

# The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild



# GAZETTE

April 2006

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**Fly Tyers Rendezvous** will be held on Saturday, April 22, 2006, at the Rockland House in Roscoe, NY, from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. Around fifty tyers will be in attendance. Come and make new friends, see old ones, schmooze, kibitz—and *learn* from some of the best fly tyers there are. If you need any information, contact Tom and Martha Mason, co-chairs, at [mason.tm@verizon.net](mailto:mason.tm@verizon.net) or (607) 498-5478.

Want to know why watching great fly tyers tie is how you should spend a Saturday? And why you should volunteer to tie at the shows we attend and the classes we teach? Read the following essay.

## Being There

Sometimes, if you want to learn something, you just have to be there. A big part of my life involves books, and, judging by the libraries of angling literature that many fly fishers collect, I'm not alone in that. As a former academic now working in scholarly publishing and editing angling books and periodicals, I've assigned, taught, used, and edited a wide variety of texts in an abiding belief in their usefulness for disseminating knowledge, provoking thought, and changing the way we all act and live. Indeed, I've been accused of approaching the world via my library, and I plead guilty to that. But there are limits to what books can do.

When I first started fly fishing, later in life than most people start, I began by reading all I could about interpreting the water of a trout stream, as well as about flies and entomology, casting, and fly tying. It's not the sort of approach everyone would find useful, but given my temperament and inclinations, it worked.

In a sense, it worked too well. I was living in Oregon at the time, where fly fishing is an important part of the culture. (If I had been in Italy, instead, I might now be editing the Catskill Opera Lovers *Gazette*.) One of my principal literary mentors was Roderick Haig-Brown, whose *Primer of Fly-Fishing* was by then out of date with regard to advances in rods, lines, leaders, and the like, but whose prose in that book and in his justly famous other works conveyed a clear sense of how to go about the art of angling, especially in the Pacific Northwest. Another was Dave Hughes, whose works took as their starting point the rivers I would actually be fishing, especially the Deschutes.

So when I finally took a deep breath and laid out what seemed like an awful lot of money for a rod, reel, line, and other tackle, I had some idea of what I needed and why. I also had some idea already of what I was being told by the guide and fly-shop employee who sold me my rig and, for a few extra bucks, taught me to cast. (After five sessions on the casting pond, when he pronounced me ready for the river, he tried to get me to pay him *less* than the \$25.00 we'd agreed on. Some people really are that dedicated to the sport.)

On my first day on the Deschutes, alone and self-conscious, once I finally relaxed, I immediately started catching fish. I was reading the water—often in exactly the same places depicted in Hughes's book on reading the water. I was casting adequately and mending well. I had the right fly (OK, it was a Woolly Bugger, but still . . .). Bingo. "Hey," I thought. "This is *easy!*"

Famous last words.

Apart from the fact that we all have bad days as well as good ones, and apart from the element of luck or chance that is part of all angling, something else was going on. On subsequent outings, I continued to catch fish, but it definitely wasn't easy, and the difficulty (which is of course part of the sport, too, and one of its attractions) focused my attention on what I had been doing—on what had worked, what hadn't, when and (at least in speculation) why. Soon I was applying what had worked in one situation to another—not just to a situation where it worked again, but also to a situation where it didn't work at all. Eventually I learned from that, but it's the kind of learning that takes time.

It's called experience. In essence, what I had done was occlude the decades and decades of experience that I had first brought to the river from my reading of works by some of the finest fly anglers in the modern world, obscuring it with the meager budget of experience I had accumulated since then. I had appealed from the ages to the hours. Worse yet, there was no going back. I could reread those texts forever, but I was now in a place where the best I could do was to use them to illuminate my own experience. I now had to figure things out myself the best I could. They had helped me get where I wanted to be, but there I was.

Later, when I started to learn to tie flies, though, things worked out the other way around. That's partly because, long before I started to tie—even before I bought my first fly rod—I had watched and listened in fascination to master tyers demonstrating their art. The Fly-Tying Theater run by Dan Byford and later by Pete Parker in the West Coast's International Sportsman's Exposition shows held me spellbound, and over the years, as I hung out there, I watched, listened to, and talked with, up close and personal, some of the finest tyers in the West, the country, and even the world.

There are things you can read about and understand immediately. Others, as in my experience on the river, you ultimately have to learn for yourself, but you can use books as platforms for that learning. For some things, though, you just have to be there, see how it's done, be told in person how to do it, be assisted and corrected and cajoled into doing it better.

Being me, when I started tying, I bought a book (Randall Kaufmann's *Fly Tyers Nymph Manual*) and worked through it, but I quickly realized that I was finding it useful principally for the fly recipes. I had already been there and done that, when it came to techniques, by being in the living presence of excellent tyers as they practiced and discussed their art.

At one of these shows, someone asked one of those tyers, Andy Burk, what they could do to become a better tyer. Andy thought for a moment and then said, “Tie a fly every day. Even if it’s just one.” It was the same thing I told my students when I was teaching writing: You have to do it. You do it and then enter into discussions with those who are trying to do the same thing. When it comes to something like fly tying—or writing—a book can’t really tell you what experience and dialogue immediately and intuitively can impart as your skills develop.

Long ago, when I was in graduate school, I also took classes in the martial arts—in t’ai chi. The school where I studied had published a book. In it, I read that there are just two principles in t’ai chi: stand up straight and relax. Of course, if you do one, you almost certainly aren’t doing the other. (Try it.) Someone has to show you how—and it takes decades of practice to do it well.

That’s why the Rendezvous is such an important event on the guild’s calendar. It’s our own version of the International Fly Tyer’s Exposition, the Somerset Fly-Fishing Show, and the Danbury Arts of the Angler Flyfishing University Shows, but with special reference to the Catskill tradition of flies, techniques, and materials. You’re in the presence of people who understand these things better than anyone you can find and who will assist and correct and cajole you into being a better tyer.

This is also what makes what the guild does at the angling shows we attend and the classes and programs that we sponsor so important. Being there is the best way to learn the Catskill fly-tying tradition and the best way to teach it. So be there.

—*Bud Bynack*

**We *Still* Need Volunteers** for the free fly-tying classes that will be held at the Catskill Fly-Fishing Center and Museum from 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 noon on April 29 and May 6, 13, and 20, 2006. Contact Bob Osburn at (845) 294-5813 to help. Contact the CFFC at (845) 439-4810 for more information. This class will feature a parachute dry fly, a soft-hackle wet fly, a Minimuddler, a Hare’s Ear Nymph, and a Gray Fox dry fly. See “Being There” above for why you should do this.

**Be a Star:** We need programs for the May and June guild meetings. If you want to demonstrate something, contact Dave Brandt at [dbrandt4@stny.rr.com](mailto:dbrandt4@stny.rr.com) or Judie DV Smith at [darbee1@juno.com](mailto:darbee1@juno.com).

### **The Fly-Fishing Show—Somerset 2006: Added Thanks**

As a result of an editorial error, we failed to credit Gary Sweet for contributing name identification cards for each tyer at Somerset. The cards were complete with the guild logo and added a touch of professional detail to our table. Thanks, Gary.

## **Obituaries**

**Richard Adams.** Richard Nelson Adams died on March 3, 2006 in Matapédia, Quebec. He was 95 years old.

Over a career that spanned more than half a century, Adams guided many famous people who came to the area to fish for Atlantic salmon, including former president Jimmy Carter. Adams began his life on the river as a teenager, putting in about 80 years as a guide and working on log drives.

Jack Lyons, manager of the Cold Spring camp on the Matapédia, called Adams “one of a kind” and a philosopher. . . . Nathalie Normandeau, Quebec’s Minister of Municipal and Regional Affairs . . . said that Adams had been one of the most celebrated ambassadors for the Gaspé region and was known internationally in salmon angling circles. She said that his fame came from his authenticity, discretion and his true nature, but particularly from his passion for his work and for the rivers. . . .

Adams was inducted to the Cullman International Hall of Fame in 1998, receiving the T. B. (Happy) Fraser Award, which recognizes significant contributions to the conservation of the Atlantic salmon. . . . The citation also mentioned his “charm, commitment, and endless patience” and his deep respect for the Atlantic salmon. . . . In his book *A Century of Sport*, Sylvain Gingras called Adams “the dean of salmon fishing guides.”

— *From [www.restigouche.net/obituaries/obits10-06.shtml](http://www.restigouche.net/obituaries/obits10-06.shtml)*

**Richard Jogodnik.** Richard Jogodnik died on February 19, 2006. He was 70 years old. Richard Jogodnik dedicated his life to the health and well-being of animals as a veterinarian and owner of Stamen Animal Hospital, New Rochelle, NY, for 40 years. He was an avid fly fisherman who found a close and loving community with those who shared his passion. He was on the board of the Catskill Flyfishing Center and Museum in Livingston Manor, NY; a member and past president of the Croton Watershed Chapter of Trout Unlimited; and a member of the Angler’s Club of New York, the Atlantic Salmon Federation, and the American Museum of Flyfishing in Manchester, VT.

**Dr. John Frederic Oswald.** Dr. John Frederic “Fred” Oswald died on March 26, 2006. He was 68 years old..

Fred Oswald was an avid fly fisherman and one of the founders of B.O.J.C. Michigan Fly Fishing Chapter. He was a member of Trout Unlimited and the Federation of Fly Fisherman. He also enjoyed photography, oil painting, and was a published author.

**Eugene E. Clark.** Eugene E. Clark died Sunday, March 26, 2006. He was 79 years old. Survivors include his wife, Mary Dette Clark; two sons, Gary Clark of Greenlawn and Alan Clark of Greenlawn; two daughters, Linda Fox and husband Frank of Centerport, NY, and Gail Martin and husband Benjamin of Hillsboro, OR; and six grandchildren.

## Good News

**Ed McQuat** was operated on for bypass surgery on a Tuesday, returned home that Friday, and was back in action at the February guild meeting. We’re glad to hear he’s recuperating and out and about.

**Floyd Franke** was also seen out and about in Roscoe on Opening Day. We hope the rehabilitation from his stroke is speedy and short.

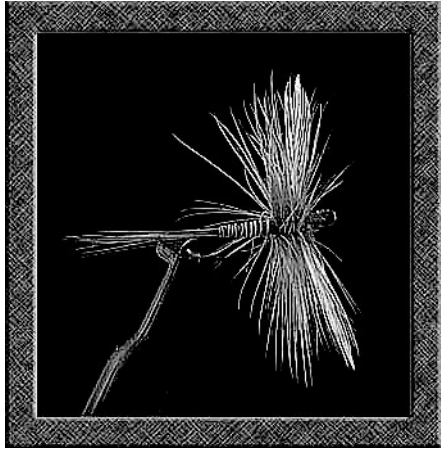


## **The Modern Genealogy of Impressionistic Patterns: The Flies of William James Lunn**

William James Lunn was the river keeper for the Houghton Fishing Club (founded in 1822) on the River Test at Stockbridge, England, a position he held from 1887 to 1932. He was succeeded by his son, Alfred and by his grandson, Mick. When Mick retired in 1992, he ended a 105-year period of Lunn service to the Houghton Fishing Club. In his book *River Keeper* (1934), John Waller Hills wrote, “As compared to [Frederick M.] Halford’s correct imitations, Lunn tied his to please the fish, and the ties had the appearance of studied carelessness, being loosely dressed and indefinite in shape. Lunn had forty patterns, sixteen winged, thirteen hackled, seven spent spinners and four nymphs, showing the growing preference for hackled patterns.”

Six of these have survived: Lunn’s Particular, the Houghton Ruby, the Sherry Spinner, the Yellow Boy, the Hackle Caperer, and the Blue Upright. Examples of all six, tied by William Lunn himself, are in the possession of Terry Hellekson and can be viewed in color on his Web site, [www.hellekson.com](http://www.hellekson.com).

### **Lunn’s Particular**



(Viewed from above)

Hook: sizes 14 and 16 with turned-up eye  
Thread: Crimson  
Wings: Medium dun hackle points, tied spent  
Tail: Fibers of Rhode Island red cock hackle  
Body: Undyed Rhode Island red hackle stalk  
Hackle: Rhode Island red cock hackle

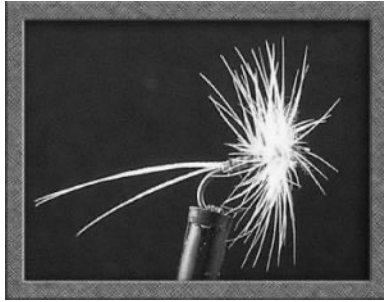


Hills wrote, “It was in 1917, when the river keeper was fishing with a Mr. Gilbey, of London Gin fame, on Park Stream, fishing was poor, and Mr. Gilbey complained to Lunn, ‘The trout are too particular today.’ Lunn gave him a new fly which immediately took three trout. On inquiry from Gilbey, ‘What’s this fly?’, the reply was: ‘It’s Lunn’s Particular.’” “Particular” in England at the time was an expression meaning a “particular favorite” and was applied usually to adult beverages. Therefore, Lunn was indulging in some humor when he told Gilbey, the gin distiller, that this fly was his “particular.”

When Lunn was shown a copy of this fly that had been purchased from Hardy’s shop in London and asked what he thought of its tying, he turned the fly between his forefinger and thumb for a moment and said, “They’ve got the hook right.”

As Hellekson writes in *Fish Flies: The Encyclopedia of the Fly Tyer’s Art* (Gibbs Smith, 2005), William Lunn “never was completely convinced that dry flies needed to be so accurately tied that they duplicated the natural in its entirety. After all, the trout view the fly from the bottom side. These flies for the most part broke with tradition. Most English flies at that time had very large, wide wings,” but Lunn “felt that a well-hackled fly would last longer and sit better on the water than a fly tied with wings. He also pointed out that a fly with wings was difficult to cast and often keeled over on its side in the water, looking very unnatural to the trout. And he made it very clear that flies produced with wings were to catch fishermen, not fish.”

## Lunn’s Blue Upright



Hook: Size 14 with turned-down eye.  
Thread: Cream  
Tail: Light dun cock hackle fibers  
Body: Peacock herl stripped of flue  
Hackle: Light dun cock hackle



*Thanks to Terry Hellekson for the pictures, recipes, and text.*

## **Dying Mallard as Wood Duck: Like Traditional Materials? Go Nuts!**

*Before there were modern chemical dyes, the dying of materials practiced across the millennia used ingredients found in nature. Here's one applied to a much-used fly-tying material.*

There's a technique I have successfully used to dye mallard flank feathers the color of wood duck. A number of guild members have asked me about this, so here it is.

I use black walnut husks. These are the green covers of the walnuts themselves. These nuts can be found all over Orange County in the fall. I have found that "road hunting" in the Warwick area has yielded the best sources, but I'm sure that many members can find trees near them. I have been told, however, that black walnut trees are not all that common in the area of the Catskill Mountains. My experience in the backwoods has confirmed that.

In the fall, the nuts can be gathered from the ground. Use gloves from the start, because the stain cannot easily be gotten out of the skin. I take the green husks off the nuts by squashing them with a hammer. I have been told by old-timers in the area that they also can be gotten off by running over them with car tires. I would think that about twenty nuts would be more than enough for the tyer who ties only his or her own flies.

After getting the husks off, I put the nuts aside to dry. They're ready to eat in a month or so. Although they're tough to break open, the taste can't be beat.

I cover the husks in a stainless steel pot with cold water to which I've added either alum or vinegar. I heat the pot to just short of boiling, then, after ten minutes or so, I leave it to sit and cool. Once everything cools down, I drain it, keeping only the colored liquid.

I now put the feathers into this liquid. I would guess that twenty hulls could dye one ounce of feathers. Before dying them, I wash the feathers in a bit of soap to get any fat off. Once the feathers have soaked in the colored liquid, I heat it up, again just short of boiling. Then I let it cool down again, and when it's cool, I strain out the feathers.

I spread out the feathers on paper towels and leave them to dry in a pan under a light. Once they're dry, they're ready to use. If you want to know more, consult *The Craft of the Dyer*, by Karen Casselman (Dover Books, 1993).

—Bill Leuszler

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild *Gazette* is issued six times a year to members. Membership is only \$10.00 per year. New, first-time members also get a **FREE** copy of the booklet *Favorite Rivers, Favorite Flies*, as well as discounts on guild patches and pins.

**WANT TO JOIN THE GUILD or GIVE A FRIEND a GREAT GIFT?** Just complete this form, then mail it and a check to: **Bob Osburn, 3 Good Time Court, Goshen, NY 10924** and indicate if it is a new membership or a renewal. **\*\*\*\*\*Remember, memberships renew in February.\*\*\*\*\***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be willing to accept the *Gazette* via e-mail?

Yes (please provide) \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

*Gazette* contacts:

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**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, BBynack@cs.com or 69 Bronxville Road, Apt. 4G, Bronxville, NY, 10708, (914) 961-3521.



William James Lunn



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