

National Awards: "Woman of the Year" in Sport Fishing & "Top 21 Most Influential Marine Industry Leaders in the 21st Century"

In recognition of her efforts to bring the sport of fishing to women, Betty Bauman was named "Woman of the Year" in the nation's sportfishing industry by the American Sport Fishing Association. The award was presented to her in Washington, DC, at a reception held for industry leaders and Congressional representatives. She was also named among the Top 21 Most Influential Marine Industry Leaders in the 21st Century by Boating Magazine, who recognized her foresight into addressing the women's market for the marine industry. Another award for "Sportperson of the Year" was made by The Cove Lodge, Elfin Cove, Alaska.



The program which brought Bauman to national attention is "Ladies, Let's Go Fishing!", a series of fishing seminars held in conjunction with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Bauman established a partnership with the state department 18 years ago, when she offered the state a solution to the lack of opportunity for women to learn fishing skills. At the time, she owned MetroMedia Marketing, a company which conducted publicity campaigns for marine businesses and large fishing tournaments in South Florida and the Bahamas. Partial funding was provided by the FWC, through the Sportfish Restoration Program of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, in 1997. The remainder of funding came from corporate sponsors, which realized the value of this marketing opportunity, as well as the chance to promote conservation ethics.

"Ladies, Let's Go Fishing!" is a weekend seminar series which offers a complete fishing experience presented in a non-intimidating environment, including classes on inshore, offshore, bottom and fly fishing, hands-on training, skill practice, an actual fishing excursion, fish fillet practice, cooking instruction and a Fish Tales Party. The first event, held in Fort Lauderdale, FL in June of 1997, was a huge success, with 120 participants. Women interested in fishing came from all walks of life, ranging from sales clerks to homemakers to business owners. The program is now commonly known as the "No-Yelling School of Fishing."

"I knew there was a market of women who would go fishing if they could learn how," Bauman commented, "I just didn't know how large this market was." Bauman said her main objective was to make fishing enjoyable for the participants, with an emphasis on conservation. She added, "There are millions of women who enjoy the outdoors. These women are prime candidates for the fishing industry, when brought into the sport properly." As the state encouraged her, she developed programs in St. Augustine, St. Petersburg, Ft. Myers, Islamorada and Panama City. "Ladies, Let's Go Fishing" has attracted participants from as far away as Germany. Other programs have been conducted in the British Virgin Islands, St. Michaels, MD, Costa Rica, Alaska, Ocean Reef, FL, a freshwater seminar in Denver, CO and more in the works.

Born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA, Bauman started fishing as a child, using a tree branch as a pole. After earning a communications degree from Ohio University, her marketing career drew her to the boating industry in Florida. There, she became hooked on saltwater fishing and established her own promotions company, MetroMedia Marketing, Inc. In 1993, she earned the Women of Enterprise award by the U.S. Small Business Administration and Avon Products.

The idea for the seminar evolved as Bauman listened to a speech made by Mike Hayden, President of the American Sportfishing Association, about the lack of participation by women in the sport of fishing. Now, "Ladies, Let's Go Fishing!" is a featured National Fishing Week event and earns rave reviews from national print and electronic media. Bauman constantly surveys her audience to develop ideas to further improve the school, resulting in opportunities for participants to back a truck and trailer, drive a boat, practice gaffing with grapefruits, and more.

Corporations have shown their support for the program, which helps spread awareness of conservation with the added value of developing incremental market share. Future plans call for events held in other parts of the nation.

"We get letters from our participants who thank us for changing their lives," Bauman commented. "That's enough reward to keep us going."

