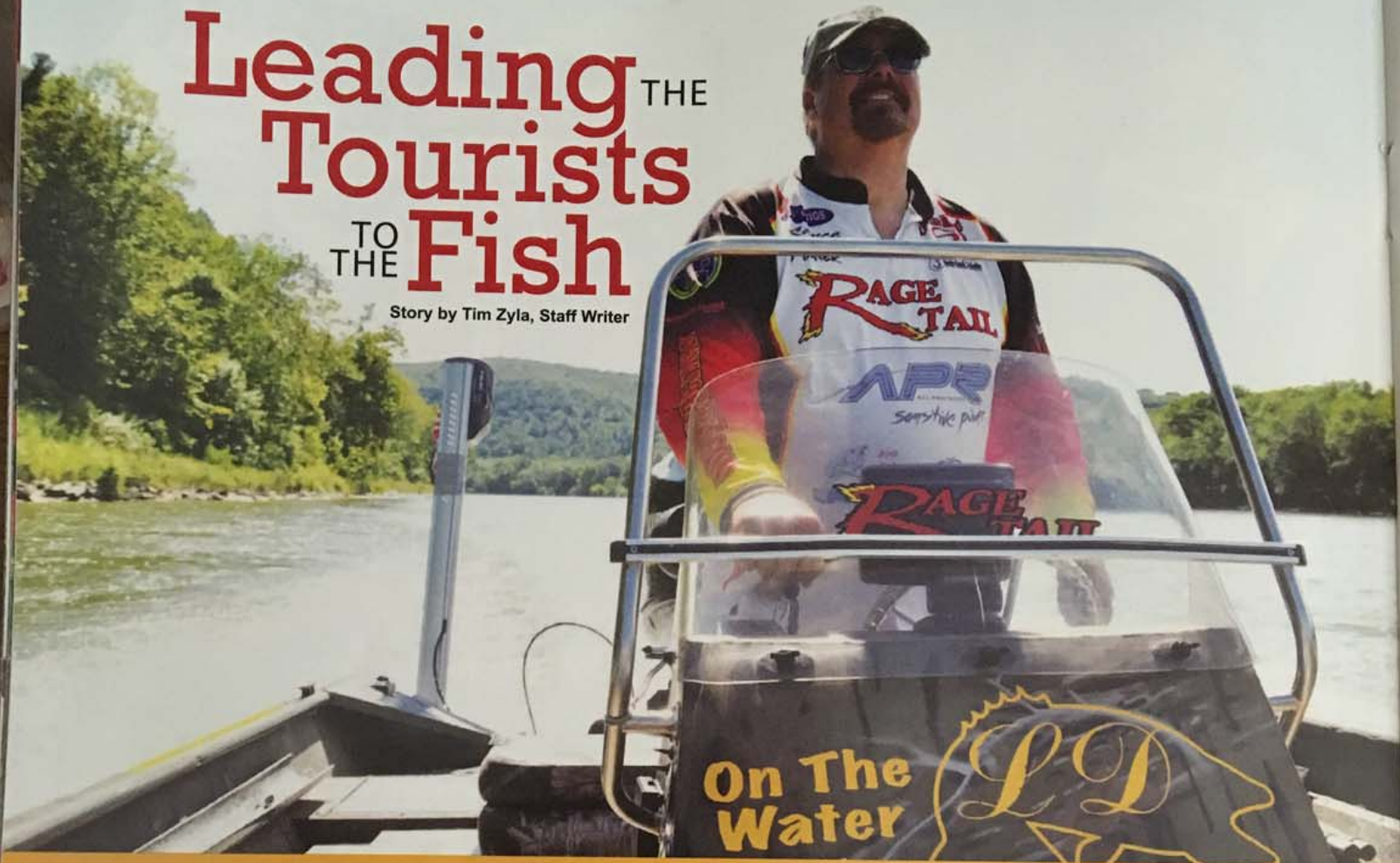


# Leading THE Tourists TO THE THE Fish

Story by Tim Zyla, Staff Writer



Lance Dunham cruises along the Susquehanna River at a brisk pace of 35 mph in his custom fishing boat, known as "The Beast." Review Photo/Tim Zyla.

Ask lifelong New Albany resident Lance Dunham if he's worked a day in the last 35 years and he'll likely say no. By combining his passion for fishing with a business plan, the 61-year-old has accomplished what few can - make a living doing what he loves.

Most days during the year, when weather permits, Dunham can be found on his fishing boat in the Susquehanna River helping non-locals catch fish in the unfamiliar waters.

Founded in 1980, L.D. Guide Service is a great way for tourists to enjoy a day of fishing surrounded by the endless mountains of Bradford County, Dunham said.

"Most of my clients are not from Bradford County," he said. "They're mostly people who come up here to get away from cities and want to relax and be sure to catch fish."

Dunham said his clients generally prefer to catch a large amount of fish as opposed to one large fish, but said he tailors the experience to what his clients want.

When asked how many times he has taken clients out on the river and failed to have them catch a fish, Dunham said, "Maybe four or five times since the beginning." On the rare chance that it does happen, Dunham said he refunds his clients in full.

"I join in their misery by not getting paid," he said.

His knowledge of the Susquehanna River is can be attributed to his father, who "didn't believe in kids sitting down," Dunham said.

"He paid us for work," Dunham said of his father. "So I had a choice: I could dig irrigation ditches or he would drop me off at the river and I could fish - but I was expected to come back with dinner."

Dunham said the choice was easy, and it didn't take long to develop a passion for fishing.

With no boat, Dunham fished from the banks of the river for the Susquehanna's most prevalent fish: smallmouth bass.

And although his love for fishing has existed from that point on, Dunham said he never would have attempted to be a fishing guide if it wasn't for a man named Dick Rivers, who practiced as a lawyer in the Philadelphia area.

"Over 35 years ago I had a sporting goods store in Dushore, and I still remember meeting Dick like it was yesterday," Dunham said.

Rivers walked into Dunham's store in a three-

piece suit and asked multiple times about where to find a fishing guide for the Susquehanna River.

"I said, 'there's no such thing as a fishing guide,'" Dunham said. "So he asked me how much money I made that day. I lied and told him \$50, but he knew I lied."

Rivers then offered him \$50 to take him out for a day of fishing on the river, he said.

"He put the money down on the counter and I snatched it up and said 'Let's go,'" Dunham said.

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**- Lance Dunham**

With Dunham's guidance, Rivers caught about 15 fish that day, which led to him telling Dunham he would be there again the next week to do it again.

The experience opened Dunham's eyes to the demand for a fishing guide in Bradford County, resulting in the creation of his business.

Rivers continued fishing with Dunham up to 20 times a year for 33 years, before he passed away in 2013 from complications of a heart attack.

Dunham went to Rivers' memorial service as the only non-family member in attendance

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before scattering his ashes in the Susquehanna River as requested.

"I never would have gotten to do this if it wasn't for Dick," Dunham said. "He was a great friend, and we used to have great conversations."

For Dunham, the conversations with his clients are almost as enjoyable as the fishing experience.

"You can be a guide and catch a ton of fish, but the clients might not like it if you aren't friendly," he said. "I like having good conversation and being friendly with my customers, not just helping them catch fish."

And as for retirement - don't bet on it.

"I'm going to do this as long as I physically can," Dunham said. "I don't plan on stopping any time soon."

The L.D. Guide Service website, [www.ldguideservice.com](http://www.ldguideservice.com), details the different charter packages that can be purchased ranging from \$135 for two people up to \$315 for two, depending on the time of day and length of the trip.

Dunham said he is currently booked for almost all of 2015, and most of his repeat clients know to book a trip early due to demand.

Tim Zyla can be reached at (570) 265-1639; or email: [tzyla@thedailyreview.com](mailto:tzyla@thedailyreview.com). Ω