

The Killer Catfish of Cape Cod

By Bill Russo

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Far from the tourist havens of Hyannis, Sandwich, Dennis and Yarmouth; deep in the interior of Cape Cod, there are extraordinary beaches that visitors to the 64 mile long island never see. They encircle the waters of a lake several miles distant from the popular oceanfront resorts clinging to the big sandbar - Cape Cod Bay on the one side and Nantucket Sound on the other. The vast tract of more than 900 acres of brackish water, rotting logs, and a billion insects is as far inland as it is possible to go.

Formed in 1938 when The Great Northeast Hurricane knocked down half the trees of the lower cape and gouged out a depression five miles long and one mile wide - it quickly filled with water. In some places it's only as deep as a fisherman's boot while in others it seems bottomless - though it's probably about as deep as the Provincetown Pilgrim Memorial is tall - 252 feet.

Despite the murky water you can see deep enough, to gape at the submerged remains of row after row of trees clipped off near their bases by the force of the hurricane, and left to stand forever in the muck, like lonely corpses staring up at the surface with blind eyes.

There are no roads to get to the lake, which the locals call "Kaycee Pond". Surrounded by thick pines, sharp vines, and dense brush, the only access to the vast, muddy swamp is by trudging through a quarter mile of living tunnel formed of weeds, twisted trees, hedges, and swamp grass.

There are no homes circling the lake, no camps or campsites, and no RVs or vans. The land around "Kaycee Pond" is home to many thousands of creatures, but not a single one of them is human.

At first glance the pond looks serene. The brown water gently laps at the hundreds of exposed tree stumps and rotting logs that almost seem plentiful enough to form a footbridge from one end to the other.

Fat frogs sit unmolested on soggy timber, snapping out their tongues at regular intervals to entrap buzzing flies who themselves got fat from sucking on the decaying matter that washes onto the beaches. Foxes, coyotes, deer, and other animals drink at the edge of the water, but only if they are very, very thirsty. They know by instinct that the calmness of "Kaycee Pond" is merely a Halloween mask that can be whisked off in an instant.

Dense forests border the lake, broken at irregular intervals by six sandy freshwater beaches. A visitor's first impression of their tranquil beauty would quickly fade when he or she noticed a few dozen fifty-pound snapping turtles with shells as big as trash can covers basking in the sun on stumps and fallen trees.

Also lolling on the sun-splashed beaches or on logs floating in the mucky water are dozens of six foot long, gray reptiles, known as Northern Water Snakes. Fierce fighters in the depths, they are non venomous and when meeting humans on a beach they usually flee back to the lake.

A few old-timers who recall a dark time of frightful and bizarre happenings back in the 1900s, say there's something else in the lake that is venomous and is very harmful to humans – though they are reluctant to give details.

They are much more likely to give harsh advice and warnings to young locals or curious tourists who ask about the lake. Their suggestion is... “Stay away from Kaycee Pond if you value your life.”

Anse Peckins over at the A & P Tackle Shop on the Old King's Highway makes his living selling fishing gear, bait, and such to the locals as well as the tourists. An inch or two under five feet tall and nearly as slim as one of his bamboo angling poles, he looks like a skinny elf or perhaps Santa Claus on a starvation diet, with his long white beard that travels down to the third button of his shirt.

Nobody knows Anse's age. For as long as anybody can remember his face was always as gnarled as the bark of a Maple tree. Generations of Cape Codders have considered his rundown bait shop an eyesore as well as an attraction of Route Six-A (The King's Highway).

A few of the elders say that decades ago, Peckins had another store: in a tiny village not far from Kaycee Pond. That was back before the weird happenings and killings drove everybody away.

“I'll tell ya the best fishin' places on the Cape and there's no extra charge,” Anse told two teenagers who wandered into the ramshackle cottage that served both as his store and his home. “While I'm packin' up your seaworms take a gander at the map on the wall. Those areas I've circled in red pencil are the best spots,” Anse affirmed, the sides of his long mustache bouncing up and down like the baton of an orchestra leader while he spoke.

“No sir, not seaworms! I think you misunderstood,” said the taller of the two youths. “We're not going saltwater fishing. We want earthworms. Lake fishing is what we've come to Cape Cod for.”

“I got earthworms,” Anse replied, “but there ain't much freshwater fishin' around here. Now you take your salt water. You can stand on the jetty of any one of the beaches and get yourself some blues, flounder, bass, and even a couple sand sharks. I can almost guarantee that you'll catch a mess of fish before noon and have 'em all cleaned and grilled up by early afternoon.”

“We want seaworms,” the taller youth persisted. “We found an old book that tells about a strange lake near here and that's where we want to fish.”

“We are going to fish there!” insisted his buddy. “We know all about that lake and we're going to see it for ourselves.”

“What was the name of the book you guys read?” Anse asked, though he was sure he knew the answer.

“Jimmy Catfish,” the teenagers replied in unison.

“That old book!” Anse protested. “I didn't know there were any copies of it still around. That was mostly just a story. It wasn't real - just an exaggeration. There was no amphibious boy named Jimmy Catfish and there are no killers left in the lake.”

“If it was just a story then you shouldn’t have any problem selling us the earthworms and telling us how to get there,” countered the taller young man.

Anse looked hard at the teenager, who said his name was Rico. He was a strong young man, about an inch over six feet with a weight of near 200 pounds. His dark brown hair was buzz cut in military style. He looked like he could handle his share of trouble and then some.

His companion was shorter, about five-nine with black hair buzzed into a flat-top that gave definition to a face that reminded Peckins of a strong man from the 1900s named ‘Charles Atlas’. Angelo, as he identified himself, had a physique that would probably make bodybuilders want to take lessons from him. Anse thought that the pair could manage many dangerous situations – but not what they’d find at Kaycee Pond. Before the ‘blood-bath’ it was known as Codfresh Lake. It got its name after fishermen began pulling Codfish out of the pond, although the lake was fresh water and Cod can only exist in salt water.

“It’s dangerous that’s all fellas. That lake is tricky. It’s ankle deep in some spots but just a few feet away it might be 80 feet to the bottom. It’s true that people died there. Sometimes there’s a swift current. Folks could easily step from the shallows into the channel and drown.”

“That’s not the way we heard it Mr Peckins. There’s a cryptozoology museum up in Maine that will pay us big money if we can find those killer catfish in Kaycee Pond and bring them some bodies stuffed and mounted.” said Rico.

“Well, I’ll sell you the worms but you’ll have to find the lake yourself. I’ll not be responsible for what might happen,” Anse said firmly. “I hope you don’t find what you’re looking for because if you do, it’s far more likely that it will catch you instead of the other way around!”

Undaunted Rico and Angelo set off on their adventure, armed with backpacks, some food, a first aid kit, bait, and their fishing rods. They rented bicycles at a shop on Great Western Road by the side of the bike trail built when the old railroad tracks were torn up between Hyannis and Provincetown.

They couldn’t persuade Anse Peckins to give them exact directions but he did reveal that although there were no roads to the lake, the route of the bike trail passes within a half mile of it. Given the fact that Kaycee Pond is the largest fresh water body in all of Cape Cod, the boys figured they’d find it by hiking an hour or two at most. It turned out that it only took about 45 minutes to get to an opening in the dense forest that looked like a tunnel.



The Arboreal Arch – a Living Tunnel leading to the water:

Photo copyright by Bill Russo, From “The Ghosts of Cape Cod”

With the smell of decaying swamp matter reaching their noses, Angelo and Rico knew they were close. Running through the Arboreal Arch as fast as they could, they reached a sandy beach in less than a minute.

“Look Rico it’s there, just like the book said – the fallen log that stretches into the water like a pier,” said Angelo, his excitement mounting.

“That’s the log that that Jimmy Catfish sat on just before all the trouble started,” Rico replied. Sun-bleached and worn smooth from time and usage by the catfish boy, the log ran from the beach in a sixty foot arc to the water where its tip dove beneath the surface. “He stretched out on that log one day back in the 1960s and summoned the monsters from the lake and they killed everything in sight.”

“That’s the story that the book tells,” Angelo stated, “but it does seem unbelievable that there could be 300 pound catfish in a Cape Cod pond.”

“That’s not the amazing part. The weight thing is easily explained,” Rico replied. “There’s plenty of food for them here and no competition for it, so they just keep growing as long as they live. What makes these catfish so extraordinary, is those razor sharp teeth that they supposedly have.”

“That’s something we’ll have to see to believe,” responded his partner. “I’ve been wondering Rico, if there are giant catfish in this lake, how are we going to catch them with the tiny little worms we got from the bait store?”



Jimmy Catfish Beach, Cape Cod. Photo copyright by Bill Russo from "The Revenge of the EIEIOs" - 2017

“I’m pretty sure that they’re cannibals Ange. Once we catch a little one, we can slice it up and use the pieces for bait. That’ll bring the big boys out.”

As they debated the best places to start casting their lines, out of the corner of their eyes they spotted a fox jumping onto an exposed stump not far from shore. It began lapping at the water. Nearly quicker than their eyes could follow, something shot out of the lake in an explosion of froth and foam, snapped down its jaws faster than a steel trap, and swallowed the fox in one bite. It disappeared back into the depths as rapidly as it had come out.

On the other side of the log, forty feet or so from where they were standing, some pigeons were splashing in a few inches of water at the edge of the beach. There were more than a dozen in the group, washing their wings, playing and drinking water.

Like the slamming of the trunk of a car, one pigeon after another was gulped down whole by the amazingly fast attacks of two or three killers from beneath the surface.

If there was any doubt before, both young men were now sure that they had found the eerie lake called Kaycee - and they guessed correctly that Kaycee stood for (K)iller (C)atfish!

Excited from what he had seen, Rico decided to fish on the fallen log that ran bridge-like from the shore to a point some sixty feet out into the water. He walked almost to the end, baited his hook with one of Anse Peckins’ worms and made a short cast of about 20 feet.

Angelo elected to try his luck on the beach near a clump of about a dozen exposed tree stumps not far from shore.

“I got one,” exclaimed Rico less than five minutes after his baited hook settled on the muddy bottom. Rapidly he spun the handles of his reel, dragging in his catch. “It’s pretty small, maybe two or three pounds.”

“Get off that log and bring it over here. Let’s check it out to see if there’s anything strange about it!”

“No need for that Ange,” said Rico, carefully grasping the fish in his hand and looking closely at it. “I can already see that it’s a baby monster for sure. Its ugly mouth is wide open and flashing a full set of razor sharp teeth. Catfish don’t have teeth, at least normal ones don’t. This means for certain that legend of the Cape Cod Killer Catfish is true!”

“Maybe Rico, but that’s a pretty small cat. The book said there are six footers in here and even a few as long as eight feet.”

“They’re out there Ange. The one that got the fox has to be giant size. I’m going to cut the head off this little one and throw it in the lake, then slice the rest of it into bait pieces. That’ll bring the large ones out for a feeding frenzy.”

As he started to draw his knife from its sheath, the little flat headed fish opened its mouth as wide as possible; its catlike whiskers bobbing feverishly, and its poison dorsal fin locked in attack mode. Rubbing one of his back fins against his shoulder, the creature produced an odd, musical sound that was projected through, and amplified by, its mouth.

“That croaking sounds like somebody running their finger up and down the teeth of a comb,” Angelo noted. “I think it’s trying to communicate with you or maybe it’s sending a message to the other catfish.”

The young fishermen didn’t notice, but when Rico went for his blade, all the noises of the pond stopped. The frogs ceased croaking, the flies failed to buzz, the snakes desisted in hissing, the lake quit lapping the shore, and even the wind wound down to nothing. The trees stopped tussling, the leaves quit rustling and became as still as gravestones. There was not a single sound save for the agitated, oddly musical combing sound generated by the little catfish.

“Hold on a minute,” Angelo advised. “Listen. There’s another noise coming from the lake!”

Looking toward the new sound they saw the breach of a mammoth catfish, eight feet long, maybe nine. Scientists say that catfish are ‘negatively buoyant’, they sink in the water – but the monster cat splashed up from the depths and was jetting through the air in a leap of 30 feet or more.

Astonished, the eyes of Rico and Angelo locked onto the flight path of the giant. Seeming to hover in the air for many seconds, its shiny scale-less body glistened in the sun; alternately showing both its silvery/black sides and snow white underbelly, as it spun like a dolphin.

The brute’s vast mouth crossed its entire flat head, from one side to the other. Six long, catlike whiskers sprouted from its face, one pair on each side of the bottom jaw for four – and then two more, even longer, shooting straight out like swords, from either side of the upper jaw, just beneath the eyes.

Those catlike whiskers, the inspiration for the name ‘catfish’, are ugly and scary but they’re nothing more than soft feelers and presented no threat to the fishermen.

The dorsal and pectoral fins however, were just as deadly as the six inch long razor teeth lining the insides of the beast’s mouth. The single dorsal fin on top of the monster, behind its head, and the two pectoral fins (one on either side of the body) are filled with sharp spines that can be locked into place and are sturdy enough to penetrate solid wood.

Getting stabbed by one of these locked horns is bad enough, but the injury is made far worse by the poison they inject. The venom from the spikes causes instant swelling and thinning of the blood, greatly increasing the blood loss.

As the mammoth catfish reached the top of its arc and began to fall back to the water, for a split second it hovered like a helicopter – just long enough to open its massive jaws and utter a loud combing croak, sounding like an orchestra of a hundred plastic combs the size of a skyscraper, with their teeth being plucked by fingers as big as a Bowing 747.

If the croak of the little one was musical, the roar of the big cat was thunder. It was so deafening that Rico and Angelo were forced to cover their ears with the palms of their hands, but still they heard the booming shout of the massive beast, seeming to say, 'LET IT GO!'.

After the big fish plunged beneath the surface, all was quiet again. Not a single sound came from the trees, insects, animals, or the lake itself, except for the flopping of the little catfish which had fallen on the smooth surface of the log when Rico dropped it to cover his ears.

"I think you should take the hook out of that catfish and throw it back in the water," said a visibly shaken Angelo.

"I'll throw it back alright, or at least part of it," said Rico who drew his knife and quickly cut off the head of the three pound fish, throwing it as far as he could.

The head landed near the spot where the giant fish had leaped. Less than a second after it fell, a dozen or more mammoth cats pushed their flat, featureless heads above the surface of the muddy water.

In unison they opened their broad, toothy maws and the unearthly noise that burst out was at once a deafening, thumping chorus of bass drums, as well as the sound of a million comb-like musical notes splayed across three or four octaves. Booming notes. Thunderous notes. Notes so powerful that they overspread the entire lake, and the surrounding woods – fording every tree within a mile to vibrate like a tuning fork.

The deafening, threatening symphony of the catfish jarred the old Maple log, pushing it as if it were being pounded by a category five hurricane or shaken by an earthquake with a score of eight on the Richter scale.

Suddenly the noises ceased. The leader of the group swam slowly towards Jimmy Catfish's log, no longer vibrating and shaking, it was now as still as death.

Other monster sized catfish fell in behind the first until they formed a tight knit wedge of some two dozen 300 pound beasts swimming slowly but inexorably towards Rico.

"Get off that log now while there's still time," his friend shouted as the beasts mutely dosed to within 30 feet of the log. "You know what they're capable of!"

Rico didn't answer. Instead, reaching behind him he withdrew a pistol from his backpack - a Glock 19 semi-automatic he lifted from his father's collection before he and Angelo left Brooklyn for their Cape Cod trip. Slightly smaller than a Glock 17, the 19 has only fifteen rounds in its magazine, instead of 17 like the iconic original.

His dad, who retired from the army as a full Colonel, raised Rico as if he were one of his recruits at Fort Sill. The boy could march five miles with a full pack before his sixth birthday and was able to handle small arms by the age of seven, rifles by nine, and ordnance at eleven – cannons, artillery, and even combat vehicles. Rico turned out to be a very tough kid and proved it a hundred times in some of the

roughest neighborhoods of the Bronx as well as the dozens of places around the world military brats are brought to.

Taking aim at the huge catfish in the lead position of the living triangle he snapped off a shot. The 35 cent, 9mm cartridge exploded in the beast's left eye sending a spray of cat-flesh and blood twenty feet in the air. In seconds, the confident and smiling Rico blasted a well aimed round in fourteen more beasts.

Rico surveyed the damage to determine how many brutes were dead and how many fled to the safety of the mucky lake bottom.

"It can't be," he gasped, "They're all still alive and coming after me." He reached in his pack for more ammo in hopes of firing off another fifteen rounds.

Directed by the wounded leader 'One-Eye', the Catfish navy pressed on with streams of blood in the water trailing after them like tiny, colorful tropical fish.

Like fighter jets from aircraft carriers, the heads of the attackers rose higher above the surface. Every living 'vessel' revealed a mouth stretched wide enough to swallow a man.

The frightening creatures were made even fiercer by the displays of double rows of razor sharp teeth lining their broad heads from a point just under one eye to an opposite point under the other eye.

Somehow the creatures propelled themselves still further out of the water. In unison they locked their poisonous dorsal fins in place. The hornlike rams could pierce through two inches of solid wood and would have no trouble stabbing deep into a human body.

Panicked by the approaching formation from hell, Rico struggled to reload his Glock 19, wondering even as he tried, if 15 more bullets would make any difference. It was his last rational thought.

Before he could install even one fresh cartridge, the onslaught began. 'One-eye' leaped from the water and flew at Rico, who raised his arms to shield his face - but that was not the beast's target.

As Rico covered his head, the catfish twisted like an Olympic diving champion and plunged his poison dorsal fin into the youth's stomach. Screaming in terror and intense pain, Rico fell back on the log and was only stopped from falling into the water when he landed on an unbroken mass of giant 300 pound catfish surrounding the log like a bridge.

The brutes stopped the horrible combing, a noise like the sound a finger makes running up and down the teeth of a comb but a million times louder. Silence overspread the muddy lake – save for the screaming of the unfortunate Rico, rolling around in pain on the backs of the mute and unmoving catfish.

For a full minute the only noise was the screaming of the terrified Rico. Angelo stood speechless on shore, stunned by the scene unfolding before him.

The stillness was broken by the sudden movement of 'One-eye'. With his giant mouth open to its extreme, the saw-toothed fish slammed his jaws shut on Rico's right arm, biting it off cleanly at the shoulder.

Rico wasn't screaming anymore. His mind was gone and his blood supply was rapidly going. 'One-eye' swallowed the right arm and then just as quickly chomped off Rico's left arm, before gently biting the unfortunate boy's legs and dragging him beneath the murky surface.

Angelo remained frozen. Gradually he realized that the catfish were not coming for him. After Rico was hauled to the depths, the killers retreated to their dens in the muck and mire at the bottom of Kaycee Pond.

Collapsing on the sand, he either fell asleep or succumbed to shock. Shortly after dawn Angelo awoke and surveyed the scene. The beach was bare, with no sign of Rico and no evidence of catfish activity.

Stumbling through the thicket for hours Angelo made his way to the bike trail, more by accident than design. Still shell-shocked from what he had seen, he walked aimlessly for an hour or more before wandering into a cranberry farm a mile or two away from a paved road.

After a few cups of coffee and a ham sandwich provided by one of the workers, Angelo was calm enough to ask for a ride back to the A & P Tackle Shop on Route Six-A.

"Mr. Peckins. Mr. Peckins, where are you? Mr. Peckins?," Angelo anxiously called as he entered the store and found it empty. A moment later, Anse Pekins walked through the front door, wearing a flannel shirt, blue jeans held up by suspenders, and silver-buckled motorcycle boots. He was carrying a large cardboard box full of dirt.

"I heard you calling but I had to finish digging up my earthworms. What can I do for....oh you're Angelo, the young fellow who was in here..."

"Yes it's me Mr. Peckins and I need some help. We found the pond and it's full of giant saw toothed catfish and they killed Rico..." Angelo feverishly explained.

From his refrigerator Anse took a glass bottle of birch beer, an old time soda that he favored, and handed it to Angelo who began to shiver uncontrollably when he related what happened.

"Take deep breaths and try to calm down. Drink some birch beer and tell me about Rico. Where is he? If he's still at the pond we're going to have to call the State Police because that area doesn't belong to any town, it's what they call an unincorporated area."

Within a half hour the State Police blocked the bike trail to all traffic and put three cruisers on the narrow path that was normally open only to hikers and bikers – not the motorcycle kind.

Anse and Angelo were in the lead car with Captain Fletcher Crosby, commander of Troop D, assigned the territory of Southeastern Massachusetts, Cape Cod and a number of smaller islands.

In the second car Lt. Martin Long, discussed the tense situation with three well armed investigators from the CAT Team (Community Action Team).

The Third car was an extended van, loaded with members of the STOP team – Special Tactics and Operations, complete with enough weapons for a small army.

“Three cars is overkill Captain,” said Anse. “All we’re going to find, if anything, is a body washed ashore.”

“That’s probably true Mr. Peckins, but I recall, just like you do, what happened before. We had a big body count and two towns full of citizens who were scared to death of monsters, both human and inhuman!”

“Course I remember. Wasn’t it me that was a friend to poor old Jimmy Catfish as well as his father. But those towns are gone. All the people have died or moved away. It’s likely that there are no killer catfish left. Something probably did happen but I’m not sure that our young friend is in any condition to tell us what actually happened. It could have been simply a fishing accident.”

“Can’t take a chance,” replied the State Police Captain. “If the trouble has started again, we’ve got to be ahead of it.”

Reaching the part of the trail closest to Kaycee Lake, the caravan stopped and the men proceeded on foot.

“It’s none of my business Captain Crosby,” said Anse, “but I think you should tell your people to just put a big electric fence around this place to keep everybody out. Nobody can build anything here cause the Department of Natural Resources has said that the area is like a giant sponge that soaks up all the excess water and keeps the rest of the island from flooding out.”

“You might be right,” the Captain agreed. “But that’s above my pay grade. We’ve got a situation here Peckins. In that van, I’ve got some powerful weapons. I may just have to dump enough ordnance in that lake to make soggy sawdust out of every stump and standing tree for three miles around.”

Shortly the group arrived at the living tunnel and walked through it to Jimmy Catfish beach.

“There’s your victim Captain,” said Anse, pointing to a corpse lying on the shoreline – its legs on the sand and the rest of the body submerged in the muddy water. “The Catfish left him there as a warning.”

“What do you mean Peckins?” asked Captain Crosby.

“I mean that you should take the body, your men, and your three car caravan and drive right back to Hyannis. Tell your people there will be no more trouble here - all that happened is a young man played with fire and got burned.

I warned him but he wouldn't listen. As for those catfish they're not going to make any more trouble, they were just following one of the most basic of human laws – the law of retaliation.”

“What are you talking about?” the Captain retorted, losing his patience with the old bait seller. “I fail to see what the connection is betw.....”

“Just pull the body out of the water Captain. Drag it out and you'll understand,” said Anse, raking his fingers like a comb through his white beard.

“Corporal Miller! Bring the surviving boy here so that he can make a positive identification of his friend. Then take two men and fetch that body.”

“Right away Captain Crosby,” said the Corporal who then addressed two of his men. “Marshal and Fields, bring a body bag from the van and then take the corpse out of the water,” directed the Corporal.

After laying the body bag down on the sand at the shoreline, Fields and Marshall, the two officers from the STOP team, grasped the cold ankles of the death youth and slowly brought him out of the water.

The two cops, as well as everyone else on the beach, except Anse Peckins, gasped when they saw the condition of the corpse. It wasn't the two missing arms that bothered them.

“His head is gone!” said Marshall.

“Bitten clean off at the neck,” added Fields.

“Do you get it now Captain Crosby?” asked Anse Peckins. “The boy was here to kill catfish and collect a pile of money by sending their bodies to a museum. He killed one, cut its head off and threw it into the pond. So I guess you could say that the catfish were just following that good old rule of the Bible – the Rule of Retaliation, an Eye for an Eye. Or in this case, perhaps we should say a Head for a Head.”

The end

This is the latest in a series of books and stories about Jimmy Catfish and a weird pond said to be in an uninhabited area of the popular tourist destination Cape Cod.

Others in the series include **Swamp Tales**, which has the first Jimmy Catfish story.

Jimmy Catfish, the Beginning and the End, which is the prequel to Jimmy Catfish

And the **Revenge of the EIEIOs**, which takes the adventure in a new direction on a collision course with **Cape Cod's Figure in Black**. These books, some just 99 cents and some free, are available from all major online retailers.

Bill Russo, retired on Cape Cod, was educated in Boston at the Huntington School and at Graham College in Kenmore Square. He was editor of several newspapers in Massachusetts as well as a former disc jockey, news writer/presenter, and broadcaster for various outlets in New England.

His sighting of a swamp creature just before the turn of the century, led to appearances in the Bridgewater Triangle Documentary Film, America's Bermuda Triangle, and on Destination America's Monsters and Mysteries series.

In addition to his radio and newspaper work, he held management positions in logistics and warehousing as well as a stint as an ironworker and President of Boston Local 501 of the Shopmen's Ironworkers Union.

Contact Bill at Billrrrrr@yahoo.com All e-mails are personally answered

Bill's Blog is called Adventures in Type and Space: <http://billrrrrr.blogspot.com/>

He also shares news and videos on his Youtube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/billrrrrr>