

LONE STAR HEROES FROM BAMC

On April 2, under picture-perfect blue skies, almost 50 wounded troops from Brooks Army Medical Center went out to Choke Canyon Reservoir with the Quality Bass Club of San Antonio, the South Texas B.A.S.S. Federation and about 100 volunteers for a day of bass fishing. These service members were wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan and are currently undergoing medical treatment at Fort Sam Houston's Brooks Army Medical Center (BAMC) in San Antonio, one of the largest medical facilities in the Department of Defense.

As the troops loaded the boats, with wounds ranging from burns to gunshot wounds to loss of limb, some had to use crutches or were wheeled down to the dock. They were all eager to get under way, though. Texas Parks and Wildlife, one of the biggest supporters of the event, waived all license requirements and park entry fees for the troops. Once the troops and boaters had left, the "shore patrol" volunteers, led by Quality Bass Club member Carolyn Pauley, all headed to a large covered pavilion to begin cooking the food, donated by Labatt Food Services, enough to "feed an army."

Although the original plan called for the boats to start coming back in for lunch at 11 a.m., that plan quickly came apart. Many of the boaters all had the same story: "I asked my partner if he/she were ready to go in to eat or if they wanted to keep fishing, and they wanted to fish."

After lunch, most of the boaters and troops went back out for a couple more hours of fishing. At 2 p.m. the boats all returned. While not a tournament, there was a big bass weigh-in at the end of the day. The South Texas B.A.S.S. Federation Director, Bill Marion, ran the scales. Said Marion, "Running the scales for these troops was certainly an honor... Watching the service members crane their necks to see the weights, holding their breath as the scale settled and the good-natured ribbing when somebody topped his buddy's weight, it could have just as easily have been a full blown B.A.S.S. tournament."

At weigh-in one of the troops stated, "I really liked how quiet it was, how you can just focus on what you are doing and how peaceful it is." Anyone who has ever fished for bass understands exactly what he is saying.

Quality Bass Club member Tim Toomey points out that credit for the day's success belongs to all the folks who pitched in with their time and/or their donations to make it happen. Want to participate? Contact Tim Toomey at t2dawg@excite.com or (210) 445-6130 or Bill Marion club@qualitybass.org or (210) 846-4850.

