

The Story of a Trap

Although the title says this is about a trap, it is really about a man that helped me in more ways than just in trapping. Sadly, Richard "Rick" Wayne Smith Jr died on March 1, 2015 at 60 years old. He had only been retired from the US Army Corps of Engineers for 3 months. He was not a member of the NATCA, but he may have sparked the trap collecting interest in me with one unique trap.

I remember the first time I met him in 2002. I had just gotten a new job in Indiana. I drove into the compound where I would be working. There was a group of men outside. As I drove up, I rolled my window down. He said "You must be from Montana, huh." I was somewhat taken by surprise that he could make that determination. I asked "How did you know that?" He said "Because of your license plates." He would refer to that first meeting from time to time and say that I must have thought he was pretty dumb if he could not figure out where I was from when the truck was clearly marked with those license plates. It was a way for him to "bust my chops" when needed.

Rick did a little trapping when I first arrived in Indiana in 2002 and we went to a few conventions together. In his younger days, he trapped a large area, but now relied on the landowners to call him when they needed something trapped. After I had been in Indiana for a while, he said that he was sick of falling into the water of the ponds and creeks he was trapping and wanted to give it up. I was still building up property permissions and he brought up about me taking over his trapping areas. I was very interested as he had some good areas.

That next year, I called the landowners of the areas he trapped and told them what Rick and I discussed me taking over trapping on their property. I asked if it would be OK for me to trap their properties. All of them said yes.

Rick helped me skin and stretch quite a few animals which I got tanned and

hung on my wall. He was very good at it and did most of the work as I was mostly moral support. I had hoped to get free time to learn more from him about skinning, scraping and stretching. One thing that Rick had discussed was catching an otter when there was an actual season for them in Indiana. The first otter season in Indiana was in 2015. I was disappointed that Rick was not able to get one. He did catch a few before there was a legal season. When he unintentionally caught one, he always



felt badly, pulled his traps and turned the otter into the Conservation Officer as required. One of these otters was mounted and placed in the US Army Corps of Engineers office where he worked.

Since Rick was through with most of his trapping, he sold or gave me a bunch of trapping supplies and traps. The prices were always half of what he could get out of them. I brought this up to him, but he was not concerned. I think he was happy they were going to a good home.

One trap was very unique and I could not figure out what it was. It had heavy jaws, a spring with a keyhole cut for the bottom eye, cast swivels and a cast end ring attached to a flat link chain. On the spring side, the jaws hooked into a post riveted to the base and the other end of the jaws hooked into two holes in the end of the base piece that had been bent up at a 90 degree angle.

The pan had a cutout V which had Victor, Shoulder Catch, and 91 stamped above it. The stamping on the bottom of the pan was badly rusted and unreadable. The pan was connected to the hump style cross which was attached to the base with a round rivet.

After not having any luck with figuring out what the traps was, I showed it to Tom Parr. Tom said that the cross was not the correct one and that it looked like a 1 ½ PS&W. So, the search was on for a correct 1 ½ cross for the trap. After not having any luck finding the correct cross, I took the trap to Bob White's Spring Trap Meet in Wisconsin. I showed the trap to Bob and, about as quickly as he left, he was back with a base/cross/pan section for a 1 ½ PS&W trap.

When I got it home, I switched out the incorrect parts for the correct ones. The new parts fit nicely with the rest of the trap. I kept the original base to remember who I got it from and got a name tag from Bob to remember who helped me with getting a correct base/cross/pan.

Sadly, the story of this trap does not go full circle. I never showed Rick the trap after the correct parts were added, but who expects someone to pass three months after their retirement. I never did get the story about the trap and why it needed the different cross added in the first place. Maybe Rick did not know, but maybe he did.

Scot H. Dahms
2270 W Willow Lane
Peru, Indiana 46970
765-327-1531
ranger1971@comcast.net