

RISAA Members' FISHING STORIES

*From the Editor: This story is worth reading all the way to the end. Every fishing family will find something familiar and is guaranteed to make you smile. The article was sent to us by member **JOHN SEREMET** who is the grandfather mentioned in the story below, written by a young man who will never forget the striped bass he caught in 2011.*

The Big Fish

by Peter Murray



One sunny afternoon in mid-August of 2011, I caught the biggest fish of my life. I was nine years old, four foot eight inches, and about to enter fourth grade. It was a typical day at my grandparents' house in Stonington, Connecticut. I planned on going fishing on my grandfather's boat in the afternoon and then coming back to a delicious meal that my grandmother prepared after she went clothes shopping with my mom and sister. I did not know this would be the day I caught a striped bass large enough to get my name in the local newspaper.

That summer was the last summer that the Connecticut/Rhode Island waters had an abundance of large predatory fish. My grandfather has done research on this and he says global warming has forced the cold-blooded fish to go to the cooler waters farther north or more offshore.

It was ideal that I caught such a nice fish that day because it would be the last day that I went to my grandparents' house that summer. Throughout that summer, I caught a ton small fish called porgies because they were plentiful and returning home with the guarantee of having buckets full of fish appealed to me much more than the high possibility of coming back empty-handed if I went for the elusive predatory fish. However, earlier that week, my sister caught a decently-sized striped bass and because of my competitive nature, I would not let her outdo me.

That day, my grandfather took me to all of his spots that had produced large striped bass for him in the past. We had no luck and only caught a few porgies that took the bait designed for striped bass. As we were about to call it a day and return disappointed, my grandfather wisely suggested trawling for fish as we went through the harbor towards his dock.

He is a real fisherman, so he wanted keep a pole in the water for as long as possible

because he knew a fish could strike at any moment. However, I did not yet know this, and I thought holding a rod as the boat slowly crept towards my grandparents' house was pointless.

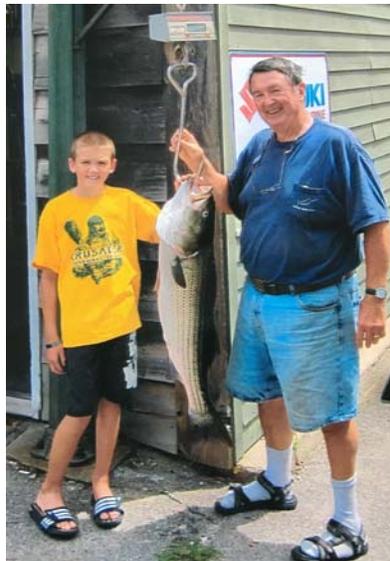
I did not feel a single bite for over ten minutes and I was highly doubtful that I would catch a fish. I was growing impatient and wanted to give up and speed home after spending a few hours on the boat. However, just as those thoughts were flooding my mind, the rod started spinning out of control. I had never felt that much force on the line, and I called out to my grandfather, "Grandpa, I think I got something!"

He responded in his gruff voice hardened by over thirty years of owning boats by saying, "Lemme see the rod, you probably just caught bottom."

He took the rod that was the same one my uncle used in 1979 when he was also nine years old. That was the only rod I had used my whole life up to that point because it was the smallest one my grandfather had, so it was the easiest one for me to handle. It was so stiff from age that it did not even bend when it hooked the porgies I caught earlier that day. In fact, that day was my first and only time seeing it really bend. It looked like it might snap.

My grandfather sensed movement at the end of the line and exclaimed, "Shit, kid, that's a fish!"

He handed me back the rod and then the battle between me and the fish began. Before I started to turn the reel handle, I took a deep breath and prayed that I would have the strength to reel it in. It took me a few minutes to bring up the fish and by the time I got it near the surface, I was so out of energy that each turn of the reel handle started to take a few seconds. However, the fish also must have run out of strength because it stopped pulling the line towards the bottom with as much force as it had at the beginning of our struggle. (to page 32)



9-year old Peter with his grandfather John Seremet at the scales in 2011. Below is John and Peter in 2018 with the same rod & tackle used in 2011.

