

If You Had Just One More Wish

by Ray Rigby

It was 1973 on a warm spring day; this was the day I became baptized into the world of Smallmouth fishing. I was eight years old and on my way to my first wade with my grandfather. The anticipation was about all an 8 year old could stand, you know we have been known to be a little fidgety at that age. I spent the night with my grandfather, or should I say I stayed at his house, was not much sleeping going on, I was too excited.

I hear the alarm clock start to buzz and there I was standing at the door, zebco 33 in hand and ready for the day's action. Grandfather politely told me, first we eat, than we fish, got to have a full belly before the day's excursion boy. Well after what seemed like an eternity we hit the road for a day of Smallmouth catching bliss. It is now 6:30 a.m. and we are approaching the area to descend to what he liked to call HAWG HEAVEN. He even told me once the next State record Smallmouth would come from this spot, I never doubted him, after all he was grandpa. Well we hit that spot about 30 times a year until my 25th. Birthday, this is the day that the wish part of the story comes into play. The night before my Birthday the phone rings, it's grandpa on the other end, we exchange pleasantries and the conversation quickly turns to our secret place HAWG HEAVEN, he says getting out the waders tomorrow morning, want to join me he ask, I reply, can't, got other stuff to do. Boy I wish I would have said yes.

Grandpa starts getting some sharp pains in his knee's and has trouble walking any kind of incline, or just plain walking for that matter. He schedules a doctor's appointment for the following week, he is thinking nothing serious, he's too young. Well it was something serious, he had been diagnosed with sever arthritis in both knees, the doctor said at the pace he was going he would not be able to walk at all inside of a year. The doctor said the only solution was complete knee replacement, which he had done. Than came the bad news from the doctor, you will be doing no more river or creek wading, all your fishing will come from a bank in a chair or from a boat. Well this did not set well with grandpa, he was a purist, thought the only way you could catch a Smallmouth worth catching was from the middle of a creek or river chest deep in a pair of waders. Sadly he did not prove them wrong, his wading days were over, and mine pretty much as well. It would just not be the same wading without hearing him tell me, with a little practice you might one day make a fisherman.

Grandpa and I still get to fish every now and then, but it's not the same, he knows it, I know it and the fish know it. I guess in hindsight I would have scrapped my plans for the next day and went, would have made a terrific birthday present, but now it is just a wish. I know every time I see a shooting star or blow out the candles on a birthday cake, I make a wish, no matter how unlikely it is to happen, I keep on wishing. In closing I would like to remind everyone, no matter how trivial it seems, when you get that call, go fishing, you will wish you had of if you don't, after all it is only one day out of your life and it keeps you from using up all your birthday cake wishes.