

Big Water”

November 20

In October I wrote an article titled “The Illusive Eleven Point Pickerel”. My wife and I had taken a trip to the Eleven Point River for a couple of days of fishing. We spent one day in the blue ribbon water fishing for rainbows and the next day we fished from Whitten to Riverton. It was on the 2nd day that I met Chuck. He and 3 friends were also floating from Whitten to Riverton. They had pulled over to a rare Eleven Point gravel bar for a break. In an exchange of hellos and introductions, Chuck recognized my name from my web site and articles I had written. A couple of days later, I received an e-mail from Chuck Whittom. We exchanged a few e-mails and he asked me if I would be interested in trading a trout guided trip for a walleye guided trip. I didn’t even hesitate, and asked him to tell me where and when, and that I would be there.

We decided on the middle of November, because it was supposed to be a good time of the year for Walleye and he nor I deer hunted. After several e-mails everything was arranged. Chuck was going down early to visit his father and take him fishing before I arrived.

On Friday, the day before the trip, I went to the basement to dig out my spinning gear and tackle box. After dusting it all off, I hadn’t used it in a year, I checked the line on the reels and made sure I had the baits I needed. Plenty of jigs and crank baits and I threw in some of my father’s live bait hooks and weights just in case we used minnows. That’s when I remembered to set the minnow trap. I set it in a little creek on my way to school that afternoon and checked it after school. It was empty. I decided to move it to another location and check it after our basketball scrimmage that night. In the headlights of the car I stumbled down the bank and lifted the trap. It was empty. When I got home I checked my e-mails and found out Chuck and his father had caught some nice crappie,

smallmouth bass and one walleye that day. I went to bed early because I had to be up by 2:00 AM to leave for Doniphan.

It was the 20th of November and the 2nd weekend of the deer season. I knew the deer would be moving around this time of year because of the rut. On my 3-hour trip to Doniphan I saw 7 deer but could only make out one buck and he was a very small yearling. When I arrived at 5:30, Chuck was waiting in the Country Mart parking lot. We loaded up my gear into his Explorer and headed to the river. It was foggy, cool and there was a little mist in the air. As we came out of the little side stream, where the boat was docked, I couldn't believe that this was the Current River. It was big water! Where I fish on the upper Current River there are places that I can almost jump across, Below Doniphan there are places that the River is about 200-300 feet across. Chuck later told me that the Current gets big about 4 miles below VanBuren, where the Big Spring branch enters the river.

We headed up stream to a spot called Laurie Chute. What a beautiful spot that is. The river hits a huge rock bluff at a right angle sending the main current south and creating an enormous eddy to the north. We caught a few smallmouth there and Chuck decided to go down stream to a few more locations. It was at our next stop that I was witness to a site never seen by myself. I have been fishing for about 50 years and this was a first for me. Chuck had made a long cast, and developed a knot in his line. He decided to cut it and retie the lure. As he was pulling in his line hand over hand a fish hit. Chuck played him well and eventually I netted him. It was a beautiful smallmouth. We measured it at 19 inches and released it. Later that day Chuck hooked and lost a second smallmouth about the same size.

It was about noon, we had a few crappie in the live well, and we had caught several fish, but no walleye. We stopped for a little break, ate some sandwiches and planned our afternoon. It seemed

like we would get into fish catch a few and then they would stop hitting. It was the same pattern all day. By late that afternoon we were still catching fish, but the walleye were not cooperating. Eventually that evening we ended up back at a hole we had fished earlier that morning and Chuck started picking up a few crappie and then our first and only walleye of the day. We watched a small flock of turkeys fly up to roost and decided that we had better get back to the dock before it got dark.

All in all it was a grand day. A very long day for me, after getting up at 2 AM, and driving the 3 hours down there, but a very enjoyable day with a new found friend. We had caught several species of fish: Crappie, Largemouth, Smallmouth, Kentuckies, Goggle-eye, Bluegill, Longear sunfish, Sauger, Whitebass and a Walleye. What a trip! THANK YOU CHUCK