

CAPTAIN MIKE DACIEK STORIES YELLOW FIN TUNA

Larry Beardsley was a Captain at Frontier and I flew co-pilot for him a number of times. Two years prior to his retirement at age 60 he moved to the big island of Hawaii on the Kona Coast. We both liked to fish so he invited me to fish with him the next time I was in Hawaii. In 1982 I had purchased a time share with Royal Aloha Vacation Club and visited Hawaii every year. Larry had two fishing boats, the Missing Link and the Rubber Ducky. He hired a Hawaiian mechanic named Link to maintain his boats. The Missing Link, a fully equipped power boat with twin inboard engines was docked at the marina. It had a wench to pull in huge fish like tuna and marlins which could exceed 2000 pounds. He kept the Rubber Ducky, a small 18 foot boat parked beside his house about twenty minutes away from the marina.

As we arrived at the marina Larry said, "I don't see Link! Last week I had a fuel leak on one of the engines and called Link to repair it. He told me he would get right on it! I reminded him that this was important because I had a good friend coming in from the mainland to go fishing. Before we load the boat I'm going to start up the engine to check if the fuel leak was repaired."

I heard the starter cranking, the engine started, sputtered and died. Then Larry looked over the side and started swearing. "Look at the fuel on top of the water! He didn't fix it!" I asked, "Can't Link repair it?" Larry shook his head in disgust. "Where is he? Now you know why I named this boat the Missing Link! Every damn time I need him, he's missing! You wait here. I'm going back to the house to get the Rubber Ducky. You came here to fish and that's what we're going to do."

It was November and the worse time of the year to be fishing for tuna. We fished all day and had one strike losing a lure that cost Larry \$25. Mike E. was with us and declined Larry's invitation to join us on the next day.

Undaunted we were back on the water at the crack of dawn. The minute we were away Larry turned on the ship to shore radio to get a fishing report on yesterday's catch. They said, "Only three tuna were caught yesterday, one about 40 pounds and the other two, twenty pounds." Larry asked, "Where were they caught?" The voice replied, "At the east end of Kona about one quarter mile off shore." We took up a heading to parallel the coast.

Larry wrapped a bungee cord around the steering wheel and looked at me. "This is a poor man's auto-pilot. Let's put out four fishing lines." As we did that he instructed me, "If we get a strike you man the Captain's Chair and I'll pull in the other three lines to avoid them getting tangled with your line." I noticed a baseball bat on the deck and asked Larry, "What's with the baseball bat?" He said, "There's nothing more fun than wrestling with a live 2,000 pound fish thrashing around inside the boat. When we get the fish next to the boat I'll grab the line to keep him there and you hit the fish in the head with the bat to knock him out. It might take three strikes... and he's out!" I laughed.

“That was funny, Larry, then what?” He said, “I’ll take a sharp knife and run it down both sides of the fish along its two major blood veins. This will drain the blood so it won’t contaminate the meat. Now I want you to reach under that lid and take out my bottle of “tea.” We had a locker the size of a coffin full of ice. This was to put the fish in ASAP to keep it cool. Heat within the fish from fighting would spoil the meat. I noticed the ice had melted and the locker was half full of ice water. Larry had stashed a six pack of beer for me and a quart of Jack Daniels whiskey for the Captain. Larry was a serious drinking man. He removed the cap and said, “Now we can do some serious drinking.” He threw his head back taking about four big swallows. He grinned at me and said, “Ahhh, good! Want a swig?”

Three hours later I had consumed all of my sandwiches and six bottles of beer. The locker had a sleeping bag on the top and I told Larry I was going to take a nap. He said, “One more thing, I have a bad back. You’ll be doing all the fishing and heavy lifting since we don’t have a wench.” “Roger that!”

An hour later I heard Larry say, “Mike, are you awake?” “Yeah, where are we?” I asked, looking around. “We’re at the end of Kona. Want to see some Killer Whales?” He handed me his binoculars. I took them and looked toward where he was pointing. “Those aren’t whales,” I said. “They’re Dolphins!” He grabbed the binoculars. “You’re right, Mike. Tuna travel under Dolphins! I’ll turn this baby around and get right in the middle of the school.”

Talk about excitement! Traveling along with them, watching them arching in and out of the water, playing with us, crossing from the front and back, was awesome.

Bam! We had a strike! The spool was unwinding and Larry closed the throttle to slow the boat down, yelling, “Mike, man the chair. I’ll get the lines in!” I strapped myself in, placing the fishing pole in the leather slot between my legs and the fight began. After about 20 minutes I had the fish close to the boat. He saw it and dived straight down taking the line with him, all my work undone. I began the pumping motion again, pulling the pole straight up, cranking the line in as I dropped the pole back down. I got him back up to the boat and he sounded again. He did it one more time before he gave up and I brought him over to the side of the boat. The fight took over an hour and I was damn tired. Larry grabbed the line holding the fish up against the boat while I knocked the fish out with the bat. Larry said, “Okay Mike, let’s pull him in.” I shook my head, “My arms are like rubber hoses, I need a couple minutes rest.” Larry responded with a big grin, “I think he’s over two hundred pounds. What would you do if he was 2,000 pounds?” I thought about it and said, “We would pull him all the way back to the marina.”

After resting I took over saying, “Here’s what we’re going to do. Because the gunwale extends out over the water we have to swing the fish out away from the boat. We’ll both grab the line and I’ll count one-two-three! On three we’ll push out and up as hard as we can...understand?” He said, “I’ll try.”

I looked at Larry and began my count, "Ready-one-two..." Larry yanked real hard on the line. We were so far out of sync that we dropped the line and the fish disappeared into the water. I stretched out reaching for the line and luckily I hooked it and pulled it in. We still had the fish. I thought, He's had too much to drink." I told Larry, "I've got my strength back now...I think I can pull him out by myself...okay?" He nodded.

I had heard that a tuna was the most streamlined fish in the ocean but I didn't believe it. I took three deep breathes, pushed out and pulled up as hard as I could. The fish leaped out of the water like it was shot from a cannon! It knocked me off my feet and I fell backwards with the fish on my chest. The back of my head struck the opposite gunwale! It felt like someone had hit me in the back of my head with a baseball bat.



Mike

Larry

Larry was on the radio broadcasting to the world that we had caught a 200 pound tuna. When I regained my senses I saw that Larry was cutting into the fish's veins. I removed the lid from the ice locker. When Larry finished his surgery I said, "Larry, you take a breather and I'll put the tuna in the locker." While I struggled with the fish I heard Larry yell, "Damn it, Mike...help me!"

I turned and there was Larry inside the locker, flailing about with both arms and legs sticking straight up into the air. Not knowing that I had removed the lid in anticipation of loading the locker, Larry sat down to rest. I couldn't restrain my laughter as I pulled him out. "That's a helluva way to sober up, Larry. Besides, there's not room for the two of you in there." Fifteen minutes later I had a huge Marlin on the line. He came out of the water, walked on his tail, dove back down taking out line like there was no tomorrow. Out he came again, dove back down, and the line went limp. I reeled in the line and checked the seven foot metal leader. It was now a three foot leader. It's not uncommon for the fish to get away by bending the leader, crimping it and making it snap. Asi est la vida! (Such is life).

The tuna sold for \$556 which went to Larry. He supplied everything except a six pack of beer.

-<https://captainbillywalker.com/war-stories/captain-mike-daciek-stories/>