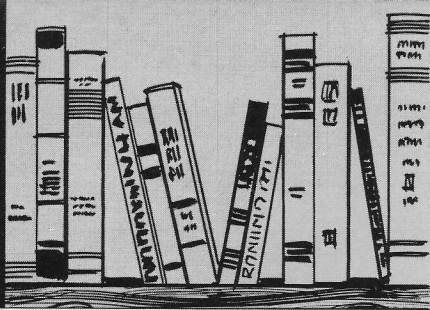


# Books by Badgers



## Fisherman's Beach

by George Vukelich. St. Martin's Press,  
New York. 186 pp., \$3.95.

An area of Wisconsin hitherto largely neglected by writers — the Two Rivers-Manitowoc country — is the setting for George Vukelich's first novel. **Fisherman's Beach** is the story of the events precipitated by the knowledge that Old Man le Mere, a tough commercial trout fisherman, is dying. Hard upon his heart attack follows a rapid-fire sequence of events — the oldest son, Germaine, six years gone, returns from France with his motherless daughter, arousing the jealous enmity of his brother, Roger, who fears that Germaine has come to take over the domain of the Old Man. Germaine has not, but he does decide to marry Ginny Dus-sault, his one-time sweetheart, now Roger's girl. A final scene introduces Reuben, the baby of the family, to lake fishing, and, following upon it is a battle between a great lake sturgeon, illegally netted, and the Old Man, resulting in the death of Old Man le Mere and the end of the novel.

This drama is played out against the struggle of the fisherman for survival in a time of great change, though it is essentially the story of two opposing ways of life — the Old Man's (representing the past), and Germaine's (the future) — though Germaine's is necessarily shadowy, and the Old Man's comes through with memorable clarity.

It is a short novel, and the Old Man dominates it; when he has gone out of it, George Vukelich rightly ends his tale. Its brevity, however, is no key to its merit; it is tightly knit, well conceived, and admirably set forth. **Fisherman's Beach** is a real place; one feels the looming lake constantly, and the author underscores its presence by pointedly making all his similes in fisherman's terminology. In this narrative the Old Man is multi-dimensional, and against his characterization the romance which springs to renewed life between Ginny and Germaine is intrusive, almost alien, however integral to the plot it is.

**Fisherman's Beach** moves swiftly; there is no lagging. Its direction is straight and true, and George Vukelich has a fine feeling — a warmly intimate one — for the setting and the many-sided characters who occupy it. He conveys sharply the tension of the fishermen, at bay between the Conservation Department and the trout-destroying lampreys — the conflict between Germaine, under pressure to stay from his father, and Roger, fearful for his inheritance. The multiple facets of the story are nicely balanced, and no secondary theme gets out of hand. Its flaws are minor and unimportant; what is important is that **Fisherman's Beach** is a highly successful first novel which augurs well for George Vukelich's future as a writer.

George Vukelich's prose is spare; there is little fat in it; and the episodic treatment of his story is the right presentation, the most effective. It is a strong, honest novel, superbly realized. **Fisherman's Beach** comes as the culmination of a writing career which has included representation in **The Atlantic Monthly**, **Bottege Oscure**, **The Beloit Poetry Journal**, and **The Best American Short Stories: 1955**.

August Derleth