

## Dutch Fred's Lake

As most people probably know, the problem with fishing stories is that they are often not true. One can safely assume that the fish described in the story was either one that got away, one that was never caught, or one with its size greatly exaggerated. So one could safely say the problem within the problem is that most fishermen are not very good at what they do, and fishing is fickle by nature, so frustration is inevitable. This frustration causes a fair number of anglers, some better than myself, to turn mad. Now, picture a man in rubber overalls standing waist deep in water, swinging a metal pole with a piece of string attached to the end of it. On the end of this string is attached a metal hook wrapped in multicolored feathers, sometimes personally wrapped together by the crazy shmuck swinging the pole. Ask yourself what you think of that man, and most would guess that he is bat shit crazy.

It is safe to say that the man with a canoe strapped to the top of his father's forest green F-150 was probably a fishermen and by deductive reasoning was also not all there. The road to the fishing hole, Dutch Fred's Lake, is an unpaved doublewide, which pretty much means that there is room for both tires. I was excited to see the dirt path winding through the woods because shade on the water meant that it would stay cooler as the summer wore on. This was a good sign because Trout are temperamental fish. They need cold, clear, clean water to live. But after a solid 20 minutes of wandering in the woods, we two Scandinavians were a little taken aback. "Now where is this place?" My father asked me, taking a break from humming and drumming on the steering wheel. "I don't know. It's just down the road," I joked. Obviously just down the road in the Upper Peninsula is a little different than back home in Ann Arbor.

We passed through ditches and forks in the road until, after a good 45 minutes in the woods, we emerged on probably the other side of Lake Huron and well into Canada. The lake was well hidden, and for good reason-- it was beautiful, surrounded on all sides by great ancient evergreen and birch trees. On the northeast side there was a cabin, well hidden by the trees, and water grasses which grew around the length of the north and south ends of the pool. On the shore was a tent, accompanied by a man in a ragged Notre

Dame sweatshirt and a pair of well-loved Levis who was playing fetch on the bank with his elderly chocolate lab. He looked good-natured so my Father said "Hello."

"Where are ya from?" he said after polite introductory formalities.

"Ann Arbor," my dad replied

"Well that's too bad." He scoffed. His distaste for the wolverines was clear to us. He took his hand off his beer-belly to laugh and throw the Frisbee to his already exhausted lab.

"Well," I began after a polite laugh, " It isn't much better, but we are Spartan fans."

"Whoa, not much better, my friend. Yeah, the Spartans fake a field goal on the Irish and God smites their coach after the game."

We all laughed at the crude joke, which made light of the heart attack Michigan State's Football coach had had after their overtime win against Notre Dame.

"What brings you up here?" he asked just being polite as he could see the big clunky metal canoe strapped haphazardly to the roof of the car.

"Fishin', my dad answered, "my son somehow got it in his head that he wants to catch a trout."

"Well this is the spot to do it, judging by that sign,"

My Father and I looked over at the sign, which read.

### Trophy Brook Trout Lake

#### Special Regulations

1. Artificial lures with single pointed hook.
2. Minimum size on all Trout 15 In.
3. Creel limit 2 trout per day.

Department of Natural Resources

"Would ya look at that," I chirped, "Lets get goin." We hurriedly unpacked the truck, placed the canoe in the water, planted our butts on the padded seats, and paddled like we were in the chase scene in the movie *The Last of The Mohicans*.

I got to flailing. I call it this because I feel in order for one to call what I was doing fishing, one must see some sign of fish life, or at least feel that you are somewhat attracting some attention with your bait. So I was basically the equivalent of a little boy drawing words in the snow, but having less fun doing so. The idea of driving an hour-and-a-half was to actually catch something, and after two-and-a-half hours I had seen more turtles than fish and was seriously considering whether or not the sign had said "Designated Turtle Lake" and under that "All fishermen be damned." We turned back after a good three hours of my trying to conduct an orchestra of turtle musicians using my eight and a half-foot long fly rod as a baton. Whether it was to go to the bathroom or check that sign again to ensure myself of my own sanity, I do not know. But as soon as the canoe scraped the shore and I stepped out of the metal container of my frustration, the fish started eating big bugs on the top of the water, a perfect time for a fly fisher, such as myself to catch something.

We pushed ourselves back out, and I threw out the biggest most fuzzy-looking mayfly imitation I had. One so juicy-looking that it had to be, and was, made by the nut who wielded it. It landed with the softness of a butterfly kiss on the top of the water. All the while a big grizzled-looking Brook Trout rose up cautiously to the combination of feathers and fuzz I had laid so softly on the surface. Seconds turned to lifetimes, boys turned to men, and the big, bright brown and rust colored Brookie sipped up my offering. I paused before I slowly, gently, cocked my wrist upward, and there was an explosion and whine as my reel struggled to let out line. Then, all of a sudden, there was nothing, and out of the water shot the huge fish with the fly halfway out of its mouth and my orange line attached to the homemade leader, attached to the hook. He came down with a big splash but no fly. I will remember how that fish looked flying through the air carrying my fly for the rest of my life. I set my rod down to curse the ever-powerful, ever-punishing gods of fly-fishing. But as I tilted my head to the floor of the canoe I heard the Notre Dame fan whistling and clapping

"I've never seen a fish like that jump that high in all of my life!" He yelled as we two Scandinavians sat speechless in our boat.

"Neither have I," I whispered to myself. "Neither have I."

The ride home was short, and the anticipation great. My mother and grandmother treated us to pasties, a very hardy Yooper meal. I told my story to all who sat at the table, down to every last detail. "The one that got away, always a classic," I said with a sigh. "That thing took off like Michael Jordan."

"Well Dylan," my grandpa muttered between bites of pasty. "You should have known what to expect from the god damn Dutch." We all laughed till we were close to tears at my grandfather's quote from an old college drinking song. After a shower and some reading I managed to get to sleep knowing that the great big fish, "The Air Man Number, Twenty-Three Michael Jordan," as I call him, was still swimming around in beautiful Dutch Fred's Lake, doubtlessly lurking in the depths and about to take some other first timer's favorite fly. Somehow that thought was comforting to me.