

2005 Long-Line Release



The Aroostook & Atikonak River News

Published occasionally in the north corner of the Libby Farm House



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WINTER 2005

Castings from Maine

From ice-out on April 28th to closing on December 1st was a full slate. The year held the promise of owning our own land and building new cabins. We lost two dear friends to untimely deaths and flew the flag at half mast for the loss of a great president. Gratefully we also gained a couple of new family members with a new daughter-in-law and sister-in-law. Of course the word is out that fishing and hunting were the best we have ever had in Ellen and my 28 years.

Lots of star alignments happened this year with the Red Sox finally winning, Matt making a full page photo in the Orvis catalogue, articles on us in Field & Stream and even a book with a section on us. Even Mom, now 86, has only seen the Sox win once. The Orvis photo is in the new fly fishing catalogue and can be attributed to my star photographer, Ellen. The new book with a section on us is "A Fisherman's Guide to Maine" by Kevin Tracewski. We do have this book and of course Ellen's cook book, 2nd edition, now available.

My thanks go to our whole crew: Ellen, Matt J, Jess, Mike, Ali, Gayle, Beth, Danny, Fred, Priscilla, Taylor, Suzanne, Diane and Joe. Also to the

guides that made your lives a little better and mine easier: Mike, Joe, Bob, Toby, Danny, George, Gary, Rick, Matt J, Boyd, Ed, Jeff and two new ones Jim Fahey and Don Kleiner. Using our new 2nd plane with Matt J as pilot and new canoes, boats, float tubes and kayaks we were able to fish many more waters more effectively.

See Castings page 2



August fishing at Matt's favorite pond.

Our Servicemen and Women

We know of several of our guests who have been or currently are serving in the military, and we want to sincerely thank you for being willing to serve in harms way for our country. Without your unselfish commitment, the world might be a very different place, thanks for protecting our freedom. Come home soon, and safe! □ The Libbys



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MJL News



Feild and Stream Oct 2004.

Castings continued from page 1

Our hunts were successful for the quality of game more than numbers. The deer and bear take were average, but the size was the highest in years. Top bear weights of 340 lbs. and a deer live weight of 325 strained the scales. Birds were expected to be down and started out the season that way, but ended up with some great days afield with up to 46 points from one dog in one day.

Photo contest winners were Rod Vallee and Eric Brooker. Both will be eligible for a free nights stay at camp. Photos that tell a story will win for 2005.

I thank all of you for making our 28th year a success for Ellen and I and for making our family's 115th a memorable one. We are still working on the land purchase and will keep you posted. Special thanks for the gift of Libby memorabilia from the Hawkin's cousins including fish and game mounts, letters, photos and the original Libby Register from 1893!

—Matt P.

This year brought a lot of firsts for me. The most important is that it is the first time I have ever worn a ring on my finger. Other not so important but very fun firsts were guiding a fishing party that caught multiple 3-4 pound brook trout on a fly-rod in a spot that most people would bet against there ever being a fish there.

I saw the September river fishing for salmon be the best that I can remember, with a couple of five pound landlocks caught out of the Aroostook. I also saw one of my female clients cry over how beautiful the scenery was even after she had to kick herself around a pond in a float tube all afternoon and into the night.

October turned out to be one of the best on record at Libby's. We had to work a little at first but we found a lot of new covers for future years. I had a once in a lifetime day with Ray and Gary on the "Norway" Rd, when they came just two Woodcock shy of a full double limit. That is eight Grouse



Dog tired and happy

and four Woodcock between them. They were all shot on the wing over Anna and Bullet. On that day there were 23 flushes.

I guided my first 140 class buck, a very nice ten pointer shot by Curt from Panama City, Florida who coincidentally was seeing real snow for the first time in his life. Three out of four deer hunters had the opportunity at a buck the first two weeks

This was the second year that Libby's has had the Maine State Forest Service Fire Watch contract for the route in our area. We bid this job two years ago so that I could build hours. It hasn't quite worked out that way. The first year I flew fifty hours on a 170 hour contract and this year I flew forty. Doing outcamp maintenance and scenic flights has brought my hours up close to the 500 that I need to be "Air-Taxi" certified.

Jessica and I bought a house in November of 2003. The house was partially finished, the upstairs just being bare studs. This winter, most of our spare time has gone into insulating, sheetrock and painting so that we can have the second floor done by next winter when we move back. The house is in Wyman, Maine, about 4 miles from Sugarloaf/USA where I work as a Snow Controller and Groomer. We try to get as much skiing in as possible but so far the runs have been few and far between.

One more thing Jess wanted me to mention is that I am now on ring number 2. About three weeks after we were married, I was guiding some river fisherman and the ring somehow came off in the cold water and was swept downstream, never to be seen again. I didn't notice until I got back to camp that it had fallen off. The new one is a little smaller.

—Matt J

From the Breadboard

What a year 2004 was!! Joy, sadness, work, play, saying good-bye to old friends and making new ones – isn't that all a part of life? Our season started with the usual scrubbing of all the camps from top to bottom to make everything shipshape, raking, planting and adding more beautiful flower beds (Thanks, Matt and Jess!). Up until August 14, much of the discussion in the kitchen focused on Matt and Jess's wedding plans. One would think that being the parents of the groom that we wouldn't have been as involved in these wedding preparations, but that was definitely not the case. We were asked our advice, and sometimes they even took it! After August 14, the discussion focused on how well everything went! See related articles.

A few years ago, someone, who shall remain nameless, came up with the "SS Award", which is bestowed on the staff or guide who does something really dumb. No matter how I try, I can't get rid of that "honor"! First there was the "beef blunder", then the "poultry problem", and most recently, the "checkbook challenge". And that was all in 2004! I'm quite willing to pass this award on – any takers?

We had the most beautiful September and October that I can remember in years! Glorious days, lovely sunsets,

and displays of the Aurora Borealis reinforced my thoughts that it's my favorite time of year! Although we were very busy, (which is a good thing!), we made time to enjoy what all of you come to experience. I feel so blessed to work and play in such a relaxing environment. We can actually see folks shake off their troubles for a few days and their main concern becomes what fly to use, or what's for dinner? We take your vacation time as seriously as you do, and strive to make it memorable for you!

Matt hit a milestone in November – the big 50, and we were able to surprise him with a little birthday party. You should've seen the look on his face, it was priceless! To keep him out of the kitchen while we made preparations, I sent him hunting with Matt J, which was an added bonus for him, as that was the only day they were able to hunt together.

When we closed camp we flew immediately to Ohio to celebrate the wedding of Gary, Matt's brother, to Judy Lupica. Judy makes a great addition to the Libby Family.

Our 29th season is just around the corner, and I am just as excited as I was for our 1st! Hope you'll be joining us in 2005 for your adventure in our little piece of paradise! God bless you all! –Ellen

From the Southern Breadboard

Tim and I are enjoying life in the South. We bought a house last April in Washington, Maine, which is near Rockland. I am working at MBNA... please don't shoot me; I am not the one calling you at suppertime. Tim is working for Daggett Builders creating carpentry masterpieces.

Last year for Christmas, Jess and I made Mom a second version of her cookbook. She finally got her act together and got it published! It came out great. We are all very excited about it. It is a 3-ring, hard-cover book and has over 200 recipes from our family. It also has a history and great old photos from the last 100 years. We have plenty for sale at \$15 and we will gladly ship them. They go great with the aprons as well! We plan to keep it updated with additions available as we come up with new recipes.

We miss you all and hope to see some of you next summer when we come to visit. Anyone that wants to come to the big city of Washington, population about 750, is welcome. That goes for you too, Mom & Dad... Enjoy 2005! –Alison Winslow



Maine Guide Muffins circa 1890

1 handful corn meal
1 handful sugar
1 egg
Pour in some melted butter
½ sieve flour
1 tsp. soda
1 tsp. salt
2 tsp. cream of tartar
½ cup canned milk
1 c. water
To make pancakes, add more water and butter.
Heat iron griddle on wood fire and grease with salt pork.
From Mom's recipes: Dad's specialty 1933-59.

2004 GUIDING

And another season of guiding at Libby Camps has gone by in a blur. They must be getting shorter because they go by faster each year! I am positive this has nothing to do with my age!

Summer was much cooler and wetter than normal. So, I did not see as much spring hole fishing as usual, but this was great for the fish. Cool waters with fish spread out all over most ponds. Gary's pond produced well all season, like the day John H and I had there in early June. My new pond also gave David and me an exceptional dry fly day in early June. Matt's favorite pond produced an unbelievable day for Sean and me in late July, both size and numbers. August was good and Matt J got the catch of his life on the 14th at Eagle Lake! I wonder what his secret fly is?

September weather was great and I saw several beauties come out of a favorite fall hole – just ask John, Tom, Karl, Gabe, Chuck or Mark! All in all a very good season of fishing, with many great people in camp, like the family group that Rod brought to us from Caucomgomac. Three generations, 16 in all, they were a joy to have in camp.

Now let's go hunting. Bear season – The first thing I want to say about the bear hunt is how proud and happy I was with the way the hunters performed on stand. No missed or wounded bear! Great shooting (and not shooting), guys!! We usually hunt for one week only, but in '04 we did two weeks, as we will this year. 20 hunters saw 36 bear, and took 10. Average size was up – Rod took the largest the first night, over 340 lbs. Also, it doesn't seem to matter what day you hunt – 3 bears were taken the first day of the hunt, 2 bears were taken the last day of the second week!

Each year we seem to get a "story" out of the bear hunt. This year it was bear that burst into flames after the shot. No way could I give this story justice, you'll have to ask Joe.

More good news, bear hunters. We beat the referendum that was trying to stop the hunt! Thank you to all who helped us and let's book for the 2005 hunt. It will be a fun time!

My moose hunt turned into another "Mikey" adventure, much to the dismay of Matt P, Matt J and Toby. I was guiding the father/son team of Alan Hall Sr/Jr from New York state. I have a hard time staying away from Mooseleuk Lake during moose season, and this year was no exception. Late on opening day, I managed to call in a good bull for the Halls. They shot, and the moose decided to travel about 150 before he fell. So instead of him being in 4 feet of water that we could float him out in, he fell into 3 feet of thick mud – not good! We needed help, and lots of it! So the moose retrieval team, Matt, Matt and Toby were called in from the main camp. I won't go into detail how they moved the moose from 3 feet of muck to 4 feet of water, or how we looked when we got to the water, but I will tell you we made it back to camp at 3:15 am!! Long day! The team says they will never come to help me with a moose again, but I know they really like a "Mikey adventure"! Thank, guys, and thank to the Alan Hall's for a great moose hunt!

We finally come to my favorite, the deer season. For the second year in a row my son Danny starts us off with a bang, literally. Youth Day was a blank, but on the first day of the season, at about 11:15 am, Danny gets his first buck, and it's definitely a buck to be proud of, 8 points and 200 lbs. This was just the start for 200 lb bucks. Before the season was over we took 13 bucks at the main camp, and 5 of them went 200 lbs or more, the largest weighed 253 lbs dressed! I think this was the start of a trend we will have for the next several years. The last couple of years I had thought there were a lot of young 2½ year old bucks – now these bucks are getting older

and heavier. Mid-winter, and it looks like another easy winter for the deer herd. I bet 2005 will be one of our best deer seasons- I know I can't wait!!

This is the time of winter when cabin fever starts to set in. I can't wait for spring when we are back in camp, ready for a new adventure each day with you, our great guests! Tight Lines, and Shoot Straight! Hope to see you all this year!
—Mike

Biggest Buck Contest



Tom Atchison of Harrisburg, North Carolina took the largest buck dressed weight of 253 lbs., a live weight over 300 pounds! He will win a free trip for 2005. Of the 16 bucks weighed in at Libby's 7 topped the scales at 200 lbs. or better.

Jess's New Life

I had a busy year in 2004 graduating from University of Maine in May with a degree in Business Administration and moving to camp the next day. This was my third year at Libby's, but my first full season: my first two years were just during vacation (yeah right). Matt and I got married in August on a beautiful day (see story).

Becoming part of the Libby family was great, but also changed my interests and hobbies. I did learn how to fly fish in 2003 and again in May of 2004 I got out of the dishes one night to go fishing with Matt. We fished for two hours before dark, and I caught a 16 inch salmon and two brook trout, one of which was 15 inches. The biggest change was becoming a hunter.

At the beginning of September, I wanted to see what our bear hunters went through in a stand and didn't know if this was going to be the last year we would be able to hunt over bait, so I decided to try bear hunting. It was really exciting to keep hearing noises, getting my heart rate up, thinking a bear was going to come out any minute, but he never did come out when I was there.

In October I got to use my new shot gun that I received as a gift from Matt as a graduation gift in May. This year on opening day, Ellen told me I had to go clean River Camp. Matt was guiding so he couldn't come help or bring me hunting, so she told me to bring my shot gun with me just in case I saw something. Well we both knew I wouldn't shoot even if I did, because I had never shot anything before so that was kind of a joke, but I brought it anyway. This was the first time I drove to an out camp alone, so that was an adventure in itself.

I got to River Camp without seeing a bird, so I cleaned the camp and did what I went there to do. When I was done mopping the floor I went outside to put the cleaning bucket back in the truck and wow, there it was, a grouse sitting right in the middle of the driveway in front of the truck. At first I froze and didn't know what to do,

then I rummaged around in the truck for a while getting my shot gun that was under bedsprings and cleaning supplies. I took the gun out and loaded it keeping my eye on the grouse the whole time. Well by the time I got the gun loaded and was thinking about shooting, the bird hopped into the woods a few feet off the road. I tiptoed up the driveway a bit and when I saw it in the woods I pulled my gun up and shot. I got it, and he was only 15 feet away! I went back to the truck and put my gun down carefully, (because Matt always said not to scratch it) and then I thought to myself, how am I going to pick this bird up, because I didn't want to touch it. So I slipped on my rubber cleaning gloves and went in the woods and picked the bird up and put him in the back of the truck and drove back to camp.

When I came hopping into the kitchen to tell Ellen I thought she was going to die of laughter. She couldn't believe

I had shot a grouse with no one else around. I did get to go hunting a few other times this fall and got my limit on one day of three hours of hunting. I did have my own personal guide though and he did the dirty work for me. In all this season I got 10 grouse and 1 woodcock.

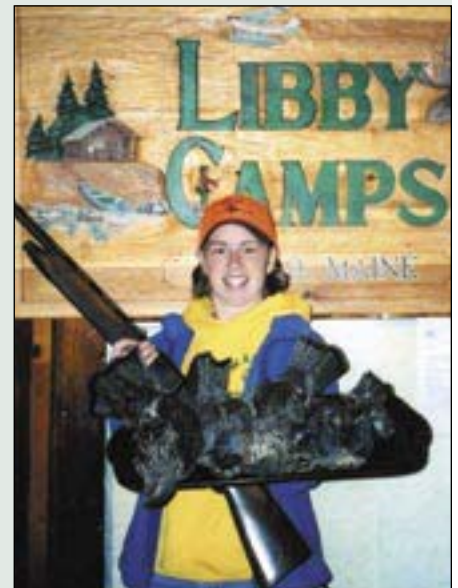
My hunting didn't stop there, I also went deer hunting for the first time this year. I spent four mornings Thanksgiving week in a stand watching deer and hoping to see a buck. The first morning I went out, I saw 4 doe in four hours, 3 that stayed and ate in front of me for two hours. The other mornings were not as eventful but I did see more throughout the week. I never did get to shoot a buck this year because my husband shot it first. He was supposed to be guiding me, but he took my deer (that's my story.) But I'm happy for him anyway, because he shot a nice 7 pointer. —Jess Libby

Orvis Wing Shooting Endorsement

Once again we will make a step to work with Orvis as an Orvis endorsed wing shooting lodge, the only one in the Northeast. We will of course specialize in grouse and woodcock in their natural environment with our dogs and customer dogs. We also will be offering a VIP trip which will include a fly out to a different area to hunt and unlimited use of our clays course. 3 day hunt with 4 nights lodging \$1950/person (single) \$1400/person (double occupancy).

Clays course? Yes we are putting in an 8 station course around a remote controlled thrower. There will be two stations easily used on rainy days (under cover). The head of wing shooting program for Orvis, Dan O'Connor, is helping

design the course. It should be up and running in the summer. This makes us endorsed for both fishing and hunting.



The Golden Fish Award

You might say the Golden Fish Award sort of evolved. Like many things in our society, it went from simple to complex, from rational to kind of crazy, and from an afterthought to a passion. And to the annual winners, well, some say it went from reward to a form of punishment. Throughout all this, however, it has never lost its allure or it's fun.

Background

Before I jump right into it, let me provide you with a little background to help put its creation into a context. Some time in the early 1950s, we left the secure coves and cloudy waters of Morses Pond (Wellesley, Massachusetts) to venture forth to the pristine waters of Maine. Specifically just outside of Rangeley, Maine. My twin brother Rick and I were about eight or nine years old. At first, we flailed the water with 4 1/2 foot fiberglass rods and a mysterious spin/cast reel called the Cormorant. (I've only seen two of these in my life. My brother had the other one.)

During the second year, we were outfitted with fly rods. Rick's was a three piece 8 foot rod. I customized mine by taking three inches off the tip to get a stiffer action (no comments, please). These were great years with great stories, too numerous to recount here. One worth mentioning, however, was our introduction to an old fly caster, Dr. Roy, who led us through the basics of wet fly fishing. He was a true sportsman as was evidenced by his calm demeanor and patience after Rick planted a number 12 Cow Dun in his left ear lobe. All he said was, "Son, were did you get that side arm casting motion?" (Some things never change.)

Fishing eventually would take a back seat to organized team sports, high school, college, the service, and the establishment of our own families. My relocation to the Chicago area

made family contact difficult. It was this reality that prompted my mother to schedule our first official family reunion. The place, Rangeley, the year, 1985. In retrospect, this was a brilliant decision on my mother's part.

The Golden Fish Idea is Born

The first reunion at our old fishing haunt was a tremendous success, and we followed it up the next year at the same place. Prior to the trip, I went into a gag gift store and purchased a hollow, yellow fish. It was about sixteen inches long and resembled a bass. But, it was ugly and that's what I was looking for. As I recall, it was right next to the rubber chickens in the display case. Rick won the contest our second year and I presented him with his ugly trophy. He was so proud, it made you sick. You should have seen him grinning and holding his fish in the air, chanting "I'm number one!" Hell, he won it with a twelve inch brook trout - kind of small, I think. The fish is really yellow with black accents, but calling it the Golden Fish Award kind of spruced up the ceremony. Certainly, no one at the bar that night challenged its description. Someone even thought it was a trout!

The Grand Unveiling

Somewhere between July, 1986 and July, 1987, my brother, Rick, lost it. I don't know if he was actually institutionalized, but his continuous giggling every time we talked about our next family fishing week worried me. (Mom thought it was normal.)

We fished our third year at another camp on a lake the name of which I still can't pronounce. Anyway, Rick shows up with this big cardboard box, giggling as usual. After a dumb speech, he unveils this "thing". It's all I could call it at the time. He's got the ugly rubber fish stapled to a large antique breadboard. The original paper bag it came in has been rolled up and stuffed into its hollow body to give it girth.

Below it, running across the width of the breadboard, he has a series of Plexiglas photo holders with little brass plaques below them. Above the fish are cup hooks which he explains are for the winning lure. And, of course, for 1986 there's his picture holding the tiny trout. (OK, I'll refrain from any more sarcastic comments about his winning fish.) This "new" trophy will accommodate twelve winners! The Golden Fish Award, born in 1986 (and scheduled to die that same year), had just been transformed to a relic celebrating the Brooker family's fishing reunions for the next decade and beyond. I actually thought Rick would throw the ugly rubber fish away.

Over the Years

The annual Brooker fishing outing has been going on steadily since that time. We fished out of other camps for several years, and now we fish out of Libby Camps. Wherever we have gone, the trophy comes with us. It's got a lot more photos on it now, all kinds of hanging lures/flys, and we added some appendages. Hanging below the main breadboard, we attached an old clip board, and below that, an old cheeseboard (shaped like a fish). It's about 4' long, and is always hung at the "master" cabin on an outside wall under a roof. (The master cabin is where the bar is located.) It seems to draw other fishing parties to it, most just curious about what it is. Some think it's neat, some just stare, and others mumble something as they walk away.

So, How Do You Win It?

I don't actually know what the current rules are which determine the winner. They seem to change a little each year. Originally, the biggest fish of the week won the trophy. Later, we developed a system in which three measures were used. One was biggest fish, one was most fish, and the third was the "keeper average". These latter criteria



The prestigious Golden Fish Award, July 30th 2004.

worked like a batting average which reflects the percentage of fish caught which could have been kept. We are “catch and release” fish folk, don’t weigh the fish, and sometimes guess at the lengths of a lot of fish. It’s an honor system and has worked well.

The scoring has gotten simpler (unlike the trophy) since the year we labored under the infamous FIASCO Scoring System. It’s hard to describe this system, and once people understand it, they tend not to believe it, anyway. This system was predicated on “fish inches”. It worked (or didn’t work is more like it) like this. For each fish caught at or above the keeper size, you got the number of inches of the fish. For non-keepers, you got just one inch. That’s pretty straight forward, isn’t it? Now, add the “bait restrictor provision”. It called for a two inch deduction from the original size of the fish if the fish was caught using actual bait. Blessedly, we only used this system one year. Our guide, Gary Corson, almost went crazy that year and even told my brother,

Rick, that if he scrapped the system, he’d let Rick fly cast side arm! The camp’s dock hand, who arranged for the bait picketed the main lodge in protest. That’s how bad it was. But, in deference to its invention, we all approved it at the “executive committee” meeting the night before departure. You know, after a few cocktails on the first night of a week’s vacation, anything seems reasonable.

About Family

The Golden Fish Award does introduce an element of competition to the experience and certainly stimulates animated exchanges throughout the week on daily achievements and near misses. But, it’s obviously a lot more than that. It’s become a sort of history of our shared passion, of our comings together, and of our individual adventures shared with friends. Fishing may be the basis for our annual reunions, but not the reason. The week in Northern Maine has been instrumental in keeping us all connected, bringing other family members to the party who enjoy the

outdoors, and establishing a tradition that might be used by the younger generations to stay in contact. I’m pleased that two of my daughters have recently been able to partake of the adventure and have loved it! I’m happy I got to know my Uncle Earl as a friend, not simply a relative. And I’m thrilled that Uncle Earl was able to share the adventures with his two grandsons. As the trophy grows, so do the memories. It’s the memories that are important. And we’d have them even if Rick had thrown away that ugly yellow fish.

Special Thanks

Special thanks are in order for Matt and Ellen Libby and their family and friends who oversee our stay. Libby Camps is a marvelous setting for our annual fishing reunion, and we are fortunate that they and our guide, Gary, join us in our fishing, our revelry, and our unbridled pursuit of that eccentric old trophy that no one really looks forward to disassembling and packing up at week’s end.

—David Brooker

GPS Research



Those of you that know me know that in the last few years I have become very fond of having and using a GPS. For everyone's benefit (except mine) in 2004 I started an ongoing research project on some GPS don'ts.

The 2004 list

- Don't run your GPS through a clothes dryer in wet jacket pocket!
- Don't leave your GPS lying loose in boat that you are going to capsize! FYI, a GPS will sink!
- Don't leave your GPS on top of the truck and then drive off over rough dirt roads.

Again for your benefit as my research finds more GPS don'ts I will update the list! Hope it saves you some money \$\$!

-Mike

Projects (honey do and honey done)

The spring brought us to camp on the 17th of April with a little snow and the ground still frozen, so the projects began. We jacked up 'Mom's Camp' built a crib under it and moved it by skidder to the other side of the driveway. We almost lost it on a side hill when it slid towards Glover Camp like an out of control mudslide. The next day it was leveled in its new home and became Matt's camp until August 14th. The old site of Mom's camp became Jess's new flower garden.

The old bath house which stood by the parking area was supposed to be razed 6 years ago, but had become

a catch all. We burned it on a wet spring day and spent the rest of the summer and fall building a large two story barn/garage to store our woodworking shop, tool shop and supply shed all in one. Thanks to the many customers who helped us build it.

The old tractor shed will be burned this spring when we weed all the 'stuff' out of it. This summer we are going to start a new cabin for Jess and Matt in the same spot. We also have a permit to build a cabin on Brown Pond, a new lease, but will have to check on spare time. Any carpenters looking for a summers work?



Satellite Phone Rental



For those outcamp users or those who just have to have communications for the day or overnight, we now have two compact phones that will work from anywhere to anywhere. Rental is \$15/day or \$75/week + time used.



The Vallee Family: 16 men and 3 generations.

Wedding Well Worth Weather

The tri fold wedding invitation lay on the Formica topped counter. The creaminess of its multi-layered fold invited me to make my reservations early: a rental car and hotel accommodations. Later, on reflecting that reservations had been made four months in advance, a recently coined proverb would come to mind: *We make plans...and God laughs!*"

We would be making the trip from Ontario, through Quebec, to land at Northern Maine Regional Airport in Presqu'Isle in our Cessna 150, whose engine has also been converted to a 150. The plans were to fly in three or four days prior to the wedding, rent a car and enjoy the delights of Northern Maine. Bonnie and Charlie had other plans.

Bonnie was a girl of whirlwind energy, born in Jamaica and coming ashore in epic proportions. Charlie, an equally brazen blustery brat, bullied his way through Port Charlotte to terrorize inland Floridian communities. Both juvenile bullies waylaid plans for thousands upon thousands of U.S.residents.

Gale force winds, torrential downpours, 500-foot ceilings, quarter-mile visibility and flash flooding kept us grounded Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of that week.

Saturday morning dawned hazy and overcast. Low ceilings in Montreal threatened but did not intimidate. Jim, our pilot, decided it was a 'go'. We left Oshawa Airport at 9:30 a.m. The wedding was on the shores of Eagle Lake at five that afternoon. It would be tight.

Our single stop enroute, St. Jean-sur le Richilieu , P.Q. saw us wolfing hamburgers from the concession stand of an itinerant fair, occupying two of the airports three runways. It had become necessary to alter our flight plan and change our destination

from Presqu'Isle as the road travel remaining, after touch down, would require time we no longer had.

Consequently our destination point became Frenchville, site of the Northern Maine Aroostook airport, the closest point to Eagle Lake, as well as the last point to obtain a rental car and aviation fuel.

We arrived at the wedding site to a rush of welcome greetings, and seven minutes *to spare*. The groom was of Libby Camps Maine fame; the bride, of local Corriveau prominence. Twin floatplanes hovered over the sky stained a cerulean blue. For this day, instead of wilderness duties, the outfitter planes were carrying out an assignment of a different nature. The father of the groom, owner of Libby Camps, took great pride and pleasure in flying in the bride by floatplane.

A bower of latticework framed an eastern blue sky. As the rays of a setting sun blessed the nuptials, all previous weather warnings became a figment of meteorological imagination.

And then, an unexpected moment arrived in the ceremony – a moment unrehearsed, unplanned, unexpected, a Moment of Silence.

Kathy Hodgkins, 47, a veteran pilot and co-owner of KT Aviation, had been among the scheduled invited guests. The day before the wedding the bridal party and guests were stunned to learn that Kathy's plane had gone down on Big Houston Mountain about 2-1/2 miles from the Katahdin Iron Works Gate near Brownville. Kathy, wife and experienced pilot, did not survive the crash. Kathy had been the groom's flight instructor. A great lady, from all accounts, beloved in life, heroic in death.

Rather than cast a pall on the sunlit ceremony, guests were proud to

See Wedding page 10



What it takes to get a day off at Libby's

Matt Sr. is always nagging at me saying, "Don't stress about the little things." Well, with Hurricanes Bonnie and Charlie and torrential downpours on August 12th and 13th and an outside wedding planned for August 14th, I must say I was stressing out about every little thing. When the morning came of the most important day of Matt J's and my life, the sun popped out through the clouds and it turned out to be a beautiful day.

Our wedding took place on a spectacular lawn on Eagle Lake in Northern Maine. Matt Sr. flew me in with the Cessna 185. It isn't every day that a girl gets to fly to her wedding in a seaplane. We had a wonderful wedding and reception with about 300 of our family and friends. We want to thank everyone who could attend and all those who kept us in their thoughts and prayers for our special day. —Jess

Wedding continued from page 9

participate in recognition of someone who, but for a day's difference, would have been among them. It was a collective offering to include her spirit in the celebration of the day. This day had received a gentle uplifting and, perhaps these guests, most of whom were joyous Mainers, were eager to give something of their selves in tribute to one who'd been deprived of celebrating this great day with her student.

Shortly after this moving tribute, the ceremony concluded and the couple turned to face their guests, the panorama of Eagle Lake spread out behind them, before walking a stately white-carpeted aisle to form a reception line.

As guests mingled, one gentleman was engaged in an enthusiastic account of the afternoon's activities. Apparently, before our arrival, the father of the groom/pilot of the bride had spent most of his afternoon giving his guests an aerial tour of Eagle Lake.

Having no idea of our recent itinerary, he turned to us, with the joviality of a soon-to-be-sated wedding guest and boomed, "Say! Too bad you weren't here earlier. You could have gone for a flight!"

We laughed. *Now that would have been different!*

—Anne Marie and Jim Beattie, reside in Oshawa, Ontario.

Ice Cutting '05



Ice cutting as always this year was on Martin Luther King's birthday weekend, Jan 14-17. This year with very little snow and rain on the 14th made it a real challenge with chains bought for the trucks and having to wait to follow a sand truck into the trail head. We arrived finally to find some of the crew already there who had skied in from the South. They had to ski and skijor through 6 inches of water. All arrived by dark safely and then the temperatures dropped below zero. The lake froze

again and the cutting was superb. The glare ice was a challenge to maneuver on, but we ended up getting 450 blocks or 17 tons of ice in 7 hours of work.

The photo above is of ice crystals that formed after the cold night on the lake. The crystals looked like thousands of huge clear butterfly wings up to 10 inches high. The only negative to the weekend was when Tim and Alison rolled their truck on the way out on an icy corner. All are fine, just a little stressed out.

Good-bye, Friends

Libby's lost two dear friends in '04. Warren Moody died in June, and Kathy Hodgkins died in August. We will never forget either.

Bob Johnson introduced us to Warren almost 20 years ago, and Warren helped us on many of our cabin-building projects over the years. You wouldn't have thought of him as a cook, but he helped me learn how to roll out pie crust! He was watching

me struggle with some crust one day, and gently told me how his mother told him to always start from the center and roll out, and always roll in the same direction, not back and forth, as that can make it tough. As Bob said at the memorial service, he was the wisest man I ever knew!

Kathy was introduced to us by Jim Strang. She, along with her husband, Tim, taught both Matt P and Matt

J to fly. Aviation wasn't her only passion, though, she had many other interests, including figure skating, gardening, painting, sailing, and her love of animals. We'll miss her infectious smile and sense of humor.

Two people who have touched our lives, and left us with many fond memories. Thanks, we are so glad to have known you. —Ellen

The Riverkeeper

Labrador fishing this year was great for the fishing, the crew and the fishers. We had a great variety of customers from all over the world who took trout, lakers, pike and salmon big enough to really write home about. Guides: Wilson, Gerard, Chris and Dave did an outstanding job bringing fish and good times to all of those willing to enjoy the wilds of Labrador. Managers Paul and Diane Reynolds went beyond great and will be remembered by all for years to come for their wit, service and great food. Our new girl in Labrador City, Michelle was fantastic. Her attitude was infectious and made us all breathe easier with her thoughtful work in town.

2004 promised to be a good one for our Canadian business with the border problems finally getting calmed down. The disaster of SARS, mad cow and terrorism seemed to be behind us and the fishermen came {thank God}. We did put up one of the camps for sale to help with the dollar crash of '03, but will be operating the other two into the future. The fishermen from last summer stand out as the

best overall customers the guides have ever had at camp. In appreciation of these great folks we are offering all return customers a 10% reduction in the rate of \$3300.

Our newest fishing package in Labrador was at our Kepimets Lake camp. We offered a full week with food, guides, flight and food for only \$2500/person. The only catch is that all hands had to help with the cooking, cleaning and upkeep. With no cook or manager the guides rose to the challenge. By all reports the weeks went great and most rebooked for 2005. This camp will be open for '05 from late July until September 4th and we will be taking 6 rods in 3 cabins.

Our biggest changes came this year at Kepimets with many improvements {read associated article}. The new



Paul and Diane at Spawn River.

program went well even when we overloaded the camp with 8 rods instead of the normal 4 for the 'Red Flannel Group'. Many thanks to all of the folks who fished with us as we learned the waters and the new operations.

We look forward to having all of you back for 2005 and look forward to making Riverkeep and Kepimets the best fishing trip in the North.

—Tyler, Gary & Matt Libby

Mike's Short Shorts

- 38% of all bucks taken at the main camp in 2004 weighed 200 lbs or more!
- Daughter Samantha Storm shoots her first grouse with Danny's 28 guage.
- It's nice to have a rescue crew when the moose is in waist-deep mud! Thanks, Toby, Matt, and Matt J!
- Son Danny shoots his first buck, 8 pts, 200 lbs. I shoot an 8 pointer, weighing 135 lbs –will I ever hear the end of this??
- The 45/70 makes a great bear round.
- One box ammo = 13 grouse, all head shots, and 1 deer. I am liking my new rifle!
- I believe we are over 100 bears since I started working the bear hunt for Libby's.
- Son Danny shoots his first turkey. Thanks, Toby for guiding.
- Son Joey is on the Dean's List—Alright Joe!
- Spontaneous combustion! On a bear? No way!—Way!! Our bear story of 2004.
- Square-stern canoes can, and will capsize. But they float upside down all the way to shore.
- Son Tom shoots his first antelope, and on February 11th makes me a grandfather!
Welcome Michael Thomas Langley

The Big Fishery

In later years my angling appetite has taken me to a few places that fly fisherman dream about. Some sage said that trout fishermen are as much in love with trout country as the trout themselves. Could be. As fond as I am of Maine and its wild trout waters, Alaska and Montana fishing always left me wanting more. And it was the country as much as the superb fishing. In Alaska the braided rivers wind on and on. The meadow creeks in Montana seem to stop at the mountain foothills; but those foothills are a long way off. In both places you feel the unending bigness of it all. It is a good feeling that touches your soul and makes you glad to be a fisherman and a big fan of His handiwork.

So it was that I had a long-sought opportunity to sample another big country: Labrador. Last summer sporting camp operators Matt and Ellen Libby graciously agreed to entrust their Labrador fishing camp, Riverkeep Lodge, on the remote Atikonak River with my wife Diane and me. Diane hired on as the camp's chief cook. I was to work with the head guide as "camp manager" and MPS (main pot scrubber).

As you might guess, you come away from this experience with many memories and almost as many stories. For Diane who performed her Herculean cooking chores with grace and an even temper, the chance to boss me around in the kitchen was almost as much fun for her as casting an Elk Hair Caddis during the evening rise.

As for me, I have always enjoyed doing dishes so I was in my glory, especially on Sundays, which were turkey days with all the trimmings. What I found particularly satisfying was getting into the dishpan at about 10 p.m. after an evening of fishing. (Our daily regimen was to get the guests fed early enough for them and us to get on the

water for the evening rise.) It was a chance to unwind, ponder tomorrow's challenges and go to bed with clean hands.

Labrador hooked us early. During the short flight in the Otter from Lab City to the Atikonak River, I was slackjawed by the same sense of bigness that left me awestruck in Alaska and Montana. Labrador gives new meaning to remote wilderness. Water and finger bogs meander as far as the eye can see. And no roads. Once we got settled in at Riverkeep Lodge and met the guides and saw the wonderful lodge and facilities, we felt like we belonged there. We knew that we had not miscalculated and that we would get the job done and bring back memories.

Looking back at our Labrador experience and aside from the country itself, I remain most impressed by the guides and the Atikonak River fishery. As you might surmise, most angling guests come to spend a week in a remote camp 90 miles from civilization not knowing quite what to expect. Except for sleeping and eating, these guests will be sharing long days in a boat with their guide. So the guide is a critical part of the Riverkeep experience.

Whether by plan or just good fortune, the Libby's are blessed by the capable men they employ as river guides. Head Guide Wilson Lawrence is, as they say, the best of the best. A highly experienced Labrador outdoorsman, this guy is a thorough, capable outdoor pro who knows the weather, the water and the way to please customers. His wry sense of humor and deep love of the angling challenge never wanes, even on those rare occasions when the fish aren't cooperating. Much the same can be said for the other two guides, Chris Williams and Gerard McClennon. Of course, Chris and

Gerard have their own individual personalities and unique senses of humor. Chris is the more outgoing of the three. Nicknamed "Chunk" by his campmates, Chris is the storyteller and Mr. Congeniality. Gerard, more quiet and introspective, is easy-going and a pleasant boatmate. As with head guide Wilson, Chris and Gerard's knowledge of the river and the fishery excels. They, too, love sport fishing and for them each day is an exciting new fishing opportunity and a chance to share an angling memory of a lifetime with a "sport."

During my first few weeks of pot scrubbing for Diane, I shared fishing thrills vicariously with "the boys" from the kitchen as they kept each other and me informed of their respective fishing successes via VHF radio. It took just about two weeks for me to get acclimated to my lodge duties so that I felt comfortable taking some time off for fishing. About the time I began to learn to speak a little "Newfie" and grumble about dirty pots Diane took away my pot scrubber and ordered me into our boat. "Hey, bye," she mocked. "Go catch a fish, eh?"

Ah yes, the fishing. The Atikonak watershed is, as advertised, a dream sport fishery. During our five week stay I remained spellbound by the size of everything: the fish, the river, the lake, the sunsets, the solitude, you name it. The Atikonak River is a remarkably diverse sport fishery. Game fish include football size brookies, large landlocked salmon, monster lake trout, wonderful eating whitefish, and northern pike the size of torpedoes.

As I learned, the diversity of the Atikonak sport fishery is the key to happy anglers. As with fishing anywhere, some days are better than others depending on weather, water levels and temperatures. This is where

the diverse fishery comes in. If the trout fishing slows, the salmon are hitting wet flies in the fast water or the heavy lakers are patrolling along the seams of the fast water. On bright days when some fish are down, there are always big brawling pike ready for action in the river backwaters. At any time of day there are multitudes of whitefish surface feeding, a blast on light fly rods.

In short, on the Atikonak there are lots of fish, the fishing days are long with 10 p.m sunsets, and the

Riverkeep guides, all polished fly fishermen in their own right, all have intimate knowledge of the river and the fish habits.

If you are reading this and pondering the possibility of a week at Matt Libby's Riverkeep Lodge on the Atikonak's Big Fishery, some advice:

1. Do it. Between the long Labrador days and the action-packed sport fishery, you'll look long and hard to find more bang for your fishing buck.
2. Bring the best rain gear you can find.

3. Listen to your guides. I say again. Even if you are an experienced fly fisherman, or a well read fly fisherman, come prepared to park your expertise and listen to your guides.

4. If you are dieting, leave your weight watcher's guide behind.

If you are anything like me, Labrador -especially Riverkeep Lodge on the Atikonak River - will always loom large in your storehouse of wonderful outdoor experiences.

-V. Paul Reynolds

Kepimets Revisited

Bob Johnson, Toby Montgomery, Tim Winslow and I flew N3868Q to Labrador the end of July to prepare the Kepimets Camp for the August business. Looking back on our trip I still get nightmares and laughs out of the memories!

Our first day in camp after a long flight and a tremendous meal at Riverkeep thanks to Diane and Paul, was spent taking stock of everything that was either broken or was just in line to be upgraded. I then flew to town to meet Michelle, our competent secretary and girl Friday, to pick up supplies, lumber, propane, food and anything I could stuff into the plane. When I arrived home I found the boys muttering about falling a camp. Peering around the lodge apprehensively I saw a collapsed cabin, which was one of 4 built on 3 foot puncheons, now at ground level leaning towards the North Pole. The rest of the day was spent jacking and leveling.

Day two brought painting, new windows, new heater stove installations and a new septic system installed [Matt's specialty], after the tank fell in. The day was going well until Bob and Toby decided to fall another camp (not really on purpose). So the jacking and leveling resumed, working well into the night. Finally we had one hour of fishing after dinner. Luckily it is light until 10 pm.

Day three was to be our last work day with all projects getting finished, hooking up plumbing, filling the water tank on the tower, tweaking the generator, putting in the dock and unloading the Otter with more supplies. Finally the end of the day arrived and Tim and I were standing proudly admiring all we had done, when Tim asked if there was anything left to do. I stated that the only thing left was to fish all the next day and find the

lunkers. The words were barely out of my mouth when we heard a snap, a creak, and then a loud crack followed by a whoosh, a crash and 500 gallons of water at our feet. The water tower and tank had collapsed, ruining the tank and destroying the tower (missing Tim and I by a few feet).

Day four turned into a work day. We flew out for water tanks, built a new tower and hooked up the water again just as the guests arrived. Luckily the guests were the Richardson's from Maine, who had been with us many years and didn't mind pitching in.

Finally around 4 pm we decided to fly out and fish a river I knew of and had plenty of trout to keep us happy for the day, but a little shy on what we expected to do for the week. Day four ended with a flight back to camp skirting thunderstorms and landing at dark.

Our flight back to Maine was uneventful and made in time for Matt and Jess's wedding. It was good to be home. A trip where everything "fell" into place. -Matt



One of Labrador's favorite footballs!

Into the Backing

In a lifetime of fishing, I have never been drawn to the dream of trophy fish. That is to say, big fish still impress me but I'm not driven by the need to conquer big fish. I figure that if it happens, it happens. In fact, given a choice I'd sooner catch a dozen small brookies on #16 dry fly than one lunger brookie lured off the bottom by a bead head nymph.

It's ironic, too, because most fly reels were made to sing. In all its years of holding line and backing for my Sage 9 weight rod, my old Medalist reel has wound down to the backing only twice. It saw action for the first time more than 20 years ago on New Brunswick's Upsalquitch River. An 18 lb Atlantic salmon sucked down my Rusty Rat and made a wild dash downriver with my fly line and most of the backing. "Chase the fish, b'ye! Chase the fish," yelled the guide.

Two decades later, that same old backing had a chance to unwind in the waters of Labrador's fabled Atikonak River. A world-class fly

fishing water for brookies and a variety of fish, large Northern Pike make for fast mid-day action on days when the trout aren't cooperating. Diane and I spent a memorable summer cooking and managing Matt Libby's Riverkeep Lodge on the Atikonak. A "working vacation," we managed to squeeze in some angling time in between camp chores.

At the suggestion of the camps' head guide, Wilson Lawrence, I used my lunch hour to cast big popping bugs over a so-called "p'yke hole" not far from the lodge. These big pike cruise the shallow river backwaters and like to hang out near the big rocks and overhanging arctic willows.

It was a still, bright day by Labrador standards. Even the incessant bugs were on lunch break. I eased the square-stern canoe onto a ledge island near the pike hole and began casting from shore. The big white popping bug made a couple of glubs as I stripped in line and then the water exploded. POW! A



3 whoppers!

toothy 14 pounder smashed the bug. Inexperienced in the aggressive ways of pike, I thought at first that a beaver or other large furbearer had grabbed my offering. But then I saw this fish's shark-like silhouette turn under the surface. The battle began.

In a matter of seconds, I was into the backing as the pike made a high speed run for the open river. I laughed aloud and joyfully urged this fish on. In the next half hour, three other large pike were hooked, beached and released- with great caution. These predatory critters have toothy maws that can tear your flesh. Wire leaders and large pliers are a must for keeping the fish on and for releasing the fish safely.

Although pike fishing is sometimes a hard sell to the fly fishing trout purists who come to Labrador in search of the trophy brookies, these shallow water bushwhackers are fierce fighters on a fly rod. Pike also make fine table fare when filleted, chunked and deep fried in batter.



A smile is worth a thousand words.

Notes From the Cook

When Paul and I agreed to cook and manage things at Riverkeep Lodge for the Libby's, I was a little nervous about the undertaking. But I have always enjoyed cooking for large groups and having cooked out of dusty spike tents for cowboys and elk hunters in the Colorado mountains under somewhat adverse conditions, I figured that the Riverkeep Lodge cooking couldn't be any tougher.

As it turned out, my Riverkeep experience was memorable in every way. Oh, it was hard work, but challenging and personally satisfying. The fishing was great! Paul and I have had many exciting outdoor hunting and fishing experiences. So I do keep a journal of it all. Here are some highlights from my journal:

- A panoramic view of the mighty Atikonak River from my cooking vantage point.
- Gracious and appreciative guests, all of whom I

would like to see again.

- Wonderful, capable guides who regaled me with stories. I will never forget them.
- Michelle, our Lab City contact. What would I have done without her and her world of patience for my last minute radiotelephone requests for cooking ingredients that needed to be on the weekly float plane.
- Bugs were no big deal, like Maine except maybe a little bigger.
- The remoteness was the best part- the focus was restful in many ways. No time to worry. No news of the outside world. Guests preferred not to talk about news. Came to Riverkeep to get away from all that.
- Ordering Paul around the kitchen was fun!

—Diane Reynolds

As Riverkeep Lodge's head guide Wilson Lawrence points out, pike are "nature's levelers," a balancing act that help keep the Atikonak watershed a fisherman's paradise that is home to trophy trout, salmon, lakera and whitefish.

Last May, while planning my trip to Labrador and cleaning my fly reels,

I had a premonition that the moth-balled Medalist would get a long awaited work out. Before leaving the Atikonak, I got into the backing one other time - on a big ole brookie. But that's the subject of another article.

V. Paul Reynolds is editor of the Northwood's Sporting Journal. He is also a Maine Guide, co-host of a weekly

radio program "Maine Outdoors" heard Sundays at 7 p.m. on The Voice of Maine News-Talk Network (WVOM-FM 103.9, WCME-FM 96.7) and former information officer for the Maine Dept. of Fish and Wildlife. His e-mail address is paul@sportingjournal.com.

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2005 RATES

The following rates will be in place for 2005. We as always will do all we can to make them the best deal there is for a vacation. Please let us know if there are any problems with service, equipment, food or accommodations.

Fishing:

■ **Pkg #1:** \$145/person/day d.o.; \$165/day single. Includes private lakeside log cabin with bath, boats & motors, canoes, kayaks, and Ellen's meals.

■ **Pkg#2:** \$200/person/day d.o.; \$260/day single. Includes all of #1 plus the use of outpost cabins if desired and seaplane fly outs every other day to remote ponds, rivers or trails.

■ **Pkg#3:** \$285/person/day d.o.; \$410/day single. Includes all of above plus full guide service.

■ **7-Day trips:** Deduct \$100/person off any package. Large groups can be quoted.

Hunting:

Pat'ridge, woodcock & ducks:

■ **Pkg#1:** \$135/person/day d.o.; \$150/day single. Includes cabin and meals.

■ **Pkg#2:** \$225/person/day d.o.; \$320/day single. Includes all of above plus services of a full time guide. Bird dogs are an additional \$100/day.

■ **Pkg#3:** Includes pkg #2 plus unlimited clays and 1 flyout. 3 days 4 nights: single \$1950 d.o. \$1400/person

Deer/Moose: Sunday to Sunday only.

■ **Pkg#1:** \$810/person/week d.o.; \$1025/week single. Includes cabin, meals and that advice again.

■ **Pkg#2:** \$1325/person/week d.o.; \$2000/week single. Includes all of above plus a full time guide for 6 days.

Bear: Sunday to Sunday only.

■ August 29-Sept. 10; \$1550/week/person d.o. \$1900/week single. Includes meals, private cabin with bath, guide for every 4 men, boats for fishing. Everything except licenses and taxidermy. Big game license \$90, bear tag \$65.

■ August 29-September 10; \$950/person/week triple occupancy; \$1300/person/week d.o.; \$2500/week single. Includes outpost cabin and guide. Chandler Pond, River Camp and Mooseleuk Stream only.

Seasons:

■ **Fishing:** All Waters: May-September 30. Some ponds and lakes in October.

■ **Hunting:** Small game October and November.

■ **Bear:** August 29-November 26.

■ **Deer bow:** October. Deer rifle: October 31-November 26..

■ **Moose:** September 26-Oct. 1 & October 11-15 (limited to lottery)

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