
NEWS

Oregon State Marine Board
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Oregon's Recreational Boating Agency



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Planting the Seed for the Love of Boating

It seems like every year when we have the first warm, sunny days after the gray days, I get triggered with memories about my childhood and being out on the water. There's nothing like being out on the water in a boat, when the light fog burns off and you can feel the warm rays of sun on your face and hear the gentle pat of the water's ripples against the boat.

My first boat was an inflatable. I grew up on a farm in Illinois and we had a slough on our property. This would be the place where I would spend the majority of my time as a kid; exploring the snails and cat tails, butterflies and other critters. It was also the place where I put in my inflatable boat, and spent countless hours, day-dreaming about what I'd be when I grew up.

My Dad was the one who shared his love of the outdoors with me and my brother. He taught us to appreciate nature, and its delicate balance. He showed us that if you care for nature, it will give so much more back to you. I was always careful to not disturb the banks of the slough and to leave no trace that I was there. Many times, my Dad and I would go out in the boat with our fishing gear –even though we knew there were no fish in the slough. After I learned and mastered the basics in our “pretend fishing,” Dad took me to bigger water with actual fish. I was so excited –had all my fishing tackle, bait and snacks for the perfect excursion. We went to Fish Lake Beach, and rented a small, 12 foot aluminum boat with a small motor. Fish Lake was well stocked with trophy bass.

He showed me how to properly cast and “feel the rod” for nibbles. After about an hour, I felt my first nibble, I jerked the rod and suddenly, the fight was on! My Dad calmly said, “O.k. honey, now gently start reeling it in.” After a few times struggling to rotate the reel, I started to panic. Dad calmly grabbed my rod and started to help. He started laughing and cheering –I think because it was my first fish and he was getting to actually reel it in. Then, he stood up in the boat and promptly fell in the water. I remember being stunned and completely froze in place. I was sitting on a throw cushion on a bench. So what did I do? Instead of throwing the cushion to him, I grabbed the fishing rod before it was totally submerged and held on for dear life! Since we weren’t at anchor, the fish started to pull the boat a bit. My Dad, who was wearing his life jacket, yelled from the water, “Hang onto it, honey!” as he swam toward the boat. By the time he reached me, I had managed to reel in the fish a little more. Dad instructed me to counterbalance the boat as he tried to get in and to NOT let go of the rod. Once he was in the boat, I just handed to rod to him. He had this huge smile on his face that I’ll never forget. I continued looking at him when all of a sudden, his smile turned into a gasp and the rod went limp. He let out this big sigh and said, “Wouldn’t you know it! Then I burst into laughter! He looked like he was about to cry. Dad said, “I’m sorry honey, you were doing just fine and I lost your first fish.” He realized I was laughing at him and then looked down at himself, in his soaking wet clothes, looking completely pitiful. Without skipping a beat, he said, “Never stand up in a small boat!” Talk about your lasting impression.

So the last few days of nice weather have really awakened the old memories, and now my daydreams are about being out on the water. I think it’s time for me to take my daughters out in a boat for our own learning adventure.

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Ashley Massey is the Public Information Officer for the Oregon State Marine Board and is an avid water recreationist and advocate for a clean environment.