

By John Altson

Dear fisherfolks: I lied. I said that I'd not write a fishing column until next spring, but I had to tell this story...

I flew down to Boynton Beach Florida to spend some time with my family. It so happens that my sister, Jeannie Truax, is as crazy a fisherman as I. She and her husband Terry have a 21 foot boat "Twice Blessed" that, until my trip, had never landed a keeper fish of any kind. It was time to help out, as I had brought my fish-bloodied lucky sweatshirt from Newburyport.

On my birthday, November 6th, we decided to take advantage of a small break in the weather (6.96 inches of rain in the week preceding) and go out on the local drift boat, Sea Mist III. We left at 1:00 PM with the minimum of ten anglers and steamed just southeast of Boynton Inlet – in about 100 feet of water and off the edge of the reef. Our party consisted of Jeannie and Terry, Jeannie's sons (Jesse and Travis Knight), and myself. Fishing deep, we had a steady pick of yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, blue runners, and triggerfish. Then, halfway into the afternoon, all hell broke loose as a school of dolphin (mahi-mahi) cruised by the boat. Nephew Jesse hooked a large bull dolphin while sister Jean hooked a smaller cow dolphin. After several minutes of furious battles, the fish leaping high into the air, both fish were landed.

We had all of the fish filleted and then returned home to a fantastic fish dinner. Jeannie breaded and sautéed the snapper fillets while Jesse and I char-broiled the mahi-mahi after rubbing it with Cajun spices. The fish was served with a mango and peach salsa and was to die for – just outstanding. If you have a chance to buy fresh mahi-mahi locally, please try it out, you won't regret it!

The story, believe it or not, gets better.

The next day, the winds abated somewhat so we decided to take out the "Twice Blessed" to the same grounds, just south of Boynton Inlet. The crew consisted of Captain Terry, my brother George, sister-in-law Carol and me. I rigged two lines deep for bottom fishing, one line at mid-depth, and one line for surface fishing. Carol immediately landed a mutton snapper, breaking the hex on the boat.

All of a sudden, the reel on the rod which was rigged for surface fishing was screaming as the line roared out at high speed. I grabbed the rod, set the hook and watched the biggest dolphin I'd ever seen leap high into the air several hundred feet away. I played the fish for a while, getting the fish alongside for Terry to gaff. Terry, however, did not have a gaff handy – he forgot to bring it out from the cabin. So, Terry tried to net the fish (12" net for a 40" fish – lots of luck) to no avail.

At this point, the line snapped but, as luck would have it (remember my bloodied sweatshirt?), the hook attached to the fish was also entangled in the net so, with a great heave, we brought the dolphin and the net into the boat. I subdued the wildly thrashing dolphin with Terry's baseball bat.

We ended the day with a catch of dolphin, snapper, bonito, Spanish mackerel, blue runner, and triggerfish.

I left my bloodied sweatshirt in Florida for continued good luck; they'll mail it back next spring when I'll resume the column! See you then.

