

Visiting an Old Friend

by Harold Ball

We have moved around the lake quite a bit over the past 25 years or so and fished a number of different areas including Macintosh – Deerpass – Conjuror - Echo – Bydand - Tripod– Trappers – Trading Post – Good Hope – Gun barrel - Sawmill – the Sand Flats – Lyndsley, and Ekka Island to name just a few.

While each of these areas has produced big fish for us and in particular Macintosh - where several years back we caught 30 fish that weighed a total of 901 pounds, including what was then the All Tackle World Record of 66.5 pounds - the place that brings back the fondest memories is McGill Bay. Located on the north shore about half way between Trophy and Great Bear Lodges, it has produced more 50 pound fish for us than all of the other areas combined.

For years many of the guys who are in our current group would camp out in McGill for the entire week and invariably would win our weekly big fish contest hands down. It even got to the point that we offered to pay the campers in advance so that we would not have to shell out at the end of the week and while looking at the self satisfied smirks on their faces. This place was not only a big fish factory but you did not have to take more than a 2 minute boat ride from the camp site to be in prime trophy fish waters.

Both Trophy and Great Bear Lodges offer fly outs to McGill but until last year we never took advantage of the opportunity choosing instead to fish either “Mac” Bay or Ekka. This past year the ice was to dictate many of our choices. We had thought about setting up camp on either Ekka or at the Katseyeide but while the vast majority of the ice was gone – what was left put both of those places out of reach for us.

Rumour had it that McGill, while shut off from the main lake by ice was actually open throughout the bay itself so it was easy for us to conclude that it was time to pay a visit to an old friend - and she welcomed us back with open arms

We started to fish not 50 yards from where the plane dropped us off (which just happened to be our old camp site) and is less than 5 minutes I had a 30 plus in the net. And it never really stopped all day. We caught numerous fish between 20 and 40 pounds with plenty of “teenagers” to keep us busy between bigger fish. The sun was shining all day and the water was like glass. Ice fog would roll in from time to time and when it did you could barley see 20 feet in front of you and, while I guess it is a bit of stretch, perhaps our old friend wanted us to stay a bit longer by making it impossible for anyone – including the plane to find us.

Some of our group went back the following day and did very well including a personal best of 45 pounds for one of the returnees – I chose to say back – my visit was perfect and I wanted to remember it that way.

I just want to mention in closing that the reason there are no pictures of fish accompanying this story is that most of us no longer weigh our fish or take them out of the water for pictures. Drawing on all of our years of experience and working with very experienced guides our “guestimates” are extremely close to what your scale will tell you. We have tested it over a number of years and this year we decided to take the plunge. Netting and weighing puts a tremendous amount of stress on the big fish and they are a lot more fragile than you might think – give it shot – the fish will thank you for it and places like McGill will continue to welcome you back and provide excellent fishing – just like an old friend.