

Jarmo Rapala

By Dan Basore

Jarmo fished often with his father Esko and grandfather Lauri Rapala. Early on he began to carve lures in the family tradition. Lauri shared family secrets on how to live, fish and very importantly to us, how to make wooden lures. Jarmo loved these lessons and learned those well making lures from his youth which continues till today.

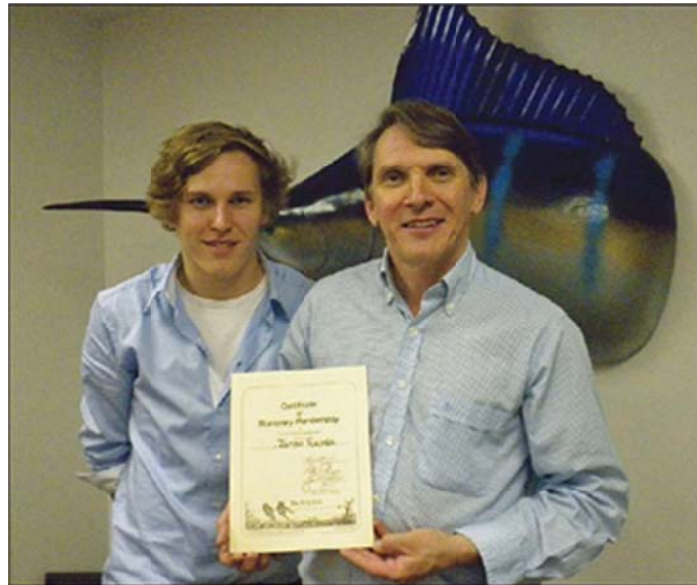
An article in the August 17th, 1962 Life magazine with Marilyn Monroe on the cover shortly after her death resulted in three million orders for the Finnish lures. At that time, 55 year old Lauri and two dozens of his family and friends could only make 100,000 lures a year.

Ron Weber and Roy Ostrom of Minnesota had earlier obtained the U.S. rights to market Rapala's lures adding other products to the mix including a filet knife that reached 40 percent of total revenue. Lauri Rapala died in 1974 while sales were booming and Rapala was a huge success.

By the 1980s sales were sluggish as a result of an economic recession, big box stores and other issues. In 1989 Jarmo was named President and took control of Rapala. He began a push to expand their lures popularity and sales worldwide.

Jarmo forged a consolidation with Ron Weber's Normark in 1990 forming the Rapala-Normark Group Ltd. They issued their first plastic lures, Rattlin' Rapalas that were very successful and profitable. By 1995 knife sales totaled 25 million units.

The family and other owners then sold the business which is now listed on the Helsinki stock exchange. It now has a greatly expanded line of lures and boasts of 880 world record catches.



Jarmo Rapala and his son Antti with Jarmo's Honorary Member certificate.

Many fish are caught and tournaments won on Rapala lures including Jacob Wheeler's FLW Cup win in August 2012. NFLCC member and B.A.S.S. Elite tournament angler Bernie Schultz is sponsored by Rapala and has a beautiful wrapped Ranger bass boat and tow vehicle. Jarmo started the Finnish Lure Company in 2008. He has now forged a partnership with Bill Cullerton Jr., son of Honorary Member Bill Cullerton Sr. and great-grandson of Bill Jamison. They now own the Bagley Bait Company and are dedicated to returning to the quality once known. For more on the Rapala story get John E. Mitchell's book, "Rapala Legendary Fishing Lures," or visit the company's website Rapala.com.

Honorary Member - 2012