

Hooked On Recovery

August 20, 2004

Another Fish Story

Yep, another fish story. This one is from several years ago. It was the last day of our family vacation on Cape Cod. It must have been a Sunday, because Sunday is moving day for this particular rental. My buddy Shortcast and I got up early and headed to the beach before sunrise. Along with our fishing rods, we brought a frozen package of squid to use as bait. Frozen squid is not one of my favorites, but we frankly, just wanted to get rid of it. So we set up our sand spikes, baited our hooks and cast. My buddy cast short, I cast long just inside the bar. Our baits were in the hole between the outer bar and the beach. It was dead low tide. We shared the beach with just one other surfcaster who was working the point. After reveling in the glory of an amazing sunrise, we noticed the guy working the point was into some bluefish. So we decided to move out of the hole and on to the point.

I picked up my rod and pulled back on the bait to begin the retrieve. As soon as that bait moved, a striper who must have been eyeing it and smelling it, engulfed the squid. BAM! Line stripped from my reel as the fish made a strong run seaward. After a few minutes, I turned its head and got it back into the hole and gradually worked it in to shore. The fish measured 41” before I slid it gently back into the light surf. Good fish!

The guy working the point sidled up and remarked on what a nice fish it was and that he had to leave due to a family obligation, otherwise he’d still be on the point. Shortcast and I thought that the 41-incher was a great way to end a vacation so we decided to pack up as well.

As we climbed the dune to the parking lot, a guy in a brand new SUV pulled up with 37 fly rods on top of his truck. He stepped out in full fish apparel including new light weight waders, vest, boots and hat complemented by a pair of the latest high-powered binoculars. He scanned up and down the beach looking for fish activity. Then he looked at me climbing the dune. Was that a look of disgust? Well, I was wearing a beat up New England Patriots swim suit garnished with squid slime and an equally grimy T-shirt. I was barefoot and carrying a leaking, waterlogged, quickly-thawing, smelly box of squid, only ONE fishing rod and had no other tackle. With one part skepticism, one part contempt and one part condescension, he acknowledged my presence and asked, “Anything going on?”

I replied, “The guy on the point who just left got a few blues and I just got a 41-incher. There are fish here.”

The guy gave me another once-over, looked me in the eye and snorted, “Yeah, right.”

As we walked across the lot, Shortcast (who was much more irritated than I was) said, “Do you want me to go talk to him? He didn’t believe you.”

“Arno”, I said, “I told him the truth. What he does with it is up to him”. And sure enough, the guy with all the right stuff started his truck and drove on to the next beach.

Where am I going from here? Well, I could pull a lot of stuff out of this allegory, but I'd like to let you do some of that. Suffice it to say, that people in recovery, although we may not always look like people with answers, we've been on the beach fishing and if you want to catch some fish, I mean really catch some fish, maybe we ought to be listened to.

Hooked on Recovery is a biweekly message from CCAR Executive Director Phillip Valentine, person in recovery since 12/28/87, devoted husband, father of four (expecting number five) and just another surf fisherman. He welcomes all your comments and suggestions on this column, email him at phillip@ccar.us. Or visit the website at www.ccar.us to get more information on this year's *Recovery Walks!* and to see previous articles.