



RON TRAPP ILLUSTRATION

Robert Traver (1903 - 1991)

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.

— Robert Traver
Anatomy of a Fisherman

JOHN VOELKER, known to fly fishermen as Robert Traver, who wrote *Trout Madness*, *Trout Magic*, and other fishing books, died March 18 at the age of eighty-seven. He spent his life searching for his elusive blond "mermaid," but always ended up landing "my little troutlings," as he dearly called them.

Voelker used the pen name Robert Traver (Traver was his mother's maiden name) to write 11 books, most of which revolved around humorous fishing yarns and courtroom dramas. His *Anatomy of a Murder*, which became a best seller and was made into an Oscar-winning movie in 1957, is based on a 1952 murder (for which Voelker

was the defense lawyer) in the Lumberjack Tavern in Big Bay near Marquette, Michigan. The movie starred Jimmy Stewart, George C. Scott, and Lee Remick.

"John brought back to fly fishing a wonderfully warm, canny, and earthy voice," says Nick Lyons, who published *Trout Magic*. "He was unflinchingly honest, funny, and homespun—and he kept reminding us that the heart of the sport was not its technology but that it was great fun. We have all lost a very great friend."

Voelker was born on June 29, 1903 in Ishpeming, Michigan, where he spent most of his life. He died of a heart attack while driving to his home

after one of his daily excursions, on a back road, through the remote countryside of his beloved Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

His grandparents had immigrated from Germany to the Upper Peninsula, and the family was in the brewery and tavern business . . . which is probably where he developed his penchant for "bourbon out of an old tin cup."

After receiving a law degree from the University of Michigan, he returned to the Upper Peninsula, and from 1934 to 1950 he was the Prosecuting Attorney of Marquette County. Later he served as a Michigan State Supreme Court justice for three years. He hung up his robe after his Hollywood success. "When the baying hounds of success seemed determined to overtake and destroy me, I suddenly quit the best job I ever had and fled home to my native Upper Peninsula to rest and fish and brood over the books I longed to write," Voelker later said of his resignation.

In *Anatomy of a Fisherman* Voelker wrote: "On the last day all fishermen are akin to pallbearers, worse yet, pallbearers who must macabrely attend their own funerals. For going out on the last day is a melancholy ritual that must be observed, a sad job that must be done, like decently burying the dead. But our hearts are laden and each cast is like waving farewell forever to our adorned trout. For what we enchanted fishermen really want is to go on fishing, fishing, FISHING—fishing into the very vaults and corridors of heaven."

He is survived by his wife Grace and three daughters.

DAVID WATTERWORTH