

Blue Gloves

I am a fishing guide in North Central Washington on Lake Chelan. I fish over 100 days per year. Among the great joys in my life are my grandchildren. Now that we live overlooking beautiful Lake Chelan, our grandkids come to visit more often. They call me Papa. During the summer, the two older grandkids (9 & 6) love to play in the water, whether it is swimming in the lake, going to the waterslides or tubing behind the eighteen-foot boat. Their dad and I are fishing nuts. However, he thinks that trout should only be caught in moving water with a dry fly. I am a bit more eclectic in my approach. The kid's normal response to our fishing expedition plans is to roll their eyes. The nine year old is a sports nut that thinks that I was put on earth to play basketball with him and teach him to throw the circle change and the curve ball. Try that on a 47-year-old elbow... The six year old helps her grandma keep the place running while I do the things that middle-aged guys do to miss-spend this period of our lives. She also likes to build puzzles with me as well as squealing on me when I do inappropriate things such as burping out loud and sometimes she even falsely accuses me of bumping her head with my elbow when anyone with eyes can see she keeps bumping my elbow with her head.

I have taken them fishing from the public docks on Lake Chelan shortly after the state stocks the lower basin of the lake with rainbow trout. They catch some fish but their attention span allows them to enjoy this for 3 to 4 minutes with no bites. They definitely got their attention span from their dad (not our daughter...). They do enjoy catching fish, but the fishing part did not seem to be a great attraction.

One day in August as we finished supper, I asked our eldest grandson what he wanted to do for the evening. He said that he wanted me to take him fishing on the big boat. I checked the time and realized that we had to go right now, if we would get even an hour to fish. I told him to get moving. Then our granddaughter chimed in that she wanted to go to. OOOOK... This was getting complicated. I guide out of a 24' Bayliner Ciera Express with a full cabin, that I keep moored in Chelan. This is a 15 to 20 minute commute. Then there is set up time, plus a cruise of a few minutes out to the fishing grounds time. I'm thinking this will be an exercise in futility and a waste of gas.

So with EENT (End Evening Nautical Twilight or last light) due at about 8:15PM, we hit the dock about 7:30. I guessed that I had about 30 minutes of fishing time. I thought about just turning around and heading back. I looked at the kids. Their eyes were shining and they were hopping up and down. Boy were they juiced! I thought, oh well, let's go. I warmed the beast up, set up the electronics, rigged the rods, prepared the downriggers and proceeded on my 10 minute cruise to hit the drop out of town where the lake slopes away through the 100' contour on it's way to the 250' depths of the lower lake basin. A quick watch check showed 7:45 as I started the kicker motor and set the first line out.

I set the U-20 luminous chartreuse Flatfish back 100', attached the line to the downrigger release and lowered the 'rigger until it hit the bottom. I raised it 15 feet and we were fishing. I grabbed rod number 2 and proceeded to repeat the above process. As

I was letting the line on the second rod back, I looked over and saw the first rod bouncing. FISH ON! So, I put rod number 2 in the rod holder, grab rod number 1 and pop it loose from the downrigger release. I handed it to Tyler with the “Remember Rule #1, don’t let go!” admonishment. Crank in rod number 2, secure it, climb up, get the net and give all the unnecessary advice that guides give. What’s significant about this is that a nine year old with a nine-foot downrigger rod, a Shimano lever drag, Charter Special with 250 feet of line out, has about all he can handle when you put a 2-foot long laker at the other end. A little while later, I see the fish, tell him to reel down and lift the tip to slide the fish in the net. One five-pound laker in the boat! Squealing kids, music to my ears.

Normally, I would want a picture of a fish with a kid. Tyler doesn’t want to touch the fish... I can tell by the look on his face even though, being our quiet kid, he doesn’t say it in words. So I set the lure back, attach it to the ‘rigger release and drop it down to the bottom and raise it fifteen feet. Take rod number two, set it back, attach it to the rigger, drop it to the bottom and raise it fifteen feet. Then I’ve got to bag the flopping fish and put it on ice. Make the turn to head home, because we’re running out of daylight, keeping the lines from overlapping which creates the most hellacious tangle you’ve ever seen, all the while keeping those flatfish working about 10 feet off the bottom at 1.4 knots on my mechanical speed indicator and keeping the kids from getting bored for the 10 minutes until I have to pull the gear up to get them back by bedtime.

“Sorry Mikayla” I said, “we’re out of time. I don’t want your Mom to worry about you.” “That’s OK papa”, she says. Then, I see the bite! Pandemonium, as I get the rod in her hands and ask her: “What’s rule #1?” “Don’t let go!” she screams. I instruct Tyler to hang onto the rod. I’m determined to let her reel this in all the way, so that it is truly “her fish”. Remember, she is six years old using a nine foot rod, with a Shimano Charter Special reel and there is a two foot laker on the end of the line. So Tyler need to hold the middle of the rod high over his head so “the tip stays up”. After much screaming, we net a fish.

I ask her if I can get a picture of her with the fish if I give her gloves. She nods “yes!” excitedly. Tyler gives me that coy look that asks me without saying a word to not let his sister “out brave” him. I show him a second pair of gloves. A minute later, I give my standard little kid picture instructions: “OK, pretend you had fun!” What do you think?



There is only thing left to do after securing the fish, securing the gear and docking the boat. That is to drill them on the drive home... “Papa catches ***BIG*** fish, Daddy catches little fish”, until I put them on the phone to their dad to recite the litany. That completed our day.