

# FAMILY FISHING

## *a Lifelong Adventure*

It's a crisp, December morning at Burke Lake Park as Mike Salomon makes his way to what he considers hallowed ground. As he gazes at the water, the memories come flooding back of the countless days he and his father, Max Salomon, set out on frequent fishing adventures spanning three decades.

"My dad always said a bad day fishing is still better than a good day at the office," Mike recalled with a grin. "He taught my brother, my sister and me how to fish. Some days, we'd catch 20 or 30 fish an hour!"

The son of Holocaust survivors, Max Salomon developed a love of fishing as a boy after he and his parents emigrated to the United States from Israel. At first, they lived in a family member's attic, and young Max amused himself by fishing nearby. From his humble roots came a lifelong passion for the outdoors that the once active, government contractor enjoyed sharing with colleagues, friends and family.

"My brother and I were Boy Scouts and my dad was a den leader," Mike said enthusiastically. "We spent a lot of time at the campgrounds, and we learned to camp, fish and hike here at Burke Lake Park."

Their last fishing trip together on foot was in July 2020, nine months after Max was diagnosed with ALS, a progressive nervous system disease that causes loss of muscle control. By September, Max relied on a motorized wheelchair to get around, and hope of ever returning to his beloved Burke Lake "fishin' hole" was fading fast.

"We weren't able to get him there in the summer because of the heat," Mike recalled. Then the heat broke in September, and Mike and his mother, Davida, decided it was time to lift Max's spirits by taking him on a long-awaited adventure to Burke Lake Park.

"My family was amazed with how everything around the marina was so easily accessible for someone in a large power wheelchair," Mike said with appreciation. "Nowhere else we've ever been was that easy, and getting him out on the pier put a huge, much needed smile on his face."

Mike says Burke Lake Park was the only place his father insisted on controlling his motorized wheelchair himself. The real test came in late September, when Max, ever determined, successfully navigated tree roots and mud for one last visit to his favorite fishing spot near Shelter C.

"You could see how much it meant to him to get back down here," Mike recalled of the bittersweet moment. "He teared up and stared at the water for 20 minutes. He didn't think he would be back after our last fishing trip here in July."

Max lost his battle with ALS just a few days later, but Mike still feels his presence when he casts a line with his father's fly rod, or drops a line with one of the fishing poles Max made for each of his three children after his diagnosis. They're poignant reminders of the good times the family enjoyed here right up until the end, thanks to the accessible pier at Burke Lake Park.

"He was happy here," Mike recalled fondly of their last outing. "He did a lot of smiling."

Sign up for a boating, fishing or camping program and create your own family memories! Listings are in the Outdoor Recreation section.

