

Bill Herzog the “Metal God”

I've been a part of the steelheading community for nearly 37 years. We live in a small world, this thing of ours, and we practically all know each other. In a nutshell, I've been a freelance writer, rod tester and representative, lure maker, radio personality and seminar speaker for a majority of that time. Most know who I am, but what no one knows is how I got here.



While not the infamous Nisqually fish this is a throwback to Bill with a monster Skeena buck.

I can thank a 14 pound Nisqually River steelhead for it all.

Back in April of '84, I caught a perfect native male steelhead in the Kahuna Hole on the south Sound's Nisqually. I was going to release it, as it had a bit of color and I did not want to pack it out a mile to the truck. As I reached down, there next to the dorsal was a red/white disc tag with Japanese script. It wouldn't pull off, so I reluctantly killed the fish, just to see where the tag came from.

I sent the tag to the University of Washington fisheries with a note. Terry Rudnick, who worked for the UW, called me with nothing short of amazing news.

It seems my steelhead was captured, tagged and released by a Japanese squidding vessel off Adak Island in the Aleutians seven months earlier. This fish had traveled a bit over 2,700 miles, making it the longest recorded traveling steelhead ever, just beating out a fish from Dworshak hatchery on the Clearwater in Idaho.

Well folks, the national media got wind of this, I have newspaper (remember newspapers?) clippings from Texas, New York and even Germany. The Today Show and Paul Harvey covered the TV and radio end of the story. The kicker was not just the fact this was a long distance record steelhead, but when the UW asked for a scale sample (this is the part the media went gaga for) I told them I could pluck one off the barbecue for you...

As with all things steelhead, the Godfather, Frank Amato of Amato Publications, contacted me and asked if I would do a short piece about my fish. Star struck and a bit overwhelmed that this man wanted anything from someone like me, I sent him a short story and it was printed in the winter issue of Salmon Trout Steelheader. I was sent a check for \$50 and a small, hand-written note. Mr. Amato was pleased with my writing style and asked if I had anything else I would like to contribute to his magazine. The rest, as they say....I'll see you all March 16th in Georgetown.

~ Bill



A more recent photo of Bill with some "updated" fish handling techniques for this dry fly caught fish.