

86 YEAR OLD GRAND SLAM

Ray and Alice Hallberg have been fishing with Martin McCord for over 20 years and were his first clients upon completion of the construction of his Belize mothership, the Meca. What makes them so unique in the world of salt water fly fishing is that Alice is 81 years old and Ray is 86. They've been taking a 12 day trip with McCord aboard his Meca live aboard each year and this year turned out to be extra special. While fishing a shallow tarpon flat at dusk (a tarpon flat they had fished many times over the years and never before seen a permit there) Martin spotted a school of permit with their fins just breaking the water. Ray's eyesight has not allowed him to see fish in the water for some years and he casts by Martin's instructions – i.e., “get your line in the air, more to the left, longer, etc.,etc.” Ray made the cast and the result was a permit released at the boat after dark that was in the 30# range – literally too big for the net. This was Ray's sixth permit, but the largest by far and special for more than just his size – this fish completed Ray's first SALTWATER GRAND SLAM!!!!!!!!!! I believe this is an “age class” world record for Grand Slams – does anyone know of a fly fisher over 86 who's taken a Grand Slam?

ENJOYING THE SALT WATER FLATS AT 86 (by Ray Hallberg)

(We asked Ray if he would share some of his thoughts regarding why he is still able to enjoy the salt water flats at his age and what follows was his response)

Occasionally, I think the end of my favorite sport is near, but the older I get the more fun it is to plan the next trip and the trip after that. I've fished in nine countries and caught more than 30 species of fish on the fly. It is different at 86 – there's no fly fishing Viagra. The 90 foot casts which were once so regular just don't seem to get there anymore.

The eyes now seldom spot the target fish. Still, there are some things that help make salt water fly fishing a great sport for all ages. Stay in good physical shape. Do some strength training with weights, walk a lot, and practice casting so the muscles don't forget.

Take a laid back approach to the adventure. Let your guide do the worrying. Make sure you communicate with your guide so he knows what you can do and especially what you can't do. You are a team and he's the coach/captain so listen to what he suggests. We have fished with many fine and talented guides around the world and, in our opinion; Martin McCord is the finest of them all.

Take a nice nap at noon and have your first beer just after you've stowed your rods for the day. Marry well, as I have, and your wife can be your favorite fishing companion.

My first grand slam (related above) is a great example of how good things happen if you relax and let things come to you.

Ray Hallberg

TRIP REPORT

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