



The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild GAZETTE



Volume 18, number 6

November 2015

There is no November meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild. Stop by the guild table at the International Fly Tying Symposium in Somerset, NJ, on November 21 and 22. See the ad at the end of this issue of the *Gazette*.

Danbury Arts of the Angler Show Report

The show was held in the Ethan Allen Hotel, as usual, but about a week earlier than normal, which led to a active weekend, because it was on October 31, Halloween, and November 1, the end of daylight saving time. As usual, our tables were busy, and visitors received much information and advice,

The group donated flies to James Ianone, the program leader for Project Healing Waters, from Newington, Connecticut, and also donated flies to the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum's raffle, held at the dinner on Saturday evening.

We signed up two new members and had twelve members renew. We also sold some patches, T-shirts, and hats. I had two people sign up to tie at the Rendezvous next year.

We had many discussions with visitors regarding the fishing in the Roscoe area rivers, the Esopus area, as well as on the Farmington and Housatonic Rivers in Connecticut.

I would like to thank the tyers who helped make the guild's participation in the Danbury show a success: Pete Peterson, Bud Bynack, Merrill "Doc" Katz, and Gary Moleon, for their help and support, which made my job easier. Thanks also go to Judie DV Smith, our guild secretary, for the preparation of everything needed to put the guild's booth together. I would also like to thank Erin Phelan for making up our badges, because without them, on Halloween, we would not have known who we were.



Merrill "Doc" Katz at Danbury

—Ed McQuat

Bylaws Revision

The committee working on revisions to the bylaws of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild has finished its work, and the proposed revisions will be presented at the December meeting. If approved there, the changes need to be voted on by the membership at large, and a ballot will be mailed to all members. Look for it, and don't forget to vote!

—Judie DV Smith

Looking Back Upstream



Angler's Cove: Crossroads of New York City's Fly-Fishing Culture, Part 10 Carlos Urtubey and King River International

As a young man, guild member Merrill Katz was lucky enough to find himself working at a fly shop in Manhattan—Angler's Cove—frequented by most of the major figures in East Coast fly fishing and American angling literature. I've asked him to recall what the angling scene was like in New York in the mid-twentieth century and some of the people he encountered at the Cove.

Carlos Urtubey was a client of Angler's Cove in the late 1960s and also took advantage of the excellent tying classes that were offered at the Cove. He was a native of Argentina and held a dual citizenship in the United States. He was employed as an advertising account executive in Manhattan. Many of the Cove's patrons were active members of Theodore Gordon Flyfishers, but Carlos was an exception to the rule.

I did not know Carlos well at that time and knew him primarily as a client of the Cove. However, the fly-fishing fraternity is a close-knit group. During the early days of my teaching career in Michigan, my wife and I were looking for something to do one weekend, and we decided to visit a boating and fishing show that was being held at Wings Stadium, the home of Kalamazoo's professional ice hockey team. As I walked around the show, not expecting to find anything dedicated to fly fishing, one corner of the mezzanine was occupied by a gentleman tying flies and exhibiting a rather comprehensive display of tying tools and materials. His banner read "King River International."

I remembered Carlos immediately, although I do not think he recognized me. I struck up a conversation with him and told him how I knew him. From that moment forward, a budding friendship developed. I visited his home, and he showed me his basement, which housed a tremendous volume of fly-tying materials.

He was operating an international company from his home. He told me that he had two factories in Colombia that were producing high-quality trout and salmon flies. At this time, there was a cottage tying industry in the United States, and many shops sold flies that were tied in this country. King River International, under Urtubey's guidance, was one of the pioneering companies manufacturing flies offshore for the U.S. and other markets. These were indeed high-quality products and were endorsed by Keith Fulsher and the Joan and Lee Wulff Fly Fishing School.

Carlos told me that one of his pressing problems was the lack of a mail-order catalog, and he asked me if I would help him to develop one. By the end of 1980, we developed, in draft form, a no-frills mail-order catalog that became ready for distribution in early 1981. Carlos and I traveled to the Midwest Fly Fishing Expo, which was held at the Southfield Civic Center. It provided King River International an opportunity to display its product line to an audience of fly anglers.

While the Kalamazoo area was home to numerous fly anglers, it was not an area that was rich in salmonid fisheries. It is difficult to operate a retail fly-fishing business in today's market if you are not located in close proximity to viable fishery resources. Carlos soon realized this, and around 1983, he sold his home, found a retail location in Chicago, moved his family, and continued to operate from that location. I never understood the wisdom behind that move, however, and shortly after that move, he relocated his business and family again, to Rockville, Maryland. From that point forward, I lost touch with Carlos.

I know very little about Carlos's fishing experiences, because he rarely spoke about them. He did very little fishing in Michigan, and I doubt that he even did very much in New York when he was there. Carlos carried a black-and-white picture of himself displaying a brace of large brook trout. Whenever a client asked him about his fishing, he would pull out that picture and exclaim, "Are you kidding me?" It was kind of a sales pitch. I believe those fish were taken in Argentina and also believe that Carlos was primarily interested in marketing his products, as opposed to actually fishing.



CJ's Flies
With "Catskill John" Bonasera

Hooks, Old and New

It's no secret that the foundation of every fly we tie is the most important material on that fly. And no matter how beautifully the finished product turns out, the hook is the

object that we rely on to bring the fish to the net.

I am obsessed with hooks, and I mean seriously obsessed. I love feathers, dubbing, floss, and all things used to make flies, but I have a real affection for hooks. Especially the old hooks—the antique, fine-wire, dry-fly style.

The character in a vintage hook is hard to describe, but easy to recognize. Never perfectly formed, it's almost as if each one is minutely different. Even the color of a vintage hook is appealing, with the earthy, handmade look that comes with age and old tooling.

By contrast, the hooks of today are identical clones of each other, shiny and smooth, sharp and engineered for performance way beyond hooks of old. It took me awhile to embrace the new hooks, because I sometimes get a little snobbish about new and different things. However, I had my eyes opened wide when I tried a sample pack that I was given at one of the shows and tied up a few patterns on them.

I wrapped half a dozen of those "competition" hooks in Adams materials, grizzly and brown hackle with some muskrat, and tried them the next morning on a target-rich stream at the height of top-water season. I admit that I lost a few trout right away with them, because the design of these barbless hooks requires keeping constant, aggressive pressure on the quarry. But once I got the hang of what not to do and stopped easing up while playing a fish, I realized how good they really are.

First, they are so unbelievably sharp that hook sets are barely needed. Most fish simply hook themselves on the take. The next thing I noticed was that every fish, once in the net, had already unhooked itself, because the shape of the point and taper of the shank makes them "self-ejecting." I always crush the barbs on my "normal" hooks, but even then, I sometimes get one where I struggle a little getting it out of a fish's mouth. The new barbless designs eliminate the stuck hooks and really speed up the release process.

The competition hooks come in all the styles to which we are accustomed, as far as lengths and wire diameters go. But one thing that is glaringly obvious with them is the large gap and slightly upturned point. They are designed for instant penetration and holding ability.

The cost of these hooks is higher than standard hooks, and while you can find off-brand models that look the same at significantly lower prices, I still recommend the name-brand hooks. I have pretty much tried them all, and the cost-saving hooks are far inferior to the Hanaks, Daiichis, and Dohikus.

I still love my Allcocks, Nyacks, and Oslo Mustads, but some of my fishing flies are now tied using the new hooks, and I can tell you, they are well suited for today's catch-and-quick-release fishing.



Old pattern, new hook

After Veteran's Day: **Thank You, Mr. Farley**

By Chuck Coronato

Nearly one hundred years have passed since Private First Class Peter V. Farley was killed on a battlefield in France during World War I. Many things have changed since then, but the South Branch of the Raritan River still flows less than half a mile from his burial place in Califon, New Jersey. Almost every fly fisher in the state will at some time come to this area to enjoy the river's excellent trout fishing, and in the process, drive past Lower Valley Cemetery and the large monument of a soldier that marks Private Farley's grave.

For a long time, I didn't give the monument any special thought. I was either in a joyful mood on my way to fishing or too relaxed on the way home after a morning spent on a beautiful stream to give much attention to a cemetery on Route 513 that looks pretty much like every other cemetery. It wasn't until my friend, who is known as "the Streamer King" and who has a penchant for history, directed my attention to the image of the soldier that I started to pause and think about the man buried there. That day, the Streamer King started a respectful tradition we always follow whenever we drive past.

A stop at the gravesite to read the inscription informed me of the soldier's rank, full name, and military unit served. His date of birth is inscribed simply as 1887, without a specific day, but it is significantly noted that he was killed in battle on September 26, 1918, just weeks before the armistice that ended the war. Standing on the grass near the grave, without the physical distance of the road and without my car to provide a layer of emotional insulation, I imagined the hardship and tragedy endured by this lone soldier and his family and thought of the sacrifice that many have made so I could have the freedom to do the things that I cherish. I wanted to know more about Peter V. Farley and to gain a deeper appreciation for all of our veterans.

An Internet search provided census information, and the 1910 census shows that Peter V. Farley resided on Pilhower Road in the township of West Tewksbury, a rural community of farms and homesteads at that time. His father's occupation is listed as "Carpenter" on the official document, but no occupation is given for the twenty-three-year-old future soldier, and I've been disappointed to not find information about Peter Farley's premilitary life. A visit to the Califon Historical Society and conversations with society volunteers turned up a rumor that Peter Farley is not actually buried in the location of his monument, but may actually be buried in France. This was a surprise to me, and started a new avenue of investigation that at least provided some likely explanations surrounding the events of Private Farley's death.

A search of World War I battles shows that the date Private Farley was killed in action matches the start of the Battle of the Argonne Forest. American Expeditionary Forces played a key role in this pivotal battle, which continued until the armistice and forced the German army from previously held critical territory. The AEF had enormous casualty numbers, with more than twenty-six thousand soldiers killed, mostly in the early days of the battle, making this one of the bloodiest battles in U.S. military history. More than fourteen thousand 14,000 U.S. soldiers are buried at the Meuse-Argonne Cemetery in France. These statistics seemed to at least give plausibility to the rumor that Private Farley was not buried in Califon. I contacted the Meuse-Argonne Cemetery with the full name, rank, and date of death for Peter V. Farley. A prompt response indicated that he is not buried there or in any of the overseas locations administered by the American Battle Monuments Commission.

Local Califon historian Don Freibergs, owner of Rambo's Country Store, which has been in the center of town since one year after Peter Farley's birth, was very helpful in providing me with information from findagrave.com and also a local newspaper article from the 1920s supporting that Private Peter V. Farley is indeed buried where you see his monument in Califon. A call to the Lower Valley Cemetery revealed that although he was killed in the fall of 1918, Peter Farley wasn't laid to rest in Califon until the summer of 1921. So the reports of a burial in France turned out to be partially true, and now that rumor has been resolved. Some questions still remain surrounding the specifics of

the private's death and why such a large monument to this particular soldier stands out in a cemetery that has interred the remains of many soldiers. Perhaps these questions will have to remain unanswered.

In a way, the unanswered questions and dead ends surrounding the details of Peter V. Farley's life and death hint of a larger truth. If we don't value the stories of our veterans and make concerted efforts to know them, it doesn't take much for the knowledge of their deeds to fade with the passage of time. The census of 1920 is also a stark reminder of this truth, because it doesn't include Peter V. Farley, but does include his parents. His mother and father were in their seventies and sixties when they suffered the anguish of burying their young son. No one ever knew a middle-aged Peter Farley. He, like so many before and after, is left through the tragedy of war young for eternity. It's a cost that seems too great to bear and that needs to be recognized.

Regardless of political persuasion or personal views concerning the wisdom or lack thereof of a particular military action, the men and women who serve our country are extraordinary people, and we have the human obligation to understand their experiences. The life and death of Private Peter V. Farley remind us that the time to listen to their stories grows shorter and more precious.

We have parades and ceremonies, but on a personal level, there are the small things that are more meaningful than all of the parades, ceremonies, medals, and monuments. There are the personal items left at the graves across the country and at The Wall in Washington and the silent prayers said by people who miss loved ones every day. And for this soldier, buried in Califon for almost one hundred years, killed in the war that established the date for Veteran's Day, the Streamer King and I roll down the car windows every time we pass by and with deep appreciation say what is meant for all of our veterans, "Thank you, Mr. Farley."

Ray Smith and the Wild Turkey

For many knowledgeable Catskill fly fishers, Ray Smith's name is synonymous with the Esopus Creek. However, not only was Smith a guide, a skillful fly fisher and tyer, and an Esopus Creek mainstay, but also quite the renowned local baseball player and the manager of the Lanesville team, back in the 1920s through the 1940s.

In the July 2014 *Gazette* issue I wrote about Ray Smith and his Fish Pot. This piece will acquaint readers with Smith's Wild Turkey.

Smith has received attention in several books about the Catskills and its illustrious fly-fishing history, appearing in magazine and newspaper articles and in books by

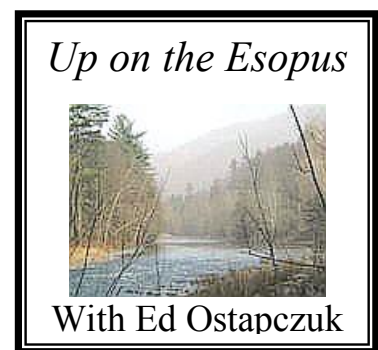
Mac Francis, Ed Van Put, and Mike Valla. However, little has been written about Smith's fly patterns other than in Valla's *The Classic Wet Fly Box*, which includes Ray's Wild Turkey.

As young anglers, several of my contemporaries took the fly-tying lessons that Smith taught, and a product of these instructions was often a set of stapled pages with the cover sheet, "Fly Patterns by



Wild Turkey, tied by Ray Smith

Ray Smith, Mt. Tremper." This handout, constructed using an old mechanical typewriter, contained five pages of trout fly patterns. Years ago, I was lucky enough to acquire a copy, though I never met Ray Smith myself. And I also acquired several wet flies that Smith had tied, including his Wild Turkey.



Wild Turkey, tied by Ed Ostapczuk

I fish a Wild Turkey in the traditional Catskill wet-fly way, normally with three flies attached to my leader, the Wild Turkey being one of the droppers. I especially like this pattern from May through the early summer, when caddisflies are about and active, and so do Esopus Creek trout.

Smith's Wild Turkey is an effective, easy-to-tie Catskill wet fly.

Ray Smith's Wild Turkey

Hook: Size 10 or 12 standard wet-fly hook

Thread: Black

Tail: Ginger hackle fibers, or none

Body: Black floss

Hackle: Palmered ginger

Wings: Brown turkey

It is interesting to note that Smith's list of patterns states that this wet fly should have no tail, yet the Wild Turkey tied by Smith that I possess has one. This Wild Turkey, pictured here under glass on a peg, wasn't tied with a photograph in mind. It is attached to a tippet and had been handled several times over before I acquired it. So it's not the best example of Smith's handiwork. Nonetheless, Smith probably tied the pattern both ways, with and without a tail. While this feature is not visible on this particular fly, Smith had a habit of touching the tips of his wet-fly wings with a dab of head cement for durability, to hold their shape.

Book Review

Tying Heritage Featherwing Streamers

By Sharon E. Wright. Published by Headwater Books/Stackpole Books, 2015; \$27.95, softbound.

You might expect that a book with "heritage" in the title would be mainly of antiquarian interest, a work conserving a tradition intact as handed down over time. In the case of *Tying Heritage Featherwing Streamers*, you'd be dead wrong.

As Sharon Wright emphasizes throughout, this is a book for today's fly tyers: not a history, but an appreciation of featherwing streamers and a how-to account of the methods she has developed for tying them. The story of how she developed those methods is part of the interest of the book.

Most fly fishers have heard of the Gray Ghost streamer—maybe they've even fished it—and if they tie flies, they probably know that it was originated by Carrie Stevens, the noted Maine streamer tyer in the Rangeley Lakes region who flourished in the early twentieth century. It is just one example of the featherwing streamers originated in the region, characteristically tied on hooks with very long shanks—up to 8XL and beyond.

The long, webby feathers that form the wings on these flies are stacked one on top of another, followed by a cheek feather or feathers and, traditionally, a jungle cock "nail." Stevens tied these in on either side of the hook at the eye, while other tyers mounted them atop the hook shank.

How to tie in these stacks of feathers without having everything go totally kablooey is the real trick here, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, given a combination of New England reticence and local self-interest, the original practitioners and those who learned from them have not been all that forthcoming in print about how to do it. In the small upstate New York town where I grew up, it was said of a family who had been in residence for over twenty years, "You know, they're not *from* here." In the Rangeley Lakes region, tyers with a similarly proprietary sense of place have tended not to share their secrets with those "from away."

Having grown up an army brat whose father was stationed wherever his career took him, Sharon Wright isn't exactly "from" anywhere, but her family has deep roots in the Rangeley Lakes area: her great-great-grandfather built the first sporting camp there, and her parents returned there when her father retired. Wright thus was able to access some local information, but what she has done with it is not so much perpetuate the original approach to these flies as make tying them understandable and

interesting using today's materials, and she has done so in the interest of the same motives of self-expression that drove the originators. "Heritage," here thus isn't a synonym for "traditional," but a term denoting something carried forward.

One way in which she unraveled the secrets of the Maine featherwing streamer was literally to unravel one: she forensically untied an original Carrie Stevens streamer, a Blue Devil, wrap by wrap and part by part, documenting each step photographically along the way and presenting the results here.

Original Carrie Stevens streamers are collectible flies, and that took chutzpah. The trick turns out to be assembling the stacks of wing feathers ahead of time, carefully cementing their stems together at the head and "grading" the stem butts, creating a gentle slope, not a thick bundle, to allow the creation of a small head.

However, this book is not a historical account of the work of Stevens or any other tyer. It's written "from a tier's perspective" and is about how Wright ties these flies today, based on what she's learned. That includes discussions of modern adhesives for assembling the wings and how to apply them, as well as explorations of materials and how to handle them. Some of the most interesting information from that perspective comes in little asides in the text or sidebars — how to flatten curved wood duck feathers or straighten a golden pheasant crest, for example, or how to tie in a Mylar tag and rib efficiently or wind a really smooth floss body using a technique that dates back to when tyers tied in hand, without a vise.

And what she urges and exemplifies in the book are new ways to use the techniques that she discusses. I think that may be the real value of the book. Although traditional Maine featherwing baitfish imitations tend to be quite beautiful, they have a couple of drawbacks as fishing flies.

For one thing, as Wright points out, hooks with really long shanks enable a hooked fish to use the leverage provided by that length to throw the hook, and shorter shanks keep more fish hooked. Wright ties the streamers she uses for fishing on 6XL hooks, which is about as long as is practical.

Also, many streamer tyers these days agree with West Coast fly designer Dan Blanton's belief that fish targeting baitfish are "headhunters"—they aim for the head of their prey. If so, it makes sense to place the hook there, not at the tail of a fly tied on a really long hook, and short-shank hooks are the way to accomplish that.

However, there's no reason why the wing assemblies that form the basis of the Maine featherwing streamer can't be tied on short-shank hooks, eliminating the long, ribbed-floss bodies of the originals, with their tips and tags. These wings do a great job of imitating any baitfish with a tall, relatively narrow body, viewed head-on, and tied in the right colors, they'd make a heck of a good small bluegill, crappie, or perch imitation for bass angling or as baby bunker flies for stripers.

Putting these techniques to use for your own creations is what Wright stresses throughout this book. Because the Maine featherwing streamer is indeed quite beautiful, it lends itself to artistic expression, and Wright has used the fly as the basis for a whole series of streamers that she calls "creative designs in the Maine tradition." "Materials can tell a story," she says, and these flies can be tied to commemorate or celebrate an event or person or even to "express an idea," as she puts it. The gallery of her own creations presented here includes a fly she's called the Last Ride. It echoes the look of a vintage motorcycle, using silver Mylar tubing as a tail/exhaust pipe, a narrow strip of black leather along the top of the shank, extending over the tail and looking like a seat, and schlappen in the wing, trimmed so it represents the flames decorating a chopper's gas tank. It's a stunning example of the way the craft of fly tying can cross over into art.

In addition to showing how to build a Stevens-style wing and supplying tips on how to produce good bodies on these long-shanked flies, Wright also explains how to mount stacked wings on top of the hook, rather than on the sides, and how to construct Maine-style tandem-hook "trolling" streamers. She also discusses and gives examples of a style of streamer known as the wounded minnow, which has a wing on only one side and twists and turns like its namesake when retrieved.

The book concludes with another gallery of featherwing streamers, tied in a variety of styles and materials by several accomplished streamer tyers, including some members of the Catskill Fly

Tyers Guild, and exemplifying the sorts of things that an imaginative tyer can accomplish using this approach to the streamer. Some are as gorgeous and gaudy as full-dress salmon flies, and some are simple, pragmatic, and imitative. What I take away from the book, though, beyond the dazzle and the innovation, is the solid information about tying techniques. Although it deals with a topic that has a well-defined tradition, this really is a book written “from a tier’s perspective.” There are things you can learn here and use, whether you tie featherwing streamers or not.

—Bud Bynack



This newsletter depends on all guild members for its content. Items from nonmembers are welcome at the editor’s discretion. Without the articles, information, for-sale or want ads, cartoons, newsworthy information, and whatever else is interesting and fun that members submit, this newsletter simply becomes a meeting announcement. Send submissions to Bud Bynack, budbynack@verizon.net or 69 Bronxville Road, Apt. 4G, Bronxville, NY 10708, (914) 961-3521.



The 25th Anniversary International Fly Tying Symposium



November 21 and 22, 2015

At the Garden State Exhibit Center
Somerset, NJ

SATURDAY: 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

SUNDAY: 9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

ADULTS: \$15.00 SATURDAY

\$12.00 SUNDAY

WEEKEND PASS: \$22.00

A new wrinkle for the Silver Anniversary Symposium will be a free “One Eye–One Fly” competition. Tyers will test their creative skills by tying their best patterns in the entrance lobby and foyer at 4:00 P.M. on Saturday. All the vises, tools, hooks, and materials will be set up for those wishing to compete. Judges will be selected from among the celebrity tyers. Each participating tyer will keep all the competition material provided—a \$75-to-\$80 value—with the winner taking home a new Regal vise.

For more information, go to: <http://www.internationalflytyingsymposium.com>.