

Alaskan Luck

Angler recounts — and revels — in his WON Waterfall Resort trip he won last year in a Berkley promotion

BY KEVIN M. FACIUS

KETCHIKAN, ALASKA — I wanted to take this opportunity to provide WON readers some observations and recollections of my June 28-July 1 trip to Waterfall Resort.

I was one of 25 weekly winners in the Berkley Gulp! contest in the spring/summer of 2005. Ultimately, my name was randomly selected as the Grand Prize Winner for the trip to Waterfall Resort in Alaska.

Also on the trip was Kal Harvey from Blue Water Tackle in Solana Beach, as I named Blue Water Tackle as my vendor of Berkley Gulp! with my entry into the weekly contest.

Also part of our group, at least on the water, were George Peagler and his son, Tom Peagler from Americus, Georgia and Atlanta, Georgia, respectively. The Waterfall program revolves around four clients per boat, so the lodge paired us up with these very nice people.

Being selected as one of the 25 weekly winners in the Berkley Gulp! contest in the summer of 2005 was a thrill in itself. Each weekly winner was featured in a full page, color ad in Western Outdoor News, the biggest weekly fishing and hunting publication in the nation. The original motivation for entering was partly driven by the fact that I



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have many friends and clients who share my love of fishing, and therefore it has been sort of an ongoing joke between us to get our mugs in the paper from time to time. Then, when Berkley sent each of the weekly winners a box of goodies worth \$100 retail from their vast product line, including Gulp!, a digital scale, braided line, lures, etc I was absolutely thrilled!

A short time after winning one of the weekly drawings, I received a call from Andrew Marks of Berkley Marketing who enthusiastically told me that I was the Grand Prize Winner for the coveted trip to Waterfall Resort, and that Kal Harvey of Blue Water Tackle and I were Alaska-bound!! Well, I just about fell off

of my chair! I never win anything and there was Andrew giving me the most exciting news that I have received in a long, long time.

The truth is that I have dreamed of going fishing in Alaska for years and I always stop by the booths of the tour operators while at the annual fishing show in Del Mar in the spring. Then, I usually think about going to Alaska in June or July, which of course by that time has already been booked the summer before. Therefore, this was the trip of a lifetime for me. To top it off, I would be going with an equipment supplier that I have done business with for 10 years AND it was a free trip! It simply doesn't get any better than that.

As the details of the trip unfolded, I was very impressed with the way Berkley stepped up to the plate by completely covering everything from airfare, permits, tournament entry fees, tips for the staff and boat captain, etc. In addition, the tour office from Waterfall Resort in Ketchikan provided all of the information and updates in a timely fashion. That was the first indication of what a well-run operation Waterfall Resort is. More on that later.

Our anticipation ran high as the trip drew closer and closer. Suddenly, it was time to go, and once we stepped on to the seaplane dock in Ketchikan, our hearts were really pumping! A few hours by air from San Diego and there we were in the Alaskan "frontier." What an exhilarating feeling, with the clean, brisk air of Alaska filling our lungs. A tremendous sense of excitement came over us as we boarded the seaplane with the other passengers.

The trip to and from the remote lodge really adds a unique dimension to the whole experience. It felt like something out of a James A. Michener novel, a truly exotic adventure. The magnificent Alaskan fjord scenery unfolded below us as we listened to inspirational music on our



THE AUTHOR, KEVIN FACIUS with a red snapper.

headphones. This aspect of our adventure is permanently etched in my mind; I will never forget it.

Upon landing at Waterfall Resort, we were given a personal, 'Fantasy Island' style greeting by Steve Cockrell, the General Manager and various staff members which was a very nice touch and really made us feel welcome. We were immediately whisked off to the General Store, where we received our room and boat assignments. Then, it was off to the 'mud room' to get our rain gear and boots. These are all areas where the Waterfall Resort really shines... they know exactly what the clients need and they dispatch everything in a friendly, efficient manner. It is all very well done.

Kal and I got our rain gear and headed for Boat No. 14 with Captain Sean Roberts, an 11-year veteran of Waterfall Resort. When we embarked, we met our boatmates for the next four days — George Peagler and his son Tom Peagler from the Atlanta area. Well, I must say that they were two of the nicest, most easy-going people you could ever meet. Our mutual love of fishing and the great outdoors soon sparked an endless series of anecdotes, jokes and just plain good fun. In addition, Captain Sean's easy, Irish-American manner made us feel instantly welcome and we all instinctively knew that we were in for a great Alaskan fishing experience. I must say that it was all of that and then some!

Since we were a 'mixed client' group, Captain Sean immediately posed a question to us; did we want to share our catch equally as a boat effort or did we want to keep track of our individual scores and divide the catch accordingly. We unanimously agreed, without hesitation, that it was one for all, all for one. Perhaps some people would differ, but in my opinion, there is no other way to go than one for all, all for one. There was no competition on our boat for who got the biggest or the best. Rather, it was a concerted team effort to maximize our opportunity on the Alaskan water every day.

We were all genuinely stoked for each other as the fish came over the gunwales and into the boxes, knowing that we would all share equally in the wonderful Alaskan bounty. And share we did! With the expert guidance of Captain Sean, we limited out every day on king salmon

and halibut, with two-day limits on Alaskan red snapper (yellow-eye rockfish). In fact, on our third day, we limited out early enough to enjoy a great seafood lunch with Captain Sean in the remote, rustic town of Craig, Alaska before heading back to Waterfall.

All of our king salmon were taken by mooching with cut-plug herring, spending our remaining time fishing for halibut and other bottom dwellers such as yelloweye rockfish and lingcod, all with the backdrop of the awesome Alaskan scenery. It seemed that whichever direction we looked, there was another post card Alaskan view, complete with whales, eagles and deer.

In the midst of all of this, Tom Peagler hooked two very large Lings in the 30- to 35-pound class which were released unharmed, in compliance with the Alaskan slot limits on that species. Tom also hooked a 61-pound halibut, taken one day after Kal Harvey's personal best of a 34-pound halibut. Most kings were in the 22- to 25-pound class, except for Kal's biggest king that weighed 29.6 pounds. Our entire catch was professionally cleaned, vacuum sealed and flash frozen, then neatly boxed for us as checked baggage for the trip home.

Every day at Waterfall Resort starts and ends with gourmet meals in the dining room, served by the friendly, professional and attentive staff. The quality of the food and service is impeccable; especially when you consider that there are 90 clients at any given time. The other thing that really impressed me about the staff was that in any encounter we had with a staff member, we were treated with the utmost professionalism that always came with a pleasant manner and a warm smile. The staff at Waterfall Resort really excels in the customer service department, making the clients feel very welcome and in my experience, eager to return.

In closing, I wish to express my most sincere gratitude to the folks at Berkley and Waterfall Resort for making all of this possible. I hope to return to Waterfall Resort in the near future and I will recount this wonderful experience over and over to all of my friends and clients who share my love of fishing and outdoor adventures. This trip has had a profound effect on me and I will never forget it.

Kevin Facius is a resident of San Diego.



KEVIN FACIUS AND KAL HARVEY, just off the seaplane at Waterfall Resort.



KAL, TOM, KEVIN AND GEORGE show off the Waterfall catch of halibut, salmon and rockfish.