

Big Fish, Big Shoes, Big Advise - Robby Dwyer

During the week of the inaugural Ray Williams Trophy period in 1998, Pat Grimes took me to the big hole down by Hoag Crossroad. It was there that I saw the biggest trout that I had ever seen. I was standing on the shore, under the tree with the rope swing, when it followed my retrieve nearly back to the bank. It never so much as bumped my Panther Martin, but I can still see it speeding towards me. Easily over 20 inches, its big, hooked jaw looked menacing as it put on the brakes and suspended itself near the surface for a few seconds, before darting back down to the depths of the swimming hole.

Later that week, my Grandmother, Rita Dwyer and my Aunt Diane came up from Binghamton to meet my father (Bob, Jr.), my Uncle Jon and I for dinner in Bainbridge, NY. After dinner, we headed back to Delaware County. I asked if they wouldn't mind dropping me off on Delhi-South Kortright Rd (18), down below the big hole so that I could try to sneak back up to it in the stream. There was a shack (fish camp?) a few hundred yards downstream, and I slid down the embankment there and into the West Branch. Dad and Uncle Jon drove up and parked next to the cornfield, across from the bottom of Glen Burnie Road to wait for me. Just down from the house formerly occupied by Author/Historian Marty Podskoch (<https://martinpodskoch.com/>), who had walked over to speak with Pat and I earlier in the week.

I had caught a few trout up to that point, but not that I can recall that were worthy of placing in a creel. Before I got out of the vehicle, I asked for advice on how best to dispatch the monster if I were lucky enough to fool him. I remember Uncle Jon remarking to my Dad that he liked my confidence. Still wearing the golf shirt that I had worn to dinner, I put on my waders

and vest. With a storm and dusk fast approaching, I planned to hustle upstream to the base of the big hole with hopes of enticing the big Brown to strike. Along the way, there was a tree on the far side of the stream, roots exposed over the water, creating a nice hole that cut underneath and into the bank. A flat sandy beach was directly across from the tree, only about 4 or 5 yards away. I made a backhand cast with a Mepps Firefly Thunder Bug and it landed on a root, above the stream. I stood there for a few seconds, shoulders slumped, contemplating how I was going to see well enough to re-tie. I initially made no effort to pop my lure off the root, as if postponing the disappointment of having wasted another good hole. To my surprise, with one tug, it flew back across the stream, landing at my feet, leaving the hole undisturbed. I made a 2nd cast and as soon as it landed, the current swept the Thunder Bug under the roots and BAM! FISH ON!

It may not have been the fish I had set out to pursue, but it only took a few seconds to beach the 20 1/2" brown. Having never landed a trout that size, I had no idea how powerful they were. I was shaking with excitement, but there was no way that fish was going to slide back into the river. I got down on my knees with the trout between my legs as I removed the hook and dispatched him. I placed the fish in the back of my vest and continued upstream. By this time, more than enough time had passed for me to have worked the intended hole thoroughly so I scurried up to it, a couple of token casts along the way. With thunder rumbling and lightning flashing in the distance, I made it to the swimming hole and made a few additional casts before walking up the edge of the corn field to the road, the headlights of the vehicle helping me find my way. Wearing my best poker face, I removed my vest and unzipped the back as Uncle Jon asked if I had any luck. I pulled out the big brown, and with a big grin, I proudly held it up. A picture was taken by the headlights before we headed back to the Grimes residence at Tunis Lake. Another picture was taken in Pat's garage, and under his supervision, I cleaned the fish as

Dad and Jon looked on. It was the first and only BDFC "fish" trophy that I ever have had the honor of winning and I will never forget it. Sharing the moment with three of my favorite fishing mentors is a priceless memory that I will cherish forever.