

Valley Angler

Janet's Excellent Adventure

As Told By Janet To Bill

Someone asked me the other day if I was ever going to write a story about catching fish. Still can't say that I have had much luck since my last outing. Janet, on the other hand has been quite busy upholding the family honor. Janet has just returned from a ten day excursion to Newfoundland fishing for Atlantic Salmon.

This all came about a few weeks ago when some very good friends asked Janet to accompany them on their annual salmon trip to the La Poile River in Newfoundland. These guys have been making this trip for a good many years starting with their late father Walter Staples. The tradition continues today with the trip organized each year by Walter's sons Jim and Russ. Each year the brothers ask four other anglers to join them for the annual event.

When first asked Janet was reluctant to make the commitment to go. This after all the busy season at the shop and a very important wedding is scheduled for the first of the month. A few weeks before the trip was to take place the trip leaders were able to fill the remaining open spot and Janet was off the hook. However, just five days before the departure time one of the group had to back out. Once again Janet was approached to go by Jim and Russ. It was Saturday morning and our good friend John Buckley was in the shop with us when the call came in. Janet was pacing the floor trying to make up her mind as to make the decision to go or not. Both John and I were encouraging her to go. John finally told her that he would never speak to her again if she didn't go. That seemed to settle it and she grabbed the phone and called Jim and said she was in.

Janet soon had an E-mail with the trips itinerary and a list of things she would need to bring including appropriate fishing gear and flies. It had been quite a while since either of us had done any salmon fishing. Rods and reels were no problem as between us we have a fair arsenal of fly rods and reels. Our fly selection was somewhat lacking, however.

For the next few days I frantically tied salmon flies. It seemed that everyone who visited the shop had suggestions as to what flies would be needed. Our good friend, Rob Upton donated a Wheatley fly box full of his favorites to the cause. I gave her my Wheatley as well along with my meager selection of salmon flies from a trip I took over ten years ago. Salmon are of course the fish of royalty and it's important to carry your flies in a classy fly box like a Wheatley. In addition to what she already had she also raided some flies from the shops collection. In the end she may have left with a gross of flies or better. As it turned out only one fly, Le Bug, would be needed. Naturally it was not in her collection.

On Friday, accompanied by a small mountain of gear including a couple dozen cookies for the guides and some fresh made blueberry muffins, she was picked up at the house by Russ and the journey began. The party would consist of Russ and Jim, long time friend Jed, and Jude and Scott.

It would seem that there is no easy way to get to the La Poile. The first part of the journey requires a long drive up into the northern reaches of Maine. The first night the party stayed at Jim's camp, where a traditional supper of lasagna was served. The next day the group headed to the province of New Brunswick where they caught the overnight ferry to Port aux Basques, Newfoundland. Once in Newfoundland another drive was required to the little village of Rose Blanche. Here they were met by the camp manager. All the gear was then loaded aboard a lobster boat which was needed in order to reach the remote village of La Poile. More supplies were taken on board in La Poile before the boat took them up river to North Bay. From North Bay a three mile hike up river was required in order to reach the camp. Fortunately the gear was hauled into camp on a trailer pulled by an ancient farm tractor. As an added bonus the party had to ford the river three times before reaching the camp.

Once safely at camp and the gear unloaded, Janet was given the honor of the first cast. Within minutes she was hooked up to her first salmon. Yes, we do have photographic evidence of the event and all are welcome to come to the shop to view the 8 by 10 glossy photo of Janet, her guide Alex and of course the salmon. I have a smaller photo of me with a salmon caught several years ago in case you're interested.

Janet said she was horrified when the guide quickly dispatched the salmon. You are legally allowed to keep two grilse. The rules of the camp are if the salmon is netted then it must be killed. If the angler is going to release the fish the guide must be made aware and he will secure the leader and release it. In the end Janet brought home two salmon and one brook trout. Many more salmon were caught and released.

Janet's largest salmon was, according to her guide 36 inches long. Janet says that it was at least 30 inches if not more. The large salmon was taken not without a heroic effort, as is often the case of salmon of this size. The fish was taken in a pool known as Split Rock, due to a gigantic boulder that stood in the middle of the river. When the salmon was hooked it made several leaps and managed to throw the fly line over the boulder. Janet swears the boulder was two stories high. The salmon proceeded to get around the rock all the time leaping and running causing the line to saw back in forth over the rock. Even though she had lost sight of the fish she knew he was jumping because each time he jumped Russ, who was on the other side of the river, with an unobstructed view of the action, would give a shout. Janet was able to clear the line from the rock at which point the fish ran under it. About to lose her balance in mid river, Janet claimed to do several perorates in a tribute to the river gods. They must have been impressed because in the end the fish was landed and released.

There is no way on earth that I could ever find the words to tell the story in print. For a more colorful and animated version please stop by the shop and see Janet. I doubt it will

take much of an effort to get her to tell the tale. Should you be looking for me I will be the green guy over in the corner.

For those who may be looking for a trip of a lifetime the name of the lodge is Salmon Hole Lodge. Russ and Jim are always looking for a few good men or woman to fill slots on their annual trips. These trips are an incredible value and every last detail of the trip has been planed to the last detail. I am sure that Janet will be able to give a favorable review should you ask.

See you on the river.