

Newsletter May 2020

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To Occupy Your Maybe Still Totally or Somewhat Quarantined Idle-Time:

Lots of Good Reading
SUPER-JUMBO ISSUE

Two big articles:

✚ **“8 Elements of Fly Design”**
by Kent Klewein

✚ **“The Longest Silence”**
by Thomas McGuane

And other important and interesting items:

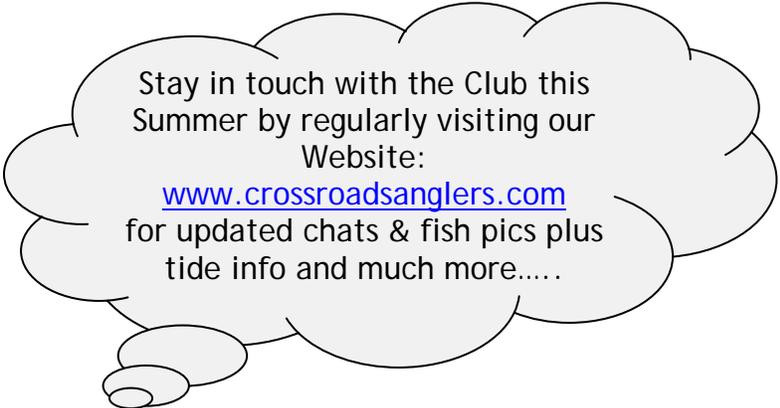
- **President’s Message**
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FLY FISHING & THE “NEW NORMAL”

ATTENTION: ALL MEMBERS

A Complimentary Crossroads Logo Mask will soon be sent to paid members’ Home Address or, if not possible, handed out at our August BBQ—see BBQ details on Club Calendar



President's Message

Due to the corona virus, not the beer, it has made the past several months very strange indeed. Going from an open, sociable society to a mask wearing lockdown. The current situation has caused us all to change the way we have been used to doing things. Many of our club's meetings, trips, and other activities were cancelled, but worse of all the virus took the club's founder, mentor, Fly tier and teacher, Bass master, Armand Courchaine.

Armand will be absent from our meetings as we move forward, but not from our memories. He was passionate about Crossroads Anglers, and he would want the club to continue as it has for the past years. We are planning a memorial meeting in February, the anniversary month of our founding.

Tom Pero wrote in his eulogy:

When I think of Armand, I think of him as a kind and unassuming mentor, always with time to show anyone interested how to tie flies, how to tie knots, how to cast. He loved teaching young people, especially. He loved his old bamboo rods and his beat-up Shakespeare Wonder Rods from the 1960s. Hell, he was still fishing the very same rods I used to watch him pull out of his trunk nearly a half-century ago, on top of the spare tire, rigged and ready to go, in the sudden event of a passing bass pond.

I personally will miss Armand, his stories, some repeated several times, his cheery personality, and most of all, not being able to ask all the questions that I had about fishing, flies, tying and materials. Do you have any memories or anecdotes about Armand, please send them to me.

We also lost another member Dick Pearce, "a genuinely nice guy who will be sorely missed". Richard Pearce died on April 5, 2020 (88) in East Providence from the effects of the post-polio syndrome. Please read his Story at the end of this Newsletter or visit the link below:
<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/thesunchronicle/obituary.aspx?n=richard-pearce&pid=196211889>

Moving forward we are working on SDF (Social Distance Fishing) trips and future meetings. The first trip will be for Stripers in either July or August. One idea is to meet early evening for dinner (BYO), followed by fishing and ending up with a beer or other refreshing drink. Stay tuned for details.

Please see our "Optimistic Calendar" on the next page!

We are always looking for ideas and new members. Invite someone you know or don't know, who might be interested in fly fishing, to a meeting. At the meetings voice your opinions—we need your input! This is your club. Even if you cannot make the meetings, we are very interested in hearing your thoughts and ideas as well.

Tight Lines & Be Safe,
Ed

The Bulletin Board

Crossroads Speaker & Events Series

(if all goes well with the reopening...)

July-August: "SDF" (socially-distanced-fishing) trips—details by emails to follow.

Late August: Special BBQ (fingers crossed), date and location—perhaps Scusset Beach—to be announced later, Ray's Trip Raffle. BBQ will be a Burgers & Dogs event.

September: Fly Tying presentation by Tim Flagler. There will also be our usual raffle and some special raffles as well.

October: Nick Santolucito will be our guest presenter.

November: TBD

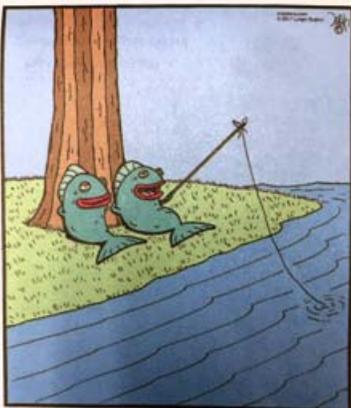
December: Holiday Party

January: TBD

February: Memorial for Armand. Ray Stachelek presenter.

March & April: TBD

May: 2021 Annual Barbecue



"You know, from this end, it really is remarkably relaxing."

To All Members:
We need your memories and anecdotes about Armand which we would like to use for a special future compilation memorial to our Club Founder and good friend



FLY TYING CORNER

Armand Says:

THE FOREVER BUG

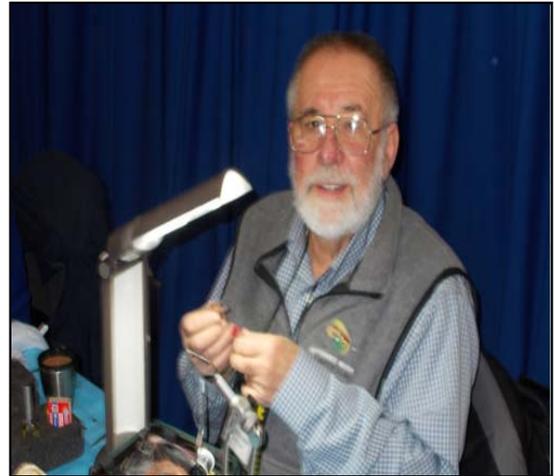
My neighbor Gene Landurand asked if I want to go to a special show on salt water fly fishing in Medford, MA. Howard Laws, Gene and myself were on our way. I was fifteen years old. United Fly Tyers sponsored the event by Lefty Kreh of Miami. It was at Medford National Guard Armory. From that moment on for almost fifty years Lefty has been my mentor. Lefty was the presenter at many UFT meetings. His writings inspired many in the sport of fishing and photography.

In the early years he spoke of the Lefty Deceiver. A pattern for all fresh and salt water gamefish. This fly was special in Striped Bass and Bluefish fishing. It was a sink fly pattern. In fishing for Largemouth bass in weed infested shallow waters, I had trouble because I couldn't fish the fly slow. One of my favorite Smallmouth bass fly patterns was the Muddler Minnow.

The solution was to combine two great patterns. Armand's Mud/Deceiver was created. The body was traditional Deceiver with a head of a Muddler. It was tested in Leonard's Pond, Big Bear Hole, Watson's Pond, and A-1 Pond located in Massachusetts. In fishing I could either fish slow or fast. Using the fast approach I would see wakes of Bass and Pickerel trying to ambush the fly.

Armand wrote about the Mud/Deceiver in the UFT Roundtable in 1973. He received comments about the fly from people on both the east and west coasts of the United States. ED.

This column is re-posted from our December 2015 Newsletter in honor of our departed good friend.



In salt water while doing some testing in the Warren River in Rhode Island, the surface strikes would be etched on my mind forever. I could not believe seeing striped bass rising in some fifteen feet of water to engulf the fly.

The Mud/Deceiver was user friendly on the fly rod. It was less wind resistant than traditional cork or balsa wood poppers. The action on the surface drove fish crazy with a savage strike.

ARMAND'S MUD / DECEIVER

Hook: Daiichi Model X472 size 1/0 or 2/0
Thread: UTC G.S.P. 100, Color is not important.

Tail: White saddle hackles.

Body: EZ Body piping pearl

Wing: Yellow 15 strands bucktail, brown 15 strands brown or blue bucktail

Throat: White 15 strands white bucktail with small amount red kinkle fiber

Head: Natural or white deer body hair, spun and clipped, Cement winding.

Eye: 3D eyes attached with Goop.

8 Elements of Fly Design to Follow for Imitating Trout Food Sources

by Kent Klewein (courtesy: gunkandgasoline.com)

When tying fly patterns, it's very important that you try your best to incorporate several different elements of fly design to increase their effectiveness.

No one knows with complete certainty what order or priority trout rank each element of a food source or fly pattern, but most anglers agree that the value or ranking of the elements often change depending on how long a trout has been selectively feeding on a specific food source, at what frequency the specific food source is being eaten, and how diverse or consistent a trout's diet is at the present moment. The order of the elements that I will talk about in know way ranks the importance of the elements. Instead, fly tiers should look at them together as a whole, and try to include as many as possible or as a check list of the features a fly pattern should have when completed. Doing so, they should find there fly patterns more effective on the water for fooling and catching trout. In this post, I will specifically talk about eight different elements of fly design that fly tiers should pay close attention to when tying fly patterns at the vise.



Photo By: Jan Hamrsky - www.aquaticinsect.net

1 & 2. Size (body) & Shape (Outline)

All trout food sources have a distinguishable main body that's easy for trout to spot. When fly tiers have finished tying a fly it should only take a fraction of a second for the tier to be able to distinguish where the main body (abdomen & thorax) of the fly is located and if it's tied in the correct proportion to the size of the hook. If multiple elements of a fly pattern end up mixing together or aren't clearly defined by the eye, you're pattern will often be rejected by trout because they won't be able to easily recognize the different areas of the fly and relate them to the naturals (tail, body, thorax, head). A sign of this happening is when you're fishing a pattern you've tied and it never seems to be hot. Take for example, the occasional twig that floats downstream. Trout rarely pay much attention to them because most of them are uniform in look and shape and therefore lack enough positive life-like features or action to resemble food. They have the attitude if they've test one twig, they've tested them all. Anglers should always tie or purchase fly patterns in multiple sizes. Quite often you're fishing the right pattern, but it's just too big or small, usually too big.

One of the first rules I learned in fly tying from my instructors was my flies needed to have the proper shape. My instructors made sure that I tied each part of the fly pattern in proper proportions and used a graduating taper moving towards the eye of the hook. The golden rule was beat into me if you get the body and thorax wrong on the fly, you're finished fly will be crap. That's because the main body of an insect (comprises the largest percentage of the flies size) and it's the first thing a trout focuses in on when they see your fly pattern. If you look at the bodies of aquatic insects you'll notice that they almost always have a noticeable degree of increasing taper from the tail to the head. Trout understand this and it's an element that they use when deciding whether the object they're looking at is food or not food. To get that nice taper, it requires you to slow down at the vise, but doing so, it will significantly increase the effectiveness of the fly patterns you tie. One tip I've found when dubbing a nice tapered body is to use sparse amounts of tying materials and to take your time. Don't try to dub the entire body with one large amount of dubbing in one shot. As you get more proficient at tying you'll find it easier to get a smooth taper and it will only take a fraction of the time.



Photo by: Scott Hogsten - www.thatbugguy.com

3. Translucency

Take a close look at aquatic insects and you'll quickly notice that the majority of them have a significant degree of translucency in the bodies. Trout often see transparency in food prospects as a positive element in their food sources. When tying flies you should make a point to try to tie your flies with some degree of translucency. A good way to accomplish this is by mixing different colors of dubbing and tying it sparsely on the hook. You can use stretchy synthetic ribbing (ex. v-ribbing) or shellback materials that are somewhat transparent out of the package. A subtle degree of translucency will give your flies depth and a natural look that other non-food floating debris in the current will not carry. Remember you can tie in lighter colored materials that are translucent and then use a darker sharpie marker over the top of them to get that multi-color and transparent look.



Photo by Jan Hamrsky - www.aquaticinsect.net

4. Appendages (wings, legs, tails)

Although there's a small percentage of trout food sources that don't really have dominant appendages (antennae, legs, gills, wings, tails) most do. So when you're tying flies, you should always make sure you're doing a good job of adding appendage like features into your patterns when it's called for. It's not terribly important that your patterns always have the exact number of appendages of the naturals the trout are eating and you don't need to go overboard and tie three times as many thinking more is better. Aquatic insects are very fragile and they're constantly getting preyed upon and banged up by turbulent water flow.

Quite often, if you take the time to do some bug sampling, you'll find aquatic insects with missing legs or tails. All that really matters is that the pattern carries that overall impressionistic look of the bug you're imitating. That's usually enough for the trout to get the positive signals they need to eat your fly. That being said, there are rare occasions when trout will become super sensitive to the number or size of the appendages on bugs. An example of this would be when trout have been feeding on a specific food source for an extended period or when they're selectively feeding on a specific stage of bug (cripple, emerger, spinner). Here, trout may use the size of the wing or length of the tails as positive triggers.



Photo by: Scott Hogsten - www.thatbugguy.com

5. Texture

Have you ever wondered why your smooth fly patterns often catch less fish than your really textured and buggy looking fly patterns? Again, if you examine the aquatic bugs that trout feed on they almost always have distinctive segmentation in the bodies and a multi-colored (molted) buggy look throughout. I've had a super realistic stonefly nymph in one of my fly boxes for years. If you put one next to a natural you'd have to really stare closely at the two of them to point out the artificial. The

problem I have with that particular realistic stonefly pattern is I've fished it more times than I can count and I've never caught a trout on it.

Now, if I dropped that realistic stonefly in your hand and let you touch and feel the texture of it, you'd say it was hard as hell, stiff as a board, and you'd quickly tell me, I wouldn't eat that thing if I was a trout. The damn antennae and tails on this fly are so hard and stiff, you could puncture the hind end of a cow with it. Texture, though not as important in my opinion as other elements in fly design, can drastically have a positive or negative effect on how many trout it will fool. Choosing materials that not only look realistic but also have the correct feel, softness or rigidity to the touch is something fly tiers should really think about when tying flies at the vise. Remember, trout don't always inhale your fly patterns. Especially when you're using subsurface patterns. Underwater trout often test or nip your fly, testing it for danger, to smell and taste it. If your pattern is way off the mark with texture trout will undoubtedly spit the fly out most of the time before you can set the hook.



Photo by Jan Hamrsky - www.aquaticinsect.net

6. Color

I've heard anglers many times over the years claiming fly color can be the most important element in fly design when trout fishing. In some instances, it's true it can be extremely important for getting trout to eat a fly pattern. For example, when there's a good amount of visible light and you're fishing crystal clear water or when wild trout are super keyed in on a specific type or stage of an aquatic insect. Another time color is really important is when an angler is fishing really flat slow moving water to super educated trout. Trout feeding in calm, slow moving water often have as much as two to three times the length of time to examine your offering and they often get within inches of it before giving you the "yeh or neh". Many times I've got refused by one pattern I tied after a dozen or more good presentations, then switched to the same pattern but one I tied with a slightly different color dubbing

and I caught the trout on the first cast. It's hard to argue the importance of color when you see that situation first hand.

That being said, when fly anglers are fishing in low light situations, fast moving water, infertile trout waters with low bug densities or in murky water conditions, exact color or pattern becomes much less important and trout tend to be much more forgiving with color, choosing instead to weigh their decision whether to eat or not eat your fly by looking for positive triggers in the other five elements of fly design.

7. Ultraviolet Reflectance & Ultraviolet ABSORPTION

In the past couple of years I've really made a point to utilize fly tying materials in my fly pattern designs that provide strategic ultraviolet reflectance and ultraviolet absorption properties. Just about all aquatic insects have unique ultraviolet markings (these markings provide invisible highlights and dark spots only visible in UV). The insects use these signature markings to distinguish themselves from other species and it helps them to mate more effectively without calling attention to predators that prey upon them. Trout use their ultraviolet vision when there's not enough visible light (ex. low light conditions or dirty water). By adding subtle amounts of UVR and UVA tying materials in your fly designs you can increase the attraction, the distance a trout can see your flies in the water and make your flies look more like the real thing (when trout view them in UV of course).

Many synthetic materials provide a better scattered UVR than natural materials. Davy Wotton's SLF dubbing and Spirit Rivers UV dubbing are two examples of tying materials that will help you increase the UVR in your flies. Ultraviolet absorption is more about color choice. If you read the book, [The New Scientific Angling](#) by Reed F. Curry, it provides tons of color tables that show you what the color of certain types of tying materials look like in the ultraviolet light spectrum. For the most part the darker the color the higher the UVA will be. But it's not always true. I used to think your standard yellow color would show up bright in ultraviolet light just like it does in visible light, but that's not the case. Yellow in ultraviolet light shows up really dark, almost black. I recommend that you tie your pattern with contrasting colors and textured materials so you can benefit from the UVR and UVA it provides under ultraviolet light. More particularly, you should fish those patterns when you think the conditions on the water suggest trout are being more reliant on their ultraviolet vision.

One reason almost all nymph patterns call for a ribbing material (often colored wire, tinsel or natural biots) is because it does a great job of providing that realistic segmentation look of the bodies of aquatic insects. This segmentation is easy to see in visible light, but it really pops out twice as much when trout view it with their ultraviolet vision. Always make a point to use fly tying materials that add a nice segmentation look to the bodies of your flies because it's sort of like the finger prints of aquatic bugs. Smooth flies catch far less fish. I could go into another couple thousands words on this subject. I just skimmed it and I probably did a poor job. If

you want to learn more about trout and their ultraviolet vision and why its important in fly fishing and fly tying, pick up one of the latest books on this subject.



Photo by: Scott Hogsten - www.thatbugguy.com

8. Action

Drop a nymph or adult aquatic insect that's alive in a glass of water and it most often will not be motionless. Most of the time the insects will kick, flap and swim with their legs and tails vigorously. What this suggests to fly tiers is that your patterns should be tied with materials that breath and move freely in the water. Doing so, you're patterns will naturally have life-like action in the water and will provide positive stimulation to trout that they are real food and not impostors. Some would say action is only important in subsurface patterns, but the fact is, that couldn't be farther from the truth. If you believe that, explain to me why there's so many dry flies patterns tied with rubber legs. My good friend and guide [Brian Lynch](#) ties all his flies on with a non-slip loop knot to improve the action of his fly on and below the surface. I highly recommend this.

Thank you to Scott Hogsten from www.thatbugguy.com and Jan Hamrsky from www.aquaticinsect.net for both graciously allowing us to use their photography in this post. Both are passionate about photographing insects in the macro and are extremely talented. In addition, both websites are great places to check out if you want to get a better look at examples of trout foods up close. Please visit their websites and show your support. Scott had mentioned he was going to be doing some fresh aquatic insect shots shortly and would give us a heads up.

Captain Ray's Guided Charter Trip Raffle

Are you still dreaming of catching that fish of a lifetime?

Now is your chance!

You could be the winner of a trip with Captain Ray Stachelek

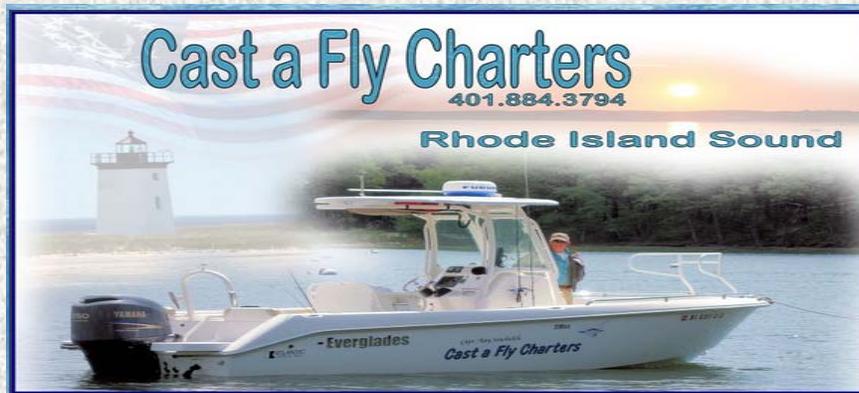


Tickets for Capt Ray's guided trip Raffle are STILL Available. Ask any board member. They are \$15.00 a ticket. Or 2 tickets for \$25.00.

Drawing will be for 1 raffle winner with 1 or 2 guests. Don't forget to ask your fishing buddies if they'd like to purchase tickets too!

THE DRAWING WILL BE AT THE (hopefully) AUGUST BBQ MEETING!!

The trip includes 8 hours of fly or spin fishing with Captain Ray Stachelek in Rhode Island.



This is the best investment you can make to have a guided saltwater trip. So Pa-Leeze buy your tickets early. Only 75 tickets will be sold!!

For more info on the Captain go to: www.castaflycharters.com

How Much Is Enough?

The rich industrialist from the North was horrified to find the southern fisherman lying lazily beside his boat, smoking a pipe.

"Why aren't you out fishing?" said the industrialist.

"Because I have caught enough fish for the day," said the fisherman.

"Why don't you catch some more?"

"What would I do with them?"

"You could earn more money," was the industrialist's reply. "With that you could have a motor fixed to your boat and go into deeper waters and catch more fish. Then you would make enough to buy nylon nets. These would bring you more fish and more money. Soon you would have enough money to own two boats...maybe even a fleet of boats. Then you would be a rich man like me."

"What would I do then?" asked the fisherman.

"Then you could *really* enjoy life."

"What do you think I am doing right now?"

Courtesy of Anthony De Mello

“The Longest Silence”

By: [Thomas McGuane](#)

(courtesy of Mid-Current Fly Fishing)

"The Longest Silence" is the title essay from Thomas McGuane's 1999 book of the same name, a collection of remarkably lucid and evocative fishing prose. The essay recounts an episode when the young McGuane fished with one of the early greats of Keys guiding, Woody Sexton, at a time when catching a permit on a fly was most often a lucky accident.

WHAT IS MOST emphatic in angling is made so by the long silences – the unproductive periods. For the ardent fisherman, progress is toward the kinds of fishing that are never productive in the sense of the blood riots of the hunting-and-fishing periodicals. Their illusions of continuous action evoke for him, finally, a condition of utter, mortuary boredom. Such anglers will always be inclined to find the gunnysack artists of the heavy kill rather cretinoid, their stringer-loads of gaping fish appalling.

No form of fishing offers such elaborate silences as fly-fishing for permit. The most successful permit fly fisherman has very few catches to describe to you. Yet there is considerable agreement that taking a permit on a fly is the extreme experience of the sport. Even the guides allow enthusiasm to shine through. I once asked one who specialized in permit if he liked fishing for them. "Yes, I do," he said reservedly, "but about the third time the customer asks, 'Is they good to eat?' I begin losing interest."

The recognition factor is low when you catch a permit. If you wake up your neighbor in the middle of the night to tell him of your success, shaking him by the lapels of his Dr. Dentons and shouting to be heard over his million-BTU air conditioner, he may well ask you what a permit is, and you will tell him it is like a pompano; rolling over, he will tell you he cherishes pompano the way he had it at Joe's Stone Crab in Miami Beach, with key lime pie afterward. If you have one mounted, you'll always be explaining what it is to people who thought you were talking about your fishing license in the first place. In the end you take the fish off the conspicuous wall and put it upstairs, where you can see it when Mom sends you to your room. It's private.

I came to it through bonefishing. The two fish share the same marine habitat, the negotiation of which in a skiff can be somewhat hazardous. Running wide open at thirty knots over a close bottom, with sponges, sea fans, crawfish traps, conchs, and starfish racing under the hull with awful clarity, this takes some getting used to. The backcountry of the Florida Keys is full of hummocks: narrow, winding waterways and channels that open suddenly upon basins, and, on every side, the flats that preoccupy the fisherman. The process of learning to fish this region is one of learning the particularities of each of these flats. The narrow channel flats with crunchy staghorn-coral bottoms, the bare sand flats, and the turtlegrass flats are all of varying utility to the fisherman, and depending upon tide, these values are in a constant condition of change. The principal boat wreckers are the yellow cap-rock flats and the more

mysterious coral heads. I was personally plagued by a picture of one of these enormities coming through the hull of my skiff and catching me on the point of the jaw. I had the usual Coast Guard safety equipment, not excluding floating cushions emblazoned FROST-FREE KEY WEST and a futile plastic whistle. I added a navy flare gun. As I learned the country, guides would run by me in their big skiffs and hundred-horse engines. I knew they never hit coral heads and had, besides, CB radios with which they might call for help. I dwelled on that and sent for radio catalogs.

One day when I was running to Content Pass on the edge of the Gulf of Mexico, I ran aground wide open in the backcountry. Unable to examine the lower unit of my engine, I got out of the boat, waiting for the tide to float it, and strolled around in four inches of water. The day was absolutely windless and the mangrove islands stood elliptically in their perfect reflections. The birds were everywhere – terns, gulls, wintering ducks, skimmers, all the wading birds, and, crying down from their tall shafts of air, more ospreys than I had ever seen. The gloomy bonanza of the Overseas Highway seemed far away.

On the western edge of that flat I saw my first permit, tailing in two feet of water. I had heard all about permit but had been convinced I'd never see one. So, looking at what was plainly a permit, I didn't know what it was. That evening, talking to my friend Woody Sexton, a permit expert, I reconstructed the fish and had it identified for me. Woody is very scientific and cautious. With his silver crew cut, tan clothing, and perfect fitness, he seems the model of reason. I believed him. I grew retroactively excited, and Woody apprised me of some of the difficulties associated with catching one on a fly. He made it clear that if I wanted to catch a permit, I would have to dedicate myself to it so completely that there really would be no time for anything else.

After that, over a long period of time, I saw a good number of them. Always, full of hope, I would cast. To permit, the fly was anathema; one look and they were gone. I cast to a few hundred. It seemed futile, all wrong, like trying to bait a tiger with watermelons. The fish would see the fly, light out or ignore it, sometimes flare at it, but never, ever touch it. I went to my tying vise and made flies that looked like whatever you could name, flies that were praiseworthy from anything but a practical point of view. The permit weren't interested, and I no longer even caught bonefish. I went back to my old fly, a rather ordinary bucktail, and was relieved to be catching bonefish again. I thought I had lost what there was of my touch.

One Sunday morning I decided to conduct services in the skiff, taking the usual battery of rods for the pursuit of permit. More and more the fish had become a simple abstraction, even though they had made one ghostly midwater appearance, poised silver as moons near my skiff, and had departed without movement, like lights going out. But I wondered if I had actually seen them. I must have. The outline and movement remained in my head: the dark fins, the pale gold of the ventral surface, and the steep, oversized scimitar tails. I dreamed about them.

Crossroads Anglers Newsletter May 2020

This fell during the first set of April's spring tides — exaggerated tides associated with the full moon. I had haunted a long, elbow-shaped flat on the Atlantic side of the keys, and by Sunday there was a large movement of tide and reciprocal tide. A twenty-knot wind complicated my still unsophisticated poling, and I went down the upper end of the flat yawing from one edge to the other and at times raging as the boat tried to swap ends against my will. I looked around, furtively concerned whether I could be seen by any of the professionals. At the corner of the flat I turned downwind and proceeded less than forty yards when I spotted, on the southern perimeter, a large stingray making a strenuous mud. When I looked closely it seemed there was something else swimming in the disturbance. I poled toward it for a better look. The other fish was a very large permit. The ray had evidently stirred up a crab and was trying to cover it, so as to prevent the permit from getting it. The permit, meanwhile, was whirling around the ray, nipping its fins to make it move off the crab.

My problem was to set up the skiff above the fish, get rid of the push pole, drift down, and make a cast. I quietly poled upwind, wondering why I hadn't been spotted. I was losing my breath with excitement, the little expanse of skin beneath my sternum throbbing like a frog's throat, and I acquired a fantastic lack of coordination. Turning in the wind, I beat the boat with the push pole as if it were a gong and conducted what a friend has described as a Chinese fire drill. After five minutes of the most dire possible clown age I got into position and could still see the permit's fins breaking the surface of the ray's mud. I laid the push pole down, picked up my fly rod, and to my intense irritation, saw that the ray had given up and was swimming, not seeing me, straight at the skiff. The closing rate was ruinous. I couldn't get a cast off in time to do anything. About twenty feet from the boat the ray sensed my presence and veered fifteen feet off my starboard gunwale, with the permit swimming close to the ray but on my side. As soon as I could see the permit clearly, it started to flush, then slowed down and crossed to the opposite side of the ray. Taking the only chance offered me, I cast over the ray, hoping my line would not spook it and, in turn, the permit. The fly fell with lucky, agonizing perfection, three feet in front of the permit on its exact line of travel. Without hesitation the fish darted forward and took: the one-in-a-thousand shot. I lifted the rod, feeling the rigid bulk of the still unalarmed fish, and set the hook. He shimmered away, my loose line jumping off the deck. And then the rod suddenly doubled and my leader broke. A loop of line had tightened itself around the handle of the reel.

I was ready for the rubber room. Having been encouraged to feel it might be five years before I hooked another, I tried to see all that was good in other kinds of fishing. I thought of various life-enhancing things a fellow could do at home. I could turn to the ennobling volumes of world literature on my shelves. I might do some oils, slap out a gouache or two. But I could not distract myself from the mental image of my lovingly assembled fly rushing from my hands on the lip of a big permit.

I had to work out a routine that would not depend on such exceptional events for success. One technique, finally, almost guaranteed me shots at permit, and that was

to stake out my skiff on the narrow channel flats that are covered with a crunchy layer of blue-green staghorn coral. Permit visit these in succession, according to tide and a hierarchy of flat values known mainly to them but intuited by certain smart fishermen. I liked to be on these flats at the early incoming tide — the young flood, as it is called — and fish to the middle incoming or, often, to the slack high. The key was to be able to stand for six hours and watch an acre of bottom for any sign of life at all. The body would give out in the following sequence: arches, back, hips. Various dehydration problems developed. I carried ice and drank quinine water until my ears rang. Push-ups and deep knee bends on the casting deck helped. And, like anyone else who uses this method, I became an active fantasizer. The time was punctuated by the appearances of oceanic wildlife, fish and turtles that frequented the area as well as many that did not. With any luck at all the permit came, sometimes in a squadron and in a hurry, sometimes alone with their tails in the air, rooting along the hard edge of the flat. The cast would be made, the line and leader would straighten and the fly fall. On a normal day the fly only made the permit uncomfortable, and it would turn and gravely depart. On another day the fly so horrified the fish that it turned tail and bolted. On very few days the permit would sprint at the fly, stop a few inches short, run in a circle when the fly was gently worked, return and flare at it, flash at it, see the boat, and flush.

On particularly hot days when the cumulus clouds stacked in a circle around the horizon, a silky sheen of light lay so fiercely on the water that my vision had to be forced through until my head ached. Patience was strained from the first, and water seemed to stream from my skin. At such times I was counting on an early sighting of fish to keep my attention. And when this did not happen I succumbed to an inviting delusion. The best place to fish was somewhere very far away, and it would be necessary to run the country. I reeled up my line and put the rod in its holder. I took the push pole out of the bottom and secured it in its chocks on the gunwale. Then I let the wind carry me off the flat. I started the engine and put it in forward, suffering exquisitely a moment more, then ran the throttle as far as it would go. The bow lifted and lowered on plane, the stern came up and the engine whined satisfactorily. Already the perspiration was drying, and I felt cool and slaked by the spray. Once on top, standing and steering, running wide open, I projected on my mind what was remembered of a suitable chart to get to this imaginary place where the fish were thick enough to walk on. I looked up and was reprovved by the vapor trail of a navy Phantom interceptor. I ran up the channels, under the bridge, using all the cheap tricks I thought I could get away with, shortcutting flats when I thought I had enough water, looking back to see if I'd left a mud trail, running the banks to get around basins because the coral heads wouldn't grow along a bank, running tight to the keys in a foot-and-a-half of water when I was trying to beat the wind, finally shutting down on some bank or flat or along some tidal pass not unlike the one I'd just run from. It was as hot as it could be, and I couldn't see. The sweat was running onto my sunglasses, and I was hungry and thinking I'd call it a day. When I got home I rather abashedly noted that I'd burned a lot of fuel without making a cast.

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The engine hadn't been running right for a week, and I was afraid of getting stranded or having to sleep out on some buggy flat or, worse, being swept to Galveston on an offshore wind. I tore the engine down and found the main-bearing seal shot and in need of replacement. I drove to Big Pine to get parts and arrived about the time the guides, who center there, were coming in for the day. At the dock, where the big skiffs with their excessive engines were nosed to the breakwater, guides mopped decks and needled each other. Customers, happy and not, disembarked with armloads of tackle, sun hats, oil, thermoses and picnic baskets. A few of these sporty dogs were plastered. One fragile lady, owl-eyed with sunburn, tottered from the casting deck of a guide's skiff and drew herself up on the dock. "Do you know what the whole trouble was?" she inquired of her companion, perhaps her husband, a man much younger than herself.

"No, what?" he said.

She smiled and pitied him. "Well, think about it."

The two put their belongings into the trunk of some kind of minicar and drove off too fast down the Overseas Highway. Four hours would put them in Palm Beach.

It seemed to have been a good day. A number of men went up the dock with fish to be mounted. One went by with a bonefish that might have weighed ten pounds. Spotting Woody Sexton, I wanted to ask how he'd done but knew that ground rules forbade this question around the boats; on the one hand, it embarrasses guides who have had bad days, and on the other, it risks passing good fishing information promiscuously. Meanwhile, as we talked, the mopping and needling continued along the dock. The larger hostilities are reserved for the fishing grounds themselves, where various complex snubbings may be performed from the semianonymity of powerful skiffs. The air can be electric with accounts of who cut off whom, who ran the bank on whom, and so on. The antagonism among the skiff guides, the offshore guides, the pompano fishermen, the crawfishermen, and the shrimpers produces tales of shootings, of disputes settled with gaffs, of barbed wire strung in guts and channels to wreck props and drive shafts. Some of the tales are true. Woody and I made a plan to fish when he got a day off. I gathered my engine parts and went home, where I had torn the engine to pieces on an old Ping-Pong table.

I worked out two or three bonefish patterns for the inside bank of Loggerhead Key. The best of these was a turnoff point where bonefish who were contouring the bank hit a small ridge and turned up onto the flat itself. By positioning myself at this, I would be able to get casts of to passing fish and to see a good piece of the bank, downlight, until noon.

One day I went out and staked the boat during the middle-incoming water of another set of new-moon tides. I caught one bonefish early in the tide, a lively fish that went a hundred yards on his first run and doggedly resisted me for a length of time that was all out of proportion to his weight. I released him after giving him a short revival

session and then just sat and looked at the water. I could see Woody fishing with a customer, working the outside of the bank for tarpon.

It was a queer day to begin with. Vital light flashed on and off around the scudding clouds, and there were slight foam lines on the water from the wind. The basin that shelved off from my bank was active with diving birds, particularly great brown pelicans, whose wings sounded like luffing sails and who ate with submerged heads while blackheaded gulls tried to rob them. The birds were drawn here by a school of mullet that was making an immense mud hundreds of yards across. The slick glowed in the sun a quarter of a mile to the south. I didn't pay much attention until it began by collective will or chemical sensors to move onto my bank. Inexorably, the huge disturbance progressed and flowed toward me. In the thinner water the mullet school was compressed, and the individual fish became easier targets for predators. Big oceanic barracuda were among them, slashing and streaking through the school like bolts of lightning. Simultaneously, silver sheets of mullet, sometimes an acre in extent, burst out of the water and rained down again. In time my skiff was in the middle of it, the opaque water was inch-by-inch alive.

Some moments later, perhaps seventy feet astern of me, a large blacktip shark swam up onto the bank and began traveling with grave sweeps of its tail through the fish, not as yet making a move for them. Mullet and smaller fish nevertheless showered out in front of the shark as it coursed past. Behind the shark I could see another fish faintly flashing. I supposed it was a jack crevalle, a pelagic fish, strong for its size, that often follows sharks. I decided to cast anyway at a distance that was all I could manage. I got off one of my better shots, which nevertheless fell slightly behind target. I was surprised to see the fish drop back to the fly, turn and elevate high in the water, then take. A permit.

I set the hook sharply and the fish started down the flat. Remembering my last episode, I kept the loose, racing line well away from the reel handle for the instant the fish took to consume it. Then the fish was on the reel. When I lowered the rod tip and cinched the hook, the fish began to accelerate, staying on top of the flat, where I could witness its wildly extending wake. Everything was holding together: the hookup was good, the knots were good. At 150 yards the fish stopped, and I got back line. I kept at it until the fish was within 80 yards of the boat. Then it suddenly made a wild, undirected run, not permitlike at all, and I could see the shark chasing it. The blacktip struck and missed three or four times, making explosions in the water that sickened me. I released the drag, untied the boat, and started the engine. Woody started poling toward me at the sound of my engine, his mystified client dragging a line astern.

There was hardly enough water to move in. The prop was half buried, and even at full throttle I couldn't get up on plane. As the explosions continued, I could only guess whether or not I was still connected to the permit. I ran toward it trailing a vast loop of line, saw the shark and immediately ran over him. I threw the engine into neutral and waited to see what had happened and tried to regain line. I was

again tight to the permit. Then the shark reappeared. He hit the permit once, killed it, and ate it, worrying it like a dog and bloodying the water. Then, an instant later, I had the shark on my line and running. I fought him with irrational care: I now planned to gaff the blacktip and retrieve my permit piece by piece. When the inevitable cutoff came I dropped the rod in the boat and, empty-handed, wondered what I had done to deserve this.

I heard Woody's skiff and looked up. He swung about and coasted alongside. I told him it was a permit, just as he had guessed from my starting up on the flat. Woody began to say something when, at that not unceremonial moment, his client broke in to remark that hooking them was the main thing. We stared at him until he added, "Or is it?"

Often afterward, we went over the affair and talked about what might have been done differently, as we had with the first permit. One friend clips a carbine on clips under the gunwale to resolve any shark problems. But I felt that with a gun in the skiff during the excitement of a running fish, I would either plug myself or deep-six the boat. Also, I like sharks. Woody knew better than to assure me there would be other chances. Knowing that there might very well not be was one of our conversational assumptions.

One morning we went looking for tarpon. Woody had had a bad night of it. He'd awakened in the darkness of his room about three in the morning and watched the shadowy figure of a huge land crab walk across his chest. Endlessly it crept to the wall and then up the plaster. Carefully silhouetting the monster, Woody blasted it with a karate chop and now, at breakfast, he was nursing a bruise on the side of his hand. At 6:00 a.m., we were having grits and eggs at the Chat and Chew restaurant. A trucker who claimed to have driven from Loxahatchee in three hours flat was yelling for "oss tie." And when the girl asked if he really wanted iced tea this early in the morning he replied, "Dash rat. Oss tie." I couldn't wake up in the heat. Listless, half dreaming, I imagined the land crab performing some morbid cadenza on my pile of grits.

We laid out the rods in the skiff. The wind was coming out of the east — that is, over one's casting hand from the point we planned to fish — and blowing fairly stiff. But the light was good, and that was more important. We headed out of Big Pine into the calm water along Ramrod Key. We ran in behind Pye Key, through the hole behind Little Money and out to Southeast Point. The sun was already huge, out of hand, like Shakespeare's "glistening Phaethon." I had whitened my nose and mouth with zinc oxide ointment, and felt, handling the mysterious rods and flies, like a shaman. As Woody jockeyed the skiff with the pole, I put my leader together. I had retained enough of my trout-fishing sensibilities to continue to be intrigued by tarpon leaders with their array of arcane knots. The butt of the leader is nail-knotted to the line, blood-knotted to monofilament of lighter test; the shock tippet that protects the leader from the rough jaws of tarpon is tied to the leader with a combination Albright Special and Bimini Bend; the shock tippet is attached to the fly either by a perfection

loop, a clinch or a Homer Rhodes Loop; and to choose one is to make a moral choice. You are made to understand that it would not be impossible to fight about it or, at the very least, quibble darkly.

We set up on a tarpon pass point. We had sand spots around us that would help us pick out the dark shapes of traveling tarpon. And we expected tarpon on the falling water, from left to right. Up on the bow with fifty feet of line coiled on the deck, I was barefoot, so I could feel if I stepped on a loop. I made a couple of practice casts – harsh, indecorous, tarpon-style – and scanned for fish.

The first were, from my point of view, spotted from too great a distance. That is, a long period of time would pass before they actually broke the circle of my casting range, during which I could go, secretly but quite completely, to pieces. The sensation for me, in the face of these advancing forms, was as of a gradual ossification of the joints. Moviegoers will recall the early appearances of Frankenstein's monster, his ambulatory motions accompanied by great rigidity of the limbs, almost as though he could stand a good oiling. I was hard put to see how I could manage anything beyond a perfunctory flapping of the rod. I had once laughed at Woody's stories of customers who sat down and held their feet slightly aloft, treading the air or wobbling their hands from the wrists. I giggled at the story of a Boston chiropractor who fell over on his back and barked like a seal.

"Let them come in now," Woody said.

"I want to nail one, Woody."

"You will. Let them come."

The fish, six of them, were surging toward us in a wedge. They ran from 80 to 110 pounds, slow, dark torpedoes. "All right, the lead fish, get on him," Woody said. I managed the throw, the fly falling in front of the fish. I let them overtake it before starting my retrieve. The big lead fish pulled up behind the fly, trailed, and then made the shoveling, open-jawed uplift of a strike that is not soon forgotten. When he turned down I set the hook and he started his run. The critical issue of getting rid of that loose line piled around one's feet now ensued. You imagine that if you are standing on a coil, you will go to the moon when that coil must follow its predecessors out of the rod. This trial went off without a hitch, and it was only my certainty that someone had done it before that kept me from deciding that we'd made a huge mistake.

The sudden pressure of the line and the direction of its resistance apparently confused the tarpon, so it raced in close-coupled arcs around the boat. Then, once it had seen the boat, felt the line and isolated a single point of resistance, it cleared out at a perfectly insane rate of acceleration that made water run three feet up my line as it sliced through the ocean. The jumps – wild, greyhounding, end-over-end,

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rattling – were all crazily blurred as they happened, while I pictured my reel exploding like a racing clutch and filling me with shrapnel. This fish, the first of six that day, broke off. So did the others, destroying various aspects of my tackle.

As the sun moved through the day the blind side continually changed, forcing us to adjust position until, by afternoon, we were watching to the north. Somehow, looking upright, Woody saw four permit coming right toward us, head-on. I cast my tarpon fly at them, out of my accustomed long-shot routine, and was surprised when one fish moved forward from the pack and followed up the fly rather aggressively. About then they all sensed the skiff and swerved to cross the bow around thirty feet out. They were down close to the bottom now, slightly spooked. I picked up, changed direction, and cast a fairly long interception. When the fly lit, well out ahead, two permit elevated from the group, sprinted forward, and the inside fish took the fly in plain view.

The positive certainty of the take, in the face of an ungodly number of refusals and countless unrewarded hours, induced immediate pessimism. I waited for everything to go haywire.

I hooked the fish quickly. It was only slightly startled and returned to the pack, which by this time had veered away from the shallow flat edge and swung back toward deep water. The critical time of loose line passed slowly. Woody unstaked the skiff and was poised to see which way the fish would take us. When the permit was tight to the reel I cinched him once and he began running. The deep water kept the fish from making the long, sustained sprints permit make on the flats. This fight was a series of assured jabs at various clean angles from the skiff. We followed, alternately gaining and losing line. Then, in some way, at the end of this blurred episode, the permit was flashing beside the boat, looking nearly circular, and the only visual contradiction to his perfect poise was the intersecting line of leader seemingly inscribed from the tip of my arcing rod to the precise corner of his jaw.

Then we discovered that there was no net in the boat. The fish would have to be tailed. I forgave Woody in advance for the permit's escape. Woody was kneeling in the skiff, my line disappearing over his shoulder, the permit no longer in my sight, Woody leaning deep from the gunwale. Then, unbelievably, his arm was up, the black symmetry of tail above his fist, the permit perpendicular to the earth, then horizontal on the floorboards, where a pile of loose line was strewn in curves that wandered around the bottom of the boat toward the gray-and-orange fly secured in the permit's mouth. I sat down numb and soaring.

I don't know what this sort of occurrence indicates beyond the necessary, ecstatic resignation to the moment. With the beginning over and, possibly, nothing learned, I was persuaded that once was not enough. And indeed it wasn't. Thirty years have passed and none of the magic of permit fishing, not a trace of it, has gone.

In Memoriam

**Richard Pearce
(1932-2020)**

Richard Pearce died on April 5, 2020 at Tockwotton on the Waterfront in East Providence from the effects of the post polio syndrome.

He was born in New York City on April 14, 1932 to Ethel and Samuel Pearce. He grew up in New York City, where he attended P.S. 6 and the Bronx High School of Science. In 1953 he graduated with Highest Honors in Philosophy from Hobart College. In the summers, wanting to experience the world outside of New York City, he hitchhiked out west to stack hay, work at odd jobs, and drive a combine on the wheat harvest. One summer he worked 26 jobs. After graduating from Hobart, Summa Cum Laude, he studied Philosophy in graduate school at Columbia University. He soon met Jean Kudo, a recent Swarthmore graduate from Urbana, Illinois and fell in love. In 1954, questioning his major in Philosophy, he withdrew from Columbia University. Toward the end of the Korean War in 1954, he was drafted into the U.S. Army. Richard and Jean were married in between basic training and clerk typist school, shortly before he was shipped off to 7th Army headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany. Jean joined him there, and for 18 months they lived off base and enjoyed travelling in Europe on the few passes he received from the Army. After his discharge, he returned to New York City a Korean War veteran.

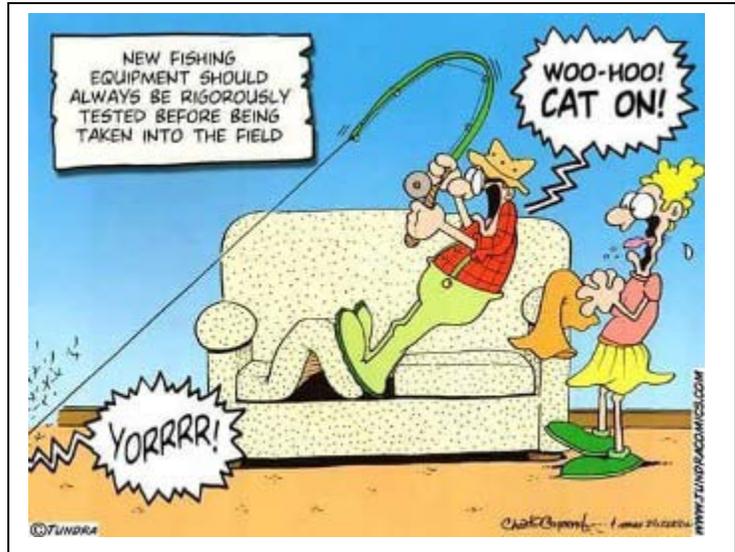
Upon his return to the United States, he changed his focus to English Literature and later received his Master's degree from Columbia University. While writing his Ph.D. dissertation he accepted an appointment to teach in the English Department at Alfred University in Alfred, New York. In 1962 he was awarded his Ph.D from Columbia. He accepted a position in 1964 in the English Department at Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts where he taught for 37 years. During his teaching tenure, he mentored many young colleagues. He enjoyed teaching and research, publishing six books on modernist narrative: *Stages of the Clown: Perspectives on Modern Fiction from Dostoyevsky to Beckett*, 1972; *William Styron*, 1971; *Critical Essays on Thomas Pynchon* (Editor), 1981; *The Novel in Motion: An Approach to Modern Fiction*, 1991; and *Molly Blooms: A Polylogue on Penelope and Cultural Studies* (Editor, with an essay, "How Does Molly Look through the Male Gaze"), 1994.

He will be remembered for his leadership of the English Department, commitment to shared governance through his work on faculty committees and in AAUP, and most especially for the mentorship and friendship he extended to so many junior faculty members. For his colleagues the screen porch in summer and woodstove in winter at the Pearces' house was a source of great food, drink, music, and intellectual sustenance. Richard was a coach, cheerleader, fan, and friend, always open to new ideas and new people. He modeled this for young faculty in his commitment to students, the creativity and excitement that went into his teaching, and his devotion to each new scholarly project. He truly embodied the best of what the Wheaton community valued and nurtured.

Following his retirement, he became an avid fly fisherman and developed a new interest in Native American Ledger Art. After travelling west to interview women ledger artists and conduct research, he was inspired to write his latest book, *Women and Ledger Art*, 2013, the first published study focusing on this topic.

While very involved with his college community and research, Richard was a loving husband and father. He and his family went on camping trips exploring different areas of the country, and his sense of adventure and humor always made the trips exciting. His passion for nature and gardening was inherited by both daughters who love working in their gardens. In connection with conferences or research, Richard and Jean enjoyed traveling to other states or countries and would return home with stories of interesting people, beautiful places, and delicious food.

In addition to being remembered by his friends and colleagues for the range of his intellect and enthusiasm, Richard will also be remembered for his positive attitude toward life and people, his warmth and quirky sense of humor. Richard died of complications of post polio syndrome, having initially contracted polio as a 9 year old in summer camp. He left his wife Jean, to whom he was married 65 years, daughters Karin Pearce-Small and Emily Pearce-Spence, sons-in-law James Small and Gerard Spence, and grandchildren Dylan and Austin Small and Lucy and Jeremy Spence.



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This is our monthly newsletter for the 2019-2020 season.
Best Wishes to All to Stay Safe and Stay Well!
See you in August..... (we hope) *Editor*