

Jerry Anselmo:

Fishing Trip May, 1999

Known as one of the best small mouth bass fisherman in the county, Jerry Anselmo doesn't limit himself to that specialty. With homes in both Franklin, North Carolina and on Lake Pontchartrain in Mandeville, Louisiana, Anselmo enjoys the wonderful fishing at those two places, but he also travels the world searching for the best fishing for all types of fish. In the midst of the fishing adventure even in some of the most remote places of the world, he always has a tale to share.

The winter of 2007 – 2008 was no exception and was perfect time for Anselmo to find that certain place to fish where not too many fishermen get to explore. The cool months led him south from his home in Franklin. In December he flew to Panama, “just to see the sights”, and then took a small plane to Pedasi, on that country's central pacific coast. Anselmo says that the plane ride itself was quite an experience. “It was one of those single-engine planes and the pilot wore those antique earphones that were really huge,” he laughs. A couple from Britain was on the same flight, and he noticed they didn't have much to say to him at the time. He saw them a few days later on the beach, and they admitted they were scared to death.

Safe in Pedasi, Anselmo rented a four-wheeler and drove 50-60 miles to the end of the road in a rain forest area called Tonosi. It was here he came upon a tribe whose contact with the outside world was limited. He watched them collect some of the most beautiful shells he had ever seen and then craft necklaces out of the shells. “I stayed there for about three days and was able to do some of the most wonderful snorkeling I have ever done in my life,” he says. “I could snorkel right on the untouched reefs.” He stayed in a hotel that was right out of the 1950's for only \$25.00 a night, complete with “cold showers.”

Next stop for Anselmo was the Iguana Islands where he rented a Panya and settled in for some fishing. For his fishing trip he took along his combo fly rod and ultra light spin cast with 6 pound test line and lots of extra spools of line and fresh water tackle, most of it from Pradco, and samples from Jeff Sansel. “Boy, did they work,” says Anselmo. “I used the fresh water bait and tackle in the salt water, and it was amazing how well it worked.” After trolling for Bill fish, Wahoo and Kings, Anselmo had the captain of the boat head back over to the island and anchor it off for about an hour.

There he did some more snorkeling and walking among the sea birds. He was greeted by thousands of huge black sea birds with red pouches. He enjoyed watching the males tend to the nests while the females searched for food. “I could walk right around them and they wouldn't even fly away from me. It was quite an experience to be able to get that close,” explains Anselmo. After his walk along the island, he hooked up his spin cast rod and had a try at reef fishing. “I caught a fish at every cast,” he says.

After three weeks of corona a fabulous fishing in the lightly populated Pedasi area, Anselmo headed back to the states and to his home on Lake Pontchartrain. His plan was next to fish the mouth of the Mississippi River at Venice, Louisiana, which according to Anselmo is “one of the best spots in the world for red fish, specks, flounder, yellow tuna and hoards of other species.” He put his boat in two blocks from his house in Mandeville and headed out across the open waters of Lake Pontchartrain.

Anselmo started his ride at Fontainebleau State Park to check out the sea birds. He passed Bayou Castine and Goose Point and then entered into Bayou Lacombe. Anselmo used a five-horse power, 22-foot center consol, but knowing it was too big to go into the small places he wanted to fish, he decided to take a flat

back with five horse power with him. That way he could anchor off in Bayou Lacombe and take the flat back into the small canals in search of marsh land.

Anselmo started out with his favorite lure, the crank bait crawfish medium deep runner, it was a good choice because to his surprise he hooked up with a 40 pound cat fish. “My excitement was uncontrollable,” he explains. The fish pulled the canoe around the lake and with an eight point line, which was saving grace. The fish came close to spoofing Anselmo several times. “After a 30 minute fight the big boy was in the canoe,” he laughs. Around the marsh he hooked up with another big cat fish, 22 pounds, and once again the fight was on again. “It was great. As the day progressed I was pulling marsh bass out on almost every cast,” says Anselmo. The chunky dark green bass were in the one-and-a-half pound to three pound range.

Anselmo then worked his way back down a canal, with the tide up, made it easy to get from the marsh to the next lake, and he was able to make his way eventually back to the cat fish hole. After several casts much to his surprise he hooked up with another monster fish, this time a 30 pound cat fish. “It was quite a day,” says Anselmo. He attributes much of his good fortune in his catches that day to Rebel Lee crawfish. Along with the great fishing Anselmo says he was once again lucky enough to experience some wonderful sea birds, alligators, and “gorgeous wood ducks.” He was having such a good time he never made it to the mouth of the Mississippi.

After his trip south Anselmo headed back home to Franklin and the Little Tennessee River. Though it can be cold in the mountains in late winter, Anselmo enjoys fishing in the little streams that are hidden away from the public. “In the winter you can see so much more of the landscape around the mountains it is a whole different view that in the summer,” he explains.

It is also during this time of year that he and his dog, Paddle, get ready for their visitors. “Right here on the Little Tennessee is the most beautiful place in the world,” says Anselmo. “And you know I have traveled around the world and have seen some of the most spectacular places and nothing can compare to this. Even if you don’t fish, you can’t help but let the cares of the world pass you by while going down this river.” Many people do that every year, and it truly doesn’t matter if you are a fisherman or just someone who wants to get away and relax on the lazy river and enjoy blue herons as they fly ahead of you and your canoe. Jerry Anselmo says it best, “Every day here the scenery of the mountains and the river bring something special to the ones who come. The Little Tennessee won’t let you down.”

