

'Trout Magic' Casts Its Spell in Spring

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 . . .

—from the book

Contemptuous of worms and tourists alike, referring to the former as "pork chops" and to the latter as characterized by the determination to make "their damned 500 miles a day," Voelker lives in Upper Michigan, regretting the day when it was joined to the rest of the state by the Mackinac Bridge.

—Arnold Gingrich in "The Joys of Trout"

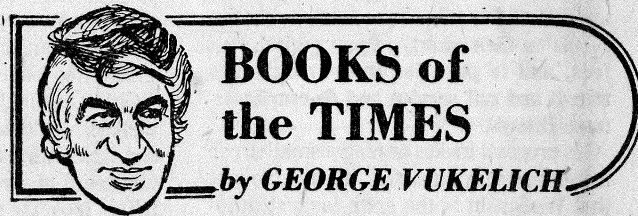
I just had to save this beauty book for a springtime column, despite the fact that it came out during our wintertime.

Wintertime is not a magical time for trout fishing, DNR notwithstanding — it is too long between mayfly hatches.

So I stashed this little classic away next to my clammy waders waiting for the real trout season to open.

Robert Traver is, of course, really John Voelker of Marquette, Mich., retired justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, the world's greatest practitioner of "bramble fishing" — the pursuit of brook trout in the upper peninsula boondocks best accomplished with a flyrod in the hand and an Italian cigar in the mouth.

And John Voelker of course is one of the most literate Old



BOOKS of the TIMES

by **GEORGE VUKELICH**

Trout Magic

By Robert Traver
Crown Publishers, Inc.
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Professionals around; a veritable ancient creaking wondrous creel chockfull of fishing lore, a blue blooded purist to the manner born who over the years has numbered among his cronies the likes of the Art Flick, Frank Steel's daughter, Dotsie, Ingrid, Queen Martha Marie, and the priceless Luigi "calla-me-Louie" Bonetti.

"The longer I fish," Traver-Voelker observes, "the stronger I feel that one way to get the dope on a man fast is to watch him fish. One need only to look to find all kinds and types, ranging from the descendants of Henry Thoreau on down to the most hopeless fishing hogs."

His eye is a fisherman's, scanning the riffles, watching for movements, watching for signs. His ear is also a fisherman's. And that ain't bad either.

"Young fellow," he quotes a crusty old codger once-met on a

stream — the quavering high falsetto voice fairly dripping with scorn, "I'd sooner be over on the Ironton ferry dock settin' on my ass plunkin' for bass than ever fish a wet fly downstream!"

Rummaging around in the Traver-Voelker fly book turns up some real bushy dandies:

• Look (though I may rue the day I ever put this in writing), fishing must be just about the most selfish, egotistical, time-consuming, self-absorbing (not to mention expensive) pastime in all the world and the women know it.

• As the clouds of smoke billowed forth and the mosquitoes sensibly fled, I recalled it was my old fishing pal Luigi who taught me that these made the very best fly dope around. I also recalled that only my own persistence further taught me that all that keeps Italian cigars from becoming the universal fly dope is not any question whether the flies can't stand them but whether the fisherman can.

• I fish . . . 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.

The best time to go fishing, Traver-Voelker once wrote in another book, is any time you can get away. If you just can't get away, reading "Trout Magic" is the next best thing.

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In addition to "Anatomy of a Murder" and six other books, Traver has written "Anatomy of a Fisherman" and "Trout Madness." He lives in his beloved Upper Michigan and fishes almost every day of the season.