

Reinke Brothers

A little bit of Heaven in Milwaukee

Terry Bitz of Outdoor Convergence

Have you ever discovered one of those locations where it seems like everyone but you knew about its existence? For me, Reinke Brothers, Inc. is one of those places. Located in Milwaukee on Greenfield Avenue, Reinke Brothers is a small fishing tackle shop that has been serving customers for longer than many of us have been alive.

My recent introduction to this business came from a friend who needed to repair an eyelet on one of his fishing rods. He suggested I go to the store with him so that I could meet Bob Reinke who owns and runs the business with his brother Richard.

Walking into the small store, I immediately knew that I had entered a special place. There were no extravagant product displays, fishing videos playing on TV or aisle after aisle of lures or fishing tackle. What I saw was a small, simple store with a huge selection of components needed to build or repair fishing rods and lures.



Reinke Brothers, which was started by Roy and Jerry Reinke, has been in operation at its current location since the early 1950's. Through the 1940's, these brothers ran the store a short distance from the current location as a part-time business. According to Bob Reinke, who I interviewed for this story, it was a tiny store that required customers to leave before new ones could enter.

“It was a one room building and only one or two customers could fit in the room at a time. We have a couple of customers that still remember the old store”; said Reinke.

Bob Reinke (middle) assists customers at the Reinke Brothers store in Milwaukee.

In the 1950's, Jerry moved out of state while Roy and his wife Evelyn turned the store into a fulltime endeavor. At the time, they sold guns along with fishing tackle, however; Roy switched to just selling tackle components shortly after Evelyn passed away in 1969. Roy's sons, Bob and

Richard, started working at the store in 1973 and took over the business when their father passed away in 1980. Today, the store continues to focus on selling tackle components for making fishing lure and rods instead of manufactured pieces that people typically buy from standard stores.

“We are really big into the components for lure making”; said Reinke. “People are not aware of how cheap they can build these lures. You can build a spinner for about a buck compared to three to five bucks that a well-known manufacturer charges.”

According to Reinke, the ability to create customized color combinations or specific presentations is what is appealing to many of his customers. Reinke not only sells all the needed components, he shows customers how to make the lures and can offer them tips on what fish are currently biting on.

“Everything you need to know (in order) to build them, we can help”; he said.

People wanting to repair their commercially produced lures can also go to Reinke Brothers to get the components and know-how to be able to fix the products themselves. Anglers who fish for muskies should certainly consider this option, especially with the new large bucktails costing almost \$30. Reinke said that he can show you how to tear the lure down and how to rebuild it.

Reinke Brothers also sells everything a person needs to create their own rods or fix the ones they already own. While building your own rod, according to Reinke, will not provide significant cost savings, anglers can build a fishing rod that specifically fits their needs while also providing them a source of pride when the rod they created lands a fish.

“You build it and it’s your rod”; he said.

While the store fills a lot of mail order requests, do not look for Reinke Brothers to open a website anytime soon.

“People want to look at the (products), touch them and take them home”; Reinke said. “A website takes away the feel.”

It is clear that Reinke Brothers is an establishment that has survived for over 60 years by offering personalized customer service, and products and knowledge that allow anglers to take their hobby to the next level. Reinke plans on doing the same for years to come and in the same location the store has operated at since 1951.

“We are like the old bakery shop”; said Reinke. “People know we have what they need. They know we are here.”

You can contact Reinke Brothers at 414-383-5591. The store is located at 3144 West Greenfield Avenue in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.