

Miramichi Revisited

Story and illustrations by Arthur Taylor

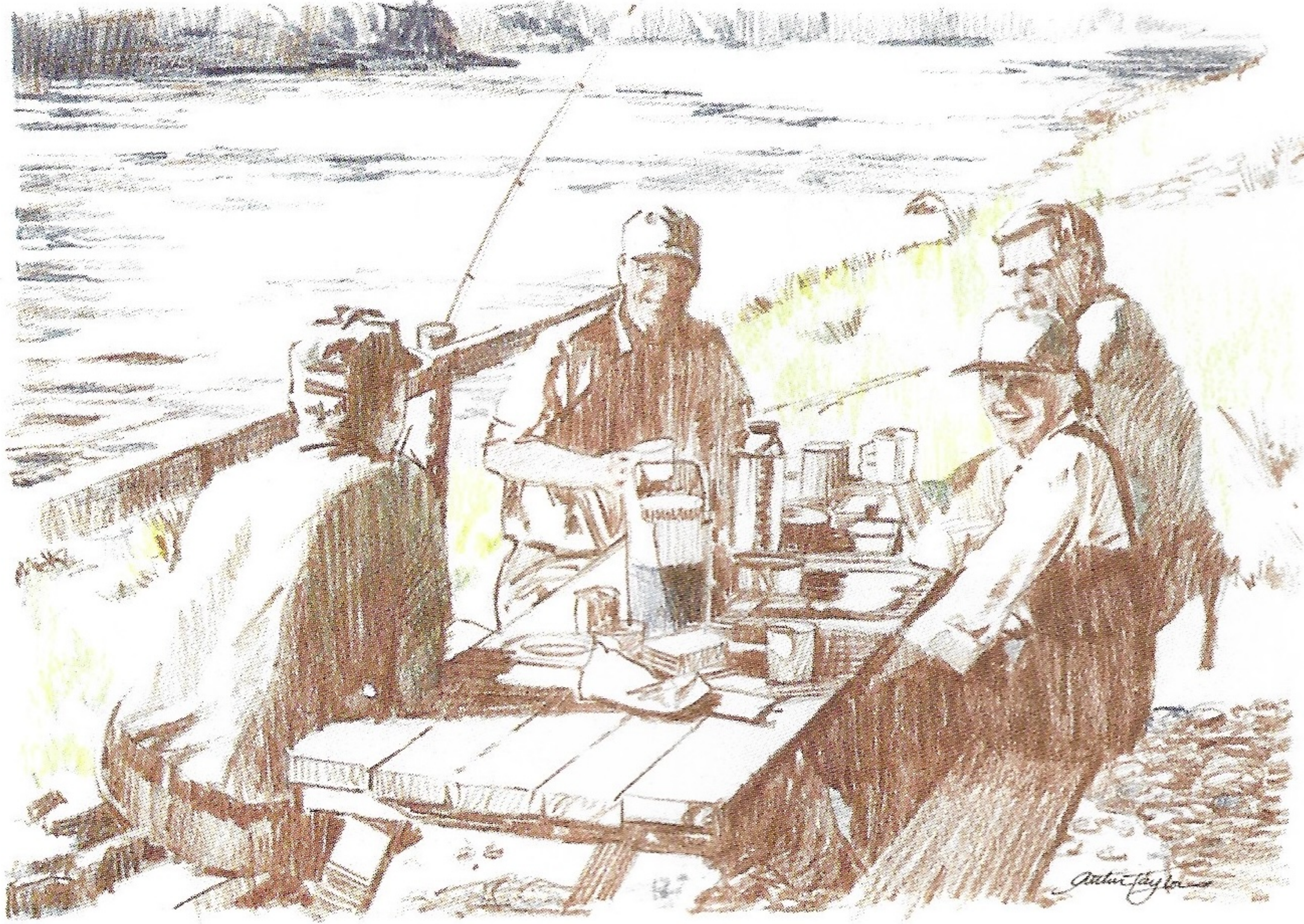
I must say it seems that my mission in life is to lead my fishing buddy Bob Colson into situations of fishing excellence. It all began the morning in July when I picked him up in Fredericton, N.B. He had just nonchalantly flown in from his home in the Buffalo area of N.Y. and we quickly motored up to Wilson's Sporting Camps on the Miramichi River. On the way, I had to attend to the business of helping set up my exhibit of "Salmon in the Maritimes" paintings at the Cultural Center of the Salmon Museum in Doaktown, and of course visit Wally Doak's Fly Shop...





Back at Wilson's we donned our fishing paraphernalia, waders, vests, flies, and creature comforts, obtained our licences from our most gracious hosts, and at last we were ready to tackle the mighty Miramichi River. Unknown to Bob, the custom at Wilson's was to have the guides pack up a light meal picnic supper that was served on the banks of the river without hardly missing a cast. It was a pleasant social event with our guide Gil Roussell serving up great sandwiches, condiments, cookies, tea, coffee as well as the stories about sighting humps on the water, supposedly representing salmon moving up the river, to the unsuspecting listeners. It was an evening of all of us sighting humps on the pool. Humps, but no bumps. It wasn't 'til later that evening, while back in the comfortable setting of our cabin that Mother Nature took charge and sent some much needed rain our way.

It was a wet and dreary morning but we somehow managed to arise to the occasion and slither over to the lunchroom and fortify ourselves, along with the other guests with a fine breakfast. I congratulated myself for inviting such a great friend and fishing expert as Bob along and I fondly recall wishing him all the luck in the world, on this his maiden voyage to the Miramichi. I also cautioned him not to be too discouraged if the salmon ignored him completely. There was a lovely young lady named Sally enjoying breakfast at an adjoining table who said she caught 4 salmon (grilse) on the day before. Our ears perked up a bit.



To make things a bit more challenging for Bob, our guide agreed to start him off on one of the pools least likely to produce of the several we would fish. I hadn't been casting my fly 10 minutes at the home pool, when from upstream someone in the slack shallow run yelled "Fish on". Slowly I gazed back and to my disbelief, Bob had a salmon on. Just plain luck I said to myself – it won't happen again. Our guide, Gil went up to help Bob net and release the fish. It wasn't 'til another hour had passed on the rain soaked river, that I landed my second fish. Bob proceeded to catch up with a grilse shortly after. We were even up with two fish each. But really who's counting, after all he is my friend and I want him to have a successful trip. We returned to the main lodge, wet and soggy, for a delicious steak dinner (lunch). We rested a while – and I went to the Salmon Museum for meeting, while Bob did some errands around Doaktown.

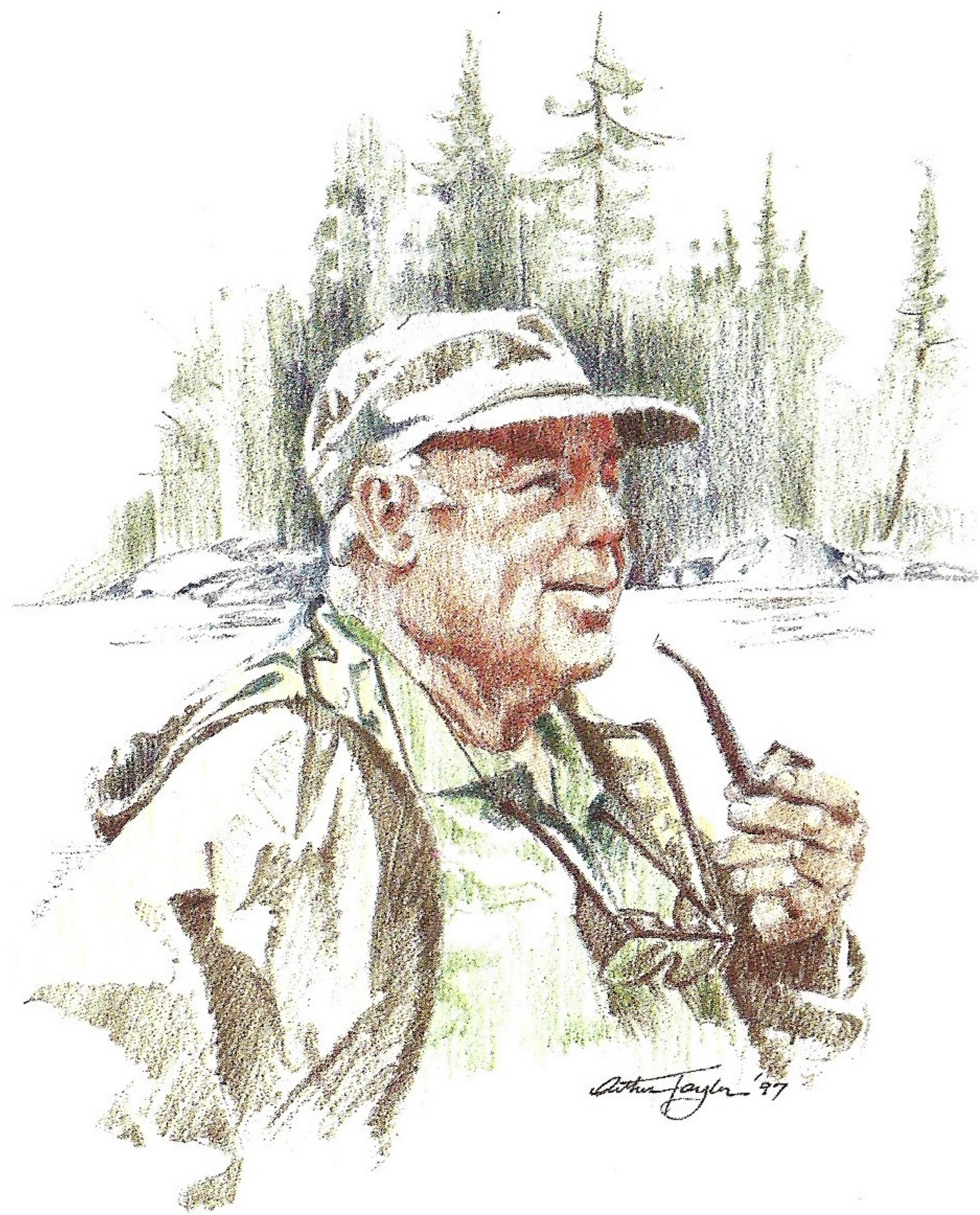
It was our turn that afternoon and evening to fish Wilson's home pool. Bob went up to fish an upper run while I staked my claim to the home pool. I managed to raise a salmon but missed him as the guide pointed up-river to Bob who was already locked on to another fish. After landing and releasing his third fish, we then swapped pools. I fished the fast run, and Bob went down to the

main pool where I had raised a fish. He had just made his fourth cast and landed his fourth fish (grilse). We sat down at the picnic table where we talked and ate. I thought to myself Bob is truly a super fisherman, but couldn't he show some deference for my age. Four fish to my two, indeed. I found some solace in mesmerizing myself while staring at this narrow strip of water, thinking here we are



sitting just 50 feet away from where hundreds of salmon pass by weekly on the way to their spawning grounds, and what a great privilege it is to be so close to this spot where the largest population of Atlantic salmon in North America must pass. Very humbling indeed.

Our third day on this rain-swept river continued right where we left off the day before. Cooler temperature and higher water apparently signaled the fish to keep moving up; new fish arrived in the pools. It was a little bit more difficult to interest the moving fish to take a fly, but that didn't deter us from enticing several larger salmon to take the #8 Green Bug and the #6 Undertaker.



All salmon were carefully released unharmed. Two subsequent rainy and cool days produced about a dozen fish for us, so I took the fourth day off to do some sketching and a quick watercolor study, while Bob continued to fish Cool Water pool.

I should mention that Wilson's water occupies a big stretch of the river with a great variety of challenging pools. In the high water Bob concentrated on fishing the near shore while I sketched and thought about the kind of painting I would do for this story. I was surrounded by many inspirational scenes of this

spectacular river. Eagles could be seen soaring overhead. Ospreys often flew by with small fish in the clutch of their talons. Kingfishers scooted about, while beavers kept busy taking green ferns to their houses. Occasionally a muskrat could be seen swimming along the far bank. The riverline environment seems so at peace with itself and I marveled at how little this river must have changed over the last 100 years. Much credit must be attributed to the early pioneers like the Wilsons who helped insure this magnificent resource will always be here.

To me, a sketch can provide several things. I can search for significant themes. Often several observed elements will connect in a single pattern. I don't look for minute details as a photo can provide that. Instead, I question myself, is there a painting there and will it be meaningful to the viewer. Will he be able to identify with what's occurring in the painting? Has he been there before? Viewer participation has always been a key consideration in my approach to painting.

After looking back on this fantastic trip, I can't help thinking... man does indeed get it right on occasion. 