

# Commission Fish Stocking Volunteers: A History of Dedication

by *Brian Wisner*  
Director, Bureau of Hatcheries

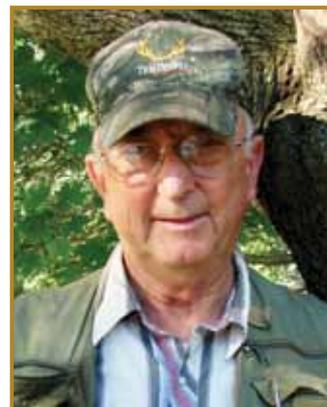
photos-Jeff Decker

Each year, the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) stocks millions of fish into the waters of the Commonwealth to enhance fishing opportunities for anglers. Over 3 million adult trout are stocked by state fish hatcheries, and the PFBC Cooperative Nurseries stock another million. In addition, millions of fry and fingerlings, such as walleyes, muskies, striped bass, steelhead, American shad, lake trout and other fish species, are stocked to become part of the fishery. Not only does it take the staff of the hatcheries and Waterways Conservation Officers (WCOs) to get these fish to the water, it also requires the efforts of dedicated volunteers throughout Pennsylvania.

The Commission stocks more than 5,100 miles of flowing water and more than 120 lakes each year with the majority of this activity happening in March, April and May. This effort takes a tremendous amount of time and labor to deliver fish to the stocking sites, unload fish from stocking trucks, carry buckets of fish to the streams and spread them out as much as possible at each destination. If solely the stocking truck driver and the WCO did all of this work, we would not be able to supply the level of service that our anglers have come to expect. In order to get the job done without volunteers, drivers would have to pull up to one or two easy access points on a stream, release most of the fish and head to the next stream. Fortunately, we have a multitude of dedicated anglers across the Commonwealth who volunteer their time, labor and expertise in assisting with fish stocking. These people carry buckets to the streams, organize other volunteers, use float boxes to move fish and assist the WCOs in numerous ways. Within this group of volunteers is a dedicated group that has spent many years contributing to the success of the Commission's stocking programs. There are so many long-time volunteers that we could never mention them all, so we'll share a few of their stories as relayed by our WCOs.

## Philip Ewaka

Philip Ewaka, age 73, has been an active and dedicated volunteer with the Commission's trout stocking program for 32 years. Philip assists with stocking by making sure that people are present to help stock, mapping the access points, determining the number of buckets per stop and having helpers on location with float boxes. He has worked with the Boy Scouts and Delaware County Field and Stream to have 14 float boxes built, which help keeps an extensive float-stocking program going yearly. When Philip misses a stocking on rare occasions, he makes sure that the volunteers are well organized and the stops are planned.—WCO Ronald Evancho, Delaware County.



Philip Ewaka

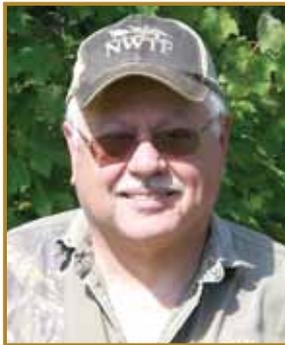


Tom Rockwell

## Tom Rockwell

Tom Rockwell began trout stocking as a child in 1950, and he became an avid trout angler due to the influences of his great grandfather, grandfather and father. Tom has always been someone who can be counted on at every stocking, working hard until the stocking truck was emptied, no matter how bad the weather. He stocks trout for

the enjoyment, to help support the trout stocking program and for the camaraderie with the stocking crew. The crew includes about seven guys who are always with me, and I refer to them as the “stocking A-team.” The running joke is that whenever there is one bucket that hasn’t yet been returned to the stocking truck, so we can move to the next stop, everyone says, “It must be Tom’s bucket.” Not because he has slowed down at 76 years old, but because, as he says, “he always likes to spread the fish out.”—WCO Terry J. Crecraft, Eastern Crawford and Warren counties.



Bill Bassinger

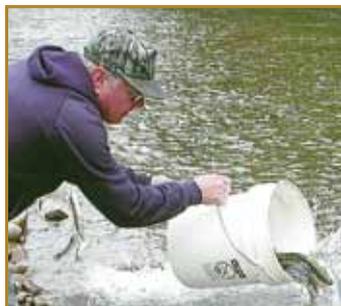
## Bill Bassinger

Bill Bassinger has been stocking the South Fork Pine Creek, Armstrong County, since the very first stocking in 1954. At that time, Bill was 16 and lived on a farm bordering the creek. Over the last 58 years, Bill has participated in all but two stockings and was often accompanied by his family. He is a member of the Pine Creek

Sportsmen’s Club and helps stock the club’s cooperative nursery fish in South Fork Pine Creek and North Fork Pine Creek as well as Scrubgrass Creek. Bill volunteers the use of his truck to stock sections of the streams where road weight restrictions prohibit the use of our much heavier stocking trucks. During the 1970s, Bill and his family began float stocking three sections of the South Fork Pine Creek and continued for almost 30 years. Bill and a friend were once stocking a section where the creek flowed along a railroad. They heard a loud crash and looked up just in time to jump out of the way of a train wreck. The wave created by the rail cars toppling into the stream washed the float box onto dry land. Ever mindful of their stocking duties, Bill and his buddy pulled the box of trout back into the creek and continued on their way. Through all the years and with his family’s support, Bill Bassinger has created a stellar record of voluntary service to local trout anglers.—WCO Bruce Gundlach, Western Armstrong County.

## Richard White

Richard White started stocking trout in the early 1980s when he was a Wilkes-Barre City Police Officer. Since his retirement, “Richie” has made every fish stocking and not only volunteered his time but also his truck. Whenever we had trout that needed to be driven to the stream in buckets, Richie provided the vehicle. He is responsible for stocking

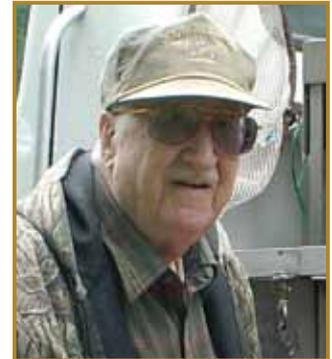


Richard White

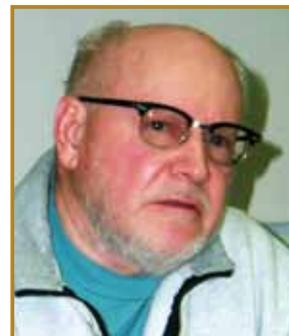
millions of trout in Wyoming, Sullivan and Susquehanna counties during the last 40 years. Anyone who catches or has ever caught a trout in one of these counties can be assured that Richie directly or indirectly got that fish into the water.—Northeast Region Manager Larry L. Bundy Jr.

## Crawford “Skinny” Eberly

Crawford “Skinny” Eberly has been assisting with trout stocking in Franklin and eastern Fulton counties for the past 35 years. He is very familiar with PFBC’s stocking program. He is in his 90s, and he still doesn’t miss a stocking. Mr. Eberly routinely arrives at the meeting place at least an hour beforehand and looks forward to conversations with our drivers. He is a great asset to me as well as other newly assigned WCOs with his vast knowledge of Franklin County and its natural resources.—WCO Anthony Quarracino, Southern Huntingdon County.



Crawford “Skinny” Eberly



Les Kleckner

## Les Kleckner

Les Kleckner, age 81, retired from the United States Army 40 years ago and 26 years ago as a math professor at Lock Haven University. Les is an active member of Trout Unlimited and numerous conservation and watershed associations. He’s been stocking fish as a volunteer since the late 1940s and attends

nearly every stocking in Clinton and Lycoming counties. While not climbing on the trucks as much anymore, he shows up in day-glow orange to help the WCO direct traffic. He is a true long-term volunteer.—WCO Anthony Beers, Clinton and Western Lycoming counties, and Assistant Regional Supervisor Thomas Nunamacher, Northcentral Region Office.

In order to maintain the level of stocking that both Pennsylvania’s anglers and the Commission expect, PFBC needs more volunteers to assist with fish stocking. Stocking schedules are posted on PFBC’s website at [www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com). Experience is not necessary, just a willingness to move a few buckets, stock some fish and learn a few stocking sites. This is also a great opportunity to introduce your children and grandchildren to the sport of fishing. You’ll find that this type of volunteerism is generational, since many of our long-term volunteers received their start by stocking fish with their parents and grandparents. ☐