The Real Story of the World Record Muskie Controversies
“Selective” Revisionist History Exposed
by Larry Ramsell (www.larryramsell.com)


(Author’s note: My primary goal in rewriting my “Compendium” was not for profit, but was to make available to the world’s muskie anglers the real truth regarding the world record muskie controversies. Since limited numbers of muskie anglers are book buyers and in an endeavor to make this information available to anyone interested without cost, I decided to put together this excerpt. When asked, MuskieFirst’s Steve Worrall said, “We would be delighted to publish the excerpted version.”. Some will say, “not again”, but the truth is most muskie anglers aren’t aware of all that has transpired. A lot of the information herein was never before been published. This excerpt will cover all the highlights and pertinent information regarding this entire subject. Volume I of my book, containing over 640 pages and 250 photographs, completely supports and fully details the excerpted material contained herein, as well as containing all of the catch stories and other world record angler information since 1877, that will not be detailed here. While I concede that parts of Volume I is a lengthy and “tough read”, this excerpt too will, out of necessity, be fairly long and somewhat complex. I have tried to “simplify” it as much as possible without leaving out too much of the published material and photographs and still provide detailed information about this subject.

To set the stage for this excerpt, most world record muskies caught since 1939, have long been a subject of controversy. It all came to a head during the middle part of the 1990’s, when “selective revisionist history” began. What transpired then and since has become a “travesty of justice” that cannot be ignored. That selective “re-writing of history” was egregious and needed to be exposed! This I have done by gathering together all known documentation, both published and unpublished that I could find, and revisiting the individual controversies. After reading it, you will have to decide for yourself which you choose to believe or not to believe…Larry Ramsell, April 2008)

Revisionist History

In 1992, John Dettloff, a self-appointed muskie historian, Wisconsin resort operator, guide and active promoter of Hayward tourism, rocked the muskie world and upset the world record applecart when he submitted The Investigation of Arthur Lawton’s World Record Muskie to the record stewards. As a result of Dettloff’s challenge, the entire Lawton world record muskie file, by then 35 years old, was dusted-off and independently reevaluated by the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame (NFWFHF) and the International Game Fish Association (IGFA). Subsequently, Arthur Lawton’s world record muskie, sanctioned in 1958 by Field & Stream following an extensive investigation that reportedly included use of the Pinkerton Detective Agency, was disqualified by the NFWFHF and set aside by the IGFA, pending further review.
Dettloff’s investigation included a challenge of the Lawton record photographs that likely helped focus the IGFA’s evaluation. However, their decision to set-aside the Lawton record was based on noncompliance with the IGFA’s 1992 record protocol for an appropriate photograph rather than disagreement with *Field & Stream*’s 1958 evaluation.

(*Author’s note: Subsequent to the publishing of my book, I came to the realization that since Field & Stream did in fact certify both the Lawton catch and photograph, the IGFA has no known current valid reason to keep the Lawton record in “set-aside” status.)*

On the other hand, the NFWFHF relied heavily on Dettloff’s investigation and disqualified the muskie as a falsified record. The Lawton record controversy is discussed in more detail below and in Part II.

Encouraged by his success in discrediting the Lawton record, Dettloff proceeded not only to challenge several of the former world record muskies but as (former) historical editor for *Musky Hunter* magazine he independently “disqualified” several others! He was on a roll. His *selective revisionist history* questioned the legitimacy of world record muskellunge attributed to Percy Haver in 1939 and 1940 and Alois Hanser in 1947.

Soon many muskie anglers believed in Dettloff’s revisionist history, without realizing that *Field & Stream* has never disqualified an established world record muskellunge, the IGFA has set-aside only the Lawton muskie and does not recognize Louis Spray’s 1949 muskie while the NFWFHF has disqualified only Lawton!

Slowly, Dettloff’s muskie records bias began to surface. It became most apparent when the World Record Muskie Alliance (WRMA) submitted an investigation of Spray’s two heaviest muskies to the NFWFHF for consideration. Ironically, Dettloff was the NFWFHF Executive Board President at the time of the submittal and ultimately responsible for the review! The WRMA investigation of Louie Spray was not submitted to the IGFA because the IGFA does not recognize Spray as the holder of the muskellunge world record. The WRMA investigation included professional photogrammetric analysis of Spray’s two heaviest muskies and their mounts. The photogrammetric analyses identified that the reported length of Spray’s muskies was appreciably greater than their photogrammetric solution and that an analytical comparison of mount and fresh caught fish photographs support that the mounts had been enlarged.

Since the NFWFHF disqualified the *Field & Stream* sanctioned Lawton muskellunge in 1992 following a review of Dettloff’s investigation, the WRMA anticipated similar treatment and disqualification of Spray’s records based on their comprehensive protest. Instead, soon a double standard for record evaluations became apparent! Dettloff encouraged the use of selective criteria for evaluation of Spray’s muskies that differed considerably from the criteria used to evaluate the Lawton muskie. For example, Dettloff’s 1992 investigation of the Lawton muskie used his amateur photographic analysis to support a claim that Lawton’s muskie was shorter than reported, conversely; professional, peer reviewed, photogrammetric solutions that support shorter Spray muskies were dismissed.
As an Advisory Governor to the NFWFHF, I protested the inconsistent evaluation of records. Under Dettloff’s direction, in response to the WRMA’s protest, the NFWFHF undertook a campaign to support and maintain the 69-pound, 11-ounce NFWFHF all-tackle muskellunge world record, supposedly caught in the Chippewa Flowage in 1949 by Louie Spray within a few hundred yards of the Dettloff resort. I wonder how Art Lawton would have fared had a similar campaign been waged in his regard? I soon learned that Brad Latvaitis (editor and collaborator of Compendium Volume I), a charter NFWFHF Advisory Governor and volunteer long active in resolving record matters also submitted a protest. Unfortunately, the NFWFHF Executive Board supported President Dettloff’s approach and Brad and I were not allowed to participate in review of Spray’s muskies. Undaunted, we independently detailed our concerns and submitted formal protests. When our concerns were summarily ignored, we independently tendered resignations and they were accepted. Dettloff told me with regard to my removal from the Spray record evaluation process ...that is the way I want it.

Information regarding the WRMA Spray muskie Protest is available at www.worldrecordmuskiealliance.com.

Why, I wondered, was this course selected? Why was a recommendation by a group of esteemed mathematicians to impanel a group of experts on mathematics and photogrammetry for the purpose of obtaining a more definitive length evaluation of Spray’s muskie ignored? Why had Dettloff’s critical eye ignored challenges to the Hayward area’s record muskellunge, namely; the Spray and Johnson records? There had to be more to it. So, in early 2006, after the NFWFHF rendered their decision to uphold the Spray record, I decided to conduct a lengthy and more detailed review of Dettloff’s Lawton Investigation. As a result of my review, Lawton investigation oversights were identified and Dettloff’s motives became clear as additional supportive data was accumulated. I submitted my extensive review and a long overlooked photograph to the IGFA and proposed the reinstatement of Lawton’s record. The review will be excerpted in Part II of this book and can be found on the Internet in its entirety at http://muskie.outdoorsfirst.com/articles/02.22.2006/1012/Did.Former.Muskellunge.World.Record.Holder.Art.Lawton.Get.A.Fair.Shake.When.His.Record.Was.Disqualified/index.htm

In addition to my review, I discussed Lawton archive photographs and duplicated several of Dettloff’s exhibits at a meeting with IGFA officials in Dania Beach, Florida. I demonstrated that Dettloff’s calculations and methodologies were inconsistent and self-serving, at best! Nevertheless, the IGFA Executive Board voted against reinstatement of the Lawton world record based on the uncertainty regarding the existence of a photograph of Lawton’s record muskie, which was the basis for their set-aside of the Lawton record in 1992. While the IGFA agreed that the photograph I submitted was not of the commonly known Lawton fish, to them it was inconclusive. A photogrammetric analysis of the Lawton photographs has not been commissioned.
Interestingly, the current officers of the IGFA concurred that the Dettloff investigation was inadequate to disqualify the Lawton record, however; the record remains in set-aside status! Why? Because when the IGFA reconsiders a record they use their current protocol and their current protocol requires an acceptable photograph for all records.

(Author’s note: As noted above, the Lawton photo was certified by Field & Stream).

Likewise, the IGFA rejected the Spray muskie because it was shot; although legal at the time of Spray’s catch, shooting is contrary to retroactive IGFA protocol, as is the number of hooks used by Spray.

Currently, the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, keepers of NY State fish records, rejects the 1992 Dettloff Investigation and steadfastly maintains the Lawton muskellunge as the state record.

In summary, Dettloff’s rewriting of muskellunge history is self-serving and independent. The application of (his) primitive, amateur photo analysis compared to professional photogrammetry, the inconsistent application of amateur methodologies to summarily dismiss all but the Hayward area fish as records, and the blatant arbitrary acceptance of data such as affidavits in upholding some records, while ignoring both original eyewitness affidavits and updated affidavits in others is not acceptable. It is my considered opinion that Mr. Dettloff has allowed his obsession with Hayward area muskies to seriously jeopardize his NFWFHF responsibilities and that he has violated his fiduciary responsibility to true muskellunge history. Accordingly, Dettloff’s findings should be ignored and all historic records discredited by him should be reinstated, each the responsibility of their sanctioning body. This book’s revision supports my proposal. The sordid details of the Spray controversy are provided in Part II and the Appendix.

When I published the 2nd Edition of the Compendium I believed in Dettloff’s sincerity regarding muskellunge history to the extent that I welcomed his contribution of a chapter entitled Musky Crimes of the Century. I now deeply regret this decision and, in fact, it keeps me awake some nights. The “crimes” were his! Although numerous people reviewed Dettloff’s Lawton investigation in 1992 and likewise accepted Dettloff’s calculations and logic at face value, I sincerely regret my previous incomplete review of the Lawton matter. I also regret my prior support of it and his subsequent “selective” record investigations and bogus discrediting of same. My current reasoning will become clear as you read Part II beginning with the 1939 records.

**Thoughts on Record Keeping**

Dr. John Casselman perhaps said it best at the 2006 Dr. Ed Crossman Muskie Symposium, when he stated that ...the old records are legendary and should be left alone. I concur, even if several of them were or are suspect. In fact, as you peruse the innuendo and controversies presented in Part II it will soon be apparent that most, if not all records, are open to debate!
Brad Latvaitis had some interesting comments regarding historic and modern day records with the sanctioning stewards.

_The brotherhood of modern anglers continues to grow in numbers and sophistication. Field & Stream’s record application read, “It is highly important that you send a photograph of the fish entered, if possible.” Modern anglers demand comprehensive analysis, particularly regarding the authentication of all-tackle records. In fact, some anglers advocate a comprehensive review and reevaluation of all established records, including, but not limited to, photo analysis…_

_It is clear that several historic fish records do not meet the scrutiny requirements demanded by today’s anglers. Nevertheless, world records which may appear suspect were often extensively evaluated by a sanctioning committee of highly qualified members. It is difficult, if not impossible, to definitively redefine world records that were sanctioned in an earlier age under different standards. I believe that Historic World Records are a part of our Muskellunge angling heritage and their maintenance is in the best interest of all Muskellunge anglers._

I concur and accordingly, _Ramsell’s Chronological List of World Records_ includes all potential historic world records as well as those from official sources. Each of the records established by any sanctioning body will remain in place in my list unless disqualified by the “original sanctioning body” or withdrawn by the record holder. Furthermore, while I respect the IGFA’s protocol of evaluating record challenges using modern records requirements, I feel that each record should be recognized in the time and spirit in which they were sanctioned.

When I wrote the first edition of _A Compendium of Muskie Angling History_, my goal was to simply preserve the wonderful history of our great sport in one place before it was lost. I did not look for reasons to discount or discredit historic catches, quite the contrary. I tried in almost every case to find additional supporting facts and information. Unfortunately, in some cases, we were all duped, but that doesn't reduce the addition that those record muskies had to the "Muskie Mystique."

Let us now proceed with individual discussions of the world record muskellunge (controversies).

_The Word Records Part II-The Controversies_

In Part II, for the first time, I present all of the innuendoes and controversy that my 40-years of research have revealed. Occasionally, as recorded below, correspondence and/or stories question whether the muskie was caught legally, on hook and line. Controversies range from where and whether a catch was made to doubts regarding length, girth and weight. I review accusations and where possible, support or rebut them with facts, affidavits, etc. Ultimately, you the reader have to make up your own mind. If you are squeamish, brace yourself ’cause it’s gonna’ get ugly!
To the naked eye, from a perusal of photographs, the length and girth of many records appear to fall short of their registered measurements. In some cases, amateur analysis of photographs provides an estimate of the dimensions of record fish. Generally, amateur photo analysis is imprecise, incomplete and can’t be repeated independently. Conversely, the science of photogrammetry utilizes defined methodology and provides repeatable, precise, results, however; few sanctioned records have been professionally analyzed. When significant differences in historic length and/or girth compared to photogrammetric solutions occur, a record may be suspect. While fraud is possible, keep in mind that measurement details were often overlooked and have rarely been documented for record catches. Furthermore, consider that it is not possible to apply photogrammetric methods to some photographs due to background and/or information constraints.

The variability in precision of measuring devices must be considered when evaluating records, as well as, the nuances involved in using; a steel tape measure, a wooden ruler, a folding wooden ruler, a soft sewing type tape, string, etc. On top of these considerations, remember that different folks measured every record fish. Unfortunately, measurement details were never a Field & Stream contest requirement, and therefore; measurement procedures are not part of the catch documentation. For example, while evidence indicates that 12-pounds of spawn were removed from Hanser’s muskie prior to a published photograph of Hanser with his fish, a measurement record is not available to document whether the affidavited girth measurement of just 24-inches was taken before or after the removal of spawn.

Ultimately, it is not possible to use photographs to definitively determine weight, and weight, after all, is the basis for establishing all-tackle world records! It’s possible that any record muskie may have been “loaded” with heavy objects, such as water or sand, etc. Unfortunately, until the record verification process requires witnesses to the opening of potential record fish, only the fisherman and possibly the taxidermist are aware of the fish’s stomach contents. Importantly, when a fish is “loaded,” affidavits attesting to verify weight are useless, regardless of the witnesses’ credibility!

(Author’s note: There was minimal controversy, more so just confusion with world records prior to 1939, hence those will not be covered here.)

From 1938 on, the record waters get quite muddy. I assume that they were influenced by; a) poor communications of the day, b) jealousy, c) promotion of tourism, d) ego and/or greed, e) journalistic sensationalism, and f) skepticism. As is the case with any story or rumor, each person retelling it colors it as they think they hear or read it. After several retellings down the line, the story barely resembles the original story or rumor. So, keeping this in mind, let us start.

Percy Haver 58-14 Lake St. Clair, Michigan – 1939

Percy Haver’s 1939 world record from Lake St. Clair, Michigan is where the fun begins. Haver entered a near 50-pounder (at 49-11) in the Field & Stream contest in 1937 finishing 4th, had a near record muskie in 1938 at 56-pounds 7-ounces finishing 1st in the
contest and world record muskies in 1939 and 1940. Although I hadn’t heard any rumors about his two record fish, there was evidently some question in the Detroit area about their validity, although nothing apparently surfaced in 1939. While Dettloff began his 1995 attack on Haver’s 1938 and 1939 fish I will cover the entire Dettloff investigation in the 1940 Haver section.

Dettloff said Haver’s 1938 Field & Stream contest fish ...proved to be greatly exaggerated after just one quick glance at the photo of Haver with the catch... Wow, just a glance was good enough for him on that one!

Louie Spray 59-8 Grindstone Lake, Wisconsin - 1939

So now, let’s get to the most controversial of all record holders and/or contenders; Louie Spray and his 1939 fish from Grindstone Lake, Wisconsin. Louie did things his way and because of this he was controversial. Most of the controversy took place in Wisconsin, although there were concerns expressed from other parts of muskie-land as well. Most of the controversy that reached print nationally was through prominent outdoor writer Mel Ellis. In his article, Throw Those Muskies Back Boys, in True magazine, Ellis wrote in part ...Fifteen years ago the record muskie taken on a rod and reel weighed 52 pounds (12 ounces). It was a Wisconsin fish, but in 1938 the record went to Michigan with the capture of a 56 pounder. (This is in error, as were several outdoor articles of the time as the 56-pounder he referred to, Haver’s 56-7, wasn’t even a world record - see the world record list at this books beginning, and Ellis missed three other fish that were world records).

The next year, however, Louis Spray, a former musky-hunting hero from Hayward and now a Rice Lake tavern keeper, came up with a 59 pound 8 ounce musky and it turned out to be the fish that was the first in a series that has been characterized in the press as not-so-nice smelling muskies.

His record catch was only second best for that year, however, because a short time later Percy Haver of Detroit, a professional muskie hunter who makes an art of trolling for the lunkers, smashed the record with a fish that went slightly over 60 pounds (again an error, as Haver’s 1939 smaller record was caught before Spray’s and it was John J. Coleman’s 60 ½-pound fish that beat both Haver and Spray in 1939).

But Louie the indomitable came right back the next year with a whopper that went 61 pounds 13 ounces, and this was another fish some people insisted smelled as though it might not be strictly fresh (to be covered shortly).

Nevertheless, he claimed a world record and during the time that this fact was in considerable doubt, he announced that he would soon produce the necessary statistical proof...

Eventually along came notarized statements that the (1939) fish had existed, and had been caught by Mr. Spray. There were the pictures and further detailed evidence
revealed that it had been weighed at a creamery station and a tavern and that it tipped the scales at 59 1/2 pounds and measured 58 inches (actually only one photograph and it wasn’t even of Spray and the fish, it was his friend Alton Van Camp). Spray’s 1939 fish had been beaten by Coleman’s, which Ellis missed completely.

In the tome *That Big Fat Musky Book* Eli Singer revealed what he learned from Alvin Van Camp, son of Alton. Alton is shown holding Spray’s record fish in the one and only photo of Spray’s 1939 record known to exist. Alvin had told Singer what his mother and father had said about the goings on at the time and about Spray. He learned that Alton had referred to Louie as a “shyster” and that Alvin’s mother Eva had related that lots of “metal” items had disappeared from their garage one day after Louie and Alton had been there with a big muskie. Eli also learned that when Alvin tried to relate this information to John Dettloff, Mr. Dettloff didn’t care to hear about it!

Eli Singer also questioned the lack of photos of Spray’s record muskies. He was at a loss to explain why there was none of Louie with the 1939 record, only three of Louie with his 1940 and 1949 records. Eli wondered regarding the known Spray record photos, if Louie had disposed of photo’s unfavorable to the fish. Could this be why Spray chose to use only the photo of Van Camp with his 1939 record? Singer also wondered why Dettloff’s newspaper requests for more photographs had produced nothing. At least nothing new has been made public.

There have also been other comments regarding the shape of the mount of Spray’s 1939 fish. In a letter from Spray to me in 1981, Spray had this comment about the mount of his 1939 fish... *The thing made a very poor mount, due to the stretchy skin. Karl Kahmann, the tazidermist (sic) call (sic) me out to his shop and showed me. The form he had made for it was so small that if the skin had of been placed over it and allowed to dry, it would have shown wrinkles, according to Karl. He then pulled the slack up in back of the fish, while I looked at the front of it, and the fins then were very much distorted, and even the tail twisted a little. So he had to make a larger form which spoiled the shape of the fish.*

*Actually, it was’nt (sic) a bad looking fish in the raw, except for the very small head, as you can see from the photo with Van holding the fish. But the mounted fish was much distorted as described above...*
We previously reported the story of the capture of Louie’s 1939 fish so let’s pick up Louie’s story from there.

...We headed for Red Harmon’s but still no one was up. Well, we got them up but quick. The door was not locked so we walked right in and hollered “muskie” and I wish you could have seen the goings on. It was in July and everybody was only half dressed, women and all, milling around.

I believe there was more booze at Harmon’s place than there was in Spray’s bar. Everybody had a bottle in his hand of all makes and description and everybody was bound we should have one on them. So, on an empty stomach, well, you can guess the consequences. Finally, Tom and I broke away and started for home. However, when we hit the main highway I figured I would like to go over to Draper-Loretta way and show the boys over there how I do it now. There was no scale there that would weigh the fish, so someone came up with a bathroom scale. We put a board on the scale, weighed it, put on the fish, weighed it, subtracted the weight of the board and it came to between 59 and 60 pounds. A young man running a filling station, Widmer Smith, told me that he thought it might be a world record, but that it should be weighed on an official scale to be authentic. Somebody took it into Winter, Wisconsin, a distance of ten miles, and brought back the weigh slip of 59 1/2 pounds. The old record was 58 1/4 pounds.

So right now, the multitude gathered there, pronounced me the muskie king of the world, which naturally called for some whoopee, including some beverage gargling. While the gang was at it, Tom and I ate a lunch, then, headed for Park Falls to show off our catch over there. We did that all right, but in the ensuing hours, some of the gang, all my friends, stole my fish and proclaimed they would give it back only after they had run my tab up to about where they wanted it. To expedite, they finally gave it back to us and we started for home via Glidden and Clam Lake, on Highway 77. We passed up not one tavern. The next day I awoke about 3:00 p.m., and could not, for the moment, remember what had happened but knew it was something big. Did we win a lot of money, lose a lot in our business, or why did I get so plastered? It finally came to me and I hustled down to the tavern, unshaved and half undressed, to see if the fish had been properly cared for. My wife had had the porter put ice on it in the basement and covered it. I went upstairs into the tavern and the place was full.

There were reporters there with cameras, all asking questions of all natures, but mostly, “Where’s the fish?” In my stupor, and from my experience the day before, in having my fish stolen, gave some weird answers such as “I gave it away, I can’t find it, and give me time to get sober, will you?” All I knew was that I was not going to come up with that all important fish until after I had contacted Karl Kahmann, the taxidermist. He wasn’t in when I called his place. About that time I met my wife again and she exclaimed in no uncertain terms, “You get up to bed and stay there until you are presentable.” Which I was glad to do to get away from that mob and especially those reporters, who were half drunk and with that “you got to show me” attitude. I had just reached the apartment when up came Karl and was I glad to see him. My wife
had shown him the fish and he said as long as it was kept iced it was okay. After the usual congratulations from Karl. I spent the balance of the afternoon in the house.

About 8:00 p.m., I went down to the tavern. The mob had left, just the usual crowd was around. I inspected the fish and found it well iced, so I went out and built a box to display the fish. The next morning I put the fish on display with a glass over the box, kept it well iced and offered a cash prize to the one who could come the nearest to guessing its weight and length, and put a book there for them to register their name and address. By then, for the first time in a couple of days, I was once again myself.

After 36 years, I am looking at that book right now. Pop Adams, who represented a bait company, was the first to register and Ray Noggles, a guide from Hayward, was second. There were 620 entries and after their guesses were all added up and divided by the said 620, the average guess was within a pound of the actual weight of 59 1/2 pounds and there were nine ties. Some amusing guesses, mostly by women were weight 90 pounds, length 29 inches (it had to be 30 inches to be legal). Another was 75 pounds and six feet two inches long. The lowest weight guessed by a man was 46 pounds. The sports writers made much of the bathroom scales that had been used, with full knowledge that it had been officially weighed. Others claimed it was never displayed as I had given it away and others had their own ways of discrediting my catch. Mostly, sports writers in general ran down the facts first and then came up with a favorable story on it. Many of those writers later saw the book that I am looking at right now, and thought some day it was going to be a very prized possession.

In addition to the above story from Louie’s book **My Muskie Days**, I have gathered additional facts and information to add to this story from a series of statements and affidavits that were prepared at the time. First an undated statement with the following.

*We the undersigned wish to state and declare that we witnessed and saw a fish belonging to Louie Spray of Hayward, Wisconsin, on the 27th of July 1939, that the fish was a muskie, that we have seen several large muskies before and that this was the largest muskie we have ever seen.* (It was signed by 18 people-noted in my book)

On a copy of the above statement that I received from Louie Spray, he had typed the following note.

**SPRAY’S COMMENT AS TO THE SIGNATURES...**
*The signatures were taken before the Fish was Officially weighed. Signed Louie Spray 10/30/79*

Since the signatures were obtained before the fish was weighed, the statements are useless regarding verification of fish weight and document only that it was the largest seen. Next was the statement of the catch released to the press by Louie.

*Official statement of World Record Muskie, released for publication by Louie Spray on this 31st day of July, 1939.*
The muskie was caught by Louie Spray, Hayward, Wisconsin, between ten and eleven A.M. July 27th, in Grindstone Lake, near Hayward.

The muskie was weighed at a cream station operated by W.J. Zecherle, Winter, Wisconsin. Also, at John Geschel’s Tavern, Loretta, Wisconsin and on each scale weighed 59 1/2 pounds. The length was 58 inches. Several people witnessed the weighing and measuring and affidavits of same are on record in the Court House in Hayward, Wisconsin.

The man holding the fish is Alton Van Camp of Loretta, Wisconsin, a licensed guide and life long friend of Spray. The muskie is being mounted and will be on display at Spray’s Cafe & Bar, Hayward, Wisconsin, as soon as completed.

Louie sent me a note of clarification on the above Release.

OCTOBER 17, 1979

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

For purposes of clarification and with reference to the attached “Release,” after the fish was weighed at the Cream Station, myself and my fishing pal, Tom Campbell, drove to Park Falls where I was raised to show off the catch. Some of my old buddies whom I was wining and dining, stole the fish, as a joke of course, and wouldn’t come up with it until I had bought their fill of grog.

When they finally gave the fish back, Tom and I finished celebrating on the way home Via Glidden, Clam Lake, and every Joint on Hy-Way #77, and naturally got home very late like Two Bells in the morning, and was pretty stiff from the consumption of all the grog.

After the fish had been displayed at Spray’s Bar for a few days, Karl Kahmann picked up and skinned it out in preparation for mounting. And when I started to look for my camera which had a full spool of film in it, I couldn’t find it and never did. I recalled that Alton Van Camp had taken a few shots of the critter with his camera, but there was not a photo of me on it. There was a good picture of Van holding the fish, and this is the picture we used in Officially Registering the catch with the American Museum of Natural History, New York.

The attached “Release” was left at the Bar so the reporters would have the correct dope with which to draft their Story. But as it turned out, some of them did not follow the script to the extent they saw that the fish was weighed on a Bath Room Scale, which it was, but not for official purposes and they knew it.
I’ve said it before and I say it here now, that if you ever catch a world record muskie Reporters will delight in kicking you in the teeth, and their publishers are of no help in straightening out the wrong they did you.

Louie then came out with the following affidavit.

We the undersigned wish to state and declare that we witnessed and saw a muskie belonging to Louie Spray of Hayward, Wisconsin, weighed and measured in John Geschel’s Tavern, Loretta, Wisconsin, on the 27th day of July, 1939. The weight was 59 1/2 pounds and length was 58 inches.

Signed  Alton Van Camp Address Loretta, Wis
Widmer Smith  “  “  “
John Geschel  “  “  “

Witness
O.P Ruid
Louie Spray (witnessing your own catch on a weight witness affidavit is unacceptable for record consideration)

Again we get clarification from Louie.

P.S. PLEASE NOTE:
The purpose of this Post-Script is for clarification only, and is not part of the Above Affidavit.

The above mentioned fish was officially weighed at the Winter, Wisconsin, Creamery, Winter, Wisconsin, and was officially recognized as a world record by the American Museum of Natural History, in 1939. And Widmer Smith, one of the affiants above, was the one who knew that the scales should be official in order to have the fish acceptable.

Signed, Louis Spray 10/7/1979

Later the following affidavit was signed by a Mr. Wm. Harmon.

I, William Harmon, of Hayward, Wisconsin wish to state and declare that on the 27th day of July, 1939, I rented a boat to one Louie Spray of Hayward, Wisconsin and that he returned to my boat landing on Grindstone Lake about nine thirty or ten o’clock the same morning with a muskie that measured 58 inches in length This fish would not weigh on a fifty pound scale that we had at the resort.

Signed Wm. V. Harmon Signed and sealed
In the presence of;
W J Shuman
H Gregersnd
The final affidavit regarding the 1939 fish comes from a Mr. W.J. Zecherle.

I, W.J. Zecherle of Winter, Wisconsin wish to state and declare that on the 27th day of July 1939, I weighed a muskie belonging to Louie Spray, of Hayward, Wisconsin. The weight was 59 1/2 pounds.

Signed W.J. Zecherle

Signed and sealed in presence of:
G.E. Phillips
H.J. Phillips

State of Wisconsin
County of Sawyer, SS.
Sworn and subscribed to before me this 31st day of July, 1939.
G.E. Phillips, (is it legal to be both witness and notary?)
Notary Public
Sawyer County, Wis.
My Commission Expires March 1, 1942

In an August 1, 1939 letter from Louie to Mr. R.G. Lynch, sports editor of the Milwaukee Sentinel, Louie had the following statement.

Dear Mr. Lynch:

Gordon (MacQuarrie) was here Sunday and found me in none too good a shape Re: the fish. Since Thursday I had taken on a lot of that refreshment that comes in that Black and White package. However, it was a good thing he came along because he woke me up to the fact that Wisconsin as well as myself, had something and since Sunday I have straightened out everything.

I now have the fish back and absolutely under control. He will be in my place of business as soon as the mounting is completed. This however was no small job and naturally took a little time.

There is still one more affidavit to file and I will send you a copy as soon as I get it executed.

Re: these affidavits, they are recorded, but I would like them back if possible.

The only decent photograph I salvaged was one with Alton Van Camp holding the fish. Therefore I am sending a snap of myself, (still full of that stuff) if you care to run it along with the other picture. I still haven’t found my Camera containing the best pictures of the thing.
As far as this being a Record Fish. I don’t know anything about that, but I guarantee you that the fish is everything we claim it is and it will be here to be looked at by anyone who might be interested.

If there is any further information you might desire I will be only too glad to give it to you.

Signed, Louie Spray

Finally, Louie received a letter from the American Museum of Natural History, then keeper of the records and to whom he had applied.

Dear Mr. Spray:

I am returning your affidavits, as you request, of your record muskie. The one thing lacking is your tackle. Would you let us know exactly what it was. It is usual for us to retain the affidavits here, and although I have made copies of them, if you feel you could do so, we would prefer to have you deposit them with us as other holders of record catches have done.

We congratulate you on your World Record catch.

Sincerely,
F.R. LaMonte
Associate Curator
Fish Department

(PS:) It is also customary to have an affidavit from someone who actually saw you catch the fish. Were you alone in the boat, and if not, is it possible for you to get a statement from whoever was with you.

There is no indication in the files or my records to indicate whether or not Spray complied with the last two requests. As can be seen, Louie did things his way. It should also be obvious that record keeping requirements were less stringent in the early years of recorded muskellunge history. One thing that must be noted is that this Spray fish was never subjected to world record scrutiny by the American Museum of Natural History since Coleman’s 1939 fish pushed it into second place in the Field & Stream contest. Professional photogrammetry has not been used to analyze the fish that Alton Van Camp is holding.

In a Sawyer County Record article by Terrell Boettcher and the obituary of a Mr. Karl Ogren provided to me by Eli Singer, we learn that in 1938 Ogren...caught a 58-pound musky on Sand Lake [Wisconsin] which he sold to Louie Spray (per obituary), and per Boettcher’s article...He (Ogren) caught a 58-pound musky in 1938 in Sand Lake, which he sold (mounted) to Louie Spray... Was this the source of Spray’s 1939 record fish as Singer alluded it could be? If already mounted, could this be why there are no
photographs of Spray with the fresh 1939 fish? While never publicized other than appearing in a period post card advertisement for “Spray’s Café and Bar,” which also contained the mount known to be Spray’s 1939 fish, this large mount was unlikely claimed by Spray to be his 1939 record, dismissing that hypothesis. In addition, it is counter to others claims of having supplied Spray with his fresh 1939 fish.

When Eli Singer asked Spray historian John Dettloff about the Ogren story he was told that the Ogren story was fabricated. Singer was aghast at Dettloff’s response. That Dettloff had no interest in checking it out further totally baffled Singer! Although Singer had mentioned the Ogren story to Dettloff multiple times between 1999 and 2001, nothing about it appeared in Dettloff’s rewrite of Louie Spray’s biography.

In his In Defense of Louie Spray articles in Musky Hunter, John Dettloff dismissed the Ogren story as ...made up...

Two photographs that Louie had sent to me also appeared in his autobiography Looking Back At That Phase Of My Muskie Days written by him and published in 1979.

One photo was captioned in his book on page 7 as a 24-pounder he caught in 1924. The other appeared on page 141 and had no weight or date ascribed to it, but Spray’s shirt, hat and pants are exactly like the ones worn by him in a photo of him with his 1940 record. When John Dettloff purchased the rights to Louie’s book and did a re-write before publishing it in 2002 under the title Three Record Muskies In His Day The Life and Times of Louie Spray, he evidently decided to forsake historical accuracy and took “editorial license” in revising history in Louie’s favor! Dettloff republished both photographs on page 153 of his version of Spray’s life, however the 1924 fish nearly doubled in size as it was captioned as a 41 ½-pound muskie Louie supposedly caught in 1939! The other fish suddenly became another Spray 1939 fish and was dubbed as a 46-pound 3-ounce muskie that was 52-inches long!!

(Author’s note: Is it any wonder I think Mr. Dettloff is biased towards Louie Spray?)

When Eli Singer informed John Dettloff what old-timers from Spray’s home area had to say about Spray buying muskies he was dismissed. Singer had told Dettloff what several of the older residents of Spray’s home area had told him with regard to Spray buying and
offering to buy record class muskies or any large muskie, including one person that claimed to have sold Spray his 1939 world record fish and that Spray had not paid him. Dettloff reportedly dismissed all accounts. That “person” is still alive and perhaps one day that story will be told!

That takes care of the story of Louie’s 1939 fish. Although covered only briefly in the WRMA’s Spray Protest, the WRMA believes this fish is questionable (and is covered in the book’s Appendix). Professional photogrammetry has not been attempted on the only known photograph of Spray’s 1939 muskie.

John J. Coleman 60-8 Eagle Lake, Ontario – 1939

Left photo shows Coleman (r) with guide George Perkins (l) and the right photo shows Coleman’s fish at Storey Taxidermy in Duluth

In as much as Mr. Ellis completely missed Coleman’s world record from Eagle Lake, Ontario in 1939, let us now review the only controversy that I have uncovered regarding Coleman’s fish. The letter that follows was written to the American Museum of Natural History (then responsible for the sanctioning of world records) on March 18, 1940 by Karl W. Kahmann a noted Hayward, Wisconsin taxidermist and the man that mounted Louie’s first two record claims in 1939 and 1940.

Dear Miss LaMonte:

Purely as a matter of putting your institution on its guard as regards the recording of the largest fish caught on hook and line, I will try to point out several things I have noticed in my many years of mounting fish and particularly in the two large muskellunge recorded for the year 1939.

You have all data on length, weight and girth of the fish caught in Grindstone Lake, Wis. by Louis Spray and the one taken in Eagle Lake, Ontario, by J.J. Coleman, so we need not go into this except to call your attention to the fact that the girth of the Spray
fish exceeds that of Mr. Coleman’s by several inches - and - girth enters very largely into what a fish will weigh.

I have mounted roughly 3000 muskellunge in the past 35 years and naturally can guess the weight of a fish fairly closely, unless it has been filled with sand and gravel, rocks, steel shafting, sash weights, or just plain water, which is too often the case.

In the case of the large muskellunge a pound or two difference may depend on whether the fish was “drowned” in landing, or whether it was weighed immediately after landing or hours or days afterwards, even where the “filling” referred to above is not done.

I saw the Coleman fish at Marshall Fields Sporting Goods Dept. in Chicago and mounted the Spray fish. I am satisfied that the Coleman fish does not come up to weight or measurements, although it is a fine specimen, certainly a large one, and well mounted.

The mount of Coleman’s record muskie by Storey Taxidermy
Photo courtesy J. Peter Haupt

I am afraid that there is too much commercialization, and too much of “Fisherman’s Liberty” in these “Records” for any scientific institution to safely vouch for them. On the other hand. I cannot see how you can do more than to rely on affidavits and scaler’s record stubs, but these do not show whether the specimen was “filled” before weighing.

It really makes very little difference whether the record muskie was caught in Wisconsin, Canada or elsewhere, but it evidently does make a lot of difference to the bait and tackle manufacturers and fishing resort owners.

All my life I have been interested in exact data in bird study and have belonged to just about every ornithological club including the A.O.U. - at present I am Treasurer of the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology - and - I do not envy your position in regards to attempting to vouch for “Fishermen’s Record Catches.”

Although Kahmann’s letter indicated that the girth of Spray’s fish exceeded Coleman’s by “several inches,” the Field & Stream records show that Coleman’s fish was only one inch less in girth than Spray’s claimed girth measurement and Kahmann made no
mention of Coleman’s fish being ¼-inch longer than Spray’s. A professional photogrammetric analysis has not been commissioned for Coleman’s muskie.

Percy Haver 62-8 Lake St. Clair, Michigan – 1940

Haver standing next to his 56-0 from 1940, one of five totaling 187-pounds he caught on June 20th (r).

Field & Stream received an undated letter and affidavits from Haver (spelling, capitalization and wording as written).

Dear Sir
  inclosed is affidavits concerning fish taken by myself in lake St Clair the 56 lb is for a matter of record only. it was one of 5 taken on this day, for a total of 186 lb. the whole catch were presented to the Detroit Tigers after the game June 21 – 40 will send story of catch and pictures as soon as possible.

Yours truly
Percy Haver

With the letter there was a contest affidavit for a 56-pound muskie with a length of 56 ½-inches and a girth of 29 ¼-inches that Haver caught on June 20, 1940 and a second contest affidavit for his 62 ½-pound muskie and eventual world record.

Next was a letter from a line manufacturer to Dan Holland, a writer for Field & Stream magazine. I discovered this (October 15, 1940) letter in the Field & Stream file.

Dear Mr. Holland:
With further reference to muskies caught by Louis Spray of Hayward, Wisconsin and Paul Haver of Detroit, I have heard quite a bit of unfavorable criticism on the Haver musky catch.

But the last word from Karl Kinnear would indicate that while it was caught on very heavy tackle and was not looked upon as a sporting proposition in Detroit, the newspaper was going to recognize the catch, and we are all quite anxious to know whether or not Field & Stream is going to officially accept either or both of these catches in your contest.

As soon as you come to a decision, Mr. Holland, we would appreciate your advising us as we are keenly interested in both of these catches. Would also appreciate it if you would let us know what tackle is shown as being used on both of these catches.

With much appreciation, we remain

Yours very truly
(Line Company unnamed)
(Signatory unnamed)

At the bottom of this letter was an internal office note from Bob Bush, the person in charge of the fishing contest, to Mr. Holland. It read.

RPH: The tackle on which Haver took his musky would not disqualify him in our contest, even tho it was heavy trolling stuff. But since receipt of this letter, I have received an anonymous letter from a guy in Detroit stating that Haver buys his fish from trappers on the Canuck side of the lake.

I don’t like the smell of the Spray affidavit at all, and will declare the entry ineligible if it’s OK with you. I don’t believe we are obligated to accept an entry. BB

I found this last comment an interesting sidebar regarding Spray’s 1940 entry.

That above mentioned undated anonymous letter from Detroit, also in the Field & Stream file said the following.

Editor of Prize fishing contest.

Here is a tip to you. Don’t let Mr. Haver of Detroit put another one over on you and all the muskie fishermen. He don’t catch them. He buys them from the Net fishermen on the Canadian side of Lake St. Clair.

He also sells the lures and has a good income from cheap advertisement.

Yours truly,
I am no muskie fisherman but like to see them play fair.

As a result of that letter, Bob Bush of *Field & Stream* sent the following letter to Mr. Haver.

**Dear Mr. Haver:**

Since receipt of your letter and affidavit by this office in connection with your big muskalonge, we have received correspondence questioning the validity of your catch.

This thing is apt to occur when anyone makes an unusual catch, but such complaints must be accepted at their face value. Should your fish turn out a prize winner in our competition – a logical assumption – and if any charges of this nature were to hold up, there would be a possibility of serious repercussion. As you know, our contest is supervised by the United States postal regulations.

Our judges will be certain you have all the information and correspondence on your catch under consideration when the competition is closed. I would suggest, therefore, that it would be to your advantage to supply us with additional sworn statements relative to this catch. If there were actual eyewitnesses to the taking of this fish, affidavits from them would fill the bill.

Sincerely yours,

Bob Bush

Prize Fishing Contest

Mr. Haver’s reply to *Field & Stream*’s letter, again spelling as written.

**Mr. Bob Bush**

**Detroit Mich**

c/o *Field & Stream*

Nov 22 – 40

**Dear Sir** inclosed you will find a statement Signed by Several people who Saw the Muskie Entered in Contest you can Check with any of them if you so desire. I also rec’d a letter from a doughting Thomas who did not have the guts enough to furnish his address, but you can rest assured that any of these stories are groundless for I am too well known here on the lake to even think of trying anything that was not on the up and up. As soon as the boys get back from Deer Hunting I will send you a couple of additional sworn statements of some fellows who were with me when the fish was on display at the Detroit news but they did not see the weight and measurements taken and there was no one near me on the lake at the time the fish was caught. The closest boat was probably ½ mile away, and the boat livery man, where I had landed has gone to florida for the winter, so I can’t contact him until spring. I am inclosing a picture of the monster fish, hope this will clear things up for you.

Yours truly,

Percy Haver
Mr. Haver did furnish the promised statement that stated the following.

*We, the undersigned, do hereby offer testimony that we saw the Muskalonge caught by Percy Haver on June 28, 1940 and that it is our opinion that the weight and measurements are correct as stated, same being 62 ½ pounds, length 59 inches, 32 ½ inch girth and that the stomach of the fish was empty.*

This statement was signed by eight people, several of which were with the *Detroit News* and several with *WWJ* radio. That seemed to end it, as Haver’s fish was accepted as the new world record.

In 1975, I was following up a lead I had gotten from the late muskie legend Homer LeBlanc and Capt. Hank Bradley on the possible whereabouts of the mount of Haver’s record fish. I received the following undated and excerpted letter from a person that did not wish to be exposed.

**Dear friend,**

...First of all I do not have Percy Haver’s musky or muskies. I have fished with Haver 4 times and never saw him catch a fish. I never fished with a so-called expert who knew less about fishing.

I had learned more about Haver from the Province of Ontario Canada game warden who had a personal confrontation with Haver. (Unnamed) told me to ask Haver how he liked (unnamed). I have been out fishing in Lake St. Clair several times and watched anglers buy muskies from the commercial netters who were not allowed to keep muskies but sold them out in the lake to the anglers at $1.00 apiece. The netters were after fish legally netted such as walleyes, carp and other rough fish. I think thousands of fishermen knew the story but libel laws being what they are hesitated to pursue it further. I question that the so-called 62 pounder went near that figure either even if legally caught. (Unnamed game warden) claims he stopped Haver’s musky methods. I was not personally a witness to Haver’s acquisitions. He claims he caught 3,000. Leave the zeros off and there is a remote possibility...

**Sincerely**

(Unnamed)

So we have two anonymous letters, basically hearsay, that provides no proof of wrongdoing on Haver’s part. Perhaps it was just a case of “sour grapes.”


*What you can’t take away from Louie is the fact that he was a diehard musky fisherman, a real musky addict. After listening to a one-hour taped interview with Louie, as well as reading things he has written on the sport, it is obvious that he was no*
phony because the tips and advice he gave only could have come from a real musky fisherman.

That quote can also apply to Haver and others. When you consider that I had the same thoughts when I reviewed the accounts of many other record holders including Haver’s accounts of the captures of his record fish, Dettloff’s taped interview with Cal Johnson’s son Phil regarding Cal’s record catch and Lawton’s accounts of his fishing days including the story of his world record catch. Apparently, in Dettloff’s mind only Spray’s stories were valid! When he set about trying to discredit Haver’s 1939 and 1940 world record catches in 1995 and Lawton’s 1957 record in 1992 he obviously disregarded their stories.

In the January 1996 issue of *Musky Hunter* magazine, John Dettloff took it upon himself, as (former) *Musky Hunter* historical editor, to personally “disqualify” Haver’s 1939 and 1940 muskie records in *The Saga Of Percy Haver & Louie Spray, Spray really did catch three record muskies in his day!* The article attempts to bolster the claims of Hayward and Dettloff’s “hero”, Louie Spray. Dettloff identifies Spray’s 1940 muskie as a world record and claims that Spray should be credited with three world records! The fact is that Louie Spray’s 1939 catch was never listed as the 1939 world record because it was beaten by John J. Coleman in October, 1939. It was, however, the world’s largest angler caught muskie for 68 days during 1939. In 1940, Percy Haver broke Coleman’s record and only the disqualification of Haver could possibly gain Spray the 1940 world record. If Haver’s 1940 muskie were disqualified by an official sanctioning body, Spray’s muskie could only be considered a record if the fact that it did not receive world record scrutiny by *Field & Stream* is overlooked! Remember, Spray’s 1940 muskie was in second place in the 1940 annual contest when entered, beaten by Haver. To set the record straight, *Field & Stream*, the record keeping body at the time of Haver’s records, reviewed and accepted Haver’s applications. Since then, the record sanctioning bodies, including *Field & Stream*, the FWFHF and the IGFA, have not reviewed or disqualified the Haver records.

It appears that the primary purpose of Dettloff’s article was to elevate Louie Spray to Babe Ruth status. His article was mostly about Louie and how he was cheated out of two of his world records; one by Haver in 1940 and the other by Lawton in 1957. He begins with a folksy story about Haver’s life before he makes his claims in the last portion of the article.

Dettloff, as he did in his Lawton investigation, used amateur photo analysis to determine the size of Haver’s fish. After spending considerable time analyzing photographs using precision measuring instruments, I’ve found that direct scaling of fish size from photographs is generally inconclusive and not repeatable because direct scaling relies on “assumptive points of measurement” and ignores or inadequately addresses perspective. As will be discussed thoroughly in the Lawton section, detailed photo analysis is best left to professional photogrammetrists and their computers.
Dettloff did a bit more work on Haver’s 1940 world record from Lake St. Clair, Michigan than he did on the 1938 and 1939 Haver fish, as evidenced in the copy of a report that he sent to me in 1995. It was based on yet another amateur photo analysis, no better than the questionable work he did on Lawton’s fish. He made many assumptions regarding distances in photographs and numerous estimates, including, camera height and angle and angler height.

He “determined” Haver’s height from a photograph and even used comments from Haver’s niece as to her “recollections” about Haver’s height. Incredibly, he made a determination of Haver’s height by scaling a photograph to his estimates of the size of various items in photographs! He then pronounced that ... *Now we can calculate Haver’s height. Knowing that (Haver’s height) = (height of the bottom edge of the first block is above the floor) referring to concrete blocks in the photograph of Haver with the five muskies; + (height of eight blocks and mortar joints) + (the approximate 2 additional inches that Haver’s head is above the last mortar joint) tells us that Haver indeed was about (3”) + (64”) + (2”) or 69” tall...

Dettloff used his estimate of Haver’s height to scale fish lengths in the Haver photos starting with Haver’s 58-pound 14-ounce record caught in 1939. He stated that ... *A careful study of the various photos of this fish provides us with adequate evidence illustrating how this musky could have been at most, 54 inches in length. The photos of this musky clearly show the fish to not be nearly as girthy as it would have to be to weigh almost 60 pounds.

Amazing! By scaling a photograph Dettloff was able to make a determination that this fish was *54 inches at most*. This despite the following facts; he had no real knowledge of Haver’s height and he had no idea of the claimed length of the fish that he crudely scaled because the application is not part of the *Field & Stream* file. Also, I am at a loss to understand just how Mr. Dettloff could determine that ... *The photos of this musky clearly show the fish to not be nearly as girthy as it would have to be to weigh almost 60 pounds* from a one-sided view?

For the most important fish to him and Spray, Haver’s 62 ½-pound 1940 record, Dettloff chose not to use his previous methods.

Dettloff was confident that he had found a Haver “smoking gun” when he discovered the mount photo of Haver’s 1940 record contained a “builder’s ruler” alongside the mount’s left side. He determined from this that the “mount” of Haver’s fish was ... *approximately 53 ½-inches long*, knowing full well that scaling the mount of a fish is not a valid determination of true length of a fresh fish, he made the quantum leap that since Haver had claimed the fish to be 59-inches long, therefore ... *this constitutes a considerable length falsification on Haver’s part*. A “rush to judgment and shallow at best!
Interestingly, similar comparisons between the Spray mounts and fresh fish were dismissed when the WRMA’s Spray protest was considered (detailed later)! He ended the Haver analysis segment with the following.

...While he was no doubt one who made the sport of fishing an important part of his life, when it came to his musky fishing, Percy Haver often had a tendency to stretch the truth. Numerous old timers from his home area seemed to know the score, long suspecting Haver of telling tall tales. When Percy made the comment that, “I have caught over 300 muskies of better than 30 pounds apiece in the last four years,” in a magazine article, it should have tipped off most musky men that Percy wasn’t being straight. For such a feat – for any man – is basically impossible.

Excuse me! Numerous old timers I guess is two, as that are the number of anonymous letters. And to accuse Haver of stretching the truth is a biased, un-provable and unfounded attack on Mr. Haver’s credibility and integrity and that of his affidavited witnesses, which was obviously something Dettloff was trying to accomplish. I find it ludicrous and unbelievable that Dettloff could make a statement like this about Haver while at the same time ignoring similar truths about Louie Spray’s records. And as for his claim that it, is basically impossible for any man to catch over 300 muskies of better than 30 pounds apiece in the last four years shows his tunnel vision and utter lack of knowledge of what goes on in the rest of the muskie world outside of his home water, the Chippewa Flowage. All of North American muskie fishing simply cannot be gauged by what is caught there. I will prove that this sort of production is indeed possible in Volume II in the chapter on release.
In one his columns, the late John Husar had a few things to say about Dettloff’s erasing of historical muskie records in a December 1995 column entitled *Dusty muskie records hit dust* in the *Chicago Tribune*. Some excerpts.

*Those scary purges in muskie-land continue as self-appointed “historians” run amok through the sport’s most hallowed lore and records.*

*The latest deceased-and defenseless-icon to bite the dust is Percy P. Haver, who back in the 1940’s claimed four of the heaviest fish in history.*

*According to a lengthy article by amateur historian John Dettloff in “Musky Hunter” magazine, Haver does not deserve recognition for any of those fish. Dettloff says Haver did not catch muskies of 62 ½ pounds, 58 pounds 14 ounces, 56-7 and 56 flat from Lake St. Clair, Mich.*

*At the time they were caught, the larger two were world records. But having eyeballed some old photos of Haver’s fish, Dettloff says he has determined the weights were exaggerated. He said the biggest one mainly served to deny the late Wisconsin angler Louie Spray a third world record. Dettloff happens to own a lodge on the Chippewa Flowage near the spot where Spray is said to have caught one of his record fish.*

*Adding fuel to the flames of controversy was Ted Dzialo of the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame, which is located near Spray’s lair in Hayward, Wis.*

*“There were a lot of crap records in the 40’s and 50’s,” Dzialo declared bluntly. “A lot of them were phonied.”*  

*Dzialo said none of Haver’s fish would crack the current list of records maintained by his organization.*

*“It doesn’t really affect us,” he said. “That’s why we haven’t said anything about it. But based upon the photographic evidence, they probably would be disqualified if they were records.”*  

*He said the main effect will be the scrubbing of Haver’s fish from any recognized list of 50-pound plus muskies-as if they never existed.*

*Dettloff said of Haver’s 56-pounder caught in 1940 prior to his record catch that, it ...proved to be falsified to the same degree after the photo of that fish was analyzed in exactly the same way as with the previously mentioned fish. I guess by the time he got to Haver’s fish, he felt that he need not go into as much detail and work as he did in his earlier Lawton record investigation.*

*Importantly, Haver’s 1939 fish was never subjected to world record scrutiny by the American Museum of Natural History because the Spray and Coleman fish pushed it into*
third place in the 1939 *Field & Stream* annual contest. Professional photogrammetry has not been commissioned to analyze any of Haver’s muskies.

**Louie Spray 61-13 Lac Court Oreilles, Wisconsin - 1940**

Louie Spray registered his second record claim from Lac Court Oreilles, Wisconsin. This fish was not subjected to world record scrutiny by the American Museum of Natural History, then responsible for the sanctioning of world records, because a larger fish, Haver’s, was caught 52-days earlier and entered in the *Field & Stream* contest before Spray’s 1940 contest entry.

We’ll now go back to Ellis’ search for the truth of Spray records in *True* magazine regarding Spray’s 1940 fish.

...Louie’s record fish became a second best shortly thereafter when Lake St.Clair in Michigan produced a larger ‘lunge (Actually it was the Coleman fish that bested Louie’s 1939 fish, as Louie’s fish had bettered Haver’s 1939 Lake St. Clair fish). But Louie was back out there pitching again in 1940, and sure enough he came up with a muskie that weighed 61 pounds 13 ounces.

**Wisconsin didn’t know whether to be happy or apprehensive about Louie’s new claims. It wanted the world-record muskie to come from Wisconsin, but it didn’t like the stories then making the rounds.**

This is a good place to again point out that *Field & Stream*’s contest editor Bob Bush evidently didn’t like Spray’s 1940 claim either as noted on the internal memo in the Haver section above and repeated here. ...I don’t like the smell of the Spray affidavit at all, and will declare the entry ineligible if it’s OK with you. I don’t believe we are obligated to accept an entry. BB It is assumed that Mr. Bush let the Spray matter drop when the Coleman application was received with a larger fish. Now back to Ellis.

**Louie said at the time that he had caught the fish on August 19 in Rice Lake. The night previous a man named Jens Jorgensen of Hayward was in Spray’s tavern with a muskie that draped from his chin to the floor. He said he had caught the fish in Lac Courte Oreilles. No one ever heard of, nor did anyone ever see, the Jorgensen muskie after that night.**

**Russ Lynch, sports editor of the Milwaukee Journal, and as honest a newspaper man as can be found despite the fact that he flicks his left out front plenty, duly reported the new developments and Louie’s answer, which was published as follows in part “the old saying is, Once a fisherman always a liar, and a few friendly and harmless jests are welcomed by any sportsman, but that cheap, chippy, chiseling bunch of lousy white lies, insinuations and intimations you wrote in your article could hardly be tolerated by anyone.”**
Louie continued to maintain he had caught a world-record fish and in some circles he made his claims stick.

Just across Lake Michigan, however, that man Haver from Detroit was rowing like mad, and not long after the ducks came back the next year, Percy came up with a 62 ½ pound ‘lunge and there went the world-record back to Michigan again.

Let us now review the rest of Louie’s story.

...When we got him in the boat we put on the tape and it appeared to be around five feet long. We headed straight for Karl Kahmanns taxidermist shop. He had a fairly accurate scale that showed the fish over 60 pounds, but he advised me to go where there was an inspected, sanctioned scale and weigh in. It was weighed at the Pufahl Hardware with Johnnie Moreland, insurance man, Herb Simonson, city clerk, and Ray Ingersol, Pufahl Hardware employee, as the weighing committee. By now I had learned, no more bathroom scales! The weight was 61 pounds 13 ounces, which was a record. That fish was also placed on display in Spray’s Bar and again a prize offered for the nearest weight, length and girth with the weight being the major factor.

Here once again, I have the book before me. There were 607 guesses, and six ties. The local Hayward people who tied were: Sigure Tonstad, Henry A. Larsen, manager of the trout pond, Bill Marquardt, golf pro at the Hayward course, Nester Gaden, blacksmith, Gail W. Davis, plumber, and Earnest F. Rice. No one guessed the exact weight, but were within an ounce of it. Nester Gaden, the blacksmith guessed 61 7/8 pounds.

Louie, who had been through it all the previous year, expected an onslaught from reporters and prepared himself with many affidavits, as seen below.

We the undersigned Committee representing the Chamber of Commerce of the City of Hayward, Wisconsin, hereby state and declare under oath that we weighed and measured a muskellunge caught by Louie Spray of the City of Hayward, Wisconsin, at the Pufahl Hardware. That the weight was Sixty One Pounds and Thirteen Ounces (61 lbs. 13 oz.) That the Length was Fifty Nine and One Quarter inches (59 1/4in.) That the Girth was Thirty Two and One Half inches (32 1/2 in.).

Signed by Committee,
John O. Moreland
Herbert Simonson
Karl W. Kahmann (Spray’s taxidermist)

I, Louie Spray of the City of Hayward, Wisconsin, herein depose, state and declare under oath, that on the 19th day of August 1940, I, in company with Mr. T.W. Campbell of West Palm Beach, Florida, caught and landed a huge muskellunge in Couderay Lake near Hayward, Wisconsin.
That said muskellunge was weighed and measured in public by a Committee representing the Hayward Chamber of Commerce of the City of Hayward, Wisconsin, and that said muskellunge weighed Sixty One Pounds and Thirteen Ounces (61 lbs.13 oz.), was Fifty Nine and One Quarter inches in length, (59 1/4 in.) and had a Girth of Thirty Two and One Half inches, (32 1/2 in.).

Further, that said muskellunge was on display in the City of Hayward, Wisconsin, for a period of three days during which time a guessing contest as to weight was conducted. That 607 persons registered their guess and that the total average guess was 62 1/4 pounds.

Further, that said muskellunge is being Mounted by Karl W. Kahmann of the City of Hayward, Wisconsin, and will be on display as soon as completed. That said weights and measurements are Recorded in the Court House in the City of Hayward, Wisconsin.

AN AFFIDAVIT TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This Affidavit concerns two Newspaper articles, namely, the Rice Lake Chronotype of Rice Lake, Wisconsin, in their issue of August 21st, 1940, and the Milwaukee Journal of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in their issue of Sunday September 1st, 1940.

In each of the two mentioned issues of the two mentioned Newspapers, my name, Jens Jorgensen, was used and mentioned in connection with a Sixty One Pound Thirteen Ounce, (61 lb.13 oz.) muskellunge caught August 19th, 1940, by Louis Spray, of Hayward, Wisconsin, intimating and insinuating that there might be something irregular or fictitious concerning and regarding the muskellunge in question in the Newspaper articles mentioned above.

Therefore, I, Jens Jorgensen, of the City of Hayward, Wisconsin, first being duly sworn on Oath, depose, say, state and declare, that I know nothing about the Spray 61 lb.13 oz. muskellunge, except that I saw it on display at Spray’s Cafe & Bar, Hayward, Wisconsin. Further, that I had nothing to do with catching or helping to catch the muskellunge herein mentioned.

AN AFFIDAVIT TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I, Ray Ingersoll of the City of Hayward, Wisconsin, being first duly sworn on oath, depose, say, state and declare, that I am employed at the Pufahl Hardware Co. of the City of Hayward.

That on the 22nd day of August 1940, a muskellunge was brought into the Pufahl Hardware Store to be weighed by John O. Moreland, Herbert Simonson and Karl W. Kahmann, a Committee in charge and Louie Spray, the owner, all of Hayward, Wisconsin.
That I weighed and measured the muskellunge in the usual manner. That the Weight was Sixty One Pounds Thirteen Ounces, (61 lbs. 13 oz.) That the Length was Fifty Nine and One Quarters inches (59 1/4) That the Girth was Thirty Two and One Half inches (32 1/2 inches).

In addition to these affidavits I had in my possession and now have a photocopy of the book Louie mentioned with the guesses of weight for the fish. It was exactly as stated.

In their 2005 protest to the NFWHFHF of Louie Spray’s record the WRMA discussed the 1940 Spray fish in considerable detail. Rather than fragment the protest synopsis, I refer you to the (books) Appendix (also available on the WRMA website at: www.worldrecordmuskiealliance.com) for the pertinent details regarding Spray’s 1939; 1940 and 1949 records. Professional photogrammetry was used to analyze the 1940 and 1949 fresh fish and mount photographs.

Brad Latvaitis, in a July 1998 Musky Hunter article titled, How Big was that Musky, discussed an advertisement postcard of Spray holding a muskie captioned as 42-pounds. Brad stated ...the muskie captioned as 42-pounds has the proportions for a musky of this weight. He noted that the 42-pound muskie is the same fish captioned in a second postcard as 61-pounds 13-ounces and Spray has the same clothes on in each postcard photo! Brad’s article documents that he queried John Dettloff on the matter and Dettloff agreed that comparative analysis shows each picture is the same fish. Dettloff was aware of the postcard with the 42-pound caption but advised he had a letter from Spray indicating the photo caption was a printer’s error. However, when Brad reviewed the letter, sent by Spray to Larry Ramsell in 1979, only a switch of the captions for Spray’s 61-pound 13-ounce and 69-pound 11-ounce muskies was noted.

When I went through my post card collection things got even messier! The four-card series above and below explains why. Shown are the cards referenced by Brad. The card on the left above clearly shows by the split on the fish’s cheek, that it was indeed the same fish claimed to be the 61-13 record on the correctly captioned card below. The card
on the right above had clearly been altered to remove this cheek split! Apparently Louie had realized this discrepancy and decided to do something about it.

Spray’s letter said in part... *The mix-up came when I ordered out 50,000 assorted Post Card photos of myself and muskies, to sell in the place at Rice Lake (Spray’s Bar). In order to get a price, it was necessary to order that many. However, somehow the L.L. Cook Company of Milwaukee, got the weights of the 61 and the 69 pounder switched, and we never noticed it until a customer at the Bar told the bartender who told me. So long as I had all the prints made up, and since both fish were my property, I just let the thing go at that, until I heard from you some time back on the matter, that the weights were wrong, so I had them corrected...* Interestingly, the 42-pound caption and postcard was not mentioned! The caption reads, *Louie Spray with a 42 pounder and half stiff (intoxicated). World Record Muskies at Spray’s Bar, Rice Lake, Wis.* Spray’s stationary captions this same fish as being, *A 43-pounder!*

When Latvaitis was preparing his article, he contacted fellow fisheries biologist Art Oehmcke who confirmed in a January 7, 1998 letter (copied to Dettloff) that, *These two photos show the same fish which should have the same body proportions. Being 6 feet, 1 ½ inches in height myself, it’s easy for me to calculate the length of the musky in the photo of the “42 pounder” that reached from the tip of Spray’s nose to a point halfway between his knees and the ground. Since Spray’s height was approximately 6’2” (note; as documented below, Spray was much shorter-5-11), comparing my dimensions, the measurement comes to a minimum of 52 inches, which would possibly allow 52 ½ inches for Spray’s height. The photo of “the World’s Largest Muskie” was not a “59 ½ inch” fish (The 61-pound 13-ounce muskie postcard is captioned, “The World’s Largest Muskie”).*

Oehmcke then relates an inquiry with John Dettloff who, *concurred with the contention that both muskies pictured are the same fish. However, he directed my attention to the copy of a letter from Spray to Larry Ramsell in which Spray gives an explanation of the “mix-up” of the photos* (As detailed above, the letter notes that a printer’s error switched
the picture captions of Spray’s 61-pound 13-ounce and 69-pound 11-ounce muskies. The 42-pound muskie caption is not mentioned). **John will be writing to you and will provide copies of the photos he has in his possession, besides the letter from Spray.**

Interestingly, Dettloff promptly visited Oehmcke and as a result Brad received a call from Art asking that he not share his thoughts in the article. In a letter dated January 9, 1998 (copied to Dettloff) Oehmcke said *After reviewing my letter of January 7 to you, John Dettloff called me to point out some possible flaws in the calculations I used in comparing Louie Spray’s physical height to mine. John correctly states that aging has the effect of reducing one’s stature, and I find he is right in my case. My present height is 72 ½” in stocking feet, not 73 ½.” That gives the Spray “42 pounder” another inch but we are still about 6 inches short of 59 ½ inches. I could be off 6 inches on my measurement from ground level to the point midway between the knees and the ground. This is an unknown factor and I’ll have to concede to that—particularly after seeing the sworn, notarized affidavits of reliable witnesses for the photo of the 61 pound, 13 oz – 59 inch fish. I feel John has substantial proof that both photos show the same 61 pound, 13 oz-59” fish and will supply you with the necessary back-up material. However, try as I might, it is hard for me to visualize that “42 pounder” as same as a 59 ½” fish. But so be it.*

Latvaitis was not swayed by the persuasive Dettloff and stated, *I disagree with any (Dettloff’s) perspective calculations from these photos. I’ve never been a big proponent of perspective calculations and distortion analysis (Dettloff’s) because camera angle and distance between the camera and object are somewhat speculative and complicated calculations.* Brad adds, *As stated earlier, the musky captioned as 42 pounds has the proper proportions for a musky of this weight based on simple comparison’s (sic) of Spray’s 6-foot-2 height to the musky’s length (and as later learned, Spray was only 5-11!). I believe that the musky in Louie’s “smoldering gun” photo is in the mid-50 inch range. Latvaitis concluded, Spray’s 61-pound 13-ounce musky was extensively displayed and very well documented. I’m just not convinced that we have an appropriate photo of it.*

In light of the recent discrepancy discovered between a professional photogrammetric comparison of the proportions of Spray’s fresh caught fish and mounts (discussed later), “extensive displaying” of Spray’s 61-pound 13-ounce mounted muskie may have been a deception.

The photo of the 1940 Spray mount shows how it appeared at Spray’s Bar in 1951 and was provided to me in 1998 by Jerome J. Sloboda.
Edward Walden’s Eagle Lake, Ontario fish was kind of an afterthought in 1940 since it finished 3rd in the Field & Steam contest, but it became the new Ontario and Canada record maskinonge. There seems to be little doubt regarding the size of Walden’s fish, however, note that the Walden fish was never subjected to world record scrutiny by the American Museum of Natural History since the Haver and Spray fish pushed it into third place in the Field & Stream contest. Despite accurate newspaper accounts at the time of Walden’s catch, there was some confusion within the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests up until 1953 on just where it had been caught. In the late 1980’s I received a copy of two letters from Ministry files from Bernard Lebeau which he had found under “Maskinonge Lake” at the Sioux Lookout District Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources office. The confusion was that the province had the fish listed as having been caught from Cliff Lake, but that was proven incorrect as the fish had been caught and documented from Eagle Lake. It was later cleared up by the area biologist.

Alois Hanser 64-8 Favil Lake, Wisconsin - 1947

Haver’s 1940 world record stayed intact until 1947, when Alois A. Hanser claimed a new record from Favil Lake, Wisconsin. But revisionist history would catch up with him too as will be noted following Hanser’s documentation.

This photo appeared in Field & Stream magazine in 1948 and in a Heddon lure advertisement. First, let’s take a look at the Hanser affidavits. On May 17, 1947, the date of the capture of his record fish, Hanser had two affidavits prepared. One was the official
Field & Stream entry blank and the second, a general affidavit. Both were duly sworn, witnessed and notarized. Hanser’s Field & Stream affidavit was witnessed by James A. Stewart and Louis Gauthier of Lac du Flambeau and notarized by Ben B. Gauthier. The general affidavit read.

I, Alois Hanser, of Lac du Flambeau, Vilas County, Wisconsin – on May 17, 1947 caught a Muskellunge weight 64 pounds 8 ounces. Length 58 inches, circumference 24 inches. The Muskellunge was caught in Favil or Halfway Lake situated in the Western part of the Lac du Flambeau Indian Reservation.

Signed
Alois Hanser

Witness to weight of fish;
Signed: James A. Stewart, Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin
Louis S. Gauthier, Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin
William Yeschek, Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin.

Then there was a July 15th affidavit from Hanser’s taxidermist.

Warner P. Norlander, being first duly sworn on oath says that he is a taxidermist, living and operating in the Town of Lincoln, Post Office, Eagle River, Wisconsin; that on or about the 20th day of May, A.D. 1947, one Alois Hanser of Lac du Flambeau, Vilas County, Wisconsin submitted to him for taxidermy on 64 ½ pound Muskallounge, caught by said Alois Hanser on Favil (Half Way Lake) in Vilas County, Wisconsin, on opening day of fishing season, to wit: May 17, 1947: that there was no illegal weight in said fish or any foreign matter whatever.

Warner P. Norlander

On June 27, 1947, Hanser then obtained a picture and number of the scale that the fish was weighed on and attested to the facts on that photograph.
This is the scale on which the Muskellunge was weighed, as per affidavit dated May 17, 1947.

Signed: Alois Hanser

After that, Hanser then had the witnesses to the weighing attest to the following on that same photograph.

We, the undersigned, residents of the Town of Flambeau, Vilas County, Wisconsin, attest that we were present at the time the Musky above referred to caught by Alois A. Hanser was deposited on the Continental scale bearing the number and being the type as hereinbefore set forth and that it did weigh 64 ½ pounds.

James A. Stewart
Louis J. Gauthier
William Yeschek

Then on the 8th of July, 1947, Hanser went one step further, with yet another personal affidavit to wit.

ALOIS A. HANSER being duly sworn, upon oath deposes and says that the Musky described in that certain communication with Field & Stream, a national publication, was weighed on a Continental scale, being model AN3CB folding scale, and that the weight was correctly taken on said scale at 64 ½ pounds, which computation was examined and found correct by three witnesses who were present at the time the fish was placed on the scale in a normal manner and said weight computed.

That this affidavit is made for the purpose of informing said magazine of the true status of said fish, which affiant caught in the manner and form set forth in the previous affidavit now on file with said publication.
Alois A. Hanser

Contained also in the Field & Stream file was an undated letter from the photographer. It listed the weight, length and girth and that the fish had been caught by Hanser from Halfway or Favel (another spelling) Lake at Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin and described the tackle used. It further said:

...Hanser has affidavits duly recorded and approved by 3 Town officials and wardens. He no doubt will forward one to you soon. Lives quite a distance from me. My interest was only as the photographer. Would like to see you use it in Field & Stream.

N.C. Ehlke
Rhinelander, Wis

Needless to say, Hanser had his act together. No wonder, as Ellis stated in his True magazine article ...no one made any great effort to discredit Hanser’s prize catch... That is until John Dettloff in 1995.

Ellis also said The muskie crown rested uneasily on Hanser's brow for two years...but no one came near the world-record fish caught by Hanser.

In the October/November 1995 issue of Musky Hunter magazine, Dettloff, as (former) Musky Hunter historical editor wrote an article entitled, Hanser Musky Disqualified. Once again, this self-appointed selective history revisionist of muskellunge world records discredits yet another non-Hayward area record muskie. So, here we go again. Dettloff starts in to the Hanser fish with the following statement ...it should come as no surprise that many folks there (Vilas County, Wisconsin) take their musky fishing very seriously. Whenever any “tom foolery” surfaces regarding anybody’s huge musky catch it is a concern of many to get to the bottom of such matters. Such is the case with the Al Hanser musky from 1947...

...Because there have been persistent rumors among numerous local fisherman and guides that Hanser’s fish had been netted and not legally caught on hook and line, the catch had never been taken completely seriously by the locals. While, I have discovered facts...that do make this a strong possibility. Because Hanser’s world record title was short-lived, the matter of the legitimacy of his catch was never aggressively pursued.

So, while as Dettloff also wrote ...this must be regarded as nothing more than a rumor... Dettloff wrote as if it wasn’t. His comment that ...the legitimacy of his catch was never aggressively pursued... because Hanser’s record was ...short-lived... rings hollow. Two years is plenty of time for Field & Stream to conduct an investigation, if indeed they would have had reason to do so. There was nothing in the Field & Stream files of any nature against the Hanser record fish. They had no reason to investigate it further. Dettloff continued.
Aside from the fact that circumstances indicate that the Hanser musky may not have been taken by conventional means, there is even more damning evidence against the legitimacy of this fish: With the documented dimensions of the Hanser musky being 58 inches in length and only 24 inches in girth, it is simply beyond the realm of possibility that this long, but thinly-built musky, could have weighed anywhere near its reported weight of 64 ½ pounds.

Let’s analyze the above paragraph in two parts. First the circumstances that supposedly indicate the fish wasn’t caught by angling. When Dettloff was working on discrediting this fish, he taped an interview with the late Art Oehmcke a retired Wisconsin DNR employee known as Mr. Musky. His responsibilities included Vilas County when the fish was caught. It is from this interview and a subsequent Oehmcke affidavit that Dettloff’s supposition came about. The affidavit contained second-hand information regarding the supposed netting previously referred to by Dettloff. That statement from Oehmcke’s affidavit.

...On March 4, 1993, I wrote Harley McKeague asking him what he had discovered about the Hanser musky. After checking his personal diary from 1947, McKeague replied by letter to me on March 23, 1993 stating the following about the Hanser musky: “I did notice that the upper and lower jaw were all skinned. And the soft rays in the caudal fin were all split, indicating confinement in a holding net for a long period of time, possibly waiting for the fish to ripen or for sale”...

While credible people are here involved, there is nothing in McKeague’s statement that could be construed as proof. In fact in the taped interview Oehmcke said that McKeague had talked to the District Attorney about it but that there was no case. McKeague’s claims were merely his unsubstantiated opinion.

The Hanser Rhinelander photo

The next thing we must address is the seemingly small girth for a fish that weighed 64 ½-pounds. What Dettloff failed to concede, as did Oehmcke as you will soon see, was information that 12-pounds of spawn had been taken from the fish. In The Rhinelander Chronicle a photograph titled Here’s Hanser and His Record Muskie, the following information was spelled out in that photo’s caption ...It had been stripped of 12 pounds
of spawn before the above picture was taken in Rhinelander this week. While Dettloff was aware of this fact and stated so in his article, he was unable to learn more about its accuracy, so he summarily dismissed it.

Oehmcke in his affidavit, confirmed the fact that Hanser’s fish was thin and that he was certain that it was *beyond the realm of possibility for the Hanser musky, having a length of 58 inches and a girth of only 24 inches to weigh anywhere near 64 ½ pounds*. However, I contend due to the above fact that 12-pounds of spawn had been removed from Hanser’s fish, likely unknown to Oehmcke as he made no mention of it, does indeed have a great bearing on the girth measurement. In fact it is everything!

The fish was taken the opening day of the season, May 17th. In Wisconsin, at least some muskies are in pre-spawn condition in early May as evidenced by the 12-pounds of spawn that were removed from Hanser’s muskie. Wisconsin later changed the opening of the season to the end of May to protect pre-spawn muskies.

It is a scientific fact that a large female muskie can contain as much as 20% of her body weight in eggs/spawn. In Dettloff’s “report” of the Hanser fish he stated that Oehmcke had said that a 45-pound fish would contain up to 6-pounds of eggs but there was no mention of egg weight for a fish weighing near 65-pounds such as claimed by Hanser. Egg weight for Hanser’s fish could have been as much as 12-pounds in a mid 50-pound fish. Dettloff summarily dismissed the possibility of Hanser’s fish weighing 64 ½-pounds with spawn despite these facts.

John Dettloff in the January 1996 issue of *Musky Hunter* magazine said *Upon studying the photograph of Hanser with his musky, it is clear that in comparing the length of his fish to Hanser’s own height of 73 inches to 74 inches, that musky was about 16 inches, or more, shorter than Hanser...* Dettloff did concede in his Hanser investigation that the stated length of Haver’s muskie was correct.

Dettloff then went on to intimate that “artificial weight” had been added to Hanser’s fish by quoting from Oehmcke’s affidavit, which stated in part *Upon arriving in Rhinelander we learned that the fish had been taken to Norlander’s Taxidermy in Eagle River, Wisconsin. As documented in my personal 1947 diary, G.E. Sprecher and I examined the newly mounted Hanser musky on the morning of June 4, 1947 at Norlander’s Taxidermy...Norlander then showed us evidence of many items added to produce false weight that he had personally removed from numerous muskies he had mounted (sash weights, Shorty beer bottles, rocks, etc.) He didn’t come right out and say it, be he inferred that “something” did come out of Hanser’s fish...*

Dettloff used the above to help make his case but as can be noted above in taxidermist Norlander’s affidavit *...that there was no illegal weight in said fish or any foreign matter whatever*. By the time Norlander got the fish to mount, it had already been stripped of 12-pounds of spawn. It therefore should be considered that Oehmcke’s impression of Norlander’s inference that *“something” did come out of Hanser’s fish...* was likely incorrect!
To set the record straight, *Field & Stream*, the record sanctioning body at the time of Hanser’s record, reviewed and accepted Hanser’s contest application. Since then, the record sanctioning bodies, including *Field & Stream*, the FWFHF and the IGFA, have not reviewed or disqualified the Hanser record. Professional photogrammetry has not been commissioned for Hanser’s muskie.

*Cal Johnson 67-8 Lac Court Oreilles, Wisconsin – 1949*

Let us now move on the Cal Johnson’s 1949 record from Lac Court Oreilles, Wisconsin. This fish was never subjected to world record scrutiny by *Field & Stream* because it was beaten by Louie Spray before year’s end. So let us begin with the Cal Johnson record controversies. Again we will quote Ellis’ *True* magazine article regarding the Cal Johnson 1947 record muskie.

*The resort business on the muskie lakes boomed right after the war, and then business began to fall off, until by summer of 1949 it was labeled as far from good in many areas. There was no doubt that the resort business needed a shot in the arm.*

*Another world-record muskie would be nice and it might do the job, so on July 24th of that summer Cal Johnson of Teal Lake accommodated by beaching a 67 1/2 pound fish. It was caught in Lac Courte Oreilles, Johnson said.*

*In the beginning, everybody was pretty happy about that muskie. Cal Johnson is a professional fisherman and an outdoor writer of many year’s standing. It was fine to have a man who had taken thousands of muskies to be catching a world record fish.*

*Johnson told how he and his son, Phil, and Jack Connor, an outdoor writer for a Minneapolis paper, got out on the lake just as a thunderstorm was grumbling its way off into the distance. He told this story:*

*“It was still raining a little and there were some lightning flashes in the east and the thunder was still rumbling. But it was a musky morning, I said, “You can smell muskies. If we don’t connect this morning, we never will."

*“I took the stern position in the boat. Connor went to the bow and Phil, who was guiding, stayed at the oars.”*

*Johnson tells of how they trolled and how the big fish latched on and how it felt as if he was tied to a log.*

*“For thirty minutes he stayed right down just bulldogging and then he started to tire. I knew it would be impossible to lift him on a gaff into the boat, so I told Phil to row slowly to shore. It took us another thirty minutes to coax him to shore.*
“Phil jumped over the side then, raincoat and all, into waist-deep water. The big fish was rolling by this time, so Phil set the gaff beneath the gill cover and began running. The head of the fish was under his fanned-out coat, and the big tail was churning. Phil didn’t stop running until he was thirty feet back on dry land.”

Johnson then told how the fish was weighed and the witnesses’ statements notarized, and Wisconsin and especially resort owners around Hayward celebrated and almost everybody was dandy about the whole thing until - wham! bang! blooey! - like some of that lightning that had been playing around on the morning of the big catch - Connor suddenly announced that he had not been in the boat with Johnson and did not see the fish caught.

So another world record ‘lunge became just a little tainted, because both Johnson and Connor stuck by their stories. Later, however, Johnson admitted that Connor had not been in the boat nor did he see the fish landed.

Johnson’s enemies immediately said, “He had it tied out in the woods fattening it.” His friends said “Johnson knew no one would believe he had caught a world record muskie, so he said Connor was with him just to bolster his story. You can’t blame him, the way things have been in Wisconsin lately.”

Johnson’s muskie was first recognized as legitimate by Outdoors, a magazine which has since been combined with Outdoorsman, (which in turn combined with Hunting and Fishing), and the prize of a new automobile was awarded to Mr. Johnson.

The Milwaukee Sentinel had a vital interest and stake in the Cal Johnson fish, and went to great lengths to clear the mess up as is evidenced in Sentinel Outdoor Editor Lew Morrison’s columns in 1949.

What’s the low down on the big muskie? What’s back of certain rumors that are bringing discredit to the state and to the Hayward area in particular? Yes, what is really behind all this fuss and what does it really amount to?

The Sentinel is vitally interested in this world’s record muskie, because it represents a most valuable asset to the state’s recreational interests. Any shenanigans should be exposed.

But likewise, if the catch was on the up and up, as the real facts reveal it to be, unwarranted rumors can bring irreparable harm to the entire state. In view of what transpired lately, the Sentinel moved into action, determined to get to the bottom of things. As a result of a very careful and thorough investigation, here are hard, cold facts that cannot be denied.

Facts Prove Legality of Big Catch
All of the facts, without a single exception, clearly and conclusively prove beyond the slightest shadow of doubt that the world’s record muskie taken by Cal Johnson in Lac Courte Oreilles on the morning of July 24, was legally caught, accurately weighed and measured, witnessed by reputable citizens and the papers officially certified by notary John Moreland, well known member of the Wisconsin Conservation Commission, who inspected the fish personally.

It might clarify several things if it is pointed out here that the Sentinel made an agreement with Cal Johnson on the Monday forenoon following the catch whereby the Sentinel obtained the exclusive rights to exhibit the fish in Wisconsin.

Johnson’s mount (l) along with Spray’s 1940 (c) and 1949 mount (r) at the 1950 Sentinel Outdoor Show

The first showing of this world’s record muskie in Wisconsin therefore, will be at the Sentinel Sports and Vacation show next April, except for the Hayward celebration referred to later in the story.

In the interests of clarity, let’s start at the beginning of this memorable fishing trip.

On the evening of July 23, Cal Johnson, his son Phillip and Jack Connor, outdoor editor of the Minneapolis Star, drove to Moccasin Lodge on Lac Courte Oreilles to do some fishing the next day.

But when the morning alarm called them it was raining and Connor, at the last moment decided to try for bass in another boat.

Cal and his son started to troll immediately after leaving the dock. In less than half an hour the big fish hit.

The battle lasted about an hour and ended when the fish was beached.

Before returning, Cal moved out to where Connor could see him and waved him in, both boats arriving a few minutes apart.

Word Flashed of Record Muskie

The hour (6 o’clock) was early for most Sunday morning vacationists, but as word of the world’s record musky spread, the place was soon overrun with people.
The first story out of Hayward, said Connor, Cal and his son were fishing together. Another had it that Connor had caught the fish. In this, all three are equally responsible for allowing this impression to remain. But before passing judgment, it might be well to consider that in the excitement, “toasts” certainly were in order for an event of this kind. They might have been coming pretty fast and things might have been said in the spirit of the moment without giving much thought to them.

And even if it might have been agreed at the moment that Connor was to share in the glory of the catch, what of it? Any way you look at it, it is trivial. But let’s give Cal credit for standing by Connor when the latter later reversed his position.

Did Johnson say Connor was in the boat with him knowing that an affidavit from him would add credibility to his record claim? Did Connor tell Johnson that he would not falsify an affidavit and later say he wasn’t with Johnson to prevent himself from being involved in Johnson’s record claim? Johnson’s son Philip confirmed and made the point that Connor was not with them in the following 1993 affidavit.

I, Philip Johnson, son of the late Cal Johnson, attest that on the 24th of July in 1949 I accompanied my father Cal and was present in the boat with him when he caught his 67-1/2 pound world record muskellunge out of Lac Court Oreilles, near Hayward, Wisconsin. I was 23 years old at the time and remember that this fish was caught early in the morning after a storm. No one else was present in the boat at the time of the catch.

I attest that my father hooked, played and landed this muskellunge fairly and by legal means and, once the muskellunge was played out and the boat was worked close enough to shore, I jumped out of the boat, gaffed the fish, and pulled it up onto the beach. Rather than shooting the muskellunge – which was legal and customary at that time – the fish was subdued with the gaff handle.

In addition to witnessing the actual catching of this 67-1/2 pound muskellunge, I was also witness to the weighing and measuring of this fish. I attest that this muskellunge was weighed in my presence on an accurate, beam-type platform scale at the Moccasin Lodge by its proprietors, Mike Solo and Serge Bagny. This muskellunge measured 60-1/4 inches in length, 33-1/2 inches around its girth and weighed in at 67 pounds eight ounces. The weight and measurements were double checked on taxidermist Karl Kahmann’s scale and the two scales gave the same reading and were subsequently state inspected.

I, Philip Johnson, attest that the above mentioned details regarding my father’s 67-1/2 pound muskellunge are all true and I was a witness to the catching, weighing and measuring of this fish.

(Signed) Philip Johnson

The Journal article continues Facts Available for All to Verify
Really the only pertinent factors in this affair are whether the fish was legally taken, and whether weights and measurements were accurate and properly witnessed.

The facts are available for anyone to verify.

Here is one clinching fact that proves the legality of the record catch:

The fish was immediately turned over to Karl Kahmann, Hayward taxidermist, who is not only an expert on muskies, but is a man who bears a most enviable reputation.

Before coming to Wisconsin, Kahmann practiced taxidermy in Chicago for some 25 years. He has done work for leading museums, as well as individuals, during which time he and his staff handled close to 5,000 muskies. He, therefore, speaks with more than passing authority.

We asked Karl if, in his examination of the fish prior to preparing it for mounting, he had found any evidence of disease. His reply was “No.”

That disposes of the question of whether the fish was “found” as some rumors had it.

Fish Not Penned, Netted or Trapped

We next asked him whether there were any abrasions on the nose or tail that would definitely show up if the fish had been penned, netted or trapped?

His answer was “No.”

Asked whether any marks on the jaw might show that the hooks had been freshly removed, he replied “Yes.”

When asked how he was sure the fish was freshly caught, he answered:

“It certainly was a freshly caught fish because rigor mortis had not set in when the fish was delivered to me about 6:30 on the morning of July 24.”

Karl further stated that the weights were double checked and that two scales gave exactly the same reading...67 pounds, 8 ounces. Both scales are now being state inspected. Measurements, he said, were taken with a steel tape.

Note: It is unknown if the two scales were state inspected despite Philip Johnson’s 1993 affidavit stating that they were. If inspected, their disposition is unknown and undocumented.

An article by Pete Maina in the summer 2002 issue of *Esox Angler* revealed an interesting comment attributed to Johnson. Johnson supposedly had no idea his muskie
was a world record until it was weighed, however; Hayward legend says Cal “called his shot” the evening before in a Hayward area tavern saying, *Tomorrow I’m going to catch a world record muskie*. When I queried Pete further I learned the following with regard to Johnson’s fish...all what I was told rather than first hand... (the dam keeper), ...who you know watched the dam (on the West Fork of the Chippewa River at the outlet of Moose Lake), said he saw a big fish below the dam himself. Didn’t claim any particular size, just said “real big,” and one day decided to go back, get the gun and shoot it – to see just how big it was. Was gone...anyway he (the dam keeper) said Cal had “a ...guy rowin’ him around – saw that several days.” SO, he was definitely fishing there.

*Of course the other thing I heard from several of the locals, old guides, was that Cal eventually took (the dam keeper’s) idea, since word was Cal too, predicted his fish: in the old Shawville tavern (the) night prior (Cal said) “gonna catch a WR tomorrow...”*

...I recall the prediction was supposedly pretty common knowledge, but really not certain who to even ask. All dead.

Pete’s summer *Esox Angler* article was followed by a companion article in the fall issue questioning Hayward area muskies. At the time, I was quite upset. I had yet to acknowledge that the Spray and Johnson muskies have been given preferential treatment. However, the WRMA’s Spray Protest, their use of professional photogrammetry to analyze the Spray and Johnson photographs, and Dettloff’s unprofessional reaction to the WRMA protest collectively caused me to seriously question the sincerity of Dettloff’s efforts to revise muskie record history... I apologized to Pete for any unkind things I said in the past regarding his opinion of Hayward’s record muskies.

Pete presented the following proposal and a Spray and Johnson protest (excerpted) to the NFWFHF in December of 2002.

...to be fair, but yet to be able to recognize all claimed record fish for what they are (still big fish), and to protect and maintain the Hall’s credibility, I propose two groupings of record class muskies...One grouping would be fish that withstand any and all scrutiny. Fish that are verified with no doubt according to FHOF standards. And, these would be the official record (Modern Day) fish.

Another group would be for any fish that have any evidence against their validity. Rather than totally eliminating these fish from listing and lore, have a group called (a name that Ron Lindner coined) ...“Apocryphal records”...or just historical records. Apocryphal does best fit the bill... (Apocryphal: of doubtful authenticity: spurious; Syn. Fictitious).

As noted at the start of this Chapter, the NFWFHF chose not to go this route despite the 2003 recommendation of NFWFHF record advisor Brad Latvaitis and the strong 2005 recommendations of their two record advisors Latvaitis and Ramsell. Further, the NFWFHF, which, regretfully I was involved with at the time as World Record Advisor, rejected Maina’s records protest.
Maina’s protest contained a section of “independent photo analysis...on all fish in question, (although only the Spray final analysis was submitted) comparing fish length to known height of captors. In every case this analysis pointed to the fish being significantly shorter than claimed lengths.

...Because there is more than sufficient evidence to-at the very least-strongly doubt the validity of these fish, and that other muskies have been taken off the official record list per similar evidence (that reference is to Dettloff’s “disqualification” of the two Haver records, the Hanser record and the Lawton record), I proposed that the Spray and Johnson fish be removed from the official list.

What should be a note of interest from this (Johnson) affidavit is that the weight witnesses did not all witness weight on the same scale.

(Author’s note: There is now additional affidavit and scale information that will be a part of the WRMA Johnson Protest. It should become public later in 2008.)

In a July 28, 1949, Sawyer County Record article Johnson was making the mount of his fish available to Hayward and he was quoted as saying ...The musky will be displayed in Hayward at all times...where it will be of more publicity value to Hayward and Sawyer County...

Of course Johnson had no control over the mount’s future disposition. In one of his books Eli Singer interviewed Bernie Tworek of Hayward and related that Tworek was the owner of the mount of Johnson’s record fish which came with the Moccasin Bar in Hayward when he purchased it.

This fosters the question “why would Cal Johnson ‘give away’ the valuable record mount if it was legitimate? Had he “created” the record to benefit Hayward and Sawyer County tourism? In an article written by Johnson shortly after his catch in the March, 1950 issue of The Outdoorsman entitled Hayward’s Famed Fishing Waters Johnson wrote profusely about the Hayward lakes area. Two-thirds of one full page within the article contained several Hayward resort ads, a Hayward real estate ad, a Hayward Lakes promotional tourism ad and a promotional tourism ad for the Indian Head Country.

Did tourism need a boost shortly after World War II? Did Cal, who knew that he was dying after a medical diagnosis, risk his life’s vaunted career and reputation to help his beloved Hayward? You will have to decide for yourself. Headlines of the Sept. 1, 1949 Sawyer County Record indicated that over 7,000 packed Hayward to glimpse the world’s record musky. This write-up included a large photo of Johnson holding his catch.

In photographs of Johnson with his fish it looks huge, although as in many problematic record photos, the fish is held in front of Johnson. So just how tall was Cal Johnson? In 2006 at the Minnesota Musky Expo, George Will asked Johnson historian John Dettloff the Johnson height question. He was told ...Cal Johnson was 5-feet 7-inches tall. I’m the
only one that knows and has that information and if anybody else tells you anything different they don’t know what they are talking about.

When Will broached the subject again at the Expo in 2007, Dettloff’s previous story changed. Will had made some comments to Dettloff about some photo and measurement comparisons he had done based on the height information Dettloff had given him the previous year, when he told Dettloff he didn’t think the Johnson fish measured up based on Johnson’s height. Dettloff then said *...He may have been 5-8 or maybe even 5-9 ...Photos are deceptive...*! Will then, caught off guard, did a double take and changed the subject knowing Dettloff had just lied to him. He knew there was no point in pursuing it further.

![Image](image1.png)

*The photo above shows Adams (l), Johnson (c) and Hagg (r). Photos were sent to me by Louie Spray*

When one looks at this photograph, Johnson is clearly at least 4 inches shorter than Hagg. Hagg was about the same 5’ 11” tall as Spray. Until positive evidence surfaces with Cal Johnson’s height we just won’t know for sure.

![Image](image2.png)

*This photo shows Hagg (r) beside Spray with Charlie Pastika (l) in front of Pastika’s Bait Shop in Hayward, 1949*

One thing that must be noted again is that Johnson’s fish was never subjected to world
record scrutiny since Spray’s 1949 fish pushed it into second place in the *Field & Stream* contest.

To set the record straight, *Field & Stream*, the record sanctioning body at the time of Johnson’s record, reviewed and accepted Johnson’s contest application. Since then, *Field & Stream* and the FWFHF have not reviewed or disqualified the Johnson record. The IGFA lists the Johnson fish as their all-tackle world record in their *World Record Game Fishes, 2007 Edition*. It is also listed as the “Unlimited” line class record in the Muskie Conventional Angling Subdivision of the NFWFHF *Official World Fresh Water World Records, 2007 Edition*.

Professional photogrammetry was commissioned by the WRMA in 2006 and completed in 2007, and is conclusive. They are currently working on the balance of their report to submit to the IGFA.

Louie Spray 69-11 Chippewa Flowage, Wisconsin – 1949

After Johnson caught his record muskie in late July, a brash claim echoed forth from none other than Louie Spray. Dettloff covered it in a *Musky Hunter* article entitled, *In Defense of Louie Spray* in the Dec. 1991/Jan. 1992 issue ...The third strike against Sprays musky involved a comment he made following Cal Johnson’s 67 1/2-pound world record musky catch. Cal was a frequent Hayward area visitor, sportswriter, and well liked by the area residents who greatly accepted and embraced his record catch. Now enters Louie Spray, and at a celebration thrown to honor Cal Johnson’s catch a gag telegram sent by Spray was read to the crowd:

DON’T GIVE AWARD YET. I WILL CATCH A NEW WORLD RECORD MUSKY THIS SEASON. SIGNED LOUIE SPRAY.

These photographs are the others of only three known originals of Spray’s 1949 record. The one on the right is the most obscure and rarely seen

Low and behold if Spray didn’t come up with a bigger musky like he said! Cal was upstaged by Louie’s catch and many people couldn’t believe it. Not wanting to see Johnson’s fish dethroned so quickly, they were very receptive to believing and
spreading rumors discrediting Sprays catch. Spray’s comment is not surprising though, for he had known about and spotted a record-class musky during the past several seasons on the Chippewa Flowage. His comment was probably half jest and half very serious, knowing that he did have a chance to better Johnson’s catch.

Well, here you will have to make up your own mind. Dettloff calls Spray’s telegram a gag and says that it was probably ...half jest...but there is nothing in archives of Spray’s claiming it was a gag. One has to find it very curious that Spray’s 1939 record was caught less than one month after Haver’s record catch, his 1940 fish was caught less than two months after Haver’s record catch and conveniently in 1949 he tops Johnson’s record catch less than three months after it was caught! Again a Dettloff comment ...Keeping bogus records on the books diminishes the standing of all the great angling achievements that have honestly been made. I have no clue as to how Dettloff reconciles one of his idols usurping the other. Let us return now to Louie Spray’s story after the catch.

...We headed for Herman’s Landing where the grog flowed freely for a few minutes - then to Hayward to weigh it, but the stores were closed.

Charlie Pastika (r) with son Leon. Photo courtesy Leon Pastika

We stopped at Charlie Pastika’s Bait Shop, but he had no scales. We stopped at Stroner’s Store, but his grocery scales would not weigh it either, so we went down Highway 27 and on out to Karl Kahmann’s, the taxidermist, whose scale I thought would weigh it, but Karl had had his fill of world record muskies, with the Cal Johnson catch that had beaten me not too long before.

It should be noted here that Spray’s account of when they went to Kahmann’s place didn’t mesh with the affidavit account given by Ted Haag (see below) and was different from what published reports of that day said. What Spray himself said had them going directly to Karl Kahmann’s taxidermy shop. This was further supported in a letter from Spray to me in December of 1979 when Spray related that the original photos of him and his record fish were taken ...in back of Karl Kahmann’s Taxidermy Shop. With darkness coming early in late October, it would have been impossible to take the photos
later after the weighing unless done the following day! Why would they go back then if Kahmann had refused to mount the fish? Back now to the completion of the story.

He showed us how they had to get a bulldozer in to make a road from his shop back to the main road, because the narrow road into his place from the Town Road had become so plugged with cars when the word got around that Cal’s fish was out there, that they, nor anyone else, could get out of the yard. They tore up his lawn: they backed over his shrubbery and did untold damage to his grounds. Karl said, “Get it out of here and don’t come back.” I reasoned with him that due to our long and continued friendship that I was quite perturbed by his attitude toward me. He calmed down and said that he was not angry with me or anyone else but just did not want to be bothered with the mob again. I was sure down in the dumps because, who could I get to mount such an important fish, should it be a Record? When we got to Stone Lake, Ted said he was thirsty for a drink of water. (Imagine Ted drinking water!) So we stopped at Smock’s Tavern to get it and show off the fish. We were asking about scales and someone mentioned that Jack Reinke, the postmaster, might come down and weigh it. The post office was alongside of Smock’s Tavern and Jack did come down to weigh it. It was 69 lbs. 11 oz. ...a new world record. We set up some whoopee then and there, and Ted had had enough “water” (on the side), we headed on for home but I was very worried about who would mount that fish.

It was late when I got home so I carefully packed the fish in ice in the basement and got busy on the phone looking for a good qualified taxidermist. Les Fossum, a bait and tackle salesman, told me about a man in Wausau, Wisconsin, whom I called. He said he wanted to look at it before making any decision, so early the next morning I was on my way over there. His store and shop was located out of Wausau a ways, at Schofield. He asked me why I did not have Karl Kahmann mount it and I told him why. Then he was afraid of a mob busting into the place and informed me that he was not equipped to handle a multitude of curiosity seekers. However, after some coffee and get-acquainted talk, he promised to do the job, providing I kept it strictly confidential. I left the fish with him and didn’t even tell my wife where it was. Because of this, the fish was not placed on display before it was mounted, as had the other two record muskies I had caught. All in all, I was very disappointed because I could not display it or even tell where it was, so naturally, once again I got some very unfavorable publicity from sports writers and such, but good old Hugh Lackey, the taxidermist, went right to work and I soon had the fish on display, and the gossip, rumors, and “you gotta show me” attitude, narrowed down to the fact that someone must have caught the critter because there it was. I finally got the gang off my back.

Now that we have the rest of Louie’s story, let’s look at his documentation. The first bit of evidence he obtained immediately after the weighing of the fish on a United States postal scale. On United States Post Office stationary was the following.

10/20/49 69 lbs. 11 ounces muskie weighed, above date.
63 1/2 inches in length
31 1/4 inches in girth,
Witnessed by -

J.C. Reinke (Postmaster)
George Quentmeyer (Spray’s fishing partner)
T.A. Hagg (guide – with Spray on a “day off”)
Louis Spray (Spray is witnessing his own fish size – not allowed)

A short time later, Louie got busy and obtained affidavits from everyone involved; from the people with him right on through the taxidermists. Following are those affidavits.

Ted Hagg, of Sarona, Wisconsin, being first duly sworn, on oath says that he accompanied Louis Spray of Rice Lake, Wis. on October 20th, 1949, on a fishing trip, and was present in the boat with him and George Quentmeyer, licensed guide of Hayward, Wisconsin. That the three of them fished together from the same boat near Herman’s Landing on the Chippewa Flowage near Hayward, Wisconsin. That at about 4:00 p.m. on that date he saw Mr. Louis Spray hook and land on rod, reel and line, a muskellunge weighing 69 lbs. 11 oz. and measuring 5 feet 3 1/2 inches long. That although he did not time the actual fight he would estimate that to the best of his knowledge, it took approximately 45 minutes to land said fish. That Mr. Spray fought and landed the fish without any assistance except that the guide George Quentmeyer shot the fish twice.

That to the best of his recollection the fish was landed at approximately 4:00 p.m. That he went with the said Louis Spray and George Quentmeyer from Herman’s Landing on the Chippewa Flowage where they got the boat and where they landed with the fish, to Pastika’s Bait and Tackle Shop to obtain ice, thence to Stroner’s Store at Hayward, Wisconsin to have the muskie weighed. That the scales at Stroner’s store were not large enough to weigh the fish so they proceeded to the Stone Lake, Wisconsin post office where the fish was weighed in my presence by Jack Reinke, local postmaster, on the governmental post office scales. That the said fish weighed 69 lbs. 11 oz. That I was present when Mr. Reinke measured the fish with a steel tape and that it measured 63 1/2 inches in length and 31 1/2 inches in girth. That the said fish was weighed at the Stone Lake post office at approximately 6:45 p.m. on that date. That thereafter they proceeded to the shop of Karl Kahmann, taxidermist at Hayward, Wisconsin, and inquired whether or not he would mount the fish. That Mr. Kahmann said it would be impossible for him to get at the job for from 60 to 90 days so it was taken to another taxidermist.

Ted Hagg

George Quentmeyer, of Hayward, Wisconsin, being first duly sworn, on oath says that he is a licensed guide and that on the 20th of October, 1949, he was employed by Louis Spray of Rice Lake, Wisconsin.

That he accompanied Mr. Spray together with Ted Hagg of Sarona, Wisconsin on a fishing expedition on the Chippewa Flowage near Hayward, Wisconsin. That they put out from Herman’s Landing and fished for several hours. That while accompanying
Mr. Spray on this occasion Louis Spray did hook and land with rod, reel and line a muskellunge weighing 69 lbs. 11 oz. and measuring 63 1/2 inches long. That your affiant shot the fish twice but that otherwise the fish was hooked, played and landed by Mr. Louis Spray without any assistance, except that this affiant also helped lift the fish into the boat. That he was present in the boat with Mr. Spray as was Mr. Hagg at all times above described. That he would estimate that it took Mr. Spray approximately 50 minutes to land the fish. That the bait used was a sucker minnow, and that the fish was finally landed at about 4:00 p.m. of that date. That they then proceeded to Herman’s Landing where they showed the fish to the proprietor and his wife. That from there they proceeded to Pastika’s Bait and Tackle Shop to obtain ice. Then to Stroner’s store at Hayward to have the fish weighed. That when it was discovered that Stroner’s scales were not large enough to weigh said fish they proceeded to the Stone Lake post office where the fish was weighed in the presence of this affiant and in the presence of Mr. Spray and Mr. Hagg by Jack Reinke, Stone Lake postmaster. That the fish was weighed on the official post office scales and that it weighed 69 lbs. 11 oz. That after the fish was weighed Mr. Reinke measured the same with a steel tape. That from the tip of the tail to the tip of the snout the fish measured 63 1/2 inches and around the girth that the said fish was 31 1/4 inches. That the said fish was so measured in my presence.

George Quentmeyer

Herman Ceranske and Edna E. Ceranske, his wife, being first duly sworn, on oath do each for themselves say that they are the proprietors of a resort known as Herman’s Landing located on the Chippewa Flowage near Hayward, Wisconsin. That they were present at their resort on the 20th of October, 1949. That they, of their own personal knowledge, know that Mr. Louis Spray and Mr. Ted Hagg fished the Chippewa Flowage in a boat rented from them in the company of each other and in the company of Mr. George Quentmeyer, licensed guide, of Hayward, Wisconsin. That at about 4:15 p.m. of said day, they were present when the above named parties landed at Herman’s Landing with the same boat they had rented from them and that Mr. Spray had in his possession the largest muskellunge that either of them had ever seen. That the muskie had been freshly caught and the parties told them Mr. Spray had just caught it. That present with them at the time that Spray, Hagg and Quentmeyer landed was one Mr. Nixon Barnes, a carpenter of Hayward, Wisconsin. That Mr. Barnes measured the fish in the presence of all the above named people and claimed it measured 5’4” long. That this is by far the largest muskellunge that we or any of us had ever seen. That we did not have a scale at our resort strong enough to weigh said fish and it was not weighed in our presence.

Edna E. Ceranske
Herman Ceranske

Nixon Barnes, being first duly sworn, on oath says that he is by occupation a carpenter and that he was at Herman’s Landing on the Chippewa Flowage on the 20th day of October, 1949 at about 4:15 p.m., when Louis Spray, Ted Hagg and George Quentmeyer landed at said resort and had with them a muskellunge which they all said
Mr. Spray had caught in the Chippewa Flowage. That it was by far the largest muskellunge I had ever seen. That I measured the same and found it measured 5’4” long. That there was no scale at Herman’s Landing sufficient to weigh the fish so it was not weighed there. The fish was undoubtedly freshly caught at the time we had seen it.

Nixon Barnes

Charles Pastika, being first duly sworn, on oath says that he is the owner of Pastika’s Bait and Tackle Shop near Hayward, Wisconsin. That he was present in said shop at approximately 6:00 p.m. on October 20th, 1949 when Mr. Louis Spray, Mr. Ted Hagg, and Mr. George Quentmeyer came to said shop to obtain ice with which to pack a large muskie. That I saw said muskie and that it was undoubtedly the largest muskie I had ever seen. That I did not weigh or measure said muskie. That I did observe that it was freshly caught and that Hagg, Spray and Quentmeyer all said that Mr. Spray had just caught it from Herman’s Landing on the Chippewa Flowage. That the parties did not stay at my shop very long as they were in a hurry to have the fish weighed and measured.

Charles Pastika
My comm. expires March 2, 1952

Jake Jordan of Hayward, Wisconsin, being first duly sworn, says that he was at Pastika’s Boat & Tackle Shop at about 6:00 p.m. on October 20, 1949, when Mr. Louis Spray, Mr. Ted Hagg and Mr. George Quentmeyer came in said shop for ice. That Mr. Spray displayed a large muskellunge which he had just caught in the Chippewa Flowage. That the muskie was undoubtedly the largest that he had ever seen and that it was obviously freshly caught. Mr. Spray stated in the presence of myself and Mr. Pastika and the others that he had caught the fish on Fleming’s Bar in the Chippewa Flowage on a large sucker minnow.

Jake Jordan

Milton Stroner, says, being first duly sworn on oath, that he is the proprietor of Stroner’s Store at Hayward, Wisconsin. That on Thursday, October 20, 1949, while we were having our evening meal, Mr. Louis Spray, Mr. Ted Hagg and Mr. George Quentmeyer called at the store and showed us the largest muskie that I have ever seen. Mr. Spray had just caught the same in the Chippewa Flowage near here and wanted to have it weighed and measured. However, the scale I had in my store would not weight anything over 35 pounds so it was impossible to weigh the fish. Mr. Spray then brought some gas at my store and the three of them again departed with the fish.

Milton Stroner

Jack Reinke, of Stone Lake, Wisconsin, being first duly sworn on oath, says that he is the postmaster of the Stone Lake, Wisconsin post office. That about 6:45 p.m. on
October 20, 1949, he was called upon by Mr. Louis Spray, George Quentmeyer and Ted Hagg, who had in their possession the largest muskellunge that he had ever seen. That all of the parties said that Mr. Spray had caught it that afternoon in the Chippewa Flowage near Hayward. That at their request we proceeded to the post office where I personally weighed the fish on the post office scales. That the fish weighed 69 lbs. 11 oz. That thereupon I measured the fish with a steel tape and it measured 63 1/2 inches long. That I measured the girth of the fish and that the same measured 31 1/4 inches. That Louis Spray, George Quentmeyer and Ted Hagg were present when I weighed and measured said fish.

Jack Reinke

Subscribed and sworn to before me
This 28th day of October, 1949.
Inez Spray (Spray’s WIFE!)
Notary Public, Sawyer County, Wis.
My comm. expires March 2, 1952

Karl W. Kahmann, being first duly sworn, on oath says that he is a taxidermist at Hayward, Wisconsin, and that in the evening of October 20, 1949, Mr. Louis Spray called at his shop with a muskellunge which Spray claimed weighed 69 lbs. 11 oz. and was a new world’s record. That I personally saw said muskie although had not measured or weighed it. That I saw the same was freshly caught and was undoubtedly one of the largest muskies I had ever seen. That Mr. Spray requested me to mount said muskie but that I advised Mr. Spray it could not be done by me within the next 60 to 90 days and that I advised Mr. Spray that if he wished the muskie mounted sooner he should attempt to get some other taxidermist to do the same.

Karl W. Kahmann

Spray must have had the whole gang in to do affidavits on October 28th (the date the above affidavits were prepared) and it sure kept his wife Inez busy typing them all up and notarizing them. She even prepared the next one for Lackey but it was notarized elsewhere.

I, Hugh A. Lackey, being first duly sworn on oath, says that he is a taxidermist at Schofield, Wisconsin, and that on Saturday, October 22nd, 1949, Mr. Louis Spray of Rice Lake, Wisconsin, delivered to him a very large muskie to mount. That Spray told him it was a world record muskie. That a price was agreed upon and that he would mount the muskie, provided such information was kept from the press and public until after the mounting was completed. That examination of the muskie disclosed that there was nothing inside or out to add artificial weight. That I am mounting the muskie and it will be ready for delivery about November 20th, 1949.

Hugh A. Lackey
One glaring point to me, regarding the Spray affidavits, is the fact that the affidavits were not prepared by the affiants, for example; several of the affidavits begin with I and later in the same affidavit use the second person. It appears quite obvious they were all formatted and prepared by Spray’s wife Inez and merely signed by the affiants.

The battle was supposedly over only 40 minutes after it started, and that may well be, but a review of the time-line of that afternoon’s events from the published records of the day (not to mention discrepancies in the actual time of the catch) by the WRMA in their rebuttal to the NFWFHF rejection of their protest, report that things just didn’t add up.

The entire 49 page WRMA rebuttal as well as the complete protest can be found on their web-site at www.worldrecordmuskiealliance.com

I recommend that you read the complete 93-page WRMA protest on their web-site, and the WRMA rebuttal there.

The NFWFHF’s decision to reject the protest may be found at: www.freshwater-fishing.org/spray/ (Author’s note: this is no longer available to the public, but may be found on MuskieFirst at)

http://muskie.outdoorsfirst.com/board/forums/thread-view.asp?tid=40411&posts=38start=1

Another thought comes to mind regarding photographs of Spray’s record muskies...why are there so few? For his 1939 record, there is only one photograph known to exist and that isn’t even of Spray holding the fish it is a friend of Spray’s, Alton Van Camp. The 1940 fish doesn’t fare much better with just a couple from Spray (one labeled 42-pounds) and one from an individual in Rice Lake found later. For his 1949 record there are only three “original” photographs known to exist and the two most common originals are superimposed on three (now 5) different backgrounds!

This is the most commonly known and seen Spray “photograph” with the “best” of the three originals superimposed on the water background. Interestingly, Spray is in this photo twice! The background photo shows Spray poling a boat on the Flambeau River
A fourth “messed with version” is one where Hagg and Quentmeyer were superimposed shaking hands on the already superimposed third version with a pine trees background. This was the superimposed photo that resurfaced during the 2005 WRMA Spray protest, when Scott Allen rediscovered it in Dettloff’s archives. Spray had sent me a copy of it long ago and I resurrected it from my vast files. It is the same superimposed photograph that the NFWFHF provided to at least three math professors with a request for a direct scaling analysis to bolster their decision to uphold the Spray record. This photograph is shown below and the “math version” is shown and covered in detail in the WRMA rebuttal.

Reference to a quote by Leonard Dorazio from the Dettloff Spray articles, makes me wonder why more photographs haven’t shown up. Dorazio’s quote also suggests that a big muskie did in fact exist. That quote was a result of a telephone interview of Dorazio by Dettloff.

*I was about 14 years old and heard about the fish by phone...I got to Herman’s as quickly as possible and remember seeing Spray and his two friends and Herman. The musky was outside near the old dock (where the boat house is now) hanging from a*
pole or an oar. The musky was as long as I was tall (no mention of his height at the time). Its tail wasn’t much off the ground but I still had to look up at it. People were taking pictures...

Dettloff was also quoted in a 1991 Sawyer County Record article by Terrell Boettcher as saying ...Once Spray reached Herman’s Landing around 4:30 p.m. that day, the story is well-documented as to the many people who saw the freshly caught fish and snapped pictures of it...

In a June/July 2003 Musky Hunter article titled, A Dilemma of World Record Proportions, Brad Latvaitis notes …In my mind, St. Louie’s halo becomes tarnished when photographic documentation is explored.

So, just where are these “pictures?” Why are there only three known original photographs of the 1949 record? And why are there three additional (now 5 known) “photographs” of the two most commonly known poses of Louie and fish superimposed on other backgrounds? If Spray had that sophisticated technology available to him in 1949, certainly most other folks at least had cameras at the time as alluded to above! Where are all of those photographs?

Have other photos been found and not made public because they don’t support the claimed size of Spray’s fish like the known photos where Spray is on an incline? In these photos Spray’s fish is out in front of him with him pushing the fish out away from his body as much as possible (that is why the head is tilted back in those photos). One has a right to wonder!

And what about those math professors utilized by the NFWFHF to direct scale the Spray muskie? Dr. Douglas N. Arnold Ph.D. on behalf of himself, Joseph Gallian Ph.D. and Dorian Goldfeld Ph.D. sent to NFWFHF Executive Director Emmett Brown a letter dated February 1, 2006 after the NFWFHF rendered their decision to uphold the Spray record. The first two paragraphs say volumes.

We are writing you concerning the recent validation of Louie Spray’s 1949 world record musky, on which you sought photographic analysis from each of us. It is our impression that there is not complete understanding of the results of the analyses we sent you, and we wanted to clarify this.

We want to stress that there is no disagreement among the three of us. Moreover, none of us is willing to say, based on the limited information and investigations we have made up to this point, whether or not we believe the record is valid. However, we feel that it is important that the analysis we have contributed be correctly understood...

The balance of that letter is a ‘must read’ and may be found on the WRMA website.

Dettloff wrote the two-part In Defense of Spray articles noted above. An envelope I received from Dettloff entitled Packet Of Documentation Supporting Louie Spray’s 69-
pound 11 oz. muskie, merely contained one page with the most common of Spray photos, a copy of Spray’s Field & Stream application and Dettloff’s hand-written note detailing the fish’s size and his estimate of Spray’s height. The balance of the packet contained only copies of the Spray affidavits. A photo analysis of fish size was not included!! This was certainly a far cry from the lengths he went to in his massive report attempting to discredit the Lawton record.

In his later years, in an apparent effort to bolster his ego and keep his muskie records in front of the public, Spray developed a couple of different collages of his record fish photos and sent them to me and various establishments in the Hayward area. In so doing, Spray repeated his mix-ups and incorrect photo captioning. This included a “head-shot” of a head-shot muskie (the huge bullet hole is quite obvious), supposedly of one of his record fish; the 61-13 from 1940 in one and the 69-11 from 1949 in the other.

The “head-shot” head and the two collages. One says “head of 69 pounder” other says “head of 61-13”

The Pete Maina protest to the NFWFHF regarding the Spray fish was partially covered above in the Johnson section. It included a somewhat amateur photo analysis. The analysis used various camera angles and a professional photographer to calculate potential fish lengths ranging from 53.4 to 56.1 inches based on six estimates of the camera’s distance from the fish. These length estimates were similar to professional photogrammetric solutions by DCM Technical Services of Toronto, Canada in the WRMA protest; 53.6 to 55.1 inches maximum length. As noted previously, Maina’s
protest was rejected by the NFWFHF. I find it interesting that these independent photo analyses found the 1949 Spray fish to be, at best, in the mid-50-inch range!

Eli Singer did a comparison of the measurement in the photos of the fresh fish and the mount and the vast difference in the length, fin placement and distances between the fins. His conclusion was that they cannot be the same fish. It was his opinion that Spray’s 1949 record should be disqualified. Singer also suggested that perhaps Spray’s mounts had burned to assure they would never be examined or closely scrutinized!

The sordid details of the Spray controversy are provided in; a) a synopsis of the WRMA’s Spray Protest, which includes a professional photogrammetric analysis on the 1940 and 1949 Spray fresh fish and mounts, as well as, a taxidermist’s analysis of the three Spray mount photos, b) a synopsis of the NFWFHF’s rejection of the WRMA protest, c) the WRMA’s rebuttal to the NFWFHF’s rejection, d) Dr. Arnold’s letter, and e) Brad Lavaitis’ letter of admonishment to the NFWFHF Directors, in the Appendix (of my book or on the web links previously noted).

Finally, before we depart our discussion of Louis Spray we must address one of the more talked about details regarding Louie Spray; his height. Just how tall was he?

In the April/May 1996 issue of Musky Hunter magazine Spray’s height was claimed by John Dettloff to be 6-feet 2-inches. In that same article about Louie’s 1940 record, Was Louie Spray’s Musky Really That Big, this Compender echoed that height and a supposed Spray weight based on what Dettloff had told me at the time and which I accepted as fact. I learned later that this information was incorrect. A packet of material that I received from Dettloff after I had expressed some concern to him about the size of Spray’s 1940 record included a height “estimate” of Spray. All of a sudden, Mr. Spray seemed to shrink! Or did he? Dettloff used ...Spray’s 6-foot 2-inch height and broad lumberjack’s frame... in the article. Following are some notes that he included in the packet to me.

...So I sent you info on his height – 6’1” I would say... On all photo’s the 59 ¼” length calipers correctly against Spray’s 72” to 73” height... (by “direct scaling,” an improper method).

Dettloff then claimed that the photo of Spray with this fish labeled 42-pounds was in error and tried to justify the appearance in that photo that the fish did look to be in that size range by saying that Spray’s right hand was ...pulling the fishes head inwards – towards him just a bit. This makes the fishes’ end of its lower jaw tilt slightly away from the camera, making the fishes’ head appear a bit shorter (maybe one inch) than it really is, and that a ...high camera angle is always unflattering when taking fish pictures (on that photo Dettloff drew a line showing his estimate of the ...Approximate camera level and true horizon... and also noted, ...Once you blow up this picture, the fish suddenly looks a little more impressive than it does on that little picture).
On a later discovered photo of Spray’s 1940 record, dubbed the “Rice Lake photo,” Dettloff did further estimations and showed his calculations justifying the claimed fish length by subtracting his direct scaling fish length estimate from his newer claim of Spray’s height of “73” inches.

Dettloff also included a photograph of Louie Spray standing beside his wife Inez. It is from this photo that Dettloff apparently came up with his new Spray height estimate. His note on that photo said ...I figure – in Spray’s prime he was approximately 6’1” or 73” tall... He also noted ...Spray may have stood an inch or so taller when he was a young buck. So it could be possible he may have been as large as 6’2” when he was young – but 6’1” would be a good safe conservative height for him. Spray was stocky in build and I bet weighed 220# or so when he was young. I am just shy of 6’ and am 200# at times and Spray was a bit larger than me in both height and weight.

Spray’s actual and true height of 5-feet, 11-inches, was confirmed by a “Statement of Injuries Received” medical report dated June 18, 1934 found by Dettloff in the microfilm records at the Sawyer County, Wisconsin Court House!

So the mystery of Spray’s “real” height has finally been settled negating all the incorrect information previously published in Musky Hunter magazine and in other venues as well!

Dettloff went on to say in his note to me ...As far as Alton Van Camp holding Spray’s 59 1/2#er 58” long. Alton was the same height as Louie... In his 2004, Musky Chronicles III Eli Singer related had learned from Alton’s son Alvin that Alton was only 5-feet 10-inches tall. When Singer discussed Spray’s true 5-foot 11-inch height with Dettloff he was reportedly told by Dettloff that this new found information about Spray actually being shorter than he had long reported was not to be made public and that he wanted it kept quiet! One has to question why?

In the professional photogrammetry analysis commissioned by the WRMA, they gave instructions to DCM Technical Services’ Dan Mills to make his analysis assuming Spray’s height as 6-feet or 72-inches. This was done because Dettloff claimed Spray’s height on the medical exam was 5-11 without shoes, which is unproven, and with his shoes on Spray was therefore 6-feet tall in the photo of his 1949 record. The WRMA gave Spray the benefit of the doubt and the DCM analysis still found Spray’s fish considerably lacking in actual vs. claimed length!

In Latvaitis’ letter to the NFWFHF Director’s regarding their assessment of the Spray protest (see book Appendix or WRMA web site), Brad makes an important point regarding Spray’s height and its application in attempting to scale from photographs ...Importantly, the Hall gives no consideration to the fact that height measurements are taken with feet together and head straightly aligned with the spine (as during a medical exam) in contrast to the reduced height that would occur when Mr. Spray’s head is cocked and his feet are spread off-center as in his photographs with muskies.
To set the record straight, \textit{Field & Stream}, the record sanctioning body at the time of Spray’s 1949 record, reviewed and accepted Spray’s contest application. Since then, \textit{Field & Stream} has not reviewed the Spray record. The IGFA obviously conducted, at least a minimal review because they refused to list the Spray 1949 fish as their all-tackle record after the Lawton disqualification. Spray’s record was not recognized by the IGFA because it was shot during landing; which although legal at the time, is at odds with their record protocol. The NFWFHF reviewed Spray’s muskie in conjunction with the WRMA protest and upheld the \textit{Field & Stream} record.

In summary of the previous two records, I am not advocating that the Johnson and Spray records be disqualified. My position on historic records has been made clear. I am advocating that \textit{ALL} historic records be treated equally by current record keepers and historians, and that they give serious thought before overturning records sanctioned by others as far back as almost 70-years ago. Since the esteemed sanctioning committees which were involved in the original acceptance of historic records are no longer in existence, this is the prudent course.

\textit{Dolores Ott-Lapp 50-4 Lac Vieux Desert, WI/MI – 1951}

Left photo another great shot of Dolores and her beautiful hybrid.  
The right photo was in color and became a post card. Courtesy 
J. Peter Haupt & Doug Lenicheck-Muskellunge Club of Wisconsin

The only confusion surrounding the Dolores Ott-Lapp hybrid caught from Lac Vieux Desert, Wisconsin/Michigan, was discussed in the Knobla section (\textit{in my book}). Had the first scale her fish was weighed on been pursued and certified at 52-pounds, she would reign as “top dog” in the hybrid world record category of the NFWFHF. However, the Ott-Lapp hybrid would not be recognized by the IGFA because it was shot during landing; which although legal at the time, is at odds with their record protocol. The NFWFHF thoroughly reviewed Mrs. Ott-Lapp’s hybrid muskie and upheld the 1951 \textit{Field & Stream} contest sanction. Mrs. Ott-Lapp’s fish was entered in the muskellunge
category finishing third in 1951. Her fish is the Unlimited line-class record in the NWFH HF Hybrid Muskie Conventional Angling Subdivision, although it was caught on 40-pound test line. A Professional photogrammetry analysis has not been commissioned to analyze Mrs. Ott-Lapp’s hybrid.

Robert Malo 70-4 Middle Eau Claire Lake, Wisconsin – 1954

One of the more controversial fish stories in muskie angling history took place in 1954. It was early morning June 6, 1954, when Robert Malo of Port Arthur, Ontario, fishing with George Cruise of Chicago, reported hooking a huge muskie on a sucker. Ultimately the fish was reported to weigh 70-pound 4-ounces and was taken from Middle Eau Claire Lake, Wisconsin. After beaching and shooting the fish, people at the resort were alerted. The fish was then taken to a taxidermist in Duluth, Minnesota where it was weighed and skinned for mounting. At the weigh-in, the fish was thought to weigh 69¾-pounds. When opened for mounting, the fish had rolls of fat, a partly digested 5½-pound northern pike and 8¼-pounds of eggs. The next day, the Minnesota Department of Weights and Measures was asked to verify the scales and the inspector found the scales to be 8 ounces “slow.”

Like other record muskies of the day, there is concern about there being a dearth of photographs of Malo’s muskie. Other than the one known photo of Malo and George Cruise taken with the fish when brought in, the only other known photographs are of the fish during the mounting process and after the mount was completed.

When Peter Haupt interviewed the taxidermist he was told *Ugliest muskie I ever saw.* This taxidermist, at the time, mounted at least one a year over 50 pounds, sometimes up to 55 pounds from Lake of the Woods and also mounted the first 60-pounder in history, which came from Eagle Lake in 1939. Peter’s statement after visiting with the taxidermist was *At this point I’m convinced Malo’s fish weighed 70 pounds 4 ounces.*

Myself, I’m convinced a tremendous muskie was taken but the one thing that was uncertain was the accuracy of the weight measurement. A weigh-in discrepancy kept Malo’s muskie from being accepted as a new world record by *Field & Stream.* There seemed, at the time, to be no disputing the fact that a big muskie had indeed been produced. *Field & Stream’s* letter to Malo agent Hank Baroo came from Hugh Grey, then *Field & Stream* Editor. That letter of rejection indicated the scale was indeed the key item. The utility bathroom scale that had been used was marked only in pound increments with no ounce marks according to scale owner George W. Flaim. The estimate at the time of the original weighing ranged from 69½ to 69¾-pounds, but of course there was no way to know for sure. Malo and Baroo, the resort operator, believed the fish tipped the scales at the 69¾-pound mark when first weighed. Taxidermist Flaim thought it 69½ pounds. When the scales were determined to be ½-pound slow, Malo and Baroo added this to the 69¾ and came up with 70¼-pounds.

After research, I drew a conclusion against the Malo fish which went into the 1st Edition of my book *A Compendium of Musky Angling History.* I felt that Malo’s muskie should
be recognized into a prominent place in muskie history. Thus, I placed it third on my all-time list of big muskies at 69-pounds 8-ounces.

Suffice it to say, a book could be written about this fish. In fact, I wrote a booklet… in 1986. It was published in 1987 and was used to make a case for the recognition of Malo’s fish by comparison of all of the misinformation vs. the facts. That case was subsequently, rightly rejected by both the IGFA and the NFWFHF, again based on incorrect scale verification protocol. That booklet *Is This The World Record Muskellunge* is reproduced, nearly completely, in the (books) Appendix.

In retrospect, the only acceptable “scale reading interpretation” for the Malo muskie by record protocol could be 69-pounds 0-ounces by rounding down to the lower of observed readable scale increments with the needle resting between two. Even though the scale was proven to be weighing “8-ounces slow” at 70-pounds, official scale protocol was violated when the weights and measures tester “readjusted the scale to zero,” and tested the scale at the weight of the muskie rather than the weight of the muskie plus the weight of the board it was placed on.

"Weights and measures tester Axell making the “fatal” scale adjustment to zero"

When Eli Singer interviewed the taxidermist that he said remounted the Malo muskie prior to it being put on display again in 1986 he learned, as reported in his *Musky Chronicles III* that the skin had not been pulled together in the back side of the mount and the inside fins were lower than the outside fins.

Singer then asked this second taxidermist what exactly he had done in reworking the mount. The taxidermist said that included in the remount he had made the tail fin longer. Singer also learned that the hide was in one piece.

To clear up the matter I contacted the second taxidermist and he related to me that he *didn’t* “remount” the fish. He told me he did remove and replace the rear paired fins, repaired all fins and repainted the mount. He also related that there was a huge gap in the skin on the backside of the mount indicating girth enhancement. He did confirm that it was a …*big fish.*
In March of 2006, I had two different people tell me quite a different story about the Malo fish. Both stories were similar. The stories, from local folks, were about the area where many big muskies had been “poached,” below the Winter Dam on the Chippewa River. They related that this particular fish (the Malo muskie) had been taken illegally during April and frozen solid in a block of ice to keep it fresh looking. Supposedly, the story goes, that poachers took the fish to Spray’s Bar in Rice Lake the following spring and placed it in his freezer while he was sleeping. When Spray awoke and discovered the fish he explained to the bearers that he couldn’t bring this fish out as he was still getting “heat” over his 1949 fish. It was then said that since Spray owed Hank Baroo, lodge owner on Middle Eau Claire Lake, a favor, he gave the fish to him. The fish surfaced during the muskie season. This “claim/story” is in direct conflict with reports at the time of the Malo catch, wherein two witness accounts claimed that the fish ...still had life... and ...its gills were still moving... Then there is taxidermist Flaim’s statement that he was sure ...it was fresh... made in 1954, although this latter statement was countered by him in a November 4, 1987 Sawyer County Record article by Terrell Boettcher who wrote ...When presented to him, the fish, “…looked dead a couple of days, all dried out. The skin was cracked. It could have even been in a freezer for a while, improperly wrapped (Flaim quote)...!”

In March of 1987 I received a letter from “Peteresox” ‘The Duluth Sleuth’ (Peter Haupt) with a change of mind after he had done some more digging into Malo’s fish. Peter related this.

At this time I cannot endorse the Malo (fish) as 100% clean. Upon broaching the subject with some area old timers (perhaps 6 or 8) all but one claimed the fish came from elsewhere. Most said the Winter dam...My own gut feeling is that it came from elsewhere. My reason is color. All photos & Flaim’s statement indicate a dark, drab fish. The fish in M.E.C. (Middle Eau Claire Lake) are as vividly marked as any I have seen anywhere in Wis. Even large ones. I saw a photo of a 47 ¾ lber at the...resort I mentioned & it was bright as a young fish – like a 30”er...Again — it’s the color that bothers me the most...I feel far more unsettled about it then I did 10yr ago when we began snooping around & when I began fishing the lake.

(Author’s note: In February of 2008, I learned and was shown proof that Hank Baroo, the lodge owner and Malo’s representative, was a convicted bank robber from Detroit! So much for his credibility. Thanks to Kurt Kuhlman for this tidbit of information.)

Perhaps Field & Stream had been correct in rejecting the fish but for the wrong reason! However, this new information that the Malo muskie was taken illegally during the off-season and frozen, while plausible, must be dismissed until such time as an eyewitness or participant comes forward with a notarized affidavit, which according to my sources is still possible. (Author’s note: I have since had the opportunity to talk to the poacher in question, but he is still unwilling to make a public statement. Stay tuned!)
Malo’s muskie was listed by the NFWFHF as an “Unofficial” record at 70-pounds in the conventional angling division from 1987 to 2007, when it was removed from their record book without explanation. When queried about this by Dale Bowman, outdoor writer for the *Chicago Sun Times* the NFWFHF told him Malo *is no longer being listed because it is unofficial*. Was this yet another move by John Dettloff to leave Louie Spray alone at the top of the list and not diminish the aura of the claimed weight of Spray’s record vs. the higher claimed Malo fish weight of 70-pounds? And if this is so, he didn’t even need an “investigation” to get rid of Malo’s fish from the record book! I’ve been told that Dettloff interviewed one of the “poachers,” which explains to me why he has had little to say about the Malo fish over the years…he knew of Spray’s involvement with this fish and the supposed poacher…the same one said to have provided Louie Spray with his 1939 record…and didn’t want the connection made!

*Arthur Lawton 69-15 – 1957*

*(Author’s note: this section took up 111 pages in my book. Out of necessity I have had to leave out some of the story and photos here).*

And now to the heart of the matter, Art Lawton’s 69-pound 15-ounce world record from the St. Lawrence River caught September 22, 1957. Controversies began shortly after its capture. Later, in 1992, an investigation by John Dettloff led the NFWFHF to disqualify Lawton’s record despite many shortcomings in his investigation; a lack of professional photogrammetry as recommended by NFWFHF attorneys, a questionable witness recant not pursued further by the NFWFHF even though recommended by their attorneys and complete disregard for the original weight witnesses, including interviews by Dettloff with those still alive. The IGFA set-aside Lawton’s record due to the uncertainty of a valid photograph required by their retroactive record protocol for challenged *Field & Stream* sanctioned records.

When I reviewed the *Field & Stream* file after it had been turned over to the IGFA in 1978, some questions immediately arose. One of the questions was why wasn’t the fish mounted? As we proceed, this question and several others will be answered. In fact, even before Lawton’s entry was received by *Field & Stream* the following anonymous letter was sent.

*No doubt, a Mr. Arthur Lawton will enter a 69 lb. 15 oz. world record muskie caught in the St. Lawrence River.*

*My husband is a traveling salesman and very frequently covers the territory where this muskie was caught. For business reasons, I prefer to withhold my name; however I would suggest checking into these prize fish. The same thing also applies to the 60 lb. muskie caught by Mrs. Lawton, his wife, last year. Two or three guides (one of which was his) claims this fish did not weigh 60 lbs.*

*As a matter of fact, Mr. Lawton is not having the “world record” mounted!: his reason being that he already has two and room for no more. This really sounds fishy to me.*
For the sake of good sportsmanship, this is respectfully submitted.

An Avid Fisherwoman.

P.S. Could clever photography make the 60 lb. fish of last year look like this year’s 69 lb. one?

Subsequently, the Lawton affidavit form, properly completed and witnessed, was submitted to Field & Stream. Soon Louie Spray, then current record holder, sent the following letter to Field & Stream.

Gentlemen:

I understand that a record muskie is supposed to have been caught last September. And that they are now trying to enter it with you as such. Seems kind of late.

The enclosed clipping shows a string of muskies including the supposed record (referring to the Lawton group photo of nine muskies). Either the fish (5th from left) weighed more than 49 pounds, or the next one to it, didn’t weigh 69. And it’s funny that he didn’t apply to me for his $2,500.00.

Spray was referring to a “reward” he was offering to the first ONE that could beat his record.

Will you please return clipping for my files.

Sincerely,
Louis Spray

“Kind of late?” Hardly! Sounds like sour grapes to me. And interestingly, Louie did not infer that the largest fish in the referenced photograph couldn’t have been 69-pounds!

My review found that …On November 29, 1957 Lawton sent the following letter to Field & Stream.

“Last October we sent you our entry for the 1957 Field & Stream Fishing Contest. As yet we have not received any acknowledgement of this entry.

Would you please check your records and see if this entry has been registered.”

On December 6, 1957 F&S contest editor, Mike (actually Mary, the name “Mike” was used for contest purposes) Ball responded.

“Replying to your letter of November 29th please be advised the picture and affidavit for your muskellunge have been received.”
Later, another anonymous letter arrived at *Field & Stream*.

Dear Mr. McClane

*I hope this letter will be of help to Field & Stream as I understand a thorough investigation is being made regarding the weight of Mr. Lawton’s world record muskie. I am very active in game and fish clubs and, as a result, have received many questions and newspaper clippings about his catching this fish near Clayton. I am there all summer. I can understand Mr. Lawton’s idea of keeping secret his fishing spots.

By coincidence, I have an Indian who is janitor of a building I own and he supplied the following information.

Mr. Lawton has fished out of Hoogansburg for many years. He stays at a motel owned by David Benedict who sometimes guides for him. However, his more frequent guide is Mr. Bush. Both Mr. Benedict and Mr. Bush are Indians and my janitor knows them very well. They claim the fish did not weigh 69 lb. 15 oz.: In fact, they claim that the largest fish ever caught in that section during the past 35 years weighed 52 lbs. and Mr. Lawton was not the one who caught that one.

My janitor was there in the middle of October, I was there the last week in October looking over the SeaWay project. Being so near, I drove over and, in asking many questions around the section, found out the information my man gave me was true.

I realize that Whele accepted Mr. Lawton’s entry, but being here in Rochester, I also realize that their business is advertising their beer and that they are not as particular as *Field & Stream* about weight being authentic.

Please, out of respect to Mr. Lawton, keep his fishing place a secret.

Sincerely,
A subscriber to *Field & Stream*

In March of 1976 I received a letter from Louie Spray claiming that in early 1958, he had received a letter from *Field & Stream* editor Hugh Grey *asking me to contest the Lawton catch. But I can’t put the finger on that right now...* The Grey letter was never produced. Louie went on *Regarding the Hugh Grey letter, I called him and advised that I would look like a poor sport if I contested it and that I believed that it was up to who ever was in charge of the authenticity of the application on recording the catch. I received no reply.*

*I stand willing to cooperate with anyone and will spend up (to) $500.00 of my own money to have the Lawton Fish Disqualified...*
Louie related he just couldn’t understand why Lawton didn’t apply for his $2,500 reward for a new record, evidently not realizing that Lawton had likely been unaware of same and that the fish had been disposed of shortly after the weighing as had been Lawton’s past practice. Spray even claimed that he had sent Lawton a telegram but got no reply. There was no record of such telegram in the Lawton archives. Spray further said ...I always have, and still do believe, that the Lawton fish should be disqualified from the Record... While I am in no position to do, I don’t think it would take much pressure if it came from Hayward Area, where the World Record rightfully belongs.

Why I wonder, did Spray think the record belonged in Hayward? Was it because he wanted his ’49 fish to be the record? In another letter to me dated March 30, 1976, Louie had more to say about Lawton’s fish. ...I want to explain to you, why I believe that Lawton Fish, was a fake and a farce from start to finish... Have a look at the Lawton Fish. Notice the peak of the roof of the building in the background. If the camera was held in a somewhat horizontal position, you would never have seen the roof of the building. But instead, the camera was held close to the subject, and at an angle of perhaps around a 45 degree upward (angle) giving the fish in front of the man an appearance of being much longer than it was. Also, compare the Lawton Fish ...and if you care too, have a look at any of my World Record Fish on this stationery. Note the background showing that the camera was held mostly horizontal. Yep, not to argue, but the...Lawton Fish... (is) FAKE...

Well, I couldn’t let that challenge pass! So I responded to Lou on April 6, 1976. I’m afraid I must take exception with your last letter. First let us discuss the pictures. As I look at the Lawton picture I see only a slight angle, perhaps eyeball to shoulder. As I look at the pictures on your stationery: top left (Spray’s 1940 record mislabeled as his 69 lbs. 11 oz. 1949 record), and top right (Spray’s 1939 record), I feel as though I am looking at your knees... The 59 ½ picture makes you look ten feet tall! Note: actually I was in error as it was Alton Van Camp holding that fish since there are none known with Spray holding it, but Alton was very close to the same height as Spray.

...let us examine very closely the pictures on your stationery of the 69-11 (mislabeled as the 69 lbs. 11 oz. 1949 World Record when in fact it was his 1940 record photo) and (the photo of the fish labeled as) 43 pounds. First the angle on the 43 seems to be on a normal (camera) level. Second, I submit that these two pictures ARE ONE AND THE SAME FISH!! A) The clothes and the hat are identical: B) Here is the real clue... It appears that the fish was clubbed on the side of the head, as the cheek is torn. I have examined hundreds of muskies and pictures and none had the marks on the cheek that this fish has! Further examination of the fish shows identical marks in other places. Yes, camera angle and closeness can (and did) make a difference... I am sorry if calling a spade a spade makes you mad, but I felt that it need be said.

So, returning to the letters received by Field & Stream, we have two “anonymous” letters, with only first and second hand “hearsay” information. Hardly conclusive or acceptable but the two anonymous letters and the Spray letter likely contributed to an
extensive and intensive investigation by Field & Stream, which supposedly included the use of the Pinkerton Detective Agency.

The use of Pinkerton was reported by John Dettloff in his 1992 Investigation of Arthur Lawton’s World Record Muskie. Unfortunately I cannot include the investigation in its entirety, as the report is Mr. Dettloff’s copyright material. We will however, use excerpts from it since it is an unpublished public record and part of the IGFA and NFWFHF files, both public institutions. I was supplied a copy by Dettloff and the IGFA in 1992.

Dettloff’s investigation includes an unsigned A.J. McClane affidavit that Dettloff prepared after talking to McClane, a Field & Stream Contest Judge at the time of the Lawton record catch and an employee of Field & Stream magazine as Fishing Editor. This unsubstantiated affidavit is discussed below. Dettloff later was quoted by Shawn Thompson in the November 7, 1992 issue of the The Whig-Standard newspaper of Gananoque, Ontario.

...Mr. Dettloff recounts an intriguing but unsubstantiated story that Field & Stream hired the Pinkerton detective agency to look into the Lawton fish and the agency found the fish had been bought. According to that story, the magazine was too embarrassed to take away a title it had already given.

But Mr. Dettloff, after publishing this story along with his steamy findings in Musky Hunter Magazine, says there’s no evidence for it and that he doesn’t believe it himself.

Interestingly, Dettloff used the unsubstantiated story regarding Field & Stream’s use of the Pinkerton Detective Agency as part of his diatribe to discredit the Lawton record. Dettloff’s recant regarding the use of Pinkerton certainly doesn’t support the comment in his investigation that McClane …displayed an excellent memory of the details associated with the Lawton muskie. Dettloff’s reference to Pinkerton begs the question, If he didn’t believe it, why then did he use it? Was it used to add false credibility to his investigation? Was his dedication of the Lawton investigation to the critically ill A.J. McClane calculated to add credibility and possibly gain sympathy and support?

Perhaps Dettloff changed his position on the unsubstantiated statement attributed to McClane regarding the Pinkerton Detective Agency when the, you-know-what, hit the fan after Lawton’s record was removed and he had to face the scrutiny of media interviews.

In the Whig-Standard, Dettloff’s claim, that …the magazine was too embarrassed to take away a title it had already given, is false based on Field & Stream’s files because their investigation was concluded before they awarded Lawton the record, i.e.; despite what Dettloff claimed in the unsigned McClane affidavit and in his magazine articles, the correspondence time-line in the Field & Stream record files ends once the Lawton muskie was accepted as a record!

The McClane (unsigned) affidavit prepared by Dettloff read I, A.J. McClane, author, fishing editor of Field & Stream magazine for over 40 years, and a long time judge of
Field & Stream’s annual fishing contest have this statement to make on Arthur Lawton’s world record muskie from 1957.

First, it should be known that, at the time of Lawton’s entry in 1957, part of our criteria in accepting a world record fish was that a photograph of the fish was required and mandatory. Without a photo, we would not accept an entry as a world record.

This criterion is unsubstantiated. A protocol requiring a photograph in order for a world record contest entry to be accepted does not exist. To the contrary, Lawton’s Field & Stream contest entry affidavit specified *It is highly important that you send a photograph of the fish entered, if possible.* Clearly, a photograph was not required but was requested only if possible! (Author’s note: Lawton did submit photographs to Field & Stream which were certified by way of record recognition.) Here’s more of the unsigned McClane affidavit.

*When Arthur Lawton entered his 69# 15 oz muskie in 1957 into our Field & Stream contest, we went on the available evidence at hand, at the time, and made a decision to accept his muskie as a world record. Some time after Lawton’s muskie was granted world record status, we learned new information which threw much doubt on the legitimacy of his fish.*

This statement is likewise unsubstantiated and defies the recorded time-line of the Lawton Field & Stream file. In hindsight, I wonder whether McClane’s statements were the product of a faulty memory some 34-years after the fact, influenced by his terminal condition, influenced by “leading” questions asked of him by Dettloff, or does McClane’s affidavit only reflect Dettloff’s interpretation of what he “thought” he heard? More of the unsigned McClane affidavit.

*We enlisted the help of Pinkerton investigators and learned that the Lawton muskie was most likely netted by Indians. I now do not believe Lawton's 69# 15 oz muskie was legitimate...*

This statement, attributed to McClane in an unsigned affidavit prepared by Dettloff, is the same statement Dettloff later claimed he did not believe. The newspaper article incorrectly stated *...the agency found the fish had been bought,* but Dettloff quoted McClane as having said that it *...was most likely netted by Indians and not caught by Lawton.* The unsigned affidavit continued.

*As one of the Field & Stream fishing contest judges who granted acceptance to the Lawton muskie in 1957, I strongly recommend and encourage a thorough investigation to be done on the Lawton fish.*

This statement was obviously included by Dettloff in his preparation of this McClane affidavit to bolster the legitimacy of his investigation. Here is more of McClane’s affidavit.
If any of our criteria was not properly met, I recommend Lawton’s world record muskie be disqualified by both the IGFA (International Game Fish Association) and the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame.

The world record muskie is one of the most prestigious of all fresh water fishing records and it is of paramount importance that accurate records be maintained for posterity.

This too is likely a statement woven into the McClane affidavit by Dettloff as it appeared nearly verbatim in his article Lawton World Record Overturned under his byline as (former) historical editor in the Oct./Nov. 1992 issue of Musky Hunter magazine in another affidavit he obtained from former Field & Stream Contest Judge H.J. Rayner. The above affidavit ended Signed, A.J. McClane.

As noted above however, the affidavit was never signed. Mrs. McClane’s footnote affidavit was also prepared by Dettloff. It read as follows.

I, Mrs. Al McClane, would like to state for the record that my late husband, Al (A. J.) McClane, intended on signing the above statement and recommendation concerning Art Lawton’s world record muskie, but died of cancer suddenly before he was able to sign it. I was with my husband when he told the above statements to John Dettloff over the phone and verify that the conversation took place. My husband considered this an important matter to resolve and, due to the extenuating circumstances involved, I feel his above statements and recommendation of a through investigation of the Lawton muskie be taken very seriously and acted upon.

Mrs. Al McClane

Quite the self-serving footnote Dettloff prepared for a short time grieving Mrs. McClane. After her husband died, I am sure the affidavit was the last thing Mrs. McClane needed to worry about. Regardless, she reportedly attested to McClane’s unsubstantiated statements, including the part about the Pinkerton Detective Agency. Or did she? Later she refuted her affidavit in a 1992 article entitled Something fishy about record flak by John Husar, in his column On the outdoors in the Chicago Tribune. Husar quoted then IGFA spokesman Ray Crawford regarding the statement attributed to Mr. McClane in the following paragraph.

Crawford disputes Dettloff’s contention that A.J. McClain (sic) the late Field & Stream judge, had urged an investigation of the record in a deathbed phone conversation last December. “I talked with Al McClain’s (sic) widow {Tuesday} and she said her husband said nothing of the sort,” Crawford said.

Dettloff wrote to me regarding Crawford’s quote saying I never said McClane did this. Someone over dramatized this event. That seems unlikely since his investigation dedication to McClane read, in part, as follows.
...Last November, when Al McClane learned about my investigation and new evidence showing that Art Lawton had submitted a false photograph of his world record muskie, he encouraged a thorough investigation with the hopes that the truth might be learned, once and for all. Even during the last weeks of his life, knowing he didn’t have long to live, Al McClane still considered this an important matter to be cleared up. His involvement and contributions to this investigation was one of the last “official” acts of his life...

(Author’s note: the “false photograph” claim was Dettloff’s and it was he that planted that seed in McClane’s mind.)

Since Husar had met with Dettloff it is likely that Dettloff made a similar comment to him, and of course Husar read Dettloff’s report, as had Crawford. Additionally, the NFWFHF related a similar “deathbed” reference in their news release after the Lawton disqualification which said ...A.J. McClane a highly credible personality in the fishing industry who died just recently, spoke to Dettloff and through his widow on his deathbed...he advised Dettloff to search out the details...

These factors likely prompted the Husar/Crawford quote. There was no “over dramatization,” just fact.

The late Elwood K. Harry, then President of the IGFA, related the following to me in a letter dated April 6, 1992 with regard to the McClane unsigned affidavit indicating his dismissal of it, Mrs. McClane’s footnote affidavit notwithstanding. He told me ...As you know, Al McClane passed away and anything relating to Al’s commitments or statements could not be verified with him at this time...

Dettloff quoted other unsubstantiated statements by McClane claiming that the Field & Stream Lawton investigation occurred after Lawton had been awarded his record. He interpreted other McClane comments to explain why Field & Stream was too embarrassed to withdraw Lawton’s record. He attributed the following to McClane.

“Such a big deal was made about Lawton’s musky being the world record. Awards had already been presented by the Governor of the State of New York, Field & Stream, etc. Plus there were rumors about several of the previous world’s record muskies being questionable.”

Dettloff then made a quantum leap of interpretation of McClane’s unsubstantiated statement when he wrote the following.

I gathered from this response that it was an awkward situation for everyone involved and it was easier to let the Lawton fish “slide.”

Another comment ...You see, we take this world’s record business pretty seriously and for that reason whenever a new one is established we feel we must investigate it from every angle... by Field & Stream Editor Hugh Grey in one of his letters below when he
began the *Field & Steam* investigation of Lawton, there is no question in my mind that *Field & Steam* would not have *...let the Lawton fish “slide”* as Dettloff claims. The time-line scenario related by Dettloff just isn’t so, and I will prove it shortly.

In an **AUTHORS NOTE** in his 1992 *Musky Hunter* magazine article Dettloff made a statement that further revealed the shallowness of his investigation using this unverified information and his lack of substantiation. He also made an interesting revelation when he *admitted* that he believed that Lawton *did indeed catch his record fish* when he wrote

> *It is not known what kind of information made McClane believe that Lawton’s musky may not have been legally caught. Evidently, McClane was unable to obtain hard evidence proving his suspicion. Due to the lack of (evidence) and my own inability to discover any such evidence – and knowing that Lawton was indeed a hardcore musky fisherman – I do believe Lawton caught his fish. My investigation just proves that his fish was much smaller than it was claimed to be.*

I strongly disagree that Dettloff proved Lawton’s fish to be smaller than claimed. His above statement is contradictory. If Lawton *did* catch his fish as Dettloff says, and multiple affidavited witnesses support the claim, how could it be “smaller” than claimed? Witnesses, including only one disinterested weight witness, were enough for Dettloff to convince the NFWFHF board to uphold the Spray record. Read on.

Indeed, *Field & Steam* conducted an investigation. Importantly, the dates of all correspondence, including the anonymous letters and the Spray letter received by *Field & Steam*, the investigational letters below to and from *Field & Steam*, and the telegram of notification of acceptance from *Field & Stream* Editor Hugh Grey to Lawton, substantiate that the *Field & Stream* investigation was concluded *before* Lawton was awarded his record!

Following is a letter to *Field & Stream* from a New York Conservation Department employee.

**Jan. 27, 1958**

**Dear Mary:**

*Perhaps the status of Arthur Lawton’s muskalonge entry has reached a point where a trained investigator should come into the picture.*

*It is not possible, of course, for Conservation Department employees to get into this kind of act – as much as we would like to.*

*Our District Fisheries Manager at Watertown has recommended a retired game protector who knows the area well for this kind of assignment.*

*I have already discussed this on the phone with Mr. Grey. Since I am not in a position to do much more at this time I am returning Mr. Lawton’s affidavit.*
The next time I am in Albany, I'll try once more to contact Mr. Lawton by phone. If anything of interest or value develops, I'll get in touch with you. And, of course, if anything turns up in your office in which I might be of help, let me know.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,
(signed by writer)

At the suggestion of this New York Conservation Department employee, Field & Stream editor Hugh Grey sent the following letter to the aforementioned “retired game protector.”

February 5, 1958

Dear (unnamed):

A problem has come up in our Prize Fishing Contest with which you might be able to give us a hand. Last September we had a 69 pound 15 ounce Muskellunge entered in our Prize Fishing Contest by Mr. Arthur Lawton of Delmar, New York.

Because this fish would constitute a new world’s record, beating Louis Spray’s 69 pound 11 ounce by four ounces, we started to find out as much about it as we could. A newspaper clipping from the Rochester Times-Union of October 24 says that the fish was taken near Clayton, but we have anonymous letters to the effect that Mr. Lawton fished elsewhere. Because of these anonymous letters and the circumstances surrounding the catch, we asked a biologist of the New York Conservation Department, with headquarters at Albany, to see if he could find out a little more about the fish, inasmuch as Delmar is only a short distance from Albany. So far Mr. Lawton has seen fit to evade these inquiries.

Because of the great interest in muskies and muskie fishing, it occurred to us that you would have heard if any fish of this size were taken in the St. Lawrence, even though it might have been landed on the New York side. If you do know anything about this fish, we would certainly appreciate hearing from you and should you so desire would keep any information you care to pass along in strictest confidence.

You see, we take this world’s record business pretty seriously and for that reason whenever a new one is established we feel we must investigate it from every angle. For your information, incidentally, Mrs. Lawton won second prize with a 52 pound 5 ounce muskie. In 1955 Mr. Lawton himself won first prize with a 58 pound 13 ounce fish.

Comparative statistics with Mr. Lawton’s 69 pound 15 ounce entry shows his fish measured 64 ½ inches in length and 31 ¾ inches in girth. Spray’s current 69 pound 11 ounce world’s record measured 63 ½ inches in length and 31 ¼ in girth. With all these
facts before you, I am sure you can see why we are moving cautiously in accepting Mr. Lawton’s fish as a new world’s record and are endeavoring to find out all we can about the catch... ...hope that you may be able to contribute some information to our investigation of Mr. Lawton’s possible new world’s record fish.

Best personal regards,
Hugh Grey

A response to Grey’s letter was received.

Dear Mr. Grey:

On February 20th, I went to Clayton, NY to see people I know about Mr. Lawton’s prize fish. Field & Stream Magazine was not mentioned to anyone in this conversation. First man was (unnamed) Game Protector, Clayton, NY.

Talking with him I found out several people had heard about his fish, but no one had ever seen any of his prize fish.

We went to the Clayton locker plant and they have the only scales in Clayton to their knowledge that will weigh over 24 lbs. and still weigh ounces, but his fish was not weighed there.

Talking with (unnamed) of Clayton who is a very respectable fishing guide, thought it funny one man could get such large fish every year and still no one ever sees them afterwards, but has never seen any real large ones. Of course Mr. (unnamed) knows Mr. Lawton enters fish every year in different contests.

(Unnamed) of Clayton, a guide told Mr. Lawton he did not see why a man would catch a big fish and then not show it to anyone.

It was reported to me that there was an argument between Mr. Lawton and Mr. (unnamed) over not showing his large fish to anyone.

I am very sorry I have not been able to be of much help on this, but will do anything I can.

Yours truly,
(Unamed)

I should note here that in the above letters, the actual names involved have purposely been left out, due to necessary confidentiality involved in world record investigations.

Field & Stream had also sent the following letter to Art Lawton.

February 21, 1958
Dear Mr. Lawton

We were disappointed to learn from Cecil Heacox the biologist of the New York Conservation Department and one of the judges of our Annual Fishing Contest, that you were unable to furnish him with more complete information about your 69 pound 15 ounce muskellunge. The catch is of particular interest to us because it is a potential world record and we had hoped you would further substantiate it for that reason.

So far as the contest is concerned, the completed affidavit form generally is sufficient but in the case of a new world record it is necessary to have all available information on record. As a protection to both ourselves and the angler, we take the records very seriously to avoid any controversy and because they must meet the approval of the scientific bodies in the field.

In this particular case, it’s difficult for us to reach a decision when the State Conservation Department is not fully informed. Although Field & Stream is responsible for the final decision, that opinion is very important, both as one of the contest judges and as a representative of the state in which the fish was caught.

In view of the above, I think you can understand the embarrassing position you have placed us in and trust you will reconsider the situation. Would you please give us a full account of the catch including such information as where in the St. Lawrence the fish was caught, where it was weighed, names and addresses of witnesses to the catching and weighing of the fish and any other details you feel would be helpful. Further, an affidavit attesting to the accuracy of the scales on which the fish was weighed is required for world records and if there were more than two witnesses to the weighing and measuring, please have as many as possible sign this affidavit.

We hope you will give the above your prompt attention and will be very pleased to receive any information which will help verify your catch.

Sincerely,
Mike Ball (name used by “Mary” Ball)
Fishing Contest Editor

Art Lawton replied promptly to the Field & Stream request. Before I publish his reply, here is something of interest from my review.

On the back of this letter Art Lawton received from Field & Stream is a handwritten note by him. It was likely an immediate thought that he had after reading the Field & Stream letter, however; these sentiments were not communicated to Field & Stream in Lawton’s reply to them. The note said

*Why was (the) story started 2 to 3 wks before Mr. Heacox ever call that I would not talk to any of the conservation people. Answer all questions ask by Mr. Heacox. What is his*
reason for saying I that I was unable to furnish him with complete information? Has some off (sic) the boys in this department an ax (sic) to grind?

That note by Lawton is indeed interesting and the Heacox call is addressed in Lawton’s reply to *Field & Stream*.

March 3, 1958

Dear Mr. Ball:

In reference to your letter of Feb. 21, below is the information you requested.

The fish was caught in the St. Lawrence River in the vicinity of Clayton, New York.

It was weighed at Dunn Bros. on a scale which had a State Seal: an affidavit follows. There were five witnesses to the weighing and measuring: 1. Mr. Louis Hauf Jr., 1 Maple Street, Stop 36 ½, Albany-Schenectady Road, Albany, New York; 2. Mr. Robert Riley, 496 Delaware Avenue, Albany, New York; 3. Mr. J. Emerson Sharp, R.D. Slingerlands, New York; 4. Mr. Lauren Kisselburg, R.D. Slingerlands, New York; 5. Mr. Walter Dunn, R.D. Delmar, New York.

Mrs. Lawton was the only witness to the catching of the fish since we always fish alone.

In the matter of the information given to the biologist; at the time he telephoned me he asked the questions and I answered them. I feel that I answered all of the questions of interest to him as I did not refuse to answer any questions. If you feel that I should talk with him again, I will be very happy to talk with him and answer any questions he may have.

If you have further questions I will be pleased to answer them.

Sincerely,
Arthur Lawton

*Field & Stream* then received statements of verification from two weight witnesses and an affidavit from the person that signed off on the actual weighing.

March 10, 1958

Dear Mr. Ball:

In answer to your letter of March 7, 1958, this will confirm to you that Mr. Arthur Lawton of Delmar, New York caught a muskellunge on September 22, 1957, which weighed 69 pounds 15 ounces.
Sincerely,
Robert Riley

(circa March 10, 1958)

Dear Mr. Ball

This is to confirm for you that I was a witness to the weighing and measuring of the muskellunge caught by Art Lawton of Delmar, New York on September 22, 1957. The scales on which the fish was weighed had a state seal of inspection on it.

Sincerely,
Lou Hauf Jr.

March 20, 1958

This is to certify that on September 23, 1957, at Dunn Bros. slaughter house, Delaware Ave., Albany, NY, I supervised the weighing on state inspected beam scales of a sixty nine pound fifteen ounce muskellunge (69 lb. 15 oz.) allegedly caught on September 22, 1957, in the St. Lawrence River by Arthur Lawton of New Scotland (Delmar RD) New York.

Further, I measured this fish to be 64 ½ inches in length and 31 ¾ inches in girth.

Walter J. Dunn

Harold Dale Shaw
Witness

I found it interesting to note the previous affidavit was witnessed by Harold Dale Shaw, the writer assigned by Field & Steam to do some additional checking on the Lawton claim and write the story of Lawton’s world record catch for the magazine.

Lawton then received a Western Union telegram from Field & Stream Editor Hugh Grey.

1958 MAR 17 PM

Arthur Lawton RD Delmar NY

Please phone me collect at MU-8-9100 so we may discuss announcement of your new world’s Muskie record in next issue of Field & Stream

Hugh Grey Editor Field & Steam Magazine

In the June 1958 issue of Field & Stream magazine, Mr. Shaw’s article Biggest Muskie Yet was published… (Author’s note: I have omitted here the original full Shaw article as
well as a taped interview I did with Lawton. While there is considerable background information therein explaining why Lawton did certain things, I have left them out due to space constraints.)

It is (was) apparent to me that the Shaw article and my taped interview remove a lot of the mysteries surrounding Lawton’s life and why folks thought that their secretive nature was suspect. Quite simply, they did the same things they had always done after catching the record fish on September 22, 1957. No mystery at all.

One thing struck me hard as I reviewed the Lawton files yet again in March of 2007 as I was re-writing this section of the world record controversies. After all of the grief that the Lawton’s went through both in the years before and after the 1957 record with anonymous letters, harassing phone calls and being followed on the water and having their lures cut off while trolling one would think that they would just retreat into a shell and say to hell with the muskie world...but they didn’t!

From 1958, the year after his record catch, thru 1962, the Lawton’s had nine more Field & Stream contest entries, four of which were over 60-pounds and three more over 50-pounds that took 1st and 2nd in 1958; 1st and 4th in 1959; 1st and 4th in 1960; 1st and 4th in 1961 and 3rd in 1962! These are hardly the actions of people that had to know that they were under close scrutiny before the record catch, and even more so after it. Logically, I assume they were under closer scrutiny after the record investigation and they still produced nine additional Field & Stream contest entries! It seems highly unlikely Field & Stream would have recognized their contest wins if they weren’t satisfied with them as well as the conclusion of the 1957 record fish investigation which Dettloff would have you believe they weren’t, through his unsigned McClane affidavit and magazine article quotes of McClane!

Try as he might, Dettloff’s suspicions about Lawton’s 65-13 couldn’t be substantiated in his Report On The Remaining Lawton Muskie Catches of December, 1992, which he sent to me, the IGFA and the NFWFHF. In my 1997 second edition Compendium, during a time when I went along with Dettloff’s crusade and allowed him to contribute a chapter, a side by side comparison of two different photographs this Lawton fish appeared. The
second photo was captioned Lawton holds his frozen “65-13” from 1959… This photo was submitted to Field & Stream. In the later photo of the 65-13…, the fish is starting to thaw and the top end of a weight in the fish’s stomach starts to become visible as the stomach distends. This was merely a hypothesis without any proof! My current hypothesis considers otherwise. Could not this distension merely have been the result of partial thawing of the upper half of the fish? I believe this latter hypothesis to be as plausible as the former and therefore no absolute conclusion can be drawn! Dettloff allowed in the photo analysis section of his report that this fish could have been ...59” long. It was 62 ½-inches long.

Ironically, had it not been for the Hartman’s falsifications in 1959, 1960 and 1961 (as confessed by Len Hartman in 1995-to be covered in Volume II), the Lawton’s would have taken 1st and 2nd place in the Field & Stream Contest all three years, 1958, 1959 and 1960, instead of 1st and 4th place. The Lawton’s recorded eight years with the first place fish beginning way back in 1944 including 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960 and 1961. Erase the three years of the Hartman’s finishes and the Lawton’s would have had five years with the second place fish as well! Those records speak for themselves. They caught seven muskies over 60-inches in length and six over 60-pounds.

Dettloff courted the IGFA with his second 1992 report, still attempting to get them to recognize Spray’s fish, while at the same time trying to eliminate the next in line should that fail, to open the way for Johnson’s fish, which it did despite the fact that it hadn’t been scrutinized by record standards. His report on Ruth Lawton’s 68-5 stated that the it had been “grossly falsified” based upon his photo interpretation which claimed that in the photo of Ruth alone with the fish (below) that …the tip of this muskie’s lower jaw is about even with the top of Ruth’s head… This is absolutely ludicrous! Ruth is to the side and below the fish on the tapering yard. As with Art’s record, witness affidavits evidently meant nothing to him for this fish.
One more thing I would like to add that I learned... I made a stop in Gananocque, Ontario to visit with Brendan Reid, a long time guide on the St. Lawrence River, where he had fished for 52 years and had caught two undocumented fish himself over 58-pounds. He related to me that ...I was on the river on September 22, 1957, when Art Lawton caught his record fish and I saw Art fight the fish and boat it and then I pulled up alongside and actually witnessed the fish in the boat after Art had subdued it...

So this should put to rest any question of Art Lawton actually catching his fish! That this information came from a Canadian who could just as easily have been unhappy for an American to have caught the record fish from his lifelong home fishing waters of the St. Lawrence River. He could have been jealous of Lawton’s record like so many others. This speaks volumes!!

We will now go to the John Dettloff’s Lawton investigation. As noted at the start of this Volume, in early 2006 I finally undertook a thorough review of the Dettloff’s Lawton investigation. What I compiled was mind-boggling to say the least and that was to be only the beginning. It is covered fairly completely below and the entire review is available on the Internet at


While Dettloff will claim that I agreed with “all” of his disqualifications when completed, my regret was expressed at the beginning of this Volume and I hereby rescind any prior support of his assault against non-Hayward world record muskies.

I now believe that John Dettloff had a hidden agenda, perhaps subconsciously, and has done more damage to the recorded history of our great sport than can now be imagined. I can see now why, after his Lawton investigation was completed, he was constantly pushing Ted Dzialo and Bob Kutz at the Hall of Fame, Mike Leech and Elwood K. Harry at the IGFA and me to help force an expedient conclusion of the Lawton world record investigation. He treated it like a crisis situation with letters to both of the above entities like this excerpted June 2, 1992 letter to NFWFHF Director Dzialo.

...After thinking about this matter, I realize a very potentially dangerous situation presents itself. Right now we have...what can be called a “lame duck” world record muskie. This (Lawton’s) muskie’s days are numbered and, during the lag time between now and the announcement of the Lawton disqualification the fishing public will not know how big the true world record muskie is. This lag time is a very dangerous period of time and should be as short as possible to avoid any potential problems from occurring. The real possibility exists that someone may catch a world record class muskie and not properly weigh, register, or handle it – thinking it is not big enough to beat a world record muskie that never existed. The 1992 Canadian season will be opening soon and with so many Canadian (and American) waters being capable of
producing a world record class muskie, I think it’s imperative that that Lawton’s record muskie be promptly thrown out.

While “seemingly” altruistic of John, his goal was obviously to get Lawton’s fish replaced with one just 4-ounces lighter; Spray’s. He goes on putting even more pressure on the NFWFHF.

I know the Hall has many projects on their agenda but I can’t see how anything could compare in priority to this matter. Any decisive action you could take to speed up the process of review would be very important in bringing about a prompt decision and avoiding any public confusion or potentially disastrous (sic) record keeping situations...so I hope you and Bob can put your heads together to insure a resolution of this matter by the end of the month. The fishing community deserves to have this cleared up quickly.

The Hall evidently agreed and as you will see later in this Lawton Section, did indeed speed up the process. In fact, according to former NFWFHF Advisory Governor Brad Latvaitis, NFWFHF Founder Bob Kutz called to tell him that they were going to disqualify the Lawton record ...before I had even seen or read the Dettloff report!

Dettloff wrote to me on June 13, 1992 ...It’s a fine line...to walk occasionally pushing both the Hall & IGFA to act promptly but being careful not to push too hard...

On September 11, 1993 he wrote a letter to the editor of Muskie magazine complaining that he was stalling publishing his Lawton disqualification articles and said that ...to “sit on” such info is counter to this purpose... (disseminating muskellunge information). He sent me a copy of that letter on September 30, 1993 with a cover letter that said in part ...Here is the letter I sent...the purpose of which was to tell him why I thought it was so important not to sit on this important historic info. There’s too much confusion out there and these articles will do much to end the confusion.

Confusion that he created! He received a return note dated September 26, 1992 from the editor that said in part ...I was so upset and discussed with your style and approach I discussed with several other...people and we all agree. You’ve gone too far John...

It is truly a shame what Dettloff did and I intended in this book to provide a full and detailed explanation of everything he has been involved with, from the Haver records through the Lawton record and the later directing the NFWFHF’s upholding of the Spray 1949 record. I think that perhaps he truly does believe Spray and Johnson were heroes and all the others were cheats and that the stuff he has done is accurate and legitimate. One very important realization came to me; it is very easy to arrive at a desired conclusion! If you think positive you can find ways to justify and prove an historical world record or records true. Conversely, if you think negatively you can find ways to disprove those same records. I believe the former is the mode Mr. Dettloff was and is in with regard to the Hayward records of Spray and Johnson and the latter was the mode he
was in trying to discredit the Haver, Hanser and Lawton world records. It is as simple as that, so let’s leave historical muskellunge history alone! OK?

I will provide for you throughout the following paragraphs, the salient points from my Lawton review as I go thru the Dettloff investigation without including my entire voluminous 41-page report here…. I will also quote from a 1992 article entitled *Something fishy about record flak* by John Husar in his column *On the outdoors* which appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* that started out *Whoops! Maybe someone had better take a long careful look at this.* In addition, throughout the quotes I will make additional comments. Husar’s article included the following.

Just days after the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame pulled the plug on Art Lawton’s 35-year-old world muskie record, cries of “foul” were being heard from the angling community. The highly political world of muskie record-keeping suddenly was in greater chaos than usual.

Skeptics were questioning the motives and expertise behind certain research that led to last week’s abrupt disqualification of the record 69-pound 15-ounce muskie Lawton had certified in 1957 from New York’s St. Lawrence River.

According to the Hall of Fame in Hayward, Wis., one of two national record-keeping bodies, the world record reverts to a controversial 69-11 muskie claimed by local angler Louie Spray on the Chippewa Flowage near Hayward in 1949.

But now comes the International Game Fish Association of Ft. Lauderdale, the other record-keeper, with a hand raised in warning.

According to IGFA spokesman Ray Crawford, the Florida organization did not authorize a joint statement on the Lawton fish, as claimed by the Wisconsin group.

“We never make announcements of this type, and we’d never make a joint statement with the Hall of Fame under any circumstances considering our past disagreements,” Crawford said.

He also said the IGFA may back off an earlier decision to “retire” the Lawton record. That agreement was based upon Hall of Fame-sponsored research compiled by John Dettloff, a Hayward-area fishing guide who operates a resort near the alleged site of Spray’s catch.

“No only are there too many questions arising about this work, but the idea that we can disqualify a record after 35 years would cause incredible problems,” Crawford said.

He explained that IGFA inherited its old records, including the Lawton fish, from a certification program conducted by *Field & Stream* magazine. Any disqualification of records from that era would pave the way for challenges of every record certified by
Field & Stream, including George Perry’s revered 22-pound, 4-ounce largemouth bass from 1932, he said.

“And imagine how vulnerable that one would be,” Crawford said. “We have a two-inch thick file documenting the Lawton fish. Today I looked into the Perry file and found only an application and a couple of newspaper clips. There was no picture, nothing more. Does that mean the record bass should be disqualified too?

He noted that Dettloff’s research is based entirely upon a complex mathematical photoanalysis of old pictures of the Lawton fish, including some new views recently obtained from the Lawton family...

Bob Kutz, the Hall of Fame founder and retired chief executive said Dettloff’s calculations provided “absolute” proof that Lawton’s fish was many inches smaller than claimed, and there could not have achieved its reported weight. Kutz cited Dettloff’s “engineering background,” although Dettloff later admitted he had only two years of college and never had worked as an engineer. Dettloff also admitted he has no background as a forensic photo analyst.

Dettloff wrote to me after this article came out and said My background was never a secret. I am more than qualified to do what I did. Back to Husar’s article.

Various inquiries over the last few days reveal other areas of contention:

The curator of a California photography museum who “verified” Dettloff’s calculations is an expert in antique stereoptical slides, according to his supervisor. Dettloff said the curator was recommended to him by a customer of his lodge.

Others who vouched for Dettloff’s work were a former Wisconsin muskie biologist and two members of a Madison, Wis. Law firm. “Perhaps we should have gone further,” said Hall of Fame executive Ted Dzialo, “But that would have cost a lot of money.”

One of the lawyers, P. Scott Hassett of Lawton & Cates, admitted having “a few questions” about the documentation, including failure by Dettloff or the Hall of Fame to further pursue an evident reversal of two Lawton witnesses...

Alan (sic-Allen) Benis (sic-Benas) of Clayton, N.Y., a muskie guide and resort operator in the Thousand Islands area of the St. Lawrence River said the dispute could benefit Hayward tourism.

“Calling [Lawton] a liar is a strong accusation for someone who is not a qualified or recognized expert,” Benis (sic) said. “Even if what [Dettloff] is saying could be true, it should be evaluated. Our position is that we are in no position after all these years to defend the Lawton fish. But we don’t feel the Hall of Fame should replace it with one of equal controversy from Wisconsin. The record should go to some other fish down the list that can’t be disputed.”
In fact, the IGFA would certify a 65-pounder caught in Ontario in 1988, Crawford said. No other major muskie, including a 68-5 by Ruth Lawton (Art’s wife) and an ex-record 67-8 by Cal Johnson in Wisconsin, is in the IGFA’s files.

And in fact, though both the Ruth Lawton and Cal Johnson muskies were accepted Field & Stream contest entries, neither underwent world record scrutiny at the time they were caught because the Ruth Lawton fish was not a world record and Johnson’s fish was not the annual Field & Stream contest winner. Still, Dettloff badgered the IGFA relentlessly, (I have the correspondence) but failed to get the IGFA to install Spray’s fish as their record. He was finally able to convince them to install the Johnson fish as their All-tackle world record, despite the fact that it had not undergone world record scrutiny at the time it was caught. It replaced the well documented and witnessed O’Brien fish that was IGFA’s record then and had been accepted under their record protocol. Back to Husar.

Personal scrutiny of Dettloff’s photos by this reporter (who certainly is no photo analyst) produced no verifiable conclusions. We (Dettloff and Husar) even disagreed on the angle of the camera lens.

I did take a long look at how the classic photo of Lawton's fish shows a tail dangling above the subject’s ankles. Dettloff says this means the fish could not be as long as claimed, that it probably was only 49 ½ pounds.

But I also looked at Spray’s official photo, and that shows a verified 69-pounder dangling only to his knees. By this standard, Spray’s fish is too short too. Does that mean photo analysis would disqualify it as well?

I herewith humbly suggest this flawed investigation deserves an investigation of its own—if only to protect the Hall’s reputation.

I regret that at the time of the Lawton investigation, I trusted Dettloff and bought into his findings. I now hope that my thorough review helps to make amends with the muskie world, including Mr. Husar, somewhere “in the great beyond.”

This next Dettloff statement was taken from his article Lawton World Record Overturned in the October/November 1992 issue of Musky Hunter magazine.

As director of the Sawyer County Historical Society and a student of the late Eldon Marple (founder of our Historical Society and known throughout Wisconsin for his works of historical preservation), one important value was instilled in me — to always seek the truth and document history accurately. Staunchly following that creed in all of my research, I did my best to document the truth on the Lawton musky.

Though laudable on the surface, his statement rings hollow. In hindsight, Dettloff cleverly engineered the disqualification of Lawton and then, as fate would have it, found
himself in a position of power with the NFWFHF as Executive Board President when the Spray record protest was filed (by the WRMA) and rejected!

Back to his *Musky Hunter* article. ...*It’s not necessarily WHO holds the world record musky title that’s important, rather that the record is accurate...*

Dettloff’s world record *selective history revisionism* suggests otherwise. Now here are a couple of quotes from Dettloff’s chapter in my *Compendium*, 2nd Edition.

...*For anyone who may be wondering whether it is necessary to be this picky about these musky records, remember that there’s no point in keeping records if they’re inaccurate. Also, for every falsified musky claim there is a victim – someone whose honest huge musky catch was overshadowed by an exaggerated claim...*

Now that’s a real “truism,” and it could be believed if he had not been *selectively* picky! He went on ...*With my intention being to neither prove or disprove the Lawton fish, my only goal was to learn all the facts pertinent to his catch with a commitment to learn the truth...*

Others beg to differ. Following is the opinion of NFWFHF Founder Bob Kutz who wrote to me in the fall of 1992, in part ...*Yes, we are very aware of John Dettloff and his varied missions in the “Muskie World”... and...We warned him about using the Hall as a sponsor/backer/endorser/etc. of his ideas”...Ted (then NFWFHF Executive Director) and I flattened him out at “square #1 when we saw early that his mission was to discredit, Lawton’s fish. At best this would be tough after 35 years...*

At any rate, after the Lawton disqualification Dettloff got some “heat” from the press and the Lawton family for misrepresenting himself and the intent of his investigation. Throughout the Lawton investigation Dettloff repeatedly asked me to support his effort to acquire the title of NFWFHF “historical researcher.” The NFWFHF eventually provided an *after-the-fact* letter of sanction. The three letters and two newspaper articles immediately above and below leave no doubt that the NFWFHF sanction was an afterthought. The letter of sanction, below, distanced the NFWFHF from the Lawton investigation and tried to *soften the blow* that had been dealt to Lawton. It was dated October 5, 1992, and included *To Whom It May Concern:*

*John Dettloff was allowed the title of Volunteer Historian by the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame when he undertook the investigation of the Spray musky and later the Lawton musky. He was cautioned to be careful and thorough in his dealings, so as not to jeopardize the reputation of the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame.*

*The Hall did not instigate or encourage the pursuit of the Lawton investigation. It was an independent research. When complete, the findings were presented to the IGFA first by the researcher and later to the Hall of Fame. We turned over the evidence to*
our Advisory Board and ultimately the fish was disqualified by a substantial majority vote. This action was simultaneously taken by the IGFA.

Actually only a 54.1% majority vote was made as will be seen below and the IGFA merely set-aside the Lawton record.

The disqualification was not taken to detract from the accomplishments of a great musky fisherman, but to establish the truth in the known records. It should be noted that the Lawton’s, both Art and Ruth have been inducted for posterity into the Hall of Fame as Legendary Anglers. Their photos and accomplishments are on public display here forever.

Ted Dzialo, Director
Bob Kutz, Volunteer Founder

Now let’s complete a realistic volunteer historian time-line. On August 14, 1992, the Eau Claire Leader Telegram reported ...Dzialo said most of the research on which the Hall’s (Lawton) decision was based was done by John Dettloff, a muskie enthusiast who is not connected with the Hall...

To me, that quote implies that he was NOT an NFWFHF “volunteer historian” in August of 1992, let alone prior to his Spray investigation that preceded the Lawton investigation. In a Dettloff letter to me dated October 20, 1992, he said about his newly gleaned position ...the Hall did authorize me to identify myself as a volunteer historian for the Hall...

Yes, but not until October 5, 1992 and then only via “detached” status as John Husar covered it in the Chicago Tribune on February 21, 1993, when he quoted Hall Director Ted Dzialo ...He’s not a member of our staff in any capacity...

So that pretty much covers that part of the debacle.

Dettloff’s “Spray bias” is apparent on the first page of his Musky Hunter magazine article entitled, Lawton World Record Overturned.

Spray’s record musky turned out to be the best documented of all the previous world records.

Dettloff’s opening statement in that article said that the Lawton disqualification was done ...after it was discovered that Lawton submitted false evidence to Field & Stream regarding his world record catch...

In fact, this notion is unproven. The evidence provided to Field & Stream was thoroughly evaluated by competent judges and a world record was awarded. If anything, the Lawton evidence and its evaluation are more extensive than most other Field & Stream world record muskellunge files! Dettloff later said in the article ...Substantial
Evidence has been discovered indicating Lawton falsified the evidence he submitted to Field & Stream and actually never did satisfy their criteria needed to accept his musky as a world record. The evidence shows that the 2 photographs submitted by Lawton were not those of a 69 pound 15 ounce musky, but were photographs of a 49 pound 8 ounce musky caught one week prior to September 22, 1957...

One of Dettloff’s primary points of disqualification of Lawton’s fish was his claim that the photographs Lawton submitted to Field & Stream were actually those of a 49 ½-pound Lawton caught fish. While he made that claim stick in 1992, my more recent investigation found this subject to interpretation and questioned the validity of his smoking gun photograph(s) as well.

First per my 2006 review.

There was no indication in the Field & Stream Lawton file of the “specific” photograph (or photographs) that was submitted by Lawton with his Contest application (Note: A photo was NOT required for contest application.)

So yes, Lawton did indeed submit at least two photographs to Field & Stream, one of which was later returned to him as was discovered in the Lawton archives. And as pointed out previously, there was no known written Field & Stream protocol even requiring a photograph for world record recognition and there still are Field & Stream established world records extant today that had no photographs… Additionally from my review was the following.

A letter from Field & Stream to Lawton, dated December 6, 1957 from the Lawton archives indicates that Lawton submitted a “picture” along with his “contest affidavit” to the “Field & Stream Fishing Contest.” However, there was no indication in the Field & Stream file of exactly which photograph was received with the application.

The Field & Stream muskellunge file did not include a chain of custody of the Lawton contest application and photograph(s) including the photographs to be used for possible publication and those rejected as unusable or not desired for publication...

Likewise, there was not a chain of custody record pertaining to the use of the Lawton contest application and photograph(s) or any other information in the Field & Stream file, likely reviewed in the subsequent investigation by Field & Stream management, including Editor Hugh Grey, the contest judges led by Field & Stream Fishing Editor, A.J. McClane, and the Pinkerton Detective Agency.* Additionally, the file was most certainly used by Field & Stream writer Dale Shaw. This use was evidenced by Shaw’s letters sent to Field & Stream with regard to the Lawton muskellunge and subsequent investigation by Field & Stream (excluding the Pinkerton investigation) in the first draft of Shaw’s story, which was in the Field &
Stream file. The final version of Shaw’s article later appeared in the May 1958 issue of F&S magazine, page 87.

Note: In typical business practice, when a file is checked out an accountability sign out sheet or “chain of custody” is often used to document file history.

*There was no information or correspondence in the Field & Stream muskellunge file indicating that Field & Stream commissioned the Pinkerton Detective Agency to investigate the Lawton muskie. If true, Pinkerton was likely commissioned by Field & Stream magazine Editor Hugh Grey covertly, and Pinkerton’s activities were not made a part of the Field & Stream Contest muskellunge file. The fact that Field & Stream may have used the Pinkerton Detective Agency became known when the author of “The Investigation of Arthur Lawton’s World Record Muskie,” Mr. John Dettloff, interviewed former Field & Stream Fishing Editor and contest Judge, A.J. McClane. As the result of a telephone conversation with Mr. McClane this information was revealed and was incorporated into an affidavit prepared for Mr. McClane by Mr. Dettloff (detailed previously):

Note: Mr. McClane did not discuss the weight of the (Lawton) muskie in his affidavit. Pinkerton’s investigation, if conducted, failed to incriminate Mr. Lawton.

The Field & Stream muskellunge file included neither documentation regarding the commissioning of Dale Shaw by Field & Stream to interview Lawton and write an article for Field & Stream (“New World’s Record Muskie”) by Mr. Shaw, that appeared in the May 1958 issue of Field & Stream magazine nor any evidence to indicate where the photograph used in Mr. Shaw’s article was obtained; from the Field & Stream contest file or from Mr. Lawton directly to Mr. Shaw.

Question: Was an unknown photograph of Lawton and his contest fish submitted that was deemed unusable for publication?

Note: It was later claimed by Lawton relative Art Molle that indeed such a (different) photograph existed.

This Molle comment was in a John Husar article dated February 21, 1993 in the Chicago Tribune in a column entitled; New evidence enters Great Muskie Controversy.

...The International Game Fish Association in Pompano Beach, Fla., also rejected Art Lawton’s fish based on Dettloff’s research, accepting the doubts raised as reason enough to disallow a 35-year old record as “questionable” (actually the photo question was the basis of the IGFA decision, not Dettloff’s investigation).”

The IGFA’s Mike Leech (then president) explained Lawton’s fish would not be acceptable by today’s standards, especially because there seems to be some doubt he submitted a picture of the correct fish (confirmation that the photo was their reason for setting aside the Lawton record).
“Now if Lawton’s supporters can come up with a new photo they find somewhere, we’ll be happy to reconsider,” Leech said.

IGFA’s Mike Leech was quoted in a August 28, 1992 Chicago Tribune John Husar column "Even though the Hayward (Dettloff) study didn't prove anything it did raise a lot of questions." said IGFA executive Mike Leech, "based upon the facts we know the Lawton fish certainly wouldn’t meet record approval today. It is therefore in the best interest of the integrity of record keeping that we remove it unless we can be shown conclusively that it qualifies. Let's say we’re leaving the door open. If anyone can prove the Lawton fish was legitimate we will listen." Again, confirmation that in 1992, the IGFA did NOT accept Dettloff’s Lawton investigation.

(Author’s note: In the book there is considerable more information with regard to the Lawton photographs that is not included here.)

The following Outdoor Life letters identify the possible loss of another Lawton photograph before his archives were relinquished to his niece, Diane Sharp. The first letter, dated November 1, 1967 was from Ben East, Senior Field Editor, requesting some pictures from Art for an upcoming article.

**Dear Art:**

*Outdoor Life is running, in one of its winter issues, as story about muskies, in which reference is made to your world-record.*

*We no longer have any of the pictures that were used with our 1958 story, and we’d like to run two or three of the best ones with this piece, including the one of you with your record, another of you with your 1955 fish, Ruth with the one she took in 1956, and the two of you with the string of nine you took the same fall you caught the big one.*

*Could you send me prints of these four pictures right away, at my Holly address?...

The second letter, dated November 19, 1967 was from Outdoor Life Editor-in-Chief, William E. Rae.

**Dear Mr. Lawton:**

*Thank you very much for sending the pictures requested by Ben East. We’re holding two of them for use—the one of yourself and Mrs. Lawton measuring several muskies...We appreciate your help very much...*  

There are several important questions raised here; did a deadline rush cause Lawton to send his only original of a still unknown picture of him with his record fish? Was the
original returned? Could discovery of this potentially different photograph be sufficient to get the Lawton record reinstated in the future if found? Back now to my review.

There is no proof extant that indicates that the photograph believed by Mr. Dettloff and his team (Hall attorney’s) to be the photograph Lawton submitted with his Field & Stream Fishing Contest Application/Affidavit is in fact the photograph that was submitted. Thereby, any subsequent photographic analysis by Mr. Dettloff and team is inconsequential.

Dettloff claimed that he found the supposed “smoking gun” photograph, in the Lawton archives. This photograph shows a string of nine muskies with handwritten weights under the five largest fish. Dettloff alleged the handwriting is Lawton’s and then made the quantum leap that this proved that Lawton’s record was only 49 ½-pounds. He surmised that since this photograph had been published without the handwritten numbers, and the muskie labeled 49 ½-pounds on his “smoking gun” copy was the same fish commonly recognized in another photograph as 69-pounds 15-ounces, that Lawton had committed fraud. Overlooked by Dettloff is the fact that the photograph of Lawton and the muskie commonly recognized as 69-pounds 15-ounces may not be the photograph that was submitted with the Field & Stream contest entry!

I would like to point out that the photographs that were used in both 1958 Lawton articles, along with the photograph’s captions, were not pre-approved by Lawton prior to their being published. Lawton did approve the article, copy only, to be used in Outdoor Life. Lawton had no knowledge of which photos were to be used with either article or what their captions were to be. This is how I covered it in my review.

Mr. Dettloff’s “Smoking Gun” photograph simply is not “smoking” at all. There are several factors involved in this comment:

To repeat. There is no proof extant that indicates that the photograph believed by Mr. Dettloff and his team to be the photograph Lawton submitted with his Field & Stream Fishing Contest Application/Affidavit is in fact the photograph that was submitted. Thereby, any subsequent photographic analysis by Mr. Dettloff and team is inconsequential.

The above notwithstanding, following are some of the most important facts germane with regard to the “smoking gun” photograph and indeed the entire Dettloff record protest.

This “smoking gun” photograph was discovered in the Lawton archives by Mr. Dettloff.

Prior to Mr. Dettloff gaining possession of the Lawton archives there was no chain of custody record for those archives.
Lawton’s niece Diane Sharp told Chicago Tribune outdoor writer John Husar, as reported in his Thursday, August 13, 1992 column that ..."He (Art Lawton) brought them to my house in a suitcase before he died," she said. “He was going to throw out a lot of things, but I told him they belonged to the family. They were never lost (as Dettloff had claimed when he “found” them). I knew where they were, I just never knew that anyone wanted them.”

We will cover more of the Diane Sharp story later. Now back to my review.

There is no evidence extant, written or implied; that the numbers written on the “smoking gun” photograph were on it prior to Mr. Dettloff’s receipt of the Lawton archives which included said photographs...

Mr. Dettloff used a “smoking gun” photograph in at least two articles (since my review I have found a third) that he later wrote about the Lawton disqualification. One was in the October (/November) 1992 issue of Musky Hunter magazine page 25 and the other was in Outdoor Life magazine’s December 1992 issue page 80 (the third was in Muskie magazine in the March 1993 issue). In both articles the supposed “smoking gun” photograph was published. While these two photos each had the alleged handwritten weight notations on them, THEY ARE IN TWO DIFFERENT HANDWRITINGS. There was never mention by Mr. Dettloff of two separate “smoking gun” photographs with (different) handwritten numbers on them (the third article was even more egregious as those supposed “handwritten numbers” were typed on the photo that appeared)... And Dettloff has never addressed the different handwritings (or the typed version) even though I first published my review on the Internet in early 2006. I am unable to include either of Dettloff’s handwritten “smoking gun” photographs in this book as they are technically his copyright. The photograph itself belongs to the Lawton family but if Dettloff or someone else placed the numbers on those photographs and copied them, they then became his I guess...not worth a court battle to find out. You must refer to the published articles to view them. Copies of the two articles with the handwritten numbers on the photographs were provided to the IGFA. Back now to my review.

There is no evidence extant that the supposed weight numbers written on the bottom of the “smoking gun” photograph were indeed numbers written by Art Lawton, as alleged by Mr. Dettloff in his Musky Hunter magazine article, Lawton World Record Overturned in the October/November 1992 issue, page 25;

(That Dettloff article said) “...I refer to this (see Photo Exhibit 3) as the ‘smoking gun’ photograph because it is such strong evidence indicating that Lawton’s record musky was falsified. Underneath most of the nine fish are Lawton’s own notations documenting the sizes of most of the muskies. Lawton documents the largest musky in the ‘smoking gun’ photograph as being 49 lbs. 8oz. This is consistent with Lawton’s
own documentation of the same photograph that he presented in his Outdoor Life article*.”

*Biggest Muskie Yet” by Art Lawton in the June 1958 issue of Outdoor Life magazine, page 70.

Ben East, Field Editor for Outdoor Life magazine and ghost writer of the Lawton article in that magazine, had the following to say in correspondence to Lawton dated February 26, 1958 regarding the Lawton archive photographs.

“...I went over the pictures with Mr. Rae (Outdoor Life Editor) while I was in New York, and he thought well of all of them except the enlargement of Art with the new world-record fish. As you realize, that one is sort of blurred and fuzzy. I have an idea we might do better with one of the original small snapshots than with this enlargement. If you have an extra could you send one along please?”

NOTE: There is no evidence extant to document what the other three of the four photographs noted above were. There was nothing noted that could definitely identify what photograph the “sort of blurred and fuzzy” photograph indeed was except that it was one of “Art with the new world-record fish.” Could this have been a different and as yet unknown photograph of Art with his world record fish? Also, in that article there were five photographs published with no indication of where the fifth photograph came from or which one it was (or which ones used came from Lawton for that matter).

In a letter from Ben East to Art Lawton dated March 6, 1958, Mr. East said the following.

“Here are your four pictures back (since five were published obviously one of them had to come from another source). I'm starting work on your story today, and I should have something to report in another week or so...”

A March 18, 1958 letter from Ben East to Art Lawton we find, in part, the following.

“Your musky story is finished and here is a carbon copy for you to look over...I hope you and Ruth will like the story...If I have let errors creep in, just indicate them on this copy and mail it back to me. Or if there are only a few corrections to make, list them by page and paragraph in a letter if you prefer... As soon as I hear from you I'll fix the piece up and move it along to New York...”

Note: Art Lawton reviewed the text of this Outdoor Life article but did not review the photo captions in this or any other published article or advertisement, including the article by Mr. Shaw in Field & Stream.
No one except Mr. Dettloff was present when the “smoking gun” photographs and alleged weight notations were discovered...

In (a) paragraph...above is my comment: “There was nothing noted that could definitely identify what photograph the “sort of blurred and fuzzy” photograph indeed was, except that it was one of ‘Art with the new world-record fish.’ Could this have been a different and as yet unknown photograph of Art with his world record fish that was too poor to use for publication?” This comment then also begs the question; was there a photograph in Lawton’s archives while in Mr. Dettloff’s possession, that is different than any known or published, that was not in the archives when returned by him to Lawton’s niece (This is a logical question that arose due to the “chain of custody” as known, of the Lawton archives, and (Lawton) nephew Art Molle’s claim that a different photograph did exist)

A handwriting analysis has not been conducted on the writing on the “smoking gun” photographs.

A visual comparison of the writing on Dettloff’s “smoking gun” including a lousy copy he sent me of the supposed “original” was made against other Lawton handwriting samples and found to be different. Dettloff told me that he keeps the original in a lock box. Obviously he did not return this supposed original to Lawton’s niece. When compared with many, many, other photographs from the Lawton archives, none of the handwritings match up with Dettloff’s supposed original single “smoking gun” photograph. As noted, professional handwriting analysis has not been done. Were the numbers on the “smoking gun” photograph written by Lawton as claimed by Dettloff?

More of my review.

The eyewitness testimony of Paul Martin documents the existence of a 69 pound 15 ounce muskellunge and a muskie caught the previous week that weighed 49 pounds 8 ounces; both having been displayed at the Lawton home next door to the Martin household. This testimony has never been refuted (by Dettloff or anyone else, and Dettloff even included it in the affidavit that he prepared for Paul Martin and included in his Investigation). Following is the pertinent information from the affidavit as covered in my review.

“I, Paul Martin, of Delmar, New York, grew up living in the house next door to Arthur Lawton...” “...I was 18 years old at the time of Art Lawton’s world record muskie catch in 1957...” “...I would like to identify and document the muskie catch in the photo above, on top of this page (Art with nine hanging muskies). I was present when Art Lawton brought home and hung up the nine muskies in the above photo. I remember it like it was yesterday. I’ll never forget that catch. This above catch of nine muskies was made by Art & Ruth Lawton one week before Art caught his 69# 15 oz world record muskie. I was there when they set up the two step ladders, put the pipe between the ladders, hung the nine muskies from the pipe, and took the pictures.
The next week, Art Lawton brought the world record catch over to my dad’s house to show us all. He was coming home from his weekend fishing trip and had about three other fish along with his record muskie. I personally saw both catches and can verify that they were two separate catches, one week apart.”

Why has this credible affidavit been ignored?

There is also information extant that Lawton retrieved nine muskies from refrigeration plant storage and hung them with the world record on that Sunday. It is reasonable to assume that since as many as 100 people were drawn to the occasion that the “nine” had been “hung” with the record fish.

The following Lawton quote is found in Outdoor Life writer Ben East’s ghostwritten article of the Lawton story in the June 1958 issue that said That night I gave him (the record fish) to my brother Ernest, who likes muskie, at the same time dividing up the nine fish from the earlier catch among friends...

My review continues.

Within the 29 different photographs containing the supposed world record muskie are (at least) two distinctly different sets of photographs obviously taken at different times...

As noted previously, several of those 29 photos are of a different fish.

There is other photographic evidence extant from the Lawton archives that there may have indeed been a tenth muskellunge hanging from the bar with the nine muskellunge that appeared in the “smoking gun” photograph exhibited by Mr. Dettloff.

A tenth hanging wire is visible in one of the photographs of nine hanging fish. The visible wire on a bar with nothing hanging from it begs the question of whether a fish had been hanging there. Had Lawton already removed the 69# 15oz muskie from the bar...?

Did Lawton remove the largest fish to take individual photographs on that Sunday following his catch and then dispose of the fish in his normal manner, as pointed out in the 1958 Outdoor Life article?

Now Dettloff’s photo analysis from my review.

Mr. Dettloff was at best an amateur photo analyst. Please note in the following resume’ that there is no training directly related to photogrammetry, which according to Webster’s ninth new collegiate dictionary is, the science of making reliable measurements by the use of photographs.
Following are excerpts from Mr. Dettloff’s resume written by him in 1992.

...I feel my education, combined with my 20 years spent here catching & measuring over 1200 legal muskies, perhaps makes me the person best capable of calculating a muskies true size off a photograph.

I have an Art background and use (sic) to paint a lot of pictures, which for a while I was selling. My Art experience gave me knowledge of perspective.

I have a very extensive mechanical design, architecture, and engineering background from school... My experience in this field also gave me knowledge of perspective as well as turned me into an extremely precise measurer and taught me how to use precision measuring devices such as calipers. I won awards in school in this field and excelled in it. My grandfather was an engineer and I have all of his calipers. I can measure a human hair with them.

I’ve taken just about every advanced math course offered in both high school & college. From Algebra to Trigonometry to all stages of Calculus I have taken and gotten very high marks. I was one of the best math students in our school.

Combine my schooling with the fact that I’ve been, in effect, professionally weighing + measuring muskies for the last 20 years – and I am the man to assess muskie photo’s. I have the reputation for being a tough weigher. I don’t round off measurements or give extra ounces or inches. I’ve disappointed a few people for calling 19# 15 oz muskies 19 # 15 oz and not 20# or calling 29# 13 oz muskies 29# 13 oz and not 30#. I call all fish to the OUNCE and to the fraction of an inch and have done so for some 1200 legal muskies.

...but I think its important you know me, my qualifications, and where I’m coming from...

Based on the qualifications provided in Mr. Dettloff’s investigation, the photographic peer reviewers were not qualified to conduct, or peer review, a photographic analysis, however; their credentials were not questioned.

One of Mr. Dettloff’s peer reviewers, Mr. Roy McJunkin, Curator of Collections at the California Museum of Photography, University of California, was clearly not qualified in photogrammetry.

Mr. McJunkin’s supervisor indicated Mr. McJunkin had no photogrammetry qualifications according to Chicago Tribune Outdoor columnist John Husar, who talked to him. Mr. Husar’s column Something fishy about record flak, appeared in the Chicago Tribune (undated-circa 1992), and said
Mr. Dettloff’s second peer reviewer was Arthur Oehmcke. (The late) Mr. Oehmcke is a former Wisconsin muskellunge culturist and fish manager retired District Director for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and author. While highly respected nationwide for his work with muskellunge propagation, Mr. Oehmcke possesses absolutely no background in photogrammetry. Further, he made an assumption regarding the photograph supposedly submitted to Field & Stream in his affidavit (as told to him by Dettloff).

While there were affidavits from only the above two peer reviewers, Mr. Dettloff also considered two attorneys from the Law Firm of Lawton (no relation) & Cates, in Madison, Wisconsin to be photo experts according to a quote of him by Shawn Thompson, Staff Writer for The Whig-Standard newspaper of Gananoque, Ontario, as follows.

“Mr. Dettloff’s evidence was given to a number of photo experts to be confirmed, he says. Among those experts was a law firm in Wisconsin that studied the evidence and gave the opinion that it met legal standards of beyond a reasonable doubt.”

A letter from Lawton & Cates attorneys James A. Olson and P. Scott Hassett to Hall Advisory Governor, the Honorable Warren P. Knowles, former Governor of Wisconsin, provided response to a copy of the Dettloff Investigation of Lawton’s muskellunge, in part.

“We have read with considerable interest the investigation by John Dettloff of Arthur Lawton’s world record muskie. Although, Mr. Dettloff makes a persuasive argument for disqualification we believe that such a move would be premature based upon the existing evidence.”

This letter went on to explain the standards of evidence, the reliability of photographic investigation and provided a strong recommendation for independent review of the Lawton photographs analyzed by Mr. Dettloff. The letter goes on to say.

“...these photographs (Lawton and control) should be randomly numbered and sent to two independent photogrammetrists. The only information given the photogrammetrists would be the height of the person shown with the fish.

Each photogrammetrist would be asked to independently determine the length of each fish. After this procedure has been followed you should know whether measurements provide relevant evidence concerning the Lawton ‘world record...’”

Later the letter continues,
“...The ability to identify the same fish from markings should be subjected to a test similar to the photogrammetric study...”

This strong recommendation by the attorney’s was not complied with by the NFWFHF.

Additionally the attorneys wrote a letter to the NFWFHF discussing their meeting with Dettloff wherein they commented on their photo review with him. I covered it in my review thusly.

The conclusions of the attorneys were, in part, as follows,

“...if a 35 year old record is to be overturned it will require additional investigation and the use of fair procedures. We would be happy to work with the Hall of Fame to see that this is done. We would be happy to drive to Hayward and review the existing evidence including the photographs under the supervision of the Hall of Fame...”

This was not done. Mr. Dettloff took his evidence and photographs to the law firm. The Hall did not participate.

On July 23, 1992 Attorney’s Olson and Hassett sent Correspondence to the Hall of Fame to the attention of Ted Dzialo, Director, regarding the “Investigation of Lawton World Record Muskie.” In part, that letter said the following.

“On July 22, 1992 we had the pleasure of meeting with John Dettloff in our offices. The meeting lasted three hours. John brought numerous photographs as well as other documents with him. He also candidly answered all questions that we posed. Based upon this meeting and our review of all of the evidence presented we are of the opinion that the Arthur Lawton World Record Muskie should be disqualified. We believe that the evidence for disqualification not only meets the ‘clear and convincing’ evidence standard but also meets the higher standard of ‘beyond a reasonable doubt.’”

This is especially interesting since none of the recommendations of their previous letter had been followed by the Hall and in a short three hours Mr. Dettloff had apparently satisfied all of their concerns without the involvement of the previously recommended photogrammetric experts! They then went on to explain their findings,

“The Photographic Evidence; We will not recount the process used by Dettloff to make the measurements other than to say it was logical and we agree with it”...“Although it may be difficult to reconstruct the length of the fish from the photograph sent to Field & Stream (#1), the fish shown in photographs #5 and #6 is clearly short of the claimed 64 ½ inches…”

Note: As pointed out previously, the fish in Dettloff photo #5 is of a different fish!
The attorneys go on to make a comment of the supposed “only one photograph.” They conclude,

“Dettloff’s investigation shows that there was more than one lousy photograph. In fact there were several good quality photographs. However, Lawton submitted the one lousy photograph to Field & Stream. This was the photograph where the length was most difficult to judge.”

With no basis, the quantum leap of which photograph was submitted to Field & Stream was made; claiming only one photograph was submitted. This is unproven. As detailed elsewhere in this review, Lawton, at one time or another had to give Field & Stream at least two photographs based on the fact that the Editor’s of Field & Stream had returned one “unused” photograph to him of the nine muskies. They also took the quantum leap of accepting Dettloff’s photo analysis without further professional photogrammetric review on the supposed record fish photo, as well as, accepting Dettloff’s findings on several other Lawton fish later disqualified by Dettloff on his own, independent of the Hall!

The Hall admitted that they should have retained their own professional review and peer review of the Lawton photographs but failed to do so due to “cost,” according to then Hall Director Ted Dzialo. Mr. Dzialo’s “cost” comment was made to Chicago Tribune Outdoor columnist John Husar and in one of his columns (undated-circa 1992). Mr. Husar wrote.

“...Ted Dzialo, president of the Hall of Fame, has admitted he and his board accepted Dettloff’s allegations without any independent forensic analysis.”

In 1993, two new eye witnesses to the Lawton record muskie came forward. Per my review.

Two new eyewitnesses to the Lawton record muskellunge surfaced after publication of the story of the Lawton disqualification in Outdoor Life magazine by Mr. Dettloff and reported by Mr. Husar in the Chicago Tribune, also on 2-21-1993. This too was ignored.

The first new eyewitness, Bob Denny, related that he held the Lawton fish, compared it to his own 6 foot height and most importantly, encouraged Lawton to get it weighed nearby on a “new Toledo Scale.” Denny “calibrated that scale” and then “put the fish on it and it weighed just a shade over 70 pounds.” Denny “also measured the fish with a steel tape measure at 65 inches in length. He later signed an affidavit regarding the above for Art Molle, Lawton’s nephew.”

The second new eyewitness, Annette C. Harder, a neighbor of Denny, said she stood beside the Lawton fish. She related to Mr. Husar that she was just five feet tall, “and when they held that fish next to me, it was at least 5 inches taller.” Ms. Harder also signed an affidavit regarding the above for Art Molle.
The complete affidavits of these new witnesses, an affidavit of a third new witness, and reaffirmation affidavits of two original weight witnesses will be shown later. Back to my review.

Ken Schultz, Field & Stream magazine Fishing Editor had a few things to say about the Lawton muskellunge record as reported by Shawn Thompson, Staff Writer for The Whig-Standard newspaper in Gananoque, Ontario, in the November 9, 1992 issue.

“Ken Schultz, associate fishing editor for Field & Stream Magazine, which originally certified the Lawton muskie, also thinks the evidence is inclusive. He said his magazine has no official position, but his own opinion is that there’s not enough evidence to throw the Lawton record out. I don’t think they’ve proved Field & Stream certified the wrong fish, he says. He added; this kind of controversy is not unusual where world record fish are concerned.”


“…Four of the five witnesses to the weighing of the Lawton fish are still alive and are sticking to their story that everything was legitimate. Mr. Dettloff dismisses them, partly because they weren’t anglers and therefore were unable, in his opinion, to tell the difference between a 49-pound fish and a 69-pound one.

Note: Per the reaffirmation document, at least one of those original five witnesses was indeed a fisherman.

I find this to be the height of arrogance by Mr. Dettloff. The Hall and now Hall president Dettloff (and the 2006 NFWFHF executive board) used the very reasoning of “witnesses” as a major part in their decision to uphold the Spray record in 2006!

In his November 9, 1992 column Mr. Thompson included the following.

“However, that leaves the puzzle of five witnesses who verified size of the record muskie. If Mr. Dettloff is right, then these five are either liars or dupes. There’s also the neighbor (Paul Martin affidavit covered earlier) who saw both fish (49-8 & 69-15) and maintains to this day that they were different fish.”

Dettloff provides great detail to support his “mathematical calculations” and his “distortion study” which attempt to show that Lawton’s fish couldn’t have been as big as claimed. He also delved into “perspective calculations;” wherein he attempted to use the Laws of Perspective determine the ...exact level of the camera, used to photograph Lawton’s musky... something that he and John Husar of the Chicago Tribune disagreed on when Mr. Husar met with Dettloff in 1992. Dettloff even went so far as to assume a different camera height (from what he had already calculated it to be) to further bolster
his manipulated calculations that Lawton’s fish couldn’t ...possibly have exceeded 57” in length... I will get more into his “smoke and mirrors” calculations later, as they were not covered in my review.

Dettloff went to great lengths to include a “visualization experiment” in his Lawton investigation in order to challenge the length of the Lawton muskie. Interestingly, in 2006, under the guidance of Dettloff, when the NFWFHF rejected the WRMA Spray protest, they completely ignored a companion “visualization experiment” of the Spray muskies submitted by the WRMA, even though it was an exact replication of the extensive experiment Dettloff used in discrediting the Lawton record! One has to wonder why?

Dettloff even attempted to discredit the original Lawton witnesses in his article and investigation report. He said ...Early on in the investigation, I sought to locate and contact the witnesses... He located three of the original five and learned that Lauren Kisselberg, Lawton’s brother-in-law had passed away. He talked only to Louis Hauf junior’s nephew. Dettloff then wrote ...I was able to contact Robert Riley who told that he too, was Lawton’s brother-in-law and that he remembered seeing Lawton’s world record. Riley told me that he wasn’t a fisherman and didn’t know anything about muskies but remembered Lawton’s musky as being very large. Next, I located and spoke with J. Emerson Sharp who told me the he was Lawton’s niece’s husband and that he remembered seeing Lawton’s musky weighed. Sharp said he personally didn’t weigh Lawton’s musky, nor did he recall who actually did the weighing of the musky. Sharp also said that he wasn’t a fisherman and just remembered the musky as a very big fish.

Well either Dettloff’s recollections that both of the above witnesses “weren’t fishermen” were faulty or he misspoke in his article. In a reaffirmation affidavit prepared after he spoke to Dettloff, Robert Riley provided the following. ...I did some deep sea fishing as a technical sergeant during World War II for two years from ocean army ships and I caught many salt water fish.

He tried to further discredit Lawton’s witnesses by inferring they didn’t actually know how big Lawton’s muskie was by saying that they had only remembered ...a very large fish (Riley)...and ...the musky was a very big fish (Sharp).

It is fact that one of the 1939 and eight of the Louie Spray 1949 affidavits also carried this “large fish” theme with the lone 1939 affidavit signed by eighteen people saying ...that we have seen several large muskies before and that this was the largest muskie we have ever seen and eight 1949 affiants saying ...the largest muskellunge that either of them had ever seen (the Ceranske’s)... and ...That it was by far the largest muskellunge I had ever seen (Barnes)... and ...That I saw said muskie and that it was undoubtedly the largest muskie I had ever seen (Pastika)... and ...That the muskie was undoubtedly the largest that he had ever seen (Jordan)... and ...(Spray) showed us the largest muskie that I have ever seen (Stroner)... and ...who (Spray, Haag and Quentmeyer) had in their possession the largest muskellunge that he had ever seen...
...was undoubtedly one of the largest muskies I had ever seen. Finally, Louis Spray...delivered to him a very large muskie to mount. Could it be from the Spray theme (remember Spray prepared the affidavits for his witnesses) that subconsciously Dettloff used this approach against the Lawton witnesses? You patient reader, will have to make up your own mind!

Dettloff also tried to make something out of the fact that four of Lawton’s witnesses were relatives, even if two were only by marriage, but he conveniently ignored the fact that two of the four weight witnesses to the Spray record were Spray’s boat mates and a third was Spray himself leaving only one supposedly disinterested witness to Spray’s record!

Along with his “smoking gun” photograph(s) Dettloff tried to make a major case against the most important weight witness Walter J. Dunn by saying that he had “recanted” his previous two affidavits made in 1958. Nothing could be further from the truth! As covered in my review.

The so called recanting of crucial eyewitness Walter J. Dunn has been misconstrued (by Dettloff and the NFWFHF).

Affidavit number 1, the “1957 Affidavit Form”: This affidavit says, “We the undersigned; witnessed the weighing and measuring of the fish described above, and verified the weight and measurements given.”

This is absolutely true. Mr. Dunn did in fact “witness” the weighing and measuring and in fact did “verify” the weight and measurements given via the “weigh slip” produced after the official weighing and length measurement (made by Dunn himself).

Affidavit number 2, the affidavit dated March 20, 1958: This affidavit was prepared, handwritten, by someone other than Mr. Dunn on T.W. Dunn’s Sons stationary. This affidavit clearly states that Mr. Dunn supervised the weighing on state inspected beam scales of a sixty nine pounds fifteen ounce muskellunge (69 lb. 15 oz.)...” It also states, “Further, I measured this fish to be 64 ½ inches in length and 31 ¾ inches in girth.”

This affidavit was signed by “Walter J. Dunn” and the affidavit was witnessed by “Harold Dale Shaw”, the writer Field & Stream sent to investigate the Lawton muskellunge and write a story about it for Field & Stream magazine. It was notarized by

“Arthur Langfelder, Justice of Peace, Town of New Scotland, NY.”

Affidavit number 3 is an undated affidavit postmarked December 12, 1991: This is the affidavit prepared by Mr. Dettloff for Mr. Dunn which had additional hand written comments on it. The affidavit states in part that
“I Walter Dunn, was present at the Dunn Bros. Slaughterhouse in Albany, New York when Art Lawton, of Delmar, New York, brought in to weigh his world record muskie known to be 69# 15 oz that he caught out of the St. Lawrence River on September 22, 1957. I did not actually weigh or measure the muskie, but I was present when it was weighed in. Somebody else weighed the muskie but I don’t recall who it was...So far as I know this is all true.”

On the surface affidavit 3 appears to recant Mr. Dunn’s affidavit 2, (regarding the measurement) however

Affidavit 1, signed by Mr. Dunn on October 28, 1957 merely had the verbiage “witnessed” and “verified weight and length measurements” (thereby negating Dettloff’s claim that Lawton’s Field & Stream contest entry was “falsified” as he wrote in his article and ...that he was guilty of fraud... and ...“its criminal fraud” as he was quoted as saying by Shawn Thompson by The Whig-Standard newspaper November 7, 1992 issue).

Affidavit 2, signed by Mr. Dunn was witnessed by the F&S Representative Harold Dale Shaw and had the verbiage,

“I supervised the weighing…” key word being “supervised.”

Dunn’s measurement statement.

“Further, I measured this fish to be 64 ½ inches in length and 31 ¾ inches in girth.”

This statement leaves nothing to doubt.

c) Affidavit 3, was undated but post marked December 12, 1991.

... “I did not actually weigh or measure the muskie, but I was present when it was weighed in...

Mr. Dunn was 75 years old in 1991 when Affidavit 3 was prepared for him by Mr. Dettloff after Mr. Dettloff had talked to Mr. Dunn on the telephone. Is it reasonable to believe that Mr. Dunn would have as clear a memory of the events of 34 years prior when he signed affidavit 2 in front of the Field & Stream representative Harold Dale Shaw and since the (third) affidavit was prepared by Mr. Dettloff do we know whether he purposely or inadvertently led Mr. Dunn? Per an article by Shawn Thompson, Staff Writer for The Whig-Standard newspaper in Gananoque, Ontario.

“...Mr. Dettloff told The Whig-Standard that he didn’t ask Mr. Dunn to explain the contradictory information in the two affidavits...”!!
This is THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THIS SCENARIO! Why weren’t the contents of the 1957 affidavits discussed with and made clear to Mr. Dunn? Why wasn’t Mr. Dunn asked to explain the critical differences? This omission by Investigator Dettloff suggests that his “agenda” had been met and he didn’t really want to know anything other than what he had gotten Mr. Dunn to commit to on this, his third affidavit, 34 years after the fact (this may be considered an indictment of Mr. Dettloff’s lack of professionalism and fair play)!

Note: While I am not making an accusation, I found it strange that the copy of the Dettloff investigation provided by Mr. Dettloff to me, did not match the copy I received from the IGFA in regard to Mr. Dunn’s affidavit 3. In the copy I received from Dettloff the notary information and the full “official” Dunn signature had been blocked out, leaving only a second, more abbreviated Dunn signature (Walt Dunn vs. Walter J Dunn). In a letter I received from Mr. Dettloff dated May 7, 1992 Mr. Dettloff had the following to say.

“…Even though the signatures were 35 years apart (from affidavit number 1 to affidavit number 3), they still match pretty close…”

Without the IGFA copy, a comparison of signatures would be difficult. While I concur that it was likely the same Walter J. Dunn that signed both affidavits, based solely on last name alone, there is an interesting difference in the “W” of the first name. Both “W’s” on affidavit 3 were markedly different than those on affidavits 1 and 2. The question arose in my mind, did Dettloff eliminate the full signature on the affidavit he sent to me to make comparative signature analysis more difficult?”

Additionally, Attorney’s James A. Olson and P. Scott Hassett of the Law Firm of Lawton & Cates in Madison, Wisconsin commented on Mr. Dunn’s statement. They had the following to say in a letter to Hall Director Ted Dzialo on July 23, 1992.

“The Walter Dunn affidavits are confusing. Since he is alive and apparently willing to talk it would be worthwhile for him to be contacted and asked follow-up questions concerning his basis for originally stating that the fish weighed 69 lb. 15 oz…”

Note: It is unknown, but seems unlikely, that Mr. Dunn was cognizant of the specifics regarding his 1957 affidavit compared to the 1991 affidavit. A phone discussion (I had) with Walter J. Dunn II (nephew of Walter J. Dunn, not to be confused with Walter M. Dunn who was the uncle of Walter J. Dunn) on April 30, 1992, revealed that Walter J. Dunn had, about 5 years after the 1957 affidavits, “…shot one of Lawton’s hunting dogs” and that “Lawton was mad enough to kill him.” Could this animosity have been the motive for a revised affidavit if it was knowingly stated?
Mr. Husar’s February 21, 1993 (Chicago Tribune) column, “New Evidence Enters Great Muskie Controversy,” details the normal procedure used to weigh the Lawton muskellunge at Dunn Bros. told by Lawton nephew Art Molle, as follows.

“While the scale happened to be in the refrigeration room, the results were displayed inside the adjoining office,” ‘he said.’ “The procedure was for someone to read the scale in the office, write down the weight and slip the paper through an opening in the window. So no one by the scale actually saw the scale’s display, although they did hear the announced results.”

The Hall did not attempt to independently obtain clarification of Dunn affidavit 3 or conduct a separate interview. Hall of Fame Advisory Governor and Researcher, Brad Latvaitis’ strong recommendation that the Hall independently obtain “an appropriate” affidavit from Walter J. Dunn was ignored. The IGFA’s activities in this matter (if any) are unknown.

The balance of Dettloff’s articles and investigation spends considerable time justifying his investigation, discrediting Lawton’s record and shoring up Spray’s return to the top.

We are finished with the Dettloff articles and his investigation for now. Next, let’s explore the review information that I consider most important with regard to the decision by the NFWFHF to disqualify the Lawton fish.

Internal Hall correspondence: During the Hall’s consideration of the Dettloff investigation a series of four memos were sent to their Executive Board, Hall Governors Advisory Board and Select Concerned Individuals (note: the 4th internal Hall correspondence indicates to all recipients that it is alright to share Hall information by stating that for “...any concerned public...to...let them read your/our portfolio on this...”).

The first internal letter, undated, from Hall Staff was sent to the National Board of Advisory Governors and the Executive Board and was signed by Ted Dzialo (Director) and Bob Kutz (Founder). This was a basic overview of Dettloff’s Lawton protest, which, unfortunately, in the manner this letter was written, inadvertently tended to lead recipients to read and accept Dettloff’s findings. That letter need not have given any details, rather just the message that the protest was made. That letter.

“This letter is being sent as to provide our board with preliminary information concerning the World Record 69 lb. 15 oz. Musky caught by Art Lawton, St. Lawrence River on 9/22/57.

It is alleged by a research project that Lawton’s Record musky has been falsified.
The Hall of Fame and the IGFA has copies of a detailed investigation conducted by a researcher/historian, John Dettloff, indicating that the weight of the fish is not as reported but of lesser weight, in fact Falsified.

Dettloff acquired photo of this and other fish caught by the Lawtons from the heirs of the Lawtons. Through photo analysis, comparing the lengths of the fish in the photos with known lengths, it is indicated that through application of engineering standards and known relationships of length and girth that the fish could not have been 69 lbs. 15 oz. This is borne out by a photo that shows the same fish on another photo as being 49 lbs. 8 oz.

The fish with a shown weight of 49 lbs. 8 oz. was determined to be the same as the fish shown as 69 lbs. 15 oz. through distinctive body marking on the fish. The 49 lb. 8 oz. fish was photographed one week prior to the catch of the World Record musky.

The report also contains affidavits by the man (Walter Dunn), who originally weighed the fish that he did not weigh the fish, as well as statements by others, including Field & Stream’s A.J. McClane of the time. Dettloff spoke to McClane prior to his passing and the statement was signed by his wife. A.J. McClane was suspicious of the fish, but it was recognized as a world record by Field & Stream. A.J. McClane was one of the judges for the Field & Stream fishing contest for many years.

As stated, this is but a preliminary report to our Directors to notify and acquaint them with what is happening on this record. Musky Historian for the Hall and IGFA, Larry Ramsell, who has received a complete copy of the report from IGFA and has been in close contact with both organizations and the researcher, concurs with the shocking results.”

Note: While I had indeed bought into Dettloff’s findings, in hindsight, I accepted Dettloff’s findings rather than do a more complete and thorough review myself, such as the one being done now. I apologize for my oversight which I attribute to a lack of time and frequent moving, as well as inexperience in the matters of total record review. The Hall’s relating that I concurred “with the shocking results.” in their letter was (inadvertent), improper and leading as were most of the other comments regarding the record that the Hall made in that letter.

The second internal letter: This letter was to clarify an attached letter, the first Lawton & Cates Law Firm letter, dated July 6, 1992. Letter number 2 was sent to Hall Governors Advisory Board, as well as, the Executive Board and “Select Concerned Individuals” from Ted Dzialo, Director and Bob Kutz, Founder, and said

“FORWARD: To clarify, the enclosed material is an evaluation by a law firm that specializes in investigative analysis concerning alleged conditions similar to the investigation we are dealing with which you all received to comment/vote on regarding the alleged falsification of the current recognized Muskie All-Tackle World Record.
This evaluation came about when one of our Advisory Governors, Warren P. Knowles (a former State/Wisconsin Governor) and an avid muskie angler gave his Dettloff papers to Lawton (no relative) & Cates Law Firm, also avid muskie people, to comment on.

At this time there appears further work to be done, primarily between Investigator, John Dettloff, and this law firm before all points are resolved for the Hall to act officially on the Art Lawton record.”

One now has to question why the Hall felt that the concerns addressed to them by the law firm, should be “...done, primarily between Investigator, John Dettloff, and this law firm before all points are resolved for the Hall to act officially on the Art Lawton record.” It was the Hall’s responsibility to independently undertake the Lawton & Cates recommendations not put it back into the hands of the protesting investigator, Mr. Dettloff!

The Hall letter continues with yet more (inadvertent) poisoning of the jury.

“Until this report, a large majority of the several dozen reports we sent out to our experts leaned heavily on disqualification as suggested by the Dettloff investigation. We will now ride in ‘neutral’ officially, until we satisfy all factions with our findings. You will be updated as the situation dictates.

We have not released any of these allegations or investigation papers to the media. Please do not leak such information at this time.”

Note: While the Hall kept the investigation under wraps, Mr. Dettloff did not as at least one major outdoor writer was sent the complete investigation package. That writer was Jerry Gibbs, Outdoor Life magazine Fishing Editor. This was according to a letter that I received on April 27, 1992 from then IGFA President, Elwood K. Harry, when he sent me a copy of the investigation. It said in part

“...Apparently, he (John Dettloff) has sent copies of this material to various people as Jerry Gibbs of Outdoor Life just called me this morning and it appears that he has a complete package of this investigation...”

Now back to Hall letter number 2.

“Investigator Dettloff tells us he has been in contact with IGFA’s new president, Mike Leech, (Elwood K. Harry died very recently) and Leech said, according to Dettloff, that they are satisfied to disqualify Lawton’s record at this time.

This comment to “disqualify” (which was leading) appears to be in direct conflict with one made to me in a letter from Michael Leech on May 29, 1992. That letter said in part
“...I agree that a decision should be made on this soon although in the past when dealing with the rescinded records it has been IGFA’s policy not to make any big public announcement but rather to quietly retire and replace the record in question...”

The Hall letter number 2 finishes

“This new law firm analysis may stall things for awhile, but if we resolve to disqualify, we plan on doing it in a joint Hall/IGFA news release. Thank you for your patience and cooperation.”

The third internal letter: From Hall of Fame Staff (signed by Ted Dzialo) to Executive Board and National Advisory Board:

“Enclosed are comments made by Brad Latvaitis on the Art Lawton Musky, on which all have received a copy of the investigation by John Dettloff.

Board member Latvaitis is also a researcher (sic) who evaluated Dettloffs investigation and his comments are as enclosed.

We are in the process of contacting Larry Ramsell, IGFA and Hall rep/historian, to obtain the appropriate affidavits from Mr. Dunn (sic-s/b Dunn) and Mr. Sharp as we felt it would be more appropriate to obtain them thru Larry as a dual rep. rather than the investigator.”

Note: I do not recall having been asked by the Hall to obtain additional affidavits from Mr. Dunn and Mr. Sharp and in fact, I did not do so. If asked and there was a reason for me not to do so, I have no recall or record of it. I in fact, did not even talk to Walter J Dunn, but I did talk to Mr. Dunn’s nephew, Walter J. Dunn II, and to Mr. Sharp.

Letter number 3 continues

“We have received comments from some of the members as to their wishes on the handling of this fish. Please send you comments in as soon as possible.

We, at this point, do not know what IGFA is doing but we would like to have our findings ready. Thank you for your cooperation.”

Fourth internal letter: This letter was dated July 27, 1992 and was sent to the Executive Board, National Advisory Governors Board and “Select Concerned Individuals” from Ted Dzialo and Bob Kutz but obviously written by Bob Kutz alone.

“This update, as of late June, concerning the alleged falsification by Art Lawton of his 69 – 15 muskie which was qualified by Field & Stream Magazine in 1957/58 as a world
all-tackle record and accepted and carried as such for 35 years, was long controversial in varied fishing circles. A muskie addict/historian, John Dettloff, a muskie guide and engineering buff, dedicated himself and his time for a few years and several thousand dollars of his money to seek proof and to settle the Lawton controversy as well as the Louie Spray 4 ounce lesser record, also often criticized that his record fish of 69 – 11 was netted, speared, purchased from a local Native American, etc.

Dettloff’s extremely thorough research proved the Spray fish to be legit and properly documented and accepted by Field & Stream, the record keeper of the time.

Dettloff next tackled the Lawton fish research, the result of which was sent to you in several mailings for your comments and vote. Dettloff has no personal gain in this.

You must realize that Ted and I and our Executive Board of Trustees decided early on to take our time and search out any ‘sour-grapes’ or motives by anyone that a wrong decision on the Hall’s part would threaten our integrity and/or lessen our hard earned 22 year credibility and reputation as a record keeper for freshwater.

The sensitive area we faced is that if the Lawton fish was disqualified, the Spray fish would be reinstated which was caught in the Hayward Lakes region. We’ve already had comments from a couple top-shelf outdoor writers that this could be a ‘put-up’ job by the Hall to bring the muskie record back to Hayward. Of course, this is not true, but logically New York and many Lawton followers there will probably be extremely disappointed for loss of image or ‘face.’

Whatever the outcome, to update the process we are in, your last update contained an evaluation of Dettloff’s research project by the Madison, Wisconsin law firm of Lawton (no relative) & Cates. This is a large, prestigious firm of trial lawyers who specialize in the reconstruction of accident and homicide, etc., cases and analysis of same through research similar to the Dettloff papers.

Since their evaluation, where-in they had questions and wanted more proof before they’d agree that the Lawton fish was a falsified entry, they met personally with researcher John Dettloff, who satisfied their needs and doubts by producing original photos and negative which served for better comparisons of the fish in question, along with more distinct markings. Further, the meeting clarified the affidavits of the weight and witness documents.”

Note: While this sounds impressive on the surface the initial recommendations for “independent photo analysis” and “additional witness affidavits” were not fulfilled, even though the attorneys approved Dettloff’s findings after meeting with him. There was no further independent Hall investigation.

Letter number 4 continues.
“After the meeting Dettloff contacted Director Dzialo and reported the law firm was now satisfied with his findings and that they would send the Hall a letter to that effect. That letter is included with this final update.

With that letter and our contact with IGFA, that they have already decided to disqualify (‘retire’ is the term used by the IGFA) the record, we now turn to our vote of Governor’s and other experts, numbering about 40. We find we have not heard from nine of those people (please respond).

Another half-dozen say they will abide by the decision of our Board research expert, Brad Latvaitis, and/or the law firm.

Note: Since Mr. Latvaitis’ recommendations were not followed his vote was not forthcoming to disqualify. This conflict with the law firm’s concurrence of the Dettloff investigation puts those additional “half-dozen” votes in question.

Letter number 4 continues

“A couple of people felt not qualified to vote. Only one person voted to let the record stand and 20 persons voted to disqualify.

At this point in time the Hall feels free to disqualify Lawton’s 69 – 15 record muskie as a falsified record.”

To my knowledge, as former World Record Secretary and Hall Historian and World Record Advisor at that time, neither a Hall record disqualification protocol nor identification of the number or percentage of votes required for disqualification were in place. In a protocol published by the Hall in 2005 ...A 2/3 vote is required (to overturn or veto an existing world record). Each member of the Executive Board is also required to give a detailed explanation of their reasoning as to how they have arrived at their decision. (Once the Executive Board arrives at a final judgement regarding the protest, they will inform the complainant as to their decision). There was no such protocol in place in 1992. If my math is correct, based on the above information, in 1992 the Hall had 20 votes to disqualify; 1 vote to let stand (or no); 9 did not respond; 1 “no vote” as his recommendation for an additional affidavit was not met (Latvaitis) and 6 question-able as their proxy was undeterminable as noted above. This means that of a potential 37 votes, only 54.1% or just over 1/2 of the total possible votes were for disqualification. By this new standard Lawton’s record would have fallen far short of disqualification in 1992!

One member of the NFWFHF Board of Advisory Governor’s, Dr. Ed Crossman, made a couple of interesting comments in responding to an inquiry made by Allen Benas of the Clayton, New York Chamber of Commerce. In a return letter to Mr. Benas dated April 28, 1993 and after Dr. Crossman had made his appraisal of the Dettloff investigation and the decision to disqualify had been rendered by the NFWFHF, he, in part, had the following to say. ...There is an additional in...that I believe NFWFHF received more
information after I returned my appraisal... I think I can say that at some point in my appraisal I indicated that I was in doubt that any record several years old could stand up to the scrutiny given the Lawton record.

This comment by Dr. Crossman begs the question; Did the NFWFHF withhold new information from the Advisory Governor’s once the Dettloff investigation packet had been sent to them? And, Dr. Crossman’s latter comment indicated just how difficult it is to attempt to reconstruct and discredit a 35-year-old record.

What is important here is that “if” the NFWFHF had “received more information” after Dr. Crossman had already submitted his appraisal it was not shared with him. With Dettloff “pushing” for a decision, it was made without any further consultation with the Advisory group or completion of the photogrammetry recommendations of the attorney’s. Since the NFWFHF also did not pursue the strong recommendations of the law firm and Advisory Governor Brad Latvaitis to gather additional information from Walter J. Dunn the “key” weight witness, it would appear that a “rush to Judgment” was indeed made. Now back to my review.

**Letter number 4 continues**

_The law firm’s evaluation of the evidence and recommendation to do so gives a comfortable feeling that we pursued all avenues to arrive at this decision and kept the integrity of the Hall at a high plane._

_If any concerned public questions our move, let them read your/our portfolio on this or refer them to us._

_In summation, it appears Lawton’s several other large fish and lesser records were also falsified. Our prime concern here at this time is only the current all-tackle record._

_...Thank you all for your concern and cooperation in the process._

_Our most sincere thanks to the Lawton-Cates Firm, John Dettloff, Larry Ramsell, Brad Latvaitis and Warren Knowles._

_I will be writing a news release on this after official clearance by the Director and Executive Board which will include IGFA’s decision to disqualify (retire) also and will go out to near 10,000 media. Please don’t ‘scoop’ us as individuals on this.”_

The news release referred to by Mr. Kutz above was later released (undated c/August 1992). It contained several obvious incorrect statements based on this review to this point, not to mention not completing the recommendations of both the law firm and Hall Governor Latvaitis and embellishing the final vote to disqualify. For that reason, I am including that news release in its entirety here. In addition, IGFA merely retired the Lawton record and left the door open. The news release (with my inserted comments; note: the IGFA did not approve this release!).
“In a joint action, the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame (NFHF) and the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) disqualified a standing 35 year old world record muskie record held by Arthur Lawton, a New York angler.

After an intense and extensive study, and gathering of evidence for a year by an independent researcher, the 1957 St. Lawrence River catch claimed to be a 69 lb. 15 oz. fish by Lawton was proven to be a falsified entry inadvertently accepted by the Field & Stream Magazine, the fish record qualifier of the time.

The Hall of Fame and the IGFA, modern day record qualifiers, who evaluated the voluminous portfolio of documents compiled by the researcher, John Dettloff, 30, of Couderay, Wisconsin, do not fault the magazine’s record process of the time, but noted that a falsification of a record application with today’s stringent requirements of certification would be noticed by either organization.

A record muskie, like a record bass, is the most sought after mark in freshwater sport angling for its promise of fame and fortune through endorsements and publications of the feat. Ironically, Lawton did not cash in on any wealth his record offered, except for a few contest dollars, but probably could not, a Hall spokesman said, because the fish he claimed as 69 lbs. 15 oz. did not exist. He never had his alleged record catch mounted. He said he cut up the fish and gave it away. His record stirred immediate controversy (That Lawton’s fish never existed is unproven and even Dettloff said he thought Lawton had caught the fish).

To uphold his claim for big fish application, he relied on several witnesses which were his family and a neighbor, none of whom, except his wife Ruth, fished. He produced a single very poor photograph as the only one shot of the fish. Photo experts at the photography museum of the University of California, several individual experts and a law firm of specialists in such analysis, determined that the fish could not exceed 57 inches in contrast to Lawton’s claim of his catch as 64 ½ inches. The exact markings he passed off as his record claim were identical in a smaller fish other photographs proved.

Incriminating evidence that the fish was falsified was fortified by the fact that Walter Dunn, a listed witness to the weighing who is alive today, recanted his part in the weighing and now, by affidavit, says he did not see the fish nor witness the weighing (Dunn’s affidavit did not say these things!).

In addition, A. J. McClane a highly credible personality in the fishing industry who died just recently, spoke to Dettloff and through his widow on his deathbed left word of affidavit that as one of the application judges for the magazine, he advised Dettloff to search out the details of the Lawton catch of which McClane too was suspicious after these many years.
The law firm of Lawton (no relative) and Cates of Madison, Wisconsin, offered the free services of their large staff or trial lawyers, several of whom are muskie anglers, to the Hall to evaluate Dettloff’s research.

The firm found Dettloff’s more than 80 pages of evidence met not only the law’s clear and convincing standard, but also a higher court standard of ‘beyond reasonable doubt.

After a lengthy personal meeting with John Dettloff and accolades for his expertise and perseverance to bring out the truth, the firm recommended disqualification of the Lawton record and the restoration of the 1949, Louis Spray record 69 lb. 11 oz. muskie to the record books.

In their analysis, the law firm also advised that it appeared that all the Lawton large fish catches were falsified for whatever intent at the time.

Dettloff, a muskie guide, fishing camp owner, research historian and fishing article author, used his fish knowledge and a couple years of formal statistical analysis training and applied it to authenticating the 1949 Louie Spray muskie record first, which Lawton took from him with his falsified 1957 catch (not exactly true as Dettloff never performed a Spray photo analysis!).

Dettloff took off on that project after a major magazine editor related a tale to a major newspaper outdoor editor that Louie Spray purchased his record from a Chicago mobster for $50.00. Other comments were that a local Indian speared the fish. Record muskies and bass throughout history have always been suspect as illegal or falsified catches. Dettloff set out and proved the magazine and news articles as ugly rumors (in his mind).

In contrast, unlike the Lawton fish, the Spray muskie catch was witnessed, well certified by numerous credible persons, and weight documented on a post office scale. Also the Spray fish was mounted and on display for a decade before it was destroyed in a fire. All the Spray catch and record documents and memorabilia is in the Hall’s archives (Lawton’s fish had more weight and measurement witnesses than did Spray’s!).

The success and extensive publication of Dettloff’s effort to once and forever quell the rumor of suspicion regarding Spray’s prompted Dettloff to initiate the Lawton research. Lawton’s claim to record and its acceptance was steeped in controversy for 35 years, ‘five years before I was even spawned’ Dettloff chides, ‘I had to look into it because I was overwhelmed by the lack of evidence surrounding the alleged record.

The Hall’s Executive Director, Ted Dzialo, and the Hall’s volunteer Founder and Public Affairs Director, Bob Kutz, are braced for criticism they feel will be directed at the Hall that it prompted the investigation and disqualification of the New York fish to bring the record back to Wisconsin.
‘Though not true at this point in time, with the players all deceased, the only purpose served,’ Dettloff said is, ‘truth must reign in record keeping and the decision by both the Hall and IGFA admonishes all would be record anglers to certify their catches beyond all doubt.’

While IGFA used their system to disqualify, the Hall reproduced the research portfolio and mailed it to its National Board of 30 Governors, its Executive Board of seven, and other concerned persons to total near 50 experts who evaluated and then voted their decision. In the final tally, eight persons did not respond, only one voted to keep the record and over 40 voted to disqualify (numbers embellished).”

Note: Was there a rush to judgment? After reviewing one more point below, I think you will find, as I did, that yes, there was in fact a rush to judgment.

Brad Latvaitis: Brad Latvaitis, former member of the Hall World Board of Advisory Governor’s, Hall Researcher and Chairman of the Awards Committee sent a letter of recommendation on June 19, 1992 to the Hall to be completed before he would vote to disqualify. Those recommendations were not acted upon. Following are the pertinent parts of that letter.

“A review of ‘The investigation of Arthur Lawton’s world record muskie’ by John Dettloff (including photo, affidavit, article and evidence exhibits) decisively documents that the muskie photograph commonly recognized as that of a 69 lb, 15 oz muskie is actually the photograph of a much smaller muskie. This smaller muskie is believed to weigh 49 lbs, 8 oz per a Lawton photo notation and calculation support presented in Dettloff’s investigation. Comparative photo analysis conclusively identify that the 49 lb, 8 oz muskie, pictured with a photo of eight other muskies, is the same muskie commonly recognized as that of a 69 lb, 15 oz muskie and presented by Dettloff as photo exhibit No 1.

Upon my receipt of the Lawton investigation, I spent several sleepless nights and most of three days evaluating Dettloff’s information and other data concerning Arthur Lawton’s World Record muskie. Based on this evaluation, I concluded, in great detail, that I could not support Dettloff’s recommendation to disqualify Art Lawton’s World Record muskie.

My response to Dettloff’s three point disqualification recommendation is summarized below:

1. I agree that the investigation established the photograph commonly recognized as a 69 lb, 15 oz muskie is the photograph of a much smaller muskie, believed to be 49 lbs, 8 oz.

2. Concerning whether Lawton submitted a false photograph, I contend that the investigation does not establish that Art Lawton submitted the photograph to Field
& Stream, or that Art Lawton submitted the photograph as part of the 1957 contest affidavit, or under what circumstances Field & Stream obtained the photograph.

3. Further, the investigation does not establish that Art Lawton submitted false evidence on the weigh-in of his World Record muskie to Field & Stream. Evidence concerning the weigh-in was submitted independently by the Witnesses! Riley’s response (Affidavit Exhibit B) went to the Field & Stream editor in response to the editor’s July 7, 1958 letter; likewise, Hauf and Dunn provided correspondence independently to Field & Stream and Dunn’s affidavit was witnessed by Shaw, who was reportedly sent by Field & Stream to investigate the record!

- Concerning the conflicting affidavits by Mr. Dunn of 1958 and 1992, I favored the 1958 affidavit for two reasons:
  
  (1) Mr. Dunn is not a fisherman. I feel that the event was insignificant to him and details can be forgotten over 34+ years.

  (2) What was extremely significant to me was that Dale Shaw, a writer for Field & Stream (the contest sponsor), sent to check on the story by Field & Stream (according to Ramsell’ Compendium of Muskie Angling History (1st edition), p 229) ended up actually witnessing in writing a notarized Statement by Dunn regarding the 69 lb, 15 oz weight, 64-1/2” length and 31-3/4” girth. Following, Shaw further documented the story in detail in a 1958 Field & Stream article (see Dettloff Article Exhibit III).

- Finally, concerning two of four Field & Stream judges, they recommended an investigation and indicated they would support disqualification if evidence submitted by Lawton was falsified or Field & Stream criteria was not properly met. Based on the 1957 Field & Stream affidavit, which are the only known criteria, a contestant must:

  (1) comply with the rules of the contest, and

  (2) the witnesses must actually witness the weighing and measuring of the fish.

A photograph was only required, if available. I reasoned that because there was no hard evidence that Lawton provided falsified information, no evidence that Lawton was out-of-compliance with contest rules, and no information that the witnesses did not actually witness the weighing and measuring of the fish, I could not support disqualification. In addition, I was concerned about Dettloff’s potential conflict of interest (the new World Record, Spray’s 69 lb, 11 oz muskie, was likely caught within sight of Dettloff’s resort) as well as the investigation’s derogatory tone; e.g., reference to Lawton’s World Record muskie as falsified rather than stating that the photo commonly recognized as the 69 lb, 15 oz muskie is actually a 49 lb, 8 oz fish; discussing 29 different photos of the 49 lb, 8 oz fish, etc.”
Note: Prior to the Hall’s recent decision with regard to the Louie Spray record muskie protest (by the WRMA), Mr. Latvaitis regretfully resigned his 30 year position as Hall Advisory Governor, Hall researcher, Hall advisor on fisheries matters and as Chairman of the Awards (Enshrinement) Committee due to the manner in which the Hall, led by Hall President Dettloff and Executive Director Brown were handling the Spray investigation. Likewise, I too, with great regret, resigned as Hall Fish Historian and World Record Advisor for similar reasons, after 35 years of volunteer service to the Hall.

That review submitted to the IGFA also contained several pages of exhibits and photograph copies. This now concludes my synopsis of the pertinent information from my 2006 review. Shortly after that review I obtained more new information and submitted an “Addendum” to my review to IGFA President Rob Kramer on March 6, 2006 which follows here in part with my additional comments.

Lawton review an Addendum (in part)

One March 3, 2006, I received additional information regarding the Lawton muskellunge world record catch from Allen Benas of the Clayton, New York Chamber of Commerce from their files on the Lawton fish:

In a letter dated 2/10/1993, from Art Molle, a Lawton relative by marriage, to Allen Benas, the following statement was found that was made by Molle after he had reviewed Art Lawton’s archives; “...Included is a letter from F&S (Field & Stream to Art Lawton) that they lost their photo’s (of Art’s muskellunge) & requested other copies...”

Herein lays the heart of the matter, the photograph.

Following is new information regarding..., affidavits from three new witnesses, as well as, additional affidavits from two of the original witnesses to the weighing of the Lawton muskellunge:

...there were a total of five “new” affidavits from eye witnesses, two of which were alluded to in my “review and above.” Those five affidavits contained the following, and copies of all five are attached:

(New witness) Affidavit #1: “I, Annette C. Harder, saw Robert L. Denny hold-up fish caught by Art Lawton. I am 5 ft tall and the fish was longer then me. This event took place on Delaware Ave, Albany, NY in September, 1957.

Signed by Annette C. Harder (address) and notarized by Sandra K. Pangburn, Notary Public, State of New York No. 4609220 Qualified in Albany County Commission Expires January 31, 1994.”
(New witness) Affidavit #2: “I, Robert L. Denny, give witness that I weighed and held Art Lawton’s 69 lb 15 oz Muskie at the farm of Roy Martin, now deceased, on a Toledo Scale and measured the fish at 65 inches. The muskie weighed (sic) 70 lbs.

I saw the Muskie in Art Lawton’s car trunk and held it up to view on Delaware Avenue, Albany, NY in September, 1957. Annette C. Harder was present at the time. I then followed Art Lawton to Martin’s Farm, to weigh and measure it. The picture which you draw your conclusion from (referring to the Dettloff investigation) is not the correct photo. I believe the correct picture exists and may be in the hands of Art Lawton’s nephew.

Signed Robert L. Denny (address & phone number), and notarized by Sandra K. Pangburn, Notary Public, State of New York No. 4609220 Qualified in Albany County Commission Expires January 31, 1994.”

(New witness) Affidavit #3: “I, Leora K. Gazel, do hereby swear that I did see the world record Muskie that Arthur Lawton of Delmar, New York caught.

The muskie was so large that it did not fit in the trunk of Mr. Lawton’s car and it was folded (on ice) in a manner tail to middle and head to middle of fish, and the fishes head and mouth was so big my head fit into its mouth.

Signed Mrs. Leora K. Gazel and notarized; Sworn to before me this 29th day of September 1992. Kathleen A. Newkirk, Notary Public, State of New York Qualified in Albany County Commission Expires July 31, 1994.”

Yes, the Lawton’s caught “head fitting” muskies as shown here by Ruth and her 54-9

(Reaffirmation) Affidavit #4: “This is to certify that I, Robert Riley, clearly remember being present at the Dunn Bros. slaughter house on Delaware Avenue in
Albany, New York, on September 23, 1957 during the weighing and measuring of the 69-pound 15-ounce muskie caught by Arthur Lawton on September 22, 1957. The muskie fish measured 64 ½ inches long.

Many people were present including Louis Hauf, Jr., Lauren Kisselburg, J. Emerson Sharp, three or four young men and the Dunn Brothers, who did the weighing and measuring.

I remember the scale had a horizontal lever with weights that you could put on it.

I did some deep-sea fishing as a technical sergeant during World War II for two years from ocean army ships and I caught many salt water fish.


Mr. Riley’s last statement is counter to the claim made in the original Dettloff Investigation that none of Lawton’s witnesses were fishermen.

(Reaffirmation) Affidavit #5: “To Whom It May Concern: This letter is intended to be testimony in support of facts regarding my witnessing the weighing of Art Lawton’s record breaking muskellunge fish.

I remember this event as the weighing took place the evening after the birth of my first daughter on September 22, 1957. On the evening of September 23, 1957, on my way to or from the hospital in Albany, New York, I stopped at Dunn Brothers Slaughter House to witness the weighing of the fish caught by Art Lawton.

As I recall, also present was Bob Riley, Lou Huff (sic), two teenage boys, Art Lawton, and the Dunn brothers. Walter Dunn did the actual weighing on a lever type scale. The muskellunge was huge and in length was as tall as the boys and particularly Lou Huff (sic). I did not pick up the fish or hold it as I am not that fond of handling fish. After the fish was weighed, I and others signed a statement attesting to the weight of the fish on the scale. I do not remember the weight or length specifically at this time, but know that it was on the statement correctly or I would not have signed it.

At that time, my signature was J. Emerson Sharp. Since then, my professional career has taken me to my present position as a Vice President of Hudson Valley Community College. During my career others have chosen to call me by my first name resulting in my present signature, James E. Sharp.

Over those years I had seen many strings of muskellunge fish caught by Art and his wife, Ruth. Many were very large and impressive; however, the record breaking muskellunge was by far a giant fish compared to any of the others.
Signed, Sincerely, James E. Sharp and notarized by Barbara Irwin Notary Public, State of New York Qualified in Rensselaer County Reg. No. 4780598 My Commission Expires 6-30-93.”

How’s that last reaffirmation affidavit for someone with great credibility? These new affidavits speak volumes!

Subsequent to my 2006 review and addendum, I arranged a meeting with IGFA Officers which included President Rob Kramer and Conservation Director and former World Records Coordinator Jason Schratweiser. Prior to that meeting I gathered together all of the original documentation and photographs to support my 2006 review and addendum.

In addition, I then decided to go back thru the Dettloff report and check his methodologies for dispelling Lawton’s record. My new findings were again very significant. I then put together exhibits, photographs and documentation of these new findings, which I then presented at IGFA headquarters in Dania Beach, Florida on February 27, 2007. I said in part

In 2006, I submitted a review of the Lawton muskellunge disqualification. That review included information in support of the Lawton muskie that surfaced following Dettloff’s investigation, documented Mr. Dettloff’s apparent bias in favor of the Spray muskie over the Lawton muskie and identified apparent weaknesses in the Dettloff investigation. My review, in addition to the investigation by Field & Stream conducted in part by the Pinkerton Detective Agency prior to establishing the Lawton muskellunge as the world record and additional Dettloff investigation weaknesses that I will highlight today, provides compelling information in support of reinstatement of the Arthur Lawton muskellunge record.

It is that meeting presentation that I will draw from now to further dispel Dettloff’s investigation claims in the following paragraphs. First I will address the John Dettloff “Marking Study,” not covered in my 2006 review or addendum, but which was covered in my meeting with IGFA. Dettloff wrote the following in his Musky Hunter article.

(Authors note: I will not include material here from that meeting that has already been covered above, but it is presented in my book in some additional detail.)

Note the body markings of the largest musky in each of the photo exhibits. Like fingerprints, the body markings, scars, color patterns and tail breaks and discolorations of no two muskies are identical. By comparing markings on all of the photo exhibits it is evident that the largest musky in each of these photo exhibits is actually the same, identical fish. There is no chance that they can be different muskies.

My findings of that “marking study” as presented in the meeting presentation with IGFA officials.
Dettloff’s attempt to use “body markings” on the eight photo exhibits is pointless. First of all, his “guarantee” that the fish in all eight photos’ are the same cannot be confirmed, therefore, it is not “evident,” as he claims, that the fish in each photo is the same (which they weren’t). His comparing of marks on photographs that are not actual fish pattern markings makes this exercise moot. His reference to markings on fish being like “fingerprints” is indeed true but the markings he used in this exhibit are markings that resulted from freezing and light reflections and shadows on the photographs. The one item in his exhibit that is not part of the fish, the piece of white attached to the dorsal fin, is not present in photo exhibit #5 (IGFA officials agreed that the fish in this photo was not the same as the others).

Following is a response to the Dettloff “marking study” contained in his “Investigation of Arthur Lawton’s World Record Muskie” (Page 14). The letters “A” thru “K” below (letters of identification added by me) correspond to those on the attached Dettloff “Evidence Exhibit EE” (Referring to various lettered markings on a drawing of the “common” Lawton record fish photo and referring to the ‘photo exhibits’ #1; #5 and #6 provided by him in his report - Dettloff copyright, not published in this book – refer to the two Dettloff articles to see it).”

I will denote prior to each of my meeting comments what Dettloff’s marking indicators are supposed to represent from his “exhibit EE.”

A) “This line of blood or slime is identical in photos #1, #5, and #6.

A) While this supposed “identifier” was impossible to see on the reports photocopies, an examination of the original photographs found that while there was an apparent mark on the identified location in “some of the photos” it should be considered inconclusive due to the fact that on the three photographs in question, there are other identifiable “marks” exclusive to photograph (exhibit) #5 that are not found on the other two. It is acknowledged that photographs #1 & #6 are indeed the same fish. Photograph #1 is what is known as the “common” Lawton record photograph. There is also the possibility that photograph #5 may indeed be of a different fish (agreed to by one of the IGFA officials).

B) Light spot. The intricate pattern of spots in this area match in all photos (#1 through #8)

B) Of the 8 photographs used in Dettloff’s investigation for his marking study, it is acknowledged that all photographs except #5 are of the same fish; hence, the markings would all be similar.

C) This lighter area is the same in all photos.

C) This identified “area” is a moot point, due to the fact that it does not identify a pattern exclusive to a particular fish (fish markings are like fingerprints), but rather just identifies a “washed out” area on the photographs. This is inconclusive evidence.
D) Unique shape and white discoloration of anal fin.

D) This is an incorrect assumption, due to the fact that fin discoloration would obviously be similar on different fish that had been frozen, with similarly shaped and positioned fins.

E) Three distinct and uniquely shaped dark spots on gill cover. Match exactly on all photos.

E) While these markings may indeed be similar, a review of my files finds that several of the fish caught by the Lawton’s over a period of several years exhibit similar markings, and therefore this identifier becomes moot (Original examples available [and were presented]).

F) These two darker shaded areas match in all photos.

F) This identified “area” is also a moot point, due to the fact that it does not identify a pattern exclusive to a particular fish (fish markings are like fingerprints), but rather just identifies a “darker shaded area” on the photographs. This too is inconclusive evidence.

G) These intricately shaped dark areas on all photos (#1 through #8) match exactly.

G) Yet again Mr. Dettloff tries to use something other than actual fish pattern to make a determination. Light shading on photographs is not a valid method of fish identification. Only by comparing the “full body” pattern of legitimate fish markings would a comparison of this nature be usable. This “pattern identification” is not possible on the original photographs (Originals available [and were presented]).

H) White mark on dorsal fin.

H) This “white mark” is not visible on the original photograph #5, which could possibly be (is) a photograph of a different fish than the fish in the other seven photographs, which I have acknowledged are one and the same fish.

I) White piece of paper or slime hanging from dorsal fin on all photos except #5.

I) On the eight photographs in this exercise, Mr. Dettloff acknowledges that this identifier is missing from photograph #5. I have already acknowledged that the other seven photographs are of the same fish. This point then becomes moot.

J) White pattern of tail discoloration duplicated exactly in all photos. (No two muskies could ever have this identical tail discoloration)
J) This is an incorrect assumption, due to the fact that fin discoloration would obviously be similar on different fish that had been frozen, with similarly shaped and positioned fins.

K) Major tail break in exact position of all photos.

K) This “major tail break” does not appear to be the same on photograph #5 (possibly of a different fish [concurred with by IGFA]); however the original photograph is inclusive.

Some Additional (Dettloff) Investigation Weaknesses

Photo Analysis

The Dettloff investigation utilized original photographs and direct measurements to estimate fish size. I recently revisited these methods and determined that there are far too many variables to accurately determine fish proportions using direct measurements from the Lawton photographs.

For example, using methods employed by Dettloff and three of the original photographs from the Lawton archives taken at about the same time, of the same fish, in the same pose and with the same camera held at variable distances from the subject, resulted in different direct measurement calculated lengths of Lawton’s record fish. At each of the slightly different camera distances from the subject, fish length changed dramatically using exact measurement points and controls. My results demonstrate that direct measurement photo analysis yields variable results (See demonstration using 3 original post photos).

Analysis of #514 Lawton Film Series Photo’s 1-G, 1-J & 1-K

This photo series is of the same fish, with the same pose, taken about the same time. Photo 1-J is closest to the camera, photo 1-G is mid-range distance away from the camera and photo 1-K is closest to the camera, with the distance differences being slight. Note that there is a slight variation in the position of the camera in front of the subject and height of the camera between photos.
The determination of the “exact” measuring points used is “very subjective” even when using a precision measuring instrument capable of measuring down to .001/inch, especially on photographs that are not crisp and sharp. I submit that it is possible and even likely, that the same measurements taken by a number of different analysts or multiple measurements by the same analyst could produce different results. Even the slightest difference in measuring the “control/known” item in the photograph, in this case the board (2x4), will affect the end result when calculating fish length. In addition, even the slightest repositioning of the camera affects the measurement of the “control/known” item.

In this exercise, in order to compensate for the “true” unknown size/width of the board (2x4) used for control from the photographs, I made three different calculations. The measured dimension on the photograph does not change, but the number/width used “for” the 2x4 produces a different end result of calculated fish length. The end result of all of the calculations, give us a “range” of the total length of the fish. Since, as stated by Dettloff in his investigation, …the fish is lying against the board, direct scaling is used.

In his investigation, Dettloff refers to the 2x4 post, making an “assumption” that the width would actually be 3 ½ inches rather than 4 inches. While this is indeed today’s standard mill size, there are other factors to be considered. It is unknown if the board in the photographs was indeed a standard mill size. The board used may have indeed been a “rough cut” 2x4 which could actually be 4 inches (or more) wide. From my lumber stock, I found a rough cut piece of hardwood that measured exactly 3.845 inches. Also, the board in the photographs appears to be very well weathered and may actually be swollen from its original size, which easily happens with pine lumber normally used in the making of 2x4’s (compensations were not made for these possibilities).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photo</th>
<th>2x4 mea.</th>
<th>Ph.Act.=A</th>
<th>Per in. calc.</th>
<th>Fish lgth./photo</th>
<th>Calc fish lgth.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-G</td>
<td>3.750 in.</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.0373</td>
<td>2.045” div. x A</td>
<td>54.83 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-G</td>
<td>3.845</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.0364</td>
<td>“ “ “ 56.18 “</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-G</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.0350</td>
<td>“ “ “ 58.43 “</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-J</td>
<td>3.750</td>
<td>.143*</td>
<td>.0355</td>
<td>2.070” “ “ 58.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-J</td>
<td>3.845</td>
<td>.143*</td>
<td>.0346</td>
<td>“ “ “ 59.83 “</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-J</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>.143*</td>
<td>.0333</td>
<td>“ “ “ 62.16 “</td>
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* Slight camera position move right in photo 1-J, causes the board to measure larger than in photo 1-G, even though photo 1-G is closer to the camera.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photo</th>
<th>2x4 mea.</th>
<th>Ph.Act.=A</th>
<th>Per in. calc.</th>
<th>Fish lgth./photo</th>
<th>Calc fish lgth.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-K</td>
<td>3.750</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td>.0347</td>
<td>2.130” “ “ 61.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-K</td>
<td>3.845</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td>.0338</td>
<td>“ “ “ 63.02 “</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-K</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td>.0325</td>
<td>“ “ “ 65.54 “</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The range of calculated fish lengths from these three photographs illustrates the difficulty in accurately scaling fish size from photographs, even when the same pose is used at similar times with the same camera, vast differences in fish length were obtained. Not taking into account the subjective actual points where the measurements were taken, which can greatly affect the results, camera distance and photo size also affect the ultimate result. In the example above, depending on which determined board size is used, results in the length of fish calculated from these photographs vary from 54.83 inches long, to 65.54 inches long; a difference of 10.71 inches, using the same subjects, the same pose and the same camera at about the same time. When factoring into this the variability in determining and manually reproducing exact measurement points, the questionable accuracy of manually determining fish length from photographs is apparent.

**Conclusion**

What I found most fascinating in this exercise, was the fact that photo subject image size and the minor differences of distance of subject from the camera, had a tremendous impact on the final calculation of fish size. Trying to determine fish length by scaling photographs, even with precision measuring instruments, is not a sound method.

Determining fish lengths from photographs, if possible, should be left to professional photogrammetrists and their computers and computer programs designed for this purpose. Even then, if there are no exact known measurements within the photograph from which to use as a starting point, the precision of the exercise may be limited but it is reproducible and far superior to manual calculations. It is interesting to note that in photograph 1-G, which had the subject mid distance from the camera, the final calculations produced were considerably below the claimed size of the Lawton muskellunge, while the slightly closer image of photograph 1-K produced results close to and on both sides of the claimed size of the Lawton muskellunge.

Importantly, my exercise illustrates that the “actual points of measurement” are very subjective and in fact extremely difficult to pinpoint and duplicate on small and/or unclear photographs. In short, very different results are obtained due to minimal differences in measurement points when direct measurement techniques are used.

Professional photogrammetry is a recognized science that has been utilized since the Civil War. Modern photogrammetry provides repeatable measurements at specific levels of accuracy. Although urged to employ a professional photogrammetrist, the Dettloff investigation used amateur photo analysis to estimate fish size. (See Law Office letter dated July 6, 1992 [already covered]).

**Distance of Top of Pipe to Ground**
Dettloff used a complex and subjective method to determine the height of the top of the pipe above the ground in the “group fish photo,” resulting in an underestimate of the size of the Lawton fish. A more accurate determination of this distance was easily obtained by using the standards information provided in the investigation by Dettloff. This was accomplished by using the standard dimensions of height and thickness of the steps of the ladder, the concrete block and the pipe. Use of this information led to the finding that the actual distance of the top of the pipe above the ground was 71 ½ inches, not the 66 to 66½ inches that was determined by Dettloff in his investigation. This finding indicates an underestimate of fish length by 5 to 5½ inches in that investigation (See photo analysis showing this finding).

Calculating the Distance from the Ground to the Top of the Pipe

In the 1992 investigation (page 19), Dettloff went to great lengths, using many “assumptions” and “moving of estimated camera height” by one foot, to arrive at his determination of the distance from the top of the pipe to the ground in the group fish photo (Dettloff photo exhibit #7 [group of nine fish photo]).

Rather than use assumptions and theoretical camera height and then an assumed move of the camera upward by one foot, I took a far simpler approach. I simply used the Standards information, provided by Dettloff, for “actual” known dimensions to apply to items contained in that photograph (group of nine fish with Art and Ruth Lawton and the right side wooden ladder showing) to determine the actual height of pipe top from the ground:

My “pipe height” analysis photo and Dettloff’s #3

The ladder Standard for distance between steps is 12.000 inches
The ladder Standard for step thickness is .781 “
By multiplying the above x 5 step spaces, we get 60.000 inches
By multiplying the above x 5 steps, we get 3.905 “
The Standard for the concrete block is 5.625 “
The Standard O.D. for the pipe is 1.900 “

The Total is……71.430 inches (or 71 ½ inches)

Dettloff’s calculated “estimate” was 66.000 to 66.500 in. (66 to 66 ½ in.)

Difference is 5.430 to 4.93 inches (5 to 5 ½”)
By then using Dettloff’s calculations, this “missing” 5 to 5 ½ inches would be added to the (his) calculated length of the fish. Using Dettloff’s “range” finding of 55¼ to 57¾ inches (investigation page 20)*, and adding the missing 5 to 5 ½ inches, we now have a fish length range from 60¾/60¼ inches to 62¾/63¼ inches…very close to Lawton’s claim.

*As an experiment, I used Dettloff’s method of calculating the fish’s length (Dettloff photo #7), and I came up with a result of 58½ inches. Then adding the missing 5 to 5 ½ inches to my result, I came up with a total fish length of 63½ to 64 inches…only 1 or ½ inch below Lawton’s claim.

As a cross check, I then applied the actual Standards determined top of pipe height to Dettloff photo #3 (shown previously). Calculations resulted in a fish length of 64¼ inches, only ¼ inch below Lawton’s claim:

Ground to top of pipe on photo measured 2.274 inches. 2.274 inches divided x 71.43 (Standards pipe top height) = .0318 inch (.0318353)  
Fish length on photo measured 2.021 inches x .0318 = 64.27 inches (64.268).

To rough check: 2.021 fish (measurement) divided x 2.274 (measured) pipe top = 89% x 71.43 pipe top = 63.57” fish length.

Therefore, it is obvious to this analyst that the method employed by Dettloff in his investigation to determine the height of the top of the pipe off the ground and subsequent determination of fish length was flawed and should be dismissed.

(Author’s note: There was more included here in my book, but of lesser value and is not included in this excerpt.)

Closing

Field & Stream investigated the Lawton record application in detail. With this in mind, Dettloff’s opinion and claim that the Lawton weight witnesses actually witnessed the weighing of a fish that weighed 49 ½ pounds is ludicrous. The official weighing of the Lawton record muskellunge was conducted on a state certified scale and attested to by the five witnesses present, and therefore, was not false evidence submitted by Lawton to Field & Stream as claimed by Dettloff in his investigation. Likewise, the two
original Dunn affidavits that Lawton submitted to Field & Stream, were not false evidence as claimed in the Dettloff investigation, one of which was signed in front of and witnessed by a Field & Stream representative.

Additional credibility for the Lawton record was provided at the time by Ken Schultz, Field & Stream associate fishing editor, and Ward B. Stone, Wildlife Pathologist for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and more recently by Edward Woltmann of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Schultz said his magazine has no official position, but his own opinion is that there’s not enough evidence to throw the Lawton record out. “I don’t think they’ve proved Field and Stream certified the wrong fish,” He added, “This kind of controversy is not unusual where world record fish are concerned.” (See The Whig-Standard newspaper, dated November 9, 1992 [already covered]).

Mr. Stone commented in part: Having reviewed the John Detloff report, I do not see sufficient evidence to disqualify the Arthur Lawton’s World Record muskie... Mr. Detloff seems to have a bias toward Wisconsin muskies... Mr. Detloff mentions that he is “a student of engineering” but provides no biography of education and experience to be evaluated (along with his letter, Mr. Stone included “his” 15 page biography). This is necessary for all experts and Detloff is acting as an expert in an important fish case with the reputation of Mr. Lawton and his witnesses at stake. The Lawton muskie record should hold, unless definitive evidence can be brought to disqualify it, and this has not been done. (See Stone letter dated September 13, 1994).

On January 31, 2007, Edward Woltmann, Public Use and Outreach Section, Bureau of Fisheries, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, provided a letter to Allen Benas, Clayton, NY Chamber of Commerce. In that letter, Mr. Woltmann made it very clear that the NYSDEC had rejected the Dettloff investigation.

The letter said in part; ...this is to verify that the 69 pound 15 ounce muskellunge caught by Arthur Lawton from the St. Lawrence River in 1957 remains our New York State record for this species. The fish met the criteria for our record fish program when it was caught and we have had no reason to change its status.

We are aware of the various disputes involving the musky record and I have been contacted by John Detloff (sic) of the Fishing Hall of Fame in an effort to encourage us to retire or otherwise disqualify the Lawton record. Since we have no conclusive evidence disputing the validity of the Lawton muskellunge... the record will stand as is until we get some undisputable proof that justifies its removal. (See NYSDEC letter).

It should be noted that Cecil Heacox, then Senior Aquatic Biologist of the New York State Conservation Department (now Department of Environmental Conservation) was one of the Field & Stream judges in 1957.
Please understand that as a resident and muskie fishing guide in Hayward, Wisconsin, and more importantly an muskellunge historian, my interest in this matter is not to give the Hayward area a “leg-up” with regard to the world record muskellunge but rather to preserve the true and accurate history of our great sport.

And now the promised Diane Sharp story. When John Dettloff began his Lawton investigation the Lawton archives went from “lost” to “found,” according to him. He was able to locate Lawton’s niece Diane Sharp to whom Art Lawton had turned over his archives. This relationship went from amicable to contentious and lead to harsh words from Mrs. Sharp and the Lawton family after Lawton’s record was disqualified. During the winter of Dettloff’s investigation and thereafter I had an ongoing dialogue with Diane. When she learned of the real motive behind Dettloff’s wants of her late uncle Art’s archives she became, to say the least, upset.

I would like to pick things up with an excerpt from a letter I received from her on March 31st, 1992, after she had written a letter on that same date to the publisher of Musky Hunter magazine, Dan Laubenstein at that time.

In her letter to me she said "I asked John (Dettloff) to send the stuff (Lawton’s archives) to me to try to be sure he sends everything (he didn’t) – When I sent it I worried that I had no way to be sure I’d get it all back – But I thought he was honest & so I did it – When I get it I will send it on to you – I’m worried that he won’t send it – And there’s really not much I can do if he doesn’t – Except write to the historical society (Sawyer County, Wisconsin) because he always writes on their stationery – or maybe the museum (Hall of Fame) since he claimed a connection there also. We’ll see – this is a pain!

Till the next chapter!
Diane

The letter from her to Mr. Laubenstein after she had been unsuccessful in contacting him by telephone.

As I told Cindy (secretary) in our conversation of March 31, 1992, the “Lost” Lawton Photo’s were never lost and do not fall into the category of an archeological find. They are my photos which were loaned to John Dettloff who wrote to me as a representative of the Sawyer County Historical Society, Inc. and the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame. I did not give permission to use these photos in an article (that Dettloff wrote in Musky Hunter magazine) which refer to Art Lawton’s world record fish as a hoax—or in any other article.

Everything which I loaned John Dettloff was loaned to him with the intent of giving to the fishing world things which pertained to my uncle and his record. John Dettloff has not been honest with me—his reasons for wanting my albums were to pursue personal projects, not to give anything of value to the fishing community.
Please do not publish any more of these photos or other material from my collection. John Dettloff does not have the authority to give you the release.

Thank you,
Diane Sharp

As is now known, Mr. Dettloff, at the very least, did not return to Diane Sharp the damning and supposed “smoking gun” photograph that he used to help derail Lawton’s record. As I have already detailed, there is no proof extant that such photo ever existed in Lawton’s archives. Dettloff did tell me that the photo was ...in my lockbox.

Following Diane’s letter to me I received a letter from Clarence “Sonny” Clark, Lawton’s nephew shortly thereafter. Some excerpts from that letter.

...Getting to Art’s record, we were young and foolish. The fish was measured many times & weighed by all of us.

The sad part was no one had spare money to invest in mounting...

Any pictures I send are to be used exclusively by you and the muskie museum (NFWFH for display). Any with X on back please send me back a copy as they are the only ones...

...Just a thought: If this guy (Dettloff) wants a fight on his hands, I was executor of Arts Estate. If he insists on trying to spoil Arts name and reputation as a record holder, I’m not adverse to hiring an attorney, and suing for making false statements.

He must be one hell of a sportsman...!

Regards,
Clarence “Sonny” Clark

At this point it should be obvious that Mr. Dettloff had the Lawton family up-in-arms. On April 19, 1992, John Dettloff sent a letter to Diane Sharp attempting to make amends. She forwarded that letter on to me. Following are a few excerpts from it.

This letter was suppose to go with your box of photos that I sent back to you but, like you, I sealed this box up before I thought to insert this letter. I consider your photos historic fishing treasures and do thank you for entrusting them to me. I always took the best of care of them. Regardless of what you think of me, I hope you’ll consider donating these photos to our National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame sometime. The Hall – as far as I know – is the world’s largest fresh water fishing museum and it would be good to see your photos preserved in their archives for ever...

Dettloff then inserted the following since he had learned that Diane was going to send the Lawton archives to me.
Enclosed is an inventory I made up for you of what you have. It took me a little time, but I did it to protect these photos in case you loan these out to anyone else. I’d hate to see anyone lose or swipe any of these photos—they are real treasures. I guess you could say my motives are selfish; in that, I would like to see these photos in the Hall of Fame’s archives someday.

Dettloff’s inventory was also sent to me by him as he knew Diane was going to forward the archives on to me. It is very non-descript for the photos and there was no listing of a photo of Art and Ruth with nine muskies with Art’s supposed “hand-written” notations of size on it; Dettloff’s “smoking gun” photograph! There was one loose reference to - Long yellow envelope marked (pictures 1957) – Full of photos! With no other details. As I have repeatedly said, when Diane Sharp immediately forwarded the archives to me, there was NO “smoking gun” photo therein and no such photograph was ever returned to Diane Sharp to my knowledge as it was never mentioned by her at any time thereafter.

Dettloff’s letter went on ...I haven’t heard back from you about my first article about the Lawtons (the first of a series of two Dettloff wrote about the Lawton’s after he had gotten the Lawton record removed and had written articles about it in several national publications, that were written in a positive light that he hoped would take some of the sting out of what he had done). You over reacted about that story and said some nasty things that weren’t true. You have the wrong idea about me. I am not a liar; everything I told you was true...

He continues his attempt to win her over ...I still would like you to try to locate any of Art and Ruth’s muskie mounts so we can hang it on display in the museums... Also, if you have any memorabilia for the museums... Wisconsin is in the heart of muskie country and to have these...museums display any of Art’s stuff will only preserve his reputation (was there any Lawton reputation left after Dettloff got through with it?)

Dettloff then went on in his letter to Diane ...Although I can understand how you jumped to the wrong conclusions about me, I don’t appreciate being called a liar. I take my role as director of the Sawyer County Historical Society very seriously and my only objective is to seek and document the truth regarding our fishing history.

Sincerely,
John Dettloff

In December of that same year Dettloff went on to attempt to discredit nearly every other big muskie that the Lawton’s ever caught and registered, with yet another investigation and he wrote a story about that as (former) Historical Editor in Musky Hunter magazine in the June/July 1993 issue entitled Six More Lawton Fish Removed From “Top Ten”!

This article used five more unauthorized Lawton photographs. So much for Diane Sharp’s admonition to Publisher Laubenstein not to use the Lawton archive photographs! I believe the family had every right to be upset with Mr. Dettloff and was it any wonder
they considered him a “liar?” Had Clarence Clark’s health been better I’m confident that the threatened lawsuit would have ensued.

About that same time period Diane Sharp was going thru a number of family problems and the Lawton mess didn’t help the situation any. She became upset with me when she learned that I was supporting Dettloff’s investigation, which as I have noted, I am truly regretful of. She then requested that I return the Lawton archives to her with the comment ...and let’s be done with this...I am totally fed up!

In a P.S. she informed me that she had written ...the Hall of Fame stating that they should be aware that this man (Dettloff) uses their name & their materials to gain the trust of people from whom he acquires things which he then gives to the Northland Fishing Museum.

About three months later the scenario worsened for Dettloff after Lawton’s record had been removed. In his outdoor column in the Chicago Tribune the late John Husar wrote an article entitled Something fishy about record flak referring to Dettloff’s research and his query of him about Lawton’s niece. Some excerpts.

...Skeptics were questioning the motives and expertise behind certain research that led to last week’s abrupt disqualification of the record 69-pound 15-ounce muskie Lawton had certified in 1957 from New York’s St. Lawrence River...

Further on in his article Husar ended an IGFA official’s comments with the following and then went on to discuss the Lawton family.

...He noted Dettloff’s research is based entirely upon a complex mathematical photoanalysis of old pictures of the Lawton fish, including some new views recently obtained from the Lawton family. Dettloff told this reporter he sought those pictures from a Lawton niece under the guise of publishing an article in a muskie magazine about her late uncle, who died in 1979. He refused to reveal the niece’s whereabouts, so she could be contacted...

Dettloff claimed in a letter to me with a copy of that article that he refused to tell Husar how to contact her Out of courtesy to her.

In a follow-up article in the Chicago Tribune on August 13, 1992 Mr. Husar wrote the following.

More on the controversial dumping of Art Lawton’s 35-year old musky record. Lawton’s niece, Diane Sharp, has surfaced in Delmar, N.Y., bristling with indignation. She says she is contemplating a lawsuit based on the manner in which a researcher acquired a collection of her uncle’s pictures.

“He said he represented the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame, which he didn’t, and he wanted them for the museum,” Sharp said. “To me, this was deceitful. If
I’d known he was going to use them to invalidate my uncle’s record I probably would have given them anyway. As a teacher, I believe in a search for truth. I also would have given them because I would have thought they supported my uncle’s claim.’’

Sharp said her uncle’s photos of the claimed 69-pound 15-ounce musky never were hidden. “He brought them to my house in a suitcase before he died,” she said. “He was going to throw out a lot of things, but I told him they belonged to the family. They were never lost. I knew where they were. I just never knew that anyone wanted them (these “lost” comments were made in response to Dettloff’s claim that he had “found” the “lost” Lawton photographs).

In the August 14, 1992 Leader-Telegram of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, an Associated Press article appeared entitled Nephew of Lawton surprised, upset that record taken away that contained the following quote.

The nephew of a man whose 1957 catch has been disqualified by the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame at Hayward as the world record.

“Wisconsin wants to be named the muskie capitol of the world. It mystifies me that after 35 years anybody can do something like that,” Arthur Molle of Guilderland, N.Y., said Wednesday...

The AP article goes on to quote Hall Director Dzialo who said that Lawton’s record ... had weathered many challenges over the years. It finally was disqualified after a year’s worth of research.

“It’s been suspect since the beginning,” Dzialo said. “Now we know once and for all that Mr. Lawton’s fish was not the world record.”

The article continued.

As a result of the hall’s decision, the world’s record goes to a 69-pound 11-ounce muskie caught by Louis Spray of Hayward.

Dzialo said most of the research on which the hall’s decision was based was done by John Dettloff, a muskie enthusiast who is not connected with the hall...

The article then again referenced Lawton’s nephew Art Molle.

Molle stood by his late uncle’s claim.

“It puts a great doubt in my mind,” he said of the disqualification. “If you’ve got enough money, you could be the next record holder.”

Molle, who telephoned The Associated Press after reading a published report about the hall’s action, said his late uncle “wasn’t one for notoriety. He just enjoyed fishing.”
So yet another unhappy Lawton relative was heard from. And the outrage wasn’t limited to the Lawton family. Joe Pitarresi, sports writer for *The Observer-Dispatch* in Utica, New York wrote a scathing letter to NFWFHF officials Ted Dzialo and Bob Kutz on September 15, 1992. He echoed the dozens of negative comments the NFWFHF received for their part in the Lawton disqualification when he wrote *A man’s good name does matter, and whatever your motivation is, you have succeeded in painting Arthur Lawton as a cheat and a villain, and you've done it without presenting a convincing argument to the public. By attempting to undermine his credibility – and by obtaining material under false pretenses, according to some – you have cost yourself in that department.*

*Who knows, maybe Lawton was the charlatan you claim, but not based on the “evidence” presented. I smell a rat, and so do many others. I really don’t think your motives in this case were pure.*

I received another letter from Diane Sharp dated September 24, 1992. In it she said in part *Truth is...the game appears to be going into over time – I’m watching what the rest do - & where things go – because I’m told that I personally, have a pretty good case against Dettloff – not about a fish – But about his methods!*...

*...You know, Larry – as I’ve told you before – World Records don’t impress me – One way or the other – What impresses me is the methodology of those who would look for glory by screwing around with the accomplishments of others – In my heart – I think your whole fishing records group must be full of the stuff we spread on gardens – But whether it was a record – or was not – I truly think my uncle did not cheat – Your little dipwad John would make him out to have spent his life falsifying fish – that sir, is a crock!*

To my knowledge neither Clarence Clark nor Diane Sharp ever pursued a lawsuit against John Dettloff.

On October 20, 1992 I then received a letter from Mr. Dettloff in regards to the NFWFHF letter from Mrs. Sharp. He wrote in part *Also, here’s a copy of the letter the Hall sent to me that states – for the record – that the Hall did authorize me to identify myself as a volunteer historian for the Hall. I sent a copy of this to Diane (Sharp) and Clarence (Clark)*...

As I reported previously, it is apparent now that an effort of “damage control” began on October 5, 1992, when NFWFHF Director Ted Dzialo and Volunteer Founder Bob Kutz issued a letter giving Dettloff supposed retroactive status as a “Volunteer Historian” for the Hall. I proved before in this section that this simply was not true.

As an aside, Bob Kutz and I were close friends and I respect what he built from scratch for Hayward; The Hall of Fame. This, in spite of his sometimes exuberant embellishment of fact and promotion. I respect too, the fine job Ted Dzialo did for the Hall when he took
over the reigns from Bob. I sincerely believe that they, as I had been, were in awe of Dettloff’s mountainous investigation and accepted it at face value.

In the letter Dettloff sent to Clarence Clark dated October 26, 1992 with a copy to me, he wrote two-and-a-half pages trying to calm him down and justifying what he had done as and insisting that it was done to *accurately document our muskie fishing history*... and insisting his findings couldn’t be disputed and his motives were pure despite what had been written in the press. He tried to pacify Mr. Clark with pleas of donating some of Lawton’s memorabilia to the Hall, saying that... *I don’t want them to be forgotten.*

He also wrote ... *One thing I want to make sure the public realizes is that many years ago many people exaggerated their catches and it was more commonplace. The Lawton’s are not alone when it comes to beefing up their muskie catches. Quite a few of them. It was common for people to add rocks, ice, sand, lead, etc. to make their fish bigger. It still doesn’t make any of their actions any more correct, but I do think that it demonstrates that – to some extent – the Lawton’s were a product of their time...* 

Mr. Dettloff neglected to inform Mr. Clark that his accusations against ... *the other top muskies in the record books which were faked as well...* did not include Hayward’s record muskies and that when the smoke cleared from all of his investigations they would be the only ones left standing!

Controversy continued in the November 9, 1992 issue of *The Whig-Standard* newspaper in an article by Shawn Thompson, St. Lawrence River historian and author of several books on river history, who wrote the following in part.

*Years after the deaths of the two best muskie fishermen in the world, a battle is being waged by their supporters to decide which one holds the record for the biggest ever caught.*

*In one camp are the relatives of Arthur Lawton. They’ve angrily come to the defense of the man who claimed he caught the big muskie in the St. Lawrence River in 1957.*

*In the other camp are the friends of Louie Spray in Wisconsin. They say that Mr. Lawton lied about the size of his fish from the St. Lawrence, and they claim that the big muskie came out of water in Wisconsin in 1949.*

*One member of the Lawton defense team is Clarence Clark...who lived next door to his uncle – Mr. Lawton... Mr. Clark say’s he’s going to start a defamation suit against John Dettloff...* 

*He’s concerned that his dead uncle’s reputation has been besmirched by the charge that he lied and falsified the records.*
Mr. Clark is also angry that the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame in Wisconsin has accepted Mr. Dettloff’s evidence. Mr. Clark says he intends to sue the hall of fame as well.

Mr. Clark says his uncle was a kind and generous man who lived to fish. A number of anglers have been suspicious for years because Mr. Lawton didn’t mount his record catch, but that, say his relatives, was typical of the man. He usually gave away the edible parts of the fish he caught and some of the food went to families who were poor.

His uncle was not a fraud and liar, says Mr. Clark.

Another relative who has taken up the cause, Arthur Molle...has gone back to the original five witnesses of the weighing of the Lawton muskie and found that the four survivors all stick to their story...

...He has another witness, Paul Martin, who saw both Lawton’s 49-pound fish and the 69-pound one and says they were two different fish.

Mr. Dettloff concedes that Mr. Martin is sticking to his story and dismisses very quickly the contradiction between photo evidence and the certainty of the witnesses.

“He’s grasping at straws,” says Mr. Molle. The fishing hall of fame disqualified Mr. Lawton for “political reasons,” he insists. “It’s so fishy it smells. They did it for one purpose, to get the record fish to Hayward (Wisconsin).”

“It’s a crime that anybody could be called a sportsman that does a thing like that”...

Mr. Thompson interviewed New York fisheries biologist Steve LaPan who had the following observation.

The best solution to the Lawton riddle, according to Mr. LePan, is to classify both the Lawton muskie and the Spray muskie as “historic” catches and leave it at that.

Mr. Dettloff says that he’ll continue his muskie sleuthing and delve into other cases of people who claim to have caught record size muskies...

He vows, “Not all the apples are rotten in the barrel, but there’s definitely several rotten apples. And I’m going to do my best to pick up these rotten apples and make the record as accurate as possible.”

And so he tried...all except the last four Hayward record muskies! Thompson concluded his article with the following.

...as for the Lawtons, their nephew Arthur Molle says they’re “laughing in the graves” because the only thing that mattered to them was the fun they had fishing, not the records they broke.
Dettloff wrote to me on November 13, 1992 in part...Finding the truth became an obsession, a challenge, a quest. I committed to spending as much time + money as it would take to find out the truth. It was hard to concentrate on anything else. I didn’t care about skiing, fishing, or sleeping until I solved the case. I even had dreams about Art Lawton.

Again, I regretfully admit that Dettloff had “won me over” with his massive report and I’m sorry it took me so long to “wake-up” and dig into it and prove it wrong.

Dick Nelson, outdoor columnist for the Albany Times Union also talked to Lawton nephew Arthur Molle and had some quotes from him as well in his late 1992 column.

...Arthur Molle, a nephew of the deceased Lawton, refutes (a NFWFHF) statement as “utter nonsense.”

Molle...said researcher John Dettloff misrepresented himself when he sought out family photographs and other memorabilia regarding the world-record fish, as well as information about other muskies Lawton and his wife Ruth had caught over the years...

Mr. Nelson ended his column with a quote from NFWFHF Volunteer Founder Bob Kutz which went...When asked where the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame would be should the IGFA fail to disqualify Lawton’s catch, Kutz said, “In one hell of a mess.”

Clayton, New York Chamber of Commerce board member Allen Benas also got a few licks in to the NFWFH in a letter to them on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce on March 17, 1993, about the validity of Dettloff’s investigation and a bit regarding the Lawton relatives.

...John (Dettloff) undertook his mission with total disregard for Art Lawton as a sportsman and total disrespect for his surviving family members. The photos, licenses and other information John received from Diane Sharp was requested under the pretense of being used by the Hall to pay some form of tribute to Lawton and his muskie fishing accomplishments. Never was there any mention of his intent to use it himself, as evidence to disqualify the Lawton fish.

Then, to add insult to injury, John willingly advised Mrs. Sharp, when returning the material, that he would keep her advised on his continuing efforts to disprove other Lawton fish, particularly Ruth’s.

Where I ask, are this man’s scruples? Please don’t tell me such antics were sanctioned by the Hall, who John often implied he was working with. Could it be that he used you too?
As for the Hall, we feel it acted both in haste and with undue vigor. To us, the whole effort takes on the appearance of a trial conducted in secrecy, with only the prosecution invited to attend. This is not the professional approach I would expect from any organization that enshrines sportsmanship and I personally find it especially unbecoming the Hall of Fame...

I believe a fitting conclusion to this entire Diane Sharp and Lawton relative’s affair would be to conclude with a notarized affidavit I received in February of 2007.

In June of 1992, John Dettloff told me that he “tricked” the Lawton family members into giving him Art and Ruth Lawton’s personal scrapbooks of their muskie careers.

This affidavit prefers not to be named in public print, which I shall honor. However this affidavit will become readily available from my lockbox in the event of any legal action by Mr. Dettloff, and I have every confidence that the affiant would be willing to testify as to the accuracy of his statement should the need arise.

I think the following quote in a 1995 John Husar Chicago Tribune article sums things up nicely with regard to Dettloff’s investigation.

Spray’s ascendancy came about when Hall of Fame record-keepers were dazzled by a controversial-and still unproven-method of forensic photo analysis, which is now being used to knock down all of Spray’s competitors from that era. The late Art Lawton’s once-venerable 69-15 muskie summarily was dethroned elevating Spray’s fish...

John Dettloff was quoted in John Husar’s February 21, 1993 Chicago Tribune column which focused on new witnesses that had come forward after the publication of his article in the December 1992 issue of Outdoor Life magazine as follows.

...If they have any proof any of the Lawton fish can be backed up, I will be the first person to urge they be reaccepted.

Are you ready to “urge” yet John? Can you accept that your “investigation” was biased and incorrect? Can you prove the Lawton “smoking gun” photograph legitimate?

Now that the selective history revisionist material of John Dettloff has been fully covered and debunked I think this would be a good place for one final Dettloff quote which was made after he had said that as an historian he gets a bit disturbed when he...sees people trying to erase the accomplishments of the elders of the sport. His quote.

...Everyone has contributions to the community and the sport, and if they do accomplish something that is well documented it should not be toyed with. If something is proved to be false, then it should be corrected. There is a way to protest without being negative or biased...
It truly is too bad Mr. Dettloff didn’t look in the mirror and heed his own words. His bias for the Spray and Johnson fish and against the other past world records he tried to discredit, which was accepted by some, including, unfortunately this writer for a time during Dettloff’s selective revisionist years of the 1990’s has been well covered throughout this section. His quoted message above is loud and clear, and as I have done in revising this book; we should leave “recorded history” alone!

JOHN?

(From the Lawton Diary, not reprinted here it is found) that the Lawton’s had a set pattern to follow. They were consistent in what they did. They got on the water and put in lots of time…they paid their dues. Art told me that they would take lunch – to be eaten in the lee of an island and make a day of it. As you will note, they didn’t worry about getting in for an early supper. They also caught a considerable number of medium and smaller sized muskies. It is very apparent they knew what they were doing and where to fish and the number of strikes they got attested to that fact. And, as was their “normal” course of business they got home late at night. Nothing to hide, just “business as usual.” And again in 1958 the fish were hung in the yard for photographs and for all to see, but this time they had a professional photographer come and take the pictures!

Ken O’Brien 65-0 - 1988

1988 ... We’ll end this section now with a review of the limited controversy that the more modern day capture of a giant muskie fit for the record book underwent; Ken O’Brien’s 65-pounder from the Moon River in 1988. I received a phone call about it within an hour of its being caught (I have “good” sources and informants!).

(Author’s note: In my book are a number of photographs of the O’Brien fish that have never before been published.)

Toronto, Ontario angler Ken O’Brien was fishing for What ever would bite, as he told me in a telephone interview. His catch made immediate international news and was covered in dozens of newspapers in the US and Canada and his catch story was written about by me in Fishing Facts magazine in the January 1989 issue as well as in Ontario Out of Doors magazine in the February 1989 issue by O’Brien with John Power. I had, after getting the details of the catch from Ken on the telephone, made a trip to Mac Tier, Ontario thereafter and viewed the frozen fish.

Later I interviewed one of O’Brien’s boat partners, Mark Airstone, in Toronto. While at Mac Tier, Gary Finkler and I acquired the scale O’Brien’s fish had been weighed on with the permission of the scale’s owner Derek Chantler. This scale had been taken to George Grisdale’s resort by Chantler, where the fish was weighed within 30-minutes after he had been called. Gary took the scale to weights and measures for checking.

One thing that had bothered me was that when I did a cursory re-weighing of the frozen fish on a bathroom scale and a 60-pound capacity Chatillon scale while there, it was
considerably short of 65 pounds. My rough calculations after weighing myself and then myself while holding the fish on the bathroom scale I came up a weight of about 56-pounds and a similar weight loss was confirmed with the Chatillon scale (registering only ½-pound increments), roughly 9-pounds less than the official registered weight. I chalked the difference up to the bathroom scale inaccuracy and the uncertain reading of the Chatillon scale, and the difficulty of reading them, plus the fact that the fish had hung in the sun and wind for several hours and had been wrapped in heavy plastic and tied shut. The fish was then placed in a chest freezer that had been off and was warm. The first thing I noticed upon unwrapping the frozen fish, with Mr. O’Brien’s permission, was a considerable amount of sheet ice between the fish and the plastic. I believed that it was additional moisture lost from the fish but wondered later if it could account for a large portion of the huge weight loss. In a 2006 consultation with a fisheries scientist with the Wisconsin DNR, I learned that the 53-pound 12-ounce Myrl McFaul muskellunge caught from North Twin Lake, Wisconsin in 1954 had experienced a 4-pound weight loss in a period of 4-days of being frozen after the catch. This weight loss was attributed by the DNR as being due to “evaporation.” It is therefore, logical to assume that the dehydration of the O’Brien muskellunge could easily be an accumulative effect of hanging for several hours in the wind and sun, and excessive dehydration due to being placed in a warm freezer and being frozen for eight days before being reweighed, not to mention the fishes “slime” weight loss; considerable on a fish of this size.

Over the years, that weight discrepancy and my uncertain interpretation and misinterpretation of the scale certification checks both the one I had done as well as the later official scale certification worked on me. This occurred during a period of time when several other world record muskies were being questioned mostly on the Internet at the time and caused me to review it further, especially my assumption of scale discrepancy. I then made a mild protest to the NFWFHF in 2002 regarding the O’Brien record.

My rationale, that if a scale discrepancy disqualified Robert Malo’s record contending fish, without even considering the huge weight loss I observed for O’Brien’s fish, likewise the same scale criteria should be applied to the O’Brien record even though it had already been accepted by both the NFWFHF and IGFA. Surprisingly then NFWFHF Executive Director Ted Dzialo concurred without much resistance. The O’Brien record and the Gary Ishii line-class record which was weighed on the same scale were set-aside by the NFWFHF. O’Brien’s fish was moved to the category of “Unofficial” as had been done with the Malo fish.

Regrettfully, I was the one that questioned O’Brien’s muskie due to concerns with the weigh-in protocol. I then reported this news in the October/November 2002 issue of Musky Hunter.

Subsequent to this decision another NFWFHF records Advisor Brad Latvaitis got involved. After his usual thorough and insightful review of the scale interpretation matter it was decided that indeed proper scale certification protocol had been followed for the O’Brien fish. He reported …O’Brien’s precise protocol for weigh-in was compromised.
when the scale used by O’Brien was brought to the Canada Consumers and Corporate Affairs Department of Weights and Measures. The scale was found to “weigh within ¼ pound”. This information was initially interpreted as either ¼ pound heavy or ¼ pound light instead of within ¼ pound (4 ounces), i.e. a 66 pound weight within ¼ pound would read between 65 pounds 14 ounces and 66 pounds 2 ounces rather than between 65 ¾ pounds and 66 ¼ pounds. Additionally, documentation of certification methods were not provided including weights used for testing, whether certification was attempted at a lesser weight, i.e. within 1/8 pound, and what the scale read compared to known weights at least equal to the weight of O’Brien’s musky.

Nevertheless, the difference in results between Thurston (MNR District Biologist that certified the scale) and the (Weight and Measures) inspector are useful and provide results that are negligible. Thurston’s methods were in accordance with FFHF protocol, and included documented, acceptable, methods of certification, while the certification conducted by the weights and measures inspector was inferior and lacked documentation compared to Thurston’s. The FFHF suspects that the inspector determined the accuracy of the scale, rather than to certify the scale’s accuracy at a given known weight. An honest mistake was made in either the questions that were asked of the inspector, or the questions that the inspector heard.

The O’Brien application for record indicated a weight of 65-pounds and 0-ounces. Thurston determined that a 65 pound weight on O’Brien’s scale would read between 64 pounds 15 ounces and 65 pounds. Also, since Thurston established that the O’Brien scale read light, the inspector’s scale accuracy check would suggest that a weight of 65 pounds would read between 64 pounds 14 ounces and 65 pounds on O’Brien’s scale. Therefore, since the musky weighed 65 pounds on the O’Brien scale, it weighed at least this amount to as much as 2 ounces more. As the additional ounces could not be verified, the weight of 65 pounds was accepted as official and the record was reinstated.

Subsequently the decision to set-aside the O’Brien and Ishii records was reversed as was reported in the December 2002/January 2003 issue of Musky Hunter magazine. As stated in that report ...”doing a re-examination of the scale documentation, it was learned that the O’Brien fish actually weighed slightly over 65 pounds rather than under 65 pounds as first thought,” the Hall announced in a statement. “The original action was an oversight due to misinterpretation of the data. The submitted weight of 65 pounds is therefore acceptable and the scale verification process that took place to substantiate it did indeed meet Hall of Fame protocol.”

The Ishii fish, a 55-pounder caught in 1981 which was weighed on the same scale and had also been set aside for that reason, has been reinstated as well.

In the statement, the Hall apologized for its actions and is sorry for any inconvenience caused. “We hope you realize what a time-consuming effort record keeping can be. We will continue to strive to maintain an accurate records list.”
Well, apparently the current NFWFHF leadership doesn’t share that last statement feeling based on their Spray fiasco in upholding that record in 2006, when in 1992, the NFWFHF disqualified the Lawton record with far less evidence than was provided the NFWFHF by the WRMA in that 2005 Spray record protest.

At any rate to return to the O’Brien fish; that fish was the most highly scrutinized large muskellunge catch ever at the time of the catch, as I later learned. An estimated 400 people viewed the fish throughout the day and it was never out of sight of several witnesses. There has been some concern expressed over the years about the “bloated” appearance of the fish in most photographs. The concern that has been expressed centers around the suggestion that perhaps the fish had been filled with water prior to weighing. My more recent personal interviews with those first on the scene as well as those charged with the handling of the fish prior to weighing found that the suggestion was baseless and it simply was not done. I personally know the key individuals that were involved in the fish handling process and were satisfied with their explanations of the “chain of custody” and handling of the fish from the time it was brought to shore until it was weighed in front of literally hundreds of witnesses.

In 2003, I spoke first with George Grisdale, owner of the resort where O’Brien’s fish was weighed. He told me that he took no photographs. George further related that he was not involved in the “washing off” or weighing process, but that his son George Jr. was involved. I called young George and learned that he had been the “hose man” when the fish was brought to his dad’s resort and the fish was washed off. He assured me in no uncertain terms, in fact was adamant, that when the fish was washed off the hose was “not” placed inside the fish. He commented that the fish was...abnormally wide. He related to me that the fish hung for...2 ½ to 3 ½ hours.

I next talked to Marion Grisdale. Marion too was adamant that no water from the hose got into the fish. We know better!, she told me. She said that the bloated belly look was...due to the fish hanging and the stomach sagging. Marion had told me in 1988 that she had the guys lay the fish on the ground and she measured it at 56 ½-inches in length. I neglected to find out from her if that was a total length or fork length.
Warren Wilkinson was on the scene almost immediately and in fact was fishing not far from O’Brien when the fish was caught. It was he who contacted a local Ministry of Natural Resources fisheries biologist from Perry Sound to come out and the biologist arrived within the hour followed closely by his supervisor Lloyd Thurston. Thurston also saw to the proper scale certification for the record application processes. Due to the efforts of Wilkinson and Thurston, O’Brien’s muskie became the new Canadian muskellunge record and line class records with both the IGFA and the NFWFHF. Subsequent to the Lawton set-aside by IGFA in 1992, O’Brien’s fish became the IGFA’s All-tackle world record for a time.

In the summer of 2006 and again in April of 2007, I had the opportunity to interview past Muskies Canada President Warren Wilkinson to further clarify the events of the day. I hadn’t known it at the time of my O’Brien protest but Warren was the person responsible for the entire O’Brien record application process. According to Warren the fish was never in O’Brien’s possession when there weren’t witnesses present including the catch itself until it was weighed and later released to Mr. Thurston and placed in George Grisdales freezer. I questioned Warren about the “chain of custody” and other pertinent information during my 2007 interview. Following are the questions and his answers.

**Larry:** **Were you near O’Brien when the fish was caught?**

**Warren:** No, I was in another area of the river and heard about it right away on the radio. We stopped fishing immediately and made a mad dash to George Grisdales resort.

**Larry:** **Were there witnesses to the catch who were also near O’Brien on the trip in from the catch site?**

**Warren:** Yes, several Muskies Canada members witnessed the catch and followed O’Brien and his boat partners with the fish.
Larry: According to Ed Barbossa, O’Brien stopped at the resort he was staying at looking for a scale before returning to Jim Grisdales resort where he had rented a boat. Did they follow him there?

Warren: Yes, MCI board member Davie was there through the entire transition, including moving the fish on a wooden pallet from Jim’s to George Grisdales resort as they had no scales at Jim’s and George did have one, although it was not sufficient to weigh O’Brien’s fish.

Larry: I understand that you arrived after O’Brien and his partners got to George Grisdales resort, but was there when the fish was brought over from Jim’s, is that correct?

Warren: Yes.

Larry: Did you witness the fish being washed off with a hose after it arrived at George’s?

Warren: Yes. This was done at the dock at George’s and was done with a hose with the fish still lying down on the pallet and before it was ever hung on the stairway by the house.

Larry: That water hose, obvious in several of the photographs showing the fish hanging, has been one of the reasons the “water in the fish” hypothesis began. Can you tell me more about that?

Warren: Yes. That hose in the photographs was attached at the house right behind where the fish hung. However, the outlet end of the hose was clear down at the dock and was used there.

Larry: When was length and girth measured?

Warren: It was done with the fish lying on the dock before the fish was weighed and hung for display. Since George Grisdales scale wouldn’t weigh the fish a call was made to Deer Horn Lodge. Derek Chantler brought his scale in and the fish was weighed on it.

Larry: The affidavit length for O’Brien’s fish is 58-inches. Was that a hanging measurement?

Warren: No, the total length was the length of the fish along the flat surface of the dock and was taken with a tape measure from the tip of the longest jaw to the tip of the tail.

Larry: Do you have any idea why Marion Grisdales “lying down” length measurement was 56 ½-inches?
Warren: Perhaps that was a fork length measurement, as that is the measurement we obtained for fork length when the fish was measured on the dock. We also measured the girth at the same time at 30 ½-inches.

Larry: When I remeasured the fish in 1988, I came up with a total length of only 54-inches. Any thoughts on that?

Warren: As you know, O’Brien had cut the throat of his fish to kill it. It is entirely likely that that cut was overlapped when frozen shortening the fish’s total length along with the shrinkage from freezing.

Larry: How long after the actual catch was the fish weighed?

Warren: Approximately one hour.

Larry: Do you have a photograph of the fish on the scale?

Warren: No, but there is likely one in existence as most people there were taking pictures (and video).

Larry: Was the rope used to hang O’Brien’s fish removed when the fish was weighed?

Warren: Yes.

Larry: Who was the MNR biologist that came out from Parry Sound?

Warren: I can’t recall his name right now, but Lloyd Thurston, his supervisor, came shortly after.

Larry: Was the biologist there during the weighing?

Warren: I can’t recall, but Lloyd Thurston his supervisor was. In fact, Lloyd supervised the weighing along with John Power of the Toronto Star.

Larry: After the official weighing and the fish had been displayed for 2-3 hours, what transpired next?

Warren: After most folks had left, Lloyd Thurston wrapped the fish and placed it in George Grisdales freezer where it remained until you removed it 8 days later. After your visit, Lloyd Thurston then took the fish to Dr. Crossman at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. Immediately after the catch, Paul Gasbarino removed a cleithrum bone and got it to Dr. Crossman as well for aging.

Larry: How soon after the catch did Dr. Crossman examine the stomach contents?
Warren: Lloyd Thurston took the fish to Dr. Crossman on Wednesday the 24th, right after your visit to see the fish at George Grisdale’s resort.

Larry: Did Dr. Crossman reweigh the fish?

Warren: No.

These “bloated-belly” shots were taken after the fish had been weighed and just prior to its being placed in George Grisdale’s (left above center) freezer. O’Brien, holding the fish against his chest forcing the stomach out, enhanced the “bloated” appearance of his fish. Photos courtesy Derek Chantler, Deer Horn Lodge

As noted above, O’Brien later that day relinquished possession of the fish with witnesses still present. It was placed in the freezer of resort owner George Grisdale where it was when I saw it. The internal cavity of the fish was later examined by fisheries scientist Dr. Ed Crossman of the Royal Ontario Museum and University of Toronto and nothing unnatural was found therein. Dr. Crossman signed the O’Brien record application. The “chain of custody” of the fish is sound and the fish was never out of sight of witnesses from the capture until released to Lloyd Thurston, Ministry of Natural Resources supervisor and thence to Dr. Crossman.

On July 12, 1989 I received the following letter from Dr. E.J. “Ed” Crossman on Royal Ontario Museum stationery with regard to his removal of the stomach contents of O’Brien’s fish in 1988 (exact date of removal not noted but it was within the two-week period after the catch):

Dear Larry:

I removed the stomach contents from O’Brien’s fish when we were preparing it for the model’s we made here at ROM. The mould for those models was made before the fish went to the taxidermist.

I had hoped contents may have been a single easily identified individual fish. Instead they turned out to be one recognizable bullhead and a second probable bullhead and a lot of disarticulated bones. As a result, I have them in alcohol and still have not gotten down to checking for obvious indicators of other species among the loose bones.
I removed the two ovaries and made them available to Bernard Lebeau...

Sincerely,
Ed.
Dr. E.J. Crossman
Curator
Department of Ichthyology & Herpetology

Ed then hand penned a P.S.:

Bernard has counted them he says (the eggs in the ovaries). His estimate came out a little over 850,000. This is far greater than anything in Carlander’s summary. I did not check any further...EJC

This massive amount of eggs contained within O’Brien’s fish could be a contributing factor to the fish’s large “bloated belly.”

I have known Warren Wilkinson, who is a ski instructor for the US Olympic Ski Team in the winter and a fishing guide in Ontario where he resides during the summer, for about 20 years. When I learned that it was he who had orchestrated the O’Brien record process any doubts that I had previously immediately dissipated. I wish I had known this before my protest. I now believe the O’Brien fish to be beyond reproach! The IGFA listed the O’Brien muskellunge as their all-tackle world record after they had set-aside the Lawton record in 1992. It remained their record until replaced by the Cal Johnson fish in 1995. The Johnson fish is now under scrutiny and if set-aside, O’Brien’s fish is likely to return to the top of IGFA’s world record list.

As was stated in the Spray section above several people have suggested to the NFWFHF that they institute a Modern Day World Record Program and also provide for the recognition of the Historical Muskellunge World Records. Before anyone else, the late John Husar had the idea and expressed it in his August 28, 1992 column in the Chicago Tribune. It said ...I believe the sport needs a way to enshrine its history, no matter how clouded some of those early legends have become.

Likewise, legitimate anglers with modern equipment and higher standards of certification should not suffer by comparison to the looser standards of yesteryear. Their achievements emerging from an era of high pressure angling and land development that has cut into the quality of certain fish population’s, deserve a category of their own.

The answer is simple. Create modern record categories while still glorifying the achievements from the past...”

NFWFHF and IGFA Director’s are you listening? I would hope that the lessons learned from this Chapter are speaking loud and clear!!
The Parting Line: Disclaimer and Conclusion

Ramsell Disclaimer: My newly postulated position of not “messing” with the Historic Muskellunge World Records is clearly stated in this Volume. Any modification of muskellunge record history should be the sole responsibility of the original sanctioning body or the angler directly involved. However, I concede that it is apparent that some of history’s world record muskies were likely less than claimed by their captors based on the professional photogrammetry completed to date, but even that particular science has limitations.

Further, I believe that my analysis and debunking of Dettloff’s selective revisionist history is sufficient to restore the credibility of Haver, Hanser and Lawton and uphold their Field & Stream acceptance as world records at the time of capture. Ironically had it not been for Mr. Dettloff’s attempts to discredit almost all world records caught over the past 68 years with the exception of the Hayward records, the WRMA wouldn’t be in existence. Had the NFWHF and IGFA, “powers that were” at the time in 1992, realized what a “can of worms” was about to be opened when they “disqualified” and “set-aside,” respectively, without “going the extra mile” to assure that the correct decision was being made for the Lawton record as a result of the Dettloff investigation, it is highly unlikely that the record confusion of the ensuing “world record war years” would have taken place and nearly doubled the size of this book!

If it seems that I have been unusually harsh on John Dettloff throughout this Volume, it is because I have lost all respect for “an historian gone awry.” As I grew up and muskies became more and more an important part of my life, my “hero” was Art Lawton. Why? Certainly not because he caught his world record from the area I grew up fishing muskies in; Hayward, Wisconsin’s renowned muskellunge waters. Waters where five previous world records had been taken to be sure, but they had been surpassed. No, it was because Art held the world record and it was the largest muskellunge ever caught, duly recorded and sanctioned; The Holy Grail of muskellunge angling. He was top dog. He was the king of all muskie anglers. And he had caught it from water I had never seen. No matter, it was still a “muskellunge.” It was “the target” for muskie anglers everywhere to shoot for. Some twenty years later, ironically Art became a personal friend as well.

Dettloff meanwhile was ensconced in “tunnel vision” for just the Hayward area records and promotion of same. He stole the glory from my hero for the benefit of his! And he did it unfairly and in a biased manner. He maneuvered himself into a position of authority with one of the current major record keepers and levered it to obtain personal goals. It is truly a sad day when someone forsakes historical truths and attempts to selectively alter muskellunge history based solely on the locale from which a record fish was caught, all in the name of promotion and tourism as he has apparently done. I don’t know if Art Lawton did indeed catch a 69-pound 15-ounce muskellunge and neither does Mr. Dettloff. Likewise I don’t know if Louie Spray or Cal Johnson caught the record fish they claimed and neither does John. We weren’t there. So let’s agree to leave the historic catches of our great sport just that; historic. Or at the very least let’s treat all historic
catches equally fair. That has not been done and I’m mad as hell about it! I think these are good thoughts with which to end Volume I…Larry Ramsell, June 2007