

# OFF THE DOCK

WITH D. A. MANN

## ~ Fishermen Lie - Good Fishermen Tell Tales ~

Find me a fisherman that has never embellished a fish story and I'll sell you a dog with three hind legs. Fishermen lie; what can I say. Somehow, that 17 inch Pompano grew to over 20 inches after a week had passed since it was caught. Growth in death. It is an amazing concept. When you were drifting the flats catching Speckled Trout, a small Tarpon broke the surface a hundred feet off your bow. That night, over cocktails, you are replaying it to your wife. "Honey, I'm telling you that it was over five feet and broke water right beside the boat! I could have touched it!"

A lot of things happen in the flats; it's a known fact. So, keeping that in mind, the barn door is wide open for some pretty good tales. It was a beautiful day last summer when I was fishing with my neighbor in the flats by Spanish Point. The Trout were plentiful. Nick is up on my forward deck working his paddle tail when his drag starts screaming. Literally. There are fish that pull your drag and then there are fish that actually make the drag *scream*. "Oh, shit! Oh, shit!" Two hundred yards of line flew off his reel in seconds. His hands were shaking trying not to lose his grip on the rod. When it surfaced, it rolled sideways exposing both the large dorsal fin, but also, the white underbelly and the horseshoe mouth with rows of teeth. A Shark. At least ten feet of mean meat.

That's the story that was spreading around the condo association. When it got back to me, the damned thing was closer to fifteen feet and had morphed into a Great White. Nick had almost lost his life trying to fight it. In reality, it had hit his jig at full cast, rolled, snapped

his line, and gave him the finger. Game over. It was a baby at *maybe* four feet; and, a Bonnethead. That all went down three years ago. By now, the story has probably grown into a tale about Nick landing Moby Dick. Or maybe, he jumped into the Bay, swam to the hooked shark, wrestled his jig free, kicked the shark in the balls, and swam back to the boat with a tooth as a souvenir.

Have I ever told a tale?

Bet your ass.

If you want some really good fish stories,

You're reading the right author.