

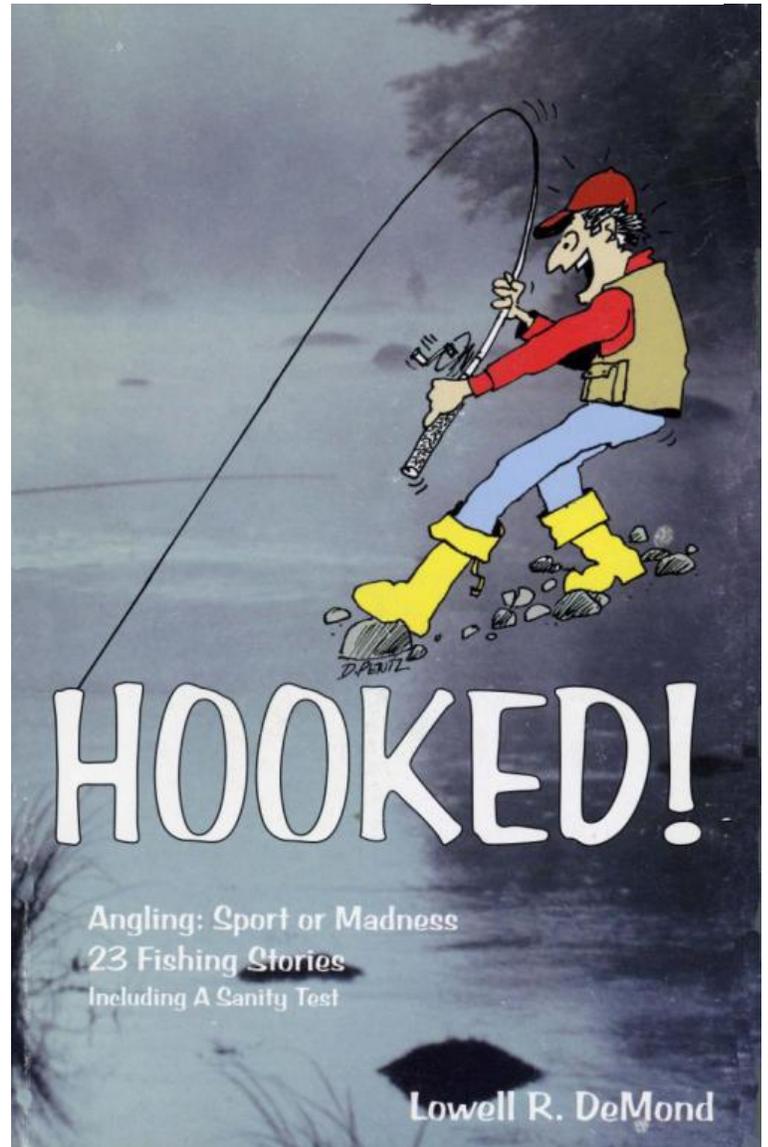
Who Fished?

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

I was fortunate enough to have a saddle horse I used to ride throughout the community. To make a little money, I sold greeting cards, and I visited every home in the village. Almost all of the homes I visited knew of my interest in fishing, but in the late 1940s the opinion of most people I called on was the same: people who fished were no good. I always found this disturbing, as I liked Tim and Hubert, and I even had some admiration for Big Jim. I knew Glen liked to fish, and then there was Cliff. How could anyone say these people were no good? But then I noticed that very few of my friends fished. They played ball and met the train at the station on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday nights, but they didn't fish.

One August day, Mother had a telephone call from our neighbours, the Fancys, who asked if I would go fishing with them. They owned a large tract of land which extended to a lake behind their house known as Hen Lake. They knew I liked to fish, and they hoped I would go with them to give them a little of my expertise for the trip, as fishing was a rare experience for them. I was always game to go fishing, so of course I accepted. They said I should arrive at their house mid-afternoon, they would pack the lunch which was to be our supper, and I all I had to bring was my fishing gear. I thought it strange that they would ask me, as I never knew them to go fishing. Theirs was a large family, but only the father and the two sons - Donnie, who was about my age, and Bob, who was younger - were going fishing.

About 3:00 p.m. I arrived at their house, but they were not ready to go. Mrs. Fancy, whose first name was Ethel, was packing a large knapsack with sandwiches, sweets and bottles of milk. The main course was to be the fresh corn still boiling on the stove.



While she was hurrying around getting this ready, Mr. Fancy, Donnie and Bob were searching the house for their fishing gear. Mr. Fancy was a bit impatient and was giving orders to look behind this door and behind that desk and behind an old pump organ which was in the living room for anything that might be useful for fishing.

Finally the corn was cooked and Mrs. Fancy took it off the stove, drained it and rolled it in a piece of oil cloth and put it in a knapsack. The fishing gear had now been corralled, and we were about ready to leave. Mr. Fancy picked up the knapsack, put it on his back and tied the straps at his front with a piece of string.

All of a sudden, disaster struck. Mr. Fancy started jumping around the kitchen, seemingly in pain and hollering like you wouldn't believe. I could barely make out what he was saying, and then he yelled, "God All Mighty, Ethel, what's in this knapsack that's so hot on my back?"

Ethel said, "It's hot corn!"

Mr. Fancy hollered, "Get it out of here!"

Before anyone could help him, he took off through the kitchen which led to the dining room through a hall and back again to the kitchen. It was a roundabout circuit; it was also a circus, and it seemed with each trip around, he was picking up speed, as the heat increased. All the furniture in his way was being bumped around. A rocking chair in which a cat was sleeping was overturned, and the cat jumped on the curtain, climbed to the top and sat on the curtain rod. Finally, Mrs. Fancy was successful in subduing her husband. She managed to untie the knot in front and got the knapsack off of his back. Upon examination, it was discovered that his back was somewhat burned. Ethel greased him well with butter and put a cloth over the burned area. In the meantime, the little kids who were not going fishing were running in and out of the kitchen, saying almost in unison, "God All Mighty! God All Mighty!"

In due course, the corn had cooled, the knapsack had been repacked, the Fancys had rounded up their fishing gear and we were ready to leave.

It was about one and a half miles from their home to the lake, and Mr. Fancy, who was not used to walking, said we would travel with his ox cart. He had a single ox cart that balanced on two wheels and on it he had put a small wooden boat we were to use for fishing. We went up to his barn only to discover the ox we were to take had earlier been turned out to pasture and was nowhere in sight. Mr. Fancy then announced we would take his Jersey bull. I had great reservations about that, as there were many wild stories in the community about bulls. People had been killed and we were warned as kids to stay clear of them. Mr. Fancy claimed he had on previous occasions yoked this bull to his cart and assured us it was not a problem.

Mr. Fancy was right; he was able to get it hitched to the cart, although it was not easy. The bull snorted a few times and was uneasy about being secured to the yoke and harness. Finally, Mr. Fancy hollered for us to climb on the cart, which we did, and the whole works started with a jerk. It was a wild ride, mostly out of control, and I remember how good I felt when I saw the lake, which meant our journey with the bull was over.

Upon our arrival, Mr. Fancy unharnessed the bull and tied him securely to a large spruce tree. While he was doing this, Donnie, Bob and I pulled the boat off the cart and launched it. We packed in the fishing gear and our lunch. When Mr. Fancy was satisfied that the bull was secure, he joined us in the boat and we shoved off.

We fished for two hours and caught two trout and a half dozen white perch. Then we went to shore, and on a scenic point of land we ate our lunch. The corn was cold, but we ate it. While we were eating, every now and then Donnie and I would make eye contact and snicker. Without saying anything to each other, I guessed we were both thinking of the kitchen scene. When we had finished lunch, we repacked the knapsack and rowed back to our point of departure, where we had left the bull.

The bull was not pleased about having been tied to a tree for three hours. He had completely torn up the ground around the spruce tree, he was frothing from the mouth, and his eyeballs were definitely showing red. I was uneasy, and I sensed Donnie and Bob were also nervous. Mr. Fancy started giving orders. He told us to load the boat and the fishing gear on the cart, and announced he would yoke and harness the bull. To my surprise, he was able to do this, although I also noticed the bull was still tied to the spruce tree. The bull, in the meantime, was snorting and blowing, and every now and then he would paw the ground, sending debris flying right over the cart.

After a great deal of effort, Mr. Fancy had the bull securely fastened to the cart and told us to climb on board. He said he would untie the bull and jump on. Donnie and Bob climbed on, but I was reluctant to join, and I just stood there clutching my steel telescope fishing rod. Mr. Fancy untied the bull and barely got out of the way when the bull made a jump-start in the direction of the farm. Donnie fell off the cart, and Bob jumped off. The four of us just stood there and watched as the bull picked up speed. The cart hit a bump and the knapsack was shredded as it fell down through the spokes of the wheel, with glass from our milk bottles and drinking cups flying through the air. I have no idea what happened to our fish that were in it. The cart rounded a turn in the road and disappeared from sight.

It took us about thirty minutes to walk back to the farm and as we walked past the house on our way to the barn, Mrs. Fancy poked her head out of the kitchen door and said, "If you got any fish bring them in and I'll cook them, and don't forget to bring in your knapsack and I'll wash the dishes." No one said anything; we just kept on walking towards the barn.

When we got to the barn, where there was once a barn door there was just a large hole with a broken cart and a smashed-up boat sticking out. I remember feeling glad that I had not put my fishing rod in the cart. The bull was inside somewhere and as far as I know survived the trip.

I announced I was going home, and Mr. Fancy thanked me for going with them. He even suggested we should do it again sometime. I muttered to myself, "God forbid!" I thanked them and left.

We never went fishing again. However, ever since that day, whenever I eat corn, pack a knapsack, hear someone say "God All Mighty" or see a bull or ox cart, I think of the Fancys and our fishing trip.