

The October meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will be held on Saturday, October 19, 2013, at 2:00 P.M. at the Rockland House on Route 206 in Roscoe, NY. Al Landheer will be demonstrating a biot Blue-Winged Olive pattern that's effective on New York and Pennsylvania streams. Bring your vise and tools and tie along—Al will supply the materials.

Don't forget the fly swap. Bring two flies of the same pattern—one to trade, and one for the guild—in separate containers and labeled with your name, the name of the fly, the size of the hook, and the date tied.

Danbury Show Tyers Needed

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will have a table at the Arts of the Anglers Show in Danbury, Connecticut, on Saturday and Sunday November 9 and 10, 2013. (See the ad in this issue of the *Gazette*.) We need tyers to staff the table on both days. If you can help out, please contact Ed McQuat, (203) 544-8014 or edmcquat@optonline.net.

Guild Meeting Minutes Summary

The September 21, 2013, meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild was attended by Bud Bynack, Gary Sweet, Kevin Storm, Dan Thomas, Joe Watts, and Bob Osburn. Bud read Judie's treasurer's report. He also read information about the preparedness of the guild for the upcoming shows (we are), but the meeting lacked a quorum to vote on renting chairs and a table for the Lancaster show. He also alerted those attending to there still being one slot open for guild sponsorship at DEC camp.

In the absence of a quorum, we discussed alternative dates for the Rendezvous this year, since the third Saturday, the usual date, is the day before Easter. Nobody was at all passionate about the alternative dates, and all would show up whenever it's held.

Since then, the executive committee has decided that the 2014 Fly Tyers Rendezvous, sponsored by the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild, will be held on Saturday, April 26. Mark your calendars.

A Topical Index for Theodore Gordon's *Notes and Letters*

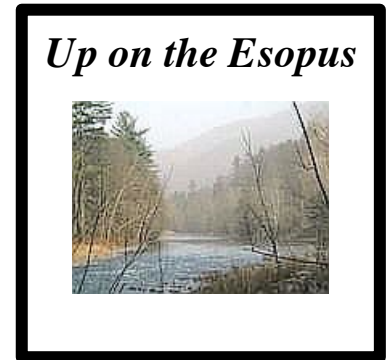
Recently I reread *The Complete Fly Fisherman: The Notes and Letters of Theodore Gordon*, edited by John McDonald. This time I created an index or concordance in a spreadsheet, divided by general topic, the specific idea he talked about,

the date of his note or letter, and the page number in the hardcover 1947 edition. The result is a sixteen-page topical index. If anyone would like this information, I can send them the file as an e-mail attachment. But note that this is an ODB (OpenDocument database) file. Excel in Microsoft Office 2010 and later supposedly can read this file format, but users of earlier versions of Excel will need to use one of the on-line conversion services. If you're interested, e-mail me at APODELL@stny.rr.com.

—Allan Podell

The East Branch Special and Dave Budin

Recently, I visited Del-Sports, Inc. in Margaretville, New York, owned and operated by Dave Budin and not that far from the banks of the East Branch of the Delaware River above New York City's Pepacton Reservoir. Upon walking into his shop, I was greeted by an assortment of hunting items and fishing gear, including a framed display of Ray Smith trout flies and a photo of Harry Darbee. Budin told me that in his younger days, he tied size 20 and smaller dry flies for the Darbees. And I also learned that this wasn't Dave's only association with them. Just like Harry, Budin fished for Atlantic salmon on the Margaree River in Nova Scotia.



Not too long ago, my wife and I visited Nova Scotia and the Margaree Salmon Museum, which has an entire display case dedicated to Harry and Elsie Darbee. So the dry fly discussed in this column, the East Branch Special, has its roots in Nova Scotia and the land of the bluenoses.

The East Branch Special is a local Catskill dry fly, devised by Budin, that over the years has captured ink in the "Hook, Line, and Sinker" columns of the *Catskill Mountain News*, authored by Judy Van Put. In fact, Judy's entire July 21, 1999, column was dedicated to introducing this fly to her readers. As she called it in a more recent column, it's indeed an "old favorite caddis imitation."

Budin told me that this fly can be fished as a dry, a wet, and a small streamer. And like other fly fishers, he often trims hackle from the top and bottom of the hook to create an emerger. Usually, anglers cast the East Branch Special upstream as a dry fly, but then sometimes pull it beneath the surface to fish it as a wet. Budin noted that imparting action to the fly in the water helps catch fish. Dave remarked that the East Branch Special is a great pattern for novice fly fishers, because it's hard to fish it incorrectly. It just catches trout.

Former Catskill Fly Tyers Guild president and prominent Catskill fly-fishing guide Hank Rope often gives his inexperienced clients this fly to use for just the reasons Budin mentioned. It is an excellent pattern for the caddisflies that are prevalent in the Catskills all season long, as well as a dry fly that trout will take when *Isonychia* mayflies abound.

According to Budin, the origin of his pattern and its various fishing techniques lies in two Nova Scotia salmon flies. One was the creation of the late Lewis Freeman, a distinguished one-armed guide who worked on the Medway River. Freeman's salmon fly is known as Rags and was first tied back in the 1950s. I suggest that interested readers Google Freeman and his fly, because there is fascinating history associated with both.

The day I visited Dave's shop, he affectionately produced a photo of Lew Freeman holding a salmon.

The other pattern is called the McIntosh and is discussed on page 58 of Darbee's *Catskill Flytier*. Harry wrote that this particular salmon fly could be fished as a wet and a dry, just as Budin suggested to me. Dave also let me examine a McIntosh that he kept in a sealed plastic case. Budin's personal attachment to these items was clearly evident.

Budin experimented locally with these Nova Scotia patterns and evolved the East Branch Special from them in the mid-1970s. In his tying days, Budin tied the East Branch Special in sizes 10 to 18, but his favorite size by far is a 14, tied on an extended-shank hook such as the Mustad 94831. Due to problems with his eyesight, Dave no longer ties himself, but relies upon Preston Woolheater from Lanesville, a former student of Ray Smith's, to fill his orders for hot-selling East Branch Specials, and he tied the example pictured here.

Budin still gave me some tying tips. He used bronze peacock herl for the body. Lacking that, he would leave his herl in the sun until it took on a bronze tint. And sometimes he would also reinforce the peacock body with fine bronze wire.



Photo: Ed Ostapczuk

East Branch Special

Hook: Mustad 94831, size 14
or to suit

Thread: Black

Rib: Fine bronze wire
(optional)

Body: Bronze peacock herl

Wing: Fine deer hair, tied
downwing style

Hackle: Brown and grizzly,
mixed

While the East Branch Special may have its roots in Nova Scotia, it is a popular local Catskill dry fly frequently fished on the upper East Branch of the Delaware. If you're ever in Margaretville, stop in at Del-Sports to say hello to Dave Budin and pick up an East Branch Special or two. You can't go wrong.

Book Review

The Founding Flies: 43 American Masters, Their Patterns and Influences
By Mike Valla. Published by Headwater Books / Stackpole Books, 2013; \$39.95
hardbound.

Mike Valla's *The Founding Flies* covers many of America's most influential fly tyers, their innovations, and their flies. The book sheds light on the lives and accomplishments of forty-three significant American fly tyers and spans the fly-tying

generations from Gordon to Marinaro, Norris to Leiser, and those in between. These tyers and their flies have laid the foundation for the flies we use today and how we fish them. While some of these “founding flies” are still very much in use, others and their originators are all but forgotten. This book reminds us why they need to be remembered. The book contains numerous color photographs of the flies, some tied by their originators and other exquisitely tied examples from contemporary tyers such as John Bonasera, Lee Schechter, Ted Patlen, Dave Brandt, and Mike Valla himself. As added plus, in addition to the photos and biographical and historical content, there are recipes for close to three hundred fly patterns. Anyone reading this book will appreciate Valla’s passion for preserving American fly-fishing history and will acquire a sense of tradition that will afford a richer angling experience. *The Founding Flies* is another great work from Mike Valla and a must-have book for any serious angling library.

—Lou Kasamis



Angler's Cove: Crossroads of New York City's Fly-Fishing Culture, Part 4

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. In an ongoing series of conversations, I’m asking 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.

Bud: It’s the time of year when some of the members of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild make their annual pilgrimage to the Atlantic salmon rivers of Canada. That got me thinking about Atlantic salmon flies. I understand that Charles DeFeo was one of the people who frequented Angler’s Cove. These days, it’s hard to know whether full-dress Atlantic salmon flies are fish lures or art objects, and I gather that DeFeo was both an artist and a gifted tyer of salmon flies.

Merrill: Right. Charles DeFeo was a fine commercial artist, and early in his career, he sold cover illustrations to *Field and Stream*. His flies were art, but his art also graces a lot of the literature of fly fishing and fly tying. In 1940, he illustrated Roderick Haig Brown’s *Return to the River*. The illustrations in Fulsher and Krom’s *Hairwing Atlantic Salmon Flies* are DeFeo’s, too. A plate of Charles DeFeo’s salmon nymphs appears in Lee Wulff’s *The Atlantic Salmon*. Shirley Woods, in *Angling For Atlantic Salmon*, notes that “nymph patterns are seldom used on Canadian streams, but they are justifiably popular on the Miramichi. Two pioneers of this type of fly are Charles DeFeo of New York and Bill Keane of Bronxville,” and DeFeo’s flies are also referred to in Joe Bates’s *Atlantic Salmon Flies and Fishing*. Charlie retired from the advertising business in 1960, but he continued his hobby of tying ornate flies for fisherman, and it developed into a second career. Charlie’s flies and illustrations remain highly collectable and in demand. I remember the Seagram wildlife calendars that Charlie illustrated. How I wish I still had some of those!

I first became acquainted with Charlie in the midsixties. he frequently stopped in at the Cove, especially late in the summer or early fall, just before the Atlantic salmon runs were beginning in Canada’s Miramichi and other maritime rivers. It was said that he

was welcome on any of the Canadian rivers because of his ability as a fly tyer and fisherman.

Charlie was a giant talent wrapped in a small package. He had an effervescent enthusiasm, especially with regard to the tying of Atlantic salmon flies and salmon fishing. In the late seventies, though, Charlie's verve and enthusiasm for fishing and tying were sapped by his battle with cancer. I choose to remember his gentle smile and his willingness to share his knowledge with others. He was an honest spokesman for the Atlantic salmon and for the sport of angling.

Here's a photo of a size 6 Nepisiguit, a fly, along with several others, that Charles DeFeo tied and gave to me.

Nepisiguit

Hook: Stout wire, size 6, with offset bend
Thread: Hot red Danville 6/0
Tag: Fine silver tinsel
Tip: Orange floss
Tail: Golden pheasant crest feather wisps, sparsely tied
Butt: Fine peacock herl with a fine band of tying thread ahead of it
Body: Natural muskrat fur with guard hairs
Hackle: Dark gray hen hackle tied as a beard, DeFeo style
Wing: Bronze mallard feather sections



Photo: Merrill Katz

Bud: In Mike Valla's new book, *The Founding Flies*, in the chapter on Eric Leiser, there's a photo of some wet flies tied by DeFeo, and in the caption, Valla says "Eric's first interest in fly tying stemmed from observing DeFeo, among others." Did you ever get a chance to watch him tie?

Merrill: The Theodore Gordon Flyfishers held an Arts of Angling Program on a periodic basis, and I'm sure that I attentively watched Charlie tie on several occasions. I had the opportunity to chat with him on numerous occasions at the Cove, too, and he often explained a particular tying technique or pattern design. I have some "doodles" sketched by DeFeo to illustrate the design of a particular fly. I retained those little sketches because I am a packrat at heart. It was a gift to have had some exposure to an angler and tyer of DeFeo's stature.

Bud: According to information published by his great-niece, DeFeo as a fishing buddy of Ted Williams. Did he ever talk about fishing with the baseball legend? Or with other anglers of the day?

Merrill: I can't say that I remember him saying he fished with Ted Williams. I know that the "Splendid Splinter" had a salmon camp on the Miramichi and that he was good friends with the late Jack Gartside. It would not surprise me at all to find that DeFeo fished with Williams and many other well-known fly fishermen. I believe that it is highly probable that Charles DeFeo shared some river time with Mr. Williams.

Bud: Today, the method of tying in the throat of an Atlantic salmon fly that clips the tip out of a feather and ties in the resulting “V” is known as the “DeFeo style.” Any idea when or how that term came into use?

Merrill: I don’ know where or when this technique was named the “DeFeo style.” Charlie DeFeo, on one occasion, demonstrated false throating for me during a visit to Angler’s Cove. Poul Jorgensen’s *Salmon Flies: Their Character, Style, and Dressing* (1978) illustrates the method without crediting DeFeo. *Hairwing Atlantic Salmon Flies* (1981), by Keith Fulsher and Charles Krom, also illustrated the method and attributed it to Charles DeFeo. *The Fly Tier’s Benchside Reference*, by Ted Leeson and Jim Schollmeyer, attributes the method to DeFeo. They, however, omit a portion of the technique! Interested tiers might consult Fulsher and Krom or Jorgenson for the complete technique.



Frank Kuttner’s Summer Fly

Summer was good this season. The streams never went into drought stage, we got rain almost every time we needed some, and the streams and trout were in great shape for the most part, at least in the places I frequent. I

was fortunate enough to be on the water during some light hatches, took a few on top with standard Catskill dry flies, and when things were really good, I sometimes tied on a more obscure pattern just to mix it up a little. One of them was Frank Kuttner’s Summer Fly

I don’t imagine too many have heard of the Summer Fly, and even fewer probably have actually fished one. Its one of those local patterns that are lost to time, used by few, and never will grace the glossy pages in an Orvis catalog.

Most flies have a story that goes along with them—the fly was conjured up by the originator for a specific place or a certain fish and used maybe with success, maybe not. Searching out these patterns and their stories is one of the things I enjoy most about fishing in the Catskills,

The Summer Fly originated on Beaverkill Road in Frank Kuttner’s Fly Shop. Frank is one of the last old-time Catskill masters. He also could be the official Sullivan County fly-fishing historian. He has tied flies for a long time, has raised hackle roosters and exotic pheasants, and runs his little shop like its still 1960. I joke with him that he has more fishing memorabilia in that tiny place than the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum has in their archives. Everyone enjoys being in his company—he’s that kind of man: a sturdy gentleman, kind and giving, and he would rather give you something than sell it to you. He is my connection to the Catskills of old, and his stories are priceless.

Frank tied this beautiful dry fly for the Willowemoc to be used during the typical summertime conditions he sometimes encountered. As a local, he has spent many years on the water during all seasons and has seen things that we part-timers will never see.

How the Summer fly originated is typical of how many of these local patterns are created . . . out of necessity. Summer conditions dictate a different approach, and after witnessing fish rising, but not being able to take them, Frank noticed an insect that he assumed was the one on which the fish were keying. He got a good look at one, then retreated to his tying bench and used the pattern that he conceived there with much success during the rest of the summer.

It’s quite unusual, as dry flies go. The wings and tail are made from the bright and delicate head crest plumes from a golden pheasant. These shiny yellow cascading feathers are very common on full-dress salmon flies and some Rangeley streamers, but are seldom

used for anything else. Tipped in red, they are very striking and give the pattern an original look I had never seen one on a dry fly before.

I still don't know what insect Frank was imitating when he first tied this fly, and his recollection is a little fuzzy, but I can attest that it does in fact work in the summer—and in the spring and fall, too.

Frank Kuttner's Summer Fly

Hook: Dry fly, size 12 and 14

Thread: Red

Tail: Golden pheasant crest, bunched

Body: Peacock herl

Wings: Golden pheasant crest, upright and divided. I use two plumes for bulk

Hackle: light ginger or cream



Summer Fly tied by Frank Kuttner Photo: John Bonasera

Contemporary Catskill Fly Tyers: Dennis Skarka

By Bill Leuszler

Earlier this year, in the first of what I hope will be a series of interviews with contemporary Catskill fly tyers, I had the opportunity to sit down with Dennis Skarka, owner and operator, along with his wife, Ellen, of Catskill Flies, a full-service fly-shop in downtown Roscoe, NY. My hope in this series is to gain a better understanding of the challenges presently facing a commercial fly tyer in the Catskills. As we sat together in his shop's "office" on a hot July morning, Dennis shared a great deal about his own approach to fly tying.

Dennis grew up in Riverhead, Long Island, NY. The family home was near a stream, and a neighbor of the family tied flies. Seeing "bugs" on the stream and realizing that imitating them was an effective way to catch fish motivated him to learn to tie himself. He moved to the Catskills in the mid-1970s, tying first for those who asked, then selling trout flies wholesale to various stores in the area—Frank Kuttner's shop in Livingston Manor and Paul Filippone's shop, Donegal's, in Roscoe, to name two.

About twenty years ago, Dennis opened a small shop in his home in Loch Sheldrake, NY. That shop was focused only on selling trout flies. Eighteen years ago, Dennis opened Catskill Flies in Roscoe. Previously, this had been the location of Donegal's. His shop's sales include trout flies, fly-tying materials, clothing, and fly-fishing gear. In addition, a guide service is available through the store. Dennis ties the majority of flies sold in the shop himself, although he stocks a small number of flies tied by other local tyers.

I asked Dennis why he continues to sell locally tied flies and not imported ones. His response was interesting: the foreign tyer cannot account for the unique colors needed for fishing in the local area. Nor do the flies they tie do a good job of representing the silhouettes of Catskill insects. In addition, quality control is often unpredictable.

Dennis was unable to calculate the rate at which he ties the flies sold in his store. He said that he never focuses on the time needed to complete a fly. “Quality comes before quantity.” This is significant, given that a fairly large percentage of income for the shop comes from fly sales. Dennis estimates that 80 percent of his fly sales are dry flies.

If you visit Dennis’s shop and look through the fly bins, you’ll notice that there is a mix of patterns, both traditional and contemporary. So I asked Dennis what his approach is to stocking flies, especially new patterns. He said that any new pattern being stocked is the result of spending a good deal of time spent on the river, often over a couple of years, with trial and error, to demonstrate its effectiveness. He’ll sometimes hand out flies to test for feedback on their effectiveness.

Many years ago, when I was tying commercially myself, I bought some of the dubbing blends that Dennis had made and that were sold through Beaverkill Angler. I ran out of the Sulphur blend a long time ago and have never been able to find anything to replicate the quality of what Dennis had put together back then—nothing that comes even close. It was simply a rabbit dubbing blend combining yellow and orange, but it captured perfectly the color of the Neversink Sulphurs. However, I noticed that he wasn’t using all that much in the way of natural materials for dubbing now. Why was that? Dennis’s response was surprising to me. He said that putting together the materials he had sold back then was very time consuming—picking out guard hairs and so on. But more significantly, he can’t consistently duplicate the colors he wants using commercially available natural materials. Color varies from batch to batch. And although Dennis believes that size and silhouette are priorities in a fly’s effectiveness, only by blending man-made materials can he capture the color he wants. He hopes for consistency in color from order to order of the dubbing materials he purchases each year.

We spent a good deal of time discussing the subject of color as it relates to the development of an effective fly. Dennis believes that with a few exceptions, a dry fly’s body should consist of multiple colors. For example, he favors a yellow cast to his Blue-Winged Olives. He achieves this by using yellow thread.

I was curious to find out what percentage of his dry-fly sales are of traditional patterns. He said that more contemporary patterns designs—parachutes and so on—outsell traditional patterns four to one.

I asked what challenges he faces in the business now. Dennis indicated that the cost of everything he has to purchase has increased over the years. Yet at the same time, he has to be sensitive to what people can afford. The retail price of a dry fly in his shop has gone up only about twenty-five cents during the eighteen years he has run it. “I want to be able to sell a good fly to the average guy,” he said.

We spent time sharing our observations about seeing limited numbers of younger people coming to the sport. Dennis pointed to the Fly Fishing Show in Somerset and the average age of a person at the show as an example. There’s lots of gray hair. The price of equipment, he thinks, is a factor for a younger person getting into the sport, too. “Who is going to buy an eight-hundred-dollar graphite rod? An older person!”

Dennis wanted to make sure that I give credit here to the two big influences on his own approach to commercial fly tying, Frank Kuttner and Walt Dette. Dennis believes that Walt’s success in the business was in part due to the fact that the Dettos weren’t reliant on fly sales as the sole source of income—that they had had other jobs. With that, Walt could afford to spend time with other fly tyers, including Dennis. When Dennis said to Walt, “I want to do what you do,” Walt quickly responded by asking what work Dennis had. Dennis said: “I work for the state.” Walt firmly said, “Well stick with that.” Dennis is very thankful for the advice.

I was very grateful for the time Dennis shared with me. In the future, I hope that the other active commercial fly tyers in the Catskills I interview will be as lively and candid.

Al Brewster passed away during the last week of September at age ninety-six. Al was a legend in fly-fishing circles and a friend of many noted fly fishers, including Art Flick and Rube Cross, as well as Walt and Winnie Dette, Harry and Elsie Darbee, Poul Jorgenson, Lee and Joan Wulff, and Ernie Schweibert. Al attended the early Federation of Fly Fishers conclaves that were held in Roscoe and Lake Placid, NY with an informal group of devil-may-care fly tyers, The Attitude Adjustment Bug Builders. He was a founding member of the Rhody Flyrodders and the Cape Cod chapter of Trout Unlimited and a member of the FFF and the United Fly Tyers.



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 Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum



Presents

The Arts of the Angler Show

At the Ethan Allen Inn,
Exit 4 on I-84 in Danbury, CT

Saturday, November 9, 2013, 8:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Sunday, November 10, 2013, 9:00 A.M. to 3:30 P.M.

This unique and comprehensive show combines the finest in fly tying, bamboo rod makers, books, and collectibles with the contemporary tackle and destinations most desired today. In addition to offering the best in fly-fishing equipment, tackle, accessories, and collectibles, this show provides attendees with continued exposure to fly fishing and reinforces the importance of the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum and the Catskills. Educational seminars and programs are featured throughout the event.

For more information, go to the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum Web site at <http://www.cffcm.net> or contact Erin at (845) 439-4810, or flyfish@catskill.net.

All proceeds benefit the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum



The 23rd Annual International



Fly Tying Symposium

November 23 and 24, 2013

At the Garden State Exhibit Center
Somerset, NJ

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

ADULTS: \$15.00

SATURDAY

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

\$12.00

SUNDAY

WEEKEND PASS: \$20.00

This year's theme is "Dutch Masters." Tiers invited from the Netherlands include Harry Schoel, Theo Bakelaar, Johan Put, Ronald Pop, Paul van den Driesche, Rudy van Duijnhoven, and Ben Weytjens from Belgium.