

The
Catskill
Fly Tyers
Guild

Gazette



Volume 16, number 2

Twentieth Anniversary

April 2013

The Annual Fly Tyers Rendezvous, sponsored by the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild, will be held on Saturday, April 20, 2013, from 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. at the Rockland House on Route 206 in Roscoe, NY. Please join us for a day of camaraderie, reunion, and fly tying with some of the most talented fly tyers in the Northeast. Lunch is available at the Rockland House.

Rendezvous Dinner: After the Rendezvous this year, we're having a group dinner at the Rockland House, formalizing the informal post-Rendezvous dining event that has occurred in the past. Social hour at 6:00 P.M., dinner at 7:00. Complete dinners, with prime rib, \$25; tilapia or stuffed chicken breast, \$22. Make a reservation with Judie DV Smith at darbee1@juno.com or 607-498-6024. Or mail a check made out to the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild to the guild address, P.O. Box 663, Roscoe, NY 12776-0663. Include your choice of entrée.

Rendezvous Silent Auction: The Rendezvous this year will feature a silent auction from 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. to benefit the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Educational Programs Fund. Items include a Grand Laker streamer tied by Lew Oatman, a handmade thread clip with the Darbee name inscribed on it, *Fishing Dry Flies on Trout Streams*, by Art Lee, a fly tied by Ed Haas, a Darbee price list (1952?), *Land of Little Rivers*, by Mac Francis, a set of maps from *Land of Little Rivers*, and more!

Raffle: The raffle drawing, for an HMH Spartan vise and a collection of rare materials, including polar bear, Australian possum, seal's fur, and other exotic things, will be held at the Rendezvous at 2:00 P.M. Proceeds benefit the Educational Programs Fund. Raffle tickets can be bought at the door: \$5 each or three for \$10.

April Meeting: After the Rendezvous, there will be a brief meeting to discuss the purchase of shirts with the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild logo.

Kids Needed for Camps

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild underwrites sending interested kids to nature and angling camps over the summer. We can send two to the Department of Environmental Conservations camps and support two days with the Brotherhood of the Jungle Cock. If you know of anyone who has shown interest in the outdoors and in angling, encourage them to contact us at the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild address, P.O. Box 663, Roscoe, NY 12776-0663.

Meeting Minutes Digest

January: Judie explained Allan Liu's offer to have guild members complete copies of *Trout Flies* by Dick Salmon. They would be gluing examples of materials in each one. If a guild member completes three books, the member would keep one. The other two books would be sold by the guild and the monies, less expenses, split 50/50 with Allan Liu.

February: On the Dick Salmon book project, Elmer Hopper and Dan Thomas have their three copies to work on. Substitutions for original materials can be used when necessary, but all books should have the same materials. More books are available. There is a possibility that funds could be made available to buy some of the materials for the books.

Secretary and Acting Treasurer Judie DV Smith reported that at the end of 2012, our regular checking account had a balance of \$1,928.72 and the Education Fund had a balance of \$1,800.01, for a total of \$3,728.73. As of the February meeting, the balance in the regular checking account was \$2,712.03 and the Education Fund had \$2,077.56 for a total of \$4,789.59. There was to be approximately \$1,000 transferred to our Education Fund from the regular checking account from monies collected over the past couple years.

March: Allan Liu wants to send us the remainder of the Dick Salmon books that he has, along with the remaining material, which may be in good shape or may not. We have reached an agreement that will be signed by us as soon as we receive the other books and materials. We will split the proceeds with Allan as books are sold. If anyone else is interested in doing a set of three, they should contact Judie. Dan Thomas is working on getting acceptable archival-quality glue.

Practical Compromises with the Catskill Style By Alan Mark Fletcher

For more than seventy years, I have been tying and fishing Catskill-style flies. Yes, I learned when I was thirteen. In recent years, however, to accommodate the aging process, I have had to make some compromises with some of the traditional ingredients. I believe the compromises actually produce better flies. They are easier to tie, and they hold up much longer in use than the traditional materials with negligible compromise in appearance. Certainly, the fish can't tell the difference.

First of all, I now use fine polypropylene for all of my dry-fly wings, and I don't split the wings into two segments. I have the poly material in many shades and colors. The second major compromise I have made is that I now tie nearly all of my bodies with very fine wool yarn, UNI-Yarn, which I have in a wide range of colors. I originally bought it from Fly Fishers Paradise, in State College, PA, and I haven't seen the yarn sold elsewhere. The yarn spools seem to last forever. Tying yarn bodies is so much easier than spinning and winding dubbed bodies, and the bodies are very neat. With my yarn I can reproduce just about every body color, from the Royal Coachman, to the Adams, to the Elk Hair Caddis, and on. I have not found a single body that I cannot reasonably reproduce with the fine wool yarn. And need I say that I nearly always use big-eye hooks?!

At nearly eighty-five, I still fly fish. I don't go into the water as much as I used to, and when I do, I use a wading staff. My much younger fishing buddies are willing to tolerate me because I provide all of the flies. One of my buddies is a physician and the other is a dentist. I find that comforting.

Ernest Schwiebert and the *Epeorus* Nymph

In the 1950s and 1960s, growing up in the Garden State in a nonangling family, I didn't have access to any fly-fishing mentors. I was a piscatorial student in the school of hard knocks and slow learners. Thus, when I became old enough to drive, I'd venture forth exploring some of New Jersey's better trout streams, such as Big Flat Brook, hoping to learn by mingling with others. Back then, there was a seasonal fly-fishing only section along the Blewett Tract where some of the best Jersey fly fishers of the day would hold court with eager-to-learn young wannabes like me. One of the fly-fishing sages was a Princeton resident and adopted son of the Garden State, Dr. Ernest G. Schwiebert, Jr., who wrote the fly fisher's bible at the time, *Matching the Hatch*. This was *the* book that everyone in the know spoke of and consulted. Thus, it is no small wonder that *Matching the Hatch* was one of the very first angling books I purchased.

I studied that book the way I studied my school textbooks—probably better. And it became my personal bible for tying flies for many years to come. Without any doubt, my favorite pattern from Schwiebert's early work was and continues to be his *Epeorus* Nymph. As fly fishers, each of us probably has our own beloved mayfly hatch. Some may fancy Hendricksons, others Green Drakes, or Blue-Winged Olives, or maybe even Sulfurs. Mine always was Quill Gordons, one of the first important hatches of every new trout season, an insect that requires the purest of fast water—my kind of bug.

So I've been tying and fishing Schwiebert's *Epeorus* Nymph since the mid-1960s. Most Aprils, this pattern spends more time on the end of my leader and catches more trout than all other flies combined. I have a lot of faith in this pattern and have been justly rewarded for it, so I fish it with a high degree of confidence.

When I first started tying this nymph, lacking specific personal guidance, I heavily relied on the insect's description provided by Schwiebert in *Matching the Hatch*. Phrases such as like "the nymphs are of a broad, flat type with prominent gills" and "they are greyish tan" guided my approach in its re-creation. And, during these early stages of fly tying and fly fishing, I developed my own method of producing a *weighted* pattern. I'm not saying what follows is the only way or even the best way to tie the *Epeorus* Nymph, but I am saying that it has served me well for many years, and I'm too old to change now.

Thread: Black

Hook:- #12 Mustad 9671

Tails: Two wood duck flank feathers

Rib: Brown saddle hackle off the belly and back, trimmed

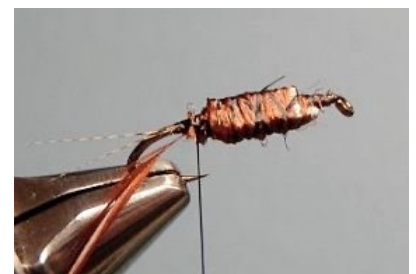
Underbody: Lead, covered with brown floss and crimped*

Abdomen: Rabbit and red fox, mixed

Wing case: Brown mottled turkey

Thorax: Beaver dubbing

Up on the Esopus



Legs: Brown partridge

*Note: I added the underbody to give weight and shape to this nymph.

First, attach the thread and tie in the tails and the hackle for palmering. Wrap the lead around the hook shank. Next, wrap brown floss over the lead, then a few wraps of tying thread over the floss to reinforce it when compressed. Then flatten the lead using nonserrated pliers, being careful that neither the floss nor the thread is cut in the process, and apply a coat of head cement over the floss to prevent lead oxidation after the fly gets wet. Finally, finish tying abdomen, wing case, thorax, and legs of the *Epeorus* Nymph in the usual way.



Atherton Flies, Part 2

In the last *Gazette*, we examined John Atherton's dry fly patterns 1 through 6. I thought we should finish up with some of his

other patterns—variants and spiders.

I have done a lot of thinking about variants. In fact, one of the very first articles I wrote for this column was on the Dun Variant. I could wax poetic about that fly for hours, so imagine my excitement when reading Atherton's *The Fly and the Fish* and how he felt about them! Not only do Atherton and I both share the same first name, we also had something else in common, the love of large-hackled, light-as-a-feather dry flies.

This style of dry fly is very easy to love. Their most important attribute, I think, is that they are light, or maybe it's better to say that they "fish light." You can place these on the stream's surface like a whisper, they ride high and long, they leave a very natural footprint, and if that were not enough, they are fast to tie. Having no wings simplifies the tying and lends them to always landing properly, too.

Atherton's impressionistic style characterized his series of variants, as it did his standard dry-fly selection. He still mixed hackle colors and tailing fibers, but instead of dubbed bodies of fox fur and seal, he used flat gold tinsel to add that little bit of attention-getting sparkle. He also tied them on a smaller range of hook sizes, specifying only 14s and 16s. This is convenient, because almost any cape has hackling long enough for a hook of those sizes. Since a variant is typically tied with hackle two sizes larger than a standard dry in relation to hook size, a size 10 hackle would be at the high end of the scale.

He gives five examples of variants. Variant Number One is a cream variant, with cream or honey dun hackle and tail and a gold body. Variant Number Two is a Tup's variant, tied like the Tup's Indispensable, but with "pale dun of brassy shade, slightly barred." Variant Number Three has dun and furnace hackle, mixed, a dun tail, and a gold body. Variant Number Four has a medium dun tail and hackle and a gold body, with a notation that he sometimes tied it like a Quill Gordon, with a body of stripped peacock quill. Finally, Variant Number Five has a cree tail and hackle and a gold body.

I could go on forever on how much I enjoy fishing variants, but one outing, in particular, stands out. It was later in the season, early in the fall of last year, and I was working a favorite stream that I spend most of the year fishing. This twisting mountain

stream and I are quite familiar with each other, and I sometimes feel that I have learned it, having experienced its many currents and pools, and I like to think that I have either caught or spooked nearly every fish in it. There are a couple of places, though, that are so difficult to cover because of the difficulty in actually getting a fly to *the spot* that they keep me humble. It was at one of these where my respect for a high-floating dry fly was born. The grade of the land in this place is steep, and a long, slow pool above turns into white water for about twenty-five feet below. The rocks, fallen trees, and shape of the stream bed form an area about the size of a blow-up swimming pool, and without a doubt, it holds a fine fish. Just looking at it from a distance tells you that whatever lives there will be happy for a long time, because aerated water, cover, and the funneling effect of the land brings every morsel of food right through it. I have cast many a fly in there and either hung up instantly or snagged subsurface on some unseen obstruction, leaving me to break off the fly and move on.

One of the little Atherton variants spoke to me that day, and knotting it on, I looked for a window into which I could toss the little fluff of a fly. Bouncing along high and dry, it sparkled in the sunlight, easily visible on the rapidly flowing water. It jumped right over a branch, went around a rock poking out of the water, spun a few times, and as it entered the sweet spot, an explosion ensued that looked like a grenade had been tossed into the stream. For a brief second, I saw the yellow belly of a huge trout, and in less time than that, it was off. Reeling in, I held in my hand a broken tippet, let out a sigh, and looked to the sky for an answer, but none came. What I did take from that place was that a small variant floating through impossible water can and will fool a wary old brown.

In addition to the standard dries and variants, the last group of Atherton dry flies are the spiders, or what we sometimes call “skaters”: no tails, no bodies, only long, stiff hackle tied tight. These flies are tied by few and used by even fewer. I always carry a dozen or so, if only for historical purposes, but the conditions have to be just right for me to tie them on. Edward R. Hewitt and John Atherton loved them though, recalling many large trout taken on them. I use them during caddis hatches, and when they’re stripped across the water quickly, they can bring trout from the depths to slash at them.

Atherton gives five examples in his book with his Number Five Spider having a yellow body to match the insects that he and Hewitt would find on the Neversink. He tied this fly with smaller hackle, measuring no more than one inch in diameter. All the others have just hackle tied larger upward of two and a half inches in diameter. Number One has badger hackle, Number Two has badger and furnace mixed, Number Three uses cree, and Number Four has furnace hackle.



Spiders and Variants

Looking Back Upstream



Angler's Cove: Crossroads of New York City's Fly-Fishing Culture, Part 1

When you're young, history is what happened to other people. Eventually, however, you realize that history is also what happened to you. 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 angling literature. In an ongoing series of conversations, I'll be 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: Tell me about Angler's Cove and how you ended up working there.

Merrill: I began fishing at a very young age, and those early experiences became an integral part of my being. My family summered in the Catskills, and I became interested in fly tying, because my dad always took me to the outdoor shows that were so popular in the 1950s. They were referred to as "outdoor expositions" and were housed at the old Madison Square Garden, Grand Central Palace, or one of the New York City armories. I became fascinated with fly tying, and my quest for fly-tying materials and information led me to become a frequent patron at Angler's Cove. At that time (1953), I was old enough to travel by subway, and the Cove was the place to go for tying materials.

The Cove was a relatively small store, located on the west side of Third Avenue near Thirty-Third Street. It had the atmosphere of a country store in the heart of Manhattan. From hanging out there, I knew Colonel Henry Siegel, who was in the process of developing his antiquarian book business, Angler's and Shooter's Bookshelf, and Glad Zwirz, wife and partner of the Cove's owner, Bob Zwirz, and they knew me. In the fall of 1965, I sustained a severe football injury, and it forced me to drop out of school for a year so I could rehabilitate my knee. When I made one of my frequent visits to the Cove, Hank Siegel asked me if I might be interested in working for them. Hank was unable to work as many hours as he had in the past, and Bob and Glad Zwirz, who resided in Connecticut, needed someone to fill the void. The Colonel recommended me for the job, a position I retained for the next seven years. Hank published his first Angler's and Shooter's Bookshelf listing in 1967, his business outgrew his Manhattan apartment, and he soon moved to Goshen, Connecticut.

Working at the Cove was a wonderful opportunity for me, because it allowed me to satisfy my need to accumulate fly-tying materials, hooks, angling books, and the latest available fishing equipment. But the Cove was also a gathering place for anglers, and it afforded me the opportunity to meet a very interesting and diverse group of individuals. Some of the grand people I met at the Cove, including Bob and Glad Zwirz, are no longer with us, but I have retained relationships, up to this moment in time, with a number of people I had the honor of meeting.

Bud: What was the fly-fishing scene like in a New York City shop in the early 1960s?

Merrill: There were four shops in New York City that catered to fly fishers: William Mills and Son (established in 1822), The Angler's Roost, Angler's Cove, and Abercrombie and Fitch. The fact that these commercial entities were located in Manhattan speaks to a well-defined angling culture. William Mills and Son sold a full line of angling equipment and fine shotguns. They were the sole distributor of H. L. Leonard cane rods and A. L. Walker fly reels. Angler's Cove, also a full-line dealer, distinguished themselves by holding a tremendous inventory of fly-tying supplies. Jim Deren's Angler's Roost was housed in the Chrysler Building in very cramped quarters, and Abercrombie and Fitch, the sole distributor of Jim Payne's fly rods, was a huge department store and a rather impersonal place to shop.

My initial impressions of the angling scene in the city were formed as a youngster who patronized Angler's Cove, beginning in 1953. But my perceptions began to change when I began working there in 1965. I was now on the other side of the counter and found that I knew a good bit more about fly tying, fly fishing, and fishing equipment than many of the folks visiting the Cove.

Glad Zwirz spent countless hours managing the Cove, and under Glad's tutelage, I learned how to operate all aspects of the business. She was a well-versed fly tyer and angler in her own right. Her husband, Bob, was conspicuous by his absence. As an outdoor writer and photographer, he was often traveling so he could glean materials for his publication commitments. When I started working, I met Bob briefly, but I did not get to know him until later that year.

Hank Siegel introduced me to the world of angling books and suggested some seminal titles to consider for inclusion in my library. Hank owned a salmon camp on the Miramichi and when the fish were running he was off chasing *Salmo salar* in Canada's Maritime Provinces. Hank passed away in 1997. In the last correspondence I had from him, he wrote to tell me about a large salmon he landed on the Restigouche. Hank once told me, "Fly-fishing people are the finest people I would ever meet," and he was correct.

Bud: It must have been an amazing place for a young fly tyer to work.

Merrill: I had been tying flies for about thirteen years, and simply observing the tying classes at the Cove helped me to sharpen my tying skills. Keith Fulsher taught the advanced tying classes at the Cove, and I finally opted to take Keith's class. I'm reasonably sure that Richard Talleur was a member of that same class. Al Zatorski, an architect, also tied for the Cove and taught their introductory tying class. I thought about taking that class, but Al convinced me to take the advanced class.

Keith Fulsher and Charles Krom were close friends. Keith was a banking professional with Barclay's, while Charlie was with the New York City Fire Department and worked for the Cove on a part-time basis. Both men tied for the Cove, and they often fished for trout in the streams of Westchester County. Both also had a passion for Atlantic salmon fishing in Canada's Maritime Provinces.

Charles Krom tied the best wet flies I have ever seen, and his Atlantic salmon flies are exquisite. Krom's Stone has been a staple nymph in my fly box—it is a very fine stonefly nymph and a killing pattern. Charlie's tying was meticulous, and his example taught me that you have to tie concisely to produce artistically pleasing flies.

The Krom Stonefly Nymph



Thread: Black

Hook: 2XL nymph hook, size 12 to 14

Tail: Two peccary fibers or two wood duck fibers

Underbody: White floss, tapered back to front

Abdomen: Two stripped peacock eye fibers, tied parallel and wrapped simultaneously

Wing case: Mallard primary quill section

Thorax: Peacock herl

Legs: Brown hackle, Doubled and palmered through the thorax

Of course, Keith's tying skills are legendary, and his innovative Thunder Creek Streamer is unique. Keith Fulsher gave me his little pamphlet titled *The Story of the Thunder Creek Series*, and in 1973, Freshet Press published *Tying and Fishing the Thunder Creek Series*. Keith Fulsher and Charlie Krom also coauthored *Hair Wing Atlantic Salmon Flies* in 1981. Keith helped me refine my tying skills, and without question, Keith was an influential force in the New York angling community.

Bud: The list of people who you've told me frequented the shop includes a Who's Who of East Coast angling at the time: not just Keith Fulsher and Dick Talleur, but Nick Lyons, Gardner Grant, Ted Niemeyer, Ernest Schwiebert, Everett Garrison, Larry Solomon, Helen Shaw, Lee Wulff, and Charles Defeo. Plus there were others with whom I'm less familiar: Dick Pobst, Frank Garristo, Jack Montague, Carlos Uretubey, Archie Walker, Steve Gardello, Leon Martuche, Leon Chandler, and Charles Wira. I want to ask you about everyone I can. In the next issue, though, let's start with Nick Lyons.

Obituaries

Floyd N. Franke, Ph.D., of Roscoe, NY, a retired educator and a longtime area resident, died Tuesday, March 5, 2013, at the Roscoe Regional Rehabilitation and Residential Health Care Facility, Roscoe, NY. He was seventy-two. Floyd Franke was cofounder of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild, a member and past board member of the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum, president of the Casting Board of Governors of the International Federation of Fly Fishers, an instructor at the Wulff School of Fly Fishing from 1989 to 2006, and chief instructor for three years. He served on the Titusville Hospital Board of Directors, was a former member of the Crawford County Mental Health–Mental Retardation Board, a member and past president of the Pleasantville Lions Club, and a member and past president of the Roscoe Kiwanis Club. There will be a memorial service on Saturday, April 13, 2013, at 11:00 A.M. in the Harris Funeral Home, Railroad Avenue, Roscoe, NY. Memorial contributions in Floyd's name may be made to the Catskill Fly Fishing Center Wulff Gallery Fund, P.O. Box 1295, Livingston Manor, NY 12758, or to the University of Pittsburgh Titusville, 504 East Main Street, Titusville, PA 16354.

Aaron Charles Hirschhorn of New City, NY, passed away on Tuesday, March 12, 2013, at Hospice of Lancaster County, surrounded by his family. He was seventy-seven. Aaron Hirschhorn was president of the Hudson Valley Fly Fishers and a longtime member of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild. Often, while attending various events at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum, he would peruse the various plaques displayed at the museum in memory of fly fishermen who had passed on. After consulting with Aaron's family, we

feel a plaque there would be a fitting tribute to him. With this in mind, the Hudson Valley Fly Fishers are reaching out to his friends, family, and fly-fishing extended family for contributions toward this effort. All contributions will go toward the plaque or memorial and the size and type of the memorial will be determined by the donations received. Checks should be made out to The Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum (CFFCM) and should be mailed by April 20, 2013, to Bruce Corwin, 4 Baldwin Court, Spring Valley, NY 10977.

Martin R. Redcay died December 31, 2012, in Clarence, NY. Martin Redcay was a charter member of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild. He was also on the committee coming up with the definition of a Catskill fly. He was the first president of the North Eastern Council Federation of Fly Fishers.

Catskill Shadows

By Joe Watts

Many years ago, way back in 1989, I rode into Great Smoky National Park on my Harley Davidson Softail. I wasn't fly fishing back then, but in mid-March of last year, realized that I wanted to go back, this time to check out the fishing. In the first week of May, I walked into the Hunter Banks Fly Shop in Ashville, North Carolina, seeking some knowledge and guidance about the local rivers in this beautiful mountainous region.

Great Smoky National Park is half in Tennessee and half in North Carolina, but the Catskills throw long shadows throughout the angling world, and as it turned out, so do members of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild.

I spoke to Shane Buckner, the "Shop Manager and Staff Wrangler," and when we got to talking, he soon realized that I was from the Catskill area. He told me not only that he knew Dave Brandt, but that Dave had taught him quite a bit of what he knew at the local North Carolina fly-tying show, which Dave used to attend annually.

Shane recommended that I talk to Dan Drake, one of the co-owners of Little River Outfitters, if I ever made my way over to Townsend, where they are located, and eventually I did. They have a lovely and spacious shop, and when Dan and I got to talking, it turned out that he knew Floyd Franke, one of the cofounders of the guild. The other two owners, Byron and Paula Begley, actually had come up to the Joan Wulff Fly Fishing School in Roscoe, where Floyd had taught them how to cast. The trio now run an impressive outfit, including their own fly-fishing school. I just missed their annual Troutfest, which is in mid-May.

Great Smokey Park is fly fisher's heaven—the sort of place I think Floyd must be right now. It would take many seasons to learn the secrets of its mountain streams and powerful rivers. Because it's in the South, hatches are a solid month ahead of our Catskill hatches, so this year, I had hoped to get down there before April Fool's Day. But thanks to Dave and Floyd, whenever I'm there, I know I'll be welcome and will feel right at home.



Willow and BK are back. Drawn by "Catskill John" Bonasera



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.

Check out the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Group on Yahoo! at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Catskill_Fly_Tyers_Guild.