



Fishing with Mom and Dad



The author with his mom, Betty, and the Smallmouth Bass they caught.

by Jeff Woleslagle

photos by the author

One of my earliest fishing memories dates back to 1975. I was about 5 years old, and my folks had taken me to Canoe Creek State Park, Blair County, to try our luck in the lake. I still recall that warm spring day while sitting on a grassy bank, snug between my mom and dad, fishing rod in hand, trying to be still and looking with hope at the water. Amazingly, the line suddenly began to peel off my fishing reel, and I frantically pulled in a beautiful Brown Trout. At that age and experience level, taking time to properly play a fish just wasn't in my knowledge bank. I vividly remember gazing in wide-eyed wonder at that stunning fish as it thrashed in our small landing net, and it set a course for me that I never

could have imagined at the time. I'm certain these scenarios have played out countless times over the years on Pennsylvania's waters with moms and dads and sons and daughters. Fishing is best taught in person, and traditions are often passed down from one generation to the next. It's a sport that can be enjoyed for a lifetime, and time shared on the water creates lasting family memories.

I often think it was more than a fish at the end of the line that day all those years ago; it was somehow my destiny. It shaped my college and career choices and certainly ignited a passion that burns no less bright today than it did when I was a child. It was my mom and dad who helped make that special moment happen, and we have been fishing together many times since that day.

If you love fishing and you want to share it with your family, a little upfront planning can ensure a good outing and help make stories that will be told for years of the lunkers that were landed and the ones that got away. For many years, I have made



The author's dad, Len, with a nice Channel Catfish.

it a regular practice to fish with my folks on Father's Day. Sometimes, my brother joins in when possible. My parents live on the shore of the Juniata River, so it usually doesn't take much planning beyond a phone call and a quick check of the weather forecast. Planning a trip with your fishing mentors can be as simple as visiting a local lake for Bluegills and other panfish or as elaborate as a guided trip to one of Pennsylvania's destination waters.

The year the COVID-19 pandemic arrived found my dad and I fishing from their river dock on Father's Day. It also found me worried deeply about what the future may hold, but one thing that has always been a calming constant is sharing time together. The peace and quiet that surrounds you while you're fishing provides a great opportunity for communication. That particular day, the winds were high and so was the water. Despite the adverse conditions we landed some nice Smallmouth Bass and a few Channel Catfish, and it was just the stress reliever we needed during an uncertain time.

If you are fortunate enough to have those folks in your life who introduced you to fishing in Pennsylvania, make sure you spend time with them this season. You'll be glad you did. The stories and memories that we have made together over the years are priceless. Think about a niece or nephew, a friend or neighbor, or anyone else you can introduce to fishing. You can be the spark that ignites a lifelong passion for someone, and you will most likely create another outdoor advocate who knows the value of clean waters and time shared together, just like my parents did for me. ☑

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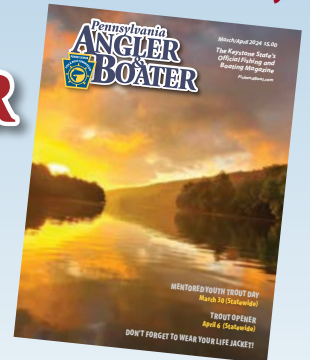
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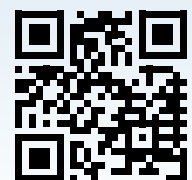
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