

Arthur Lawton 69-15 – 1957

1957 ... 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.

November 12, 1957

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*.

11-18-57

*Field & Stream,
New York, N.Y.*

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. His requirements were ...***The fish must measure at least 5 ft. in length or over (this is for obvious reasons) and have a girth of 31 inches or more and must not have swallowed just previous to the catch any lead, rocks, old iron or other artificial weight. The fish must be weighed, examined and measured at SPRAY'S BAR by Lou Spray of Rice Lake, Wis. Method of measuring to be same as used by Field & Stream Contest. FISH CAN BE TAKEN BY ANY LEGAL METHOD IN ANY WATER IN THE WORLD! –NO QUESTIONS ASKED! FULL PAYMENT GUARENTEED!***

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 contests 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.***

***Rochester, New York
December 21, 1957***

Field and Stream
Fishing Editor
530 Fifth Avenue
New York City

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 Wheeler 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.

In January of 1979, Spray sent another letter to (former) *Field & Stream* editor Hugh Grey. It asked, *I am wondering if you can remember writing me a letter back in the Fall of 1957, asking me to contest the Lawton Muskie catch of September of that year...*

I told you in my reply to your letter, that if I contested the Lawton Catch, that I was afraid of the ribbing I would encounter from Muskie Anglers, for poor sportsmanship I displayed,

especially since I held the record so long myself. And also, at the time, I was unaware that Lawton did not have his Catch mounted.

For years I had been offering a Prize of \$2,500.00 to anyone breaking the Record, and since Lawton did not contact me on the matter, I suspicioned (sic) that the catch was somewhat doubtful as a Record, and especially so now that I had (sic) your letter at hand. But for reasons above mentioned, I chose not to favor you with a Contest. But now I wish I would have...

About a month later in February of 1979, Hugh Grey responded. *I'm afraid I can't be of much help to you in response to your letter of January 23rd which was forwarded to me by FIELD & STREAM. I have not been associated with the magazine since 1975 and have no access to correspondence files.*

We were always having controversy over the musy (sic) record, it seems to me, and I can't confirm or disavow the letter you refer to...

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! 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 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

***Ann Sodahl
Notary Public, State of Florida
My Commission Expires: Oct. 23, 1995
Bonded thru Notary Public Underwriters***

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...

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 & Stream*** investigation of Lawton, there is no question in my mind that ***Field & Stream*** 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& Stream*** conducted an investigation. Importantly, the dates of all correspondence, including the anonymous letters and the Spray letter received by ***Field& Stream***, the investigational letters below to and from ***Field& Stream***, 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

***Miss Mary Ball
Fishing Contest Dept.
Field and Stream***

*530 Fifth Ave.
New York 36, N.Y.*

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

Mr. (unnamed)
(address)

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.

It was certainly good seeing you again when we were all up at the cabin in September. I imagine the river looks a lot different now than it did at that time and that you have really got plenty of snow. (Unnamed) and (also unnamed) join me in best regards and 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.

(Town unnamed)
24 February, 1958

*Mr. Hugh Grey,
Editor*

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,
(Unnamed)*

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

*Mr. Arthur Lawton
R.D.
Delmar, N.Y.*

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*.

*R.D. Delmar, New York
March 3, 1958*

*Mr. Mike Ball
Fishing Contest Editor
Field and Stream
530 Fifth Avenue
New York 36, New York*

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

*Mr. Mike Ball
Fishing Contest Editor
Field & Stream Magazine
530 Fifth Ave.,
New York, N.Y.*

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*

*1 Maple Avenue
Albany 5, N.Y.*

(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*

*Sworn to before me
This 20th day of March 1958
Arthur Langlelder
Justice of Peace
Town of New Scotland
NY*

I found it interesting to note the previous affidavit was witnessed by Harold Dale Shaw, the writer assigned by *Field & Stream* 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 and pretty much told the story of the catch. However it was published in a much abbreviated form from the original version which he had submitted to the magazine. When I came across the unedited version in the *Field & Stream* files I found Mr. Shaw had given a much deeper insight into the life of Art Lawton, his fishing prowess and his *normal course of action* after his fishing trips much of which was not used. It was, I assume, edited for due to space constraints. It included material from Shaw's personal interview of Lawton. Following are the salient parts from the unedited version of that article.

...Thus began a strange story – an adventure which started with the hair-raising action of a big fish battle and ended, if it has ended, with some of the overtones of a detective tale.

...”Tell me about the fish,” I said. “The editors of Field& Stream have sent me up to get the story for their readers. As you know, this is the biggest muskie caught in eight years, and the biggest ever taken on rod and reel. You must have been very excited when it happened.”

Lawton looked puzzled. “No. I wasn't.” he said slowly. “You figure, some day you will tag one like that. It's bound to happen. I've caught a lot of muskies, you know. My wife has too. So it's bound to happen. She had the Field& Stream Contest top fish for 1956 – 60 lb. 8 oz. – and I had second place, and I had first place the year before that. So you get used to it. I don't fish for records. I fish for muskies. When I caught the fish, I didn't know it was a new record, or what it weighed, even. You see, it comes down to, I love the river. You said you've fished there – then you know what I mean. The St. Lawrence is God's Country. Since 1936 I've spent every moment I could spare up there. No, I didn't know when I caught him that Louis Spray out in Wisconsin held the record at 69 lbs. 11 oz. and that I had beaten him by 4 ounces. I don't like this idea of beating anybody. Like I said, I fish for muskies, not records. My wife and I have caught more than 700 muskies since 1936!”



Art (l) with brother Gordon and Art's 1st Muskie 1936

More than twenty years of muskie fishing. Thirty-five muskies per season.

I wondered, how did one man and his wife catch so many and such big muskies, and in an area where the charter muskie guides thought they were doing fair if they brought in one or two legal fish in a week?

The catches of Arthur Lawton definitely set him far above the general angling throng, and make him one of the most outstanding muskie killers of our time. Few men have caught a muskellunge over fifty pounds, and Art Lawton has caught four, actually many more, one of them the 69 lbs. 15 oz. giant.

How does so much luck come to one man?

Says Lawton, there is not only luck. There is hard work and slow learning. There's just learning how to work hard too. You begin by beginning very young.

...if you wanted to fish with Art Lawton you got up before the sun and you fished until after sunset. On a nice night, you might fish until 3 a.m., or right through until after dawn.

And you didn't kid around too much, or get soused in the boat.

If you could stand that kind of fishing, you almost always saw fish. But they were not yours! They were Lawton's. He almost always caught the most and the biggest fish. He was just too damn good. People got to resent that, of course, fishermen being prone to jealously as much or more than anybody else. And Art wasn't going to catch less fish to placate anybody.

...In a boat with Lawton, you fished – ten, even eighteen hours a day if you fished – and you fished right.

“When they start to hit,” Art says, “you got to be there.” One thing I can't stand is the idea of being in the cabin taking a nap when the big boys decide to get hungry. If I could fish 24 hours a day, I'd do it. I just love it that much.”

Thus the personality of a potential record-buster emerges.

...He left Gordon in his wake. Only Ruth could keep up with him – Ruth and an Indian named Oaks – a river-lover and meat fisherman who knew where the muskies were and how to catch them, but who didn't guide commercially as a rule.

Oaks was nearly 60 then, and is now gone. At that age he stood 6 foot 2 and was built like a section of suspension-bridge cable.

The Lawton's had no outboard in 1936. Oaks was their outboard. He could blow breeze into a pair of “ash sails” from dawn til dusk. Art figures he rowed easily thirty to forty miles a day. One particular island was fifteen miles long, and a regular tour was to troll the length of it and back, and then down the river in another direction.

...By 1939, Lawton and his wife had settled down to fishing almost entirely alone. They knew the river and they had a motor. They had reduced muskie slaying to a cold science that was paying off regularly in sizzling action, thrills and sheer exercise.

...In one week's vacation in 1939, they landed six muskies from 11 to 33 pounds. That's nearly a muskie a day going into one boat, which any muskie devotee will tell you is just short of miraculous.

To do it, they fished every possible minute, day and night. They ate in their boat. They all but slept in it.

...Their system was to drive the 200 miles to the river on a Friday after work, start fishing the following dawn, fish til after dark Saturday, fish all day Sunday and drive home Sunday night. Week in, week out they followed this muskie-mad system. Week in, week out they brought in big catches, showed them to no one, stowed them in their car and trundled home.

...More discoveries. That a week centering on a full moon in September was the best time to fish. For years Lawton has arranged his vacation to cover just that time.

That an old hang-dog orange plug that has been kicking around the box for years would catch muskies – if Ruth used it. Caught her seven in two days. Helped her hook the biggest muskie Lawton has ever seen, a fish estimated at 75 pounds. She fought it to a standstill for 20 minutes before the drag froze and the fish broke off.

Since 1939, there hasn't been a season they haven't taken at least one muskellunge heavier than 30 pounds.

...In 1944 he broke the Field & Stream Contest with a 58 lb. 5 ounce.



In my 1st Compendium this 1950 fish was incorrectly shown as Lawton's 1944 fish

In 1955 he made first again with a 58 lb. 13 oz. fish.



Art's 58-13

In 1956 he had second with a 52 pound 5 ounce. (He took second place to his wife, whose 60 lb. 8 oz. muskie placed first).



Two muskies – 112-pounds 13-ounces! Biggest fish in (l) photo s/a (r)

And now in the 1957 Contest, Lawton is back on top with a 69 lb. 15 oz. giant, a new world record.

What happened to Arthur Lawton on Monday, September 23, 1957, and during the weeks which followed will amaze some readers. However, they must understand that subsequent events were the result of the mysterious dramatic effect which big muskies and the talk of big muskies has on the majority of muskie chasers who have not caught enough of them – or any of them – and who have not, therefore, developed a rational attitude toward those who enjoy special success in the sport.

Also it must be understood that subsequent events in Arthur Lawton's life were partly the result of his unusual personality.

First of all, when it came to fishing, he was solitary. In other things, he has always been a companionable fellow, a man with pals, a league bowler, a camp party deer driver. Not a lonely person hard put to find a hand to shake.

However, the way he fishes, and with his secret spots and all, he has got to alone – that is, with his wife Ruth.

Still there is more to it. Success long back made him the center of a swarm of secret-seekers. He learned that for his purposes, which was to be a successful fisherman, there was only one way to protect your privately discovered productive spots from the meat hungry buddies you found slapping your back every time you showed game. Art Lawton, like most of the better hunters and fishermen, learned this, and learned it the hard way.

...”As soon as Ruth and I started taking big muskies out of the river the Albany papers played them up. Pictures and everything. I didn't mind, but wouldn't tell where I caught fish, and that made people mad. The phone started ringing. Strangers complaining and begging for tips.

For years since, Lawton has been getting demanding letters and calls. His reluctance to hand out information is matched only by his reluctance to flash his fish around. He's caught more than two tons of legal muskies. Few people have seen many of them. The problem of combining a modestly productive workaday life with a heavy fishing schedule seems to be lessened if the fish are rapidly disposed of, and the expense reduced if none are mounted. Usually Lawton's catches are cut into steaks and fillets by fish-eating friends within a day or two after his return to Albany. He does not eat muskie himself any more.

Art Lawton went to work at the storage company bright and early Monday morning. Sometime during the day he went into the cooler and looked at his fish. It looked nice. But he knew it was losing weight, and this bothered him. Begging off work early in the afternoon, he wrapped up his fish, put it in his car and drove home. When he got home, he hammered a 2 x 4 post into the lawn and hung the fish on it. Then he went in and made several calls to arrange for a weighing and for some witnesses, for he had a feeling the fish might belong in the Field & Stream Contest.

While Lawton rounded up his weigher and witnesses, gasping motorists screeched to a halt on the highway and scrambled out to have a look at the grand muskellunge in the yard. A similar scene had been enacted the week before. That time, returning from a week's vacation on the river, Lawton had strung up nine muskies ranging from 20 to 49 ½ pounds. Gawkers backed up traffic for a mile.

Eventually Lawton put the fish in the car and drove to Walter Dunn's slaughterhouse in Albany. The witnesses were already there...

...Lawton laid his fish on the scale bed, Dunn fiddled with the sliding weight, and the balance was soon struck.

“Sixty-nine pounds fifteen ounces,” Dunn said.

Everybody gathered close to check the reading. Dunn and Sharp signed a Field & Stream Contest affidavit. There was no discussion of a world record, for Lawton was still thinking only of the Field & Stream Contest. For that reason, he disposed of the big muskie as he had disposed of smaller ones before; he gave the meat to his friends. It did not occur to him to have the fish mounted, for he has no particular yen for fish on the wall and mounting is an expense he cannot incur.

But the facts were soon distorted into a “mysterious disappearance” by other anglers. It did not suffice them that the muskie had been seen and examined by witnesses, that it had been weighed on a licensed and inspected scale, that an affidavit had been sworn to before a justice of the peace.

Lawton is aware of the rumors and gossip and anonymous letter writing. He thought that the world record muskie was up high somewhere over seventy pounds. This impression is easily formed because articles on muskies repeatedly mention fish of 70, 80 and ever over 100 pounds have been seined by game wardens obtaining eggs for hatchery propagation.

Further, Field & Stream has not made a regular practice of publishing the world record listings, since the popular interest has been in the annual contest winners.

Actually, the world record muskellunge on the Field & Stream books before Lawton made his effort was caught in 1949, eight years previously. Lack of competitive activity in this class has very likely caused popular interest in the 1949 catch to fade.

Therefore, when rod-and-reel columns in Albany and other New York papers, and then, like flash fire, in papers throughout the nation, began to carry stories on Lawton’s catch, the writers of these columns demonstrated that they had made hasty recourse to their files in order to come up with data they published...

...Lawton’s claim had hardly been filed when suspicion and jealousy mounted to fever pitch in certain quarters – that is, in places where muskie men gathered to agree on how certain they were there was something wrong with this new claim.

The most hot-headed pointed out that no two fish could be that close in measurement, one just edging out the other.

Those with cooler heads, small voices in the storm, said that anyone trying to fake a world record would hardly be stupid enough to dummy up measurements and weight so close to those of the record he was out to beat. He would try to avoid the very suspicion that had been generated.

Art Lawton's comment on this is still that on Monday of the weighing he did not know what the world record was. You have to consult a World Almanac to find out. A lot of people don't own one.

As news of Lawton's record claim spread, repercussions began to be felt in the Field & Stream offices in New York. One by one, strange letters arrived...

Informed that rumors were being circulated, Lawton said, "Remember that I caught nine muskies the week before the big one, and the best of the nine went 49 ½ pounds. A lot of people saw them, including this guide, I guess. He just figures that it was the 49 ½ pounder I've entered in the contest."

As for mounted muskies, he did not like them – they were expensive to have done in the big sizes. They dominated a living room...There are no mounted fish anywhere in the Lawton house. He has no den in which to put one. Oh, there is one in the attic, a small one gathering dust. The only other Lawton mount is in a local sporting-goods store.



Ruth's 1956 giant

Actually, there were four mounted Lawton muskies. The two mentioned and two others, one of which was Ruth's 60 ½ pounder from the previous year, 1956 (shown on the previous page). The three in Lawton's possession were indeed in the attic. I viewed them when I was there in January of 1978. Let us continue with Shaw's story.

However, there are those who point out that while the mounting of a world record muskie might cost 100 dollars or more, and might make a disgusting trophy, there are tavern owners who would gladly pay 500 or more to have one over the bar for publicity purposes, in order to enjoy the disgusting effect it would have on swarming customers.

Anyway, fan mail continued to arrive at Field& Stream, as late as December 21, 1957...

He quoted the one of the two anonymous letters previously exhibited above from the gentleman active in "game and fish clubs."

Informed of this letter, Art Lawton explained that the nine muskies caught the week ending September 15 were taken out and seen by Benedict, who did not guide him, and that Benedict

called a newspaper photographer to take a picture but Lawton left before he arrived. “Obviously,” says Lawton, “Benedict thought the one I entered as the world record was the 49 ½ pounder, but it was not. The one I entered was caught the next weekend, and further west. If I tell where I stayed, the place would be deluged. I simply cannot divulge that information, and it is not required for me to give it.



The Lawton “Nine”

David Benedict, Indian, riverman, man of mystery, man with an opinion. What could he reveal?

Even in this automation age, the long-distance routing of the person-to-person call to Benedict was complex, and at that it ended in the lap of an information operator.

“Are there any David Benedicts in there?” I asked.

“There is only an Alec and a Michael.”

“Try Michael. Maybe I have the name wrong.”

She tried Michael. Michael answered.

My operator said, “Are you Mr. Benedict the fishing guide?”

Michael Benedict said, “No, you want Joe. He’s got no phone.”

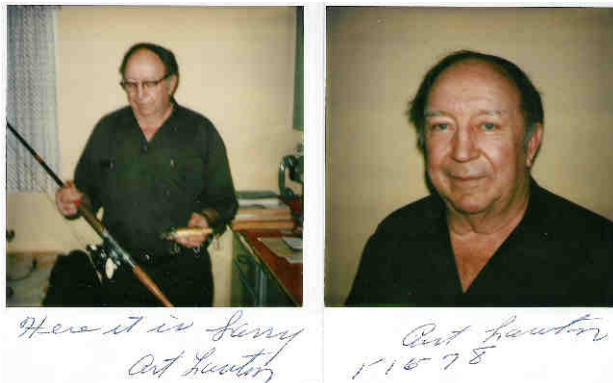
I threw in: “Is there any David Benedict in there?”

And then it ended for good. Mike Benedict ended it for me. He said, "Dave died several months ago, in December." And then he hung up. So did I.

In the end, everybody put in an opinion on the great St. Lawrence muskellunge, but perhaps of all came from Clayton Seghers, head of the New York State Conservation Commission, Division of Conservation Education, who compiles its trophy records and had this to say:

"We know there are muskellunge of world-record size in the section of the St. Lawrence where the Lawton's fish, and we now that Art Lawton is an extremely persistent and successful muskellunge fisherman who took a muskie weighing more than 58 pounds as far back as 1944. He has been capturing top place in national fishing contests and New York State muskie records for years. If anybody was going to set a new world record, Lawton was the logical man to do it."

When I visited with Art Lawton in January of 1978, I did a tape recorded interview with him. Following is the critical parts of that interview.



"Here it is Larry-Art Lawton" as Art showed me his rod, reel and lure during my 1978 visit - both photos were signed by Art

Larry: Art, while we've got this opportunity I would like to get the story from you first hand. There's been, as always is the case with any record muskie, lots of stories of different things that were done that weren't supposed to have been and tales, I think more from jealousy than anything. I'd like to get it from you in your own words, how the fish was caught, the entire story behind the fish if we could.

Art: Well, let's see. We were trolling, I think it was about 4:30, 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon when I had this strike, hooked it and played it until more or less tired out which was about an hour, maybe ten, fifteen minutes. I'm sorry about the picture, put it that way. I guess there's been a lot of talk but it was just one of those things that first of all, it didn't come out good. I can't remember just why, but my brother generally took the pictures and for some reason or another he was having a hard time to get to the house to take it. I didn't realize that people really was that much interested in muskie fishing....

Larry: Okay, and you were trolling on your favorite grounds of course.

Art: One of those spots where we'd taken a few before, good sized ones. Well, we generally would start out around 9:30 and fish until 2:00 maybe 2:30, and then we'd pull in and have lunch. This day was no different as far as I can remember, only that I had a good fish when I came in that night.

Larry: The thought never entered your mind that you had a potential world record, I understand.

Art: No, I, well, I'd always said I'd like to get a record, but I never realized that this fish was a record.

Larry: Just knew it was probably the biggest one you'd ever caught?

Art: Yeah, if I would have realized it was a record, I would have pushed the northern back down in there that he threw up....

Larry: This was after you brought the fish to the boat?

Art: After I had him hooked, while bringing him in or fighting him, he emptied his stomach, whatever happened, and this northern, little muskie, whatever, it happened to be was hooked on one of those hooks on the plug....

Larry: We'd have to consider that this weight, your 69-pounds 15-ounces was the weight with an empty stomach actually....

Larry: What was your normal procedure than after you caught a big fish like this?

Art: Well, we put him on a rope and laid him over the side, dragged him around until we went in that evening.

Larry: Keep him fresh, in other words. You didn't immediately quit fishing then,

Art: No, no!...

Larry: Okay, then what did you do with the fish after you got the official weight and got the witnesses to sign the affidavit and so forth?

Art: I gave it to the neighbors to be eaten.

Larry: Was this normal procedure for you?

Art: Yeah. Well you heard that today, from a little boy that ate a lot of them.

Larry: Right, we talked to Paul Martin who was one of your neighbors, the family of 11 children, and as was your normal practice, you gave them this fish, and you had given the numbers of big fish in the previous days.

Art: I always give them all they wanted of them, you know.

Larry: There's always the question that's asked me, why didn't you mount this world record fish?

Art: Well, I had three or four mounted up in the attic which you saw.

Larry: Right, they're sitting there gathering dust as has been written in articles. One of them I would say is close to a 60 inch fish and it's laying there gathering dust (actual mount length which I measured later was 57 inches and I learned it was Ruth's 60 ½-pounder from 1956 registered at 63 ¼-inches fresh length).

Art: If I'd ever realized what I could have made or did with it, I would have had it mounted, believe me....

Larry: The first time then when you realized that you had a record fish was when Field & Stream contacted you?

Art: Right.

Larry: "That was probably 30 days later?"

Art: Yes, it must have been all of a month later....

Larry: You had done, as you normally had done, by getting the fish weighed on a certified scale; getting the signatures of the witnesses to the weight; and then disposed of the fish in your normal manner.

Art: Yeah, the regular way we had always done.

Larry: And, I remember our previous conversation, you told me that the weather that day that you took the picture was bad, almost didn't even get a picture of the fish.

Art: That's right. I come near to not getting, well, I almost had to fight to get my brother to come out and take the picture. We didn't have a, well, I had a little camera, but for some reason or another that wasn't working, or we didn't have film, and that picture was taken late in the afternoon. It was, well, almost dusk.

Note: On September 22, 2006 I received a letter from Lawton nephew Art Molle following up on an earlier letter he had sent me with what he believed to be a newly found photo of Lawton's record fish. That letter said in part *...I still believe the picture...is the worlds record, as he (Art) apologized for having only one photo left in his camera. I believe the line across photo at face, head and roof level was caused by being last photo...*



Molle's "last Lawton photo"

This was an important photo discovery by Mr. Molle but more importantly his statement accredited to Art Lawton for his "apologizing" *for having only one photo left in his camera* is of even more importance. I will cover this more later.

Larry: So, we don't have the fish mount for posterity and we're fortunate to have the one picture that had been in existence of the fish.

Art: Yeah, I think so....

Art: Well, I'll tell you, I wish that I'd had more good pictures of him; I wished I'd taken more, or had more taken. If I'd have realized what was going to take place, I'm sure I'd have had a photographer take the pictures....

Larry: ...One thing that has been asked of me many times too is why haven't we heard from the St. Lawrence River in the past six or seven years...I think we can probably answer the question as far as you're concerned that your wife passed away.

Art: Yes.

Larry: When was that?

Art: '71. October 17, 1971.



1966-Last known photographs of Ruth Lawton. Boat "Muskie Queen"

Larry: And she was your constant fishing partner for 40 years and you kind of just lost your spirit and your interest in fishing. How many times have you been on the river since 1971?"

Art: I believe twice last year and the year before.

Larry: That would explain why we haven't heard from Art Lawton. People might be interested in knowing that you were on the river, what, one day last year?

Art: One day.

Larry: Caught seven?

Art: Seven.

Larry: Caught seven muskies, released six of them. The one you kept by your standards was a small fish. How much did this fish that you kept last fall weigh?

Art: Thirty-six pounds....



Note: Art caught his last muskie in 1977, which weighed 36-pounds. In this photo (previous page) the muskie looks comparatively “small” and makes a good one to compare against his “big” muskie photos.

Larry: “And then I know from the records, in 1944 you caught a fish that weighed 58-pounds 5-ounces. What most people don't realize, at that time that fish was the 7th (actually 6th sanctioned) largest muskie that had ever been caught and this was 1944! What this should prove to people is that Art Lawton has been catching big muskies since before a lot of them were born. It further, to me, indicates that there was no real luck involved in the vast numbers of big fish that you caught. You were on your waters way back when, and you learned them thoroughly and you were consistent.

Art: Well, I started when I was 16, 17, I don't remember just how old I was, fished with my brother. He was a lot harder fisherman than I was. We used to start at daybreak and we'd fish

right through dark. Well, the pictures you saw, some were small ones and some were the good ones....

It's like catching muskies, people say you got to know the days and the weather and this and that; I don't believe in it because you never know. You can go out there today and maybe you'll have a good day and you thought it was going to be lousy. Well, some of the times we had good days when we thought we wasn't going to get a thing, or maybe a good week....

Larry: Getting back to some of the discrepancies on your fish because of the way it was handled and because you didn't realize you had a record fish, what are some of the wild tales that have been rumored around muskie country that have come back to you about your fish?

Art: Well, it's been said that it wasn't any job for me to catch a bunch of muskies; I run them up a creek.

Larry: Run them up a creek, huh? Pick out the ones you want?

Art: "Pick out the ones I want and let the rest go.

Larry: If that was the case, why couldn't everybody else do that?

Art: That's what I often wondered. I think I probably told a fellow that. I said if that's what you think, good, try it sometime and see how many you get. That was the best damn story I ever heard.

Larry: He was probably jealous because he couldn't get any.

Art: He worked in the same building where I did and he just couldn't believe that I was catching muskies the way I was. I believe there was a little sour grapes, as you said.

Larry: Did you ever hear tales, people getting back to you with rumors that you bought that fish?

Art: No, nobody ever said that I bought it, not that anybody said to me anyway.

Larry: This is a lot of the tales you hear from some of the Wisconsin people.

Art: No, I don't have to buy them, I caught them.

Larry: Well, I think the record since 1936 that you showed me, the pictures, and come right through the years with it, indicates that you knew what you were doing and you were very successful at it.

Art: As my wife and I used to laugh a lot of times, because I was always saying that I didn't have to get on my knees and pray for that big one. We had them and we generally tried to hold them so that people could get the actual size of it....

Larry: You related a story to me. People wanted to find out so bad what you were using. What did they do?

Art: Well, they really couldn't find out what I was using and maybe I was a little shy at telling people. I never told anybody too much what I did use.

Larry: They thought you had some super secret bait I suppose.

Art: They thought I was doing something special or different and this one night we was coming up to one of our favorite spots which there was always fellows out there which was nothing new, but this one night there was a lot of extra boats around. Hell, I was coming up through them and, boy, I had a nice strike, a good one I figured. It was jerk, jerk, and first thing I know, slack. What the hell happened? No plug I reeled in. So while I was baiting mine, putting on another outfit same as I had, we made another circle and the same thing happened to my wife. I just couldn't believe that this thing could happen like that. We lost two. And after I lost the third one, I said what the hell, there something wrong. I knew darn well there was no barrels in this place where I was fishing. I was almost sure because I'd fished there time and time again for years and never had anything like that happen.

Larry: So what do you figure the answer was?

Art: Later on the word got out that the boys had scuba divers out there-

Larry: Had them waiting for your bait to come by and cut them off so they could see what you were using.

Art: Also you were telling me you used to be bothered by a lot of people trying to follow you to your fishing grounds.

Art: Yeah. There was one fellow that had a little money and he was bound and determined to find out what I was doing. He would start out and he'd get in the weeds or someplace and hide and watch me with glasses, and try to see what the hell I had or what I was using...

It is 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!

The length and girth information on eight of the nine supported the sanctioned weights as can be seen in the following list:

Art 1958 59-pounds 5-ounces 59 ¼-inches long x 30 ½-inches girth
Ruth 1958 54-pounds 9-ounces 58 -inches long x 29 ¾-inches girth
Art 1959 65-pounds 13-ounces 62 ½-inches long x 32 -inches girth
Art 1959 51-pounds 7-ounces 56 ¾-inches long x 29 ½-inches girth
Art 1960 61-pounds 4-ounces 63 ½-inches long x 29 ¾-inches girth
Ruth 1961 68-pounds 5-ounces 61 ½-inches long x 32 ½-inches girth
Art 1961 53-pounds 6-ounces 58 ½-inches long x 29 ¾-inches girth
Art 1962 61-pounds 4-ounces 60 ½-inches long x 30 ½-inches girth



59-5 Art 1958 - 54-9 Ruth 1958



Amazing Watson!



Art's 51-7 and 65-13 from 1959

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 (next page) was captioned ***Lawton holds his frozen "65-13" from 1959...*** (above) ***This photo was submitted to Field & Stream. In the later photo of the 65-13...*** (next page), ***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!



What say you Sherlock? I concur Mr. Compender.



Partially frozen or weight?

Dettloff allowed in the photo analysis section of his report that this fish could have been **...59"** long. It was 62 ½-inches long.



49-3 Ruth 1959 – 61-4 Art 1960

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.



53-6 Art 68-5 Ruth 1961

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 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.



**The "King" at 69-15 and The "Queen" at 68-5
First and Third on the All-Time List!**

Below is length and girth information on the 1955 fish, two of their 1956 fish and the 1957 record fish.

Art 1955 58-pounds 13-ounces 60 ½-inches long x 28 ½-inches girth
Ruth 1956 60-pounds 8-ounces 63 ¼-inches long x 29 3/8-in. girth
Art 1956 52-pounds 5-ounces 56 ½-inches long x 28 ½-inches girth
Art 1957 69-pounds 15-ounces 64 ½-inches long x 31 ¾-inches girth

One more thing I would like to add that I learned after I left Art. I made a stop in Gananoque, 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!!

It should be noted too, that currently there is a gentleman fishing the St. Lawrence River that is boating numbers of huge muskies to the mid 50-pound range that far exceed what the Lawton's accomplished...but he hasn't yet found "the one," or even a verified 60-pounder. I look for that to happen in the next few years, so stay tuned. I will discuss this gentleman in considerably more detail in Volume II.

We will now go to the John Dettloff's Lawton investigation. As noted at the start of this Volume, in early 2006 I finally under-

took 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

<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>

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, although a considerable amount of it will be included. 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., on 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.

“Not 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?”

Footnote: In a November 2, 1992 letter to Mike Leech at the IGFA, at a time when Dettloff was upset with the IGFA for not replacing the Lawton fish with the Spray fish because it had been shot contrary to IGFA’s rules, he even attacked that bass record, saying *...If you intend on setting an IGFA precedent by applying today’s angling rules to yesterday’s catches...then in order for the IGFA to maintain its credibility...the IGFA MUST BE CONSISTENT by disqualifying ALL fish that violate that new precedent.*

Here are but three fish that MUST BE disqualified based on the above precedent...

He then went on to list the largemouth bass world record, the yellow perch world record and Ken O’Brien’s record (which both the IGFA and the NFWFHF accepted under their *current* protocol’s) which IGFA later installed as their All-tackle record. He just could not accept that the IGFA wouldn’t put Spray’s fish in their record book. Now back to Husar’s article.

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 stereotypical 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. He said the law firm was unaware Dettloff's resort is near the alleged site of Spray's catch...

Dettloff wrote the following to me regarding Hassett's statement. *Hassett never said this. I told him where Spray got his fish.* I can only assume Husar's quote was a result of a misunderstanding during phone conversation with Hassett. Mr. Hassett wrote to the Tribune's "Public Editor" to correct the record, saying that Husar's quote was incorrect and he wrote *...That's patently untrue...* Back to Husar's article.

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 through out 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 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; the largemouth bass and the yellow perch world records come immediately to mind. 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 (covered previously).

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 (leaving the "door open" as was done again in 2007, should a better new photograph surface).

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. Husar went on.

Fat chance to find a photo missing for 35 years right?

Well, Arthur Molle of Albany, N.Y., a nephew of the Lawton's, claims he has uncovered not just one but possibly two photos of the true Lawton muskie. And one, he says, is of a fish that may be appreciably larger than the one that was rejected arbitrarily...

I learned more about Mr. Molle's claim from a letter sent by Mr. Molle to the Clayton, N.Y. Chamber of Commerce dated February 20, 1993; ***...included is a letter from F&S (Field & Stream to Art Lawton) that they lost their photos (of Art's muskellunge) & requested other copies...*** This information was sent to IGFA President Rob Kramer on March 6, 2006. Regardless, that ***Field & Stream*** letter has yet to surface. I also sent Mr. Kramer affidavits from three new witnesses to Lawton's record fish and two reaffirmation affidavits made by two of the original weight witnesses that Molle had provided to the Clayton Chamber of Commerce.

On March 28, 2006 I received a letter from Art Molle that included what he thought was a new/different photograph in addition to two 1967 letters from ***Outdoor Life*** to Lawton. That photograph *was* a photograph of a different fish. It was included in my 2nd edition, along with others, as a photograph thought to be the same fish as the commonly known Lawton photo. It wasn't and was my error. Close scrutiny of the fish and other items in these photos provided the necessary clues. At our February 27, 2007 meeting an IGFA official agreed that the Molle photograph is definitely of a different fish but it was insufficient to get the Lawton record reinstated. That meeting will be detailed later. I missed this letter in my review to the IGFA with the "last shot on camera" Molle quote.



An IGFA official agreed that this fish was different

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?"

I just found time Monday to send off for copying the four of your pictures which you want returned. I'll get them back to you as soon as I receive the copy prints."

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.

Pertinent information from the Martin affidavit (prepared and) obtained by Mr. Dettloff.

"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

"The curator of a California photography museum who 'verified' Dettloff's calculations is an expert in antique stereoptical slides..."

Mr. Dettloff's second peer reviewer was Arthur Oehmcke. 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 conclusion of the Lawton & Cates attorneys in part follows.

“John Dettloff has done a superb job collecting the evidence and thoughtfully evaluating it. We agree with his conclusion that the Lawton muskie should be disqualified. We recommend that the Hall of Fame obtain the services of a consultant in photographic analysis to review (future) potential records. This not only would insure the accuracy of the photographs submitted but would discourage the submission of fraudulent claims.”

Again, this is interesting. After recommending two independent photogrammetry reviews and further communication with Walter Dunn in their first letter, the attorneys suddenly accept fully only that work done by Mr. Dettloff.

Lawton & Cates recommendation to the Hall to obtain photogrammetric consultant services has gone unheeded in the subsequent 14 years including the Hall’s review of the recent 2005 WRMA vs. Spray record muskellunge protest.

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."

The judges for the Annual *Field & Stream* Fishing Contest were; Dr. H. John Rayner, Chief of Operations, Division of Fisheries, Oregon State Game Commission; Cecil Heacox, Senior Aquatic Biologist, New York State Conservation Department; Van Campen Heilner, author and marine ichthyologist; A.J. McClane, Fishing Editor, *Field & Stream*.

(The two judges contacted from this) ...esteemed group was, in effect, duped by Mr. Dettloff. This despite an un-notarized "affidavit" from Judge H J Rayner, and an unsigned affidavit

from Judge and *Field & Stream* employee, A.J. McClane (signed by Mrs. A.J. McClane after Mr. McClane's death [which was covered earlier]).

A "separate" notary slip for the Raynor affidavit was included by Dettloff in his investigation but was not legal by definition *on the notary slip* which read "*THIS CERTIFICATE MUST BE ATTACHED TO THE DOCUMENT DESCRIBED AT RIGHT*": The document description is at best non-descript and could be questionable in a Court of Law. However to give Dettloff the benefit of the doubt, Rayner's notary was likely legitimate. However in his article, Dettloff superimposed the notary information, seal and Rayner's signature **on his** typed version of the affidavit to make it appear proper.

***The Whig-Standard* newspaper of Gananoque, Ontario, November 7, 1992, article by Shawn Thompson stated.**

"...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."

In the year after disqualification, new photographic evidence supposedly surfaced via Lawton nephew Art Molle (as detailed previously above in a more complete quote) and was reported in the *Chicago Tribune* on 2-21-1993 by John Husar...

This new photo evidence, to my knowledge, was ignored (and not pursued).

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 muskie 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* (Reinke)... and *...was undoubtedly one of the largest muskies I had ever seen* (Kahmann)... and finally, *...Louis Spray...delivered to him a very large muskie to mount* (Lackey). 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 only).

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 1/2 inches in length and 31 3/4 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 SENARIO! 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 Hall letter continued.

"It is our plan to allow our directors to view this report and then advise us of their decision as to disqualify this fish record or allow it to stand.

Due to the extensive size of the report and the cost to duplicate it 35 times over, we will send out 10 copies of the report and will appreciate the return with your comments as quickly as possible, so it can be forwarded to other board members.

Enclosed will be an addressed, stamped envelope for your convenience. Again, thanks for your prompt assistance in this matter when the report is forwarded to you.

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” 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 resercher (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. Donn (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.

Finally, it is ironic but there are only two species of fish that shake the angling world of records; that is the largemouth bass and the muskie. Though important, all the other fresh water species do not hold the same high priority of concern we’ve found.

In the past, we’ve researched and disqualified an ages old foul-hooked brown trout record from Scotland, a record pike by a ‘Notzlii,’ a record snagged blue catfish, and several other lesser fish.

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!*).

RESEARCH PROVES LAWTON MUSKIE RECORD FALSIFIED

“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 of 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."

At this next point in Mr. Latvaitis' letter a bit of confusion ensues with regard to a telephone call between myself (Larry Ramsell) and Mr. Latvaitis. I will detail it further after the following quote from his letter.

"Therefore, based solely on Dettloff's investigation, my recommendation was not to support disqualification. However, prior to submitting my recommendation, I received a telephone call from Mr. Larry Ramsell. Larry also initially did not support disqualification and conducted a detailed follow-up study. This follow-up research made disquali-fication the only choice. Larry determined, as implied by the investigation, that J Emerson Sharp and Walter J Dunn were present at the weigh-in, but did not actually witness the weighing and measuring of Arthur Lawton's 69 lb, 15 oz muskie. If verified, this fact clearly invalidates the 1957 Field & Stream contest affidavit and disqualifies the muskie. I strongly urge that an appropriate affidavit is obtained from Mr. Sharp and Mr. Dunn specifying that they did not actually witness the weighing and measuring (note that Mr. Dunn's affidavit of 1992 does not specify that he did not actually witness the weighing and measuring."

It is apparent to me now that Mr. Latvaitis had misinter-preted our conversation since I did never did talk to Mr. Dunn. I did talk to Mr. Dunn's nephew and Mr. Sharp. Mr.

Sharp confirmed that he saw the fish weighed and measured. One additional possible reason for this confusion was the normal method in which the scale reading had been handled. The scale procedure was detailed earlier in this review.

Note: The reaffirmation affidavit submitted by Mr. Sharp confirms the above.

The next paragraph of the Latvaitis letter deals with the other Lawton muskies not germane to this review. His final paragraph states the following in part.

“In summary, I strongly urge that an appropriate affidavit be obtained from Mr. Dunn and Mr. Sharp. Upon receipt of at least one of these affidavits, I urge that the 69 lb, 15 oz muskie be disqualified (if either confirmed that their original affidavits were inaccurate).”

After signature, Mr. Latvaitis added a postscript.

“PS – Dettloff’s description of girth, length, and weight relationships is somewhat misleading. The value provided for different weight range muskies is not the most accurate; it only represents the average. Most muskie in each weight range category can be expected to fall within the range provided and average as described in Dettloff’s formula; i.e., a 40 to 60 lb muskie should range between a 707.3 to 910 divisor with the average divisor at 808.7.”

Note: The postscript is referring to the formula Dettloff had used in his side width analysis of the supposed, unproven, photograph of the Lawton record muskie.

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

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 the photographs, affidavits from three new witnesses, as well as, additional affidavits from two of the original witnesses to the weighing of the Lawton muskellunge:

It was a new photograph that was alluded to by "an IGFA Director," to the Clayton, New York Chamber of Commerce in 1992, (when he) indicated if they (the Chamber of Commerce), "could 'prove' that Lawton's muskellunge actually existed, that the world record would be back on the St. Lawrence River." This was covered in my 'review,' page 1, paragraph 3.

On page 4... of my review is a quote from new eyewitness Bob Denny stating that ... "if that picture was in error, Art (Lawton) gave them the wrong picture..." (See also...my 'review' regarding two new witnesses alleged affidavits and find copies of those new affidavits attached).

On page 10...of my "review," there is a reference to a "...sort of blurred and fuzzy." photograph. Enclosed is a copy of a "new" photograph that could be considered "blurred and fuzzy," at least on the top part, that has just surfaced (already shown).

I later found that I too had this photograph and that it had been used in my 2nd Edition *Compendium*. What I hadn't realized at the time was that it was indeed of a different fish and not the same one in the photograph Dettloff had tried to discredit. I hadn't taken the time and care to assess it properly and my recent conclusion that it was indeed a different fish was later supported by an IGFA official in my meeting with them in February of 2007.

Finally, and most importantly, 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 than 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.

Signed Robert Riley date 29 Sept 92 and notarized State of NY County of Albany 29 Sept 92 by Josephine D. Long Notary Public, State of New York Qualified in Albany County 4674179 My Commission Expires Dec. 31, 1992.

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! I then ended my addendum with the following.

Mr. Kramer, I trust that this Addendum and attachments, along with my original "Lawton Review" and attachments will provide you and the IGFA Directors the necessary information to make a fully informed decision regarding the Lawton world record muskellunge matter. Should you or they have any questions or further clarification on any of the material contained in both of my documents, please do not hesitate to contact me. In the meantime, I shall continue digging, and if any other new information is found, I shall let you know immediately.

Respectfully submitted,

**Larry Ramsell
Muskie Historian**

Attachments

I included the "new fuzzy" photo on which evidence exists to show it was taken during the time frame of Lawton's catch; a marginal copy of Dettloff's "smoking gun" photo which Dettloff had sent to me; a copy of Dettloff's two aforementioned articles containing the "smoking gun" photos with the two different handwritings; a photo copy of Dettloff's "smoking gun" photo from the Dettloff investigation report; and a copy of the photo of Lawton with the nine fish with a tenth hanging wire on the bar which can only be seen on the original photograph with a magnifying glass.

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. My opening statement at that meeting, with additional new comments.

**Larry Ramsell/IGFA Meeting, February 27, 2007
Regarding the Arthur Lawton Muskellunge Record**

In 1992, as a result of an investigation of the Arthur Lawton world record muskellunge prepared by Mr. John Dettloff, the IGFA "set-aside" the Lawton record. Subsequently, under

protest by Mr. Dettloff (after IGFA had installed the Ken O'Brien 65-pound muskellunge as their All-tackle world record), *the IGFA recognized the Cal Johnson muskellunge as the world record over the Louis Spray muskellunge* (after Dettloff provided the IGFA with his documentation of the Johnson fish and despite the fact that it hadn't been subjected to world record scrutiny).

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.

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.

Marking Study

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 (shown previously).

Review of the Dettloff "Marking Study"

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 [concurrent with by IGFA]); however the original photograph is inclusive.

We will continue now with more of the key information from my presentation at IGFA Headquarters in February of 2007.

New Information and Analysis

Dettloff’s “smoking gun” photograph ([Dettloff] investigation photo exhibit #4)

1) The Field & Stream muskellunge files do not include a chain of custody.

2) There is no indication in the Field & Stream Lawton file that specifies the photograph that was submitted with the Lawton application.

- 3) *At the time of application, a photo was not required for contest application in the muskellunge category.*
- 4) *The Lawton family archives, provided to Mr., Dettloff, do not include a chain of custody.*
- 5) *The source of the photograph dubbed the “smoking gun” was never documented.*
- 6) *The “smoking gun” photograph is not present in the Lawton family archives. If it was once a part of the archives, it apparently was not returned to Lawton’s niece Diane Sharp (then caretaker of the Lawton archives).*
- 7) *The handwriting (numbers) on the “smoking gun” photograph do not match several examples of handwritten numbers from the Lawton archives (original examples provided).*
- 8) *Two magazine articles (a third was found after this meeting with the “numbers” typed on the photograph) written by Dettloff after disqualification that used the “smoking gun” photograph include handwritten numbers that are different on the same photograph in each article (See article copies).*
- 9) *An Outdoor Life magazine letter stated that, “...the (photo) enlargement of Art with the new world-record fish... 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?” (See Appendix #2 [already covered]). It is not known if the rejected blurred and fuzzy photo was inadvertently replaced with the photo of a different musky in either the Outdoor Life or Field & Stream articles in 1958. Note: Lawton did not review the photographs or the captions for either article.*
- 10) *Per eyewitness Mr. Bob Denny’s comments after the Lawton muskie was set-aside, “...all I can say is if that picture was in error, and Art gave them the wrong picture. I certainly saw the fish...” (See Feb. 21, 1993, Chicago Tribune article [already covered]).*

Walter J. Dunn’s Three (3) Affidavits

With respect to Dettloff’s supposed “recant witness,” Walter J. Dunn, there are several factors to consider. Did Dettloff use Mr. Dunn to get a desired result without informing Mr. Dunn that his 1991 statement, 34 years after the fact, (which was prepared by Dettloff), was in conflict with Dunn’s two original affidavits prepared shortly after the record fish was caught? Despite Dunn’s new statement, “I did not actually weigh or measure the muskie, but I was present when it was weighed,” this most recent affidavit does not indicate that the Lawton fish weight was anything other than the claimed weight of 69 pounds 15 ounces.

The first original Dunn affidavit, dated October 28, 1957, is contained within Lawton’s Field & Stream contest affidavit (original in IGFA files) stating that he “...actually witnessed the weighing and measuring of this fish,” and the second Dunn affidavit is dated March 20, 1958, and was witnessed by Harold Dale Shaw, a representative from Field & Stream

magazine (original in IGFA files), that stated, “I supervised the weighing on state inspected beam scales of a sixty nine pounds fifteen ounce muskellunge...” and, “Further, I measured this fish to be 64 ¼ inches in length and 31 ¾ inches in girth.” (See 3 Dunn affidavits [already covered]).

Per an article by Shawn Thompson, Staff Writer for The Whig-Standard newspaper in Gananoque, Ontario, on November 7, 1992, “Mr. Dettloff told The Whig-Standard ...that he didn’t ask Mr. Dunn to explain the contradictory information in the two affidavits...” At best this omission indicates investigator bias (See article Appendix [already covered]).

Paul Martin Affidavit

Please consider also, that Dettloff chose to ignore a key point in the affidavit that he prepared for Lawton neighbor Paul Martin, which stated, “...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.” confirming the existence of the Lawton record fish (See Dettloff investigation affidavit exhibit G [already covered]).

Living Original Weight and Measurement Witnesses

In addition to Dettloff’s dismissing a key issue in the Martin affidavit, two of the original Lawton witnesses to the weighing and measuring of the record fish, of the four then still alive, that Dettloff talked to were dismissed even though they were present at the time of the original weighing and measuring ...After disqualification in 1992 new affidavits of affirmation were prepared by the two witnesses he did talk to (See new affidavits [already covered]).

New Lawton Record Fish Witnesses

Add to the above, the affidavits of three new witnesses to the Lawton record fish that surfaced after publication of the Dettloff article in Outdoor Life magazine in 1992, one of whom also witnessed the weighing of Lawton’s record muskellunge on a non-certified scale where it was found to be in excess of 70 pounds. These new affidavits were not considered at the time (See 3 additional new affidavits [already covered]).

Some Additional 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 photos.

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.



1-G

1-J

1-K

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 ¾ 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).

<u>Photo</u>	<u>2x4 mea.</u>	<u>Ph.Act.=A</u>	<u>Per in. calc.</u>	<u>Fish lgth./photo</u>	<u>Calc fish lgth.</u>
1-G	3.750 in.	.140	.0373	2.045" div. x A	54.83 inches
1-G	3.845 "	.140	.0364	" " " "	56.18 "
1-G	4.000 "	.140	.0350	" " " "	58.43 "
1-J	3.750 "	.143*	.0355	2.070" " " "	58.31 "
1-J	3.845 "	.143*	.0346	" " " "	59.83 "
1-J	4.000 "	.143*	.0333	" " " "	62.16 "

** 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.*

<u>Photo</u>	<u>2x4 mea.</u>	<u>Ph.Act.=A</u>	<u>Per in. calc.</u>	<u>Fish lgth./photo</u>	<u>Calc fish lgth.</u>
1-K	3.750 "	.130	.0347	2.130" " " "	61.38 "
1-K	3.845 "	.130	.0338	" " " "	63.02 "
1-K	4.000 "	.130	.0325	" " " "	65.54 "

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 60¼/60¾ 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.*



Dettloff photo #7

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.

Weight Estimate Formula

Dettloff's creation of a formula to determine weight from a photograph for large muskies was developed using information he had gathered. His new formula was developed by using fish side width from a photograph. Additionally, using a list of 12 fish in excess of 60 pounds, Dettloff developed a new "divisor" to be used with the standard weight formula for fish in this size category. This attempt to go away from the commonly accepted formula for calculating fish weight; $Girth \times Girth \times Length$ divided by 800, further shows a biased attempt to discredit the Lawton record muskellunge...making of the divisor used larger naturally further reduces his calculated weight of the Lawton fish.

Dettloff Formula Applied to Lawton's Muskellunge

One of the ironies I discovered in the Dettloff investigation was that Dettloff's "Girth, Length, Weight Relationship Study" actually supports Lawton's claimed girth and length measurements. The Dettloff formula modification for calculating the weight of a muskellunge over 60 pounds, using known data from 12 historical muskellunge catches (Evidence exhibit JJ) and Dettloff's formula for calculating fish side width (SW) supports Lawton's claimed girth and length measurements (investigation Pgs. 24 & 25-pertinent content on page 25).

A new divisor was calculated to be used with the standard $G \times G \times L/800$ formula for estimating the weight of muskellunge over 60 pounds. This new divisor was then applied to the estimated calculations made from the "common" Lawton photo (Photo exhibit #1).

Using Dettloff's longest assumed length determination of the Lawton fish of 57 inches (Pg. 23) resulted in a calculated Side Width (SW) dimension of 9 inches. The calculations employed to determine this possible maximum 57 inch length were all made (by Dettloff) using estimated dimension calculations from several assumed measurement points on the Lawton "post photo" (Photo exhibit #5).



Dettloff photo #5. NOT the "commonly known" fish!

The 9 inch dimension was applied to the Dettloff formula that uses SW to determine the weight of a muskellunge. That formula (Pg. 25) is: $2(SW-1) + 2(.58)(SW) = Girth$. The calculations:

$2(9-1) + 2(.58)(9) = 26.34$ inches calculated girth (math error should have been 26.44 inches)

$2(9 - 1 = 8 \times 2 = 16) + 2(.58 \times 9 = 5.22 \times 2 = 10.44) = 26.44$ inches total girth. Note: In Dettloff's investigation, his calculations contained an error, as his calculation of total girth was 26.34 inches.

By using his newly determined girth dimension, he calculated the weight for the Lawton fish at 48.9 pounds (should have been 49.3 pounds using corrected girth calculation):

$26.34 \times 26.34 \times 57/808.7 = 48.9$ pounds (should have been 49.3 pounds using the accurate calculated girth of 26.44 inches and correcting his calculation error).

This estimated weight of the Lawton fish was further diminished in the investigation by applying his new divisor of 935.4 (developed by Dettloff for fish over 60 pounds). That calculation (Pg. 25) resulted in a weight of 42.3 pounds. This is a gross misuse of his new divisor (935.4) for muskies over 60 pounds being applied to a fish that he had calculated to be in the 40 to 60 pound range requiring use of his (new) divisor of 808.7 (or the standard 800) for fish in that weight range.

When the Dettloff divisor for muskellunge over 60 pounds is applied to the original claimed Lawton girth and length dimensions, we find that Lawton's fish is right in the ball park and slightly under the actual submitted weight:

$31.75 \times 31.75 \times 64.5/935.4 = 69.51$ pounds vs. affidavit weight of 69.94 pounds.

Ramsell Measurements and Calculations

To carry this exercise to the next phase, I made calculations from an original commonly known photograph from the Lawton archives (see original of #1 [common photo] of Dettloff photo exhibit):

Actual measured SW = 0.588 inches.

Actual measured length = 3.527 inches.

This equals a girth to length ratio of 16.67% (.588 divided by 3.527) which can then be used to calculate SW, using Dettloff's formula, in inches, and using the Lawton length claim of 64.5 inches:

$64.5 \times 16.67\% = 10.75$ inches SW

Using the Dettloff SW formula and his new standard divisor of 935.4 for fish over 60 pounds, I calculated a girth of 31.98 inches vs. Lawton's claimed girth of 31.75 inches.

$2(10.75 - 1) + 2(.58)(10.75) = 31.98$ inches.

$2(10.75 - 1 = 9.75 \times 2 = 19.50) + 2(.58 \times 10.75 = 6.24 \times 2 = 12.48) = 31.98$ inches girth.

The calculated fish weight using Dettloff's new divisor: $31.98 \times 31.98 \times 64.5$ divided by 935.4 = 70.52 pounds, only 0.58 pounds difference from Lawton's claim of 69.94 pounds.

The Dettloff measurements equate to a girth to length ratio of 15.79% (9" calculated girth divided by assumed 57" length). Dettloff's calculations were not shown.

This compares to my measurements of the "common" photograph #1 (shown in my examples of the 8 photographs used by Dettloff in his investigation which are actual original's from the Lawton archives) showing a 16.67% girth to length ratio, a deviation of only 0.88% from Dettloff's calculations, despite different fish lengths being used for calculation. My original photo #1 calculation: 0.588 SW divided by 3.527 photo fish length = 16.67% SW ratio.

Dettloff's girth to length ratio equated to his calculating a fish SW of 9 inches. My calculated girth to length ratio equates to a fish SW of 10.75 inches, considerably more variation from Dettloff's than one would think as a result of only an 0.88% insignificant difference in girth to length ratio's. This is easily explained by Dettloff's use of his calculated fish length of 57 inches. It is impossible to check Dettloff's calculations for accuracy, since dimensions were not provided, nor was the exact photograph he used for measurement.

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 Dettloff report, I do not see sufficient evidence to disqualify the Arthur Lawton's World Record muskie... Mr. Dettloff seems to have a bias toward Wisconsin muskies... Mr. Dettloff 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 Dettloff 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.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

*Sincerely,
Larry Ramsell,
Muskellunge Historian*

And now the oft 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 – 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 (NFWFHF 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 *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 says 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 his 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.*



Who is this Dettloff guy Watson?

Now I got a good start on Hartman and my teeth are sunk into it as well. The urgency isn’t as important... I’m glad our friendship survived (+ even grew) all of the clandestine activities of the Lawton investigation...

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.”***

Things cooled for a bit until February 21, 1993 when *Chicago Tribune* outdoor writer John Husar had more to say in his article *New evidence enters Great Muskie Controversy*. Mr. Husar too interviewed Lawton nephew Arthur Molle. I covered most of this earlier in this section, but I would now like to include a pertinent Molle quote.

...Molle said he believes his aunt and uncle have been subjected to enormous injustice, considering the large number of major fish they caught over the years.

“I just can’t believe it when these people say Art and Aunt Ruth lied about their fish,” Molle said. “They weren’t that kind of people. They didn’t lie about anything. They didn’t even make a big deal of their fish.”

Clayton, New York Chamber of Commerce board member Allen Benas also got a few licks in to the NFWFHF 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 affiant 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?

Before we leave the Lawton's, I thought it would be of interest to readers to publish some of the only diary the Lawton's ever kept, much to Art's later regret, for the 1958 season.

FISHING TRIPS TO THE ST. LAWRENCE RIVER 1958

Labor Day Week-End

8/30 *Up & ready to leave 2:30 a.m.
Fishing grounds 8:30 a.m.
Unpacked car & on River at 10:30 a.m.
Beautiful warm day – clear
1st Strike – 11:40 a.m. – Ruth – Boated – 23 lbs.
Bad storm came up – made shore and rain was over – River calmed down – Wet? Oh Yes!!
2nd Strike – 7:30 p.m. – Art – Boated (hurt bad) 10 lbs.*

8/31 *No muskie strikes
1 – Northern – Art – 17 lbs. – 2:30 p.m. (spawn in it)
1 – Walleye – Art – 4 lbs. – 4:10 p.m.
Cloudy, muggy-foggy all day – Rough*

9/1 *Rainy – Cloudy – Cold & Water choppy
1st Strike – 1:30 p.m. – Art – 28 lbs. – Boated
2nd Strike – 4:15 p.m. – Ruth – small – returned to water
3rd Strike – 5:30 p.m. – returned to river
4th Strike – 6:10 p.m. – returned to river
Left for home 7:30 p.m.*

9/2 *Arrived home 1:50 a.m.*

Week-End 9-6 & 9-7/58

9/6 *Left home 2:30 a.m.
Arrived 8:30 a.m.
On River 9:10 a.m.
Lost one strike – Cloudy-cool but nice*

9/7 *On River 8:30 a.m.
Lost 4 Strikes*
Got 1 muskie – Ruth – 18 lbs. – 1:20 p.m.*

*Got 1 walleye – Art – 12 lbs. – 6:10 p.m.
Cloudy-Cold & misty all day – fish hitting plugs light & from front
On one strike musky hit plug from front and teeth cut line

Week-End 9/13

*Sat. 9/13 Left home 2:30 a.m.
Car trouble – 15 min. from home – heater – delayed 1 hr.
Arrived at River 9:30 a.m.
Raining hard – stopped at 11
On river at 11 – cleared the air but cloudy & cold all day – snow suit, sweater & wool shirt on
1st Strike – 11:15 a.m. – Boated – Art
2nd Strike – 11:40 a.m. – Boated – Art
3rd Strike – 1:10 p.m. – Lost – Art
4th Strike – 6:25 p.m. – Lost – Art*

Saturday 9/14

*Lost 2 hrs. in morning going for ice
1st Strike – 11:00 a.m. – Lost – good one – Art – Straightened hooks
2nd Strike – 4:25 p.m. – Lost – Art
3rd Strike – 5:00 p.m. – Boated – beautiful – 50 lbs. – Art
4th Strike – 6:30 p.m. – Boated – around 40 lbs. – Art
Camp 7:30 p.m.
Yes Ruth was along – but not one single muskie strike all week-end
Left River 8:05 p.m.
Arrived home 2:30 a.m.*

Week-End 9-20-58

*Left home 2:40 a.m.
Arrived (river) 8:35 a.m.
Fishing 9:45 a.m.
Cloudy, Cool, Misty
1st Strike – 4:15 p.m. – Lost – straightened hook out – Art
2nd Strike – 4:50 p.m. – 12 lbs. – Ruth
3rd Strike – 5:15 p.m. – 22 lbs. – Art
4th Strike – 6:10 p.m. – 54 lbs. 9 oz. – Ruth
Whopper – 1 hr. 15 min. tug o' war*

*9/21 1st Strike – 3:40 p.m. – Art – 23 lbs.
2nd Strike – 3:55 p.m. – Ruth – 22 lbs.
3rd Strike – 4:45 p.m. – Ruth – 28 lbs.
Started to rain – poured before we got to shore – Camp 4:55 p.m.
Home 1:20 a.m.*

Vacation – 9/28

Left home 4 a.m. – over slept 1 hr.

Arrived 10:30 a.m. – Rain – foggy all the way up

Had dinner – on river 1:30

1st Strike – 2:30 p.m. – Art – 10 lbs. Released – Golden shiner chubby pikie

2nd Strike – 4:15 p.m. – Art – 22 lbs. – Golden shiner chubby pikie

3rd Strike – 6:15 p.m. – Ruth – walleye 6 lbs. – yellow flash

Cloudy – Cold – Choppy Waters

Camp 7 p.m.

9/29 up at 7 – fishing 9:50 a.m.

1st Strike – 10:40 a.m. – Ruth – 12 lbs. – Golden shiner chubby pikie

2nd Strike – 12:30 p.m. – Ruth – 25 lbs. – Golden shiner chubby pikie

3rd Strike – 1:05 p.m. – Art – Lost – Golden shiner chubby pikie

*4th Strike – 1:27 p.m. – Art – Golden shiner chubby pikie – a Whopper – hit like a weed
– one hook – gaff broke – 22nd fish in 11 days – Cool – sun shining on water –*

Beautiful afternoon

5th Strike – 5:42 p.m. – Art – Lost

Stopped fishing 7 p.m.

9/30 Beautiful day on River

South wind – cool – windy – sunshine

On River 8:30 a.m.

1st Strike – 8:55 a.m. – Art – 10 lbs. – released – golden shiner chubby pikie

*2nd Strike – 10:20 a.m. – Ruth – Another Whopper – 50 lbs. – golden shiner chubby
pikie*

3rd Strike – 11:35 a.m. – Art – 25 lbs. – golden shiner chubby pikie

4th Strike – 12:47 p.m. – 36 lbs. – 52 inches – golden shiner chubby pikie

Afternoon – Cloudy & warmer

10/1 Cold & I do mean Cold – North wind and rough to start out 9 a.m.

1st Strike – 10:55 a.m. – Ruth – 33 lbs. – golden shiner regular jointed

2nd Strike – 11:30 a.m. – Art – 18 lbs. – golden shiner regular jointed

*12:45 p.m. – hid in the weeds behind one Little Sister Island – Winds came up – rough
water*

To camp 1:30 p.m. – Grounded for afternoon

10/2 Southwest wind – Beautiful sunshine day – Cool – just a ripple on the water

On water 8:45 a.m.

1st Strike – 11:25 a.m. – Art – small – released – golden shiner chubby pikie

2nd Strike – 12:25 p.m. – Ruth – 11 lbs. – released – yellow flash

3rd Strike – 1:10 p.m. – Ruth – 36 lbs. – yellow flash

4th Strike – 4:23 p.m. – Art – very small – released – golden shiner chubby pikie

*5th Strike – 6:10 p.m. – Ruth – 13 lbs. – hooked in back and rolled in leader. Lassoed
him but I boated him. Everything happens to me. Released*

Camp 6:45 p.m.

10/3 Cloudy – Dark – Cool – Water smooth to start out at 8:50 a.m. – Sunshine & hot

1st Strike – Art – 15 lbs. – released – giant pike
2nd Strike – Art – baitfish but a muskie – golden shiner chubby pike
3rd Strike – Ruth – Saved the day with a 25 lb. – Art jerked him boat – yellow flash (38th muskie)
Camp 7:15 p.m.

10/4 Last day of our 1958 vacation – Cold – North winds – rough
1st Strike – 9:12 a.m. – Ruth – 34 ½” – 10 lbs. – yellow flash – released
10:30 a.m. – Art & me got a strike together (snake northern pike)
10:35 – 2nd Strike – Ruth – nice walleye – yellow flash
11:20 – Ruth – baitfish muskie – returned – yellow flash
To camp at 12:30 – too rough – winds got worse – started for home at 3 O’clock with
10 beautiful muskies- over 335 pounds of fish. 5 of them were beautiful

A WONDERFUL VACATION



Art with 9 of the 10 showing

10/5 Home-

Had Mr. Campbell come up and take pictures at 12:30. From then on the rest of the day was like Grand Central Station. People riding by & friends coming to look at muskies hanging in front yard for pictures. Pictures turned out beautiful



Art and Ruth with the 10

10/11 Week-End

Left home 2 a.m.

Arrived 8:45 a.m.

Wind bound – very rough – first time since we started fishing we couldn't get on river at least part of the day. East wind.

10/12 Wind bound until 12:15 p.m.

Cold & nasty – Ruth almost froze

1st Strike – 2:05 p.m. – Art – small – released – golden shiner chubby pikie

2nd Strike – 2:40 p.m. – Ruth – Lost

Stopped fishing at 4 p.m.

Cold – Rough – Rainy

10/13 Ripple on water – Cold – Sun now & then – On River 9 a.m.

1st Strike - 9:05 a.m. – Art – golden shiner chubby pikie

2nd Strike - 1:10 p.m. – Art – golden shiner chubby pikie

3rd Strike – 2:10 p.m. – Ruth – pike -12 lbs. – released

4th Strike – 5:25 p.m. – Ruth – Lost – hit hard – golden shiner chubby pikie

5th Strike – 5:55 p.m. – Art – 12 lbs. – released – golden shiner chubby pikie

6th Strike – 6:10 p.m. – Art – golden shiner chubby pikie – Over 50 lbs. – a good job landing it – and how! A winner I hope. Turned out to be a beautiful day &



had a wonderful time.

Home 2:15 a.m.

Week-End 10-25-58

Left home 2:15 a.m.

Flat tire on way up - Brand new snow tread tire - Two animal teeth in it

Rained all way up

Arrived – 9:45 a.m. – Art got tired pulled up alongside road & slept. Yep!

We done it again – Wind bound – I mean for the whole day. Had a good rest for my birthday.

10/26 COLD!! Cloudy & slightly rough to start out at 9:10 a.m.

So there you have it from Ruth Lawton herself. That was the last entry in the diary. They did indeed catch many large muskies in their long career. There are a few things I would like to point out that will make a re-review of the diary more interesting (I'm sure everyone will go over it several times).

You will note 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!

It appears that to be considered a “Whopper” a muskie had to be over 50-pounds! And only two of the four they caught over 50-pounds in 1958 were *Field & Stream* contest winners.



Ruth fighting one (l) and the guide landing it (r) in the early days



Art and guide trolling (l) and boating one (r) in the early days



*Art, fish and the “Muskie Queen”1966 (l)
Art “weighing ‘em in” at Chubby’s Marina
at Ogdensburg, NY in 1967 (r)*

I enjoyed the time I spent with Art. He wouldn’t let me stay at a motel, rather he insisted that I stay with him. So I did and we spent some time rummaging thru his attic and his tackle. I got to see his equipment and the way it was rigged. In general he was an ok guy. Later that year Art joined me on a muskie trip to Leech Lake, Minnesota with Lou Cook and Lake of the Woods with Dr. Jerry Jurgens and Bob Kimitch. We made a film with Art in Ontario; the only one ever made with him. As it turned out that was to be Art’s last fishing trip as he died two months later.



Art's last day of muskie fishing. Dr. Jerry Jurgens shown guiding Art with Bob and I up front on Lake of the Woods, Ontario

Although IGFA merely retired Lawton's record pending further investigation and proof, the additional proof that I provided IGFA in 2007 still wasn't enough to satisfy their executive board. The uncertainty of the existence of a true photograph of the Lawton record fish is what kept the IGFA from reinstating it and since Lawton is dead, we'll never know for sure if another one existed unless discovered in the future.