

Fly fishermen mourn loss of Bay

By GODWIN KELLY

Kenneth E. Bay, 94, who helped ignite saltwater fly fishing interest in this area, died Nov. 24 in an assisted living facility in New York. Bay, who re-tired to this area (Palm Coast, then Ormond Beach) 30 years ago, helped found the Mid-Coast Fly Fishers.

"He started this club with five people," club president Dennis O'Brien said. "Now, we have 80 members."

Bay started fishing the rivers and streams of New England as a boy. When he discovered fly fishing, he became one of the masters in that style of angling. He co-authored three books on saltwater fly fly tying, including "Salt-water Flies And How To Tie Them," which was the first book on the subject. All books on fly fishing to that point were based on freshwater fishing.

Bay was part of America's "greatest generation," those people who survived the Great Depression and pulled the country through World War II. Bay flew missions over Europe and was called back to service during the Korean War.

Former club president Mark Patterson said Bay spoke very little of his war experience, except on one occasion. "He invited me to his apartment in Ormond, he grabs this cardboard box and pours out all these medals," Patterson said. "He had four Distinguished Flying Crosses, a bunch of Bronze Stars and a piece of flak that hit him and nearly killed him during a mission. He was a just an amazing, mild-mannered gentleman, who was an excellent person." Bay was featured twice on the News-Journal Outdoors Page. Bay, who was in his 80s at the time, challenged a bait angler to something of a fishing duel in the Halifax River. Bay and a companion hooked 50 fish on fly to the bait fisherman's catch of three trout. The following year, Bay explained, step by step how to tie a basic saltwater fly.

"Ken really went out of his way to promote fly fishing in this area," Patterson said. "He would show anyone how to do it." O'Brien said the club will honor its founding father on an annual basis by giving the Kenneth Bay Memorial Fly Tying Award.

He was a wonderful guy," O'Brien said. "Ken was always helpful and always giving. We will miss him immensely."

For more information about fly fishing, go online to mid-coastflyfishers.org ..



