

## Uncle Ron – 4 Lines in the Water



Uncle Ron. That's what he was to my sister Nancy and me. What a wonderful uncle. Always smiling. Always quick with a funny remark. I told Tim last week that I don't remember ever seeing Uncle Ron get angry. Now, I'm sure he had his moments. We all do. But for me, he was always happy, laughing and joking.

Some of the best days of my youth were spent in a boat with my dad and his brother, Uncle Ron, and my cousin Tim. We spent many hours on the waters of Minnesota, Canada and even South Dakota. Yes, there are lakes there. So many good times, great memories and lessons learned from our fathers that included lots of laughs whenever you had Uncle Ron in the boat.

One of our favorite jokes never seemed to get old. In those days, dad was usually running the trolling motor in the back of the boat, smoke in one hand, the tiller in the other; skirting the rock points and weed lines. Uncle Ron was usually sitting just ahead of my dad so they could talk and devise the best strategy for the day and watch the little green box. The little green box? Why, that's the Lowrance "fish finder". The most incredible technology of the 1970's. It hardly seemed fair to the fish at the time.

Tim and I both learned about trolling for Northern Pike from our dads. Some of you might be asking, "Really, you guys actually tried to catch those slimy things on purpose?" Yes we did. I'm certain that my dad and Uncle Ron both learned from Grandpa John and Grandma Doris. They were paying it forward.

Uncle Ron and my dad taught us how to rig a sucker minnow on a strip-on; the right amount of lead sinker to put on your line; how to tie a knot – a good one; how to pump the rod to change the speed of your lure to make the spinner turn faster - and boy, you could feel the vibration of that spinner run right up the line and into your hand. We learned how to tell the difference between a fish and a weed, or a log - and believe me, there were many laughs and lots of teasing when the "monster" turned out to be a tree branch.



As soon as we got into heavy weeds, "Keep 'em up!" would be called out and we'd all raise our rod tips high to keep the treble hooks out of the cabbage. When we did hook into one, and believe me, we hooked into plenty, we learned how to play the fish - pump and reel, and not to horse em!

Lessons were a 2 way street though. One lesson my dad learned was to check his sandwich carefully if Uncle Ron and I made them. Somehow, one day on Lake Oahe, the cheese in my dad's sandwich was still wrapped in its cellophane when he bit into it later that day. I don't know, Uncle Ron and I thought it was pretty funny. I'm sure was an innocent mistake on our part....



With four lines in the water we had to learn to keep our lines clear of each other, and clear of the motor. In those days, we fished with steel rods and bait casting reels. You know, the ones that make that *zippity zip* sound when you let line out; and turned into a rat's nest if you didn't cast it with just the right amount of pressure on the spool with your thumb. We learned that Grandpa John always said the best time for a strike was coming off an inside turn, because the lure would slow and drop in depth, and then, just as you came out of the turn the lure would speed up and rise, tempting a strike from a hungry northern.

So, you're asking yourself, "What was the oldest joke Jeff was talking about?" Well, as the fishing day dragged on, when the bites were not there, and especially when the sun was shining, it was very easy to dose off to the steady rhythm of the trolling motor, and the sounds of small waves lapping at the sides of the boat. The best nap ever. Until someone grabbed hold of the napper's line and gave it a good hard tug. Usually, a series of tugs, bam... Bam... BAM. The napper always leaped to action to set the hook, only to realize that it was his turn to be the butt of the oldest joke in the boat. Uncle Ron had his fair share of naps and caught us napping as many times.

Of course we learned more than how to fish, how to launch and land boat, and how to clean fish. We didn't know it, but we were learning about life and the love of family. Catching fish was a bonus. So, now there is one less line in the water. I wish I could tug on Uncle Ron's line just one more time.

