

## **Fishing, what it means**

By Kevin Dahlke



If one was to ask an angler what fishing means to them, they would probably get a different reason from each of those fishers. There are loads of reasons why we fish and when you sit down and think about it, every one of those reasons has a meaning and something behind them.

Over the years I have looked at fishing from all different angles and theory's and they all had their time and place over my fishing career. What does this mean? I want to give you, the reader, an idea of what fishing has meant to me over the years and it does and will go from one side to the other.

Back in the early days of when you were a kid and you and a buddy jumped on your bikes and rode to the closest body of water to wet a line. There were days that many fish were caught and also days that you were lucky to see a fish, but every chance you would get you made that ride to try your hand at catching a fish.

Those days that were spent sitting on the shoreline casting a worm and bobber as far as you could, to try and beat your buddy with a bigger fish. You would brag to each other that your fish was bigger than theirs and seems that everyone caught huge fish by the time the end of the day came and then you had to make that ride home once again. These are memories that you keep with you all of your life and you wonder where these buddies of your childhood are today.

Then the days come when your father and grandfather would take you along in the 14 foot boat with the 5 hp motor on the back for a day on the lake. Panfish were always the species that was sought and many hours were spent anchored near some shallow weeds and casting a bobber out looking for fish. Dad and Grandpa were always telling you to stop making so much noise because the fish can hear you and that is scaring them away from biting your hook.

There were thousands of hours spent with the three of us on such a variety of different bodies of waters exploring and searching for those meals of fish. If it looked like rain we

were not going to be caught out there and would head off as fast as that 5 hp would move us along. These are memories that you keep with you all of your life and one day you look forward to meeting with Grandpa once again to share those quality stories of yester years with each other.

Then the day came that you got your drivers license and you thought the fish better watch out now because I am coming to get you. You hook that 14 foot boat and 5 hp motor to your parents' car that you borrowed and head to the lake that you think is going to produce those big fish for you. You fish like there is no tomorrow because you are living through your dreams of watching those guys on TV and what they are doing to help put fish in your boat.

Your mindset is not on catching panfish like your dad and grandpa had you catching all of your youth. You want to catch some of those big bass like they do on TV and you have all of the latest baits that you figure that will do that job for you. You cast and cast like there is no tomorrow and pound every target that you can find and are catching fish here and there and a smile is forming on your face.

After some time spent out on the water fishing the way that you want to fish, ideas are flying through your mind like "hey, I bet I could do this for a living like the big boys". I felt that I could go to any body of water and catch fish after fish and there was no stopping me now. These are memories that you keep with you all of your life and you hope that these dreams come true one day and there wouldn't be anything better than fishing for a living.

So you are at that point in your life and you are working a real job at this point and the temptations of fishing bass tournaments are on your mind all the time. You take that next step and buy yourself a bass boat and start looking at some tournament trails that look inviting for you to fish. You spend hours and days pre-fishing for these tournaments and looking for that one sweet spot that is going to make you famous and put you into the winners circle.

Many lakes are fished and many miles are traveled around a few states to compete at these levels. You are making friends from the competitors you fish against and are starting to make a name for yourself. But you are not finishing in the standings where you really want to be and this starts playing mind games with you each and everyday that you are on the water. You now are second guessing all of your moves and this dream that you want to fish for a living is starting to not look so good or promising.

Anytime that we start moving towards a passion of ours that we would like to turn into a career things seem to be not what they look like. Getting up in the wee hours of the mornings to get to the lake at dawn to start another practice day, isn't as inviting anymore and seems to be a lot like work and the fun really isn't there anymore. Do I really want to fish for a living as this is starting to feel more like work and not play. These are memories that you keep with you all of your life and I was fortunate and glad that I took my shot at tournament fishing and can say that I tried something that I wanted to.

Since I have that behind me now, my fishing is all about having fun and enjoying spending time out there on the water. I enjoy these days hooking my boat up to the truck and picking a lake to go fish at, and I don't care, I do a little, if I catch a fish or not. My days on the water now are to get away from the rat race of being an adult, a husband and a father and using that time to clear my head and get myself back to reality.

I look forward to the days that I am able to get out and fish with some of my old friends and relive some of the old days that we had together. I also look forward to the days that I am able to take my dad out fishing, like he use to take me, as he doesn't fish much anymore and we don't get to fish together that often either. These are memories that you keep with you all your life and I try and keep them going forward as each year passes.

Now are the days that I am truly enjoying fishing as I have my own kids to take along and show them the art of fishing. My daughter is getting into those teenage years now so we don't get out much together anymore, but over the last years we had spent many hours in the boat, just the two of us and those are the memories that I will be carrying with me as I go forward. Hopefully the day will come once again that she wants to try her hand at fishing again and I will be there ready and willing to do that for her.

Also now that my son is getting a little older he has been accompanying me on quite a few adventures as of late. This past winter he had really gotten himself excited and went on many ice fishing trips with me and for a six year old, he showed this old man how to catch some very nice fish. Just watching his excitement while he is watching the electronics and catching a fish is priceless in my book. He always looks forward to our fishing and if we haven't been out for a while he starts bugging that we need to go once again.

These are memories that you keep with you all of your life and I treasure all of these and hope that they continue to be made for many years to come. It is funny how we come full circle in life and from what my father and grandfather had taught me out there on the water, I am teaching my kids the exact same things. Sure we now have much bigger boats, all of the fancy electronics, more baits than we will ever use and more fishing rods/reels that we know what to do with, but we seem to always come back to the basics in whatever we do.

Fishing these days has been much more enjoyable to me and means so much more to me these days as well. I really look forward to each trip that is made to the water and at the end of the day, fish or not, I know that I had a great day out there. Fishing is not work anymore but a favorite past time that I can spend many hours out there again. But if I only have an hour to fish, so be it, I was still able to do something at that moment that means so much to me. Fishing, what it means to me is time to reflect on life, get away from all of the hustle and bustle, and spend some quality time with family, my kids and friends new and old. Once again, there aren't enough days that I get to fish again and this is telling me that my passion to fish is back stronger than ever...

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