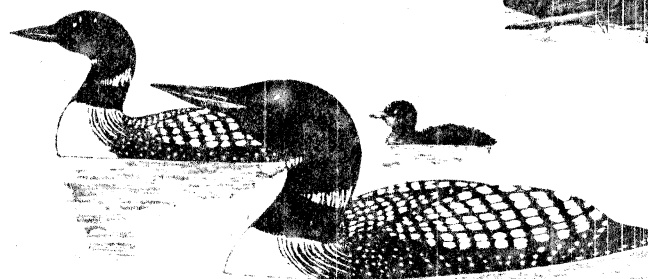


Summer 1963

## NORTH COUNTRY NOTEBOOK

by George Vukelich

The Opening Day of the new trout season is a ritual in our neck of the woods. You lay out all your gear in the hallway and wait for Don Reinfeldt to pick you up after midnight. Your wife, having witnessed this annual madness for years, performs with all the aloof professionalism of a SAC pilot running through the preflight checklist. Coffee — Plenty. Sandwiches. Liver sausage. Bananas — Two. Matches. Cigarettes. An extra pack should you pass the point of no return. The radio warns of rain showers and you know darned well that she checked the creel to make sure the raingear is rolled up therein. By the time Don arrives, she has you so organized, there is time to share a cup of coffee to savor the holiday feeling. Later, in the headlight beams, the highway strips away like line from a reel. The city thins out and the country begins. Fencelines, red barns, cattle crossings, Burma Shave signs, sleeping farms and watchful dogs. Driving to a trout stream in the middle of the night is not the greatest joy of this life. But it is one of them. After the first hour, the land changes, slowly, subtly. There are more pines now. There is naked sand in the cut banks. The northern forests begin here. You leave the main highway and follow the secondary roads. A startled rabbit veers across the road and plunges into the brush. You observe that it was a skinny rabbit and Don hopes that it will live long enough to be a fat one by fall. The pastures are rock-strewn here. Deserted, weathered, collapsed buildings stand mournfully along the road. A crumbled, blackened, fieldstone foundation marks the spot where a barn once stood. Did fire get it? Don says that the whole area was burned over once. It's great berry country later on. Another hour passes and Don swings onto the last turn-off before the stream. Before you finish another cigarette you will be there. As you climb the last rise and roll toward the little bridge, you count the darkened cars on the shoulders. Two. Three. And two more. Counting yours, that's six. You won't be shoulder to shoulder on the stream. As you cross the bridge, Don slows and you can hear the water gurgling below. It looks good, he says, and you agree. It always looks good. Coming to this stream is like coming home. And home looks pretty good when you've been away. Parked off the road, you step into the wet grass and feel the north country chill on your face. But you can smell pine and the stream and the hot coffee from the thermos. From the other direction beams of light ignite the ground fog like a fire. In five minutes a car parks opposite you, the engine stops, and Norm Zimmerman walks over. We have our coffee and sit and smoke and talk until false dawn lightens the eastern sky. The birds are waking in the woods and somewhere a rooster is crowing. It is good to be together like this in the early hours. It reminds you of the army when you all got up quietly and talked softly and then each man moved out with his own thoughts. For the next half-day, you may only catch glimpses of the others miles from here. There will be no motors. No boats. There will be very little sign of man. There will only be this wilderness stream and you—alone with your thoughts.



Judge John Voelker, the Pride of the Upper Peninsula, thinks trout fishermen have simply swapped Santa Claus for Izaak Walton. "Just as no Christmas can ever quite disappoint a youngster," says the Judge, "so no opening day can ever disappoint this grown-up brother. The day is invested with its own special magic, a magic that nothing can dispel. It is the signal for the end of the long winter hibernation, the widening of prison doors, the symbol of one of nature's greatest miracles, the annual unlocking of spring." Amen, my friend. And Merry Christmas to you too.

The Peace Corps currently has 5,000 volunteers serving in 40 countries throughout the free world and is faced with an ever-increasing demand for more. To satisfy the demand, the Peace Corps conducted a revolutionary experiment last month at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

The "Wisconsin Plan" called for a seven-member Peace Corps recruiting team to spend a full week on campus telling the Peace Corps story to students in classes, fraternities, sororities, etc. — in effect to "saturate" the campus, answering all students' questions concerning the Corps. (Prior to the Wisconsin experiment, the Peace Corps had never employed more than two recruiters at a time, and their visit was usually limited to a day or two.)

The "Wisconsin Plan" also called for a streamlined one-hour-long Peace Corps test to be given four times daily to interested students. (The old test took an agonizing four hours and applicants had to wait three months for the exams to be processed.)

Wisconsin tests were handled by special electronic computers in Washington and successful applicants were notified within ten days. The Wisconsin experiment has been pronounced an "unqualified success" by the Corps. Over 400 students took the exam, and a Corps spokesman estimated that "well over 70%" will be invited to train for Peace Corps duty. This figure is particularly interesting in view of the fact that since the Peace Corps was set up two years ago, the entire state of Wisconsin has produced only 98 Peace Corps volunteers.

In a telegram to *Wisconsin Tales and Trails*, Douglas Kiker of the Peace Corps Washington staff reported that the first student from the University of Wisconsin to be invited for Peace Corps training as a result of last month's experiment is Jeremy Redfield, a 21-year-old graduating senior from Pewaukee. A major in International Relations, Redfield (with 4 years of Spanish and 1 of Portuguese) will spend two years in an Ecuador School Construction Project. Kiker stated that the "Wisconsin Plan" would be taken to other campuses shortly.