

# The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild



# GAZETTE

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**The June meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild** will be held on Thursday, June 18, at 7:00 P.M. in the Education Building of the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum on Old Route 17 in Livingston Manor, NY. The program will feature noted angler and casting instructor Mark Sedotti. He was casting columnist for *Saltwater Fly Fishing* magazine for its first five years and is widely known for this ability to cast a very large fly for distances up to 180 feet. Mark will be tying streamers for big trout and, if there's time, a saltwater streamer pattern. He also will do a casting demonstration before the meeting.

If you'd like to tie along with Mark, bring your vise and some Zonker strips, large streamer hooks, tungsten beads or cones, Flashabou and other flash, and, for the saltwater pattern, bucktail, dumbbell eyes, and 1/0 to 4/0 saltwater hooks.

## New Guild Secretary

Erin Phelan of Westbrookville has agreed to fill the position of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild secretary-treasurer. You can contact Erin at [jphelan@hvc.rr.com](mailto:jphelan@hvc.rr.com) or (845) 754-7456. The guild welcomes her to this important post. Judie DV Smith has been acting secretary/treasurer for the last three years while the organization has sought a replacement. The guild thanks—no, it pays tribute to, stands in awe of, and collectively tips its hat to her and her numberless contributions over the years, which still continue.

## Bicentennial Fly Contest

At the Fly Tyers Rendezvous on April 18 at the Rockland House, the winner of the tying contest to celebrate the Bicentennial of the Town of Rockland was announced. The rules specified wet flies no larger than a size 8, tied on a traditional wet-fly hook. Flies had to include three of the following colors: royal blue, maroon/claret, white, and gray, the colors of the local high schools. The winner was John ("Catskill John") Bonasera, whose fly appears at right. Lloyd Richards placed second, and Mike Hogue placed third. The fly will be on display at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum as part of the bicentennial festivities.



## The Guild on the Web

Tired of waiting for news of the guild to arrive via the *Gazette* and monthly meeting notices? The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild has a group Web site hosted by Yahoo, with a message board, photo

posting, a calendar, and e-mail messages and notifications. Just go to [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Catskill\\_Fly\\_Tyers\\_Guild](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Catskill_Fly_Tyers_Guild) and register.

## Sparse Grey Matter

Also on the Web, there is a new bulletin board devoted entirely to tying Catskill-style flies. The site, with the witty name Sparse Grey Matter, is hosted and administered by Joe Fox of Dette Trout Flies and is moderated by Mike Valla and Jim Slattery. The level of knowledge about Catskill flies and fly tying in general is unequalled. Check it out at <http://www.sparsegreymatter.com>.

## Pequest

I would like to thank all the tyers who donated their time to tie at the Pequest Open House on April 4 and 5 at the New Jersey Department of Fish and Game's Pequest Hatchery. Thanks go out to Chally Bates, Elmer Hopper, and Brian McKee, who tied on April 4, and to Mike McAuliff and Anthony Giaquinto, who tied with me on April 5. We had our best weekend since we started tying at this event four years ago: one renewal and four new members, plus \$75.00 in fly-plate raffle sales. Again thanks to everyone involved who made this event a success.



(Photo, left to right: Mike McAuliff, John Collins, Anthony Giaquinto, and Elmer Hopper)

—John Collins

**B**ack in February 2005, I was going through the wet-fly plates in Ray Bergman's *Trout* when I came across a fly called the Blue Professor. I researched it a bit and found a brief description of the fly in Mary Orvis Marbury's *Favorite Flies and Their Histories*: "The Blue Professor is simply the old Professor made with a blue body instead of yellow. In some parts of the Adirondacks it appears more taking than the true Professor" (p. 350).

When I looked at the patterns listed for the two Professors in *Trout*, I noticed that the Blue Professor has the tag of gold omitted, and the recipe for the tail calls for crimson instead of the Professor's scarlet red. So the question that arises is why does Mary Orvis Marbury's book state there is no difference between the Professor and the Blue Professor except the body color, while Bergman's book shows a difference between the two? Actually, it's not unusual to find such conflicts. For example, for the Blue Bottle, *Trout* states that the fly has a tail, but for the same fly in *With Fly, Plug, and Bait*, the tail is omitted and a tag of gold is added. The Silver Doctor actually has three different variations listed, one in each of Bergman's three books.

Variations aside, the true test for this fly came during Bug Week in June 2005 in the Catskills, where I have had much success with the traditional yellow Professor. I fished the Blue Professor in riffles and in medium to faster-moving water and caught my fair share of brown trout. I also found that this pattern fails to produce in slower to still waters.

### *The Wet-Fly Corner*

With Andy Brasko, a Genuine Wet-Fly Fisherman



I was fishing slower water and just could not get this fly to work. I moved downstream to where I spotted a riffle, made two casts, and landed a beautiful brown trout. I was so excited that I released the fish in record time, made another cast, and landed another brown in the same area. Honestly, I had doubted that the blue-bodied Professor would work as well as the standard yellow-bodied pattern. One thing I did learn about the Blue Professor is that I caught only brown trout with it, and it works only in the flows that I described above. When I have switched to the traditional Professor and fished the same stretch I have caught brook trout, as well.

This year, during Bug Week, I will be fishing a two-wet-fly rig, one with the Blue Professor and a dropper with the traditional Professor to see if one catches more fish than the other. This is one fly that you will always find in my fly box—next to the traditional Professor. Give it a try. I am quite sure you will be happy with the results.

*Update:* In “The Wet-Fly Corner” in the April 2009 *Gazette*, where I wrote about the Blue-Winged Olive wet fly, I said that I was going to fish this fly in size 8 and report back on how it worked. Well, in New Jersey waters this spring, this fly produced very well. Browns and brookies had no issue with the fly being size 8, and it drew some very violent strikes. I will be fishing with this fly on the Catskill streams during Bug Week of 2009 if any Blue-Winged Olives are present.



Photo: Annie Brasko

### **The Blue Professor**

Hook: Mustad 3906, size 8

Thread: White Danville 6/0 (underbody) and black Danville 6/0 (head)

Tail: Scarlet red paired duck or goose quills (three quill segments)

Body: Two strands of sky-blue Danville floss wrapped from back to front

Rib: Size 16/18 gold Mylar tinsel

Wings: Paired mallard flank (left-curving and right-curving slips)

Full collar: Brown hen cape

Head: One coat of Griff's Thin, Two coats of Griff's thick

## Tying Notes

The recipe listed above is a modified pattern from Bergman's *Trout*. The tail is scarlet red instead of crimson. As a tyer, I wanted the tail color to be the same as the traditional Professor's. And I tied the pattern with a traditional full collar instead of a beard/false hackle. I did follow the rest of the pattern and omitted the tag. For the Catskill experiments, I will be tying the Blue Professor exactly the same way as the traditional Professor. I am wondering if the tag will help trigger a few strikes from brook trout on this fly. Only time will tell.



### *Looking Back Upstream*

## Fly Tying as a Profession By Harry Darbee

Fly tying as a profession is, it seems to me, somewhat a delusion if a monetary reward is the sole consideration. Before I elaborate on this statement, let me say that fly tying is the only occupation for which I gave a continental damn.

To me, fly tying represents a way of life quite as much as it means a livelihood. Tying flies along the banks of a beloved stream away from the bustle and stench of a city is my idea of the ultimate in occupations. Whether or not I would still be enamored of the craft if I were compelled to make my living at it in some large city or less pleasant surroundings, I cannot say. I never will know the answer either; I have not the slightest intention of ever trying to find out.

Calling fly tying a way of life may not be understood by the average person, but I am sure the professional will readily understand and probably at least partially agree with the definition. To those who have not spent hours at this fascinating pursuit and whose curiosity leads them to read this, I had better explain just how I regard my occupation as a way of life.

Tying flies for a living has enabled me to enjoy a certain independence of action and thought not easily come by in these days of mass production and time-clock dominated lives. It is a profession not apt to be displaced nor even much changed by machines. It is also about as individual an occupation as one can find outside the arts.

Some people do define fly tying as an art in itself, but with this I do not concur. I believe the fly tyer is an artisan for perhaps 98 per cent of his time and perhaps an artist the other 2 per cent. When creating a pattern or inventing a style or type of fly not heretofore known or maybe in adapting new techniques to old fly-dressing problems, a tyer could be called, temporarily at least, an artist. But to place an artistic label on the humdrum process of repeating a pattern day after day, as any professional tyer must to earn his dinner, is stretching the word artist beyond its meaning so far as I am concerned.

However, if I cannot consider a fly tyer an artist in the full sense of the word, I can certainly proclaim him an individualist in the fullest definition of the term. Comparison of the work of several top-flight tyers will prove the point. The product of each is as dissimilar as the faces and personalities of the tyers. Yet they will be equally excellent specimens of workmanship. The very requirements of fly tying vary in different localities and with different species of fish for which flies are tied. To a person who is inclined toward an individualistic occupation, this is one of the chief attractions.

There are several general categories into which fly tyers may be divided. A man can choose one of these and work entirely within his work so that it will come under several or all of these categories. And by categories, I mean such divisions of fly tying as salmon flies, steelhead flies, streamer flies, bass bugs, wet flies, dry flies, etc. Then the tyer may do an entirely wholesale business, catering to very large purchases of some type or types of flies. Or he may prefer to do custom work, tying small and

medium-sized orders of extremely varied character for a select clientele. I prefer the custom tyer's viewpoint and have followed it for years. I do not think there is much to choose one way or another from a cash standpoint. Custom orders go slower because of the varied nature of the order and the size of the unit. The wholesale order goes faster because repetition makes for speed in tying. Persons of unusual ability and speed can, of course, better themselves accordingly. But no one makes a million at it.

Without trying to raise a sense of false optimism in the reader who may contemplate fly tying as a livelihood, I believe it safe to say that there seems to be an adequate market for the product of a good conscientious fly tyer in either the wholesale or custom markets. Contributing to the fly tyer's enjoyment of his profession is the opportunity to meet and talk with the like-minded people who will be his customers and angling associates. There seems to be a very forthright and unselfish attitude among anglers and fly tyers that is refreshing in these highly competitive days. Fly tyers swap more information freely than any group with which I have ever come in contact. Oddly enough, it does not seem to be detrimental, and I suspect the same attitude could benefit followers of many other vocations.

Most of the fly tyers of my acquaintance are also anglers, many of them excellent ones. Lots of them are widely traveled and well read, and an evening in their company is always well spent. As correspondents, anglers and fly tyers seem to have few equals, and seldom does the fly tyer find time heavy on his hands—he almost always has letters to answer.

As for mental enjoyment, the fly tyer who acquires a full or even competent understanding of his craft will send his mind in search of information in many directions. To list just a few of the varied subjects—stream entomology, fish habits and habitat requirements, light conditions encountered in fishing and the relation to fish vision of these conditions, dyeing, fly materials and sources, etc.—that most fly tyers have occasion to explore more or less, at one time or another, will again emphasize the point that boredom should be lacking entirely.

There is also a large and growing literature of fly tying and angling. This field alone could occupy one for years. Angling literature is anything but monotonous, and food for thought aplenty will reward the reader. No custom tyer can neglect the books on angling and fly tying without detriment to his career. I think the entertainment alone well worth my time spent with the angling books I can get hold of, even if it were not practically mandatory to read them in order to keep up with my vocation.

Further, a study of the flies to be tied with regard to the mechanical construction and variations to meet requirements of the various manners of use is necessary and unending. Fly tying is not a static profession. The changes and new methods of use and the materials being added yearly to the stock of the fly tyer are endless. One will find it exciting just to try keep abreast of developments.

Another angle of the fly-tying game that cannot be learned to any great extent by reading alone is perhaps as interesting as a multitude of books. I refer to the knowledge of materials for flies. True understanding of hackles, hooks, feathers, etc., comes only by handling these items and comparing texture, color, and quality from the day tying is first started to that day when the last fly is tied and the final trip is taken, beyond which no one has ever returned to tell of the fishing. Anyone who claims to know it all when it comes to fly materials is a plain fraud.

I have been asked many times for advice by would-be fly tyers. My formula is quite simple. Several items are, I believe, very necessary but not necessarily in order of importance. All are important.

*Merchandising ability.* This encompasses a thorough knowledge of the product, its market, and value. I doubt that anyone can succeed either as a tyer for someone else or in his own business if this knowledge be lacking. This is more or less true of any business or profession but doubly so in fly tying.

*Industry.* Here is an old one whose value has been stressed for all of us since earliest childhood.

*Professional competence.* Know your trade at least as well as any successful plumber or bank clerk knows his.

*Capital.* It need not be a fabulous amount, but it is hard to keep going on a hand-to-mouth basis, and failure is easy if the tyer cannot or will not invest in his business. A start on small capital is best; then, regardless of success, loss will be at a minimum. Just what minimum sum of capital is necessary to launch a fly-tying venture will be governed by the kind of flies and the sort of business proposed. If the embryo tyer does not know how much money he needs, he surely does not know the rest of his trade well enough to burn his bridges and go all-out on a fly-tying venture. Starting small in spare time and working up to a full-time tying business is my idea of a safe method of becoming a professional tyer.

*This article first appeared in Field & Stream in August 1953. Many thanks for research and transcription to Judie DV Smith.*

## **Fran Betters Updates**

When I got home from another trek up to see Fran Betters, I received the April issue of the *Gazette* with my piece about visiting him. This time, we drove up the Northway to exit 30 and on to Route 73, past Chapel Pond, then took the long way to the river via the cascades (both still iced over), just so we could drive down River Road to Route 86 following the West Branch of the Ausable to see if anyone was having any luck on Opening Day. The wind was blowing, and my arthritic fingers didn't need a thermometer to tell them the temperature was in the midthirties. We would not be wading today.

We stopped at the iron bridge and walked out to midspan without seeing a fish. It meant no stocking had been done, and holdovers would be tough to come by for anyone giving it a try. Well, there was ten miles of river, and not a soul was "giving it a try." We saw a single car parked along 86, but no one was in sight . . . a brave fisherman perhaps swept away in the current . . . a hiker . . . a breakdown . . . or just some one relieving himself behind a tree?

We had phoned several days ago, saying only that we'd be up sometime this week, but knowing that Wednesday was roll-baking day, hadn't bothered to call back with a specific date—and you know what they say when you assume something. But a couple of quick phone calls, and quite surprised, we soon found ourselves traveling down to "The Acres" to pick up Fran and bring him up to the shop.

We found our way through the maze to Fran's house on the very first try, backed right into his open garage, and went inside. We met his hospice nurse, who knew the plan, having been one of the phone calls Dot had made from the shop. She put on a weightlifter's belt and wheeled Fran out to my car, where she deftly lifted him from the wheelchair into my front seat. I took careful notice of how she did this maneuver, because I knew I would have to remove him and get him into a second wheelchair at the shop in the reverse manner. "Good thing I've been working out three times a week," I thought as we bid farewell and drove away. This could be comical, or a disaster.

But I needn't have feared, for Fran weighs about as much as my 6-weight . His color was better than the last time, but his legs and feet are now useless and much like a puppet's legs without the strings. Once inside the shop, Fran wheeled himself into the space where he ties, but just getting him there tired him, and although we talked quite comfortably for a couple of hours, he never tied a single fly. His friend Pat came in and tied Beadhead Picket Finns, a far-out variation of an old favorite fly.

Fran was in good spirits. He seemed genuinely glad to chat, smiling at our (and his own) jokes. Two customers came in and bought four dozen Ausable Wulffs. We had met them last year at Fran's

shop, and Fran remembered them, too. For minutes at a time his mind was off his troubles. Then a bit of the tiredness would creep, in and he'd rest for a minute. He seemed determined not to refresh himself with his oxygen contraption.

Jan showed up just as we were leaving. Fran gave us some Australian possum, dyed orangish for his Ausable Wulff body dubbing. I said I'd tie one and bring it up for his critique in May at the "Two Fly" Contest. . . . He didn't have to reply. His eyes smiled at me, and the obvious was left unspoken.

"I've got a feeling you're gonna fool 'em one more time," I said with a handshake—then a hug for Jan . . . and we were out the door.

I drove down to the public beach on Lake Everest and the backed-up water behind the Wilmington dam. "It's Opening Day," I said, "and I'm going to make a dozen casts or until my fingers fall off."

The wind was blowing fiercely and a cold rain had begun to fall. "It's Opening Day," I said again as I watched my line shoot out forty feet and just hang there with my Beadhead Woolly Bugger four feet above the water and wondered if they had ever tried to crossbreed a brown trout with a flying fish.

*Later. . . .*

Had a great time up at the Ausable Tenth Annual Two Fly Contest, tying Klinkhammers Friday night during registration and hanging out with the contestants. Saw Fran Saturday and again Sunday. He did do some tying while I was there, and I bought eight more of his flies, then later, three more . . . I should have made it an even dozen, but he stopped tying, and because the river was roaring from the heavy rainfall Saturday evening, I decided to head home. I asked Fran to sign four more of his postcards featuring the old shop.

Fran is still hanging in there, but he gets frailer every time I see him, and every time I see him, I think there is no way he could look frailer and weaker than the time before. We got him telling stories and jokes and smiling, but this time he did not remove the oxygen as he had done in the past—not even once. Three days before, he had asked the docs to shut off his defibrillator, so now, if he goes—he goes, and he does not have to "go" twice, which I suppose, will mean the end—the end of Fran, the end of Fran's flies and stories, and the end of an era . . . but the beginning of a legacy.

I am sorry I never got to fish with Fran. He was always busy tying at his shop whenever I stopped in, and though I often thought of asking him to hit the water with me, I always had the feeling that to go would cost him monetarily (tying/selling flies), and not wanting to put him on the spot, I never did. I will be up there for three days starting June 5, and I will visit him again then. There is no movement on the sale of his shop. The price was lowered again, this time from \$750,000, to \$699,000 . . . still, I'm afraid, about a third too much, in my own opinion. Too much work is needed on the six-unit motel and the apartment house. The shop is in fine shape, as is the little restaurant that is rented out to a young and friendly local man. I had breakfast there twice and lunch on Saturday—everything's perfectly cooked to my taste, from the (no runny whites) eggs to the Reuben and "real" fries.

Jan told me that they sold his house (pending) and the deal is that Fran can live there for the remainder of his life.

*—Bob Mead, via e-mail*



## Governor Update (The Fly, Not . . .)

Nice write-up on the Governor wet fly . . . it can be deadly on the Esopus at times when *Isonychia* are active. I tie it in size 4 and 6, though, and fish it in higher and slightly stained flows . . . great results for rainbows.



—Ed Ostapczuk, via e-mail

## Made in Japan

I would like to inform you about the Made in Japan exhibition at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum. The exhibition features items that collected by me for this exhibition. The exhibition will last at least till the end of 2009.

Some of the flies in the exhibition include *ayu kebebari*, tied by Yukio Katsuoka, who was honored as a Japanese Traditional Craftsman by the Japanese government in 1962. This traditional Japanese fly is for fishing for *ayu*, which is a fish indigenous to Japan. *Ke* means “feather” and *bari* means “hook” in Japanese. The oldest book that discusses the origin of this fly was written at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

*Tenkara* is the traditional Japanese method of fly fishing. With origins in ancient Japan, *tenkara* has been perfected over centuries to become the preferred method of fishing small streams. Today, it employs twelve-foot-long carbon-fiber rods that telescope down to twenty inches. Only a rod, line, and fly, but no reel, are used.



*Tenkara*



*Tenkara kebari*, tied by Dr. Hisao Ishigaki

Some of the flies and other items in the exhibition were donated by the club members of World Fly Fishing of Japan (<http://wffj.org>), the Japan Fly Fishers ([http://www.jff.gr.jp/jff\\_main/index.htm](http://www.jff.gr.jp/jff_main/index.htm)), and readers of the Japanese magazine *Flyfishers*.



The paper flies hanging in the exhibition were made by Toshio Kamitani, who is a member of the Public Relations Committee of World Fly Fishing of Japan. He made them to photograph their shadows. These photographs are published in a book called *Paper Flies*.

The bamboo rod, which was made from Japanese bamboo, was donated by Yukihiro Yoshida. He was an angler for Fly Fishing Team Japan in 2002.

If you have any comments, please send e-mail to me. Tight lines and tight wraps.

—*Misako Ishimura, misakoflyfish@gmail.com*

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild *Gazette* is issued six times a year to members. Membership is only \$10.00 per year. For membership renewals, send a check, your current address and phone number, and, if you wish to receive the *Gazette* by e-mail, your current e-mail address, to:

**Bob Osburn, 3 Good Time Court, Goshen, NY 10924**

**➤➤➤➤➤ Remember, memberships renew in *February* <<<<<<<**



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](mailto:budbynack@verizon.net) or 69 Bronxville Road, Apt. 4G, Bronxville, NY, 10708, (914) 961-3521.