

## Fish Tales

By Mike McConnell

We have not caught many fish but we have had some entertaining bouts with our boat. We did not have a boat when I was a child. Janice and I bought our first boat about 3 years ago. We knew nothing about boating. Our mistakes have brought us quite a few laughs. Our first boat...which we still have...including trailer...is a \$400 beauty. It is actually a fiberglass duck hunting boat. We have had a series of issues, like trying to unload the boat before removing the straps, unloading it without putting the plug in it and having a flat before we bought a spare tire, the prop falling off and having to row back to the truck ramp. I suspect a few other folks have done some if not most of those. We also have had some creative issues.

We once pushed off and after we were maybe 50' from the ramp, a friend told me we were taking on water...and lot of it. We went back to shore as quickly as we could. There was a large hole where the bottom of the boat rode on the front support. My neighbor who owns a half dozen boats fixed it that same day...and had a good laugh at my expense. He has been a great help and has gotten a lot of entertainment from us.

After a couple of trips, we put a \$1200 fish finder on our \$400 boat which was also quite entertaining to my neighbor. He told me that now our boat was worth \$1300. That would have hurt my feelings if I had any.

A week or so after repairing the boat, we decided to record all of Cedar Creek reservoir with our fish finder. When we were about 2/3 around it, I told Janice that the battery voltage was only 11.7V and that we needed to go straight to the ramp. The wind was blowing against us....and we were already going slow. There was nobody else on the lake to help. She suggested that we get as low as we could in the boat to reduce wind resistance which we did. We found that I had not put the paddle back in the boat after turning the boat over to repair the hole...and it was getting dark and they close the gates at dark. We did have a fish net and life jackets. My son put a life jacket around the fish net and paddled to help the struggling trolling motor. We eventually got to the ramp...very slowly...and the gate was not locked.

Later we bought an old pontoon boat. More accurately we bought a Mercury 60hp 4 stroke that came with a boat and trailer. The boat looked ok for a fish boat but unfortunately it did not float very well...not good. I bought 2 pontoons from Craigslist but they were smaller than I needed and were going to be a nightmare to attach. In a blog about boats, someone wrote that it was easier to get an ugly boat that is structurally sound than to economically rebuild one. I found one for \$1K and bought it. Still we have spent many hours working on the two boats.

During one of our first outings, the switch turned in the socket. The wind was blowing the boat into someone's dock. Janice and John were desperately hanging over the side of the boat hanging on to the dock trying to keep the boat from damaging it while I was trying to disassemble the switch assembly so I could hold the switch while turning the key...wish we had a video of that.

Later we bought a used trolling motor with remote control. While fishing a seemingly abandoned dock, the wind blew us slightly into a slip and wedged the boat. We fished for awhile but when we got ready to leave, it was wedged more than I had anticipated. Janice pushed on a dock post near the middle of the boat and I hopped off with the remote so the trolling motor could be used while I was trying to push the boat loose by hand. It suddenly broke loose. Seeing how fast it was moving away from the dock, I hopped on the boat, looked back and saw the remote on the dock. The boat was too far gone to hop back on the dock there. Janice was desperately trying to keep the boat from going too far from the dock on the other side. I ran around, hopped on the other side of the dock and ran around the slip to get the control.

We have not caught many fish but it was very entertaining to watch Janice battle a probably 2# catfish with her crappie pole. It was bending so much that she could not pick it up enough to get it in the boat like she had been

doing with the bream. She finally pulled it beside the boat and I got it with the fish net. We had fun with that one...and she has caught several more since but now we know the drill. We are looking forward to our next adventure...and hopefully learning to catch a few fish.