

# Just one more cast.

By Jon Wongrey

His name was Roland Newman. He was my uncle. I called him Pappy. We fished every Saturday from the time I could hold a cane pole. We fished in the spring, in a nice farm pond of some 15 acres in Williamsburg County, South Carolina. We fished under a hot sun or in the rain. Sometimes we caught fish and sometimes we didn't. But we were together and that was what counted. Early on, he instilled in me that fishing was to be a gentle and contemplative art.

"Don't let numbers and who catches the biggest fish rule this wonderful pastime," he would say, scratching his gray beard. And when it was time to head to the boat landing, I would ask, "Just one more cast?" He always allowed that final cast, for he knew a boy's notion.

The day came when I slipped away from Pappy and from home. When I returned, I had a son and Pappy was gone. But the things I saw in my son, Pappy had seen in me. We filled our weekends fishing. In the summer, we backpacked the western mountains of

As we fished on, I heard my son say to Rice the same words I'd said to him, the same message Pappy had given to me: "Don't let numbers or who catches the biggest fish rule this wonderful pastime."

As the spring evening waned, I yelled out to the twosome that I was going in to prepare our supper. The two-burner cook stove was placed on a long picnic table. On the right burner a pot of salt-seasoned water was placed. The grits were stirred in when the water began to "boil." To that a quarter-cup of butter was added.

Cleaned, peppered and dusted with yellow cornmeal, the bream were placed in a black cast-iron skillet bubbling with hot oil on the left burner. The oil popped and hissed as the freshly mealed fish cooked.

A chill had come upon the pond and the piquant scent of frying fish and the corn-like odor of bubbling grits fused with spring's forested wildflowers and transported to where a father and son

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South Carolina for trout of many species. And I implanted in him the angling values Pappy had instilled in me. "Don't let numbers or who catches the biggest fish rule this wonderful pastime."

And when the afternoon sun was at low tide, I would hear the echo of those wonderful words, "Just one more cast?"

Then one day my son, grown, left home. When he returned, he had a son stirred with the fishing fever. We call him Rice.

Since it was Saturday morning, I called my son to see if he and Rice wanted to spend the afternoon on a quiet pond fishing for bream. My son readily accepted the offer and wanted to know if we could cook at the pond. "You know," he said, "fry some fish...make a pot of grits?"

Rice, now 10, chattered continuously as we left the city and drove into the countryside. The pond is a mixture of stumps, logs and standing cypress trees clothed in long, robe-like grayish-white banners of Spanish moss. Wood ducks nest in the trees' cavities.

My son and Rice got into one of the small green boats. I fished alone in the other. And not 10 yards from the bank I had a bream take my bait. A nice fish — wide and thick.

Not long after, I watched as my grandson hauled his first bream from the water. Rice held up the fish for me to find favor. I gladly did.

fished in the late evening. The sun, a plum red, hovered on the western border. And as the first bull bats began to fly, the first whippoorwills began to call, and the first bullfrogs began to croak, an old request came softly from the pond to where I stood in the light of two kerosene lanterns frying fish, "Just one more cast?"

