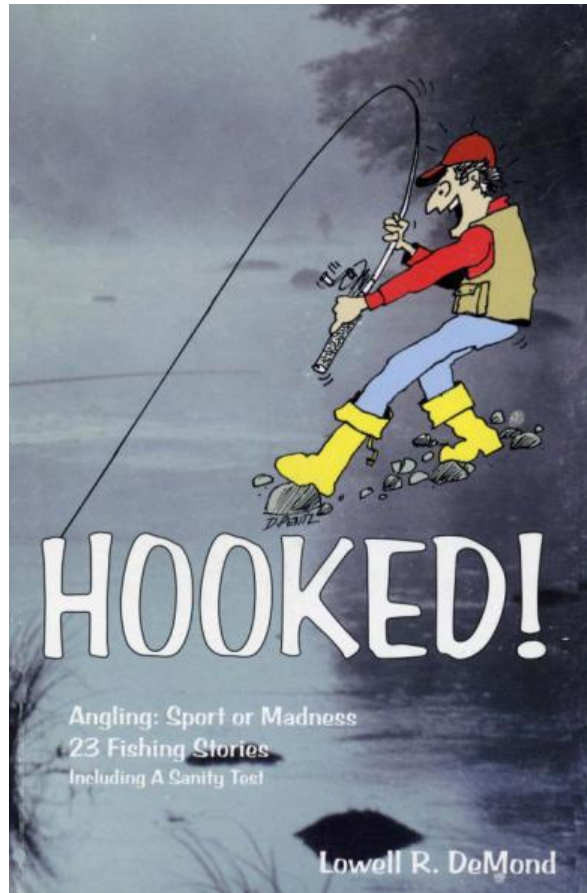


The Wrong Bull

This tale is from a 1996 book, HOOKED!, by Lowell R. Demond of Bridgewater, Nova Scotia. I knew him as a likeable gentleman when he was President of the LaHave River Salmon Association. Lowell retired as Principal of Bridgewater High School in 1994. Many thanks to him for giving us permission to publish this.

- Bill Carpan, Stillwater NS



The Margaree is one of the most picturesque rivers in Nova Scotia. Located in Cape Breton, it runs through fairly high hills with mixed hardwoods and is especially colourful in the fall. It also is one of the best salmon-producing rivers in the province and is known for its large fish. Herman and I like to do some fall fishing and on occasion we journey to the Margaree.

There are a lot of good pools to fish on the river and, although the fishing pressure is rather heavy, if you scout around, you can usually find a pool with fish in it that is not crowded. One such pool is the Seal Pool, on the lower end of the river.

To get to this pool, you park along the highway and walk down a steep bank to a large, open pasture. I don't know if this is common land or not, but there are usually about one hundred

head of cattle pastured there on the large acreage. There are few fences, and the cattle have access to the river.

One fall, Herman and I were fishing at the Seal Pool, taking turns rotating down the river. A number of fish were showing in the pool, and on my second trip down, I hooked about a ten-to-twelve pound salmon. It put up a good fight, and since catch and release was required of large salmon, I reeled it in as quickly as possible and Herman helped me release it. We then continued on fishing.

After we had been there about an hour, a young couple appeared on the scene. He was a fisherman and she was an observer, and for the purpose of this story, we will call her the "girlfriend." She had brought a cushion and found a good place to sit where she had a good view of the river. He, meanwhile, walked down over the bank and started fishing in the river below us. As is customary, we were rotating the pool, and although we were not upset that he had stepped in front of us, some anglers would have been.

Before this young couple had arrived, there had been quite a commotion going on in the pasture among the cattle. Herman and I had been watching this off and on, and it appeared to us that a very large bull was exercising his authority with a cow that was in heat, and there was a smaller bull who was also interested. The big bull constantly butted the smaller bull, and on occasion became quite aggressive with him. The young fellow wanted a sniff, but the old bull was determined this was not to be. This caused the young bull to become frustrated, and he mooed and bleated and frothed at the mouth. Sometimes he got so exasperated that he pawed the ground and the dirt would fly right over his back into the air. While all of this was going on, the herd was working its way towards us and getting closer.

Before long, the young bull left the herd and started towards where the girlfriend was sitting on the bank. He was still making his strange sounds and pawing the ground, and she had her eye on him. Closer and closer he came and finally she yelled out to Herman and me, "Is that animal a bull?" We told her it was, but not to worry about him, as we considered him harmless. The bull kept coming, and she panicked and began to cry.

The boyfriend was downriver quite a distance from us, and we called to him and told him his girlfriend needed help. Herman also became concerned and suggested we throw rocks at the bull, as he was now within throwing distance. The boyfriend reeled in his fishing line and was now heading upstream along the river bank at a fast pace to her rescue.

There were lots of good rocks to throw, because the river bottom was all gravel and had rocks from one inch to six inches in diameter. Herman and I would reach in the water and get a rock and throw it at the bull. We continued this until I picked up a wet rock about the size of a softball. When I went to throw it, it slipped out of my hand and came very close to hitting the boyfriend on the head. If it had hit him, it might have killed him or at least caused him serious injury. This scared the heck out of me, but before I could fully comprehend the seriousness of my action, Herman hollered, "You're throwing at the wrong bull."

These six words changed the whole situation around. When the girlfriend heard what Herman had said, she stopped crying, seemed to forget the bull and started to laugh. The boyfriend, too, thought it was funny. The bull turned and started in another direction, and I, having recovered from my scary throw, nearly fell in the river as a result of my weakened condition from laughing, and my relief at not hitting the boyfriend on the head. The young couple quickly gathered up their belongings, and the last I saw of them, they were scurrying up the steep side of the pasture to where their car was parked.

Often when I am fishing near a field or see cattle along a river, which is not uncommon, I think of this incident, and when I do, I wonder about three things: (1) how the story sounded when the girlfriend or boyfriend told it, (2) if I had hit the boyfriend on the head with the rock and killed him, whether or not I would have been charged for a criminal offence, and (3) what would the verdict of the jury have been?