. Soon, we

would have our limit of trout. I think the legal limit was eight, and we wouldn't want to do anything illegal – unethical, perhaps, but not illegal.

I still remember those days with fondness. I've never caught as many fish since then. There were other ways to go fishing. If you didn't get the fish within the first few days, they would begin to work their way up the river. They would get used to providing for themselves. They became wary of strangely shaped objects dangling from strings in the water. They watched for shadows on the shore. They became stronger, and ventured into the deeper, faster water where no worm-laden hook could survive.

It was those times that we had to walk a few miles up river to the streams, hide in the shadows on the bank, let the lure float out on the current, and try to make like we really weren't there, which was a lot of work. It took some time, but we figured out that the longer you waited to catch the fish, the more work was involved, and the result was less satisfying.

You know, Jesus told some fishermen one day that he would make them fishers of men if they would just follow him. He didn't say that He would make them doctrinal experts, or that thousands of people would tremble at their very word. He didn't promise important positions or untold influence among the brethren. He told them to go fishing for men.

He didn't tell them they would get more recognition if they worked harder at it. They could catch them close to shore, or they could make it difficult and travel long distances for them. He did seem to indicate, however, that even if they caught some, they couldn't take any real credit for it. They had been provided by His father – the owner of the hatchery.

Sometimes, when we get aged and reach the epitome of spirituality, it is worth while to look back and learn some things that we knew when we were ten years old.

Wait, I have to go now, I think I see the truck.

Doc Trin