

Becoming a Master Crappie Guide

By Bernard Williams

So you call yourself a crappie guide; by definition a guide is “a person who advises or shows the way to others”. You’ve taken people fishing for years, just didn’t get paid for it. When you started charging for your services you kind of felt like you was doing something illegal. How can you charge someone for something you love doing. Just don’t seem like the right thing to be doing.

One day I had a talk with long-time crappie guide Vic Finkley from Grenada, Mississippi. Mr. Finkley is what I



Crappie Guide Vic Finkley – Grenada, MS

consider to be a master crappie guide. He has over 50 years of experience fishing the trophy crappie waters of north Mississippi, mainly Grenada Lake. He’s on the water over 200 days each year. He’s booked solid for 7 to 9 months of the year at least a year in advance; and he’s done this for many years. Vic was a bait and minnow distributor before retired now his son Jerry Finkley now runs the bait and tackle business. They service bait shops north of Hwy 82 in North Mississippi. I asked Vic what does it take to be a good crappie guide? His response was “Patience. No matter how mad or upset you get with a client you have to maintain your emotions.”

Vic says, “You’ll know after a few trips whether you cut out to be a fishing guide. You’re going to be fishing with people that complain. They’ll grumble when the fish are biting and when the fish were not. You may not enjoy it but you have to make the best of it. When you encounter these type individuals try to change the focus to understanding their

personality. Once you find what make them tick, try to walk a mile in their shoes. Focus your mind on that person and not on you, it’s not about you anymore, it’s about them. You’re under enough pressure as it is to find fish and help your client find ways to catch them.”

Vic says, “You have to be a cheerful person; don’t let the negatives control you. When fishing, you’re always going to have issues, what separates the good guides or fishermen from the average is how they handle adversity”. I’ve been around Vic for many years and I’ve never seen him rattled. His clients are repeat offenders; they almost always re-book a trip for the same time next year after the day is over. Another point Vic stressed is: “You got to love what you’re doing. I love to fish, whether it’s with a client or just for fun. I tell my clients we’re going fishing, we may or may not catch fish but we’re going to have a good time. That’s why it’s called fishing not catching.” Vic says this approach has worked for over 40 years. He’s got customers that’s been fishing with him for over 25 years.

The point I’m trying to show you is, don’t get into guiding for the money, you’ve have to love fishing and people to survive. You must have patience if you’re going to continue and grow your business. Guiding is a service and the definition of service is “the action of helping or doing work for someone”. In other words you are out there with paying clients giving them a helping hand. You have to be courteous, friendly, polite and considerate, if not don’t plan on being in the guide business too long. When customers start spreading their bad experiences about your service, you’re doomed. My advice is to be selective in choosing your customers; it’s like they say, “some money is not good money”.

So if you’re looking for an excellent guide on any of the trophy lakes of northern Mississippi (Grenada, Enid, Sardis, or Arkabutla), give Vic Finkley (662-417-8690) a call first. You may have to get in line, he stays extremely busy. I promise you one thing; you’ll have a good time fishing and sharing some of his life stories. Tell him I sent you, it may help, however I don’t think he gives discounts. ...*Bernard*