

Fishing from the Heart

It was 8:10 AM and 31 degrees. I was wondering just how it was I remembered extra pants, long underwear, gloves, and thick socks for him and forgot all of the above for me. It didn't really matter. There wasn't a chill on earth that could cool me off. My emotions were running hot and my anxiety was running high. I had been waiting a very long time for this day. It was the first time I had taken my son trout fishing. Was he ready? Was I ready? They say you can't really start them too young. But I also know that the first experience can paint a lasting impression, good or bad. Good and he might be hooked for life. Bad and it could turn into a very short day and a very long drive home. He had been fishing before and liked it but this was different. This was *trout* fishing; an introduction to the big leagues, moving water and beautiful places far from home. I was a little nervous to say the least.

We left the hotel parking lot around seven fifteen, biscuits and hot beverages in hand from the local drive through. We stayed up later the night before than I hoped we would. I guess neither of us could get to sleep from the anticipation.

“Dad?”

“Yes?”

“How long before we get there?”

“That depends. Do you want to take the scenic way and look at some farms, or the quick way down the interstate?”

“The quick way!”

Good answer. I couldn't wait either.

To my surprise, when we arrived we were the only car on the stream. I pulled into one of my favorite spots and assembled our gear. Okay, we made it here, the stream is wide open and it doesn't appear I have forgotten anything. My nerves calmed down. Well a little. As we approached the stream I was pointing out the higher points of the sport, like where the fish might be, the fact that we may catch fish and may not, etc... We took a couple of practice casts and then a serious float through the run. The look on my son's face was priceless and the pride that grew in my chest unbelievable. We were doing it. We were trout fishing together. It took a couple of more pools, and lots of little side trips to turn over rocks and explore the local flora and fauna until we hooked up. Then there in the net was the evidence; an 11" rainbow glistening and frisky.



We tried several more spots along the stream and enjoyed many beautiful sites on the way. By this time it was getting near noon and time for lunch. I thought he was doing great. He was still interested and ready to go. Let's keep in mind, he is six years old and we had been fishing for a few hours.

“Son?”

“Yeah Dad?”

“Let's go eat lunch. There's something I want to show you.”



I took my son up to a set of falls on a little tributary. He was amazed or as he put it “coooooo!” We sat on a comfortable rock and had lunch together filled with conversation and lots of laughter. After we finished lunch I suggested we hit one more pool and then think about heading home. With a little convincing from my son (very little), we decided to try a few more spots before we shed our waders for the day and then take a hike. I knew of a couple of trails nearby and chose one for our final excursion of the day.



It was about a half a mile up to the historic farm maintained by the park service and of course the same coming back. At first I was concerned he wouldn't be able to make it the full round trip and had visions of carrying him back down. He proved my worries to be unfounded as he bounded up the trail and bounced his way back down. Once we got back to the car I explained that we really needed to get on the road. We strapped ourselves in and headed out. About half way back in one of the towns we pass through is a favorite stop of mine – Krispy Kreme doughnuts. During my business travels, this is my standard coffee break and treat pickup stop for the kids. As we were getting back into the car for the final leg home, something I will never forget happened.

“Dad?”

“Yes, buddy?”

“Maybe I should keep my shoes on this time.”

“Why son?”

“You know, in case you have to stop for gas.”

“Oh, we're okay on gas. Should just be a straight drive.”

“Well, maybe we will stop for dinner, or maybe we could do a little Christmas shopping?””

“No, we really should get home. Your mother and sister are expecting us.”

“Oh. I just...”

“Just what son?”

“I just don't want this to end.”

“gulp”

I went into that day hoping it would be a great experience for my son. One he would never forget. But at that single moment, it became more that I ever hoped. I choke even now as I write this story down. I will never forget that day and pray that we will have many more too come. A few hours on the water and a few simple words from a six year old touched me beyond expression. So, do yourself a favor. Take a kid fishing. You might be surprised how much you will get back in return.

-Buddy Davis

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