

A picture is worth a thousand words

My brother-in-law Ernie loves to fish. We have had some great trips together but one in particular comes to mind.

Ernie and my wife's sister Sophie live just outside of Atlanta, GA. When they used to live in Baltimore, MD we would visit them once in a while and go fishing in the Chesapeake Bay and catch striped bass. Now, stripers or rock as they call them out there, are pound for pound one of the fightingest fish you will find anywhere. Since they moved to Georgia, Ernie doesn't get to do as much fishing as he would like so I invited him to come up to visit and I would take him on a fishing trip.

They decided they would come up and Sophie and Anna would do whatever sisters do and Ernie and I would take a few days and go up north to a little trout lake that I new of to do some real Minnesota fishing.

We threw the canoe on the roof of the SUV, loaded the fishing gear, food, beer, and we were ready to head out on our adventure. Being from somewhere other than Minnesota, Ernie had not had much canoeing experience. While we drove north to our destination he was asking me about the safety of fishing from a canoe. He had heard that they tipped over a lot.

I assured him that tippy canoe was a political phrase not a real occurrence. He had nothing to worry about. I was an experienced Minnesota fisherman and had things completely under control. Actually I had gone the extra mile in looking out for his safety and comfort. I brought along a nice soft boat cushion for him to sit on because those metal seats in the canoe can become uncomfortable after a while.

When we got to the lake we unloaded the canoe and all of our gear and before we even set up camp I suggested we go out and catch our limit of rainbows for supper. Ernie was all for that, after all, he did love to fish.

We pushed off shore and proceeded to paddle across the lake to the spot where I knew we would catch some fish. Ernie was in the front seat and I, being the guide, took the stern.

I didn't mention this before but Ernie is a pretty big guy. He is about a foot taller than me and probably outweighs me by fifty pounds. Well, if you put this big guy on a three inch thick boat cushion, it makes him a little bit top heavy. As we paddled across the lake I was beginning to notice that with each paddle stroke Ernie took the canoe would rock pretty severely. We weren't too far from our fishing spot so I didn't give it too much thought. We had fish to catch. We could work on his paddling stroke later.

My favorite way to fish for inland rainbows is to use a hook and night crawler set up with a slip sinker. You use a syringe to inflate the worm a little bit to float it off the bottom and you just cast it out and let it sit. If done properly a trout will come along, see that

tasty worm floating there and let the game begin. The next thing you know your line is going out and the fish comes flying out of the water with your worm hanging from his mouth.

I explained this highly skilled technique to Ernie, and being the avid fisherman that he is, he caught on very quickly. His very first cast produced a nice fourteen inch rainbow. I told him it wouldn't be long and he could teach this stuff.

Ernie put a new crawler on his hook, inflated it, and prepared to make his next cast. I apparently had forgotten to explain that sudden movements in a canoe might be a mistake. When he leaned back to make his cast the canoe proceeded to lean with him.

We tipped over so fast. Everything in the canoe became floating evidence of our existence on the lake. Tackle box, worm container, beer cooler, everything we had with us was floating. Everything except my favorite fishing pole, it sank right to the bottom of the lake.

As I was falling into the water I must have let go of my rod in an effort to right the ship. The rod had been my dad's and was actually a family heirloom in my mind. It was a Harnell 9 foot fiberglass fly rod that he had used for many years. At the time when he bought it, it was state of the art equipment. I had even had it restored to like new condition.

As luck would have it, there was another boat on the water fishing a few hundred yards away from us. They must have seen what had happened and hurried over to rescue us. We assured them that we were fine. We were only about 15 feet from shore and we hung onto the canoe and could swim our way to safety.

One of our would be rescuers then said "I'm sorry, but I just have to do this". I looked towards him and saw him sitting there with his camera pointed at us.

Before they left, they asked once again if we needed help. We said no thanks but then I realized that my fishing rod had sunk and I told them that if by chance they happened to catch a fishing pole it might be mine.

We made our way to shore and gathered up our floating paraphernalia. Once we got all of the water out of the canoe we got back in and headed back to camp to dry off. After a change of clothes and doing a quick inventory of our equipment we realized that all of our night crawlers were now residents of the lake. We had no bait.

Only one day into our trip and we had already lost all of our bait and my favorite fishing rod. The closest town was about forty miles away so we jumped into the SUV and headed to town.

After replenishing our supply of worms Ernie insisted on buying me a new fishing rod. He felt so bad for causing me to lose the other one. I didn't have the heart to tell him the

real meaning behind the rod, he felt bad enough already. So, armed with a new rod and more bait we headed back for more fishing.

There was still plenty of daylight left so when we got back to the lake we decided to go back out and fish. After all, we still had to catch supper.

As we paddled back out we came across our, would be rescuers. They were heading back in for the day. They came over towards the canoe, cautiously, not wanting to swamp us again. The guy in the front of the boat reached down and picked up something as the approached. He held up a fishing pole and asked if it looked familiar. There was the Harnell. God works in mysterious ways.

I never got to see the picture that he took, but it would have been worth a thousand words, I'm sure.