

FWFHF dismissal of
distortions on Spray mounts.

RETORT
by
Doug Petrousek

In answer to the WRMA challenge that the Louie Spray world record mounts were artificially “enlarged” to meet claimed dimensions, the FWFHF provided a photo of a fresh fish and a mounted fish. The photo is claimed to be of the same fish showing fin placement on the mount which does not match the fin placement of the fresh fish. Of course we don’t know for a fact that these are the same fish. However, we find that there are more similarities in the mount of the fresh fish in the FWFHF example than there are in comparing the fresh Spray fish to the mounts done by Kahmann or the musky mounted by Hugh Lackey. In the FWFHF example photo, the measurement from the fork of the tail to the front of the dorsal and the anal fin are the same on both. The girth as measured in front of the ventral fins is equal in both fish. The girth directly behind the head at the pectoral fins is the same in both fish. The distance from the front of the jaw to the front of the dorsal fin is the same in both. The girth in caudal area, behind dorsal and anal fin is the same in both fish. The overall appearance of the mount as compared to the fresh fish is certainly more favorable in its representation than is shown in the Spray mounts.

The FWFHF asserts that taxidermy is “merely an artist’s representation of a fish”. However, the representation by taxidermy, in its best form, is meant to “copy” the look of the specimen as it was in life. It is meant to “recreate” the anatomy and dimensions of the specimen as closely as possible. This is accomplished by the taxidermist taking measurements and contact tracings of the fish prior to the removal of the skin. With these measurements an artificial body or “manikin” is constructed. This would provide an accurate [though not exact] form for the fish skin to be mounted on. Any accomplished taxidermist understands the importance of these measurements and tracings. Karl Kahmann is thought to be a renowned taxidermist of his day. This can be evidenced by the display dedicated to him in the FWFHF museum. It is not likely that he would be ignorant of proper preparation in the mounting of Spray’s WORLD RECORD fish.

CONCLUSION

Louie Spray claimed to have caught three [3] WORLD RECORD muskies. The first two [2] were brought to Karl Kahmann for mounting. The 1939 fish, as addressed in my analysis for WRMA, was a very poor representation of the fish as it appeared in photos with Alton Van Camp. My opinion is the fish was “enhanced” to reflect dimensions required in application for record status. Evidently Spray was happy with the work done by Kahmann since he brought his second WORLD RECORD to Karl for mounting in 1940. The 1940 mount is addressed in my contribution to the WRMA report. In 1949 Kahmann refused to mount Spray’s third WORLD RECORD. The fish went to taxidermist Hugh Lackey. I found this fish to be distorted in such manner to lead me to believe it was intentional and not just an “accident” of the taxidermist’s art. All three mounts show distortion in a **number of major areas** as compared to publicity photos of these fish. I believe these fish to be artificially enlarged in order to conform to a predetermined size which these fish did not measure up to when caught.

Addendum: Some of my credentials are as follows;

*Full time taxidermist since 1976 mounting only fish.

*Personally mounted over 36 line class world records as recognized by the FWFHF.

- *Personally mounted 8 state record fish.
- *Have done restoration of All Tackle World Record Smallmouth Bass.
- *Have taught classes in fish taxidermy and done restoration work for the John G. Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, Illinois.
- *Some customers include ; Pepsi-cola, Spence Petros, Jim Saric, Babe Winkelman, Len Hartman, Bill Cullerton, Tony Portincaso, Dick Kaminski.
- *Have mounted 4 muskies currently holding line class records in the FWFHF.
- * Have taught in excess of 100 students in the art of taxidermy either as a hobby or a profession.

Submitted respectfully,

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