



## Introduction

**O**NE OF LIFE'S PROBLEMS is that we must choose a career at an early age; by the time we're sophomores or juniors in high school, we're expected to know what we're going to do for the rest of our lives. Preposterous. How can we make a lifetime decision when as teenagers we aren't sure of our skills or what's involved in the various professions or vocations?

This was a lesser problem in my day: the girls wanted to become stewardesses, nurses or teachers, while most of the guys wanted to be firemen, policemen, or pilots (except for Clarence who, in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, said he wanted to become an undertaker and later became one).

Most of us picked an occupation, tested it out on our families, and if we received a few nods of approval, we usually pursued it.

Aunt Dena gave me a Gilbert Chemistry Set for Christmas when I was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and I became so interested in chemistry that, by the time I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, I assembled quite a laboratory in our living room. I placed a small table near a window for my experiments and used a built-in book case in our living room to store my chemicals and other apparatus. I delivered two daily newspapers to earn money to purchase the equipment.

Unfortunately, I burned our expensive Oriental rug in the living room by accidentally dropping sulfuric acid on it. My grandmother was enraged but gave me a pass.

Cousin Ernie, who was also interested in chemistry, and I conducted various experiments. For example, we made “laughing gas” (nitrous oxide) but because neither one of us wanted to inhale it, we bribed my grandfather by giving him a quarter.

“What’s suppose to happen?” he inquired in Greek.

“It’s supposed to make you laugh,” we replied.

So he inhaled the laughing gas that we produced and stored in a jar, faked a laugh, and insisted on his money. We reluctantly paid him 25 cents, because we wanted to use him for future experiments. He pocketed the quarter, laughed heartily, mumbled something about “easy money” and headed for Talman Drug Store to buy a banana split.

One day, when I was home from school for lunch, I showed grandpa some “chemistry magic.” I put a few drops of glycerine on potassium permanganate (don’t try this at home!). After a few seconds the mixture started to bubble, smoulder, smoke and then, *presto*, burst into brilliant flames.

He was impressed.

After I left for school grandpa tried to recreate the experiment. Something went wrong because the chemicals didn’t burst into fire. Disappointed, he left the house and went for a walk. Apparently there was a delayed reaction, and eventually the compounds flared into flames which ignited the curtains, billowing in the breeze from the open window.

To make a long story somewhat shorter, my grandparents’ three-flat building was in flames. Fire engines raced to the house, and firemen, carrying axes, hoses and other equipment quickly extinguished the flames, but all floors were damaged, mostly from the smoke. We and the families that occupied the apartment building had to live at a hotel for about a week until the flats were restored and decorated.

Grandma was so furious that she dumped all my chemicals and equipment into the alley.

That ended my chemistry lab at 4842 N. Talman Avenue.

I pursued chemistry in high school even though I no longer had a home lab. When I read A. J. McClane's *Field and Stream* article on parabolic fly rods in Mrs. Brabec's English class, I realized that he made a living from fishing. Maybe I could do that. The seed was planted in my mind, but I didn't dare tell my parents about my career fantasy; actually, I didn't seriously consider the possibility myself. It was only a dream.

I enrolled as a chemistry major at Northwestern University. N.U.'s location on Lake Michigan's beach was spectacular. So were the glamorous, gorgeous coeds. Between classes, Nick Chandler, Jack Shillestad, Bob McFarland and other friends were spending meaningful hours on the beach perfecting a tan or lining up a Friday night date, while I spent three to four consecutive hours in the lab or listening to a professor in a smock, droning on about valences and atomic weights of various elements.

After a couple of weeks I realized I wasn't "chemistry material." I switched to Liberal Arts, as an English Lit major, where I discovered I wasn't "English Lit material" either. Read James Joyce's *Ulysses* (one sentence is several pages long) or his nonsensical *Finnegans Wake* and you'll know what I mean. Or read e e cummings, who didn't believe in using punctuation or caps in some of his poems or in his name, for that matter. My professor called me "the most unEnglish English Lit major I've had in my classroom."

I eventually ended up in the N.U.'s Medill School of Journalism, but the fishing seed implanted in me continued to grow. I worked at a tackle shop, wrote for fishing publications, guided in Canada, started a rod manufacturing company and later booked international fishing trips.

Somehow, I survived. I accomplished my goal of earning a living through fishing.

I'm sure I would have been richer had I pursued a career in chemistry, or marketing, or banking or anything else. Financially, that is.

I don't think I could be any richer in terms of the experiences I've had through the years.

*FISHING PASSION: A lifelong love affair with angling* is not a book

about catching fish after fish. Or where to fish. There are many fine books on those subjects.

This is a book, or odyssey, about chasing wonderful dreams: some that actually materialized, others that shattered into fractured nightmares. But that's part of the territory. No regrets.

I believe there is a similarity between the passionate attraction to fishing (or other interests) and romantic love. I've divided the book into six sections, which show the parallel between romantic love and addicted angling. There are *The innocent years*, *Early flirtations*, *Flings and infatuations*, *Lifelong commitments*, *Feelings, emotions & relationships*, and *Regrets, hopes and dreams*.

It happens in love; it happens in passionate fishing.

In this magical time capsule, called FISHING PASSION, I'm going to take you back six decades, introduce you to some fascinating people, visit a few interesting places, share some of the bizarre experiences, relive the formative days of international fishing and fish with a few special friends.

Fasten your seat belts. We've got a lot of travelin' to do. I hope you enjoy the ride.

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