

Fishin' in Michigan

Written by Dave Murray

Thursday, 03 December 2020 15:00



More than 20 years ago my wife, Terry, and I spent a long weekend in Aiken. While there, we had dinner with our very close friends, Joe, a pediatrician and his wife, Mary. The other guests were Dr. and Ms. Goode. Although recently retired, Dr. Goode still travelled with Joe, as they had for many years, on annual medical missions. While I was aware of Joe and Dr. Goode's medical missionary work, I had only a nodding acquaintance with the Goodes and was unaware that she was also very involved with her church's good work.

It was late December and quite cold, not only there but also in Beaufort. I knew that one of my friends, a commercial fisherman, would be working during that cold snap and I did not envy him at all. Maybe that's one reason my mind was on fishing. More so than usual, I mean.

As we were getting ready, Terry just out of the blue said "David," in a tone that got my attention. "Now look," she said. "Not everyone has the same interest in fishing that you have. In fact, most people don't. I do not want to look around and see that you have Ms. Goode cornered and the poor woman's eyes are glazed over while you're holding forth on fishing in Alaska or Wyoming or wherever just because it's cold. I know full well that's what's on your mind, but no one needs to hear about it. Not tonight. It's just not acceptable. I suggest that you inquire about others' interests. Find out what's going on in their lives. Just don't make it about fishing."

"Right," I replied. "I've got it," although her admonishment did serve to remind me of that

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that time in Wyoming when an early season weather system came roaring down ... "Stop it," I thought, and began to think that maybe she had a point. Best be careful; wouldn't want to be thought a bore.

So when we arrived I was on my absolute best behavior, which was real easy in the beginning because we were supposed to be mostly listening at first anyway. The two doctors were going to share, complete with a slide show, their recent experiences in a distant, war torn and poverty stricken country, and I was interested in hearing about it.

Not long after a most interesting and informative presentation we were seated for dinner, and that's when things started going awry. You see, I have a hearing impairment and Ms. Goode, whom I hardly knew, was seated on my bad side. So having turned over this new leaf and being truly focused on proper social etiquette, I inquired of her, "What's going on in your life these days?"

"Well," she replied, "I just got back from a mission." And I thought she said she just got back from fishin'.

The first thing that went through my mind was that this was a perfect example of how I should be more careful about subconsciously stereotyping folks, because I had assumed, obviously for no good reason, that this lady would not have had the least interest in fishing.

"That sounds just grand. Where were you?" I asked, expecting Florida or maybe the Bahamas, given the time of year.

"Michigan," was the response.

"Well now, doesn't that just take the cake," I thought. "Her husband goes halfway around the world on a medical mission and she leaves the Deep South in late-December to go fishin' in Michigan, of all places. Now there's a truly dedicated fisher."

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I quickly glanced around to see if Terry was listening to this, in which case I was fully prepared to place the blame squarely where it belonged with a quick “She brought it up, not me!” but no worries – safe to continue this fascinating conversation.

“That’s very interesting.” I said, “What for?” thinking it had to be for steelhead that time of year. I tried to imagine her in insulated waders standing knee deep in a Michigan steelhead stream fly casting in a snowstorm. I was having difficulty getting a clear picture.

With a rather perplexed expression, she replied “Souls.”

Now this was getting to be too much. “Is that right?” I asked, “In fresh water?”

That’s when I felt a sharp kick under the table against my shin. I looked up to see Terry giving me the cut-throat gesture universally understood to mean “Knock it off!” I also noticed that everyone had rather puzzled expressions. So I let it drop, figuring that on the way back to the inn I could easily explain my innocence. Sure, it was a surprising coincidence that we shared the same interests, but I was simply being polite.

As soon as we were in the car I said, “Terry, you may not believe this but Ms. Goode is really serious about fish...” when I was interrupted with “For cryin’ out loud, she wasn’t fishin’! She was on a mission!”

“Oh.” I said. “Well, that puts a whole different light on it. Gosh, I guess it’s a good thing I didn’t ask if she prefers ’em grilled or fried.’

I didn’t catch all the response, but it sounded sort of like some mumbling about ... “such a cross to bear.”

Wishing you happy holidays and tight lines, wherever and whatever you’re fishin’ for this holiday season,

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