

FROM WHERE I SIT

JOHN COONEY

It's the Fishing – Not the Fish

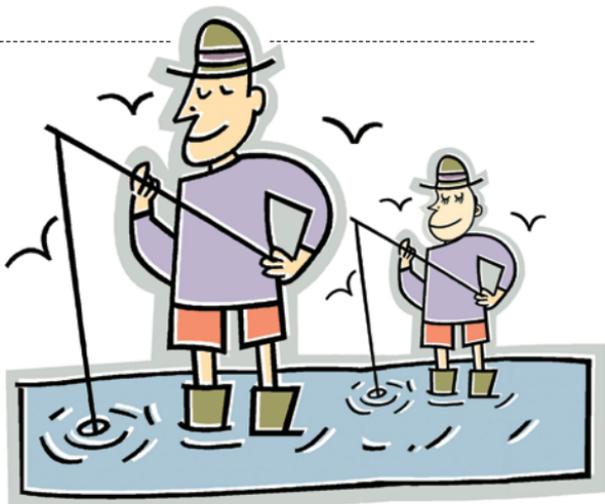
I've never entered a fishing contest, and doubt if I ever will. Oh, I've caught my fair share of fish, and even accidentally hooked the odd big one. But I'm not fanatical enough to get my photo in *NZ Fishing News*. I don't own a tackle-box, I hate the smell of bait, I'd rather eat a sausage than a snapper, and I get seasick ...

It happened only last summer. I got up early one morning, went out on the water with some mates, and lost my breakfast over the side of their small rocking boat. They thought nothing of it, but I thought I'd died and gone to hell! And I was reminded yet again that seasickness, like grieving, is endured in four distinct stages ...

Stage One is DENIAL:

That hollow, squeamy sensation has followed you from the boat ramp. Your belly's doing belly-flops, and your face is turning green. But when your friends ask, "Are you feeling okay?" you say, "Yeah, I'm feeling fine!" – see, denial!

Stage Two is ANGER: The out-board fumes, the rotting squid-bait, and the sloppy, rolling sea are making your guts churn like a Rotorua mudpool. And you're angry. Angry at yourself – you forgot to take a pill. And angry at your mates – *no way* will they take you home!



Stage Three is DEPRESSION: Hot waves are now surging up the back of your throat, and you have to swallow every time a swell goes past. You beg your mates: "Stop rocking the boat!" And you plead with God: "Take my life – now!"

Finally comes ACCEPTANCE: You've fought your heaving guts for long enough. The time has come to disgrace yourself in front of your friends. And as you stagger to the side of the boat, that mudpool becomes a geyser ...

You don't, of course, need a boat to go fishing. You can do it much cheaper (and without getting sick) off a beach. Which is what I found myself doing only the other week. I took a small boy fishing one hot summer's night. I had a brand new rod I'd been given for my birthday ... a five-year-old grandson who was begging to come ... and some nearby surf just sitting there waiting.

We hit the beach as the sun was going down, carried our gear to a spot near the rocks, and eagerly baited-up. I waded out into the waves, did a truly magnificent cast, and got half-drowned for my efforts.

Then we sat down together in the warm soft sand to wait – just him and me – like the seasoned fishermen that we were.

He held the rod, and waited for the strike, and we talked. He reeled it in from time to time, and I cast it out again, and we sat down and waited and talked some more.

We talked about the beach, we talked about the sea, we talked about sharks and whales and dolphins and the hungry

kingfish that was about to take our hook. And, as it got darker and a little lonelier and spookier on that long empty beach, we snuggled up a bit closer, and talked about stars and God and stuff like that.

We were in no hurry. There was nothing urgent to rush back to. *Now* was all that really mattered. And in between casting out and reeling in and checking the bait, we enjoyed some big-man-to-little-man bonding.

We didn't catch our kingfish that night, by the way. We didn't catch a thing. In fact, neither of us even got a bite – despite staying out so late that the batteries in our torch went flat.

But no-one was bothered. Not him, not me. 'Cause when there's just God and you and your grandson ... it's the fishing that counts, not the fish. 🐾

JOHN (GRAPEVINE'S FOUNDER & EDITOR) POINTS OUT THAT 75% OF THE EARTH'S SURFACE IS WATER, AND ONLY 25% LAND. THEREFORE MEN SHOULD SPEND MUCH MORE TIME FISHING THAN THEY DO MOWING LAWNS.

THORT



I read recipes the same way I read science fiction. I get to the end and say, "Well, that's not going to happen!"