

## **BDFC Stories/Testimonials**

### **Father in the eye of a son - Kevin Grimes**

When trying to pick a good story to write about, I wanted to try to capture the essence of what it is to have the privilege to be a member of the BDFC. In the process, I kept circling back to the memories that were a major influence in my development as a youth and in doing so reminiscing about my relationship with my dad and his journey with fishing. So instead of describing the story where I fell into the stream multiple times, having the reel fall off the rod and my slackline tripping me while trying to land the next trophy trout only to see the beauty slip from the shore to fight another day, I will share some reflections about one of the founding fathers of the BDFC from the eyes of his youngest son.

Patrick Henry Grimes has his first introduction to fishing as a youth at Van Courtland Park in the Bronx where he would attempt to catch fish with dough, corn, worms or anything that might bring some success. On hearing that fishing was better at the reservoirs in the north, He began venturing further afield to confirm these stories. The results of these expeditions may not have been fruitful, but it did not deter him from his developing passion for the sport of fishing. After he opened a new office of his family's travel business in White Plains, New York, he met Tom Kerr at the local Kiwanis Club meeting. Their conversation about the Tom's friends and family that had incredible success in trout fishing in the Catskill Mountains was met with some cynicism by Pat and led to a "prove it" trip that weekend to the Islee's farmhouse along Vegas Creek. He could never have seen the impact that that trip would have on the rest of his life, but he did find out that the stories were true, and these friends of Tom were indeed the real deal when it came to fishing. He also discovered that they were a great bunch of guys with a love of life and adventure that made them quick friends. There he met the Dwyers, Dimmicks

and other friends from the Binghamton area. Regular fishing trips to the Catskills with this tight knit group of guys became an important part of his life. These frequent trips led not only to a refining of his fishing skills through his mentors but enhanced his love for the Catskill Mountains which he shared with his family and friends. He introduced a strong circle of friends from the neighborhood in Shelbourne Road in Yonkers NY such as the Flynns and Winstanleys as the group migrated from the Islee's to Martha and Jack Hewitt's farm further up Vegas. At the age of 7 or 8, I became his constant companion on the 3-hour trip to Delaware County. My earliest recollections were entering the stream at the bridge at Spic Tuttle's farm on the Tremperskill at daybreak following my dad upstream as he fished for the next three hours as snow was lightly falling. I was not able to properly cast or manage anything remotely challenging on the stream except for dancing amongst the slippery rocks trying to remain upright in boots up to my ears, so I was there to observe rather than fish. I shared in his thrill when he managed to land a nice brown or a beautiful brookie and began to learn the basics of fishing in streams and where to expect to catch the fish. He would often give me the first shot at a nice hole where I would make a futile attempt at casting or retrieving one of dad's casts which always led to better results. My highlight of the morning was to thaw out at the trailer diner on the outskirts of Andes where some of the best hot chocolate awaited my frozen fingers. It seemed like a full day was had and it was only 9am. At some point in the day, we would rendezvous at a predetermined spot with anyone of the group up for the weekend, normally along a stream to take lunch and get filled in on the highlights of the morning fish. It was always amazing to hear and see the success of our fellow fisherman. The most impressive thing was seeing the trout that were caught when, at the same time, you did not even see a fish. Jon Dwyer and Ray Williams were always great at explaining how bad the fishing was then showing the beautiful 18in brown

they caught. This day was repeated in subsequent years on April 1st, the beginning of the trout season. We had to be out there regardless of the weather or other conditions to cast off the withdrawal from the previous six months without a rod in our hands. I did get to bring my own rod but not until I could tie my own knots and put on a wrap around (weight) with some proficiency. We had practice sessions for tying hooks and securing wrap-arounds in our living room each March where we would also oil our reels, load fresh line and make sure we had the proper equipment for the coming season. Dad would set up a bucket in the front yard to practice our casting and make it more challenging by setting up some form of obstruction so we would have to make a low cast to successfully land the hook in the bucket. A weekend in March was also used for another purpose. My dad always worked hard at gaining and maintaining permission to fish posted property along the local streams and would bring boxes of Dunkin' Donuts to the farmhouses as a little gift in appreciation of their permission. I think in some circumstances that I was used as a nice prop for my dad when making a new request to have fishing access. Who could refuse permission to a father who wants to teach his son how to fish? Although he did not eat fish or keep many, he always asked the farmer if they would like for him to drop a fish off "if he managed to catch one" and there were many that took him up on it. Sometimes those efforts were for naught when the guardians of the stream were not in the know. Once while fishing with dad on the Tremperskill most of the morning, gunshots were fired into the trees over our head from the porch of a house across the corn field. I never saw my dad lose his cool very often, but he certainly laid into the young man brandishing the gun as he marched across the corn field with me in tow. He did extract a reasonable apology, and we went back to our Fishing.

As we all know, fishing is not always nonstop action. It teaches patience, perseverance

and an appreciation for your surroundings. Everyday of fishing is a good day. But at the same time, the catching can be such a thrill! My dad had a good understanding of that. When we went through the morning of fishing without a strike to our name, we would try some of the small tributaries where we were bound to find a brookie or two interested in a worm. One of my favorite spots was Winter Hollow Brook which flows into the upper Plattekill and runs up the valley where the former BDFC property was located. In the early season, it held enough water to support some browns as well as brookies and two hours of fishing would make any novice fisherman love the sport. On those less than active days on the stream, the group might meet up for a friendly game of cards and maybe a cold beer alongside the stream. This is where I was introduced to the game of pitch in one of my earliest memories of the fisherman from the Binghamton area. They played for 25 cents a game and 10 cents for each time you did not make your bid. At the end of the fun, there may not have been much money changing hands, but it was certainly money well invested.

As fishermen, we often get set in our ways, begin and end with what we know has brought success in the past. Certainly, experience is a major contributor to consistent performance, but do we really give alternative ways a proper vetting? When the fish are biting, do we ever switch from the method that is working? Of course not. We will only consider trying something new when the tried-and-true method is not producing. Not the best conditions for getting a real feel for the new method. I was always impressed with my dad's willingness to try something new. Certainly, fly fishing was a method that was a different approach (which he reserved for fishing out West). Upon reaching the Catskills, he tried to emulate the underhand fishing method of his newfound fishing buddies, using worms and wraparounds as the mainstay offering. He was committed to this approach for many years. At some point in the mid '70's, he

was introduced to the Phoebe lure which was all the rage for a few years which could be effective on bright, sunny days. I remember days when fish would leap out of the water over rocks chasing after the lure. That being said, I cannot say that I have a Phoebe lure in my creel now. The introduction of the panther martin (late 70's?) was a game changer for all in the club with great debates on color and size. In his later years, in an effort to go after the biggest fish, Dad adopted a method introduced by Roger Sackett, using a treble rig laced through a live minnow which was very successful for early season trout. He trapped the minnows in a pond close to the Tunis Lake house and carried them in a peanut butter jar in his creel. Over the years, there were forays into the Pimms minnow and Y Zuri lures which my Dad used in bigger waters but never was a big fan. He never abandoned the worms fishing completely but succumbed to the ease and effectiveness of lure fishing as we all have.

About the same time that I was cutting my teeth in the sport of fishing, the Bob Dwyer Fishing Club was being created. The Club emanated from the respect, fellowship and love that the founding fathers had for Bob Dwyer Sr, their ringleader in the world of fishing. With plenty of encouragement from Pat Grimes, it was formally established in 1970 at a meeting at 56 Shelbourne Road with the acceptance of its bylaws by the original members present with Bud Hurley acting as advisor. It certainly was a moment akin to the signing of the Declaration of Independence for all those involved. It was this foresight that led to decades of fishing and fellowship for generations to date and hopefully generations to come. Pat Grimes always wanted to share his pleasure for fishing and love for the members of the club. At this time, the trophy competition was formally adopted.

The Catskills was my dad's happy place. When it seemed the weight of the world was on

his shoulder, he could always escape to Delaware County and find some peace for a few days.

One morning when I was in middle school, I was called down to the principal's office for a phone call from my mom (no cell phone ). She said that I would be picked up shortly by my dad. If you knew my dad, being pulled out of school was a big no-no, so despite being excited to miss the rest of the day of class, I wondered what was up. After a few minutes of silence upon entering the car, dad explained, "your mother packed a bag for you in the back, we are going fishing, I needed to get away." When driving back from a weekend of fishing, those weights seemed more manageable. I assume that all our members have had similar feelings. I most certainly have. If there was an alternative happy place for my dad, it was the Rocky Mountains and, more specifically, Montana. His first exposure came from a fishing trip with Tom Kerr and a few of his fishing buddies to Wyoming to experience fly fishing for the first time. Attracted by the scenery, fishing and hiking, this experience sparked additional trips to the area which eventually became his annual pilgrimage to Montana for backpacking and fly fishing. In the mid '80's, he organized an epic 10 day fishing extravaganza for the members of the BDFC to experience fly fishing on all of the great trout waters of Montana. A wonderful experience was shared by all which included Fr. Tom Keating's 50th birthday celebration at Chico Hot Spring Ranch. Since taking my first backpacking trip with my father out of Cooke City in 1975 led by Montana legends Rick Graetz and Bill Cunningham, I have ventured back often with family and friends. Now I see dad's grandchildren gravitating toward Montana as their happy place with a love of the outdoors and all it has to offer, a great gift from their Grandfather.

At some point in the '70's, my dad purchased a Chevy van decked out with a pop tent roof, sleeper bench, closet and sink and decal'd with distinctive yellow and orange racing stripes. After a short period of time, everyone recognized his van and knew where he was fishing. I recall that he could not wait for me to get my drivers license so he could sleep in the back on our drive up on a Friday night. It made for convenient streamside slumber so we could hit the stream at the crack of dawn. The Chevy van was still a mainstay for transportation when dad and mom staked their claim in the Catskills by purchasing a property in the shadow of Bobcat Mountain at Tunis Lake which included a small A frame house, eventually becoming a renovated retirement home in the heart of our fishing territory. This location has brought countless memories and good times for our family and friends as it still does today. As my dad reached retirement and found that he had ample time to fish, I found him much less enthused about the fishing and more interested in the times he was able to spend with his fellow fisherman. Perhaps this was always at the core of his love of the sport. He cherished his time with family, especially introducing his grandchildren to fishing and other outdoor activities, passing his knowledge and respect for the world around us to the next generation. The climb to the top of Bobcat from Tunis Lake was a rite of passage for the grandkids. His annual pilgrimage to the wilderness of Montana was made without fail while he was physically able. His final backpacking trip included his eldest grandchild.

Having recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of the BDFC and approximately the same number of years fishing personally, I would like to express the gratitude that I have to the founding fathers and especially my dad for providing the oasis that is the BDFC. Their initial fellowship and camaraderie established in the early years with Bob Dwyer Sr surrounding the sport of fishing has endured through the years by their example. It has been extended

to friends and family to where everyone feels a sense of belonging. Even though members do not travel to the Catskills as often to fish as our founding fathers, each opportunity to get together is met with anticipation, gratitude and satisfaction. Although my dad could never imagine what impacts his first three-hour drive to the Catskills would bring I could not imagine where I would be if he decided not to make that trip. Certainly, much different and certainly much worse off. So, as I look forward to April and the first day of the season, I'll approach the next trip to the Catskill with renewed enthusiasm knowing that family, friends and fun times await leaving enduring memories for all.



## **Big Fish, Big Shoes, Big Advise - Robby Dwyer**

During the week of the inaugural Ray Williams Trophy period in 1998, Pat Grimes took me to the big hole down by Hoag Crossroad. It was there that I saw the biggest trout that I had ever seen. I was standing on the shore, under the tree with the rope swing, when it followed my retrieve nearly back to the bank. It never so much as bumped my Panther Martin, but I can still see it speeding towards me. Easily over 20 inches, its big, hooked jaw looked menacing as it put on the brakes and suspended itself near the surface for a few seconds, before darting back down to the depths of the swimming hole.

Later that week, my Grandmother, Rita Dwyer and my Aunt Diane came up from Binghamton to meet my father (Bob, Jr.), my Uncle Jon and I for dinner in Bainbridge, NY. After dinner, we headed back to Delaware County. I asked if they wouldn't mind dropping me off on Delhi-South Kortright Rd (18), down below the big hole so that I could try to sneak back up to it in the stream. There was a shack (fish camp?) a few hundred yards downstream, and I slid down the embankment there and into the West Branch. Dad and Uncle Jon drove up and parked next to the cornfield, across from the bottom of Glen Burnie Road to wait for me. Just down from the house formerly occupied by Author/Historian Marty Podskoch (<https://martinpodskoch.com/>), who had walked over to speak with Pat and I earlier in the week.

I had caught a few trout up to that point, but not that I can recall that were worthy of placing in a creel. Before I got out of the vehicle, I asked for advice on how best to dispatch the monster if I were lucky enough to fool him. I remember Uncle Jon remarking to my Dad that he liked my confidence. Still wearing the golf shirt that I had worn to dinner, I put on my waders

and vest. With a storm and dusk fast approaching, I planned to hustle upstream to the base of the big hole with hopes of enticing the big Brown to strike. Along the way, there was a tree on the far side of the stream, roots exposed over the water, creating a nice hole that cut underneath and into the bank. A flat sandy beach was directly across from the tree, only about 4 or 5 yards away. I made a backhand cast with a Mepps Firefly Thunder Bug and it landed on a root, above the stream. I stood there for a few seconds, shoulders slumped, contemplating how I was going to see well enough to re-tie. I initially made no effort to pop my lure off the root, as if postponing the disappointment of having wasted another good hole. To my surprise, with one tug, it flew back across the stream, landing at my feet, leaving the hole undisturbed. I made a 2nd cast and as soon as it landed, the current swept the Thunder Bug under the roots and BAM! FISH ON!

It may not have been the fish I had set out to pursue, but it only took a few seconds to beach the 20 1/2" brown. Having never landed a trout that size, I had no idea how powerful they were. I was shaking with excitement, but there was no way that fish was going to slide back into the river. I got down on my knees with the trout between my legs as I removed the hook and dispatched him. I placed the fish in the back of my vest and continued upstream. By this time, more than enough time had passed for me to have worked the intended hole thoroughly so I scurried up to it, a couple of token casts along the way. With thunder rumbling and lightning flashing in the distance, I made it to the swimming hole and made a few additional casts before walking up the edge of the corn field to the road, the headlights of the vehicle helping me find my way. Wearing my best poker face, I removed my vest and unzipped the back as Uncle Jon asked if I had any luck. I pulled out the big brown, and with a big grin, I proudly held it up. A picture was taken by the headlights before we headed back to the Grimes residence at Tunis Lake. Another picture was taken in Pat's garage, and under his supervision, I cleaned the fish as

Dad and Jon looked on. It was the first and only BDFC "fish" trophy that I ever have had the honor of winning and I will never forget it. Sharing the moment with three of my favorite fishing mentors is a priceless memory that I will cherish forever.

## **Why I Fish - Rob Crowley**

I first heard about the Bob Dwyer Fishing Club (BDFC) from my great friend, Tim. The club is steeped in tradition, built on the camaraderie of men who cherish the outdoors. It's about more than just fishing; it's about respect, caring, sportsmanship, laughter, and sharing stories. Make no bones about it, the BDFC catches trout.

My fishing sensei had specific ideals to become a club member. Be prepared, ready to learn, and practice. This idea included, "no fishing, the first day is observation on a local stream". He taught me gear essentials and how to carry it, how to move through the bush with purpose and care, as even the smallest disturbance can send vibrations through the water. Learn the holes, watch the waterflow, stream bends, tree roots, rocks, and more. Understand how to "hunt" the fish and learn the underhand cast.

### ***Let's go***

First stop, Woodland Valley Creek, Catskill Mountains. With an old lightweight rod and reel that had been gathering dust and a supply of corkscrewed line, (It turns out, fishing line can develop memory) it was time to hit the stream. Woodland Valley had rocks and elevation change and just about everything you needed, except where was the water?

Tim and I fished hopscotch, a partner-style of fishing which involves alternating sides and jumping ahead. Marching upstream, I stumbled over rocks, tripping and splashing, certainly not sneaking up on anything. How could there be fish in such shallow pools? Feeling frustrated, I carried on, wondering what lesson I was supposed to learn. Then I looked ahead and saw my

partner pulling in a beautiful trout and hope springs eternal! He pointed out a small eddy near a rock. “That’s a good target,” he said. I bounced the lure a little upstream but was able to guide it just to the upside of the flow around the rock and Boom !— a little brown. Wow!

The lesson? You must “know” that the fish are there. Never give up on a cast. Even a poor one can be saved. Watch it all the way in. You can really see structure when the water is low. Be quieter.

*Let’s go again.*

We decided to hit the road for a bit of reconnaissance. Tim had a specific spot in mind, but I couldn’t stop marveling at the scenery—mountains, valleys, rolling hills, barns, and the wide expanse of blue sky overhead. As we gained elevation, the streams wound through farmland, crisscrossed by small bridges. After figuring out our entry, exit, and where to park, we arrived at East Brook—and it had water! We were ready. Let’s go again.

The conditions were perfect for a two-bank hopscotch scenario. We passed more small bridges, winding streams with high banks, willow trees, and fields of farmland. The fishing was off a bit, but I did get plenty of casting practice! Tim was a bit ahead when he tried to get my attention. As I looked upstream, a mama duck and her little ducklings came scurrying down the water. Absolutely beautiful, even though that stretch was pooched.

No big deal. Tim moved ahead to scout the next good spot while I stayed back, “refining” my casting. Then, as I continued upstream, I noticed I had passed a perfect hole beneath a tree’s overhang. “Oh well,” I thought, “I’ll fish it from downstream.” I cast backward, and my lure landed perfectly under the overhang. Then it happened—lightning struck.

The moment my lure hit the water, an electric jolt shot up the line, through the rod, and straight

to my heart. I had hooked a monster.

I remember yelling—well, more like squealing—“Tim, I got one!” He turned to offer advice, but when he saw the bend in my rod, he dropped everything and sprinted to the stream. “Keep the rod up, reel it in easily, don’t yank it!” he shouted. I followed his instructions as the fish fought hard. The weight was immense, my heart was racing, and adrenaline pumped through my veins. Tim, net in hand, swooped in, securing the fish. The fight was intense, and when it was over, all I could say was, “Wow, wow, wow!” For the record, that beautiful 22-inch brown trout wouldn’t have qualified as a trophy catch—after all, it wasn’t self-netted. And at the time, I wasn’t yet a member of the Bob Dwyer Fishing Club. But you can probably guess what happened next.

### ***So, Why Do I Fish?***

Because fishing is everything.

## **Oh Stickbait, Oh Stickbait - Wayne Cerinetti**

After rounding the corner, I saw Rob waiting for my arrival at the rendezvous point. I asked him how he did, his fate was the same as mine, a blank on the scoreboard. A large hole was above us on the small river we were fishing so we decided to sneak up and fish it together. As we approached the sweeping hole I told Rob he was up and I stayed back as he slowly snuck up to make a cast. Rob was sporting a 6' 6" medium action rod with a large stickbait tied to the end of the line. He crept up to the tail of the hole with the stealth of a cat trying to catch a bird and threw a perfect cast to the opposite bank and started working the bait back through the hole. Suddenly he turned back to me, face and eyes wide and quietly mentioned that a large trout had chased the bait back to him. After a few more casts, the large trout would not take the large stickbait.

I mentioned to Rob as I snuck up to him to take my 5' 6' ultra light with 416 mono and a small stickbait attached. He took the rod and handed off his rig to me. He then slipped back up, crouched and made a perfect cast. Almost as soon as he worked the bait back to him it was hammered by the large trout and the drag started to sing. The brown trout jumped and made a large splash in the middle of the river. After playing the stout brown like a pro he brought the fish to my net. After a brief celebration and a big high five the fish was measured, pictured, and released to fight another day.

## **Muddy Waters - John Knoepfel**

The stream was angry that day my friends, like an old man trying to return his unused nightcrawlers at the sports shop. Two friends and I stopped about a half a mile north of the bridge connecting route 18 and route 10 in South Kortright. There used to be a spot to pull off route 10 that has since been closed by a guardrail. None of us were particularly optimistic about catching any fish that day by looking at the milk chocolate colored water on the way there. I probably wouldn't have tried to fish if it were just me going. We carefully made our way down the steep muddy hill to the stream. The hole there is more like a small pond where the water makes a ninety degree turn. I had caught fish in this spot a few times before. My two friends started casting out their worms into the swirling pool, I walked downstream a little and started casting my bait into the rushing water. I cast out my line a few times into no particular spots because it seemed unlikely that I would catch anything. About ten minutes went by when I felt a strong hit. I reeled in a nice fat trout about 15" long. I don't know what kind it was to this day. I can't distinguish one trout from the other. They all taste the same though.

Another ten minutes or so went by when I got another hit. I reeled another trout in that could have been the first one's twin. It really surprised me to catch anything in such murky fast running water. I figured my friends did well in the pool but they didn't even get a hit. It was so cold so we didn't stay long. The lesson I learned was that water conditions didn't have to be perfect to have a successful day on the stream and yes they tasted good.



## The Pool that Lay Above - Jon Dwyer

### THE POOL THAT LAY ABOVE

When I was a little boy, I used to watch my dad go to a **fishing spot** far up stream. Where **no one else would go**. When he came back, he wore a smile this man **who I did love**. As he recounted of his find, **a pool that lay above**.

He told me, no one could go up there **and not return to find**. A better life among the faults, **that have beset mankind**. He gained an inner peace within **that dark and shady glen**. As well as a **Spiritual Growth**, that made him the tallest **of all tall men**.

Then one day, he passed beyond **the pool that lay above** (*December 31, 1969*). No more to share **his gifts with us**. His gifts of **honesty and love**.

**In sadness**, the following year I walked upstream in hopes **that I might find**. An answer to life and death, **that had perplexed my mind**.

My thoughts of dad had taken me beyond the pathways **made by men** and led me to a shady spot, **a dark and lonely glen**. A strange and holy quietness seemed to **fill the air**. As though my very presence spelled out doom **to creatures there**.

A blue jay spoke in whispered tones, a squirrel **ran from sight**. A frightened doe nudged her fawns and urged them **to take flight**. I quietly dropped beneath a pine **and as I settled there**, I heeded a compulsion **to genuflect in prayer**.

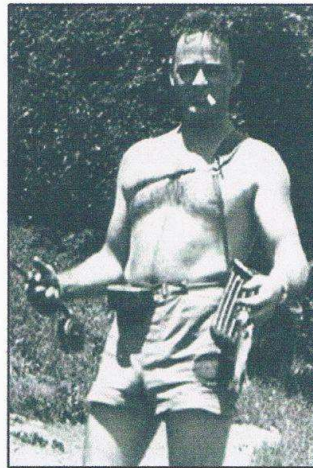
**When I looked up**, my eyes fell on an object **near at hand**. Dad's fishing hat,  
I recognized it as one I gave him, the one with the **sweat stained band**.

**It was hung with care**, upon a limb and seeing it was proof positive **that I'd found**  
the pool that lay above. The one he loved so much. So with this, in mind **my heart began to pound**.

I placed Dad's hat upon my head and felt **an untold glow!** A new found strength came over me **for I was soon to know**.

**That God's plan** here in the glen. Where Dad had learned **to love**.

The creatures here and men beyond, **before he went above**.



I learned that in the stream of life, that each and **every man**. Must leave life's dull and beaten paths, if he would be **God's man**.

To gain an earthly happiness, that comes along **with love**. Before he travels life's last mile, **to that one last pool above**.

As I stood there the doe came back, **to stand erect and proud**. The blue jay spread his thread of song,  
**that echoed far and loud.**

The little squirrel came back, to sit upon **his favorite seat**. The forest seemed to come alive,  
**with breezes soft and sweet.**

A hungry trout rolled merrily, **as I watched a hatch take birth**. And all of God's creatures,  
**entered with a song to Mother Earth.**

I knew that they had thought, **that I was he**.  
The one they **learned to love**.  
It was then I vowed to live my life, **like he who fished above.**

I placed that hat where it had hung **and promised to return**. Whenever in my heart I found,  
that hate and sin **may burn.**

I had learned to love my fellow man, **as he had done before**. Until the day my travels cease,  
**along life's weary shore.**

Then I can join, the dad I lost. **And share again his love**. As we fish, side by side once more.  
**In that pool that lay above.**

My dear friends and family, when I wrote my first contribution to (*Fish Tales*) which Brian Grimes has asked us all to contribute to. I decided to dedicate this one to my father, Bob Dwyer Sr. for whom the Club is named.

Trout fishing has been described as the contemplative man's recreation. It offers each of us an opportunity to forget our burdens and cares, while finding a little inner peace. A time to commune with nature.

A time to soak in a little beauty which is so much the surround of a babbling brook and to simply restore the soul. If by chance, one happens to catch some trout ... so much the better.

In fact, the catching is only a small part. Sometimes a very small part of it. To be sure, trout fishermen are notoriously competitive. Matched perhaps, only by their miraculous propensity to make a trout increase in size each time it is orally re-caught.

So, as we enter into our 55th year as a Club, I pray God's blessing on each of you.

(+) the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit  
... Amen

*Jon Dwyer*