Subject: : Paflyfish General Forum
Topic: : Bittersweet Moment
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Some of you remember me telling the story of how a co-worker's aging father passed onto me some old fly rods (my trusty Fenwick came from him, the Phillipson I passed onto Sandfly that needed some restoration, a Berkley Parametric, as well as a few rods that he built) and some old reels (Heddon 320 and my Cortland 444 Multiplier). This is the man who got me into fishing with glass! He told me then when he gave me these things that some day he'll be passing on all his equipment to me. I never thought that day would come so soon.

Within the past year, he started showing signs of dimentia. Him and his wife are snowbirds who go to Florida every winter. This past winter, they decided that he was tired of moving and they would live down there til the end of their days. He left all of his fly fishing equipment up here in his daughter's house.

They flew in from Florida yesterday for a visit. Today, my coworker showed up with her father, parked next to my car, and started loading gear into my car. I immediately went outside to talk to them. I knew this was probably the last time I'd ever talk to him again, and I knew for sure that we would never, ever have the chance to fly fish together.

He gave me boxes of tying equipment, a Richardson chest box, another rod and reel (Sage, didn't see what kind of reel was on it), his waders, wading staff, his boots, everything. He told me he never met anyone else who fly fished (apart from his days at Penn State with Milt Eisenhauer and Joe Humphreys), that he never had anyone he thought he'd pass this stuff onto. I told him I was glad to take it, and that it was certainly a bittersweet moment.

I had to go back into the office. There's a picnic table outside where he was sitting. A few coworkers went out to meet him and his wife. When they returned they told me he was sobbing. When they asked him what was wrong, he said, "I just gave my life away."

I'm not quite sure how I could ever pay this forward. The closest thing I can compare it to is when Johnny Cash gave Bob Dylan his guitar. Some gifts are unmeasurable, and it makes me lament the day I may have to do the same thing. I will certainly use all the equipment he gave me. Some think it should sit on a shelf like an icon, but he wants me to fish with it, and I will fish with it. I think for him, it's better to have me take the risk of breaking or lsing the gear by fishing with it than it is to let it sit on a shelf and collect dust. I will honor this man by making sure his gear never collects dust.