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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NEWS RELEASE

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ADDRESS BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR FRANK P. BRIGGS
AT THE ANNUAL CONVENTION OF TROUT, UNLIMITED, AT BOILING SPRINGS, PENNSYLVANIA,
ON SEPTEMBER 7, 1963

My father, not a schooled but nevertheless a highly intelligent man, impressed upon me in my early age that we should "learn something" out of each of Life's adventures or, as he often said it, "You are the worse for the doing."

When I weeded the garden, he told me I was learning to separate the bad from the good; when I reaped the harvests, he said I was learning the lesson that we should lay up today for the drought of tomorrow, and so on down the line.

One day I went fishing. I thought that I'd sit idly on the sunny bank of the little creek that rippled by our farm home, loll in the sun, pull in a few perch or a mud cat or two, and have an afternoon of complete relaxation and fun. But Dad happened along just as I pulled out a flopping sun-perch and thereby came my lesson from fishing.

"A lie is like a fish on dry land," Dad said, "It will fret and fling, and make a frightful bother, but it cannot hurt you if you let it flop. You have only to keep still, and the fish, like the lie, will die of itself."

So, when I was asked to speak here tonight, I wondered indeed just what fishing had taught me--what, perchance, it had taught you--and what we could find as common ground on which to discuss trout fishing and trout propagation, management and perpetuation.

I was impressed--yes, very impressed--with the statement of the philosophy of Trout, Unlimited. I think, even though you all know it, it should be repeated here, not only for the record but for reaffirmation.

Trout, Unlimited believes that trout fishing isn't just fishing for trout. It's fishing for sport rather than for food where the true enjoyment of the sport lies in the challenge, the lore and the battle of wits, not necessarily the full creel. It's the feeling of satisfaction that comes from limiting your kill instead of killing your limit. It's communing with nature where the chief reward is a refreshed body and a contented soul, where a license is a permit to use--not abuse, to enjoy--not destroy our trout waters. It's subscribing to the proposition that what's good for trout is good for trout fishermen and that managing trout for the trout rather than for the trout fishermen is fundamental to the solution of our trout problems. It's appreciating our trout, respecting fellow anglers and giving serious thought to tomorrow."

This, to me, is an excellent philosophy and one oft to be studied and emulated.

But what does fishing teach a man or woman? There are the easy and obvious answers: casting skills, plus patience, acceptance, and how to relax muscles and mind and how to vitalize the soul.

Yet the art of angling teaches other things less clearly seen: To view our world of humans as coexistent with other worlds that we forget, because those other worlds are walled away from us; to see water as a living, mysterious unity of life rather than a clear, tepid flow from a bathroom faucet; and to look into the murky depths of existence as into a glass darkly.

Fishing can teach us certain physical arts of casting and trolling, of spotting the rootwad, thumbing the reel, playing the fish, and there is satisfaction in this coordination. But fishing can teach us certain spiritual skills, also, of compassion based upon understanding life as a whole, teach us of Eternal Mysteries that cannot be impaled upon the ~~hook of understanding~~, teach us that in the Flow of earthly Time we are no more--and no less--than a trout.

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Fishing, of course, teaches us other things. Take, for instance, the guide in the north woods who was asked about a noted preacher with whom he had fished.

"Yes," said the guide, "he was a good man except for his swearing."

"But look," said the fisherman, "surely you don't mean to say that Dr. Fosdick was profane?"

"Oh, but he was, sir," protested the guide. "Once he caught a fine bass. Just as he was about to land him in the boat, the fish wiggled off the hook. So I says to the Doctor, "That's a damned shame!" and the Doc comes right back and says: "Yes, it is!" "But that's the only time I ever heard him use such language."

Several people have given me their definitions of fishing and I want to take time to pass some of them on to you--they may hit your piscatorial lexicon or they may not. Here are some I have picked at random:

"An heroic treatment tried by some laymen to avoid falling asleep in church on Sunday."

"A delusion entirely surrounded by liars in old clothes."

"A disease for which there is no cure; catching but not contagious. It formerly infected only savages, small boys and the village ne'er-do-well; but now it attacks presidents, governors, judges, doctors, lawyers, congressmen, senators, ministers, priests, rabbis . . . 20 million people. In extreme cases the fever can be reduced by placing the patient in the hot sun for several hours."

(Fishing was) ". . . an employment for his idle time, which was then not idly spent" for angling was, after tedious study, 'a rest to his mind, a cheerer of his spirits, a diverter of sadness, a calmer of unquiet thoughts, a moderator of passions, a procurer of contentedness'" and 'that it beget habits of peace and patience in those that professed and practised it.' Indeed, my friend, you will find angling to be like the virtue of humility, which has a calmness of spirit, and a world of other blessings attending upon it." (Taken from The Complete Angler, quoting Sir Henry Wotton, Provost of Eton College.)

"Sooner or later most fishermen discover something in fishing besides fish. Like the fish, the values of fishing are elusive, sometimes in the ripples, sometimes in the pools, sometimes even in an empty creel. But they are always somewhere for the angler with the proper bait." (From "Farewell Thou Busy World," by John Hodgdon Bradley - 1935)

"When I would beget content," says Isaak Walton, "and increase confidence in the power and wisdom and providence of Almighty God, I will walk the meadows by some gliding stream, and there contemplate the lilies that take no care, and those very many other little living creatures that are not only created, but feed (man knows not how) by the goodness of the God of nature, and therefore trust in him."

"The contentment which fills the mind of the angler at the close of his day's sport is one of the chiefest charms in his life. He is just sufficiently wearied in body to be thoughtful, and the weariness is without nervousness, so that thoughts succeed each other with deliberation and calm, not in haste and confusion. The evening talk after a day of fishing is apt to be memorable. The quiet thinking on the way home is apt to be pleasant, delicious, sometimes even sacred.

"I am not sure but that many anglers remember with more distinctness and delight their going home after days of sport than the sport itself. . . ."

(Going Home, from "I Go a-Fishing," by William Cowper Prime - 1873)

I could go on and on with these definitions and comments but, I believe, you would like to hear a little about the work we, in the Fish and Wildlife Service, are doing to make trout fishing better.

We have National Fish Hatcheries in 31 States, raising one or more species of trout for release in the streams and lakes of the Nation. The most widely raised trout is, of course, the beautiful rainbow.

Approximately 30 million trout, of all species and of all sizes, were raised in our national hatcheries in 1962.

National Fish Hatcheries produce the species of trout best suited for management of public fishing waters in their vicinity. Some raise colorful brook trout, once found only in eastern waters, but now successfully introduced in numerous lakes and streams throughout the country. Western hatcheries often propagate cutthroat trout, so named because of distinctive, red, slash-like markings beneath the jaw. Many of our hatcheries produce rainbows, the most universally distributed trout of all, now found in suitable waters all over the world.

Others raise brown trout, a favorite of skilled fly fishermen everywhere, and in some areas our hatcheries produce lake trout, now making a strong comeback in the Great Lakes after years of depredation by the sea lamprey.

Forty-eight States, in our Union, enjoy trout fishing along 403,500 miles of cool rippling streams and in 2,300,000 acres of the 37,230 cold-water lakes.

Last year, trout fishing provided sport and relaxation for some 25,000,000 men, women, boys and girls, who fished some 117,881,000 days.

Our primary concern is with the management of fisheries in waters on Federal lands such as Indian reservations, national forests, military reservations and joint Federal-State cooperative management areas. We are dedicated to the wise use of our trout fishery resources.

In order to effectively carry out our programs, we engage in various phases of research including nutritional studies so that we can produce finer, healthier, better-fighting trout and studies of fish disease organisms and their control. We are beginning construction of a fine, new genetics laboratory at Beulah, Wyoming, so that we can gather information which will help us breed trout that will not only grow more rapidly and efficiently but will survive better in the wild and will give the fisherman a more sporting fish over which to float a fly. We are also studying the effects of pesticides on various species of fish.

Management biologists working with waters on Federal lands and, in cooperation with various States, map out long-range management programs for many trout waters so that they may supply maximum fishing opportunities.

By and large, we would wish to manage trout fishing largely for its recreational potential. In this busy world of ours, fishing has proven to be one of our very best recreational outlets.

Trout waters, too, are a considerable economic asset. Areas with well-managed trout fisheries benefit financially.

More and more emphasis is being placed on stocking the right trout in the right water. We have learned that certain strains of trout do better in certain types of streams.

A trout stream is a long-term investment, extremely valuable in terms of both money and recreation. Let's manage it to the best of our ability.

Recently, I was privileged to read "The Trout Fisherman's Bedside Book," an excellent publication written by Arthur R. Macdougall, Jr., one of your members. It has so many good things that I feel that I should urge each and everyone of you, if you have not already done so, to get a copy and read it. It is extremely interesting, highly instructive, and thoroughly enthralling. I could quote from it all night and still leave unsaid many of its gems.

Another renowned member of your organization, a man already known in sport fishing circles throughout the Nation, gained further renown as recently as last Sunday when he appeared on "To Tell the Truth" (a heck of a place for a fisherman

to appear!), and baffled at least fifty percent of the panel. I salute Joe Brooks, not only for his prowess, but for his spread of the fishing gospel throughout the land.

I congratulate you and your fine organization on the efficient, unselfish work you are doing.

Sport and recreation of the future lie heavily on what we, in America, do today.

The time for sitting idly by and letting God and Nature provide us with our favorite recreation is rapidly passing.

The time to do something about it is NOW!

Let's not muff the ball, sleep at the switch, defile and denude the streams, nor become engulfed with the cares of the world and forget the heritage we have enjoyed and which in all fairness we must pass on to our posterity.

As I close, I'd like to quote from the writings of a great old fisherman, Herbert Hoover, 31st President of the United States. He said:

"Fishing is a chance to wash one's soul with pure air, with the rush of the brook, or with the shimmer of the sun on the blue water.

"It brings meekness and inspiration from the scenery of nature, charity toward tackle makers; patience toward fish, a mockery of profits and egos, a quieting of hate, a rejoicing that you do not have to decide a darned thing until next week.

"And it is discipline in the equality of man--for all men are equal before fish."

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