



"Our mission is to ignite women who have a passion for fly-fishing and provide adventures to realize their limitless potential."

—Lori-Ann Murphy



Long Tall Sally

by Lori-Ann Murphy

"I feel so exposed out here! Where are the trees? Where is the shade?"

I was training for a casting competition in 1998 when a "Pippi Longstocking" of sorts came up to me and said, "The Witch of the East is here to beat the Witch of the West." With that, Rachel Finn and I became instant friends and now -over mountains and rivers - life friends.

She said she could visit Montana in September, so I got our camp together at one of my all time favorite State Parks. It was literally "92 degrees in the shade," when she arrived at the Bozeman airport. My truck and camper - no air conditioning. We kept the windows rolled down, ate Dot's Pretzels and planned for the week ahead.

Rachel is probably the biggest fishing addict I know. So river time was a priority.

It worked out that some of my long time fishing guide pals decided to have a fun float day on the Yellowstone - up by Yankee Jim Canyon. This is a tough crew but she had no problem joining in on guide stories over a fabulous riverside lunch. We traded boats, rowing positions, fishing positions and chased my new pup around on the river. It was a glorious blue sky day and we landed some nice fish. And now she knows about a few of my heroes.

We were at The Murray Bar the night before so she got to witness the full Livingston fly fishing guide life after 5 pm. She knew several guides in the bar of course. Rachel guides full time in the Adirondacks - which is way east of the Absaroka's. But guides tend to be clan like and we find each other no matter which river - with its local bar - we're fishing.

"When you come out West next summer you could extend your hosted trips -our local art gallery is looking for an artist in residence next summer. They'll love the fact that you have your MFA from Yale." She pulled out a cigar and lit it - looked at me and said, "Maybe I don't want to extend my stay." She went on to say she felt vulnerable and exposed by the big sky of Montana - and in Southwest Montana, a lack of trees. I shared Lewis and Clark stories and showed her where the tribes of Native American Indians hung out - thinking she would think this is cool, and she does, but she still had to deal with that "exposed" feeling.

As Rachel fished, she started to focus on the river instead of the bigness. By the time she went home she said, "It's OK I guess - it is beautiful." And with that, a big smile, a soft roll of the cigar in her hand and peace from the East Witch.

I'm not guiding anymore. I decided to change things up a bit after 30 years on the oars and then pushing a push pole as an old lady on the flats of Ambergris Caye. Jezze - but I loved it. So much so that I was searching for "guide rehab" places - which they actually have in Flagstaff for all the Colorado River guides. But I just let my circle of friends listen to my wrath and offer support. I'm doing OK now, so I guess it worked. Next chapters keep me doing the things I love with the people I care about.

So many of us tell tales of how we averted a responsible life style for the love of guiding and being outdoors. Maybe a little apologetic to the peanut gallery. But I'm not so sure now that being a "trout bum" or "living the dream in Belize" is a bad thing. When you hang around fly fishing guides you will hear about life. From the hatch to the tug, it's all there - big life.

When we fish, we find that childlike enthusiasm that becomes contagious for us and those who enjoy being with us. We get to a point where we know that good feeling and value it as life itself. From "Dark Waters," Russell Chatham shares:

"The successful combination of exited wonder and fierce effort produces a new sensation: satisfaction, perhaps the greatest thrill and most important goal in all our lives."

From the foreward, Nick Lyons reminds us of the great logical mind of Huckleberry Finn. "In a barrel of odds and ends," 'Huck tells us,' - "it is different; things get mixed up and the juice kind of swaps around, and then things go better." For us, that would be our witches brew. Things just go better for us when we fish and play outside.

Knowledge of the natural world becomes an obsession and "the catch." The sporting life is a valued life - filled with stories of places with friends and heroes. I get to witness this on our RWFFA trips! And just like this story - you too have made new and life friends from a trip with Reel Women. What we have brewed together is truly magic. Let's keep mixing the pot - let's make the best "Witches Brew."

Cast to your dreams,

L-A



Above photo - Rachel Finn at camp before fishing. And then a happy camper!

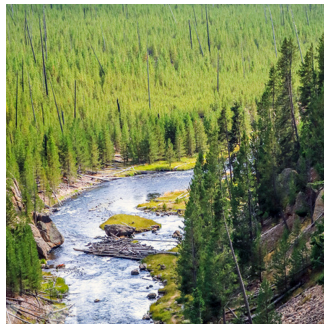
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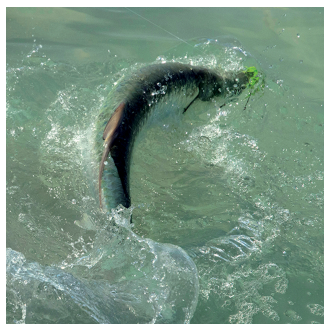
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From Lori-Ann: [Please contact me if you want to put a Belize trip together. I live in San Pedro and have a full service fly shop Reel Belize.](#)



Lori-Ann Murphy
Make Your Connections Count!

Ambergris Caye, BZ
 011 501 610-5182
What's App: 610-5182
web: www.reelbelize.com
email: fish@reelbelize.com
social: [@reelbelize](https://www.instagram.com/reelbelize)



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