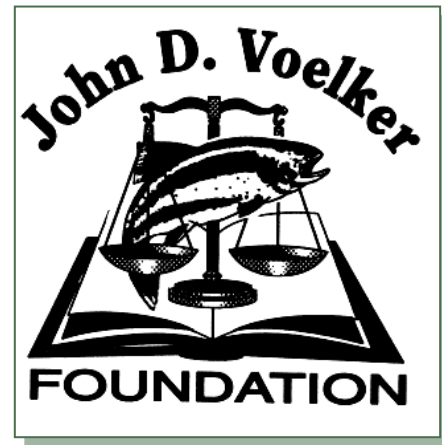


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In Hemingway's Meadow, the Robert Traver Writing Award Collection
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FOREWORD

Every now and then, you get to meet someone who has influenced the fly-fishing world in a creative, life-sustaining way. Fortunately for all of us, Nick Lyons and the staff of *Fly Rod & Reel* magazine—friends of John D. Voelker—collaborated with John Frey and the Voelker Foundation to create the Robert Traver Fly-Fishing Writing Award in 1994. Nick and those friends are literary entrepreneurs, founders whose creative powers deserve our praise. We are blessed to have known them, to have benefited from their keen sense for truth (even in fiction) and their knowledge and respect for the “natural world where trout are found.” It is to them, and our old pal John Voelker (known on book covers as Robert Traver), that we dedicate this volume of Traver award stories and essays, *In Hemingway's Meadow*.

We trust you will find that these stories stimulate your imagination, recall the fun on and near the water with friends (past, present and future), knowing that days on a trout stream are, in fact, additive to your life total.

Robert Traver—John’s chosen pen name that combined his brother’s and mother’s names—was used for John’s first three novels, *Troubleshooter*, *Danny & The Boys* and *Small Town D.A.* published from 1948 to 1954, while he was Marquette County (Michigan) prosecutor. “I didn’t want the voters to think I was an author on company time,” he explained. John wrote all of his books in laborious longhand, most of them on yellow legal pads with green felt pen. One afternoon at his camp on Frenchman’s Pond, after teaching me his “patented roll cast” and giving me a 15-2s lesson from the Upper Peninsula Cribbage Champ, John asserted “I do most of my writing during the winter months when thick ice covers my favorite fishing spots. There isn’t any good writing; only re-writing. Observe, observe, observe. Then, polish your work.”

His *Anatomy of a Fisherman* and *Trout Madness* have been described as the best fishing books since Izaak Walton’s 17th Century *The Compleat Angler*. Voelker’s numerous articles on the joys of fly-fishing attest to his great love of the outdoors and established him as the dean of American fly-fishing. David Richey of the *Detroit News* wrote, “Voelker could put into words the inner thoughts that few trout fishermen can express. He could draw word pictures of rising trout, the slash of a brookie to a fly, and the mystery of what trout fishing is all about.”

In April 1989, John Voelker helped establish the John D. Voelker Foundation. In our first 20 years, we have invited our members to initially fund the Traver Fly-Fishing Writing Award, provide Native American law-school scholarships, commissioned Rod Crossman (a Traver Award illustrator) to paint John's Supreme Court portrait and collaborated with Trout Unlimited, Fly Fishers Federation and Rusty Gates' Anglers of the Au Sable to restore and protect trout habitat.

Charles Kuralt, who had featured John in his CBS *On the Road* series, called John Voelker, "about the nearest thing to a great man I've ever known." The 1996 Traver Awards were dedicated to Kuralt, who wrote a strong letter of support for the Traver Award Endowment Fund.

It is a privilege to have had Charles, Nick Lyons and John Frey serve on the Foundation Board. Nick is a renowned author and editor, whose many splendid books inspire and engender love and mysteries of trout fishing. Fortunately for Traver lovers, Nick also selected and edited Traver books, essays and letters, including manuscripts from the Voelker Papers at Northern Michigan University. The result is *Traver on Fishing*, which we encourage you to read.

Nick writes, "I'm delighted the Traver Award will continue. When we got it started we wanted to encourage stories and then essays that reflected John's ample spirit and good values in writing about fly-fishing and the natural world. The very fact that there's now an anthology coming out, gleaned from literally thousands of submissions, suggests that the program has already been a success. A number of the winners have had books published...and a whole lot of folk have been encouraged to write wisely and well about a subject so dear to John's heart."

What is it that so attracted people from all walks of life to this backwoods philosopher and naturalist?

Voelker's famous essay "Testament of a Fisherman" provides some strong clues: "I fish because I love to; because I love the environs where trout are found, which are invariably beautiful,...because trout do not lie or cheat and cannot be bought or bribed, but respond only to quietude and humility and endless patience; because I suspect men are going along this way for the last time, and I for one don't want to waste the trip;...because only in the woods can I find solitude without loneliness; because bourbon out of an old tin cup always tastes better out there;...and...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."

It is fun to go back, re-reading the Traver Award Winners, and the other, as the awards guidelines state, "Distinguished original stories or essays that embody the implicit love of fly-fishing, respect for the sport and the natural world in which it takes place. The Traver Stories and Essays demonstrate high literary values in three categories:

- A. The Joy of Fly-Fishing: Personal or Philosophic.
- B. Ecological: Knowledge and Protection of the Natural World.
- C. Humor: Piscatorial Friendships and Fun on the Water."

Pete Fromm's *Home Before Dark* set the pace in 1994, drawing upon a fly-fishing trip between a father and step son, providing the reader with insights and questions. As the annual 150 to 200

entries rolled in, the judges (Nick Lyons, John Frey, Charles Kuralt in 1996, the Traver Award winners, Ted Leeson, Seth Norman, the *FR&R* Editors, Fred Baker, Jim Graves and I) have had fun, and were challenged to select the winning stories.

Clearly, the lessons from Seth Norman's *Edith's Rule* and Bil Monan's *The Surrender* come to mind – connecting people is vital, but you cannot actually give it away, especially where servant leadership is concerned. In my life, it was my father, a WWII Navy veteran and accomplished bibliophile, sailor and Congressman, who helped me see how this works. Dick Vander Veen asked a question the Traver Award asks, “Can one cultivate the ability to be creative? Marion (his wife; my Mom) taught me a little of what it is to see through the eyes of an artist. She opened my mind to see, that to be creative is the noblest of all activity. The grand object of life is to create something for the good of all that never existed before.”

Bouncing out to Frenchman's Pond with John at the wheel of his fish car, taking time to pick blueberries and *boletus edulus* in season and trading barbs and yarns, we talked about writing and the need to encourage young writers to polish their craft. We exchanged ideas though more than 100 letters. In his last letter dated March 18, 1991, John kindly acknowledged a story I'd written. It was returning from Ishpeming's post office that afternoon that John's fish car—and he—ended their many U. P. adventures. We thank those who founded and helped fund the Traver Award, 1994 to today. Now, we have work to do. For we challenge you, our readers, to join us in contributing to the Traver Award Endowment Fund so that the Award is, in fact, perpetual. Please explore the Voelker Foundation Web site www.voelkerfdn.org and help us

endow the Traver Award, and thereby protect the creative environs where trout are found, for future generations.

Richard F. (Rich) Vander Veen, III

President, John D. Voelker Foundation

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