



# The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild *Gazette*

Volume 26, number 1

January 2023

**This issue marks the twenty-five-year anniversary of the *Gazette*. Although not named the *Gazette* until 2000, the newsletter sent to all guild members in January 1998 was volume 1, number 1. A look back at our first twenty-five years begins on page eight of this issue.**

**The next regular meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will take place at 10:00 AM on January 28. This will be a virtual meeting. The guild has started virtual fly-tying sessions for the winter months, and the next one is scheduled for Thursday, January 12, at 7:00 PM. Zoom links for the regular meeting and for winter tying will be sent by email to all members as the dates draw near.**

## **President's Message** **By Joe Ceballos**



For our twenty-fifth anniversary of this newsletter, let's start with the oldest photo that appeared in an issue of the *Gazette*. It's a black-and-white image of "Steve's Vise," and it's an inexpensive fly-tying vise that you can build for kids. The article that accompanies the image was written by Ed Engelman in the June 2005 *Gazette*, and you can access it [here](#) and scroll down to page three.

I want to wish all guild members a Happy New Year, and hope that the recent holidays have been a good time for all.

This new year of 2023 brings the thirtieth anniversary of the guild and the twenty-fifth anniversary of our newsletter. Both are milestones for our group. There are good changes that we have seen at work, such as the Mailchimp email program that has made the sending of group emails simpler, providing timely announcements. Our website continues to gain content. There are currently 115 past issues of the *Gazette* that can be viewed on our website, and the events page is a great place to check for updates of guild activities.

John Apgar's suggestion of having tying nights on Zoom seems to be a great success and will continue. The informal tying sessions that have been taking place every other Thursday night are a member-driven activity, and the tyers who are showing up have been deciding what the form of future sessions shall be. Continue to check your email for links to the upcoming sessions.

From my conversations with many members at the Fly Tying Symposium, the consensus seems to be that all are in favor of learning about fly tying in an historical context. Activities to do so will be planned for the future. Live meetings will not start again until March or April, because the winter months are not the best for travel conditions, and we have been having very good attendance in our virtual meetings, which are much more convenient for our members during this time of year.

Please read the notices that were emailed to everyone on December 31 and January 3 regarding the elections that are required to take place in February, in accordance with our by-laws. So far, members running for office are Joe Ceballos for president, John Apgar for vice president, Ed Walsh for secretary/ membership, and Chuck Coronato for editor. If there are other candidates in addition to those mentioned, please contact the guild via email at [catskillflytyersguild@gmail.com](mailto:catskillflytyersguild@gmail.com). The latest date to notify us of will be January 14, 2023, so we have time to put together a slate of candidates and plan some time for them to speak if they choose to do so during our regular membership meeting on January 28.

February is time to renew memberships. If you haven't yet renewed your dues, please renew by going to <https://cftg.limitedrun.com/>.

Here's hoping that we all have a great 2023!

## **Mother's Pool Winter** **By Lois Ostapczuk**



*Mother's Pool Winter*, by Lois Ostapczuk

Often, when we travel from Phoenicia to Mount Tremper, my husband will utilize Old Route 28/ Plank Road along his Esopus Creek. And just as often, when we pass Mother's Pool, he'll point it out to me saying, "That's a famous Esopus Creek pool, but I rarely ever catch a fish there."

Recently, he asked me to paint a watercolor of Mother's Pool as it lies asleep in winter. Given the wintry landscape, I was able to do this painting without using white gouache, but instead left areas of the watercolor paper untouched, representing snow. In addition, the sky was kept dull, with a hint of a glow, for a more wintry appearance. Maybe someday my husband will catch a trout there while thinking of this painting.

View more of Catskill artist Lois Ostapczuk's paintings by visiting:  
<http://catskillwatersart.blogspot.com/2014/02/blog-post.html>

## Decades of Catskill Memories

As I write these words, the day marks the winter solstice, and the year is winding down. It has been thirty years since I answered the call of the Catskills, that mythical region where the trout was invented, along with most of the greatest dry flies with which to catch it. I can think of no better personal way to honor the twenty-fifth anniversary of this fine publication and thirty years of the guild than to recount my own memories of Catskill rivers, trout, and dry flies.

I was born and raised in Maryland and was pulled toward fishing from an early age. I treasured every issue of the big three outdoor magazines that I got my hands on, saving them, to my mother's chagrin. The images of fly fishing for trout haunted me from the beginning, but trout were far away from my Southern Maryland environs. At the pinnacle of the dream world that I longed to enter were the storied Catskills, a fairyland that it would take more than half my life to reach, but reach it I did.

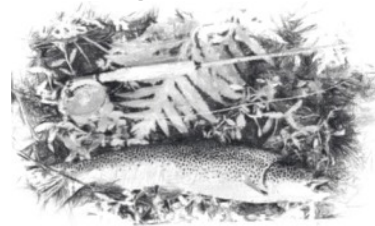
I remember that first morning, arriving in Roscoe, securing my lodging, and nervously donning my waders at the shrine of the upper Beaver Kill. As I walked to the river, the sun illuminated a blizzard of wings in the air above the riffles, and it was all I could do to contain myself. It was mid-May, and the Hendrickson hatch had passed. The thousands of flies in the air were caddisflies, but neither they nor the trout were active on the water below.



Hendrickson's Pool, May 2003 Photo: Mark Sturtevant

Next, I visited the hallowed white house on Cottage Street, nearly bowing as I stepped to the door in front of the sign: "Dette, Trout Flies." On that trip, I met Walt, Winnie, and Mary and learned to call those pale-winged caddis Shadflies. I visited Hendrickson's Pool and hooked and lost my first Catskill whopper, upstream in Barnhart's Pool, on a Dette fly. Memory finds me on the porch of the bed and breakfast house at Rockland Road and Old Route 17, where I blended fur and Antron dubbing with my fingers and tied a pair of Gary LaFontaine's Emergent Sparkle Pupas to try and solve my Shadfly dilemma, and then wading the frothy white water of the Acid Factory Run, where those flies

### *Casting Catskill Cane*



With Mark Sturtevant

performed beyond all hopes and expectations!

Later, in early June, I watched the trout begin to slash at Coffin Flies. The huge spinners dipped their abdomens to plant their precious cargo in the Beaver Kill, and the water exploded as a very large brown rose and leaped with my Coffin Fly in its jaw! I left knowing that I would be a Beaver Kill angler for life.

From that baptism in the cult of the Green Drake, I was mesmerized. Whenever possible, I traveled to the great Catskill rivers near Memorial Day to partake in the ritual of big mayflies and bigger trout. Along the way, I designed many flies to break the code, beginning a fifteen-year odyssey inspired by the ties of Theodore Gordon. I became aware of the fly called the 100-Year Dun that grew from those beginnings, a quest to fashion a more natural-looking dun to deceive the trophy browns that avidly sought the naturals. I tie that design now for all of the Catskill mayflies, from size 8 Drakes to size 20 Olives and Sulphurs, and they are killing flies.

As the count of the seasons grew, I expanded my time and my tramping to include most of the region's great rivers. Slowly, the rivers worked their magic upon me. As my knowledge and angling skills increased, they began to surrender the trophy wild trout I had pictured since those boyhood stories first enthralled me. The West Branch of the Delaware River invited me to explore the vastness of the Delaware River system, where I witnessed terrific hatches unlike anything I had seen!

One fateful July day, I arrived at the West Branch Angler with a thunderstorm on my tail that was following me through Deposit. It passed as I visited with my friends, and by the time I had stowed my bag in the white house, there were clearer skies to the west.

I headed to a favorite run and walked upriver. A rise drew my attention, and I knotted a tiny X-Caddis to my tippet and took that fish—my first two-foot brown trout from Catskill waters! The West Branch was kind to me, but demanded respect. I also recall wandering its banks during the most intense Hendrickson hatch I have ever been blessed to experience, yet never seeing a single rise in the forty-eight-degree water.

I remember hooking into a tremendous fish that slowly, defiantly, motored out of an island channel and into the raging main river with my Quill Gordon, never to be seen again. Another stormy afternoon found me fast to a leviathan with a tiny Blue Quill between us. I tell you now, that brown would have taped at least twenty-eight inches, had the hook not pulled out a few feet from my grasp. Decades of triumphs, decades of defeats, they're all coveted memories of the glory of the Catskills.

There are pools along the East Branch of the Delaware River that I remember fondly, for it is perhaps the most difficult taskmaster of all Catskill rivers, and I have a passion for difficult trout. The Neversink came last in my quest, and the wait proved worthwhile. I shall never forget easing up to the lip of a riffle with three large brown trout gulping Hendricksons in the tail of the pool above me, and the rush of adrenaline when the largest took my CDC emerger and turned that flat, shallow water to effervescent spray!

If the East Branch has an equal in difficulty, it is the wide main stem of the Delaware River that challenges for the title. The river is moody and less likely to reward the angler's patient efforts, but it is captivating and beautiful. There is a photo that forms the header for my blog, a photo I call *Rainbow Bridge*. I was sitting on a bankside rock when a shaft of sunlight broke through the clouds that had persisted throughout the day—the day I landed my first twenty-four inch main-stem brown. I glanced toward the light as it illuminated the far bank of the river and gasped as the rainbow appeared, shining



“Rainbow Bridge” Photo: Mark Sturevant

its colors just long enough for me to grab my little fishing camera and take the shot. That moment, that flash of sunlight, is as vivid and exciting a memory as netting that benchmark trout.

I cherish a host of memories from my decades along these rivers. I have become a Catskill fly fisher and maintain a passion for the flies and the history, as well as for the rivers of my heart. I dreamed for most of those thirty years that I might once fish an entire season here. I worked toward that goal, ever increasing my days upon the rivers until the blessing of my retirement. I found a little house in Hancock, where at last, entire seasons are mine to enjoy. Living here finally drew me to join the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild during my first Catskill winter and further enjoy my immersion in the angling history that helped bring me to the Catskills three decades ago.

Four full seasons upon the rivers of my heart have taught me a great deal, as have my interactions with guild members and visits to the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum. Indeed, my cup is full as I celebrate the close of another season and toast the next thirty years of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild, its members, and its *Gazette!*



A 100-Year Dun Heritage Green Drake tied by Mark Sturtevant

Mark Sturtevant can be followed on his blog, *Bright Waters Catskills*: <https://brightwatercatskill.art.blog/>

## Membership Renewals

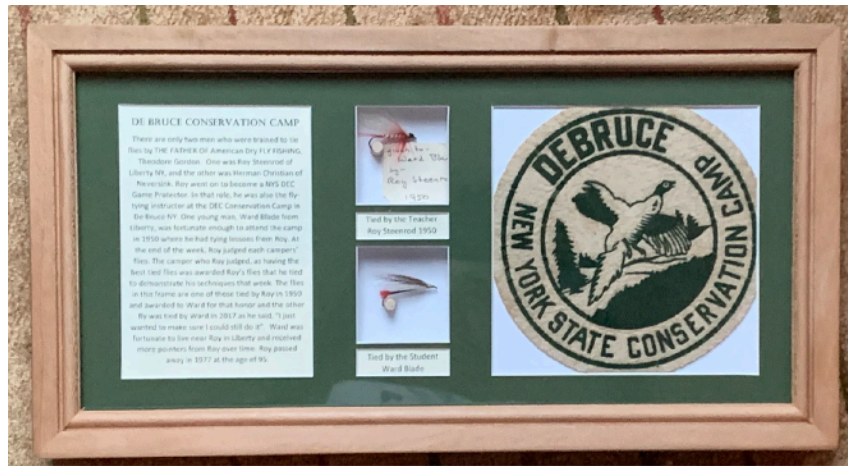
As Joe stated in his President's Message, February is the month to renew your dues for the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild. The cost of dues remains \$20. Renewals and new memberships are both accomplished by using the following link: <https://cftg.limitedrun.com/>.

### Ward Blade By Pete Leitner

Cyrus "Ward" Blade of Neversink, passed away on December 21, 2022. Born in 1938, in Liberty, New York, he was fortunate to have been a neighbor of Roy Steenrod. Thanks to that connection and the generosity of a sponsorship from the Liberty Rod and Gun Club, the twelve-year-old Ward was nominated for a week at the NY DEC Conservation Camp in DeBruce, where Mr. Steenrod taught fly tying. Ward took further "pointers" from Roy during frequent visits to his teacher's tying bench in his home's basement. Ward hadn't tied flies in years. Thanks to a chance introduction to him by Judie DV Smith, I spent three wonderful visits with Ward in his basement, talking about Roy, lessons learned from him, and stories of Ward's days as a teen working at Berner's Sports shop and the "legends," to us, who passed through that shop.

Ward didn't think very often of the skills he had learned from Roy, as his hope of becoming a commercial tyer in the 1950s evaporated with college, a promising career with the New York City water authority as an engineer on the reservoirs and dams, and starting a family—all things that made tying flies take a back seat.

With a lot of encouragement and the assistance of John Bonasera, Ward attended the Fly Tyers Roundtable at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum in September 2022. He called me after



Frame containing a fly tied by Roy Steenrod's, above a fly tied by his student Ward Blade. Photo: Pete Leitner

it. He was very excited, and we talked for a long time. He said, "Everyone was so nice and really wanted to hear about Roy." After Ward's passing, his daughter Heidi reached out and wanted everyone involved in the Roundtable to know how wonderfully they impacted her dad's last days. He and the family were truly thankful.

The stories about Ward are many, but one in particular sums him up. For years I have heard the story from John Bonasera about the old man who had walked into the center one day when John was a guest tyer. He took out a Band-Aid box with five flies in it, said that they were tied by Roy Steenrod, and that Roy taught him to tie. Things were busy, and John couldn't spend time with the fellow before he

left. When John met him again, he realized that Ward was the fellow with the Steenrod flies. To commemorate Ward's days at the camp with Roy, I made frames as a gift for each of his children with a camp patch, a fly tied by him, and a fly tied by Roy. The second frame attached with this story is being donated to the museum and, luckily, the frame that will be auctioned off during the museum's annual meeting also has one of his flies. In his self-effacing manner that I got to know, when Ward sent the fly for the Roundtable frame, he commented that he hoped that having him in it would not hurt the value of the frame. Ward—I think not. That was typical Ward. Rest in Peace.



Above: Frame for the CFFC&M with photo of Ward Blade and one of his flies.  
 Below: One of Ward's flies joins those tied by the esteemed attendees of the Fly Tyers Roundtable.



This newsletter depends on all guild members for its content. Items from nonmembers are welcome at the editor's discretion. Your articles, cartoons, paintings, photographs, reports of information, and bits of whatever else is interesting and fun are vital to this newsletter. Send submissions to Chuck Coronato, [coronato3@verizon.net](mailto:coronato3@verizon.net) or 412 Highland Avenue, Wyckoff, New Jersey 07481 (201) 723-6230

## Looking Back Twenty-Five Years

This is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the guild's newsletter, which was started in January 1998 by Allan Podell. Allan served as editor until he turned the position over to Bud Bynack in 2005. Bud was editor between 2005 and 2020. The name *Gazette* was first used in July 2000, and it was chosen from numerous suggestions offered by guild members. In this current issue, we will have a look back at some of the articles that have appeared in the *Gazette* over the years. It is impossible to represent all of the fine contributions that have been submitted by our active guild members, so please grant me the privilege of selecting just a few articles from past issues of the *Gazette* to appear in this look back. I've recently completed the task of archiving all of the available electronic copies of the *Gazette*, and they're now on the guild's website (totaling 115 issues). You can find them here [Gazette Archives](#). I hope that reading the selected pieces that follow leads you to search through the *Gazette* archives and read the wisdom that was written in our newsletter long before many of us were even members in the guild. For people with our shared interests, the archives are a treasure chest.

Welcome. That's the very first word that you'll read when you go to the archives and pull up the newsletter's first issue. That first word, chosen by editor Allan Podell, opened the dialogue for the vision he laid out for what the newsletter would be. He was putting out an invitation to all guild members to contribute, to share, and to be seen in the pages of what would become the *Gazette*. It was an inclusive message that recognized the wealth of knowledge and talent present in our guild membership, and everything said back then still applies to what can be included today. (You just have to send it to a different address.) Please go to the archives and read that first issue. It looks very different compared with our present newsletter, but you'll recognize many of the same debates that are still relevant to this day, and there's an editor's opinion included that will give you an appreciation for Allan's fiery style and his propensity for not being shy about making his opinions known.

Just as it is impossible to include all of the wonderful submissions from years past that have been made to the *Gazette*, it will be impossible for me to thank all of the people who deserve thanks, so my apologies to anyone who I leave out. Thank you to longtime contributors John Bonasera and Ed Ostapczuk for continuing to write their columns for the guild. Thank you to newer, but equally steady contributors: Mark Sturtevant, Ed Walsh, and Lois Ostapczuk (who adds a delightful burst of color and artistry to our pages). Thank you to guild president Joe Ceballos and vice president Paul Dolbec for their behind-the-scenes appreciation for what I've been doing. Thank you to guild secretary Nicole March for our many conversations on how to get things done and for her extra set of eyes that caught many mistakes in the *Gazette* before it got sent out. Thank you to Judie DV Smith for her original contributions to the guild, and for her personal support in our email conversations and her generosity in sharing her parent's archives with all of us. Thank you to our first editor, Allan Podell, for his vision, and for getting this ball rolling in the right direction. Thank you to Bud Bynack for his professionalism, his dedication, and for raising the bar. I owe Bud special thanks, as he was kind enough to not only choose me to carry the torch, but also to patiently teach me how to do it. Before I met Bud, the *Chicago Manual of Style* didn't exactly ring a bell. When I heard Chicago style, I thought it meant that someone was going to ruin my pizza by making it deep dish. Bud showed the way, and it's my good fortune to be able to call him a friend.



We all know that twenty-five years is quite the chunk of time, even though it seems to pass so quickly. In the previous century, twenty-five years would be roughly the same length of time from the World War II D-Day invasion of Normandy, France, to the first time astronauts walked on the moon. But most of us mark our years according to more personal events: first kisses, graduations, children born, and all things that have meaning and heart. Along the way, right here in the guild, we've made some close friends, and there are some good people who we've lost when they passed over to the other side. As you look through the archives and read the words, you'll remember many dear friends because, as author Norman Maclean wrote in the next to last line of *A River Runs Through It*, "some of the words are theirs." I hope that everyone takes a few moments to look back, and then join together to move on to our next chapter in the same spirit of "welcome" that started this journey.

—Chuck Coronato

## **Fifteen Years** **By Bud Bynack**

It was a spur-of-the-moment decision—a leap into the unknown—and it changed my life. I had returned to the East after decades on the West Coast, and I knew no one here except Gary Sweet, a member of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild who, like me, used to hang out on the old CompuServe Fly Fishing Forum. I joined the guild and had just started to attend meetings at the Rockland House when Allan Podell announced he was looking for someone to take over editing and publishing the *Gazette*, which he'd been doing for the past six years.

I gulped twice and volunteered. A former academic, I'd been doing developmental editing of scholarly books and helping edit a fly-fishing magazine called *California Fly Fisher*, and I told myself that if I didn't offer to take this on, then I had no right to piss and moan about anyone who did. Nobody else in the guild knew me, and I'm sure the regulars wondered, "Who's this guy?" As it turned out, it was the people I came to know and the community I had joined that made it possible for me to find a new home here, in the cradle of American fly fishing. So what matters to me most as I look back on my fifteen-year tenure as editor of the *Gazette* is the people I've met while doing it. I started out a stranger and ended up with a whole lot of friends.

But that presents me with a quandary. As every newsletter editor knows, it is the contributors who make the publication, along with the organization's officers who support it. There's no way I can name them all, and so many have contributed so much. I remember worrying that I had nothing for an upcoming issue, and then pieces would come in from unexpected contributors, articles that were just what I needed. All those I omit, as well as those I mention, deserve everyone's thanks for helping carry the *Gazette* forward and make it what it has been. However, that also means the next couple of paragraphs are going to be like one of those Academy Awards speeches, both too long and yet not long enough.

Allan Podell walked me through his procedure for producing the newsletter and supplied me with the template he was using, but content was what I needed. I review tying books for *California Fly Fisher* (and get paid for it!), and I figured I could run those in a pinch, because the magazine buys only first serial rights. There were a lot of pinches, and I ran a lot of them. But beyond that, what was I going

to do? Fortunately, Judie DV Smith came to my rescue and made possible a lot of what I published early on by introducing me to the real custodians of the Catskill fly-tying tradition and by supplying materials from the Darbee archives. Some of those folks are now fishing on the other side of the Rainbow Bridge—Larry Duckwall, who called me right off the bat and gave me encouragement, Bob Osburn, who was membership chair, Glenn Overton, of tying wax fame, and the inimitable Ralph Graves, among them. I tried to present the guild presidents during my tenure, Hank Rope, Jr., Dave Brandt, and Joe Ceballos, with a professional publication, but it's no secret that the guild's secretary is the person who keeps the organization running, and if it wasn't for the efforts and support of Judie DV Smith, Erin Phelan, and Nicole March, there wouldn't be a Catskill Fly Tyers Guild, much less a guild newsletter.

Looking through the archives, I realize how much Bill Leuszler contributed to the *Gazette* when I began, as did Mike Hogue and Ed McQuat. It dawned on me early on that what I really needed were columnists on whom I could count from issue to issue, and with Andy Brasko's "Wet-Fly Corner," then Catskill John Bonasera's "CJ's Flies" and Ed Ostapczuk's "Up on the Esopus," I had some relief from fears of blank white space, which haunted me like the whiteness of the whale that haunted Ahab. Taking time out of their lives six times a year to write on a deadline is a real commitment, and we all should thank them for it.

There have been a lot of changes between the August 2005 issue, when I took over, and now. One big one is distribution. We used to print it out, photocopy it double-sided, fold it in half, tape it shut, and mail it that way, a form that the Post Office machines frequently tore up. Then, for what seemed like forever, we used regular envelopes. My late wife and I would fold a copy letter style, then insert it in an envelope, then moisten and seal the envelope, then stamp the envelope, then add a printed-out return label to the envelope, then add a printed-out address label to the envelope. And there were a whole lot of envelopes. The total membership tended to run between 200 and 240 individuals, depending on time of year, and we had to do this over and over, for every . . . single . . . one. Wine helped. The guild was slow to follow the trend to email distribution of electronic copies, first in Word and then as PDFs, and for quite a while, we still sent hard copies to a list of old-school members who for one reason or another steadfastly remained offline. (Agnes Van Put still gets one. Live to be 100 or more, and maybe you can, too.) The switch to email made life a whole lot easier.

Something that really jumps out when I look at the archives is the gradual improvement in the look of the thing. I'm a words guy, not a graphic designer, and learning to do layout in Microsoft Word was a challenge. Indeed, laying the thing out remains so—just ask Chuck Coronato. (The secret motto of the *Gazette* is "All the news that fits the print.") I got better at it, Word got better, including its graphics and image capabilities, and although soliciting and editing articles was my main concern, I tried to make it look good—clean and simple—and not just read well.

It eventually got to the point where I thought I pretty much had the thing under control. I should have recognized the danger in that. I had always put energy into improving the *Gazette*, but now I began to notice that I was letting what I was doing be good enough. It was time for someone with new ideas and new energies to take over, though it took me a while to realize it. Like someone waiting for their car's odometer to roll over at a nice, round 100,000 miles, I figured I'd call it quits after fifteen years—at least two or three years later than I should have done it. Chuck Coronato had written a few things for me and had groused gently about a minor change I'd made in one of his pieces. "Whoa, I thought—here's someone who *cares about words!*" So I asked him if he'd take over, and he said yes.

I had him over to my place to watch me do the first editing pass on an issue in February 2020. There was some news out of China about a virus going around—nothing to worry about, probably. We collaboratively edited the next issues, exchanging files as the COVID-19 lockdowns started, with him doing more each time, and then I let go of it and was gone. I said at the time that I hoped all anyone one would notice was that the *Gazette* had gotten better. And under Chuck, it has.

The mission of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild is to “preserve, protect, and enhance” the Catskill fly-tying heritage, and if you look through the archives of the *Gazette*, not just when it was under my stewardship, but across its history, you’ll notice that between “preserve” and “protect,” on the one hand, and “enhance,” on the other, a number of possible relationships have played out and also turn up often in guild discussions. There are those who are interested in preserving and protecting the tradition in various ways and those who are interested in enhancing it in other ways so that it meets the emerging conditions of the future. Ideally, those two ends are complementary, but at any given time, they are in some kind of dynamic tension and seeking a balance. Just as in the past, in the future, you’ll be able to see the current state of that balance in the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild *Gazette*.

*The following “CJ’s Flies” is the first of that column written by John Bonasera, and it appeared in the Gazette of June 2010. Our thanks go to “Catskill John” for his continuing contributions to the guild.*



## The Cinberg

The headwaters of the Neversink River begin at Slide Mountain, the highest peak in the Catskills. The East Branch and the West Branch flow through what’s known as Frost Valley and meet in Claryville. This is the water

that Theodore Gordon fished, as did E. R. Hewitt, and it’s where many Catskill fly patterns were invented, tested, and tweaked.

One such pattern is the Cinberg, a fly custom made for the rough-and-tumble pocket water of the Neversink. I first learned of this fly from an old *Sports Afield* magazine dated April 1979. Phil Chase and Larry Madison wrote an article on the comeback of the Delaware. In it was a mention of the Cinberg, a fly concocted by Doc Cinberg. It was a “caddis spider,” the story read, “made with wood duck feathers.” I was intrigued by this partial dressing and tried to imagine what a spider with wood duck feathers would look like, but I came up with nothing. Unfortunately, like many local patterns that are simply forgotten, this one was also. Or so I thought . . .

Around two years later, with the Cinberg dressing mystery still in the back of my mind, I got a phone call from my close friend Rob J. He and I share a love of cane rods and old fly patterns. He told me he had been in touch with Phil Chase, and the two had fished the Neversink together. As he was talking, something clicked. Phil Chase . . . Neversink . . . wood duck . . . Cinberg!

Phil sent Rob some pictures of a Cinberg, along with some tips on tying it, and I learned that Phil used to tie them for Doc Cinberg himself. Doc, ever so particular about how they should look, would separate them into two piles, “good” and “bad.” Doc would take the “good” pile, and Phil kept the rest.



This fly was designed to be fished on a short line in pocket water. Cinberg would have three or four feet of line out past the tip top with a nine-foot leader and work the water from close in for a perfect drift every time. “Ed Hewitt taught me how to stand on their tails,” he would say.

The Cinberg is a classic example of a fly that looks like nothing, yet imitates everything. Its stiff hackle and tail, tight, slim body, and oversized wood duck collar is perfect for the fast-moving water for which it was made.

The original dressing was as follows.

Hook: Mustad 94840, size 14  
Collar: Wood duck flank feather  
Tail: Brown or ginger spade hackle  
Body: Tan fox fur  
Hackle: Brown

Phil later added a sprig of wood duck to the tail, to go along with the spade hackle. Either way is fine.

The trick to this fly is the collar of wood duck. Wood duck does not wrap very well, so the flank feather is tied in and wrapped first. Choose a good-sized feather and strip off the short barbs so that you have a squared tip section with equal-length barbs. Tie this to the hook with the tips pointing to the front, over the eye. Leave a small gap behind the eye, as you would on a classic Catskill dry. You are going to need this gap for finishing the fly. You are looking for the flank collar to be three to four sizes larger than the hackle.



Photos: John Bonasera

When you wind the wood duck, you want the flank feather to spin slightly, like deer hair on a bass bug, so that the barbs are evenly wound around the hook.

Then tie the rest of the fly with a tail, body, and hackle of a size appropriate for a size 14 hook and, after tying off the hackle, pull the wood duck flank back, bring the tying thread through it, and use the thread to build up a dam in front of the wood duck to keep it in the round. This may take a little practice, but the result is a beautiful classic pattern that has a rich history on one of the great Catskill rivers.

*This “Up on the Esopus” with Ed Ostapczuk appeared in the Gazette of February 2012. As noted by then editor Bud Bynack, it was the first of this new column written for the Gazette. Bud was delighted to welcome the new column, and the guild continues to be delighted that Ed still writes it for every issue.*

## Ralph Hoffman’s Black Bear

*Editor’s Note: In this issue of the Gazette, we’re delighted to welcome a new column by Ed Ostapczuk on Catskill flies and the Catskill angling tradition. Those who know Ed also know his*

### *Up on the Esopus*



With Ed Ostapczuk

*devotion to the history of fly fishing in the Catskill Mountains, the heritage of those who made it, and the rivers that continue to give it life. Ed speaks from a very clear sense of place—hence the title. However, his experience, knowledge, and expertise span the region and its rivers—the Beaverkill, Willowemoc, and Delaware, as well as the Esopus, including their smaller tributaries, where Ed stalks brook trout with his favorite cane rods. We look forward to sharing Ed’s knowledge and enthusiasm for the entire Catskill angling heritage as seen from up on the Esopus.*

If ever there was a Catskill trout stream made for swinging wet flies, it would have to be the Esopus Creek, at least in my opinion. When the Shandaken Tunnel is open, many times the river is big and bold, full of pockets, runs, and riffles where a well-placed wet fly might reward the fly fisher with a wild, silver-sided dancing rainbow. And the Esopus has a wet-fly historical bent: two of its most famous fly tyers were known for their wet flies, though they tied other flies, for sure.



*The Black Bear in the middle was tied by Ralph Hoffman*

Perhaps the most famous of these is the late Ray Smith. While I never met him personally—he died some ten days before a mutual acquaintance arranged for us to meet—I am familiar with some of his patterns and even have a few wet flies that he tied.

The other renowned Esopus fly tyer who immediately comes to mind is the late Ralph Hoffman, whom I did know. Ralph was a member of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild and a featured tyer on the Guild’s DVD *Fly Tyers, Volume 2: A Guild Sampler*. I met Ralph a long time ago through our local Trout Unlimited chapter. Ralph was quite involved and supportive of it. Folks attending TU meetings held at the Boiceville Inn would gather round Ralph each night, trying to absorb the pearls of wisdom he willingly shared.

And whenever Ralph demonstrated fly tying, the chapter meeting would be packed. He was generous with the chapter, often donating flies he tied for our annual dinner and auction, at which I served as the auctioneer. His flies always brought in a tidy sum during the course of a live auction; I don’t ever recall his selection of flies selling for less than one hundred dollars, and often more.

I learned quite a bit from Ralph—different tying techniques and various wet-fly patterns that he created. One such pattern is Ralph Hoffman’s Black Bear, a wet fly he often used at night, on point with another wet-fly dropper. It’s an easy fly to tie and an effective one to fish. Ralph tied it on a size 8 Mustad 36890 hook. Before you ask me why that hook style, I once asked Ralph that question myself and honestly have forgotten his answer—but he had one. The man didn’t do things without reason.

### **Ralph Hoffman’s Black Bear**

Thread: Black

Hook: Mustad 36890, size 8

Tail: Red calf tail

Body: Chocolate brown wool

Wing: Black bear



*Tie and Photo: Ed Ostapczuk*

Fortunately for me, I have a bunch of Mustad 36890 hooks from the days when I tied hair-wing Atlantic salmon flies, and I still have chunks of black bear that Ralph gave me. At more than one TU meeting, Ralph brought in excess pieces of fur and deer hides to share with other tyers present.

I recall one TU meeting at which I regret that I hassled Ralph privately about fishing this fly and not doing well using it. I could see what I said about his pattern upset him, and I meant only to kid him a bit. But as I told him in later days, I have experienced many a wonderful outing on the Esopus, swinging this pattern as the point fly. I can vividly recall several overcast midsummer days swinging a pair of wets, the Black Bear included, on the Esopus below Phoenicia, between the Rawson Hole and Mother's Pool, picking up 'bows and browns alike along the way. Then there was the last day of a trout season many years ago, fishing the upper Esopus, upstream of Peck Hollow, when a small wild rainbow took this fly and was the last trout I touched that year. But perhaps my fondest memory of using this pattern involves a fish I never caught. It was during the 2005 season. Almost the entire year's fishing on the Esopus was lost due to record flooding that occurred in early April. The Esopus ran red most of trout season, but on the eve of August 2, I finally got up the nerve to try the creek again. I swung two wet flies below Five Arches, downstream into the legendary Chimney Hole. There I hooked what might have been my best fish of the season. It cleared the water three times with the Black Bear in its jaw, but my leader didn't hold. I ended the evening with a few small trout, happy that I did, but I couldn't help but wonder what ate my Black Bear.

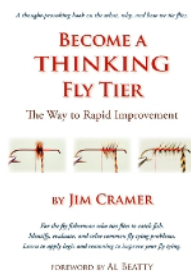
In my possession I have several wet flies that Ralph Hoffman tied, including one Black Bear. These are treasures for sure that will never see a trout stream.

*The following insightful book review comes from the Gazette of June 2013. Over the years, Bud Bynack has contributed countless book reviews for the Gazette, and we thank Bud for continuing to do so.*

## Book Review

### ***Becoming a Thinking Fly Tier: The Way to Rapid Improvement***

*By Jim Cramer. Published by No Nonsense Fly Fishing Guidebooks, 2013; \$27.95 softbound.*



“Try thinking,” the professor wrote on my physics midterm exam when I was a freshman in college. He was right. I had done OK in science and math in high school simply by recognizing that a problem was of a certain kind (a genre, really) and applying the method I’d been taught to solve that kind of problem. However, that was just a sophisticated version of rote learning—a swell way to ace standardized tests, but not actually what should be called “thinking.” I nearly flunked the college freshman physics course because nobody had taught me how scientists actually go about thinking.

Fly tyers are a lot like I was back then. We learn there are certain kinds of problems (getting materials to stay on top of the hook, for example), and we learn established ways to deal with them. If we learn new techniques, it’s because they’re handed down by others—we just apply them. And if we veer into “creative” thinking, it usually involves dreaming up some new fly that, as it usually turns out, is a version of a fly someone else already has thought up. Most fly tyers just apply established protocols to well-defined problems—problems that have been defined for them by others.

Years later, as a professor myself, albeit in a discipline about as far from physics as you can get, I finally understood what my old physics professor had meant and why he was tempted to write such a comment. The comment itself bothered me, and still does: it was his job to teach me *how* to think like a physicist, and that hadn't happened. But faced with the same issue in my own discipline, I realized how challenging an undertaking it is to try to teach someone how to "try thinking."

That challenge is what Jim Cramer takes on in *Becoming a Thinking Fly Tier*. When trying to meet it myself, I realized there are two possible ways to go. In *Becoming a Thinking Fly Tier*, Jim Cramer follows both of them.

The first and most important way is to make a distinction between "rules" and "principles." That's my claim, not Cramer's. However, he tacitly employs it throughout the book.

"Rules" are what every student *wants* to learn: "How should I do this?" they ask. If it's been done before, there will be an answer for that. It can be communicated, learned, tested for, validated by the imprimatur of authority, and perpetuated in that manner. One of the many pressures that teachers face is the understandable, but pernicious insistence by students that they be told the "how" of things—to be told how to follow the rules.

"Principles," by contrast, are what every student *needs* to learn: the general ways in which things work—the energies and resistances of things and of people that underlie the way in which this "this," whatever it may be, comes into being as a problem or issue and therefore the ways in which it can and can't be dealt with. Principles involve what is going on and why, and when posed as questions, those words—"What?" and "Why?"—lead to knowledge of the conditions that help determine possible answers to any simply instrumental questions—to the "How?" questions.

"You will see these simple questions repeated in different forms throughout this book," Cramer writes. "Regardless of how you ask these questions, if you take the time to ask *and* answer them, your tying will improve and you will be on your way to becoming a thinking fly tier."

The important thing here is that unlike the answers to "How should I do this?" there are no predetermined answers to the "What?" and "Why?" questions. They're open-ended. They lead to surprising places. They lead to insights. They lead to what is called "thinking."

In *Becoming a Thinking Fly Tier*, the distinction between rules and principles appears as the contrast between "habit" and "critical thinking." Cramer writes: "Habit is simply the repetition of doing the same thing over and over in the same manner," and "because habit allows us to tie without thought, it is the enemy of critical thinking, and without critical thinking our tying will not improve. Even those habits that you consider to be good habits," he writes, "should be reviewed occasionally" and subjected to critical thought.

This is not necessarily a comfortable process. As Ralph Waldo Emerson put it, more radically, "The terror of reform is the discovery that we must cast away our virtues, or what we have always esteemed such, into the same pit that has consumed our grosser vices."

However, the benefits of critical thinking, of seeking to understand and apply principles, rather than to learn rules, make the whole process worthwhile, and most of *Becoming a Thinking Fly Tier* consists of examples of the kind of insights that becoming a thinking fly tier can yield.

That's the second way to encourage thought: perform the process of critical thinking as an ethical example, hoping that it's the process itself and the sorts of results that it yields, not just the specific results themselves, that others will focus on and emulate.

*Becoming a Thinking Fly Tier* just sparkles with interesting ideas. In the chapter on hackling wet flies, for example, Cramer analyzes what goes on in the hackling process in terms of the physical properties of feathers and hooks. Nothing is more common for a tyer than having hackles go kablooey in some way—splaying out, slanting the wrong way, just getting out of control. Cramer figures out why and what to do about it. He’s got some great ideas about parachute hackling, too. And in an amazing chapter on adding weight to flies, he measures the actual weight and analyzes the relative effectiveness of beads, eyes, cones, and lead wire. It’s always been a mystery how much weight actually gets added to a fly using these various methods, and now it’s not. That chapter alone is worth the price of the book.

There’s more: a new technique that Cramer calls “thatching” — attaching bunches of material in the manner of a thatched roof to form the body of a fly. There’s a “hook rant” about the ways in which the designations of hook sizes don’t really tell you what you need to know about them. There’s a chapter on what he calls “fast food flies,” quickly tied nymphs using a couple of pieces of marabou that accomplish for subsurface flies what Harry Darbee, another thinking fly tyer, accomplished for dries with his Two-Feather Fly. And there are little *lagniappes* in the form of sidebar “Fly Notions” that suggest a whole raft of interesting ideas, such as using organza tape for nymph gills.

There’s a lot more than that, actually. I could go on, but to do so would misrepresent the emphasis of the book. In fact, although Cramer flushes ideas from the underbrush of fly-tying traditions like a bird dog flushes quail, the appeal such ideas points to the tension between these two ways to encourage people to “try thinking”: the more dazzling the results, the more likely they will get in the way of asking the kinds of questions that produced them. The natural interest in “How?” can detract from the focus on “What?” and “Why?” You certainly can buy this book for the results of Jim Cramer’s critical thinking, but you should buy it because it encourages you to think for yourself.

Jim Cramer is a retired engineer who used to work at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California, where the “principal responsibility is ensuring the safety, security, and reliability of the nation’s nuclear weapons through the application of advanced science, engineering, and technology,” as the Wikipedia entry for it puts it, and the habits of thought that he advocates here are particularly characteristic of an engineer’s approach to materials and their applications. Actually, many of the best fly tyers I know have a background in engineering and mechanics. (They also tend to be left-handed, but that’s just weird.) At fly-tying demonstrations and angling shows, they can and will tell you exactly why they make every move they make when tying a particular fly, why they use the materials they use, and why they put *this* wrap right *there*. Jim Cramer wants you to aspire to be like them: “Once you seriously become a thinking fly tyer, you should be able to explain to a student or even another more advanced tyer why you perform a tying step the way that you do. You should be able to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of alternate approaches.” The way you arrive at that point is by striving to be able to make those same explanations to yourself.

In the acknowledgments of the book, I’m thanked in embarrassingly profuse terms, having been involved at a very early stage in the shaping of the manuscript, but as an editor, I don’t have to like the material on which I work—my job is just to try to make it better. Obviously, I like this book a lot, but I like it because I now try thinking every time I sit down at the vise. I like it because it’s made me a better fly tyer.

—Bud Bynack



From the October 2008 Gazette, comes one of the many articles and ties by Andy Brasko. Andy mentions here that this fly, the Captain, has become his trademark, so it's fitting that we revisit it. Check the Gazette archives from 2007 through 2012 to enjoy more of Andy's wonderful wet-fly ties and their history.

**F**all is upon us once again. I truly love the fall and its fishing. It's the time of year when the scenery is bursting with colors that are a Thanksgiving feast for the eyes. This time of year, on bright, sunny days, I reach for my favorite fly—a fly that has become my trademark: the Captain.

Don Bastian introduced me to this fly in the weekend wet-fly class I attended at the Fishing Creek Angler in Benton, Pennsylvania. Some of the wet flies found in Ray Bergman's *Trout* that seem a little drab in the color plates are really gems when they are tied. When I went home and looked at all the flies I tied that weekend, I fell in love with the looks of the Captain. It's one of those flies with just a plain body and wing that gets transformed into eye candy with a little color and is dignified with a touch of peacock herl for the tag. I decided to tie up a dozen of these flies and place them in my fly box.

With most of the flies listed in *Trout*, there is little to no information about when or how to fish these flies, so next I was off to the stream for research. In the spring, this fly caught only a fish or two, and the summer was not much better. It was not until mid-September that I decided to give this fly another try. I was fishing the Beaverkill and tied on a size 6 Captain. About three or four casts later, I felt a slight bump. Thinking the fly had gotten snagged, I started to pull on the fly line again and felt a very slight tug. I decided to retrieve the line slowly and see what is going on the other end. As the fly came into view, all I could do was to stand there in amazement and laugh. I had just landed a three-inch rainbow trout. The size 6 hook was wedged in its mouth, with the tip of the hook barely penetrating the skin. This little guy had tried to inhale the fly.

After I had a good laugh, I realized that if a little trout would go after this fly, the bigger ones should do the same. And sure enough, I wound up catching seven more trout of various sizes, from eight to about thirteen inches. I noted a few things about how the Captain fished that day. The sky was clear, the sun was bright, and the water was clear. Also, all the strikes were hard.

For the next two years, when I fished that fly, I noted that it took fish only sporadically in the spring, but very well in the fall. I also noted that on dark, cloudy days, the fly never caught fish.

I have caught fish on the Willowemoc and Beaverkill and in New Jersey on my home waters of the Ken Lockwood Gorge, the Pequest River, and Big Flat Brook. This is one of the very few flies on which I have caught browns, rainbows, and brook trout. The Captain can always be found in my fly box. Give this classic fly a try, enjoy this upcoming fall fishing season, and don't forget to stop and enjoy all the colors and beauty that make this season special.

### ***The Wet-Fly Corner***

With Andy Brasko, a Genuine Wet-Fly Fisherman





*Photo: Annie Brasko*

### **The Captain**

Hook: Mustad 3906 size 6 or size 8 (For show flies, I prefer to use Mustad 3399, size 6)

Thread: White Danville 6/0 for the underbody and black Danville 6/0 for the head

Tail: Two segments of duck quill dyed red married over two segments of duck quill dyed yellow

Tag: One peacock herl taken from the peacock eye

Body: Two strands of white Danville floss tied in at the back and wrapped forward together at the same time

Beard/false hackle: Brown schlappen (I prefer to use fiery brown)

Wing: Paired duck quills. In Bergman's *Trout*, the wing is listed as "slate." This means natural duck quill.

*Judie DV Smith is the daughter of legendary and influential Catskill tyers Elsie and Harry Darbee. Judie was present for the formation of the guild, served as secretary for many years, and has provided us with access to historic writings and letters from her father. We thank Judie with our sincere appreciation for her generosity.*

*The following is from the Gazette of October 2008:*

*Looking Back Upstream*



### **Fly-Tying Notes from Harry Darbee: Tying the Four-Winged Dry Fly**

*Quoted from a letter to F. B. Lord, August 23, 1947.*

Here is the method I use tying the four-winged flies:

First tie in wings of mallard flank, dividing them and cocking them rather far apart. Grasp them close to the bases and turn them completely under the hook. If the turn is made in the same direction as the tying silk is wound in dressing the fly, they will not loosen.

Second, tie another pair of wings directly over those just turned under, cocking them so as to form a cross with the wings underneath, that is: have them at about equal distance apart in all directions. This will allow the fly to land “cocked” even though on its side or upside down as you desired.

Third, wind back to bend, fasten tail and form body, tying in hackles at shoulder and tying off as in conventional patterns, being careful to not disturb the set of the wings when winding the hackles. Finish off and varnish and the fly is ready for business.

Materials used in this fly are as follows:

Wings—Mallard Flank

Tail and hackles—medium ginger

Body—Gray fur dubbing from fox belly.

[Signed]

Harry Darbee

*From the October 2010 Gazette:*



## Poachers

Letter from Edward R. Hewitt, 48 Gramercy Park, New York 10, NY, June 19, 1944

My dear Mrs. Darbee:

Since you were here poachers got into my place and stole most of my trout from my ponds and pools. They must have taken 4000 in all. It is plain that I cant raise fish here any more to stock the stream as I cant afford such losses and I can afford a night watchman even if I could get one. I am going to dismantle all my ponds now and cease raising fish. If the local population want it this way they can have it. I may buy a few fish to put in the stream if I get enough Rods but this is doubtful. The thing I mind most is that they took all my Norwegian salmon which cost as much to bring over and raise I have only two or three left. This loss alone amounts to over \$500. I hate to stop raising trout an improving the fishing but there is nothing else to do. I can get what fishing I want anyway without any stocking. I have certainly improved the Neversink fishing in the last dozen years quite a lot and this is a poor reward for what I have done for the River. We know who stole the fish but did not catch them.

Yours truly.

Edward R. Hewitt (signed)

*Courtesy of Judie DV Smith, who notes “I copied this exactly the way he typed it.”*

From the December 2010 Gazette:

### Looking Back Upstream



### “My dear Darbee”

Archival material courtesy of Judie DV Smith

Edward R. Hewitt, 127 East 21st St. (off Gramercy Park),  
New York, NY

Aug. 21st. 1935

My dear Darbee,

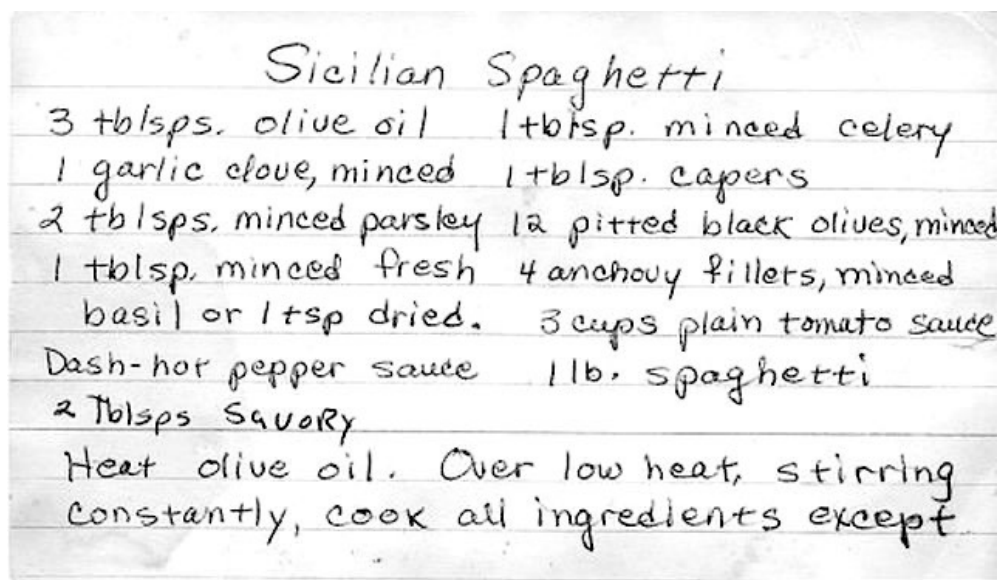
I find that you have no telephone and could not call you up. If you would come over Friday afternoon about five oclock we could look over my layout and try some fishing. This is not good now except at night and I dont like to have the water fished at night as it spoils the daytime fly fishing. My leg is better so that I can get around more but not fish any long time.

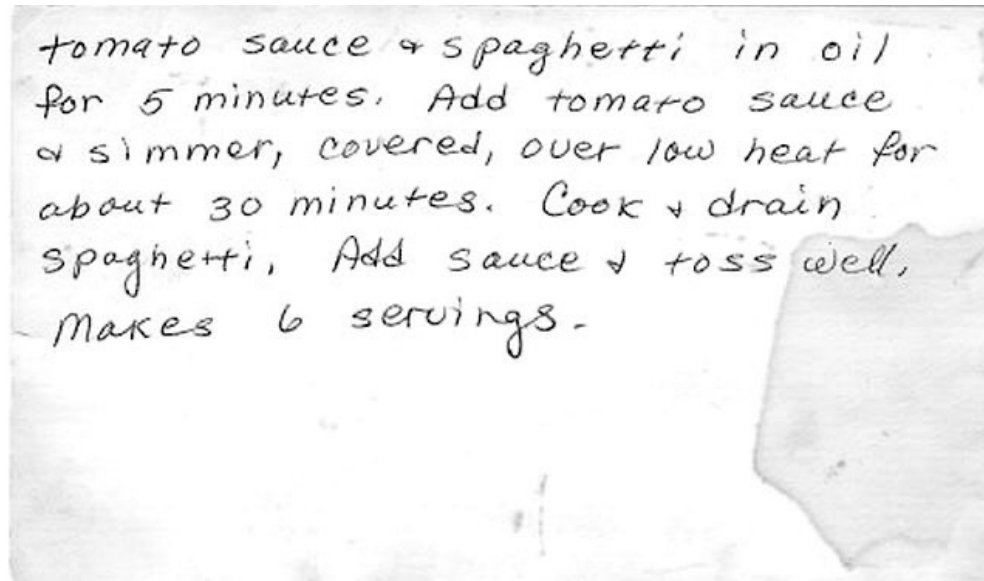
Very truly, Edward R. Hewitt (signed)

*Though we can't promise that eating like a Darbee will improve your fly tying—it couldn't hurt. And this recipe looks pretty good. From the March 2015 Gazette.*

### Elsie Darbee's Sicilian Spaghetti Recipe

For tyers who want to carry the Catskill tradition beyond Mustad hooks, natural fur, and wood duck feathers, here's something to enjoy back in camp. (Courtesy of Judie DV Smith.)





*The following spirited defense of Catskill-style flies was written by editor Allan Podell and frequent contributor Mike Hogue, who also organized the Fly Tyers Rendezvous for the guild and currently sends out his own newsletter in support of his business, Badger Creek Fly Tying and its online [eflytyer.com](http://eflytyer.com). This piece appeared in the Gazette of August 2003. The October 2003 issue is entirely dedicated to guild members voicing their opinions regarding Catskill-style flies, and is a great read that can be found in our Gazette archives. Reading the opinions of Allan and Mike, and going back to the archives for the October 2003 issue, will be a joy for lovers of Catskill-style flies, and we'll all be armed with a few more good responses when someone asks us, "So why do you still fish with those old flies?" All of the writing below appears on the left side of the page, because it has been separated from the two-column form that was used when the Gazette was written as a print copy.*

## EDITORIAL: ARTICLE IN 'FLY TYER' ASKS, "ARE CATSKILL FLIES OBSOLETE?"

### Part 1: by Allan Podell

An article by Morgan Lyle in the current issue of FLY TYER magazine asks the question, "Is the Catskill Dry Fly Obsolete?" In it, the author quotes a few renowned people and cites a few sources to yield a quasi-positive response to the question. Allow me to respond to just about all his sources, his citations and his overall slant on the topic – BOGUS! Now that is a response you'd expect from a member of the CFTG but I am prepared to back it up and show the fallacies of the authors examination of the subject.

Trout do not have the capacity to learn, teach or remember. They react. Therefore, under the right set of circumstances, patterns or styles of flies that worked 10, 50, 100 or more years ago will continue to work with a good presentation.

- The author quotes Al Caucci (who I highly respect). "If you cast one (Catskill dry fly) on glassy-smooth flat water, it just doesn't look like a real insect. And it doesn't look vulnerable enough." However, Al Caucci also wrote (Hatches, p290) "If a dun is being skittered across the surface by gusts of wind or if it is constantly struggling on a surface that is relatively broken, the choice should be a hackled pattern".

- The author quotes Doug Swisher. "Hackle is a ridiculous imitation of legs". Swisher also wrote (Selective Trout, p24) "But stop and think: if you can tell the difference (between a natural and an imitation) thirty feet away, the trout three inches away must be having hysterics". Well, Mr. Swisher, if trout are that observant, I guess they must die laughing when they see, regardless the imitation, a fly with the clearly visible bend, point and barb hanging from the back section. By the way, anybody use a Swisher/Richards 'no hackle' recently? Didn't think so.

- Sales volume as a gauge? What nonsense! Since when does sales have to do with the effectiveness or even the popularity of any pattern? Trout don't read sales reports and how many times has it been said that 'flies are tied to catch fishermen'?

- In the article AK Best is quoted as saying, "I guess it depends on the individual and his needs ... And if I see a rise, I'm going to tie on a hackled fly."

- Even in the article, Jim Brungardt, manager of Yellowstone Angler in Montana, says, "Yeah, these fish are going to need exact representations. But those patterns, the Adams and Cahill, still work in a lot of places, but they've just gone out of favor, I think. It's not that they don't work; it's just that they've gone out of favor."

Admittedly, the Catskill (style) fly is not for every situation. It was designed for specific use on certain type(s) of waters. Specifically, small/medium size moving water. However, regardless of how it was first intended, this style of fly has under various conditions. Can the same be said about the other styles mentioned in that article? Let's see how a 'no hackle' or comparadun does on some quick flowing mountain stream or heavy pocket water.

The simple fact is that, fly fishers like 'new' toys and are fad addicts. They can be new models of rods, reels, lines or a new style/pattern of fly. How often have you seen catalogs describe new fly patterns with phrases like 'must have', 'killer pattern', etc? Yet most of those patterns will be conspicuously missing from the same catalog the following year.

The Catskill fly has been around and catching trout for over

100 years. That's no fad. A properly tied Catskill style fly is as versatile as flies come. In the right hands, and in its intended setting, it will do better than, or as well as, any other style of fly. Even in circumstances for which it was not intended, it will do well. What other style can make all those claims? Obsolete generally means "no longer in general use; fallen into disuse; of a discarded or outmoded type: an obsolete expression." So is the Catskill style 'obsolete'? Hardly. Are there other styles that work? Of course. However, the Catskill style of fly is as effective today as it was over a century ago. Maybe when a trout's brain evolves and it is able to think and learn, the Catskill style fly will lose some of its effectiveness. Until then this style will continue to fool fish and it will continue to fool them long after today's 'fad' flies are long forgotten. (A Podell)

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## Part 2: by Mike Hogue

The most recent issue of Fly Tyer magazine contains an article which basically asks, is the Catskill Dry Fly Dead? After reading the story I have a few useful observations. Like most things made and designed by man, Catskill flies were designed to be used in a certain place during a certain period of time. Many designs reflect the technology, the tools, the materials and the designer's choices whenever something is created whether it is a car, computer or a fly.

Let's take a look at the Light Cahill. In the places which these were fished, the rivers are largely Freestone, which required a fly to be dressed heavily in order for it to float well. This fly solved several problems and it acted to define a series of other flies. If you look at the actual patterns, the original was more sparsely dressed ( than flies by today's standards ) and it had fine long tails and narrow wings. Today most often you see this fly with fat wings, stumpy tails and a ton of dubbing to make the fly appear fatter, shorter and over dressed. In other words things evolve and change over time.

Whereas, flies such as the Compara dun were created for totally different kinds of water reflecting a need to have fly which behaved very differently under completely different circumstances. Fishing the flat water of the Delaware is very different than the Beaverkill which Steenrod fished when he created the fly. In the early days of the river there were many small dams and lots of deep pools with lots of broken water, today the river is much more open, is wider and has a different character than it did. So while one pattern may have been effective, the place also changed requiring the tyers to change. Morgan also talks about bin sales of fly shops. Trying to compare bins sales of flies at stores makes little or no sense, since hatches, sizes, colors and water conditions usually dictate

the sorts of flies which are sold and used in a location or region. Much like me using a giant Michigan hex fly in the middle of our sulphur hatch it is almost impossible to compare the Catskill dry flies to AK Best's hackled flies. About all these flies really have in common is that they are used for trout fishing and they are tied on a hook.

I think what we should do is look instead at the context of where, when, how something is used. Consider this: One really hot fly out west last season was called the DOA Royal Wulff. It basically is a royal with a soft poly wing which isn't divided, the wing is doubled over and the rear half is clipped short, creating an emerger wing. The tail is antron. So what we are doing here is updating a classic by using contemporary materials.

Is the Catskill dry dead? Hell no! I caught 10-15 fish during a recent hatch in 3 hour period using one of these antique gems. I tried more "modern" flies and the fish didn't take any of them. Using the same sort of logic as Mr. Lyle these must have been really old fish, right?

**WHAT'S YOUR OPINION? DO YOU THINK THE CATSKILL STYLE OF FLY IS OBSOLETE? THE NEXT NEWSLETTER WILL BE DEVOTED ENTIRELY ON THIS QUESTION.**

Send your opinions and/or comments to:

Editor, Allan Podell

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## A Few Photos From the Archives



Harry Darbee and A. J. McClane in 1975. Photo courtesy of Eric Peper.



Andy Brasko's tie of the Telephone Box Dr. Burke. December 2010.



Our beloved Dave Brandt

*This concludes our look back over the first twenty-five years of the Gazette. Thank you for coming along on the journey, and thank you for being a supporter of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild. Again, the Gazette archives are found here [Gazette Archives](#), and the guild's website is [catskillflytyersguild.org](#).*