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# Outdoors is Treat for Mind and Heart

## Forrest Fisher Column



Photo by Forrest Fisher

Gene Winger and Doyle Dietz share the humble fun of friendship and a 21-inch smallmouth bass in the Allegheny River last week. Over 40 fish were caught and released unharmed.

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by Forrest Fisher, Columnist |

Last week was a journey week. Fern and I travelled to Pennsylvania to visit with fellow outdoor writers and share ideas, toss a few fishing lines, compare shotguns, quip about each other's hair loss and joke about how we might climb the tallest mountain to hunt turkey where no one else could possibly be.

Some of us are getting too silvery between the ear lobes to climb much of anything that some might call a mountain – like the stairs to the second floor of the hotel, but we kid about it. It's fun. It helps us laugh and according to Fox News, laughing helps us all keep younger, the ultimate quest.

As writers, we share our love of the outdoors in every aspect. We talked about fishing rods, reels, boats, four-stroke engines, shoes, waders, braided lines and fly lines, firearms, new laws, arrows, bows, boots, deer ticks, health insurance and the cost of gas, not necessarily in that order. My friends in the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association are from an elite group of outdoor folks that love to share the one thing they want to help others find out about – the outdoors. The fun of hiking, fishing, camping, hunting and all the rest. New terms in the last few years include kayaks, mountain bikes, mini-backpacks, ceramic forks and our dependence on space age communications...er, cell phones. We all agreed that the world seems to think we need these gizmos. We did not talk about Chinese exports and our own American need to over consume everything, thank goodness, since the microbrews tasted so good.

One evening as we walked down Main Street from our affordable Quality Inn hotel room in downtown Franklin, Pa., my wife said, "Isn't it great to see families holding hands, talking and walking from one small shop to another, window shopping and just enjoying conversation?" Who could disagree? It was a lot like East Aurora, too. We are lucky to live in Western New York in such a similar place.

So to share, here is a word for vacationers looking for a healthy nearby place to visit this year, only a two and a half hour drive away, in the National Heritage Oil Region of Pennsylvania, where oil was discovered. I know! Who of us knew?

We visited the DeBence Antique Music World as a first stop and we heard birds outside trying to overcome the music inside coming from mechanized musical instruments that were on museum display that were played for us. Some of these things were straight from the Wild West and the Matt Dillon timeframe – including church air organs. We learned that a half-dozen or more of the harmonious collectables came from Western New York. Cool? Indeed!

The mosaic of musical gear we observed provided a symmetry of sound that was beautiful, unamplified, all natural, and mostly using air, springs, and old-fashioned ingenuity. No hidden circuitry, if you know what I mean. No permission to share your name, pictures, location or personal information. I miss those days.

We walked a bit farther down the sidewalk, passing undisguised church steeples and wooden-front stores and shops still in use, many built in the late 1700s. Spring flowers were in bloom alongside the shop venues when we stopped with our writer friends to have dinner at Benjamin's Roadhouse. Simple wooden tables, wooden floors, a 200-year-old bar and undisguised. We enjoyed live music, too, blues and rock from a group called the Max Schang Trio – you gotta love bass, drums and guitar simplicity, half of us were singing! It was that good.

As we drifted back to the hotel to refuel our energy for the next day and a Jet Boat fishing adventure on the Allegheny River, our conversation embraced the simplicity of life in the old days and life in the outdoors, and how good we felt visiting this town. The next day, we each caught several dozen smallmouth bass casting trouble-free tube jigs. Simple fishing, albeit from a modern watercraft and using Gamma brand braided line, the good stuff. Still it was simple, drag-screaming fun.

We observed campers in simple pop-up tents that had hiked down to the river bottom to overnight a stay and fish the shoreline of the river. Watching them cook breakfast took me back to my young family days and camping. Camping is much more than a place where you spend a small fortune to live like a homeless person! Many joke about that.

Camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, even a simple lunchtime break, all allow us to observe nature and sort of "find ourselves." Some say we all quest to find a deeper understanding

for all things outdoors. Maybe, but we will find fresh air, silence, the sound of the wind shifting through the trees, the music of water rushing over rocks in a creek, and other hidden things that to learn more about outside. All devoid of over-complexity. In the outdoors, with nature, we look to form a special bond with our own universe and the simple natural world. If we are lucky, we share such essential time with those special people that we share life with, our family and friends.

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*Share life with others, make new friends in the outdoors, lead by example. Send comments to [nugdor@yahoo.com](mailto:nugdor@yahoo.com).*

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