



THE FISHIN' INSIDER

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Unfortunately for the PI/SPI Guides Association, a bunch of members of the Texas Outdoor Writers Association that they'd invited to sample the offerings of the Sandspit were faced with a cruel choice; the long arduous journey to the buffer zone between the real world and the third world or a quick trip to Matagorda. The Matagorda Bash offered one thing the Sandspit couldn't, a 24 hour stay at a lodge in the middle of the bay where rumor has it, the help included hot and cold runnin' chamber maids ala Poco Bueno in its glory or gory years. Had this development come to light earlier, they could've put together a trip to Matamoros to compete, but alas time was short and the CVB budget tight.

Not that the shindig was a bust. They did attract writers from major markets. Ron Henry Strait and John Goodspeed from the San Antonio Express News, Doug Pike from the Houston Chronicle, my wicked aunt Jonette Childs from Saltwater Texas which happens to have an extensive international subscriber base, Earl Nottingham from Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine and David Sikes from the Corpus Christi Caller Times. Since nobody made a joke about the pike minnows name change by the International Society of Ichthyologists to hag fish, I suspect Senior Pike may even share some of his adventure with readers of Field & Stream.

Not sure how, but I even got thrown into the mix, probably by mistake, and fished with Ron Henry, Captain Bryan Ray and Warden James Dunks. The idea was to go tarpoonin' out by the jetties cuz Ron Henry don't get to do much of that. After a wildass Monday morning with the tide rippin' out against a 20-25 knot south wind in 4 to 6 foot chop with the occasional 7 footer and no bites we said no mas and hit the dock only to find an invite for lunch. The I.B.N.A.



Seated L-R Ron Henry Strait and Tom Gibson standing Warden Dunks and Captain Bryan "Sting" Ray.

Local I812 had arranged for Ron Henry to scarf down a shrimp basket at Dirty Al's Alamo at the Sea Ranch, Bryan and James winced and all I could do was chuckle and offer my services as interpreter and bodyguard. An aside, since the IBNA could only afford one basket we made a call to my cheap ass publisher to see if he could pick up the tab for mine, it still ain't been returned.

Anyhow, after an evening of listnin' to Skipper Ray croon at Beefeaters we took another shot at the tarpoon Tuesday evening. The only change to the lineup was Tom Gibson who'd just driven in from Clear Lake, the cigar chompin' marauder of tarpon fishing and retired NASA engineer. Tom had spotted Bryan his first Shamrock in the late 70's if he'd take him tarpoonin' occasionally. That was a fifteen footer. This Shamrock is an elegant and roomy 26 footer. He still holds the state record for tarpon at 210 pounds, used to hold the Coonass record at 230 and a few IGFA world line class records, the largest of which was a 265 pound beast caught off Guinea Bissau, West Africa.

We go out and the tide's rippin' in but the winds laid down to 15 knots out of the south. Lines are out as Todd Lohry slides up and immediately hooks up a hundred pounder that makes some cool leaps. A moment later Bryan's rod nearly gets jerked out of his hands and the fights on but no jumps. Turns out to be a cousin a 100 times removed, about a seventy-pound stingray. Sun's down and its gettin' late and boom, another strike. After about ten minutes into the fight I call the better half to tell I'll be late. Things get hectic and I tell her I gotta go in mid-sentence. She still ain't talkin' to me and neither will my cute l'il editor if I don't get this to her right now. By the way, the fish broke off a few minutes later.

We welcome your fishin' photos. Drop them by 2600 Padre Boulevard on the Island, or mail them to I.B. Hooked, c/o Coastal Current Weekly, P.O.Box 2429, South Padre Island, Texas 78597. Be sure to include the name of the angler, weight and type of fish, where caught, and name of boat if applicable. Photos with SASE will be returned.