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Gestation

PRODUCING A QUARTERLY journal can mean a rather lengthy gestation period for an article. There are limited pages available, and there is often a queue for that real estate. At the last minute, an article may get bumped to the next issue because it's a page too long or short, and a more recently submitted piece may take its place based on length alone. Our average article gestation is about nine to twelve months, with some taking a bit longer and a few well-timed pieces appearing more quickly.

And then there are those that are in the works for years.

Back in March 2010, Bill Fowler wrote to me with an idea for an article about the sport of fly fishing in movies. He had a list of films and a list of people he was trying to reach about those films. I encouraged him to work on it.

The next piece of correspondence in the file is dated February 2013. Bill and I had seen each other in Denver the previous September, when I attended a Flyfishers' Club of London dinner he and Gordon Wickstrom hosted. Clearly, we'd discussed the article then. Bill had run into some dead ends and had narrowed the scope of the piece to lawyer John D. Voelker, author of *Anatomy of a Murder* (under the nom de plume Robert Traver) and other books, including three fishing books, *Anatomy of a Fisherman*, *Trout Madness*, and *Trout Magic*. "I have received from the university archives a copy of John D. Voelker's complete fishing journal (1936–1987), a personal journal, and an Uncle Tom's Cabin (aka Voelker's Pond) journal," Bill wrote to me. "I must say it has been quite a treat to read his works in the raw form. Voelker called his fishing journal his 'Fishing Notes'; his humor and style are very present and I believe a true reflection of his life in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. My goal is to have something for you to consider this year. I have started writing, but only have studied about half of the 'Fishing Notes.' While I was waiting for the journals, I read all his lawyer books, and think myself a better attorney for doing so."

In June 2014, Bill wrote again to report on his progress. The good news, he told me, was that the research was complete and the article written. The bad news was that his first draft still needed a lot of work—the term he used was *stinks*. "The really really good news," he said, "is that I'm going to Marquette, Michigan, in early July to study all the photographs in their archives. Voelker's daughter, Grace Wood, has invited me to go to Frenchman's Pond

for a visit. As Voelker would say, 'off to the woody woods.' I say this because I will get all the stinky stuff out of my article and present you with a work suitable for your consideration."

In mid-November 2015, Bill sent word of some exciting acquisition and illustration, and on November 30, I received the manuscript, which has been a joy to work on.

But because it's such a long piece—a long piece in a queue—it's taken time. Sarah May Clarkson (copy editor) and I didn't get it back to Bill for his review until February 2016. There were rounds of revisions, then Sara Wilcox (design and production) had to lay out the pages. There were several *more* rounds of review in April and May. Final approved pages then had to wait for the first issue available that would accommodate it—this one, Fall 2016.

G. William Fowler's "The Fishing Notes of John D. Voelker, Michigan's Mightiest Piscator," the result of that first article proposal six-and-a-half years ago, begins on page 2. We hope that any stinky stuff, if it was ever there, has been expunged. Fifty-two fishing seasons are described in these notes and, as Fowler puts it, it "contains some of the foundational information Voelker used to compose his yarns."

We continue to feature Michigan with the famous fly tier from Mayfield. On a summer morning in 1922, John Falk's grandfather, Len Halladay, named his original trout fly the Adams, after a good customer. Since then, there have been many stories about the Adams and its origin. Over the years, Falk has collected bits of misinformation and not-quite-right stories published about the fly. In "The Legend of Halladay and His Adams" (page 18), Falk aims to set the record straight.

It feels as if we are always losing fishing friends. In this issue, Trustee Woods King pays tribute to former trustee Dickson L. Whitney (page 24), and Peter Castagnetti remembers his friend, the writer and tier Bob Warren (page 25).

We've had our usual busy summer here at the museum, and this year's fly-fishing festival was nothing short of a great time. More than 700 people dropped by to check out our great vendors, eat some great food, listen to some great music, and visit some great exhibits. Take a look at our coverage on page 22, and come be a part of it next year.

Be a part of this journal, too. We're always looking for good writers to make fly-fishing history, traditions, and people come alive in these pages.

KATHLEEN ACHOR
EDITOR



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ON THE COVER: A 1979 watercolor of John D. Voelker by Paul Grant. Used with permission of Julie Voelker Cohen.

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The Fishing Notes of John D. Voelker, Michigan's Mightiest Piscator

by G. William Fowler



A 1979 watercolor of John D. Voelker by Paul Grant. Used with permission of Julie Voelker Cohen.

MORE THAN FORTY years ago, John D. Voelker wrote a story that begins when Art Flick calls and Voelker answers the phone, “Michigan’s Mightiest Piscator.”¹ Even though the scene never happened,² it is an example of the humorous side of Voelker’s imagination. “Michigan’s Mightiest Piscator” is a well-deserved title and a testament both to Voelker’s lifelong passion for fishing the beaver ponds and rivers of the Upper Peninsula (U.P.) searching for Michigan’s wild brook trout (or “mermaids,” as he called them) and to his writings chronicling those adventures. In those writings, names of ponds and rivers are often changed to protect the innocent, especially that body of water he eventually came to own, which he might refer to as Frenchman’s Pond, Uncles, or Uncle Tom’s Pond.

A true believer in wild brook trout and forever loyal to Michigan’s U.P., Voelker, under the pen name Robert Traver, is best known to the world for the novel *Anatomy of a Murder*, but among anglers

his genius is captured in his fishing stories. He maintained a fishing journal for fifty-two fishing seasons (1936–1987)—hundreds of handwritten pages—which he called “Fishing Notes.” This journal contains some of the foundational information Voelker used to compose his yarns.³

In the preface to his first angling book, *Trout Madness*, Voelker admits that “I will lie a little, but not much.”⁴ To possibly uncover a glimpse of what he meant by that, I examine Voelker’s “Fishing Notes” (and to some extent his other writings) and search for historical detail. As Voelker’s old fishing friend Louie Bonetti once said, “Sure, sure t’ing—dese people gooda people, dey sometime tella da trut.”⁵

BIOGRAPHY

John Donaldson Voelker was born on 29 June 1903 in Ishpeming, Michigan, to George O. Voelker, a saloon owner with reputedly the longest bar in Michigan’s

Upper Peninsula, and Annie Traver Voelker, a private music teacher for thirty-eight years. Voelker attributes being “planted” in the U.P. to his “brewer-grandfather’s long search for a community simply crawling with permanently parched beer guzzlers.”⁶ The youngest of six brothers, he was a good student, learning music and showing an early interest in writing. His first story, “Lost Alone All Night in a Swamp with a Bear,” was written in grammar school.⁷ Voelker’s childhood home was only one block from the library, and his mother encouraged his love for books. He graduated from Ishpeming High School in 1922 and Northern State Normal College in 1924.⁸ Later, he attended the University of Michigan Law School at Ann Arbor, graduating in 1928.⁹

Grace Taylor of Oak Park, Illinois, and Voelker met while he was in law school and she was an undergraduate. They married in 1930 and raised three daughters, and had a son who died at age eighteen months. After a three-year stint with

the law firm of Mayer, Meyer, Austrian & Platt in Chicago, Voelker, finding city life unbearable, returned to the U.P. In a letter to his mother, he explained his desire to leave: "The chief reason I came to Chicago was to give it a fair trial and never in future years succumb to a feeling of thwarted ambition, a common malady I believe, among small-town attorneys."¹⁰ Voelker had just received a raise to \$250 a month, but it only strengthened his decision to leave. Although he professed he was not unhappy, he found Chicago "wanting," explaining that his routine was to work "until 5:45 every night and then walk ½ mile through the soot, ride 10 and walk another ½ mile, and reverse the process in the morning."¹¹ Grace was reluctantly amenable to moving to a smaller community as long as her babies could be "born in Oak Park with her old family doctor in attendance."¹²

Voelker published eleven books, three of which dealt with fishing.¹³ *Trout Madness: Being a Dissertation on the Symptoms and Pathology of This Incurable Disease by One of Its Victims* was first published in 1960, *Anatomy of a Fisherman* in 1964,¹⁴ and *Trout Magic* in 1974.¹⁵ Voelker's stories also appeared in numerous magazines, including *Life*, *Esquire*, *Field & Stream*, *Fly Rod & Reel*, *Fly Fisherman*, *Gray's Sporting Journal*, and *Sports Afield*. From 1967 to 1969, he contributed weekly stories to the *Detroit News Sunday Magazine* under the heading "Traver Treatment." During his tenure as a Michigan Supreme Court justice, he authored more than one hundred opinions. The most notable was a dissenting opinion in *People v. Hildabridle*, which became the majority opinion when shared with the other justices.¹⁶ Somehow he also had time to keep up extensive and long-term correspondences with friends and business associates.

Voelker's legal career included fourteen years as the Marquette County prosecutor, running successfully for office seven times. As a public prosecutor, he began writing under the pen name Robert Traver so that the voters would not think he was working only part time. Robert was the name of an older brother who died after World War I, and Traver was his mother's maiden name. Voelker lost the 1950 reelection campaign by thirty-six votes, and in his own words, "The battered D.A. was now the ex-D.A. Like old Joe Lewis, I had lingered too long; had fought a hard fight; and had finally got knocked out by a younger man. Oddly enough, once it was done, I somehow preferred it that way."¹⁷ He then opened a law office in Ishpeming and quickly established a general law practice handling all types of civil and

criminal cases. In 1952, he represented Army Lieutenant Coleman A. Peterson, who was charged with the murder of Maurice Chenoweth (for allegedly raping Peterson's wife). Voelker's only comment in "Fishing Notes" about the successful trial that would one day change his life: "Next day, Sept. 15, went into murder defense of Lt. Peterson. After 8 day trial, he was found not guilty by reason of temporary insanity."¹⁸ An examination of "Fishing Notes" reveals that Voelker fished every day for a month preceding the trial. Several dates carry the notation "PM," indicating that he was out on the water after a day's work.

He ran unenthusiastically and unsuccessfully for Congress in the 1954 Democratic primary. His campaign slogan, "Congress needs a transfusion of new blood," is still considered relevant by many.¹⁹ The first mention of the campaign in "Fishing Notes" was on 13 June 1954. When fishing with friends L. P. "Busky" Barrett and Henry "Hank" L. Scarffe, the three discovered a new place on the Big Esky River, later to be named

The Glide. "We all agreed there was no more beautiful and lovely spot both to fish and to look at that we knew. We plan to pitch a tent and stay there weekends. A likely place to campaign!"²⁰ This spot is the secret location where his story "The Intruder" unfolds.²¹ On primary election day, 3 August 1954, Voelker fished Frenchman's Pond with Busky Barrett and Carroll C. Rushton. His friends caught ten trout, but he didn't catch a single one. His stoic comment was brief: "Today, I got beat for the Demo. nomination for Congress."²² Voelker did not let the campaign interfere with his trout fishing—he fished sixty days before the primary, and there is not a single PM notation during that time. He did not enjoy asking for votes and did not have big followings when he spoke. He drew bigger crowds by pulling out his fly rod and giving casting demonstrations. In 1956, Michigan Governor G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams appointed Voelker to fill a vacant seat on the Michigan Supreme Court. He then ran a successful statewide campaign in 1958 and won a four-year term.



The Honorable John D. Voelker, Michigan Supreme Court Justice 1956–1960. MSS-39: Photograph Series, Box 6, portraits. Used with permission from Kitchie Hill, Inc.

Voelker's most popular book, *Anatomy of a Murder*, was scheduled for publication in 1957, but was delayed so the Book of the Month Club could publish their version in January 1958. Once released as a full novel, it was on the *New York Times* best-seller list for almost a year. Otto Preminger acquired the film rights and directed an Academy Award-nominated film starring James Stewart, Lee Remick, Ben Gazara, and George C. Scott.²³ After acquiring the film rights, Preminger traveled to the U.P. to inspect potential filming locations. When Preminger left town, Voelker took him to the train and went fishing for the rest of the day, catching five 10- to 12-inch brook trout at Weasel's Pond.²⁴ The crew began filming on 23 March 1959, and the movie was filmed entirely on location in the U.P.²⁵ Voelker was a legal consultant to Preminger on the film, and on 15 May 1959, the last day of filming, he took *Life* magazine photographer Gjon Mili and Jimmy Stewart's wife, Gloria, to Top Hawkins Pond. He wrote: "Mostly postured and posed for movies for Mili, roll casting etc., gave Mrs. S. lessons in same, ate lunch and so home."²⁶

In the beginning, Voelker must have been a challenge for Preminger, primarily because it was difficult for Preminger to understand Voelker's passion for fishing. Preminger, in his overbearing directorial tone, sent a telegram before filming started: "Tried to telephone you several times, but you were fishing."²⁷ The follow-

ing year, after the film was completed, Preminger telegraphed Voelker, surrendering to the Voelker fishing lifestyle. "Dear John, am hanging on phone not able to reach you like old bullfrog who cannot compete with trout."²⁸

Service on the Michigan Supreme Court was not pleasurable or rewarding for Voelker. The 450-mile one-way trip by car to Lansing was strenuous and even dangerous in winter. He was wanting to start another book but could not; the concentration it took to compose legal opinions left no time. Shortly after the film premier of *Anatomy of a Murder*, he resigned from the court. On 24 November 1959, he sent a resignation letter (effective 4 January 1960) to Governor Williams to explain that he was "pregnant with book" and "while other lawyers may write my opinions, they cannot write my books."²⁹ At the age of fifty-six, with newfound wealth and success, Voelker became a full-time writer and angler.³⁰

Opening day of the 1960 trout season found Voelker (along with his wife, Grace; Joseph Welch, who played the court judge in *Anatomy of a Murder*; and his wife, Agnes) in Israel visiting Otto Preminger during the filming of the movie *Exodus*. His first fishing day was not until May 24 at Frenchman's and Hawkins Ponds. He did not catch anything, but commented in "Fishing Notes," "First time in my life that I missed the trout opener."³¹ After this long absence from the U.P. during a fish-

ing season, he began fishing every day to make up for lost time. Fishing was terrible until a cloudy July day at Frenchman's Pond: "The day I have awaited; I have brushed out the dam, and I long-leadered the hot spot and picked my fish till I had enough."³² He caught seven brook trout (8–10¾ inches). On July 12 at Frenchman's Pond (aka Uncles Pond), he "stood in bright sun and long-leadered the dam, taking three nice ones and missing many on the sunken fly bite. One never conquers the problems, but perhaps I am learning a little about Uncles."³³ The following week was exceptional. On July 17, after his daughter's twenty-fourth-birthday dinner, Voelker went night fishing alone at Biegler's Pool on the Barnhardt River. "Went to the old spot, I haven't fished in years. On 3rd cast 5x Paul Young No. 10 Killer [Candy striper] hooked, played and landed this nice treat"; Voelker had caught an 18¼-inch brown trout, his largest brown recorded in "Fishing Notes."³⁴ Fishing was fair for a few days, but the weather intervened. "Well today I had everything—sunned out, rained out, and then, in evening, blown out."³⁵ On August 18, Voelker began building a dam to raise the water level a few inches on Frenchman's lower pond at the old crossed logs above the rocks.³⁶

Voelker enjoyed a drink, particularly sour mash bourbon, preferring Evan Williams, finding quality in the bottle and not needing any advertisements to



Left: Voelker's favorite flies for the U.P., from left to right: Slim Jim, small Adams, Nymph, Candy Striper, Jassid, and Betty McNault. Ernie Wood collection. Photo by Larry Crane. Used with permission of Larry Crane.



Right: The Candy Striper. Ernie Wood collection. Photo by Larry Crane.



John D. Voelker (pictured) fishing the Yellow Dog River on 23 July 1940. MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Photographic Series. Used with permission from Kitchie Hill, Inc.



John D. Voelker with trout fryers cooking in the skillet at Frenchman's Pond. MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Photographic Series, ca. 1970s. Used with permission from Kitchie Hill, Inc.

make the bourbon taste better. At first, he preferred his bourbon served in an old tin cup, but later, after the cabin at Frenchman's Pond was built, the container of choice was a French jelly jar, and an old-fashioned was the preferred drink. He was also particular with whom he drank. "I hate cocktail parties . . . I can see no utility or pleasure in getting half crocked with people you little know nor will long remember."³⁷

Classical and jazz music were an important part of Voelker's life. He played the Italian clavietta and the mandolin. He did not like country western or bluegrass music. He built an FM radio antenna extending well above the trees in the wooded area next to his house to get good reception. "Well at long last I am getting good FM reception. . . . Bach and Haydn till it runs out of my ears. . . . What a joy to get away from TV and crackling commercial radio. . . . I shall sit back with a big beer and bask in Bach."³⁸

EVOLUTION OF A FLY FISHERMAN

Voelker was not raised a fly fisherman. He learned to fish with bait and did so until age thirty-five. "Fishing Notes"

reveals that 17 May 1938 was the beginning of his journey to becoming a fly fisherman.³⁹ This was the first day that Carroll C. Rushton, a Michigan circuit judge and fly fisherman, appeared in "Fishing Notes." Rushton and Voelker fished together fifteen days that season. Rushton caught forty-two trout on flies, whereas Voelker caught only twenty-two using bait. Rushton also caught the largest trout: a 13-inch brook.⁴⁰ If we assume Voelker's statistics are reliable, it is obvious that he was outfished and becoming aware that fishing with a fly might have its advantages.

The following year, another fly fisherman, Tommy Cole, began fishing with Voelker; they fished together ten days. "From the very first day, Tommy began a subtle campaign to wean me away from bait fishing and win me over to the fly."⁴¹ Cole showed Voelker that fly fishing was simply a vastly more exciting, artful, and humane way of wooing a trout.⁴² Rushton and Cole are credited as being the two individuals who taught him to fly fish.

Voelker considered his real start as a fly fisherman to be 1 July 1940 while fishing the Escanaba River. Cole was catching trout, and when Voelker landed a sucker, Cole took the pole and tied a fly on the line. "Tom Cole rigged up a fly on my bait

pole and I caught 2 trout on flies, lost a beautiful brown tr[ou]t up at the boat and got 3 other strikes."⁴³ Cole caught five trout that day, the biggest 13 inches; Voelker also caught five, his biggest 9 inches.⁴⁴ On reflection, Voelker writes in his story, "Sins My Father Taught Me," that Cole's new approach made the difference. "I was not only a fly-fisherman in my head but at last in my heart, the only place I guess it really matters."⁴⁵

Although Voelker is gracious in describing Cole's patience and fly-fishing wisdom, there may be another motive attributable to the conversion. Voelker was a gentle and joyful person, but he was competitive, a man who enjoyed winning; he kept count of the number and size of fish caught as a way to compare himself with others. Because of this competitive nature, it would be fair to conclude that being outfished may have encouraged his willingness to be seduced by the fly and give up his old ways. After the conversion, Voelker may have on rare occasion regressed to using worms or a bait, especially if he needed some small legal-size trout for eating (called "fryers").⁴⁶ During the postwar spinning revolution in the late 1940s, Voelker used a spinning rod on opening day in 1949.⁴⁷ On July 9, he caught his first fish using a

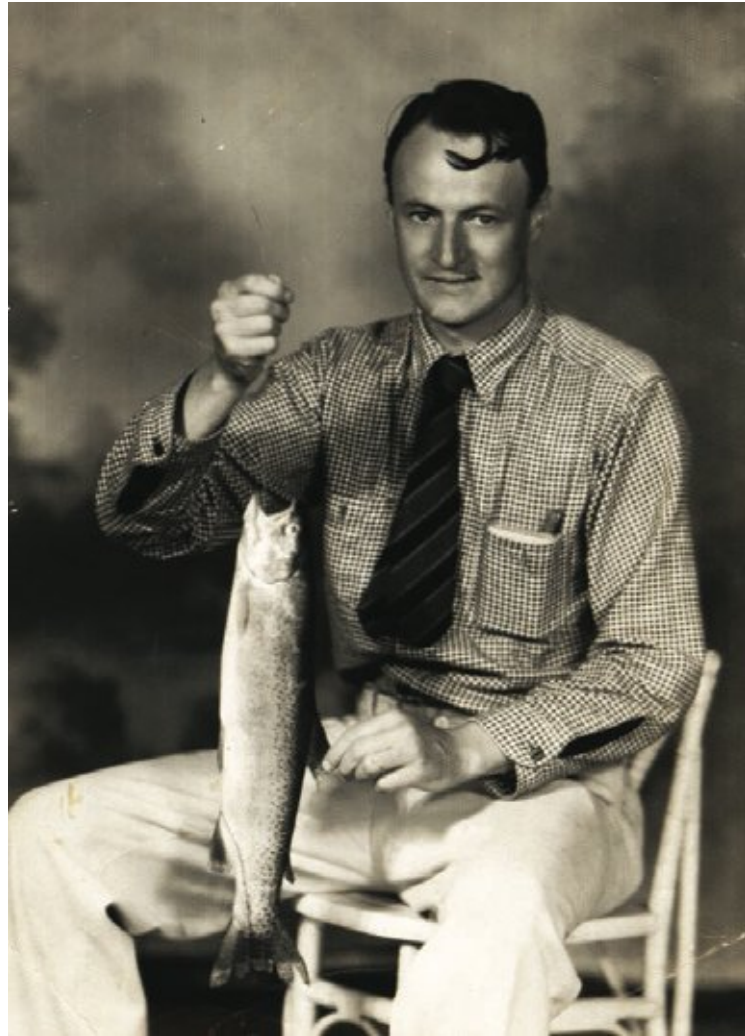
bubble with a wet fly.⁴⁸ He also experimented with spinning tackle by inserting BBs into a plastic float to make a rattling sound in hopes of attracting a trout. “Did not fish seriously. Frittering with spinning bubble filled with BB’s (my invention) and a fly.”⁴⁹

Fly rods are an essential tool in the pursuit of trout. Voelker had many rods, including two bamboo rods he acquired and used for the first time in July 1958. One was a Thomas originally built in 1928 with the tips replaced in 1945. This rod “has a slow wet fly action going down to the butt joint, but it handles and roll casts beautifully. I’m in love with it.”⁵⁰ On 6 July 1958, he bought an 8-foot boat rod built by Paul Young. “Paul Y. is breaking up his old rod sets and sold me this for \$50.”⁵¹ Morris Kushner made several bamboo rods for Voelker based on Voelker’s idea of the perfect fly rod:

I roll cast a lot with long leaders and small flies on lakes, ponds and beaver dams and for this I like a long (8½-foot) limber, supple rod in which the action goes down to the butt. Just the opposite, in other words, of the rigid so-called dry-fly action rods which so many fishermen seem to prefer of late years, but which I do not like, even for dry-fly fishing. I like very much the responsiveness and lazy action of the 8-foot rod you gave Hal Lawin. It is a dream.⁵²

Voelker acted like he could barely tie his own shoes, so he was not ashamed to say he did not tie his own trout flies. Paul Young was one source for flies mentioned in “Fishing Notes.” On 1 May 1962, Voelker caught his longest brook trout: “Stomach virtually empty and beautifully marked,” 15¾ inches long at Top Weasel’s [Pond] with a Paul Young no. 10 red-and-gold bucktail streamer and 5x 12-foot leader.⁵³ Voelker also bought flies from Jim Engler’s Orvis store in Detroit. Frank Cupp of Livonia, Michigan, was the tier.⁵⁴

After reading *Art Flick’s Streamside Guide to Naturals and Their Imitations*, Voelker asked Flick for the name of a good fly tier who could replicate his patterns.⁵⁵ Flick recommended Harry Darbee of Livingston, New York,⁵⁶ but “Fishing Notes” does not reflect that Voelker purchased any flies from Darbee. Voelker had purchased additional copies of Flick’s book, giving one to Bill Nault and another to John Peterson. Voelker hoped that these local tiers would “catch fire and tie them exactly as you describe.”⁵⁷ Nault lived in Ishpeming and was a reliable source of well-tied flies. On ordering four dozen



John D. Voelker’s 20-inch rainbow trout weighing 2.5 pounds caught 20 July 1937 at Boyne City dam. Note the Italian cigars in Voelker’s front pocket. Photo by Paul Strayer. MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Photographic Series. Used with permission from Kitchie Hill, Inc.



Voelker with Louie Bonetti, fisherman and hunter, on the Yellow Dog Plains north of Ishpeming, Michigan. MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Photographic Series, ca. 1951. Used with permission from Kitchie Hill, Inc.



of the smallest Adams that Nault could conveniently tie, Voelker wrote to him, “Your Adams is by all odds the best fly in my kit. It works even when prayer fails.”⁵⁸ Nault was tying sizes 24 and 28 for Voelker.⁵⁹ He charged \$2.50 per dozen, but Voelker was paying him twice that amount,⁶⁰ as well as sending Nault autographed editions of his books when they became available. Nault also tied the Betty Nault and Jassids for Voelker. One technique that Nault used was tying a smaller-size fly on a larger hook—for example, a no. 18 fly on a no. 16 hook.⁶¹ Voelker had Nault tie flies on no. 28 hooks and wanted him to use no. 32, but Nault declined, saying “So dang small I can’t see it.”⁶²

Another Michigan tier who sold flies to Voelker was Lloyd W. Anderson from Negaunee, owner of Lloyd’s Fly Box. Anderson was a humble, quiet man, and an extremely talented tier.⁶³ Voelker and Anderson corresponded for more than twenty-one years working to develop an effective pattern for Frenchman’s Pond.⁶⁴ Anderson constantly sent different patterns, including a March Brown with short-bodied “mayagomy”-colored pattern with six legs and a fork in the tail, which he tied using an 1806 pattern from a member of the Derwent Fly Fishing Club that had been published in W. H. Aldam’s *A Quaint Treatise on Flees, and the Art a Artyfichall Flee Making* (1876).⁶⁵ Anderson also sent Voelker a West Coast steelhead fly pattern known as a Ringold Queen that he had modified for use in Frenchman’s Pond, even though the natural insect is found in streams with swift gravel runs and riffles.⁶⁶

THE LANGUAGE OF FISHING

The language of fishing is more than instructional writing about how to fish, how to tie a fly, how to build a rod, or where to go fishing. Voelker’s writings make up an essential contribution to the American library of angling literature. His stories are unique in part because he introduced exotic and romantic names to the sport. Calling wild brook trout *mermaids* and fishing spots *Shangri-la* and *Frenchman’s* moves us out of the ordinary.

All writers have their own time to write, and Voelker had his own time, too. He wrote his books during the fall and winter months, when trout season was closed. It was his way of devoting a lot of time to fishing and balancing it with

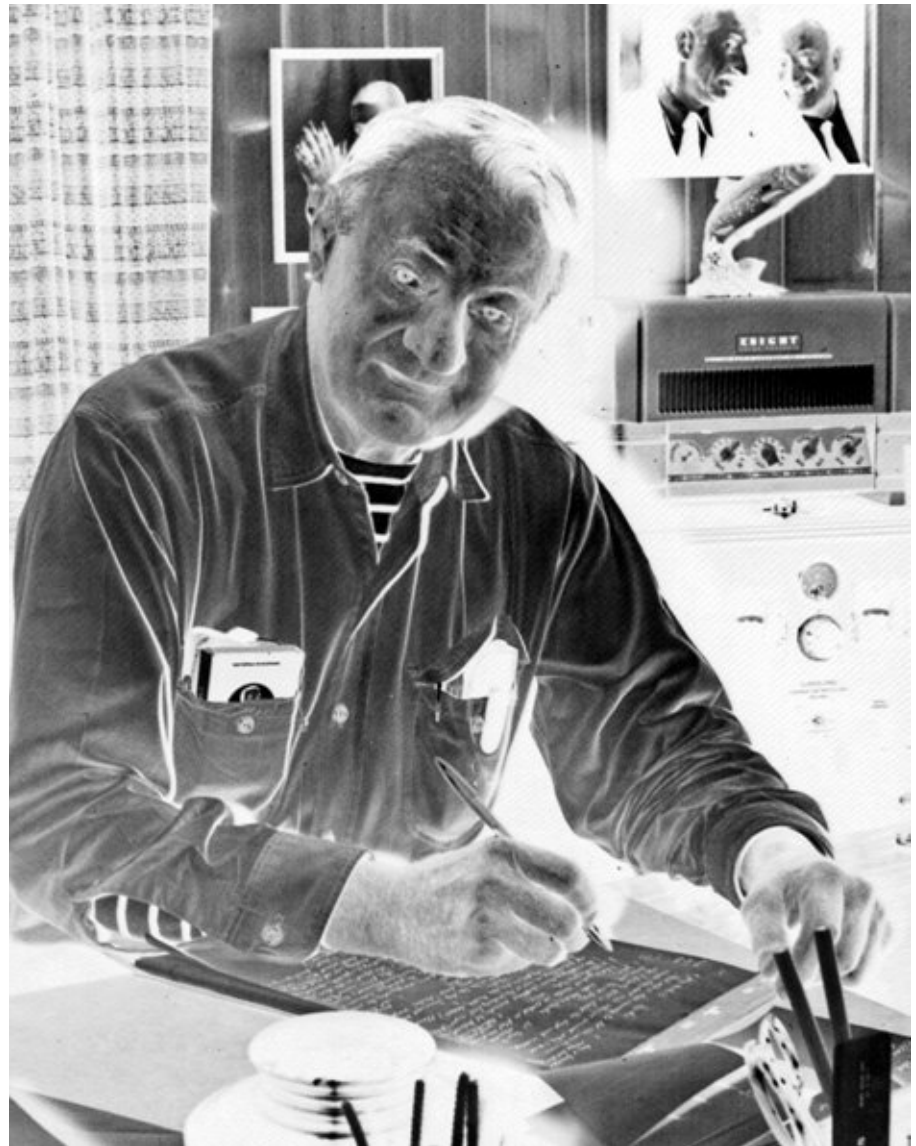
Among Voelker’s favorite flies were, from top to bottom, the Adams, the Jassid, and the Betty Nault. All flies from the Ernie Wood collection. Photos by Larry Crane.

time to write. Voelker played with words, always trying to express an idea in a new way. He liked the word *slob* and frequently used it to describe big fish. He also used *slob* as a strong negative word to express his disdain for loggers who were destroying the landscape, as well as for poachers or tourist fishermen who were destroying the fishing. A common phrase to describe his fishless days was *ritualistic fishing*. His writings are humorous and straightforward; there is no need to read between the lines. Voelker's ability to quickly come to a point and articulate it clearly is illustrated in his "Testament of a Fisherman":

I fish because I love to; because I love the environs where trout are found, which are invariably beautiful, and hate the environs where crowds of people are found, which are invariably ugly; because of all the television commercials, cocktail parties, and assorted social posturing I thus escape; because, in a world where most men seem to spend their lives doing things they hate, my fishing is at once an endless source of delight and an act of small rebellion; because trout do not lie or cheat and cannot be bought or bribed or impressed by power, but respond only to quietude and humility and endless patience; because I suspect that men are going along this way for the last time, and I for one don't want to waste the trip; because mercifully there are no telephones on trout waters; because only in the woods can I find solitude without loneliness; because bourbon out of an old tin cup always tastes better out there; because maybe one day I will catch a mermaid; and, finally, not because I regard fishing as being so terribly important but because I suspect that so many of the other concerns of men are equally unimportant—and not nearly so much fun.⁶⁷

He once told a young student, "Read, learn words. Learn what they mean and how to string them together."⁶⁸ He wrote a note to himself in 1942, before ever publishing a book: "Remember always to try to: write down to earth, elemental, simple, direct."⁶⁹ He once said, "There isn't any good writing; only re-writing. Observe, observe, observe. Then, publish your work."⁷⁰ According to Voelker, writing is an "attempt to create some sort of picture, scene or lasting impression upon its beholders. While virtually all the other arts try to do this through the universal 'language' of the eye or ear, writing alone is confined to painting its pictures only in the mind and this only through the ancient but still artificial medium of words."⁷¹

In his last years, Voelker was working on a fourth book about fishing that might have included a chapter titled "A



John D. Voelker in his home office at Ishpeming, Michigan (ca. 1961), wearing a favorite French sailor shirt as an undershirt. MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Photographic Series. Used with permission from Kitchie Hill, Inc.

Short Course about Writing Fishing Stories," in which he reflected on the difficulties of writing about fishing. "Game fishing, especially with a fly, almost necessarily involves one person in pursuit of one fish at a time. This naturally sharply narrows and limits both the action and cast of characters. Such yarns can be embellished a bit by bits of insect talk, types of water and flies and hatches and the like. But essentially most fishing tales boil down to an account of whether our hero caught the 'beeg' one or fell on his butt."⁷² Elsewhere, referencing his story "The Intruder," Voelker called it "perhaps the closest I ever came, or may ever come, to writing a genuine short story about the pursuit of trout."⁷³

Sparse Grey Hackle described Voelker's writing and the accuracy of his storytelling. "It's hard to analyze your work because it's not just the quality of your

English that makes you fascinating—to me anyway. . . . And you have an unerring eye for the vivid, dramatic, incredible and moving situation or person. I think you always exaggerate or touch up what you're writing about. I don't believe, for example, that your father is portrayed with objective accuracy, in your piece in the current [*Gray's Sporting*] *Journal*. I don't believe that Richard Nixon looked like the way the cartoonists drew him, either. But they sure dramatized him, and you do the same."⁷⁴ Voelker may have been dramatic at times, but as Arnold Gingrich said, "He gives you that wonderful, relaxed, lazy, unhurried and unflustered, comfortable 'old shoe' feeling, page after page."⁷⁵ Nick Lyons said that Voelker's style of writing was "his own unique mix of true or fictional narrative, mingled with wise upcountry wit, home-spun and down-to-earth philosophy."⁷⁶

The subject of trout fishing also finds its way into Voelker's novels. As Art Flick commented to his wife on reading *Anatomy of a Murder* for the first time, "The fellow who wrote this is really a fisherman and didn't just put the stuff about fishing in the book to fill up space."⁷⁷ The opening scene finds the main character, defense attorney Paul Biegler, returning from a fishing trip.⁷⁸ Before trial, while researching the legal defense of irresistible impulse to murder, Biegler says, "Our search possessed much of the uncertainty and palpitant quality of stalking an elusive rising trout."⁷⁹ Later Biegler says, "I've simply got to crawl off somewhere by myself and submit this case to a jury of my peers—the trout."⁸⁰ Observing the prosecutor during trial, Biegler thinks, "I longed to peek into his darting otter brain,"⁸¹ and when the prosecutor was huddled with his trial team, "I drew what I hoped was a leaping trout on my scratch pad. A psychologist would probably have told me I was obsessed with plump mermaids."⁸²

Voelker's other legal trial novels also contain references to angling that reflect his real-life situation, in which the attorney is always burdened by his legal obligations, yet dreaming of mermaids. In *Small Town D.A.*, when asked if he liked to fish, he makes it clear that he does. "Like?" I said slowly. "Do I like to fish? Look, my friend, fishing is my secret lust—I am its slave. As a drunkard does not merely like his bottle nor a lecher merely like his mistress, so I do not merely like to fish—I love to fish."⁸³ Catchy angling phrases pop up throughout his books, such as "fishy as a rat in Denmark"⁸⁴ and "like a trout fisherman over a new beaver dam."⁸⁵

Voelker's passion for fly fishing and its rewards for a full life are eloquently stated in *Laughing Whitefish*, a novel about the legal efforts of a Native American to establish her family's ownership rights in a company with a U.P. iron ore mine. The main character, William Poe, is a young lawyer who had quit his job with a large law firm and moved to the U.P. While contemplating what he did not tell a friendly journalist from the local newspaper, Poe says:

Of late I had thought I detected a massive tedium and joylessness all about me, a shrinking from life, a kind of snuffling mediocrity and relentless acquisitiveness which I for one regarded as an affront to the spirit, almost a physical violation of the person. But if I was depressed by the growing confusion of making a living with any fullness of living, I was appalled by the withering away of the spirit I thought I detected among the people around me:

the deliberate stunting of talent, the smothering of latent abilities, the stifling of sleeping capacities, this slow leaking away of life. Willy Poe was lost among his own people and he had to flee to find himself.

Nor had I told him that one of the minor reasons I had to come to the Upper Peninsula was that I had developed a passion for the new sport of fly casting for trout—new in America, that is. For graduation my father had given me one of the exquisite new split bamboo fly rods made by Hiram Leonard of Bangor, and armed with this fairy wand even in the heavily fished waters around Ann Arbor I was growing quite proficient at the sport. The very act of fishing, I was finding, seemed to bring repose and a sense of kinship with nature. And the trout helped me to eat.⁸⁶

This autobiographical passage states Voelker's innermost reasons for leaving a prestigious big city law firm and moving to the U.P. In his novel, as in his life, the big city did not offer adventure.

"FISHING NOTES"

The primary source document supporting Voelker's fishing stories are his "Fishing Notes," consisting of hundreds of handwritten pages beginning on 27 April 1936 and continuing through 11 June 1987.⁸⁷ Each year's notes start on opening day and conclude on the last day of the

season, with the exceptions of 1947, 1951, and 1952, when Voelker made brief notes about fall bird hunting. He once commented that he hunted only to scout out the rivers when the fishing season was over.⁸⁸ He also kept several other journals that are not primarily concerned with his fishing activities but provide context about both his writing and off-season activities, and that help put his U.P. fishing experiences into perspective with the rest of his life. The other journals include "Log of Uncle Tom's Cabin," four volumes archived as "Journals," and two more volumes archived as "Notebooks."⁸⁹

In a *Life Magazine* feature article, Voelker said, "Part of the allure of fishing is the call of an unknown bird, the sharp cry of a strange animal or the mystery of a flower."⁹⁰ "Fishing Notes" confirms that Voelker's activities in the U.P. woods were not solely focused on catching brook trout. When the fish were not rising, he was in the woods searching for wild berries, morel mushrooms, and flowers for his wife. He was also continuously on the lookout for pine knots to burn in his Franklin stove.⁹¹

"Fishing Notes" is almost exclusively about Voelker's fishing days in the U.P., not detailed entries of all of his fishing experiences. Fishing trips taken away from the U.P. during the off season are found solely in other journals. Canadian trips during trout season are mentioned



After 4:00 p.m., opening day, 24 April 1982, with old-fashioned in hand. Voelker (center, in chair behind last man in first row) described the group as pilgrims because the township plowman was needed to clean up the road so they could get to the cabin at Frenchman's Pond. MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Photographic Series. Used with permission from Kitchie Hill, Inc.

with the barest of details, as if the purpose was merely to account for his days away. For example, in 1945, a three-day August trip was noted simply: “No fish. Hi or low water. Tried hard. Flies.”⁹² In 1948, being in Canada for seven days, he noted just that “Fishing was poor, too much H₂O.”⁹³ Similarly, a two-day 1950 trip to the River Josephine is void of detail. He caught fifteen 7- to 13-inch brook trout and said only, “Worked for fish, lovely trip.”⁹⁴

In the early years, Voelker’s “Fishing Notes” is data compilation. He meticulously records the names of friends and places they fished, brief notations on weather conditions, and the number and size of fish caught. At times, when water conditions were intolerable, he started recording more about them. On occasion, the time of day is revealed. He identified fryers with the letter “F.”⁹⁵

Keeping track of the actual number of fish caught was important to Voelker. He added up his legal catches for the years 1936–1969, which totaled 5,766 trout.⁹⁶ His best season—with 337 trout—was 1963. Because Voelker recorded the number of fish he caught, as well as those of his fishing companions, it is numerically obvious that he was not the best fisherman of the group. There are several reasons for his lower daily count. First, he rarely fished anything but the fly, whereas some of his companions fished almost exclusively with bait. On 1 and 2 July 1950, at Perch Pond while fishing with

four others, Voelker noted: “We took over 37 brook trout, my quota being low because I insisted on fly-fishing while the others made hay with worms.”⁹⁷ He also remarked that another fishing friend’s interpretation of a legal length was shorter than his. In later years, there are no detailed references to the number of fish caught, just the fish reported as big enough to be called a “money fish.” Voelker and his friends would agree on opening day the amount to wager on the largest fish caught each day. A money fish had to be at least 10 inches and would earn a dollar from each fisherman participating in the wager.⁹⁸

The first year of “Fishing Notes,” 1936, consists of only three pages. Voelker reveals dates, locations, people with whom he fished, their total catch, and the largest fish. He compiled year-end statistics showing sixty-five days of fishing; seventy-five trout and eight bass were caught; the largest trout was 12¼ inches taken at Deer Creek and the largest bass was 17½ inches from Big Dead River. He concluded that “These fish should run about \$0.25 per ounce!”⁹⁹ By 1964, Voelker revealed that the financial aspect of fishing had increased to 5 dollars an ounce.¹⁰⁰ The first descriptive narrative text was recorded on 26 May 1938, noting that John Speck, a conservation officer, told him, “200 7½- to 9-inch trout were planted in Deer Creek at Weasel[’s Pond] last week.”¹⁰¹ With this information, Voelker and friends fished Deer Creek eight days, and by June 18 he

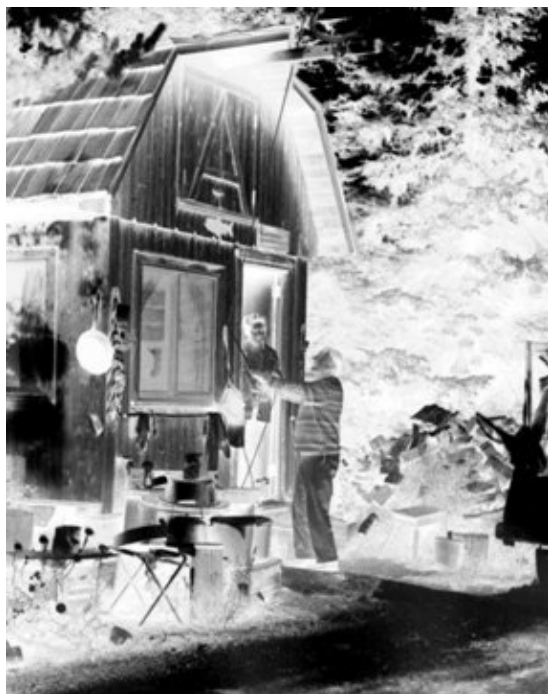
reported that they had caught a total of seventy-three trout. Only one fish was recorded being caught on a fly.¹⁰²

A significant aspect of Voelker’s fishing the backwoods was the numerous locations that were available. For example, the 1956 season was representative of his fishing days: he fished more than twenty different ponds and river pools, sometimes fishing three or four places in a single day.¹⁰³ After Voelker purchased Frenchman’s Pond in 1963, his travels on the backroads continued, but his primary purpose was searching for berries and mushrooms. Every day that he fished during the 1986 season, he only fished at Frenchman’s Pond, but made numerous foraging “crawls” throughout the backwoods.¹⁰⁴

FRENCHMAN’S POND

Henry David Thoreau’s Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts—probably America’s most famous pond—was formed by glaciers thousands of years ago. Walden Pond’s fame is due not to its reputation as a fishing hole, but rather Thoreau’s writings and ideas. Similarly, John Voelker’s glacial Frenchman’s Pond has arguably become the most famous still-water fishery in America, its fame not because of the fish, but because of Voelker’s writing. Voelker referred to its beaver ponds as “haunting quiet waters.”¹⁰⁵

The name *Frenchman’s* cannot be found on a map. Voelker never intended



Voelker and his wife, Grace, at the cabin at Frenchman’s, ca. 1967. Used with permission from Kitchie Hill, Inc.



Al Pellicane

Voelker back at Frenchman’s in 1980, wearing what appears to be the same sweater as in the 1967 photo. From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

to reveal its location, but after his death, it became general knowledge that Frenchman's Pond's real name was Uncle Tom's Pond—Uncles for short.¹⁰⁶ It consists of two spring-fed beaver ponds in the Escabana River drainage, approximately one-half mile apart. The lower quarter mile of the stream between the lower and upper ponds is gravel, sand, and stone, providing trout-spawning habitat.¹⁰⁷ The upper pond is about an acre in size, and the lower pond covers 3½ acres. Depth soundings in 1951 showed the deepest parts in both ponds were only 3 feet near the beaver dams; otherwise, a 2-foot depth prevailed throughout both.¹⁰⁸

Frenchman's Pond was a private refuge where Voelker, friends, and guests fished, spun yarns, drank old-fashioned from jelly jars, fried trout in a skillet, and otherwise sought the solace of the U.P. backwoods. On 24 June 1963, Voelker and his wife acquired 160 acres of wooded forest, including Frenchman's Pond, from Merle Yelle.¹⁰⁹ On the day he purchased Frenchman's, Voelker caught two fryers while Busky Barrett was fishing in Voelker's boat using a parasol for shade. They had a steak dinner, and Voelker recorded that he "Bought Uncles."¹¹⁰ On June 27, he trimmed tree limbs near the rocks to make it easier to "watch the rise."¹¹¹ On June 28, he cut more branches, improved the boat berth by widening it, and built a rock fireplace. He described it as "a lovely summer day."¹¹² Years later, he added an "old bar room round table with the drink pockets underneath that I used to play cards on and drink home brew and local moonshine off when I was still in law school."¹¹³

The shallowness of the ponds was a major issue for Voelker. On 8 August 1963, he began repairing the dam by gathering old logs and rocks in an attempt to raise the water level.¹¹⁴ Five days later, to his surprise, the water had risen 4 inches or more. Declaring a "new Uncles"—and noting that large fish were feeding—made all the work rewarding.¹¹⁵ The next day, the water had receded a little, and Voelker realized he must sandbag the dams.¹¹⁶

A fish survey was done in 1951 with a seine by the Michigan Conservation Department. It resulted in eight brook trout caught ranging in size from 5.5 to 12.4 inches, with the dominant size being 6.5 inches, in the lower pond, and seven brook trout ranging from 5.6 to 9.6 inches in the upper pond. Four white suckers were caught ranging in size from 6.3 to 8.5 inches.¹¹⁷ The surveyors found vegetation, including *Chara*, *Ranunculus*, and *Spirogyra* algae.¹¹⁸ Frenchman's had an abundant natural food supply, including



Opening day at Frenchman's Pond, all fishing from casting platforms, ca. 1986. From nearest angler: Ted Bogdan and his nine-year-old grandson, Nicky Bogdan; Tom Bogdan; Voelker; and two unidentified fishermen. MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Photographic Series, used with permission from Kitchie Hill, Inc.

aquatic insects, freshwater shrimp, caddisfly larva, and brook sticklebacks.¹¹⁹

Another source document is "Log of Uncle Tom's Cabin," which begins 23 April 1966 and ends 22 February 1985.¹²⁰ The cabin log begins a few days before opening day, when Voelker and two friends "bucked drifts of salt snow"¹²¹ on the road to ascertain whether the carpenters could get in the following week to start building on the camp. John Pendergrath, the carpenter, and his two helpers, started constructing the small cabin in 1966 on April 27 and completed the work on May 4 amidst cold, snowy conditions—beds were brought in on May 6. Numerous improvements were made, including adding a cement block porch on May 8, shelves on May 13, and drapes on June 4. A major project to stabilize the top dam was begun by adding bags of gravel.¹²² The goal was to raise the water level 5 inches because the pond was only 2–3 feet deep. The first of many casting platforms was built on July 13 at a favorable location known as the Lower Log.¹²³

Voelker had numerous encounters with trespassers coming to the cabin, even though NO TRESPASSING signs had been posted. It became necessary to install a cable across the road and partially fence the property.¹²⁴ Later, a school bell was given to Voelker to signal guests and announce the cocktail hour.¹²⁵ At Frenchman's, it was "Fishing before drinking, see."¹²⁶ Fishing with Charles Kuralt one day, Voelker noted, "At 4:00 P.M., we turned from A to B—angling to bourbon."¹²⁷

The cabin log also provides some insights into U.P. life during the winter

months, when the fishing season was closed. It was common for Voelker to ski or snowshoe into Frenchman's each month to inspect the cabin and the ice on the ponds, and to check the road conditions. The cabin log shows that at age seventy-three, a month after a major surgery, Voelker and his friend Ted Bogdan made a trip to the cabin in one hour on snowshoes.

The history of Voelker's experiences at Frenchman's began long before he purchased the property. He had been fishing there for twenty years, but upon learning that it was about to be sold to a lumber company, he stepped in and purchased it.¹²⁸ His first recorded entry in "Fishing Notes" about Frenchman's was on 20 May 1943, stating that it was a "beautiful day, no rise, no fish."¹²⁹ On 29 August 1949, with F. Russell, Voelker reported, "Found road into pond: a rare, potential place, very difficult to fish from shore."¹³⁰ He caught eight fryers, and Russell did not catch any trout. Voelker returned the next two days, noting "Fantastic! A low barometer, cold rain, high wind and fish rising like crazy—but not to our flies."¹³¹ Voelker continued fishing Frenchman's Pond, and on 24 April 1954, opening day, standing shoulder to shoulder with his good friend Hank Scarffe, they both filled out with ten brook trout a piece.¹³² Ten days later, it was so cold the line was freezing in the guides, and he did not catch a single fish.¹³³

Another time, while alone at Frenchman's, Voelker caught two 10-inch brooks and wrote, "Couldn't solve regular rise, but at dusk I went up to the

calmed dam & scrubbing out a 7x long leader and a #22 dry fly which I made wet (there being no rise) teased on these two nice trout and missed several others. Is this a partial solution to this most baffling fascinating place? I dunno.²¹³⁴

Frenchman's Pond was a difficult and sometimes frustrating place to fish. Heavy growth along the shoreline prevented normal casting. If one tried to fish from a boat, trout were put down and disappeared partly because of the shallowness of water and partly because of its clarity. Voelker had to become an expert roll caster, and casting platforms were constructed along the water's edge. To his delight, large trout could be seen cruising the shallow ponds. To his frustration, they would not take the fly. The bright summer sun could also ruin the fishing. With all these challenges, Voelker fished each day knowing that he would be lucky to catch a brace of brookies. Seduced by the challenges and difficulty of the fishing, it does not appear that he was overly concerned about solving the problems in order to catch more trout. Rather, he was content being a part of the mystery and enjoying the magic of Frenchman's. He might complain in "Fishing Notes" about water conditions and the weather, but he came back day after day for the pure joy of being on quiet waters.

Another difficulty at Frenchman's was a greenish algae that would appear in the summer, signaling that catching fish would be even harder as anglers tried to cast their flies. After many years, Voelker sought help. In a 1985 letter to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources seeking advice on how to treat the algae because the trout were not rising, Voelker wrote, "for many years, I have fished for brook trout on an old beaver backwater . . . called on some maps Uncle Tom's Pond. . . . During all that time the pond has supported native brook trout in abundance, however hard they were to catch, evidenced mostly by a slow but steady course of trout rises."²¹³⁵ Ten days later, before the state could respond, Voelker wrote back to report that the algae was slackening and the trout had begun reappearing "after the longest 'drought' there I've ever seen."²¹³⁶ The state did not respond in writing and the algae problem was never formally addressed.

"Fishing Notes" confirms Voelker's passion for secrecy. There are no maps or directions to fishing locations. Fishing spots are given fictitious names and even changed at times to make the location more difficult to determine. One place was identified as "ruined dams" in 1941, but by 1953, its real name, Hawkins Pond, was revealed.¹³⁷ Even his own private

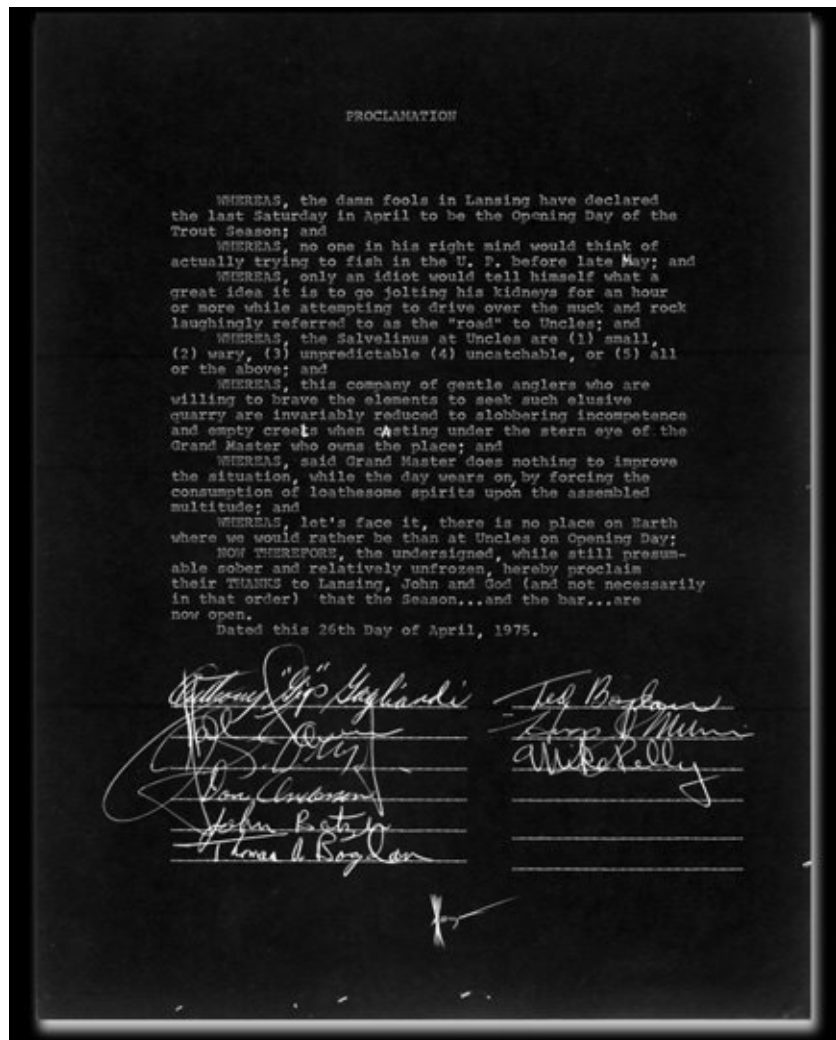
place had many names: Uncles, Uncle Tom's, Frenchman's Pond, and Voelker Pond.¹³⁸ One spot in Alger County was called Shangri-La to keep the place secret, and Gingrass Pond was known as the "Puddle."²¹³⁹

FIRST DAY

Opening day for trout in Michigan is the last Saturday in April, which historically has proven to be cold, windy, and miserable. Access to some fishing spots was often difficult because of snowbanks and ice. Even with these hardships, an opening day in the U.P. is warmly welcomed. In "The First Day," Voelker details opening days from 1936 to 1952, but somewhat differently than in "Fishing Notes." The dates, number of fish caught, and weather conditions appear to be the same, but the locations where he fished are disguised in the published story, true to his philosophy of never giving away the location of a good fishing spot. The names of those who fished with him are

also changed. The narrative portions in "The First Day" are reported from memory and not supported in "Fishing Notes." For example, the 1950 trip to Alger County became a pub crawl of at least seventeen pubs, during which he was forced to listen to "8 million polka and hillbilly laments sung through the left nostril."²¹⁴⁰ This is pure Traver storytelling and falls comfortably within the concept of literary license—which isn't to say that Voelker never stopped at a bar on his way home, merely that "Fishing Notes" makes no mention of an opening day pub crawl. Voelker did not keep track of pubs like he did his fish.

Opening day at Frenchman's became a well-attended social event with so many anglers that in later years it was necessary to have a sign-in sheet. When signing in, anglers agreed to the rules for wagering on the biggest fish caught. The atmosphere of the event is best summarized by a 1975 Opening Day Proclamation (see photo below) presented to Voelker by eight fishing friends.



Opening Day Proclamation, "Fishing Notes," 26 April 1975, MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Personal Series, Box 6, Folder 40. Used with permission from Kitchie Hill, Inc.



Voelker's Ford Model A fishing car, "Buckshot," in which he crawled through the U.P. backwoods from 1935 to 1957. The rubber boat was first used 9 July 1941. John D. Voelker Papers, Photographic Series, ca. 1941. Used with permission from Kitchie Hill, Inc.



John D. Voelker with Bush Car and fish nets. MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Photographic Series, ca. 1957. Used with permission from Kitchie Hill, Inc.



Voelker's second fish car, a 1957 Jeep called the "Bush Car." MSS-39: John D. Voelker Papers, Photographic Series, ca. 1957. Used with permission from Kitchie Hill, Inc.

FISHING CARS

Voelker considered a vehicle equipped with all his fishing gear an essential piece of equipment for every fishing trip because he traveled extensively through the back roads of the U.P. He always carried enough gear in his car to stay a week in the field, including extra tires, winches, and chains to deal with any backwoods situation. His fishing car was fully stocked with rods, reels, flies, waders, bourbon, Italian cigars, food, and camping gear. He would also carry a boat or two and sometimes pulled a teardrop sleeping trailer. Voelker was fully aware of his own obsession with tackle and equipment. In "The Frugal Fisherman," he describes how anglers are overcome with the need for more and more equipment, yet he justifies that need and removes all doubts about needing a new rod.¹⁴¹

Voelker's first fishing car was a used 1928 two-door Model A Ford sedan always identified as Model A in "Fishing Notes." In his story "The Fish Car," he names the faithful, yet moody and fickle Model A "Buckshot." Voelker describes Buckshot as a neglected orphan child (though he did his best raising her) and calls her a "lazy daughter," an "old firehorse," and a "sulking pouting lover."¹⁴² "Fishing Notes" does not comment on Buckshot's personality, but it does chronicle Voelker's adventures and hardships of his many journeys throughout the U.P. Once a newspaper story with the headline "Fishing Car Damaged in Crash" reported that Voelker had been temporarily blinded from the lights of an oncoming car, causing him to veer off the road and hit a tree at 1:30 A.M. The accident was minor, with \$35 in dam-

ages to the car and no injuries.¹⁴³ The last "Fishing Notes" entry for the 1955 season adds to this story. Voelker and friends had fished at Frenchman's and had a good day. Afterward, "We made the blunder of pushing on to Gwinn," meaning they had a few more drinks before going home.¹⁴⁴

In April 1957, Voelker bought a Jeep Wagoneer, which he named "Bush Car," to replace Buckshot (who quietly passed away when loaned to Voelker's brother Leo). Although the Jeep was a mechanical improvement—a four-wheel-drive vehicle was more adaptable for use in the backwoods—Bush Car failed to captivate Voelker's imagination like Buckshot had. Bush Car never acquired a personality or an identity and ceased to become an integral part of Voelker's written fishing experiences.¹⁴⁵

PISCATORIAL DISCRETION

Fishing was a private matter with Voelker, practiced alone or with close friends in secluded, secret, and quiet places. Piscatorial discretion was a matter of honor, and good fishing spots were to be protected at all costs.¹⁴⁶ “Never show a favorite spot to any fisherman you wouldn’t trust with your wife,” he advised.¹⁴⁷ It was not unusual for him to hide the fishing car in the woods and walk in to the pond, covering his trail as he went. When leaving a paved or well-traveled road, Voelker would sweep away his car tracks so a passerby wouldn’t discover his route. Another strategy he used was to take a different route when leaving a fishing spot. Once he went so far as to create a decoy road to keep others from finding the real road into Frenchman’s Pond.

Another aspect of piscatorial discretion is the obligation to protect a secret spot once revealed to you by a friend. Obviously, the first responsibility is to keep the secret, but just as important is to not overfish a secret spot. When, in “Kiss-and-Tell Fisherman,” a fishing friend shared the hottest brook trout spot in Michigan with Voelker, Voelker only returned with that friend, and fishing time was limited to protect the trout. Even when a good fishing spot is discovered, one has the responsibility of keeping the secret and exercising piscatorial discretion, as illustrated in “The Intruder,” when Voelker comes upon a younger fisherman who says, “If you don’t mind, please keep this little stretch under your hat—it’s been all mine for nearly ten years. It’s really something special.”¹⁴⁸ Twenty years later, they meet again, and Voelker, remembering their pact, asks, “How about our having a drink to your glorious trout—and still another to reunion at our old secret fishing spot?”¹⁴⁹

Voelker’s concept of piscatorial discretion goes to the heart of sportsmanship. Without honor and conservation, there will only be self-destruction.

LEGACY

Fishing stories written by others reflecting on their experiences with Voelker are a part of the Voelker legacy. Jim Enger was Voelker’s friend for many years, and his stories—including “The Master of Frenchman’s Pond”—tell about his fishing experiences there over twenty years.¹⁵⁰ James McCullough’s book, *Voelker’s Pond: A Robert Traver Legacy*, is about when he fished Frenchman’s Pond in 1976 with his father and Voelker.¹⁵¹ Jerry Dennis’s “Brook Trout in Traver County” tells of a 1989 summer



John D. Voelker at Frenchman’s Pond with Leonard bamboo rod and 3/8-inch Hardy LRH reel reversed to left-hand retrieve. Cover of Sunday Magazine of the Detroit News (Detroit, Michigan, 18 June 1967). Reprinted courtesy of the Detroit News, copyright 1967.



In August 1991, Grace Voelker donated many of John Voelker’s fishing effects to the museum. They include the fishing vest he wore for the last thirty years of his life, a twenty-five year-old sweater knitted by Grace, his favorite fishing hat, an enamel cup, Italian cigars, his notebooks and green pens, and his Orvis Impregnated Limestone Special. From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

Cook Nelson

day at Frenchman's Pond with Voelker, Norris McDowell, Ted Bogdan, Paul Grant, and Jim Washinawatok.¹⁵² Paul Grant's paintings in *Portrait of a Peninsula* fondly remember and reflect on his times with Voelker.¹⁵³ Bill Nault's remembrance of fishing with Art Flick and Voelker recounts another special day.¹⁵⁴

Toward the end of his life, Voelker allowed Michigan attorneys Frederick Baker and Rich Vander Veen III to establish the John D. Voelker Foundation with the primary purposes of (1) funding scholarships for Native Americans desiring to attend law school and (2) underwriting the Robert Traver Fly-Fishing Writing Award (an annual endeavor to select the best fishing story; *Fly Rod & Reel* publishes the winning story each year).¹⁵⁵ The scholarship program not only is evidence that Voelker valued a good education, but also shows his respect and love for Native Americans.

Voelker's last days consisted of a daily trip to the post office for the mail; then to the Rainbow Bar, a local watering hole in Ishpeming, for cribbage with friend Gigs Gagliardi; and then off to Frenchman's Pond, with numerous side journeys throughout the area in search of nature's bounties. On 19 March 1991, Voelker was making his way home from the post office when he had a fatal heart attack.

As Jim Harrison said, "Death steals everything except our stories."¹⁵⁶ A remarkable storyteller, Voelker left us with a road map of his personal journey from trout madness to trout magic. Speaking of the woodlands he loved, he said, "This is the land where I was born. This is where I live and fish. This is where I hope to await eternity."¹⁵⁷ John D. Voelker is resting in Ishpeming Cemetery, forever a part of the Upper Peninsula.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Two more of Voelker's favorite flies: left, a Nymph, and below, a Slim Jim. Flies from the Ernie Wood collection. Photos by Larry Crane.

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The Legend of Halladay and His Adams

by John Falk

ONE MORNING DURING the summer of 1922, Leonard Halladay, a Mayfield, Michigan, fly tier, said about a trout fly: "We would call it the Adams."¹ He was speaking to his friend and customer C. F. Adams. Unlike many other flies named after a good customer, the Adams has become world famous.

Since that day in 1922, two established outdoors writers—Harold Hinsdill Smedley and George Herter—have described

interviews with Len Halladay. Of note, their accounts are identical. However, there are others, some acquaintances of Len Halladay and some not, who have written incorrectly about both the origin of the Adams and Halladay's life.

I am one of Len Halladay's fourteen grandchildren. For my first fourteen and a half years, I fished with Grandpa, and he taught me how to tie flies. Over the course of more than sixty years, I have

been collecting articles about Grandpa and his flies. I hope to put these articles in the proper perspective using the history of the Adams as told by Len Halladay to his family and to others who visited him at his Mayfield home to talk about fishing.

IN THE WORDS OF THOSE WHO KNEW LEN HALLADAY

In the late 1930s or early 1940s, Halladay told Harold (Dike) Smedley the history of the Adams. Smedley writes:

Leonard Halladay, of Mayfield, Michigan, was the first to tie this truly "Michigan's favorite fly," which was named for Charles F. Adams, an attorney of Lorain, Ohio. As Halladay himself tells it, "The first Adams I made I handed to Mr. Adams, who was fishing in a small pond in front of my house, to try on the Boardman that evening. When he came back next morning, he wanted to know what I called it. He said it was a 'knock-out' and I said we would call it the Adams, since he had made the first good catch on it."²

Dike Smedley was a writer, fly fisher, and tournament fly-casting champion. "This year he won both the National Dry Fly and National Wet Fly titles, the first time in thirty-four years of national competition that one man has taken both crowns in a single year," wrote Ben East in 1942 as a preface to the second printing of Smedley's book, *Fly Patterns and Their Origins*.³

After publication of the first edition, Smedley revisited Mayfield, gave Halladay a copy of his book, and took the photos of one of Halladay's Adamses found in subsequent editions (shown left).⁴

Smedley gives this description of the Adams in his book:

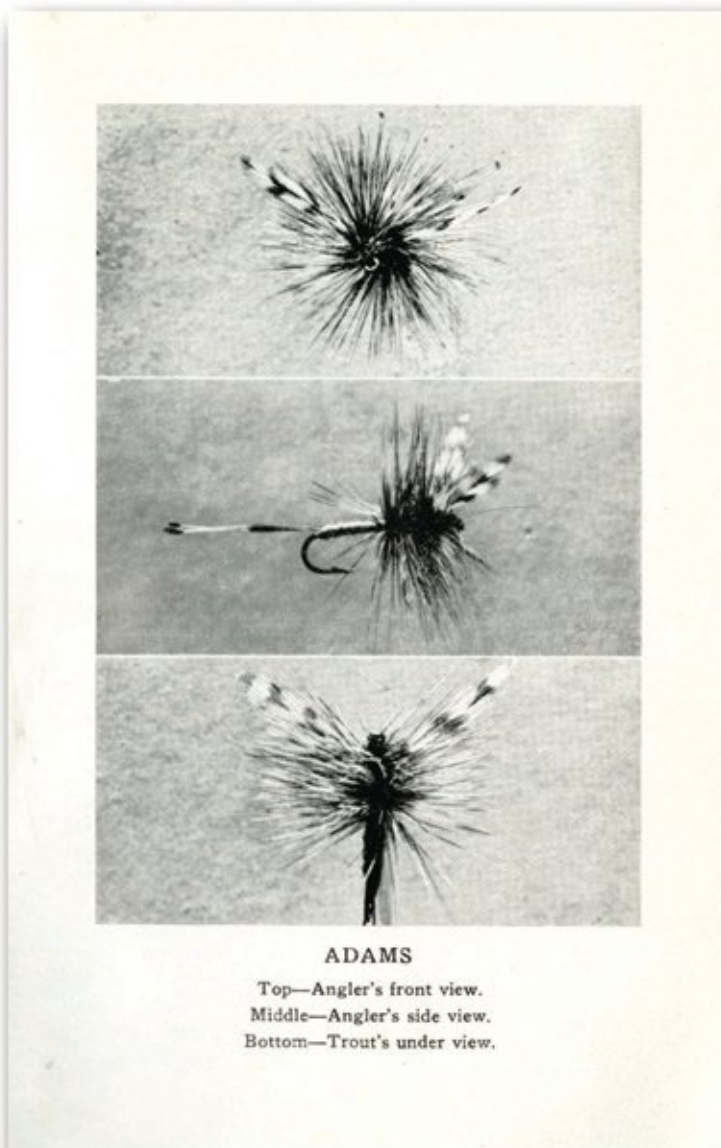
Haladay's [*sic*] original tying is as simple as the pattern is effective. It is the same today as when first tied. As given to me by Haladay [*sic*], the pattern is tied:

Body: gray wool yarn.

Tail: two strands from a golden pheasant neck feather.

Hackle: mixed, from neck feathers of Barred Plymouth Rock and Rhode Island Red roosters.

Wings: narrow neck feathers of Barred Plymouth Rock rooster, tied "advanced" forward and in a semi-spent manner.⁵



Dike Smedley's photos of one of Halladay's Adamses, as seen in the 4th edition of his Fly Patterns and Their Origins (Muskegon, Mich.: Westshore Publications, 1950), facing page 4.

This was the way Grandpa taught me how to tie the Adams in the early 1940s at his Mayfield home when I was about three years old. His fly-tying techniques were far different from those of the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century: he tied feather and hair wings on one at a time, used half-hitches at the end of each step to maintain tension, and did not use a bobbin. The reader should view my video, *Grandpa's Story: The Adams Fly*, for details about Halladay's techniques.⁶

George Herter (Herter's, Inc., Waseca, Minnesota) was a supplier of outdoor gear in the early- to mid-twentieth century, as well as a hunter, angler, and writer. In his *Professional Fly Tying, Spinning and Tackle Making Manual and Manufacturers' Guide*, he writes of the Adams and a conversation he had with Len Halladay:

Adams. Invented in 1922 by Leonard Halladay of Mayfield, Michigan, and named for Charles F. Adams, a lawyer from Lorain, Ohio. This is one of the best dry flies ever made in this world. It is a dry fly that will take larger trout and grayling. Most dry flies have a bad tendency to take only small fish. Leonard Halladay was born in 1872. He spent sixty years living on the Boardman River in Michigan. During his early life on the Boardman the river contained about half brook trout and half grayling. He began tying flies in 1917. Leonard sold the first Adams dry fly to Mr. Adams for evening fishing on the Boardman River. The fly proved to be a tremendous producer and the name Adams was permanently given this fly because Adams was a good customer and made the first large catch using it. Previous to this the fly was called the "Halladay." The Adams pattern given to me by Mr. Leonard Halladay is exactly like this. Tail: Two fibers of golden pheasant tippet. Body: Gray wool yarn. Wing: Narrow Plymouth Rock rooster neck hackle tied forward and semi-spent wing. Hackle: One Plymouth Rock, one Rhode Island Red rooster neck hackle wound together. Head: Black tying thread.⁷

Smedley's and Herter's narratives about Halladay and his Adams are the same stories Halladay told to his children, grandchildren, and others who came to his home in Mayfield to buy flies and talk about fishing.

IN THE WORDS OF THE ADAMS FAMILY

Curiously, to my knowledge, no interviews with, or writings of, C. F. Adams exist of his account of the day Halladay gave him a fly to try on the Boardman that summer evening of 1922. Halladay's

historic words on the following day, "We would call it the Adams, since he had made the first good catch on it,"⁸ were not recorded by Adams, but by Smedley as told to him by Halladay.

As the popularity of the Adams grew, and as time passed since the Smedley and Herter interviews with Halladay, facts began to be replaced by fiction in various accounts of the Adams. This is not surprising. Some writers (whatever the subject) alter facts in an attempt at self-aggrandizement. Others simply make mistakes. Some altered facts become legends. This has happened with the Adams. And some of those who knew Len Halladay and presumably had heard the story of the origin of the Adams from him have written alternate versions since his death.

Smedley writes of a conversation with Lon Adams (also known as Burt), the then-eighteen-year-old son of C. F. Adams. Burt, who was interested in fishing, was a friend of two of Halladay's daughters who were about his age. In the 1944 printing of his book, Smedley states, "Lon B. Adams, son of Charles F. Adams, says, 'Since Dad and I do practically all of our fishing together, and have both used this particular fly ever since it was originated, we have noticed that although it is at all times a steady fish getter, it seems to be especially effective if there are flying ants on the stream, and we have both thought it is the 'bug' that it apparently simulates.'"⁹

Burt Adams has opined about the Adams to several other fishing writers since his conversation with Smedley. Bob Jackson, Burt's friend and fishing companion, wrote:

I had the good fortune to know both Charles F. Adams and his son Lon B. Adams. I corresponded and conversed with the younger Adams several years ago concerning the origin of the pattern. . . . He remembered that in 1923, the fishing had been quite poor. He and his father were using for the most part a small gray palmer-hackle fly and a hopper pattern. While fishing the Mayfield Pond one evening, Charles Adams described to Len an insect that he had observed on the river as well as this pond for which they had no good imitation. Since they bought many of their flies from him, Adams asked Len to tie some samples for him to try on this hatch. He obliged with two or three prototypes, one of which worked very well. Len recalled that the pattern was an instant success and [C. F. and Burt] requested that more and more be tied. When they asked Len what he called the fly, he replied: "Up to now, it doesn't have a name but I guess that we'll call it the Adams."¹⁰

Note that Burt Adams believed the date of the fly's origin to be 1923.

Kenneth Peterson, who did not know Halladay personally, quotes a letter that Burt Adams wrote to him: "About 1922 or 1923 we were using a Gray Palmer almost exclusively. When I say 'we,' I mean my father and myself."¹¹ They wanted a more effective pattern, and Burt reports that Halladay "tied two or three different samples and eventually came up with what was the first Adams fly. . . . This fly worked well for me and we had Len make us a few more. Then he made them for other fishermen, and within some 10 or 15 years the fly had passed from fisherman to fisherman until it was in fairly general use all over the country."¹²

In spite of these correspondences and conversations, in 1970, a generation after Len Halladay died, Burt Adams wrote to a young boy who had lost his fly container on the bank of the Mayfield Pond, "I'm real proud of the fact that back in 1923 when I was just about your age I designed the Adams Fly and had it named after me."¹³

Misinformation can be insidious. However, members of Burt's family rebutted his statements in an article in the *Traverse City Record Eagle* on 22 October 1993. A columnist for the paper, Stephanie Beach, quoted a letter she received from one of C. F. Adams's granddaughters, Priscilla Adams Wood: "Mr. Halladay tied this fly for my dad and grandfather Charlie Adams. Together the three of them created the Adams Trout Fly."¹⁴ Beach asked readers to respond with more information about the origin of the Adams. I sent Priscilla Adams Wood copies of the Adams sections in Smedley and Herter, an Adams fly that I tied, and an Adams fly tied on a safety pin. She warmly responded in December 1994, writing, "I love my Adams fly pin! Thank you. My sister Sherry (age 60) remembers having one of these pins as a child & also watching Mr. Halladay tie them."¹⁵

In 1994, Tom Spademan, a great-grandson of C. F. Adams, also wrote his support of the granddaughter's version.¹⁶

Another C. F. Adams grandchild, Charles A. Felix, did not feel that Burt Adams was involved in the origin of the Adams. In 2010, in the comments section of an online article in which Burt Adams's involvement in the origin of the Adams was questioned, Felix says: "Charles F. Adams was my grandfather, on my mother's side, and I was raised spending my summers at Arbutus Lake. I was told the history of the fly all my early life. I knew Len Halladay and his family, and some descendants are still living in that area, and I can remember him as shown in the picture. . . . I agree with the doubt of my uncle's involvement in the creation of

the fly due to his age at the time.”¹⁷ In 2013, Felix attended the Kingsley (Michigan) Adams Fly Festival, read the Smedley section about the Adams, and told Edna Sargent that Smedley’s version was the way it happened.¹⁸

WORDS BECOME LEGEND

As the fame of Halladay and his Adams grew, a number of unverified claims were made about him and his flies by people who were born or took up fly fishing and fly tying long after Halladay died.

A milestone in the mythologizing of Halladay, his personal history and that of his flies, and his fly-tying techniques is an incorrect reference to him as “Doc Halladay.”¹⁹ Jerry Dennis, a Traverse City, Michigan, outdoor writer wrote to me in 1988, “The ‘King Trout’ story from *In-Fisherman* mentions your grandfather. The reference to ‘Doc’ is a bit embarrassing. For some reason, that ‘nickname’ has been tacked onto your grandfather’s name for as long as I can remember.”²⁰ There was a medical doctor referred to as Doc *Holliday* in Traverse City who was Halladay’s contemporary, but he is not a relation.

This is not the only erroneous information. A post on the Southern Tier Fly Fisher website claimed, “By 1934 the Adams fly was patented by William Avery Bush of Detroit, Michigan, and sold commercially.”²¹ The same claim may be found in a Perfect Fly catalogue article.²² I wrote to the latter requesting a patent number. In the response to my letter, James Marsh, a website representative, states, “I have no idea what the patent number is but I have read this quoted in two different articles. I actually find it a little difficult to accept there is a patent on it.”²³ A patent search by Hal Mendelsohn, a University of Central Florida University patent and trademark librarian, did not find a patent for the Adams fly issued to William Avery Bush in 1934 or any other year.²⁴ A post on Shannon’s Fly & Tackle’s website section Fly of the Month claimed that Len Halladay originated the Lemon Cahill Spinner.²⁵ An attempt to verify this claim resulted in no response. In an article in *Michigan Natural Resources*, Don Ingle wrote that the Adams was invented by Leonard Halloday.²⁶ The Wikipedia page for the Adams dry fly rightly states Leonard as Halladay’s first name in the text but calls him Richard in the sidebar that summarizes the fly’s facts and history.²⁷ In the late 1990s, the proprietor of the Northfield, Illinois, Orvis store told me that a woman had been in claiming to be the granddaughter of Len Halladay; around the same time, I ran into a fish-

erman who told me that a woman in Detroit told him she was Halladay’s granddaughter. Neither of these claims was true.

Many other factual errors and misinformation have added to the legend of Halladay and his flies. Among them: He was born in New York. He was born in 1883. He started tying flies as a youth. He used the drag on the reel containing tying thread to maintain tension. He originated the Widdicomb fly. Fly tying and guiding was a sound business for him. He is the driver of an open car shown on a sign in front of the Mayfield store. The original Adams had a dubbed muskrat body.²⁸

Contributions to the Halladay/Adams legend have even come from international sources. Lesley Crawford, a Scottish angler and author, writes:

The “Adams” is a superb dry fly with multi-purpose uses. It is an American design first created by Ray Bergman as an all-rounder hatching insect. Nowadays its usage is worldwide which says a lot about its durability in attracting trout. Because of its subtle shades of brown, ginger, and grey the Adams is a real never-fail-me pattern. Going river fishing without an Adams is the equivalent of going fishing without a reel, not something you would want to do too often.²⁹

In fact, Ray Bergman extols the virtues of the Adams, but does not claim to have invented the fly. He writes of a day on the river with a friend, “The Adams had taken about three times as many fish as the Royal Coachman.”³⁰

BACK TO GRANDPA’S WORDS

I too have added to the legend of Halladay and his Adams by suggesting a hoax theory. To explain inconsistencies between Halladay’s narrative to Smedley, Herter, his family, and other versions, I proposed the Halladay hoax theory to Dr. Ken Gum and Joe Emancho, Trout Unlimited members of the Traverse City chapter, during a phone conversation on 5 June 2000. They asked what version I believed.

I told them, Grandpa’s, of course. Smedley and Herter are objective reporters/observers, not related to the Halladay or Adams families, who interviewed Len Halladay years before his death. Their version is the same as the version Halladay told his progeny. But, if other versions are correct, then Grandpa accomplished the greatest fishing hoax since Izaak Walton purloined sections of the *Compleat Angler* from earlier writers. Grandpa was neither a worldly man nor one of letters; he had an eighth-grade education and spent his entire life within several miles of his birthplace. But for more than half a century after C. F. Adams fished the Boardman with the Adams fly for the first time, Grandpa’s version of the birth of the fly persisted before alternate versions arose.

I have presented Grandpa’s version of the origin of the Adams as told to Smedley, Herter, and his children and grandchildren to enable the reader to contrast history with the legend that began to unfold around the fly in the decades after Halladay’s death in 1952.



This photo of Len Halladay, taken shortly before his death in 1952, is one of many family photos donated by the author to the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

There are probably many more stories and tall tales in cyberspace and the print media—and more yet to come—that will add to the legend of Len Halladay and his flies. These future tales should be compared and contrasted with my grandfather’s words.



ENDNOTES

1. Harold Hinsdill Smedley, *Fly Patterns and Their Origins*, 2nd printing, revised and enlarged (Muskegon, Mich.: Westshore Publications, 1944), 1.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Ben East, preface, in Harold Hinsdill Smedley, *Fly Patterns and Their Origins*, 4th ed. (Muskegon, Mich.: Westshore Publications, 1950), vii. This preface, written for the 2nd printing, was retained in the 4th edition.

4. Smedley, *Fly Patterns and Their Origins*, 4th ed. (Muskegon, Mich.: Westshore Publications, 1950), 4.

5. *Ibid.*, 5.

6. For details about Halladay’s fly-tying techniques, the reader should view my three-part video, *Grandpa’s Story: The Adams Fly* (2010), which can be found on the John Falk YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/channel/UCF5xOq4FHuhtnJTmghNxHFA).

7. George L. Herter, *Professional Fly Tying, Spinning and Tackle Making Manual and Manufacturers’ Guide*, 18th ed. (Waseca, Minn.: Herter’s, Inc., 1969), 478.

8. Smedley, *Fly Patterns and Their Origins*, 2nd printing, 1.

9. *Ibid.*, 2.

10. Bob Jackson, “Some Call It Madness,” letter to editor, *Fly Fisherman* (December 1986), 10.

11. Kenneth Peterson, “The Adams Family,” *Michigan Out-of-Doors* (1992), 35.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Tom Gauthier, *Fly Tying Illustrated: Flies You Can Count On to Catch Trout* (Bloomington, Ind.: Trafford Publishing, 2011), 2.

14. Stephanie Beach, “Northern Notes,” *Traverse City (Michigan) Record Eagle* (22 October 1993), 4D.

15. Priscilla Adams Wood, letter to author, 10 December 1994.

16. Tom Spademan, “Controversy in Mayfield,” *Michigan Explorer* (1994), 27–29.

17. Charles Felix in the Comments section of Alex Cerveniak, “The Adams: History Revisited by Tom Deschaine,” *Hatches* (19 April 2010), <http://hatchesmagazine.com/blogs/Hatches/2010/04/19/the-adams-history-revisited-by-tom-deschaine/>. Accessed 29 April 2016.

18. Edna Sargent, phone conversation with the author, June 2013. Sargent is a long-time Mayfield area resident who knew Len Halladay and C. F. Adams.

19. Jerry Dennis, “Reflections: King Trout,” *In-Fisherman* (December 1987), 172.

20. Jerry Dennis, letter to author, 15 June 1988.

21. “Local Favorites—The Adams Dry Fly,” *Southern Tier Fly Fisher* (8 March 2010),

<https://stflyfisher.wordpress.com/tag/adams-dry-fly/>. Accessed 29 April 2016.

22. Parachute Adams Trout Fly, Perfect Fly, www.perfectflystore.com/parachuteadamsinfo.html. Accessed 29 April 2016.

23. James Marsh, e-mail to author, 21 October 2012.

24. Hal Mendelsohn, e-mails to author, 22 June 2015, 24 June 2015, and 25 June 2015.

25. Les’ Lemon Cahill Spinner, Fly of the Month (May 2006), www.shannonsflytackle.com/tying_lemon_cahill_sprnr.htm. Accessed 29 April 2015.

26. Don J. Ingle, “America’s Greatest Dry Fly,” *Michigan Natural Resources* (March/April 1996), 18.

27. Wikipedia, “Adams (dry fly),” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adams_\(dry_fly\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adams_(dry_fly)). Accessed 25 May 2016.

28. I have gathered these statements from three articles: Alex Cerveniak, “The Adams: History Revisited by Tom Deschaine,” *Hatches* (19 April 2010), <http://hatchesmagazine.com/blogs/Hatches/2010/04/19/the-adams-history-revisited-by-tom-deschaine/>; Tom Deschaine, “The Adams: Final Chapter,” *Fly Anglers Online* (19 November 2011), <http://flyangersonline.com/articles/oldflies/2012/oldflies20121119.php>; and Tom Deschaine, “From the Vice [sic] of the Mayfield Tyer,” *Fly Anglers Online* (27 January 2014), [www.flyangersonline.com/articles/oldflies/2014/oldflies20140127.php](http://flyangersonline.com/articles/oldflies/2014/oldflies20140127.php). All accessed 29 April 2016.

29. Lesley Crawford, *Trout Talk: An A to Z of Trout Fishing* (Shrewsbury, U.K.: Swan Hill Press, 2004), 13.

30. Ray Bergman, *Trout* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1952), 225.



Sara Wilcox

Dike Smedley’s photos recreated in 2016, using an Adams sold by the Orvis Company (Tail: brown hackle barbs. Body: gray muskrat fur. Wings: grizzly hackle tips. Hackle: mixed grizzly and brown.)

Fly-Fishing Festival

Photos by Sara Wilcox



Although the forecast called for rain, it held off all day, allowing the 700-plus people who attended to enjoy the festival dry and happy.

The Ninth Annual Fly-Fishing Festival: A Taste of the Great Outdoors was the most successful festival to date. A wide variety of both fly-fishing and food vendors were lying in wait for the more than 700 people who attended. Fly tiers such as Kevin Ramirez, Bill Sylvester, and Mike Rice spent the sunny day tying both fresh- and saltwater flies. Also in attendance was Rhey Plumley, who demonstrated tying the Vermont state fly, the Governor Aiken Bucktail Streamer (named for George Aiken, Vermont governor and longtime U.S. senator). Paul Sinicki spent the day instructing children and adults how to cast, while Douglas Outdoors set up a casting competition, awarding winner Jared Strazzi with a brand-new Upstream rod. Folk Americana band Dear June provided an easy-listening soundtrack for the event while attendees sampled from food vendors or discussed fly fishing with other vendors and attendees.

The museum wishes to thank Mulligans of Manchester, Finn & Stone, the Vermont Country Store, rk Miles, Vermont Kitchen Supply, Mrs. Murphy's Donuts, and Tall Cat Coffee for their sponsorships. We are grateful to all who volunteered.



There were activities—including making practice rods and clown flies—for all ages.



With twenty-three vendors, there was plenty to see and taste at this year's festival.



Fly tiers from all around the area—such as Chris Samson and Kevin Ramirez, seated—gave saltwater and freshwater fly-tying instruction. Rhey Plumley (standing, left) demonstrated tying the Governor Aiken Bucktail Streamer, the Vermont state fly.



Dear June, a folk Americana band, played for eager listeners and enthusiastic dancers throughout the event.



Vendors provided both fly-fishing goods and good eats—including Goodman's American Pie, who showed up with their pizza truck.



Greg Brown, of Berkshire Fly rods, was on hand to give rod-building demonstrations throughout the day.



Douglas Outdoors set up a casting contest, and Paul Sinicki provided casting instruction for both children and adults.

Dickson L. Whitney

24 May 1927–15 June 2016

Ann T. Whitney



Dick Whitney (bow) and Leigh Perkins (stern) on the Salt River, Wyoming, August 2014.

DICKSON L. WHITNEY, a trustee of the American Museum of Fly Fishing from 1978 to 1995, passed away peacefully this summer.

After serving in the Navy at the end of World War II, he met future fellow AMFF trustee Leigh Perkins while both were attending Williams College. Dick and Leigh were early visitors to locations now part of the fly-fishing landscape, as well as to some that have not yet achieved great renown. The two fished together often. Once, on a trip to the Bow River, their lines got tangled; Leigh cut Dick's line and continued to fish, much to Dick's chagrin.

Following his retirement as chair and CEO of McGean Rohco, Inc., a privately held specialty chemical company in Cleveland, Dick's fascination with the American West led him to build a residence on the Idaho–Wyoming border south of Jackson, Wyoming. He combined fly fishing and duck hunting on spring-fed streams and scenic (and sometimes intimidating)

horseback rides into his daily activities. Dick was a renowned game cook.

His idea to host one of the Cleveland-area dinner auctions in a barn at a local apple orchard resulted in one of the best American Museum of Fly Fishing local fund-raising dinners.

Dick was the long-time president of the Ottawa Shooting Club in Port Clinton, Ohio, and a member of the boards of directors of the Orvis Company, Cedar Fair, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, the Cleveland Zoological Society, Glen Oak School, and University Hospitals of Cleveland.

Dick's dedication during his seventeen years as a trustee early in the museum's development helped set the framework for the success enjoyed today by the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

—WOODS KING III
TRUSTEE

Bob Warren

10 December 1944–10 July 2016



*Bob Warren.
Image courtesy of Linda Warren.*



Bob Warren and Stan Bogdan (seated) examine the inner workings of a reel in this undated photo. Image courtesy of Graydon R. Hilyard.

ON A QUIET Sunday morning in July, Bob Warren, surrounded by his family and friends, passed away after a long struggle with cancer. A fine trout and salmon angler and upland bird hunter, Bob was the consummate sportsman. He once told me—after taking a ruffed grouse out of his English setter Beck’s mouth—how he wished he could preen the bird’s feathers and toss it back into the air so it could fly off to return another day. At another favorite covert near his home in Princeton, Massachusetts, we came upon some thick grapevines, always a likely place to find a grouse or two. Sure enough, as he approached, the dog went on point, and Bob gave the command to go in. To our surprise, three grouse tried to escape the entanglement of vines. Bob wouldn’t shoot as the birds flew to safety. When I asked him why, he told me that it wasn’t very sporting to take the birds under those circumstances.

Once, fishing the Burnshirt River in central Massachusetts, the water was a little too high for me to cross, so Bob carried me across on his shoulder so we could fish the good brook trout water together. (He called me “The World’s Tallest Midget”!)

On another occasion, we were fishing Cady Lane on the Swift River in central Massachusetts. On a hot July day, a bough perched over the river held fledgling cedar waxwings being attended to by their mother. Bob and I were watching a solitary brown trout in its feeding lane. Bob threw a live

grasshopper in its path. The trout took it with a great strike. Bob then tied on an artificial hopper and cast it out to the wary brown’s lie. As I watched the fly go directly over the trout, nothing happened. We waited a few minutes, then Bob threw out another live hopper. Without hesitation, the brown took the terrestrial as we looked on and smiled.

Atlantic salmon fishing was also a great passion of Bob’s. He fished the Miramichi River during the 1960s and the Matapedia in the 1970s. More recently, he and wife Linda, son Daniel, and grandson Wes fished the Miramichi in Boiestown, New Brunswick.

To say that Bob was a good fly tier would be a gross understatement. He was considered by his peers to be one of the very best. He coedited several books on fishing and flies and contributed to many fly-tying journals, and his understanding of the English language was a quality of which he was most proud. Bob volunteered time and expertise to the American Museum of Fly Fishing and worked hard on land-use and conservation issues.

Bob Warren: teacher, master electrician, carpenter, and a friend to all the natural world. We will miss him.

—PETER CASTAGNETTI
ASHLAND, MASSACHUSETTS



AMFF Launches amff.org

The American Museum of Fly Fishing is inviting fly-fishing fans to explore our new website, amff.org, which has been designed to provide a user-friendly and interactive experience for anglers across the globe.

New additions to the site include collections features that will be updated and added to monthly. The museum houses 22,000 flies, 1,200 reels, 1,400 rods, and 700 prints and paintings. As stewards of fly-fishing history, we want to make a large portion of this collection available to the public, both in the museum and now online. We will offer blog and video content that mixes the past with the present, and take a more in-depth look at people, places, and artifacts that have contributed to our great sport. The website will also be a helpful tool for people looking to visit the museum and the surrounding area. We hope to see you—both online and in person—soon!



The home page of the museum's new website at amff.org.

AMFF Joins NEMA and ISHA

The American Museum of Fly Fishing recently became a member of two important groups: the New England Museum Association (NEMA) and the International Sports Heritage Association (ISHA). We are excited to join forces with nonprofits around the world and those close to home in supporting the museum and sports-heritage industries. NEMA inspires and connects people engaged with the museum field, provides tools for innovative leadership, and empowers museums to sustain themselves as essential to their communities. ISHA's mission is to educate, promote, and support organizations and individuals engaged in the celebration of sports heritage. For more information, you can find them online at www.sportsheritage.org and www.nemanet.org.



Peter Nardin

This summer season, the museum hosted two Canvas & Cocktails programs: one led by Sam Aronson on June 18 and another on July 2 led by George Van Hook (pictured). The program provides the opportunity to invite the public to expand their interest in both the arts and fly fishing while being instructed through the painting process and enjoying a glass of wine. Each was a great success, and we'd like to thank both Sam and George for their time (and patience).

Field & Stream Fly-Fishing Covers Exhibited

In July, the museum opened an exhibit of *Field & Stream* fly-fishing covers in the Gardner L. Grant Library.

Field & Stream has been the preeminent American outdoors publication for more than a century, with a current monthly circulation exceeding one million. Over the years, there have been more than 150 covers depicting the various forms of fishing, many specifically fly fishing. Until the early 1970s, the preferred style of cover art was a commissioned work by an accomplished artist or illustrator. Over a 75-year span, *Field & Stream* presented the work of many accomplished artists, almost all of whom were experienced outdoorsmen as well. Because they were painting for knowledgeable hunters and anglers, detail and accuracy were of paramount concern, and the covers almost always reflect this.

We hope that this small selection of *Field & Stream* covers will be of interest to those who fly fish as well as to those who don't but wonder what it is all about.

Erratum

In the Summer 2016 issue, we reported on Ted Turner's receipt of the museum's Heritage Award. In that article, Paul

Volcker was erroneously identified as the former secretary of state. He is in fact the former chairman of the Federal Reserve. We regret the error.

AMFF Contributes to Vermont State Symbols Page

In the Spring 2015 (vol. 42, no. 2) issue of this journal, we ran an article by Rhey Plumley, "The Governor Aiken Bucktail: The Official Fishing Fly of the State of Vermont." Back in 2012, Plumley drafted a "modest proposal" to establish the Governor Aiken Bucktail as the official Vermont State fishing fly. In April 2014, the bill passed, and it was signed into law that year on May 5. In June 2016, we received a request to use an image from that article on the State Symbols USA website. Take a look at www.statesymbolsusa.org/symbol-official-item/vermont/sports/governor-aiken-bucktail-streamer.

Recent Donations to the Collection

William Fowler of Odessa, Texas, donated a set of five flies tied by Art Flick: Grey Fox, Grey Fox Variant, March Brown, Hendrickson, and Stone Fly Creeper. **William Flick** of Livingston, Montana, sent us a limited-edition copy (no. 20 of 55) of Roger Keckeissen's *Art Flick, Catskill Legend: A Remembrance of His Life and Times* (Clark City Press, 2015).



Sara Wilcox

On July 17, in honor of National Ice Cream Day, we invited the public to the museum grounds for a free ice cream cone and a variety of family-friendly activities, including tying a clown fly or building a casting rod. Admission to the museum was free, and all who attended enjoyed a walk-through of our exhibits.

Upcoming Events

Events take place on the museum grounds in Manchester, Vermont, unless otherwise noted.

October 21

Lecture by Elizabeth Merritt, American Alliance of Museums
4:00 p.m.

October 21

Angling and Art Reception
5:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.

October 22

Annual Members Meeting
9:00 a.m.

October 26

2016 Izaak Walton Award Event honoring James Prosek
Racquet & Tennis Club
New York City

December 3

Gallery Program
Hooked on the Holidays
1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

Always check our website (www.amff.org) for additions, updates, and more information or contact (802) 362-3300 or amff@amff.org. The museum's e-mail newsletter offers up-to-date news and event information. To subscribe, look for the link on our website or contact the museum.

Nathaniel P. Reed of Hobe Sound, Florida, gave us a Ted Godfry salmon fly reel. **Joe Radley** of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, donated audiocassette tapes and compact discs containing a reading given by Ed Zern and a 1980 interview of Arthur McDougall by Bob Rinn.

Mark Olson of Minneapolis gave us a limited-edition copy (no. 145 of 200) of John Knott's *The History of the Wilton Fly Fishing Club* (The Medlar Press, 2013). **Victor R. Johnson** of Vallejo, California, sent us copies of his book *America's Fishing Waders: The Evolution of Modern Fishing Waders* (Hodgman, 1838 to Date) (EP Press, 2008). And **Susan Zuccotti** of Brooklyn, New York, donated a collection of 276 books. For a detailed listing, contact the museum.

In the Library

Thanks to the following for their donations of titles that have become part of our permanent collection (published in 2016 unless otherwise noted):

Callahan & Company sent us copies of a new series of four angling monographs from Coch-y-Bonddu Books: Peter Hayes's *Imitators of the Fly: A History* (No. 1), Colin Innes's *The Lost Salmon Flies of Balmoral* (No. 2), Keith Harwood's *Angling Books: A Collector's Guide* (No. 3), and Ken Callahan's *American Angling Bibliographies* (No. 4). Frank Amato Publications sent us Michael Gorman's *American Nymph Fly-Fishing Guide: River Trout, Stillwater Species, and Steelhead* (2015). And Skyhorse Publishing sent us Robert DeMott's *Angling Days: A Fly Fisher's Journals* and Maxine Atherton and Catherine Varchaver's *The Fly Fisher and the River: A Memoir*.

CONTRIBUTORS

Barbara Falk



John C. Falk got his Ph.D. in organic chemistry at the University of Michigan in 1964. After a biochemistry postdoc at Northwestern University, he had an industrial research/development career in the chemical industry that led to, among other things, sixty patents and publications. He has held many management positions and was an inventor of record at a Fortune 100 company. Falk, the grandson of Len Halladay, has donated Halladay's fly-tying table, photographs, and many other Halladay-Adams fly artifacts to the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

Ernie Wood

G. William Fowler, a lifelong fisherman, is an attorney in Odessa, Texas, now practicing commercial litigation in the oil and gas industry. Here he is pictured with John Voelker's daughter, Grace V. T. Wood, at the cabin on Frenchman's Pond on 9 July 2014. Fowler is a frequent contributor to *Flyfishers Journal*, published by the Flyfishers' Club of London. His most recent contribution to the *American Fly Fisher*, "Frederic M. Halford at Mottisfont on the River Test," appeared in the Spring 2011 issue.



Gift Membership Offer!

Gift membership makes a great gift for a fellow fly fishing enthusiast.

Each year membership from now through December will include our brand new 2017 wall calendar, featuring images from the Museum's collection.

Gift memberships start at \$50.



2017 CALENDAR

Visit www.amff.org/shop or call 802-362-3300.

In the Olympic Spirit: Individual *and* Community

WE ARE REMINDED this Olympic season of many people working together for a bigger purpose. We've repeatedly heard how a medalist is proud just to represent the United States; how the individuals on the relay team have done it for their teammates; how each has complete confidence in, and is inspired by, his or her fellows to succeed. This can be a bit hard to believe, given the sustained singular desire to achieve individually, which most Olympic athletes have nurtured since childhood. But the Olympic ethos represents both individual achievement and support within the community that has helped generate such success. For those of us who think about such things, it gives us a moment to reflect seriously on the community of our museum. We have been a museum for more than forty-five years, but we have rarely regarded ourselves as a community. In fact, we should.

We have had to pull together recently in the absence of an executive director, and I have seen superior and selfless work done by staff and trustees for the greater good of the museum and museum community. New ideas have bubbled up, individuals have reached out to their networks and resources, and there is a wonderful freedom to try new things. Just a few examples: Erik Oken suggested having the next conservation symposium at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies and made the necessary introductions. Walter Matia offered to write a trustee questionnaire to get input in drafting a job description for the new executive director. Rob Oden, in overseeing our sophisticated national search for our next executive director, telephoned in the middle of the night from halfway across the globe in Karachi, Pakistan, to answer the questions of a trustee in New York. Fred Polhemus and Communications Coordinator Pete Nardini worked not only to build our extraordinary new website, but build it in time to show a version to the board at the May meeting. Jim Heckman took on the full *Field & Stream* cover exhibit entirely by himself, as he did last year for the *New Yorker* exhibit, from securing the covers to writing the content. And Director of Development Sarah Foster, so well liked and respected by the trustees, has worked tirelessly with extraordinary efficiency and goodwill to keep the museum running smoothly.

Our community extends to the partnerships we've built over the years: Bonefish and Tarpon Trust, American Rivers, and the Atlantic Salmon Federation, to name a few. With each relationship, we share and benefit from programming, symposium ideas and speakers, donor support, and, significantly, the wisdom of shared trustees. We continue to build new alliances. We've recently called on the Environmental Consortium of Colleges & Universities to support and implement our conservation initiative, and they have enthusiastically agreed. In an effort to share our ideas and learn from others, we have rejoined the New England Museum Association, joined the International Sports Heritage Association for the first time, and upgraded our American Alliance of Museums membership to the highest level. We have invited Elizabeth Merritt, vice president of strategic foresight and founding director of the Center



AMFF President Karen W. Kaplan.

for the Future of Museums, to speak to our board at the October meeting about digitization and the future. The day before our meeting, Merritt will conduct a public forum on these serious issues at the museum, and we have invited the boards and members of several New England museums—including Hildene, the Clark, Norman Rockwell Museum, Shelburne Museum, Bennington Museum, and Southern Vermont Arts Center—to attend. Our efforts to anchor our museum community within the local Manchester and regional communities enhances us all, and enlightens and sustains us.

Success and excellence achieved for institutions as well as for individuals depends on an ethos not only of personal hard work, but of working for each other and for the community. It speaks to stewardship. Thanks to combined individual efforts, the American Museum of Fly Fishing has developed its own successful—and winning—Olympic spirit.

KAREN KAPLAN
PRESIDENT



Catch and Release the Spirit of Fly Fishing!

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MISSION

THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF FLY FISHING is the steward of the history, traditions, and practices of the sport of fly fishing and promotes the conservation of its waters. The museum collects, preserves, exhibits, studies, and interprets the artifacts, art, and literature of the sport and, through a variety of outreach platforms, uses these resources to engage, educate, and benefit all.

The museum provides public programs to fulfill its educational mission, including exhibitions, publications, gallery programs, and special events. Research services are available for members, visiting scholars, students, educational organizations, and writers. Contact Yoshi Akiyama at yakiyama@amff.org to schedule a visit.

VOLUNTEER

Throughout the year, the museum needs volunteers to help with programs, special projects, events, and administrative tasks. You do not have to be an angler to enjoy working with us! Contact Becki Trudell at btrudell@amff.org to tell us how we would benefit from your skills and talents.

SUPPORT

The American Museum of Fly Fishing relies on the generosity of public-spirited individuals for substantial support. If you wish to contribute funding to a specific program, donate an item for fund-raising purposes, or place an advertisement in this journal, contact Sarah Foster at sfoster@amff.org. We encourage you to give the museum consideration when planning for gifts, bequests, and memorials.

JOIN

Membership Dues (per annum)

Patron	\$1,000
Sustainer	\$500
Contributor	\$250
Benefactor	\$100
Associate	\$50

The museum is an active, member-oriented nonprofit institution. Membership dues include four issues of the *American Fly Fisher*; unlimited visits for your entire family to museum exhibitions, gallery programs, and special events; access to our 7,000-volume angling reference library; and a discount on all items sold by the museum on its website and inside the museum store, the Brookside Angler. To join, please contact Samantha Pitcher at spitcher@amff.org.



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phone to visit our
collection online!