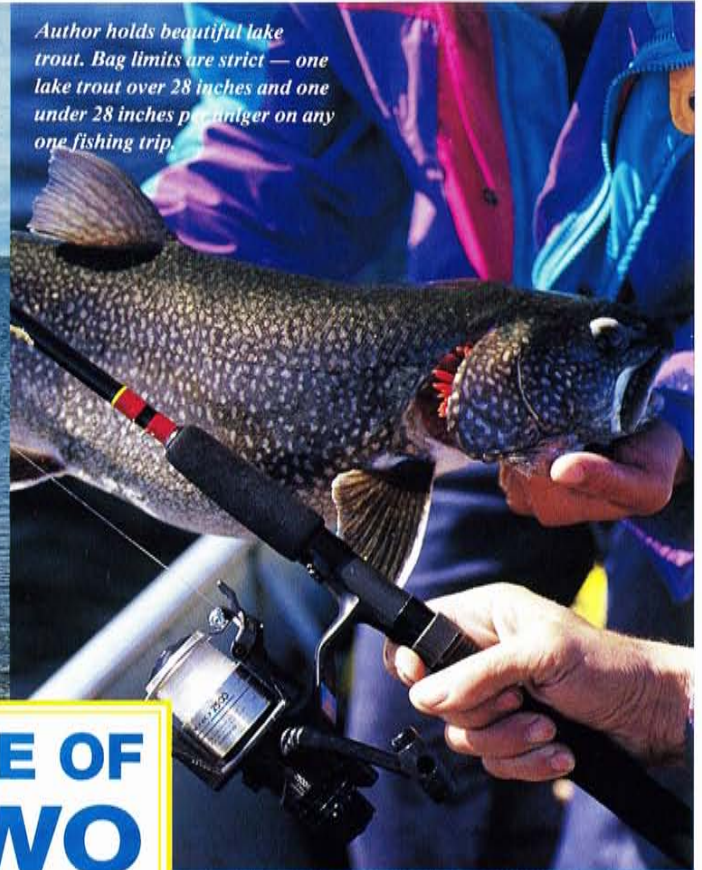


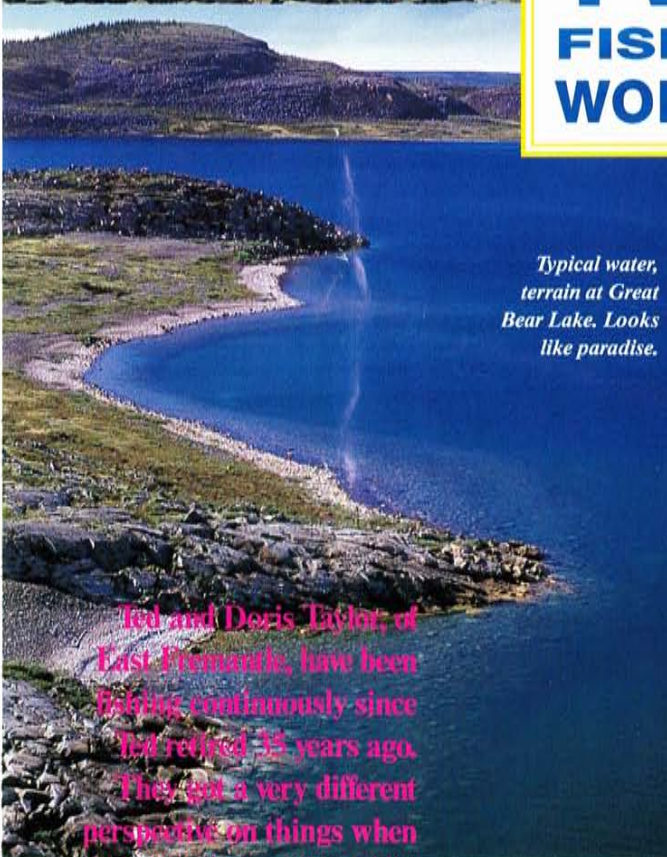
Doris and Ted Taylor on their fishing trip of a lifetime to Great Bear Lake in Canada's Northwest Territories. These three lake trout were to be lunch for four people!



Author holds beautiful lake trout. Bag limits are strict — one lake trout over 28 inches and one under 28 inches per angler on any one fishing trip.



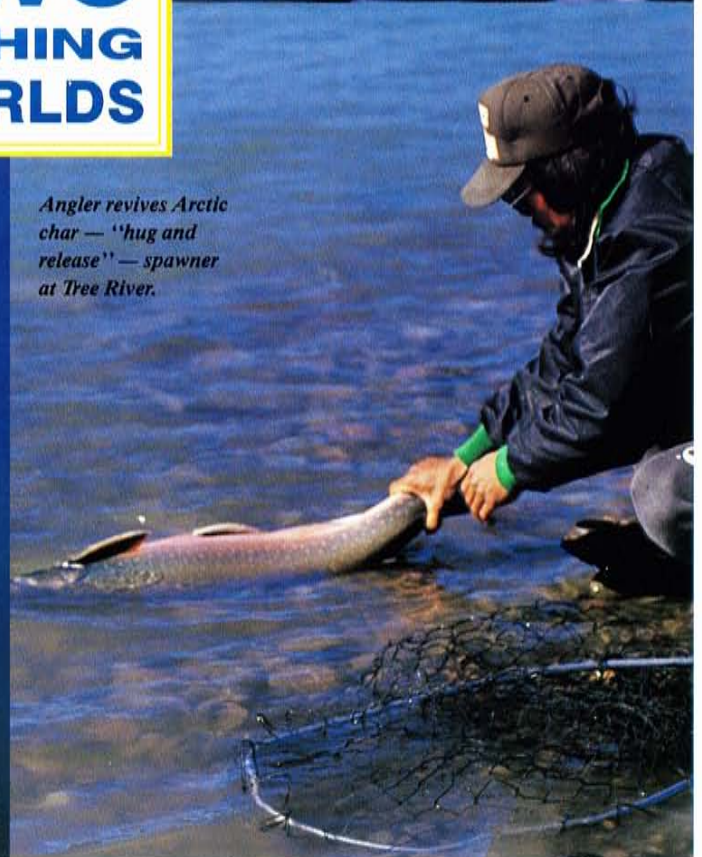
TALE OF TWO FISHING WORLDS



Typical water, terrain at Great Bear Lake. Looks like paradise.

Ted and Doris Taylor, of East Fremantle, have been fishing continuously since Ted retired 35 years ago. They got a very different perspective on things when their daughter, writer LYN HANCOCK now living in Canada, took them to Plummers' prestigious sportfishing lodge on Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories.

Angler revives Arctic char — "hug and release" — spawner at Tree River.



It took Dad over an hour to bring in his giant cod — pulling as fast as possible in the bobbing dinghy, searing through two sets of gloves, straining against the gunwale, trying to keep his feet steady and the line from tangling around his body as the huge fish ran

and dodged and twisted in its efforts to get away.

"At one point," he recalled, "I was sure that fish was taking us to Africa. I kept praying the line wouldn't snag or snap on a spike of coral."

It wasn't easy, especially as Dad was 80 years old and fishing with a handline in 45 metres of rough ocean 15



kilometres out from Coral Bay at a place called The Mixing Bowl for its tempestuous waters. Luckily he had 500 metres of 45kg line and two large hooks, because when the mighty fish finally came alongside it turned out to be a 140kg-plus slimy cod.

To get it back to the beach he put half hitches through its cheeks, secured it by a cleat to the transom then increased his speed to ten knots till the fish planed behind.

"I had trouble keeping its mouth out of the water so it didn't go under and drag down the dinghy — and of course fending off the sharks," Dad told me.

His reputation as "the old man of the sea" escalated considerably when his big fish was dragged to the beach by truck and winched on to the scale.

"It had to be one hell of a lot more than 300 pounds — the fillets were 50 pounds — but that's as far as the scale went. It was too big really, too tough. It wasn't nice eating at all," he recalled.

"And you know, looking back, it was exciting bringing in such a big fish but we should have let it go. It was probably a hundred years old. It could have lived another 50-60 years."

That was some statement for Dad, whose philosophy (and that of his mates Down Under) is that a fish is caught to be eaten.

Western Australia's inaugural Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee (May 1991 report) said that the aim of recreational fishing was "to catch a feed for oneself and family and, for a variety of personal reasons, to enjoy the experience along the way."

But some WA people take this to extremes. It has been common practice for fishers to fill big freezers with fillets over a period of weeks, even months, and then sell their catch to pay for fuel,

bait, tackle and other holiday costs.

My parents are not shamateurs but their attitude towards fishing is typical of many of their West Aussie buddies. A fish is to be killed and eaten. It is not played on a light line with rod and reel in the name of sport, it is not baited by a barbless hook, lifted carefully out of the net, nursed gently back and forth in the water to help it revive, it is not hugged and released.

Since they retired 35 years ago Mum and Dad have spent their time fishing: summers in the south living aboard a 21-foot launch anchored off old limestone reefs at Rottneest, and winters in the north living in a 16-foot caravan, by the rich Ningaloo barrier reef at Coral Bay.

They fish out of an open 4.3 m dinghy and go where others do not dare.

Occasionally Dad nets prawns and blue manna crabs in a river estuary or tries for trout and marron on farm-stocked dams. Once he joined tourists aboard a charter boat at Exmouth to angle for sports fish such as coral trout, marlin, mackerel, tuna and barracuda. Another time he joined his mates beach fishing on the South Coast, standing in the surf hefting giant rods with game reels to fish for sharks.

But mostly my parents' methods are simple and inexpensive. Drifting over the reefs, jiggling with hooks, heavy line and sinkers, hoping for whiting, skipjack and snapper but accepting anything that comes along — rock cod, herring and parrot fish. Trolling at two miles an hour with the line enclosed by such home-made lures as red and white drinking straws. Chumming by wrapping berley around a piece of meat bait or scattering it on the water to attract schooling fish.

Doris and Ted bring them in.

Baiting crayfish pots with fish in the late afternoon and collecting the catch in the morning.

Mum and Dad use handlines to get a better feel for the fish in WA's strong winds and currents and reef-ridden terrain.

"At Coral Bay I fish the top level inside the reef where it's calm, I can anchor, and catch fish in six feet of clear water," Dad explained, "or else I go outside the reef and fish the bottom in the 200-foot area. Either way I'm fishing in rocks, often mountains of rocks, and a handline helps."

Even on the few occasions he uses a rod and reel he still holds the line with his hand to take the initial bite and then pulls the fish up a few feet before winching it the rest of the way.

My parents usually use two leaders with a lead sinker at the far end. As soon as a fish is caught they throw over a buoy to mark the spot in the strong currents and then set their boat to drift past the buoy and catch other fish in the same spot.

It's important to hook up fish fast, either by line or winch. They gaff them on board, stow them in a tank amidships and kill them quickly with a lead hammer (or 12-gauge shotgun for sharks).

"Sounds rough," Dad admits, "but it's the only way to handle big fish. We don't want to lose our gear, sharks bite 40 or 50-pound fish right off the line and we can't have fish thrashing about in the bottom of the boat."

As I see it, West Aussie anglers have been spoiled by relaxed year-round fishing in the shallow, highly productive waters along 12,000 kilometres of sparsely-populated coastline. There's little or no licensing and regulation or

enforcement and a prevailing public attitude that "she'll be right, mate."

Officials have set aside a few sanctuaries and laid down a few generous bag limits and minimum catch sizes for some species, but this comment from one angler is far too typical: "We put the book on the shelf and forget about it."

My parents found a world of difference in Canada when they came to join me for a week at Chummy Plummer's prestigious fishing lodge on Great Bear Lake and its outpost camp on Tree River.

These hotspots are world famous for their consistent catches of big wild fish including a 74-pound lake trout, a 32-pound 9-ounce arctic char and a 5-pound 15-ounce arctic grayling. Plummer is especially revered for his transportation wizardry. With a unique 737 jet service direct from Winnipeg to the wilderness, a guide for every one or two anglers, a fleet of boats and planes to take clients to where the fish are, and a myriad varied locations to choose from, Plummer's lodges on Great Bear Lake are the fishing Mecca of the Northwest Territories (some say North America).

Mum and Dad were understandably thrilled. They were also flabbergasted.

All that wilderness, all that water yet guides took guests on boat and plane rides as much as two hours' travel from the lodge to spread fishing pressure and maintain the wilderness experience.

All those fish, yet anglers on any one fishing trip may kill only one lake trout over 28 inches and only one under 28 inches; and only two arctic char and five

The Taylors are handline specialists from way back.



Ted Taylor once handlined this massive 140kg-plus slimy cod to his dinghy off Coral Bay and then towed it back to shore. It tasted ordinary and later Ted wished he had returned it to the water to live for another 50 or 60 years.

grayling. [Such is peer pressure and increasing concern for fish stocks that very few sportsmen take home even those. And soon it may be illegal to kill any Great Bear Lake trout or Tree River char at all.]

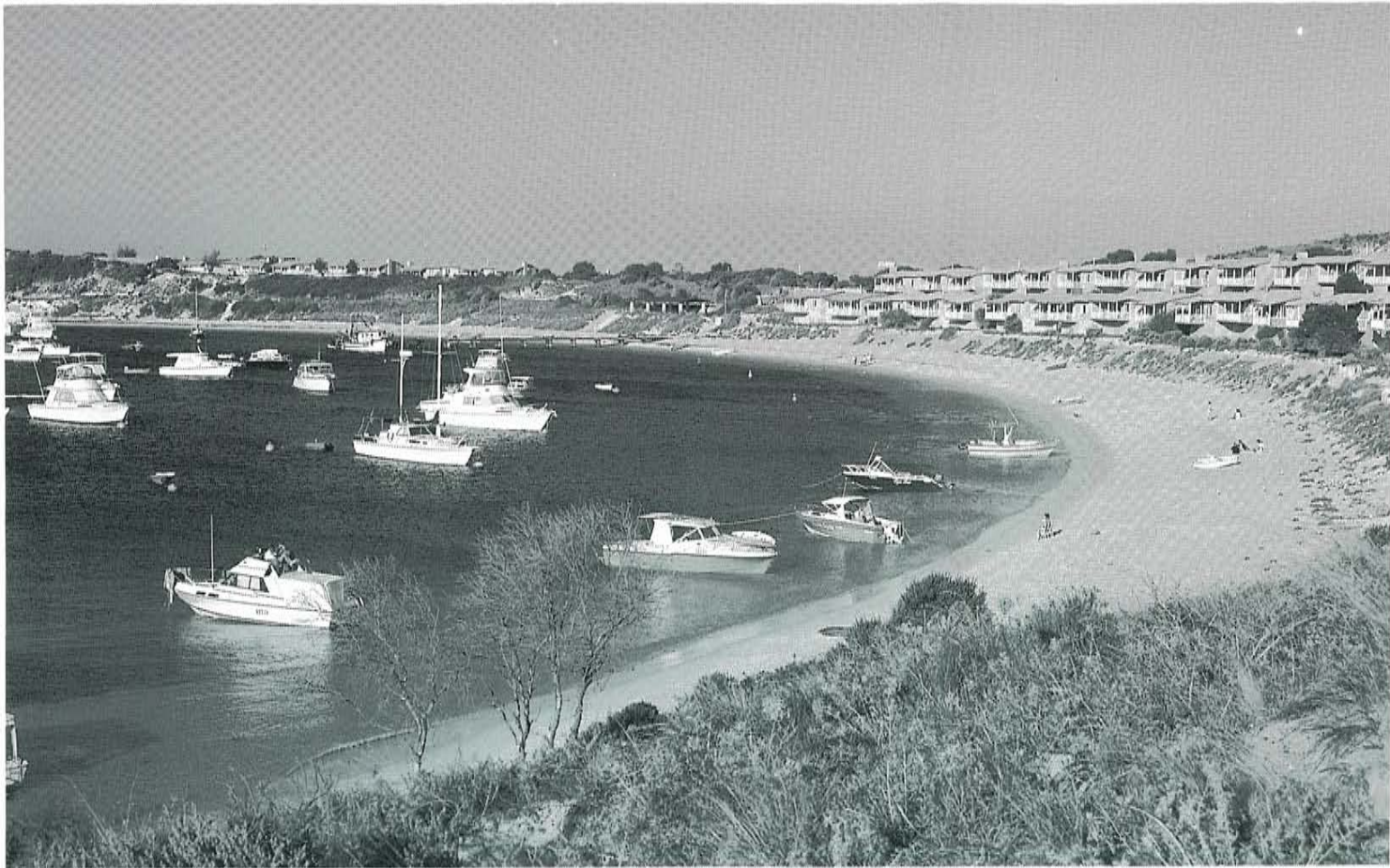
Yet here were North American anglers happily paying perhaps 5000 dollars (including transportation) and hefty licence fees (\$40 non-resident and \$11 special Great Bear Lake management) for just one week of fishing — and very happily putting all their fish back.

"The average Aussie wouldn't dream of paying that much money and not take home fish to eat," said dumbfounded Dad. "In Western Australia you can fly or drive a few hundred miles north-west of Perth and for \$70 a day get transport to and from the charter boat, lunch, and 10 fish guaranteed, gutted frozen and sent home for you."

He found it astounding that although the lodge staff were already strict in enforcing fishing regulations, "way up there in the Never-Never of Tree River" a government inspector had binoculars trained on the hot fishing spots and actually prosecuted a high-ranking government official who accepted a char from his buddy's quota after he had missed out himself!

Mum and Dad had to get used to different gear. I outfitted them with the best — Shimano's state-of-the-art Aero reels with their convenient one-handed quickfire cast and a special fighting drag lever to control tension, Berkeley's 4-6-8- and 12-pound test line (pragmatic Dad thought 50-pound line would be better), snap swivels not leaders, and barbless hooks. Then there was a bewil-





dering (to Dad) variety of lures — Len Thompson's ubiquitous five of diamonds and red devil, several intriguing Mepps and Williams kits, one for each species, and a vast assortment of Rapalas (which to Dad at least looked like fish). Added to those were more we bought at the lodge: large spoons such as red eyes, daredevils and half waves, and rubbery eel-like jigs such as puddle jumpers and white reapers.

In a week we got to use them all. "Just yank it out and slap on another one," said the guide blithely every time we lost a lure to a fighting fish.

At home Mum and Dad would have spent hours with a waterglass bending over the side directing the dinghy back and forth till the hook wiggled clear. But that would be lost fishing time up here where dedicated anglers often missed meals to fish, or they fished in the light of the midnight sun.

Although they remained addicted to the intimacy of the handline, my parents persevered with rods and reels. Mum fought her arthritic fingers by practising at night in the privacy of her cabin with the line hooked to a chair! She didn't want her native guide to think her a mug.

They didn't get any trophies and they

missed catching a char but they averaged daily a dozen or so lake trout (about ten-pounders), caught a few beautiful three and four-pound arctic grayling, and as many northern pike as they wanted.

Their only complaint was that the guides, who adhered to a strict catch-and-release policy, whisked away the fish before they had really looked at them or felt they had caught them.

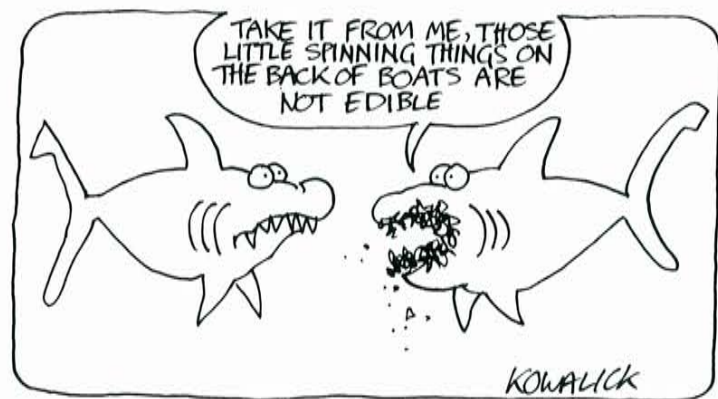
"Those fish are sure lucky," admitted Mum honestly. "It kills me to throw them back."

On the other hand (shades of animal rights activists), she thought it ironic that North Americans who preached conservation tired out fish intentionally

Beautiful Geordie Bay, where the Taylors have spent their summers on their 21-foot boat.

on light tackle and guides let an abundance of shore-lunch fish expire slowly at the bottom of the boat. Ho can you love fish and do that?

We all learnt something at Great Bear Lake. I learnt that Americans who have lost their best wilderness waters are more dedicated than Canadians and Australians in championing conservation. I learnt through North American eyes to look at fish with the same care and concern that I have automatically for other creatures.





Common spoon lures for northern species such as lake trout and pike.

My parents went back home with a deeper appreciation for what they still have Down Under and a deeper understanding for the stringent regulation and higher prices Up Here.

"Seems a lot more efficient and professional in Canada. I don't know how those lodges survive in such a short season with everything flown in," they said.

Dad admitted that fishing back home was not as good as it used to be. More people, more boats, more roads to the fishing spots. Fewer fish, smaller fish, longer time to fill your freezer with fillets.

"We used to catch 8-12-pound spangled emperors inside the reef in schools once," he said. "Now you got to go a long way out and catch less. Ten years ago a person could fill a 500-pound deep freezer with fillets after fishing



Ted Taylor, veteran fisher and crayfisher, takes a cray from his pot at Rottnest.

two or three days a week for a couple of months. Now we wouldn't get a third of that. So the writing's on the wall."



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