

JANUARY MEETING

Sat., Jan. 16th, 1:00 PM
Rockland House
Demonstration by: Tom Mason
(see page 4 for details)

PROPORTIONS - get them right! by A. Podell

In the Nov./Dec. issue of FR & R magazine, Darrel Martin ***WAS COMPLETELY WRONG*** when he describes the standard and correct proportions for tying a 'traditional Catskill style' dry fly as having "A long, bare neck about three eye-lengths from the hook eye." He was ***equally wrong*** in a 1992 F R & R magazine when he made the same proclamation in a similar article. And finally, he is ***wrong*** again when he writes, "Proportion has less effect upon fly function and fish than it does upon our tying aesthetics".

These are significant errors that ***must not*** be dismissed lightly. It's important, no it's vital, that we emphatically point out this false information and set the record straight by providing clear and historically accurate information for publication. Otherwise, if we allow this false information to go unchallenged, it could very well influence how contemporary and future fly tiers view and subsequently tie the 'Catskill' style, thereby unknowingly change its construction. Therefore, the 45-50 members of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild who were at the December meeting urged each other to write letters to-the-editor opposing Mr. Martin's view. Also, I was asked to write and send a letter on behalf of the Guild to the magazine identifying this misinformation and give an accurate description of the 'traditional Catskill style' dry fly proportions.

I safely estimate that the members at our meeting represented over 1,250 years of fly tying experience. Several were taught by, were friends of, tied alongside or sat on the lap of tiers we consider Masters of the 'Catskill style. The combined fly tying/fishing libraries of these members would be immense. Yet, not one member agreed with the author's opinion because he is wrong. Martin offers no evidence or cites any sources to support his opinion simply because there is none.

Here, however, is a brief history, with documented evidence, that supports a far different conclusion about the 'Catskill style' and proportions. Additional supporting evidence comes from 1st hand accounts of people who knew the fly tiers of that golden age and, quite simply, viewing their dry flies.

Early 'Catskill style' flies were proportioned relative to the shape of the hooks available, the quality of tying materials, the leader material (gut) and importantly to the 'Turtle knot' which was used almost exclusively to attach fly and tippet (see pg 6). Very early, when the 'Catskill' style was being developed, the most popular hook size was a 12. They had different bends and longer shanks were needed: 1) to allow for the bare space behind the eye where and upon which the gut tippet was attached to the fly; and 2) along the shank to tie the body, wing, hackle and a small neat head.

Just look at the flies tied by Gordon, Steenrod, Christian, Cross, Atherton, Detttes, Darbees, Flick and others of that time and place. You don't need a microscope to see the proportions of their flies or see that the amount of bare shank behind the eye is usually close to 1 eye length.

1. Personal observation of 100's of flies, tied by the above, on display at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center.
2. Leiser. THE DETTES, plates of their flies.
3. Bergman. TROUT (1945), plates
4. Jennings. BOOK of TROUT FLIES, plates
5. McClane. ENCYCLOPEDIA, plates by the Darbees
6. Flick. NEW STREAMSIDE GUIDE, plates by Art Flick
7. Fortune Magazine. May, 1946, plates by the Darbees and the Detttes

(cont. pg 7)

COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Ralph Hoffman was our guest fly tyer at the November meeting. He did a great job of patiently demonstrating how he tyed his wet flies. From the reaction to the demonstration it appeared that we enjoyed it and learned a few tricks. Wouldn't it be great to have this, and future demonstrations, available for individual or group viewing?

During the meeting that followed, it was suggested that we videotape demonstrations, keep them on file and possibly duplicate them as requested or for sale. A committee is being formed to look into: what equipment is needed, is it available through the membership, who would do the taping, and anything else that needs to be identified, considered & resolved before recommending to the membership.

Any member willing to help out on the committee or in other ways please contact me by mail, phone or email. Because many of us are geographically widespread, we will probably communicate by one of the ways above. Also, please contact me if you are willing to help with the actual videotaping.

Allan: 100 Glen Ave., Elmira, NY 14905
phone no. (607)734-6257
email: apodell@stny.Lrun.com

CONTENTS & CONTRIBUTORS

Meeting Notices - - - pg 1, 2 & 4
Volunteers Needed - - - pg 2
TRUE NATIVE: Judie D. Vinciguerra - - - pg 3
EDITORIAL - - - pg 2
PROPORTIONS: Allan Podell - - - pg 1
LETTERS TO EDITOR - - - pg 3
Harold Williams, Hank Rope
NEVERSINK NOTES: Bill Leuszler - - - pg 3
HISTORICAL FLY: Allan Podell - - - pg 4
UPCOMING 'SHOWS' & INFORMATION - - - pg 5
SPRING/SUMMER REVIEW: Dave Brandt - - - pg 5
THE TURLE KNOT: Red Quill - - - pg 6
CLASSIFIED ADS - - - pg 6
Catskill Fly (cartoon): Dave Brandt - - - pg 6
Book Reviews - - - pg 6

SPECIAL EVENT in FEBRUARY: MATERIAL SWAP

If you make only one meeting all year, this is the one!! You never know what *stuff* you'll find so bring *stuff* you're willing to swap(trade). In addition there'll be prizes (more *stuff*), a contest or two (even more *stuff*) and possibly some *stuff* auctioned off.

Here's some of the '*stuff*' traded in previous years:
quality necks live roosters woodduck rabbit
ducks wings deer, elk, moose mallard books
furs & skins hooks pheasant skins polar bear
rods/reels bear skin tying tools/equipment

You never know what to expect and that's what makes 'the swap' interesting, fun, worth participating in and a great event. DON'T MISS IT.

Sat., Feb. 20th, 1:00PM at the
Rockland House
(12 noon to set up a table)

EDITORIAL:

WOW! Here we are with the 1st anniversary issue of this Newsletter. I'd like to take some space to express my sincere gratitude to the Guild members who made this effort possible by submitting information, articles, 'letters to the editor', cartoons, etc. I won't list those members by name for fear I might leave someone out. I'd also like to thank the many members who frequently offered their encouragement.

This is your Newsletter. You provide the articles, pieces of information, written comments, opinions, want ads, etc. Please do not get lulled into thinking that stuff just appears in the Newsletter. Your fellow members donate a little time to write about a story, situation, idea, concern, opinion or something else and sent it in. So, think of something you would be willing to share with the group. Then write it (cont. pg 3)

(Editorial, cont)

down and send it to me. Individually, it might just be a story but put them together and collectively they become this Newsletter.

Thanks again ... AP

For their support, the Guild wants to thank

Pat & Joe Roseo, Proprietors
of the

Rockland House

Motel
Lounge
& Fine Dining

P.O. Box 220, Rockland Road, Roscoe, NY 12776
607-498-4240

REUBEN CROSS, A TRUE NATIVE OF SULLIVAN COUNTY: submitted by: JD Vinciguerra

An obituary for Reuben Cross' father appeared in the Sept. 23, 1937 edition of the Liberty Register, Liberty, NY. Headline was: Descendant of 1812 fighters passes in hospital at 77.

"John C. Heenan Cross was born in a log cabin and whose ancestors fought in the war of 1812, died at 3 am Monday in Maimonides Hospital, Liberty. His death, in his 78th year, has removed from this section of the country a member of one of its pioneer families, who was widely and favorably known.

Four children survived: Celia, wife of Leslie Conklin, of Middletown; Stephen, of Hinton, West Virginia; Elwood, of Woodridge; and Reuben, of this village, who has gained fame as a fisherman and a tier of trout flies. Burial was in the Liberty Cemetery, Liberty, NY."

LETTERS TO EDITOR:

I received an interesting letter from member Harold Williams. It would have appeared here had I not misplaced it. (Harold, my apologies) When & if I do find it it will be printed here in its entirety. Until then I am taking the liberty of paraphrasing its overall conclusion because the ideas and spirit expressed are

and should be, of interest to the Guild.

The definition of "Catskill Flies" that seems to have been established by the Guild is too narrow and confining. It does a disservice to the early pioneering efforts, extraordinary skills and innovative talents of the tyers/fly fishers who came out of, chose to reside in, or frequented the Catskill region. Those men and women were imaginary, visionary and unafraid to experiment or set limits in their tying and fly fishing. Their contributions and accomplishments went far beyond the trout streams and rivers within the Catskill Mountains.

What is a Catskill Fly?

"Can a man from Elmira tie a "Catskill Fly"?????"

There is no doubt Roy Steenrod of Liberty New York tied a "Catskill Fly" when he tied the Hendrickson.

Did Edward R. Hewitt of New York City tie a "Catskill Fly" when he tied the Bi-visible? Perhaps his original tie was at home, perhaps not. Some might say the Bi-visible is a "Catskill Fly". Could it be a New York City fly?

Was Dan Cahill's Cahill born on an Erie railroad train somewhere between Jersey City and Buffalo, or on the bank of Callicoon Creek?

Can the Old Glory, tied by Ralph Graves, be a "Catskill Fly" if he lives across the road from the Catskill park?

Perhaps we could acknowledge that the man from Elmira can tie a "Catskill Fly" as long as it does not have a brass bead head.

Hank Rope

NEVERSINK NOTES - A SEPTEMBER HIKE

By Bill Leuszler

The conditions were right, a crisp September morning. With hopeful anticipation I set out to hike the headwater of the Neversink Reservoir. I hope to share this wonderful experience with Guild members in these notes.

Even though I had wanted to take this hike for over 10 years I had only made one rather impulsive attempt 8 years ago. Without the appropriate topographic maps in hand at the time I found myself quickly lost. In planning for this fall's hike I had already purchased the two topo maps needed - Liberty East and (cont., pg 4)

(Neversink Notes, cont)

Willowemoc.

My reason for taking this hike was to have an opportunity to fish on the Neversink River in an area that had historical significance. The picture on page 178 in Francis' book, CATSKILL RIVERS, gives a good sense as to what the area looks like even now. With the reservoir at a low stage I knew that I would be able to fish a section that is usually underwater most of the year.

I have often said that the Neversink Gorge area is the most beautiful spot in Sullivan County. Without a doubt this area above the reservoir comes close to being as beautiful.

The hike started on the eastern side of the reservoir. I took Shields Road which is the first left off Route 55 going out of Bradley towards Neversink. Shields Road only goes for about 1 mile before it turns into a dirt road that is pretty rough. Once starting out I realized that I was experiencing something special. I could not have anticipated the beauty I saw. The trees were turning into their fall colors. The 3 mile hike went by very quickly.

What was even more amazing was that I was walking in a place where time had stopped. This road at one time must have been used often. All of the structures along the road had been destroyed, but the stone walls were still there and the orchards were full of ripe apples. I was taken by surprised when I looked up and saw right in front of me a healthy black walnut tree. Black walnut trees are never seen in Sullivan County. This one must have been planted by one of the families living in this area years ago. It's as if I had gone back in time 75 years.

The road became increasingly more rural as I started getting towards the river itself. The topo map helped me here. After passing the 2nd beaver pond on my right I dropped down a steep incline to head for the river. If I had gone further on the road itself I would have gone into Big Bend Club property. So far I had been staying on NYC reservoir property.

Once I got to the river I was struck by the distinct beauty of this particular section. Words cannot describe it. The water was low and clear. Fishing is usually only

good on this section of the river when water is running high. And the only fish I could see were some very large suckers holding deep in a pool. I hope to return soon to this area when conditions are better for fishing.

I now realize, after taking this hike, that an important task for the Guild would be to identify the locations of the old pools. I do not know any place where this information is written down. Some of the names mentioned in books I have read are Mollie's Pool, Big Bend and Little Bend. Hopefully one of the members may already know this information. It would be a great article for the Newsletter or the next edition of "Favorite Flies, Favorite Rivers".

The walk from the river back up to the road was pretty tough. But a bite into a fresh apple from one of the trees was refreshing. It was a wonderful day!

The QUILL GORDON - HISTORICAL FLY

By A. Podell

In *Fishless Days, Angling Nights*, Herman Christian is quoted and says this about Theodore Gordon and this fly. "*The drake is the great fly in the Neversink; we do not have the Green Drake and the Coffin Fly [Gray Drake] of the Beaverkill. The male of our drake is sort of smoky dun color ... The Quill Gordon imitates the male.*"

Mr. Gordon tied the Quill Gordon, Light and Dark Cahill, and the pig's wool flies in light, medium, and dark colors. He used a wire over his quill sometimes for protection, not for color."

Recipe:	Original	Modern
Thread:	probably black	olive
Tail:	dun	dun
Wing:	woodduck (bunched)	woodduck (split)
Body:	Different shades of peacock eye quill over which x-fine copper wire is wound in open spirals.	
Hackle:	dun	dun

JANUARY MEETING - Tom Mason Demonstrates: Darbee's Dark Hendrickson Floating Nymph

Materials: Brown thread; brown moose mane; tan or brown floss or thread; mallard flank feathers; dun hackle; hook = size 12 or 14, 1xL dry fly.

The World's Largest
FLY FISHING SHOW

Garden State Exhibit Center
Somerset, NJ

January 29, 30, 31 - 1999

For information call: 1-800-420-7582,
or go to: www.flyfishingshow.com

Accommodations & Show Rates:

Somerset Marriott: (800) 238-3198

Holiday Inn Somerset: (908) 356-1700

Somerset Doubletree: (732) 469-2600

Admission: Adult \$2 or 2 day pass \$20, 3 day \$28

Child under 12 years old: \$2.00

Show Times: Friday: 11:00 am - 7:00 pm

Saturday: 9:00 am - 7:00 pm

Sunday: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

There are a limited number of discount tickets available to Guild members for the show @ \$7.50 each. Call Judie at (607)498-6024 or email <darbee1@juno.com> to order as soon as possible.

Another show:

7th Annual Fly Fishing Show

Rechory Armory, University of Maryland
College Park, MD

Jan. 16th & 17th, 1999

SPRING/SUMMER IN REVIEW by Dave Brandt

Our season started slowly with rain, ever high water and lost hatches, but the Guild meetings provided respite from slow fishing.

April's get together occurred in the Rockland House on 4-18-98 with Dick Jogodnik explaining midges and the use of C.D.C. April also kept Ken Mears, Dave Catizone and Bob Osburn busy with fly tying course held at C.F.F.C. We also brought out By-Laws to be reviewed by members and voted on by members aot at the March meeting. Results to be announced in May. Individual dues scheduling also changed at this time to make them payable in February, regardless of when one joined.

In May we began our evening routine, gathering at

C.F.F.C. This writer demonstrated tying the B.G. Dun. We learned here that we had been installed on the railing surrounding the museum. We also officially accepted the By-Laws, with a vote of 38 in favor of and 2 against. Copies of this new By-Laws may be obtained by asking a director: Judie, Floyd or myself.

We firmed up plans to be present at the Roscoe C. of C. craft day and at the O & W Railway Association annual event. We owe thanks to Judie Vinciguerra, Dick Smith, Bill Leuszler, Art Dewitt, Ralph Hoffman, Bob Osburn, Floyd Franke, Dave Pabst and maybe others (I don't have a good list, but want to thank everyone).

Our second-generation fly tying kits were discussed. These will contain history, materials and instruction for two wets this time around. Thanks go to Ralph Graves, Jim Jenner and John Jacobson for efforts (so far) with this program.

In June, those present at the C.F.F.C. were led through the construction of a nifty extended body Coffin Fly by our inimitable (thank goodness) Ralph Graves. A nice pattern! Paul Bachem took the two Ralph tied there, home for \$10.00.

More was to be done to bring the new fly tying kits to fruition, with artwork for new instructions needed.

Plans were made to attend C.F.F.C. Summerfest and the Youth Outdoor Expo. in August and September. We tie at several events now each year, with maybe thousands of onlookers passing by, and it's usually thanks to the same 'core group' of our fold that we have a presence at these shows and clinics. We owe them thanks and maybe a pledge to help man the booth some time.

Summer had come, with not enough fishing since the opener, and called for a picnic on August 15 at the firemen's pavillion at East Branch, NY, with some time to fish.

September brought us back to regular meetings but also was a time to start putting some picnic tables together for use in the Darbee/Vinciguerra pavillion at C.F.F.C. Each table will be inscribed with the name of a Catskill tyer and be given to the Center in our name. This is a nice project and gives members a chance to pitch in. Call Floyd or Judie to find out how YOU might help.

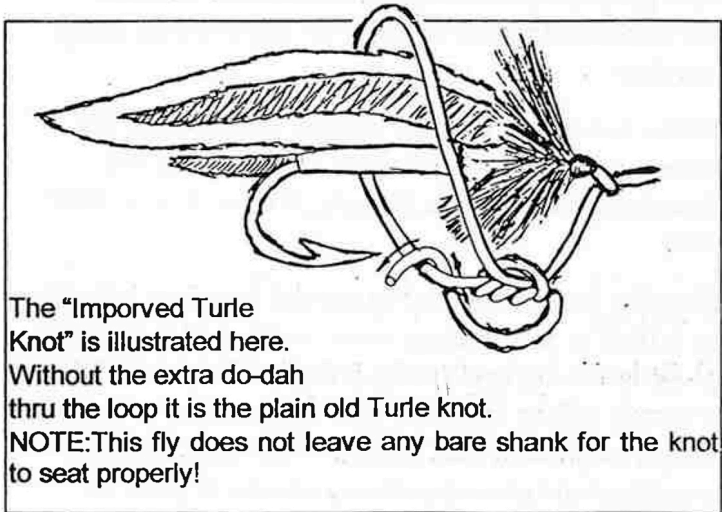
(cont. pg 6)

(SPRING/SUMMMER REVIEW, cont)

The meeting on September 17 found us huddled to watch Floyd Franke demonstrate an elaborate and yet simple nymph pattern called the Bottle Brush Nymph. If you weren't there, you missed another informative tying session. Our tying sessions and fly swaps are reason enough to attend (unless you're hip deep in risers!).

The TURLE KNOT: By "Red Quill"
(reprinted with permission of the author)

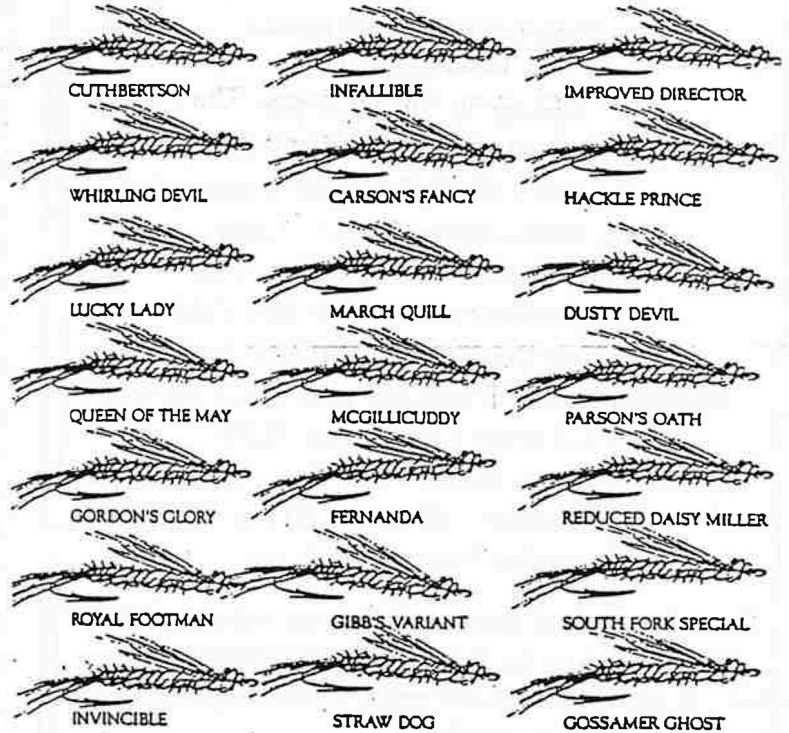
The Turle knot is tied totally off of the fly and only becomes truly "attached" to the hook when it is snugged up on the hook shank. I will not go into Turle knot tying instructions here as numerous books, such as 'Practical Fishing Knots' by Lefty Kreh & Sossin have detailed, illustrated instructions (see below). But in a nutshell ... a slip knot is formed in the tippet using a surgeons knot and the resulting loop is slipped over the fly and tightened down on the hook shank. Because the fly was previously threaded onto the leader the knot forms on the hook shank with the tippet coming straight out through the eye. Only the little used, up-turned eye, and the far more popular down-turned eye hooks are traditional Catskill dry fly hooks. (By the way...because of this fact, ring eye hooks are NOT a Catskill tradition.) This "straight pull" effect is especially important in dry fly fishing as the fly simply cannot be cocked out of position by the knot tied ON the hook eye such as a badly tied cinch knot. The Turle's breaking strength is poor (75%) ... but the fly rides like a natural!



The "Imporved Turle Knot" is illustrated here. Without the extra do-dah thru the loop it is the plain old Turle knot. NOTE: This fly does not leave any bare shank for the knot to seat properly!

After exhaustive research, Dave Brandt feels that these are *CATSKILL PATTERNS* ...

Dry Flies (Basic Patterns)



CLASSIFIEDS*

GOT STUFF NEED STUFF
FIND A BUYER FIND A SELLER
LIST WHAT YOU'VE GOT
OR SOMETHING YOU'RE LOOKING FOR
HERE & FOR FREE (Nada, Nothing, Zip, Ziltch*):

* members only. Five(5) lines per month at no cost

NEEDED: BOOK REVIEWS:

Read any good tying/fishing books you'd recommend or bad ones you'd suggest avoiding? Books: old & new; stories; histories; patterns; techniques; biographies; about the Catskills, PA, Alaska, Adirondacks, anywhere, are fair game. Opinions may vary, so if you want to comment on a review that appeared in these pages, please use civility. There are many reasons why opinions can differ and each may be entirely valid.

(PROPORTIONS, cont.)

When Catskill dry flies were being developed hackle was much different then it is today. In part, hackle was larger. By today's standards, Theodore Gordon tied large dry flies (mostly sizes 12 & 14). The hackle barbs were tied longer as were the tail fibers. The wing(s) were tied higher. Some of Theodore Gordon's flies had wings that were bunched instead of split and were tied in, in front of the hackle. It may be that large hooks (#6-10) were just too heavy to float a dry fly especially with the weaker hackle. That might explain why the larger insects were usually tied on a size 12 but with oversized proportions. For example, Herman Christian, talking about T. Gordon said, "Mr. Gordon used the *Light Cahill* and the *Quill Gordon* to imitate the drake. He tied them in three shades ... As the season advances, the hatch gets lighter in color. He would put on a big fly, *Quill Gordon* or *Cahill*"(1).

"The *Cross* style of construction marks the beginning of traditional Catskill flies as we know them today... 'Our fly tying today', says Walt(Dette) 'with a few minor changes, is the style and technique evolved by *Rube Cross*'(2). But Cross kept his tying knowledge secret until his books, *THE COMPLETE FLY TYER* and *AMERICAN TROUT LURES* were published. About the head Cross writes, "Now make two or three half-hitches, as shown and draw each tight, pushing them back with thumb and finger-nail and leaving a space of about one-sixteenth of an inch between the hackle and eye of hook"(3). According to Harry Darbee, "Roy Steenrod was perhaps more responsible than anyone else for passing the distinctive features of the Catskill style. Its characteristics: a good-sized hook, typically size 12 Model Perfect; a notably lean, spare body, usually of spun fur or stripped quill of peacock herl; a divided wing of lemon-colored, mottled barbules of a woodduck flank feather; and a few sparse turns of incredibly stiff, clean, glassy cock's hackle, mostly either blue dun or ginger. The wings and hackle are set back from the eye of the hook, leaving an unusually long, clean 'neck' at the expense of a slightly shortened body"(4).

Others write about the 'neck'. G.L. Herter: "Always leave some room between the hackle (of the dry fly) and the eye of the hook. Using your fingernail shove the hackle slightly back along the hook shank away from the eye of the hook"(5). E. Leiser, "The Dette

style of tying leaves a bit of bare shank before the eye of the hook"(6). Ray Bergman: "... take your thumb and forefinger and with your fingernails tight against the shank of the hook near the eye push back toward the tail against the wings"(7). Al Brewster, a master tier who has tied commercially since the 1940's says this, "Begin by tying the thread from the bobbin to the hook shank about 1/6" to 1/8" behind the hook eye, depending on the hook size. Don't crowd the head. Leave enough room for two hackles in front, at least 1/32" of bare shank... This is the Catskill type of head. The bare shank is created because the old-time tiers used gut for their leaders and needed a place on the hook to place the *Turtle* knots they used to tie on the fly"(8).

Now, as far as Mr. Martin's second statement about proportion and function, let me point out just one thing. Without proper proportions the fly is out of balance. If you think that does not effect fly function, how much success do you think you'll have with a fly that constantly lands on, and then floats on its head?

Today the Catskill style of fly lives. It does so for one very very simple reason ... the style works!!! Each year new fly patterns and styles appear in catalogs with descriptions anointing each one as a 'wonder fly'. How interesting that almost all of these soon fades into oblivion. Meanwhile, the 'Catskill style' old-timers just keep catching trout.

However, each time a pen is raised, one hundred (100) years of Catskill fly tying tradition is jeopardized. Articles like those of Mr. Martin, must be carefully scrutinized. We cannot allow incorrect information, as he presented, to go unchallenged or we will fail to fulfill the C.F.T. Guild mission to "preserve, protect and enhance the Catskill fly tying heritage".

I haven't seen a fly, past or present, with 3 eye-lengths of bare neck. Based on personal observations and research 1 eye length appears correct. . Many of you members have a better grasp of flytying history than I. Let's hear what you have to say.

1. S.G. Hackle, *FISHLESS DAYS, ANGLING NIGHTS*, pg 138
2. & 6. Leiser, *THE DETTES*, pgs 39 & 168
3. Cross, *AMERICAN TROUT LURES*, pg 20
4. Darbee, *CATSKILL FLYTIER*, pg 42
5. Herter, G.L., *PROF. FLY TYING*(19th ed), pg 261
7. Bergman, *TROUT* (1945), pg 395
8. Schiff, C. "Catskill Ties", *Fly Fisherman*, 2/96, pg 77