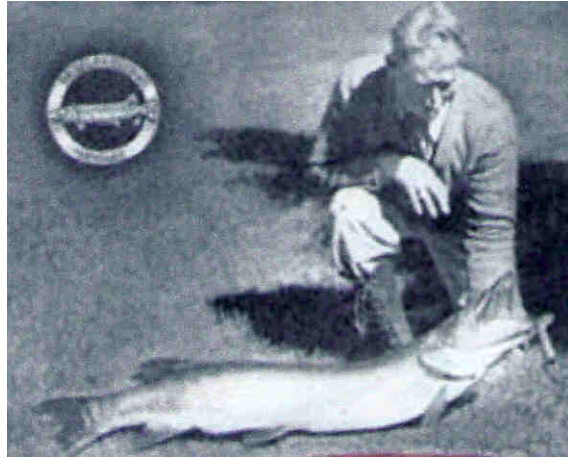


Alois Hanser 64-8 Favil Lake, Wisconsin - 1947



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.

The photo on the previous page appeared in *Field & Stream* magazine in 1948 and in a Heddon lure advertisement. Note the small Heddon Vamp in the fish's mouth and the nice touch of Haver's 1st place *Field & Stream* award pin superimposed upon the photograph.

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.

May 17, 1947

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.*

*State of Wisconsin
Vilas County*

Personally came before me, this 17 day May A.D., 1947 the above named, Alois Hanser, Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin to me known to be the person who executed the foregoing instrument and acknowledged the same.

*Ben B. Gauthier
Notary Public, Lac du Flambeau, Vilas County, Wisconsin
My Commission expires 1/28/1948*

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

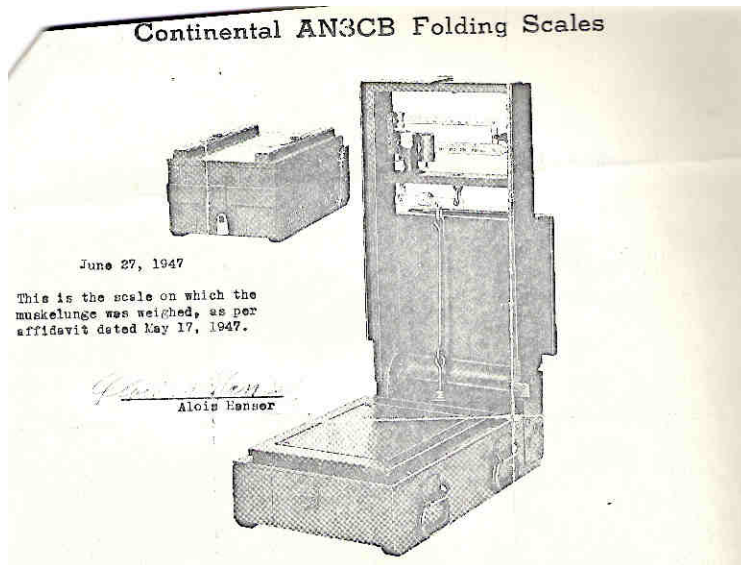
*STATE OF WISCONSIN
County of Vilas.*

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 Muskalloung, 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

*Subscribed and sworn to before me
This 15th day of July A.D. 1947
Frank W. Carter
County Judge, Vilas County, Wisconsin*

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*

*Ben C. Gauthier
Notary Public, Vilas County, Wisconsin
My commission expires January 28, 1948*

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

**STATE OF WISCONSIN
VILAS COUNTY,**

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

Subscribed and sworn to before me

This 8th day of July, 1947

Ben C. Gauthier

Notary Public, Vilas Co., Wis.

My commission expires January 28, 1948

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

Rhineland, 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, although Louie Spray did comment about the size of Hanser's fish in a letter to me in 1976 when he wrote *...I know I can prove that the Hanser Fish was... a fake and a farce from start to finish... If you don't believe it, go over in the Minocqua-Woodruff, Mercier (sic) Country and take a look at the mounted fish itself...*

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 *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 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 Muskies*, 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 Rhineland 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.



The Hanser Rhinelander photo

In a letter to Bob Kutz at the NFWHF in 1980, Louie Spray had the following to say about the spawn in the Hanser fish **...If ever a Muskie was recorded on a “Wing And A Prayer” it was the Hanser fish of 1947. It is still on display over at Mercer, and if it weighed a lick over 45 pounds, I’ll eat it, regardless of their claim of 12 pounds of spawn in the fish.**

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.

Dettloff tried to make something out of the possibility that Hanser’s fish wasn’t caught from Favil Lake but it has no bearing on the size of the fish. Similarly, the catch location of Spray’s 1949 fish was also questioned, as you will soon read. Dettloff reported that Hanser’s daughter-in-law Molly Hanser said **...that Hanser’s musky did not come out of Favil Lake...she remembered seeing Al Hanser coming to shore of the lake his home was on – Mitten Lake – with the fish in the bottom of his boat...**

This recollection 48-years after the fact flies in the face of a factual Hanser statement at the time of the catch that **...I put the fish in my car and went home.**

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!

Incidentally, fish were loaded in those days as will be chronicled by Len Hartman in Volume II.

In closing, consider an interesting fact included in Dettloff's article, Hanser was ...***A former constable of Lac du Flambeau.***

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.