



NEIL HYMAS
Cokeville and former Wheatland Game Warden

HIS MONEY'S WORTH

Two warden trainees were assigned to a boat patrol to check fishermen and boaters on several large reservoirs for the spring and summer. It was May when the ice left Pathfinder Reservoir and the pair put in their 18 foot patrol boat. They ran up to an isolated point where they observed a man and a woman fishing near their truck camper. The two young wardens checked the couple who were fishing from lawn chairs. Everything seemed legal and as the wardens were walking back to their boat, one of them tripped over a fishing line hidden at the water's edge. The wardens noticed that a coffee cup had been set by the illegal hand line. Although the couple was the only fishermen for miles, and the gear matched the tackle in the fisherman's tackle box, the couple denied any knowledge of the handline. Being somewhat inexperienced, the wardens decided to leave and discuss the situation. After pulling back into the Reservoir some distance, the wardens agreed they should issue a citation after gathering some evidence. They pulled back to the beach, and jumped out. They stood facing the couple as they wrote out the citation for the illegal hand line. After listening to the wardens explain the court procedures for some time, the couple grinned and the man said, "By the way, your boat has floated off."

Two very embarrassed officers turned to see their boat slowly drifting away, already 150 yards out in the icy water.

After a quick coin toss, one warden `volunteered' to swim for the boat. First asking the wife of the fisherman to step inside the camper, he stripped down to his briefs and dove into the frigid water, inhaling involuntarily. While the officer was stroking wildly toward the boat, the fisherman hollered he had to save this moment and ran for his camera. He was snapping photos as the warden reached the boat and gave a high plunge to get over the side. The warden made it halfway over the gunwale, but his briefs had slid to his knees as he cleared the water. This made for good photography material as the warden thrashed and squirmed into the patrol boat.

Although the fisherman never admitted to using the set line, he posted his fine money. He easily received his money's worth from the show.