

A Great Day on KING SALMON Creek

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #118 —

Seems like everyone has a fishing story to tell, or at least they should. The biggest fishing story ever told must have been Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" (1952) or Herman Melville's "Moby Dick" (1851); but both of those stories were fiction — this one is true and I was there!

King Salmon Creek, at least the one we were fishing, isn't a particularly noteworthy body of water, unless of course you're a king salmon — who happened to have been hatched there. The creek flows north, out of the low mountains that define the Alaska Peninsula, and travels only a few miles before dumping its snow melt water into the Bering Sea, just up the coast from Port Moller.

Every year for a few weeks beginning in late June, for as long as anyone can remember, the king salmon have come out of the salt water of the North Pacific Ocean during high tide and swam into the fresh water of

King Salmon Creek to spawn — and then to die. Must be quite a homing instinct!

There are five species of salmon in the North Pacific, each with two names — sockeye

(red), pink (humpback), chum (dog), silver (coho) and king (Chinook). The reason they call them king salmon, or kings, is because they're the biggest of the lot — with the world record on fishing tackle being close to 100 pounds.

The life cycle of a king salmon is short, but interesting. They hatched from eggs, in this very creek, a few years earlier,



These are the biggest king salmon we caught, 40" and 42" — 32 and 34 pounds. Even with heavy spinning rods, kings this big are a handful. The limit on kings was two per day, five per year.

and spent the first 12 to 18 months of their lives in fresh water before heading out to sea. Three or four years later they come back — a lot bigger.

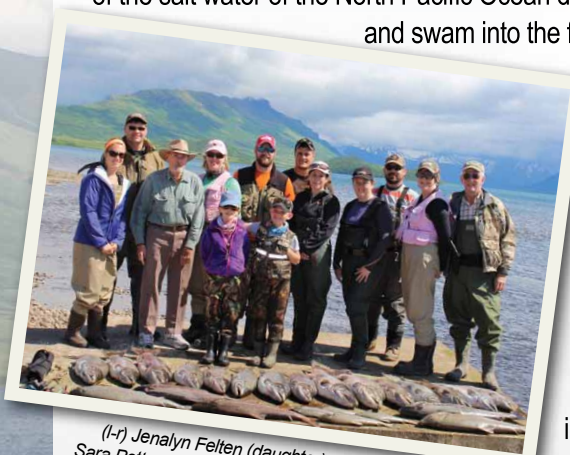
On this day, our party of 13 fished a couple of deep holes a mile or so from the mouth of the creek. We began

"...great day of fishing on King Salmon Creek."

hooking up as soon as our lines hit the water and for a couple of hours someone was always shouting 'fish on'; at which time everyone else would reel in, leaving the river clear to fight the fish — till he was ready to come to the net. We had thrown hooks, broken lines and a broken rod, but when we got into the planes and flew back to the lodge, it had been a great day of fishing on King Salmon Creek.



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King Salmon Creek
Port Moller, Alaska
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(l-r) Jenalyn Felten (daughter), Joel Felten, Bert Klineburger, Sara Potterfield, Eliza Zara, Adam Love, Jay Zara, Kirby Asher, Lori Rhoades, Erin Ellingson, Doug Wehmeyer, Brenda and Larry, with 20 nice kings and three smaller fish. Bear Lake in the background.



One of our fishing holes was this bend in King Salmon Creek, which created some deeper water that held the salmon. The fisherman on the right has a fish on.