

A Guide is a Guide is a Guide is a Guide...

by captain avery revere

MWFF asked me to present at their December meeting. As I began assembling images for this presentation I found myself recalling stories associated with the images. For example, there was a picture of my friend Lisa whom had never been fishing before. I looked at that picture, a picture in which Lisa looks like she is about to kiss the fish, and I thought back on the first time I took her fishing. The entire winter prior to her first fishing trip, Lisa insisted that fishing was just a waste of time, fishing was torture for the innocent fishies (the jury is still out on that subject) and why couldn't I just enjoy sitting on the beach reading a good book and in the hot summer sun. June came a long and so did Lisa's first chance to come out on the boat with me. Just for the fun of it, I stopped the boat, grabbed a rod and started casting. Suddenly, Lisa had a fishing rod in her hand and wanted to know how it worked. By her second cast, a striped bass swirled at Lisa's lure. She yelled, "I found a fish" and continued to cast. What red-blooded fisherman doesn't have to take a cast when there are fish about, so I grabbed a rod and tossed out a line. Presto, I was hooked up to a nice fish. Within a few minutes I had the 32" keeper to the boat and now, Lisa was identifying herself as the guide, a label with which I simply couldn't argue and which she continues to own.

As charter captains go, I am a baby as I have only (officially) been in business for three seasons. However, this "baby" wasn't born yesterday and I have learned that



although I may be the guide, it is a rare charter trip when I don't find that my client has some important contributions to make toward a successful day of fishing. That said, it seems that at times my judgment has been impaired and my soft spot for listening to my elders has resulted in what you might call "grounding" experiences. My father always loved to fish and my childhood is filled with fish stories. April 1st we'd hit the local rod & gun club with our red & white bobbers and a coffee can filled with worms, and I'm pretty sure that it was adolescence blossoming that put an end to my enjoyment of gutting and cleaning all the mackerel we'd catch while trolling mackerel rigs off the bell buoy. Consequently, when I take my Dad fishing and he points and yells "birds working", it is a deep-seated reflex that causes me to gun the boat in the direction of the

diving birds even though I know perfectly well that those birds are diving on bait on a shallow sandbar. Vroom and we are aground on the flat. An 86 year old woman was my eldest client. She wasn't familiar with the local waters, but she knew what to look for and she wasn't shy about telling me where she thought we ought to be fishing. Once again I knew that shallow water lurked on the other side of that "rip" but somehow I was lured by her Siren's cry and drove my boat right up on the sandbar in my effort to believe in her wisdom.

Now don't get me wrong, I am captain of my ship and knowledgeable of my local waters and of my local fishery. I know many of the tricks of my trade, perhaps even some that my clients do not yet know. I have certain fly patterns that I trust and there are retrieves that I find more successful than others and it is definitely part of my job description to share these techniques with my clients. That said, I always qualify my suggestions with "this works for me...this is my habit...utilize what you know... and most importantly: vary your retrieve, stripers love that". Some of my clients actually listen to me, others don't. This summer I had a very nice man on board my boat. Phillip was new to fly fishing and he had the latest and greatest in equipment and clothing. He had a million questions and probably twice as many ideas. The problem, Phillip couldn't catch a fish. There were fish all around. I could see them in the water, I could even see them on the "fish

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finder" (now there is a misnomer for an electronic instrument). Still this guy could not catch a fish. I told him over and over again, cast your line and immediately start your retrieve. "Two quick medium strips and then a long slow strip, and then vary the pattern...get the fly moving and then slow it down". Every cast Phillip would drop the fly, count to some number and then begin his retrieve. Every cast Phillip wouldn't catch a fish. Finally, I insisted that he not hesitate but that he immediately begin his retrieve. I don't think that he was halfway through his second strip when bam he was hooked up. That time, this guide was right on.

I have fished some unfamiliar territory including in the Florida Keys. My friend Amanda, a well known northeast fly fishing guide, and I have fished for days on the flats and mangroves of Islamorada,

Key West, Key Biscayne and the Ten Thousand Islands. We have heeded the instructions and advice of trustworthy local guides, still our efforts have rendered us only a little bit better than fish-less. We have fished the Bahamas both with and without the aid of a local guide. On the days that we were guided, we saw and caught five times as many fish as we did when we guided ourselves. I have surprised both myself and the snottiest of the Florida guides by hooking a 100 lb. tarpon (16 lb. test leader) and landing it in approximately 20 minutes. I attribute my success to the fact that I both listened to and heeded the guide's instructions. Together we landed the large tarpon as a team. I was in charge of the rod and he controlled the boat by push pole and trolling motors. What could easily have been an hour and half long test of endurance was more



like a twenty minute pop quiz. I have walked the Venezuelan flats of Los Roques, participating in a friendly competition both between my fishing companion and our respective guides. We each caught 12-16 bonefish on a single flat, but I promise you that I did not actually see, let alone spot all of the 16 bonefish that I hooked up. There is no doubt that the local guides could see at least twice as many fish at least twice as far away as I could. My job was simply to cast and retrieve according to their instruction, a job that due to the strong wind and the usual fly casting complications (tangled fly lines and so much more) isn't always as easy as it sounds.

Suffice it to say that I guide as I am guided. I look for and find guides in many people, places and things. There are guides whose advice seems sound, nevertheless, I am taken on a detour that at first glance doesn't seem to advance me toward my apparent goal. I find in these situations it always good to reflect on the journey offered by the "detour". It is important in fishing, as in life, to keep an open mind when looking for guides and for guidance. There is no one guide that can do it all. There are many guides for all of us. It is indisputable, however, that a local guide is a good bet when fishing in an unfamiliar location. ■