



## New finds for fisherman hooked on Scranton area



RICHARD G. MALLOY S.J. GUEST COLUMNIST)

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A corridor of consolation. A river of repose. A stream of serenity and salvation.

Last year on Sunday, March 25:

I've only got two short hours in the afternoon to fish. Gotta be back for the 7 p.m. Mass.

In "The 2011-12 Winter that Wasn't in NEPA" it warms up (again!) and turns into a beautiful afternoon. The Lackawana River is calling. Jump in the car and in three minutes I'm there, down in downtown Scranton, less than a mile from campus.

Cast, cast, cast. After a half hour, I see a flash, and then she hits. The shock travels up my arms. The rod bends and the reel screams. Big brownie. A fierce fight. She jumps twice but doesn't throw the hook. Yes! In the net, I see she's 18 to 20 inches. Gleaming gold and burnished brown in the March sun. Beautiful. This is so much better than golf. I finally got a 22-inch trout. I let her slide gently back into the bubbling, burbling waters of the flowing Lackawana River. Look at that two-foot trout go. I'm ecstatic. This is a great place to live.

The longer I live here, the more I find to like. The Lackawana River Corridor Association has done wonders to create the 75-mile bike trail along the river. WVIA, the great local PBS station, produced a fabulous documentary on the LRCA's transformative work of the past few decades.

Stomp is at the Scranton Cultural Center and Riverdance is over in Williamsport. OK, I don't have time to go, but at least I know they are happening in this vibrant and sizable community. There are 535,504 living in Lackawana and Luzerne counties. By population, that's a little smaller than Milwaukee or Las Vegas, and our valley in beautiful green NEPA is a little bigger than Tucson.

And where else do they have a branch office of the public library in the mall? Get toothpaste, shoelaces and a library book all in one trip. Plus the Lackawana County Library website is fantastic. I can download books onto my kindle for free. Who needs Amazon?

All the colleges in the area, Marywood, Misericordia, Wilkes, and Lackawana along with the University of Scranton, bring in speakers and have wonderful cultural events of all sorts and sizes. Cheryl Boga draws dozens of world-class musicians throughout the year to Houlihan Mclean Center. They make music on campus that you can listen to for free. And you can actually park on or near the music hall. Try that at Penn or Temple in Philly.

Baseball is back with the RailRiders opening up in a brand new stadium. You can ski, fish, hike, camp, and barbeque at 100 lakesides all within 15 miles of Courthouse Square. High school and college hoops entertain all winter. The University of Scranton and Scranton Prep bring the energy and beauty of lacrosse in the spring. Soccer teams vibrantly battle in the fall months. And high school football here is second to none.

Nay Aug Park is a mile from downtown and the beautiful, easy stroll around Lake Scranton is a five-minute drive up Moosic Street. Lackawana State Park with great year round fishing (if you like the ice) is 15 minutes from downtown; Tobyhanna and Gouldsboro are short 30-minute drives into the Poconos.

Saturday Night Live is all screwed up having the Joe Biden character bad mouth our city. What do "New Squawkers" know? Let 'em have 24-hour noise and traffic congestion.

Go ahead and spend weeks of your life stuck on the George Washington Bridge. Here you get fireworks at Thanksgiving, Christmas and the Fourth of July. There are amazing small town parades and fairs all year long. Dozens of parish picnics and hundreds of community fundraisers - from the local fire company's pancake breakfast to the American Legion's beef and beer - make for a land where there is simply too much to choose. You can't do it all. And, can anyone say St. Paddy's Day parades?

There are decent cheesesteaks at Cosmo's and a superlative hoagie (not a sub or hero) at Granteed's. Glider's breakfast can't be beat. There are more good pizza places in the Scranton area than there are rabid Eagles fans in Philly. There's real Italian at Café Classico and La Trattoria, meat to eat at Ipanema Grille and the wonderland that is Cooper's. And everybody raves about Russell's. A comic came to the U. and was trying to humorously put down Scranton. He moaned, "Where could I get Thai food here?" The kids yelled back, "There are two great Thai places right down the street!"

As I write it is March 27. It's 45 degrees, the tail end of the winter of 2012-13 that "annoyed, but didn't blanket us with a blizzard." I'm gonna wander down to the river this evening. Two-foot trout tremble at the sound of my approach.

## Two-foot trout proves elusive but Scranton hooks fisherman

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RICHARD G. MALLOY, S.J. (GUEST COLUMNIST) Published: December 22, 2011

When I was in the first grade, the nuns must have been pulling their hair out under their habits trying to figure out how to keep classes of 65 to 100 baby boomers occupied during the days before Christmas. So they sent Liz Betzler and me around to all the grades to sing "All I Want For Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth." I am sure we were adorable, both of us missing the requisite incisors.

Liz went on to become an actress. I became a Jesuit, lucky enough to land in Scranton.

In September 2010, I arrived at the University of Scranton after spending more than two decades south of the Electric City, living and working at Holy Name Parish in Camden, N.J., and teaching at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia. Whenever I could get a day or two away, I'd boogie up the turnpike's Northeast Extension and fish at Chapman Lake. Surprisingly, the Jesuits at the university, who seem to know everything, never told me about Scranton's best-kept secret: the huge brown trout in the Lackawana River.

This past year, I have wandered this brawny, blustery brute of a river, battling brush and slipping on stones. From the urban fishing areas behind the ballfield in South Side and the weeds below Redner's, to the beauty of Archbald and above, I kept trying to find these tremendous trout that local fishermen kept telling me were in the lovely Lackawana. Yet, besides a few, fat, foot-long trout, I wasn't having any real luck. The trout proved largely exotic, elegant and elusive.

Summer and fall this year saw the river unusually high, too rough to fish. I was frustrated. Trophy trout live less than a mile from where I sleep and I wasn't catching any of them.

Then my luck turned, along with the weather over Thanksgiving. Fifty, even 60-degree days. Beautiful blue skies. Pleasant light breezes. Last year I drove to Philly in a snowstorm on Thanksgiving. This year I hit Scranton's stream over Thanksgiving weekend.

Friday I got a couple. Saturday and Sunday, a few more. Of course none of my skeptical Jesuit brothers believed without photo evidence. (They forget Jesus said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.") I produced the photo proof of a beauty that was caught .. well, I'd tell you where, but then I'd have to swear you to secrecy.

It seems I keep finding more secrets of this magic town. The people are friendly. You can find a parking spot (try doing that in Philly). You've got Gertrude Hawk chocolate, fireworks and lights on Courthouse Square, a revitalized downtown, great food from Italian to Thai, a bishop who can mesmerize a high school audience with his preaching, great basketball, fantastic parks 20 minutes in any direction, wonderful music, great small towns up and down the valley. Coney Island hot dogs and Catalano's hoagies. Cosmo's even grills up a cheesesteak as good as you get in Philly.

For a 6 a.m. flight, I leave the university at 5, get there, park in seconds, just a few minutes to get through security, and I'm at the gate at 5:30. And the TSA people at the airport are kind and helpful. And, I haven't even really gotten to know Wilkes-Barre yet.

Last week I had to drive to Washington, D.C. The traffic, the congestion, the noise. I wanted to come home to Scranton. Who needs a big city when all you could want is here? The Scranton/ Wilkes-Barre area's population is 563,641, but you can drive without fear of losing life and limb. With all these folks, it's amazing there aren't more people who know of the many attractions of this area.

Look, no one has told the fishermen in New York or Philly there are big trout in the river. Don't let them know. More fish for us. The last time Jesus was here he appeared to a bunch of guys on a fishing trip. John: 21; you can look it up. When I'm out fishing, I'm just looking for Jesus and that miracle 24-inch trout. That's all I want for Christmas.

## Welcoming community no place for prejudice



BY REV. Richard G. Malloy, S.J. (GUEST COLUMNIST)

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After a late Sunday night flight from Chicago after a weekend wedding I was standing on the ramp waiting for a carry-on bag. A guy in a baseball cap and flannel shirt tells me he's from a state in the deep South. He's up here working the natural gas jobs.

He asks, "Where you from?"

"I've been in Scranton about a year, but I'm from Philly," I answer.

He says, "So, how's those flash mobs?"

"Bad news," I reply.

Then he looks at me and says, "You know, you never see a white flash mob," accompanied by a white-guy-to-white-guy-look" that some white guys don't realize other white guys don't appreciate.

"Really," I say. "This morning I saw some pretty horrific white guy BS on TV, white people beating the hell out of one another at stadiums in Baltimore and Oakland. It's not color that matters, Dude. It's stupidity."

He didn't seem to appreciate my sentiments.

Too many good ole boys don't get it. The USA is changing. We are more diverse. Those who actively oppose or resent and don't accept diversity are harming not only themselves, but the communities in which they work and live.

If people of color get the message that Northeast Pennsylvania is not a welcoming place, in a generation, only old, white people will be living here with no one to continue our communities.

There are almost 309 million people in the USA. Only some 197 million (63.7 percent) are "white, non-Hispanic." About 38.9 million (12.6 percent) are African-American and another 50 million (16.3 percent) are Latinos (U.S. Census 2010). By the time I'm an old man, 2042, the USA will become a nation in which no one group makes up 50 percent of the population (Perez and Hirschman 2009).

In a year here in NEPA, I've met many great people, folks who are friendly and welcoming, people who work hard to make a good world for their family and neighbors. Most would love to see their children and grandchildren settle and thrive in the Lackawana Valley.

I hope that people whose skin tone is darker than mine experience what I've experienced here. But I know my African-American and Latino friends have questions I don't entertain when I travel outside our big cities.

A few years ago, I was at a Jesuit retreat center near the Pennsylvania-Maryland border. For years, folks from our parishes in place like Philadelphia, Camden, N.J., and Baltimore have visited the center. Over the years, I'd heard of some of the local good ole boys who keep a flavor of the Klan in the air. They are not appreciative of what they call "mud people" invading "their" territory.

One Saturday afternoon, the family retreat schedule called for free time when we could just kick back and relax. Three Latino guys came over and asked if they could go into nearby Waynesboro, get a beer, and catch some of the Phillies game on TV. I told them they'd better ask their wives if they could go, but I didn't see how it would disrupt things. They looked at me and then at one another, with glances that communicated, "He's not really getting it."

"Yo, Padre Rick, we need to know if it's OK for 'us,' you know, guys who look like us, to go into that local bar."

It hit me again. The blindness of white privilege. I never think twice about where I go, or what I do when there. No one is going to look at me askance because I'm "white" or "Irish." But my three Puerto Rican friends, U.S. citizens, as are all Puerto Ricans, had to wonder and worry if their entering a public establishment in the great commonwealth of Pennsylvania would be a problem.

We "white guys" have to speak up to other "white guys" and let them know our future depends on building communities wherein people who don't look like "us" feel welcomed and appreciated.

Anyone coming here to NEPA to take our gas should know we don't appreciate anyone bringing outdated and destructive attitudes and ideas of racial privilege to our valley.

God made the magical Pocono mountains for all peoples. The Catholic Church teaches that racism is a sin. We need to root out of our minds, hearts and souls any remnants of prejudice and discrimination lodged there by all too recent societal dynamics.

I was born in 1955 into a USA in which segregation was legal, lethal and largely unquestioned. By the time I was 10 years old, the entire country had changed for the better as a result of the courageous work and sacrifice of those in the Civil Rights movement.

Here we are, some 50 years later. Let's not allow a resurgence in hateful and idiotic prejudice to reassert its ugly and stupid presence among us or our children.

