

# VERNON S. “PETE” HIDY

Founder of the Flyfisher’s Club of Oregon

By Lance Hidy



PETE HIDY AT HIS FLY-TYING BENCH, C. 1939-41.

August 2011 • Merrimac, Massachusetts



## Note to the Reader

These pages are part of a larger book whose hoped-for publication will be in 2012. As the research coincided with the anniversary of the Flyfisher's Club of Oregon, the following

extract has been submitted for posting on the club's website as part of its celebrations. The pages have been designed by the author in horizontal, two-column format, using 15-point Magma type, for ease of reading on computer displays. LH

## Part One: The Flyfisher's Club of Oregon

**M**Y FATHER, PETE HIDY, had already been fly fishing for twenty-five years, and had written a couple of books on the subject, when he was elected to be the first president of The Flyfisher's Club of Oregon. Being fourteen at the time, I was aware that the club and its bulletin, *The Creel*, were an important, joyful part of Dad's life, but I knew little of the details. But as his son and fishing companion, I had an intimate understanding of his great passion for the sport.

Since Pete's death in 1983, interest in his contributions to fly fishing have grown. Over the past three years I was contacted by two angling historians who were seeking information about him: Jack W. Berryman in Seattle, and Terry Lawton in England. Having inherited Dad's archive of correspondence, writing, photography, flies, fly-tying materials, reels, Leonard rod, and a Brayshaw trout carving when my mother

died in 2006, these inquiries from scholars caused me to look at this archive with a new sense of filial responsibility. This led to a decision to gradually bring parts of it into public view.

As I became aware that this year, 2011, is the fiftieth anniversary of the Club, I decided to start there, hoping to offer some facts and insights that might be of interest to current members—including the old-timers like Tom McAllister and Roger Bachman who knew my father well.

One charter member and former club president whose friendship meant much to Pete was Tom Tongue. Shortly before the twentieth anniversary dinner in 1981, and a few weeks before his retirement from the Oregon Supreme Court, Tom wrote a toast that he mailed to Bob Wethern to be read aloud:

"On this occasion we all owe an immense debt of gratitude to Pete Hidy. It was his idea, as a new-comer to Portland, . . . that Oregon's many fly fishermen were in need of this club—an obvious fact which we natives were too blind to see. *The Creel*,



Vernon S. "Pete" Hidy (1914–1983), founder of The Flyfisher's Club of Oregon.

February, 1981,  
to Robert  
Wethern

Supreme Court  
THOMAS H. TONGUE  
JUSTICE

Salem, Oregon  
19710

Saturday

Dear Bob:

Please convey to members of the club both my congratulations upon attaining its 20th Anniversary and my regrets for being unable to attend this most happy occasion.

As a charter member of the club and as one of its past presidents I had looked forward to being with you all for this meeting and to renew many old friendships. The Court, however, has scheduled arguments in Eugene for all day Tuesday and in Salem again for all day Wednesday. Because I am now reduced to "tanning on a cylinder" until my retirement in February, I am simply unable to get to Portland for the Tuesday meeting. After February, however, I hope to get "back into circulation" and to attend some of the club's spring meetings.

On this occasion we all owe an immense debt of gratitude to Pete Hidy. It was his idea, as a necessity to Portland, from Pennsylvania, that Oregon's many fly fishermen were in need of this club—an obvious fact which we natives were too blind to see. The "Creel" which soon gained international recognition, was also his idea and its excellence was largely due to his efforts and his literary genius.

I will be thinking of you all Tuesday evening and will join with you, *in absentia*, in a toast to Pete Hidy!

Regards to all,  
Tom Tongue

which soon gained international recognition, was also his idea and its excellence was largely due to his efforts and his literary genius. I will be thinking of you all Tuesday evening and will join with you, *in absentia*, in a toast to Pete Hidy!"

Dad's poor health prevented his traveling from Boise to join the celebration. After Bob forwarded the toast to him, he carefully filed it amid other club memorabilia. When I read it for the first time recently, I remembered my father's modesty. Never did I hear my father boast about the founding of the club and *The Creel*. But he took very good care of the gift from the club: a gavel stamped with PETE, and V.S. "PETE" HIDY PRESIDENT FLYCASTERS [sic] CLUB 1961 stamped around the base of the sound block.



Pete's first goal as president was to publish a club journal. He modelled it partly upon the one he considered the best in the country at the time—*The Anglers' Club Bulletin* published by the Anglers' Club of New York, and long edited by his friend, Sparse Grey Hackle.

Nineteen years later as a 20th-anniversary "best of the

Creel” volume was being contemplated, editor Bob Wethern reflected on the beginning:

“A major myth concerning *The Creel* is that it rose, suddenly full-blown, out of nowhere. Let the record show it *wasn't* a from-scratch happening. Pete Hidy brought the “starter” west, like pioneers before him, and perceived in Portland all the ingredients for a damn'd good batch.

The yeasting and the leavening over the years have supported his judgment. Those who followed Pete as editor-in-chief slipped in a new seasoning now and then, but they weren't about to let that precious original “starter” give out!

It is said that the original sourdough came over with Columbus and still is turning out the best bread there is. A myth, no doubt. But rest assured, Pete's starter for *The Creel* is alive and well.” [December 4, 1979]

Upon becoming president, Pete immediately recruited his publishing team, starting with two of his fishing buddies, Bob Beatty, an energetic editor and manager, and Douglas Lynch, who at the time was Oregon's foremost graphic designer. The others, Lenox Dick, Fred E. Locke, and Robert Wethern brought a rare combination of literary gifts, organizational skill, and capacity for hard work that would

keep the journal going steadily for over twenty years. With the addition of master printer Fred O. Hallwyler, Dad's “dream team” of seven men was complete. By the time the 30th Anniversary issue came out, the names of thirty-four men had appeared in the Creel Committee credits that appeared in every issue—and this does not include the many who contributed writing, photographs, and illustrations. (See the Creel History Chart on page 36).

Seeing that The Anglers' Club of New York had a logo



Three founding editors of *The Creel*: Bob Beatty, Bob Weatheren, and Pete Hidy, with Ken Klarquist.

with a creel and a trout, *The Creel* committee commissioned a more delicate variation, adding two more fish and a fly rod, embellished with a fringe of streamside vegetation and pebbles. When the logo was featured alone on the cover of the premier issue, the effect was so impressive that some mem-

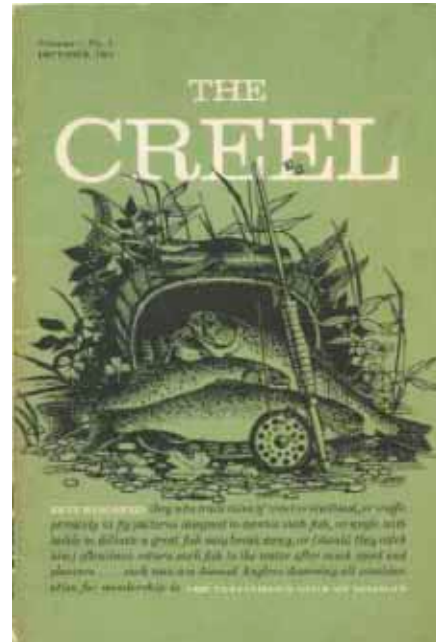
bers proposed making this cover design permanent. Doug Lynch did indeed keep the logo on every cover, but reduced down to two inches.

The committee adopted other traits from *The Anglers' Club Bulletin*—including the term “bulletin,” and the 36-page, 6 x 9-inch trim. However, they opted for a heavier, uncoated paper and a stunning two-color cover. Further distinguishing themselves from New York’s slightly archaic, plural *Anglers'*, the Creel committee preferred the more down-to-earth, singular *Flyfisher's*—a sign of the editorial nuance that would enliven the journal’s pages.

The editorial model for a club bulletin that was foremost in Pete’s mind was the one cultivated by his friend Sparse Grey Hackle for the New York Angler’s Club. Pete’s editorial guidelines for *The Creel* were explained in a call for submissions drafted by Bob Wethern during the years that the bulletin was in its full stride, and are worth quoting here in their entirety:

“Contributions to *The Creel* are welcomed. They should be in English but need not be typed. Pictures enhance any story greatly, particularly if they relate to the subject matter. Material should bear directly on fly fishing in the Pacific Northwest or should be of strong natural interest to fly fishing men of that region. Emphasis should be on fresh water stream fishing, although exceptions are common.

The Creel favors stories about the adventures of the well-known and unknown. Of old-timers. Of gear and techniques. Of fish-related subjects, such as stream preservation. Of hobbies allied to fly fishing. Other sports, other



The 6 x 9” trim size of the bulletin and the symbols in the logo of the Anglers’ Club of New York were imitated by Pete and his newly-formed Creel Committee in 1961.

locales, other philosophies we respect, but feel their best expression lies in other publications.

Stories about talking fish or thinking fish tend to be frowned upon. The fish performs his own specialty superbly well. It seems redundant to burden him with human glibness or rationalization.

Poetry is suspect, since it always scans a thousand times better for the author than for any other reader. Fictional short-stories find little favor, nor is there need for them. The most rigidly documented and witnessed fishing story will contain ample allotments of high drama and fantastic coincidence.

Earnest effort should be made to spell names correctly and give dates accurately. As for other factual matters, such as size of fish or length of cast, we entrust their recounting to the temperance of your individual conscience.

Any contribution will be soberly considered by The Creel's Editorial Committee, which asks the privilege of making slight revisions in your text, if such add to the clarity.

You may address contributions to The Creel, c/o Robert Wethern, 0130 S.W. Pennoyer Street, Portland, Oregon 97201."

The article written by Pete for Volume 1, Number 1, under the pen name A. River Rogue, was clearly a matter of conscience. It was a tribute to one of the club's key consultants, Audrey Joy, who was barred from membership because of her gender. Although the club rules published in that first issue of *The Creel* nowhere stated that it was for men only, such

was the case. Audrey ran the fly-tying business in the Meier and Frank Department Store in downtown Portland. I remember my father introducing me to her as she sat working at her vise, surrounded by a well-organized display of flies. I may have been about twelve years old. She warmly inquired about my own activities as a fly fisherman, and wished me well with a big smile. As Pete's article explains, Audrey not only had a Rolodex containing her customer's contact information, but could give a profile of each one, emphasizing those whose character she admired. She helped Pete find leading candidates for club membership. I have no idea whether Audrey fished. If not, she might have considered herself disqualified from membership. If she had secretly hoped to be invited, we do not know. These men were her customers, and she surely would not say anything to cast a shadow over her relations with them. In the essay, repeated here on pages 65–66, Pete credits Audrey's important role in the formation of the club, and gives a rousing endorsement of her little business.

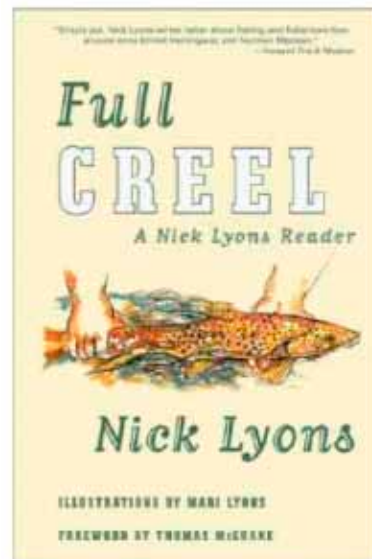
The very contentious gender issue came to a vote thirty-three years later, when, in 1994, the men-only rule survived by a narrow margin. Finally in the fall of 2004 a vote-by-mail came in 84 to 38 in favor of admitting women. McKenzie legend Dixie Monkhouse was approved as an honorary member that December. The first regular female member was Lisa Hansen, admitted in March 2005.

The name *Creel* was a brilliant choice, instantly planting the idea in members' heads that writing an article was as

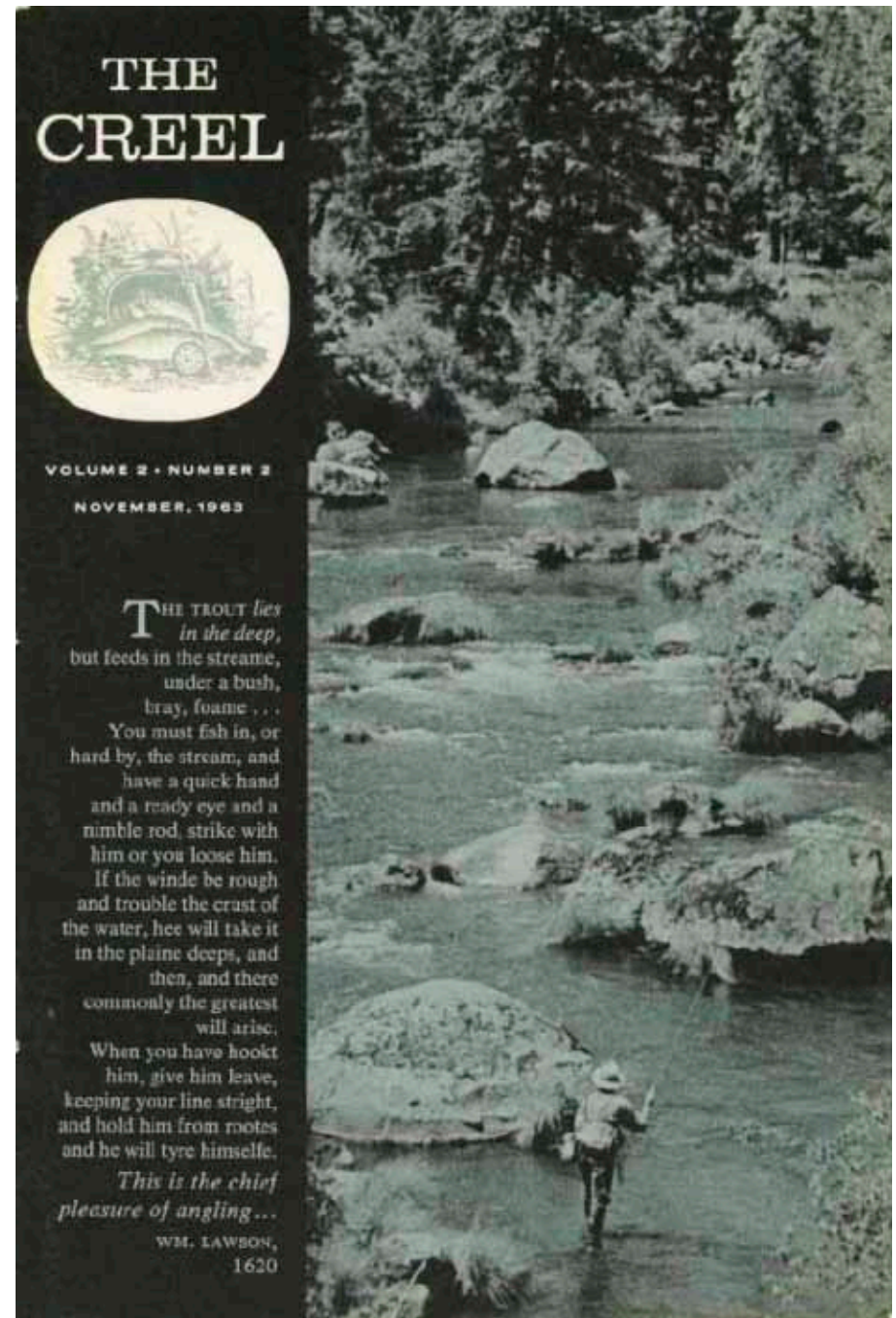
worthy and difficult as catching a fine trout or steelhead. It became a point of pride to contribute, even among men who had never written for publication before.

The creel metaphor caught on elsewhere. A year-and-a-half later a similarly-named journal appeared in England: *Creel: A Fishing Magazine* was founded by artist-writer Bernard Venables with art direction and photography by Michael Prichard. Its contributors were the most-admired fishing authors in the UK, including Clive Gammon, Reg Righyni, Anthony Pearson, Ian Niall, and Denys Watkins-Pitchford. Nick Lyons, the renowned writer and publisher of fishing literature (who published Pete Hidy in 1971), also used the word in the title of his wonderful *Full Creel: A Nick Lyons Reader* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2000).

Doug Lynch, who designed every issue of *The Creel*, looked back on the bulletin's editorial content, saying it reflected Pete's "profound awareness of the mood and mystique of the angling fraternity," and his "brilliant ability to articulate its editorial form and selection." I am sure that Pete would say that he had only a small hand in the venture, and that the



RIGHT: Pete often carried a camera when fishing. His 1962 photograph of the Warm Springs River appeared on the cover of the fourth issue of *The Creel*.



credit was shared by the whole Creel Committee. I can attest to the respect that Pete had for those men who became life-long friends. For me, when I was growing up, these were our household names that sound as familiar to me today as they did fifty years ago—Lynch, Wethern, Beatty, Len Dick, Locke, Wood, Worcester, Bachman, LaFollette, Wilson, Fewel, Wahl, Langtry, McAllister, and many others—evidence to my adolescent mind that one of the best things about publishing (and fishing) was the ensuing friendships.

Watching the genesis of *The Creel* during my high school years was a powerful influence in my eventual choice of a career in publishing and graphic design—primarily because of Doug Lynch. During my college summers in 1965 and 1967 Doug hired me to be his design assistant at Douglas Lynch Associates in Portland—a revelatory experience that set me on my career path as a publication designer. I observed that *The Creel* was Doug’s virtuoso performance as a typographer. The apt display fonts, the playful arrangement of images, the unpredictable variation in page designs, and Doug’s obsessive attention to detail, made the content irresistible, drawing the reader into the equally well-crafted stories. A decade later, as I started my own graphic design studio in Cambridge, Massachusetts, I became a nonresident member of the club, and made a few *Creel* illustrations at Doug’s request.

Of course, design isn’t everything. Editorially *The Creel* proved to be visionary, planting the seeds for a new generation of fly fishing journalists. In his 1974 book *The Fishing in Print* (p. 323), Arnold Gingrich wrote:

“As editor of *The Creel*, the beautiful and distinctive organ of The Flyfisher’s Club of Oregon, Pete Hidy was a trailblazer, in bringing a civilizing overlay of appreciation of the traditional and historic lore to the then generally rough and ready state of Western fly fishing in general. To my mind, V. S. Hidy can never be praised enough, for he showed the way, like a lantern in the dark, long before such journals as *The Flyfisher*, *Trout*, *Fly Fisherman Magazine*, and *The American Fly Fisher* were ever dreamed of. He is one of those rare spirits who could, almost single-handedly, give a sport a good name.”



Left: Arnold Gingrich (1903–1976), co-founder and editor of *Esquire* magazine, 1933–1961. His other books on fly fishing include *The Well-Tempered Angler* (1965), *The Joys of Trout* (1973), and *American Trout Fishing* (1996), Photograph by Peter Alport

Jack W. Berryman, writing about Pete Hidy in *Northwest Fly Fishing* (May/June 2008, p. 78), reported that *The Creel* “was an instant sensation in the fly fishing community—preceding all other popular fly-fishing magazines by several years.”

Dave Hughes was one of those who admired the editorial standards of *The Creel*:

“While I struggled through the many years of becoming a writer for small fly fishing magazines, and later larger ones—if it can be said there are large ones—and became a



contributing editor for *Field & Stream*, it remained a sort of background hope that someday I might be able to write for *The Creel*. I had one invitation, to contribute on a river I'd fished but a couple of days, so deferred to those who knew the river well. I've written close to thirty books about fly fishing, and am an honorary member of the FCO for my contributions to the literature of fly fishing, but I've yet to fulfill that nagging goal: to contribute to *The Creel*."

One of the unexpected side-effects of the bulletin's success was that it attracted a trickle of non-resident members from far-away places like Argentina, France, and New Zealand. Non-resident membership in the Flyfisher's Club of Oregon was more easily attained than was possible in the far more exclusive Anglers' Club of New York. There was evidently a hunger for a literate journal dedicated to fly fishing. Pete was particularly proud that this little Pacific Northwest effort was embraced internationally. Years later, when *The Creel* started to fall apart, and the whole year of 1979 passed without yielding a single issue of *The Creel*, Pete worried about those far-flung members for whom the journal was their only link to the club.

Volunteer-run journals are notoriously difficult to maintain over the long haul, and the Creel Committee had its internal problems right from the start. It was not immune, for example, to the age-old publishing friction between the art and editorial departments, nor to deadline burn-out. Doug's graphic experiments were not always greeted enthusiastically by the word men, and there were times when the belea-

guered designer received copy before the editing had been polished. These mutual aggravations led to long-simmering friction that had a mildly corrosive effect on committee morale—but not strong enough to undo the profound respect the Creel men had for each other. To make matters worse, by the late 1970s inflation and a recession were causing widespread tensions that must have been felt by the Creel team, all of whom had demanding day jobs.

Perhaps the single biggest setback to *The Creel* was Pete's relocation to Boise in 1968, when he was hired, ironically, by *Creel* cofounder Bob Beatty who had become communications director at Boise Cascade, the forest products company headquartered in Boise. Although Pete continued to edit remotely, as Bob Wethern would also do when he moved to Washington, he would never again play the leadership role that he once had. Roger Bachman was one of those who stepped in to fill the void left by Pete. Roger wrote to me recently about those days:

"After Pete left town the Creel team fell into tense battles, which Pete had smoothed over when he was here. . . . Not only was his smiling grace the glue that made the Creel work flow, I think we all missed seeing him regularly."

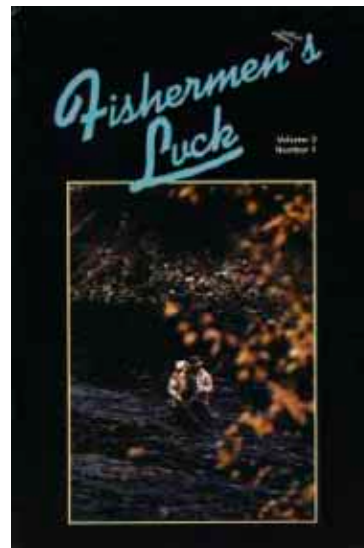
Once he settled in Boise, Pete's most important writing for *The Creel* was yet to come (see page 34). He remained on the Creel Committee, but his writing and editing was split between *The Creel* and working with New York publishers again, resulting in *The Art of Tying the Wet Fly and Fishing the Flymph*

(Crown, 1971), and *The Pleasures of Fly Fishing* (Winchester, 1972). The following year he self-published an illustrated booklet, *An Open Letter to the International Society of Flymph Fishermen*. I will have more to say about those publications in part two of this article (pages 28–31).

The early 1970s in Idaho were happy, productive years for Pete. I moved into my parents home for brief period when I opened my first graphic design studio in downtown Boise, so I was able to observe his modus operandi up close. He started each day at 4:30 or 5:00, working on *The Creel* or other fly fishing business for a couple of hours before going off to his full-time job at Boise Cascade. He enjoyed golfing on weekends that he stayed in town—but we also took many day trips to the local canyons, often for fishing, but sometimes just to explore and take photographs.

Then in the mid-1970s, when Pete was in his early 60's, he had a mild stroke and the beginnings of respiratory failure that would prove fatal in 1983. After recovering from the stroke, he continued to tie flies and write, but fishing was no longer a possibility. The last Idaho fishing license in his fly wallet was dated 1976.

Pete's commitment to *The Creel* was further compromised when he applied his diminish-



Here are the only two issues of *Fishermen's Luck*, the journal of the Boise Valley Fly Fishermen, that Pete Hidy and Clayne Baker produced in 1979–80.

ing energy to founding *Fishermen's Luck*, a similar journal for the Boise Valley Fly Fishermen, co-edited with Clayne Baker. Pete was frustrated that he and Clayne were unable to recruit the kind of talent that had made *The Creel* so successful, so *Fishermen's Luck* folded after only two issues: April 1979, and February 1981.

In 1980, with the 20th anniversary of the club approaching, Pete and Bob Wethern began corresponding about the possibility of compiling *The Best of the Creel* as a 300-page book. Pete even typed a list of the articles that he thought most deserving for inclusion. When he and Bob failed to enlist a publisher, they let the project drop. Instead, Bob organized a club "Festschrift" for Pete. He was deeply moved by this package that included gifts from his old fishing companions, along with slides and a videotape celebrating the Club's twenty years—and of course Tom Tongue's toast that was quoted at the beginning of this article. But *The Best of the Creel* was indeed a good idea whose time may yet come—especially now that the era of the ebook is upon us. And we still have Pete's list of articles as a starting point.

After Pete's death, The Flyfisher's Club of Oregon honored its founder in a way that recognized the special importance of his editorial

vision in starting *The Creel*. The Vernon S. “Pete” Hidy Life Membership Award was instituted to honor those who make extraordinary contributions to angling literature. The recipients so far include:

FRANK W. AMATO  
H. LENOX DICK, M.D.  
RICK HAFELE  
DAVE HUGHES  
CHARLES LEESON  
TOM MCALLISTER  
JIM SCHOLLMEYER

I regret that it is not possible to insert here a little biography of each one of the core members of the Creel Committee. That is a task for someone else. What I can do now, is tell more of my father’s fly fishing story, including the events before and after his time in Oregon.

## Part Two: Pete’s Story

Born on August 9, 1914, in Springfield, Ohio, his formative experiences came during the summers on his grandfather Hidy’s farm, 25 miles southeast in Bookwalter. Near the end of his life, Pete wrote about those early days, c. 1922–30:

“I liked to explore the stream named Paint Creek that flowed through the pastures and on across the countryside to the old Hidy Cemetery where many of our ancestors and relatives are buried. . . . I learned to fish with worms and crawfish for bass, perch, catfish and carp, and during the hot afternoons I would see blacksnakes in the thickets where I picked blackberries; and I got acquainted with many birds up in the trees I climbed for fun and juicy cherries and mulberries. . . . When it rained I would take a kerosene lantern, a long, one-piece bamboo pole and a can of worms and go fishing for catfish. The sounds of the owls and big bullfrogs and falling rain made music in the night.

My grandfather Alfred Hidy (1858–1946) was a big hard-working farmer, a storyteller and a good listener who had served as a justice of the peace for several years. He had a reputation for fairness and skill in settling disputes. I can still see him ploughing his fields, mowing the hay, shucking corn, milking the cow and hitching the horses to the wagons.”

During 1932–33 Pete managed to complete four semesters at Wittenberg College in Springfield before the Great Depression cut his studies short—the equivalent of

a community college education today, minus the degree. Nonetheless, in his final semester Pete found his calling in a journalism class—an abiding passion that would give life not only to *The Creel*, but to a string of superb fishing books and articles.

But, it was the darkest time of the Depression, and Pete was unemployed. When affluent Philadelphia relatives beckoned, offering him refuge while he applied for jobs, he gratefully fled from the farmland to the big city. Somehow he landed a job as a traveling salesman for the Burroughs company, selling typewriters and adding machines. But he met two people there who would change his life. One was Elaine Ruth Williams, a nurse-in-training at Lankenau Hospital, whom he would eventually marry. The other was Richard G. “Dick” Clark, a Philadelphia businessman.

Dick Clark was also a fly fisherman, and a member of the Anglers’ Club of New York. When he found out that Pete liked to fish, he offered to show him how to catch trout with a fly—something that Pete had never seen in Ohio. They went to Dick’s favorite getaway on Brodhead Creek, 100 miles north in the Pocono mountains—equidistant from Manhattan to the east. Because of its proximity to two major cities, this prime trout water was a fisherman’s mecca until it was damaged by hurricane Hazel in 1954, and then by subsequent flood control projects. Lodging

was available at the Spruce Cabin Inn and Henryville House, but Dick preferred the upscale Hotel Rapids in Analomink, where the proprietor and chef, Charles Rethoret served French cuisine, accompanied by fine wines. Analomink Charley, as he was called, treated his guests like royalty—which, in the world of fly fishing, they were. These were the angling elite of the day, including writers such as John Alden Knight, Preston Jennings, Ed Zern, Charles McKinley Wetzel, and Charlie Fox.

However, the one who interested Pete (and Dick Clark) was not among the city men, but the taciturn bachelor from the Bethlehem steel mill in Allentown, a working-class tool-maker with a German accent—Jim Leisenring. Possessing neither education nor money, he had become a legend for his ability to catch trout, especially when other’s creels were



Elaine Ruth Williams, c. 1940



James E. Leisenring (1878–1951) in his prime in an undated photograph, taken on one of his trips to the American West.

empty. Pete told me that Jim often received lodging in exchange for providing kitchens with trout. It is doubtful that he could have afforded the rates at Hotel Rapids, so it is possible that he had a barter arrangement with Charley too.

To set the stage for what follows, I will jump ahead here a few years. Sometime after the publication of Jim and Pete's book, *The Art of Tying the Wet Fly* (1941), Charley hung an oil portrait of Jim over the main fireplace in the bar at Hotel Rapids in Analomink. It was painted by Philadelphia artist Sibley Smith, a frequent guest there. The painting was based on the photograph that a friend of Pete's made for the frontispiece of their book in 1940. Very likely the photographer was either Jack Cameron or

John Deinenger, both of whose credits appear under half-tones in the book. In a letter dated June 18, 1940, Jim wrote: "Dear Pete, I received the tools and picture which my mother captured right off because she said it looks like me. Oh well.

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LEFT: Portrait of James E. Leisenring painted by Sibley Smith, photographed in the Philadelphia home of Elise Clark, widow of Richard G. Clark, c 1971. This painting had been displayed at the Hotel Rapids on the Brodhead, Analomink, Pennsylvania, where it hung in the place of honor, over the main fireplace. The painting was rescued when the hotel was destroyed by fire. Photo by Lance Hidy.

ABOVE: The photograph from the frontispiece in *The Art of Tying the Wet Fly* in 1941. The painting was copied from this. Collection of Lance Hidy.



I thank you for the same.” Pete has written that Charles Re-thoret commissioned the painting (“A Salute to Leisenring and Skues,” *The Creel*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Dec. 1970). After the hotel burned down, the rescued painting eventually was moved to Dick Clark’s home, where I photographed it around 1970. I do not know where the painting is today.

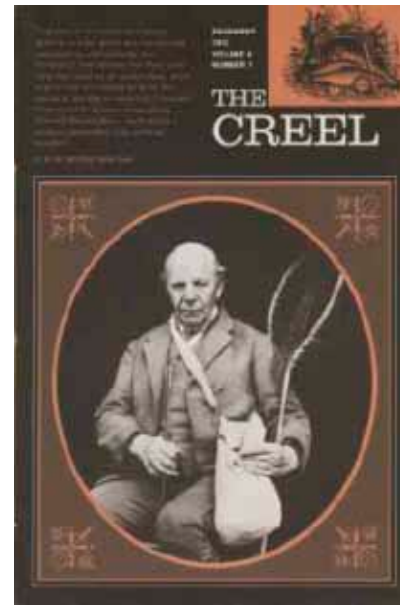
In the portrait Jim is wearing his slightly ragged fishing clothes, and is cradling his soft-action, Leonard bamboo rod. But of supreme significance is the felt-paged, pigskin covered, wet-fly wallet that lies open in his hands. The dry-fly men couldn’t use these wallets since they would crush the stiff dry-fly hackles. By including this wallet in the portrait, the Pocono fly fisherman were making it clear that their local hero was a wet-fly man—like the English writer, G.E.M. Skues. This iconic image said to its small audience that the days of the dry-fly monoculture in American fly fishing were ending.

Three of Skues’ books had become touchstones for Leisenring, as they would for Pete: *Minor Tactics of the Chalk Stream* (1910), and *The Way of a Trout With a Fly* (1921), and *Nymph Fishing for Chalk Stream Trout* (1939). Skues’ was careful never to criticize the dry fly, choosing instead to explain why he was usually able to catch trout below the surface when the dry fly failed. He thought it absurd to limit himself to the two-dimensional water surface when the trout were so often feeding below, in the third dimension.

Skues’ experience rang true to Leisenring who never had been a dry fly purist. He blended Skues’ methods with his own, adapted to the ecology of American trout streams. Like

Skues, he examined the contents of the trouts’ stomachs to see what they were really eating. This incontrovertible evidence led to the same inescapable conclusion that Skues had reported: that the trout’s main food consisted not of floating insects, but of hatching flies swimming below the surface, and of nymphs.

We know that Leisenring and Skues corresponded, but the only evidence that has survived is a Xerox of a letter written to Skues in 1947, and a mounted set of Leisenring’s flies that Skues gave to the Flyfishers’ Club of London, where they still reside.



Skues appeared on the cover of *The Creel*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Dec. 1970, whose lead article was “A Salute to Leisenring and Skues,” by V. S. Hidy.



James E. Leisenring and Pete Hidy, Allentown, Pennsylvania, circa 1940 when they collaborated on *The Art of Tying the Wet Fly*.

Now I will step back a few years. Before ever arriving at Hotel Rapids, Pete had heard the Leisenring legend from Dick Clark. When Pete and Jim first encountered each other streamside, Pete knew exactly who he was talking to. His account of their first meetings is modest and matter-of-fact (*The Creel*, Dec. 1970):

“I first met ‘Big Jim’ at a pool on the Brodhead at Analomink. After he netted the trout he was playing, I looked at the fly and saw that it was such a fly as you could not buy in

a store. A year later I met him again and we became friends. He invited me to his home and, at my request, taught me to tie flies.”

By taking Pete on as an apprentice, Jim signalled two things: he didn’t want his wet-fly techniques to die with him; and that the young man from Ohio earned his admiration and trust.

After wondering about the chemistry that led to this unlikely friendship, I have some ideas, based partly on reading Jim’s letters to Pete, partly on knowing my father, and the rest from reading their publications. Pete was always an obsessive reader, so I have no doubt that he commenced immediately to absorb the literature of fly fishing—a passion to his last days. For him, as for many others, the books were an important part of the sport’s attraction. However, it is important to understand that Pete was repulsed by orthodoxy of any kind, so the dry-fly-only code of the time would have left him cold. For example, while Pete’s two brothers (my uncles Ross and Albert) bent to family pressure to become Lutheran ministers, he, the eldest, always had an uneasy relation with churches and doctrine. Although he was careful to avoid using the cliché, the trout stream was all the church



Pete Hidy at his fly-tying bench, c. 1939–41. Collection of Lance Hidy.

he needed. Pete would have been inquisitive and respectful of the dry-fly mystique, as he was of religion, but not ready to be a true believer. Not ever. Jim Leisenring's eclectic approach to fly fishing was more to his taste, which was obviously gratifying to Jim. But even more impressive to the old man, Pete loved fly tying and advanced rapidly—soon nearly equaling his teacher. When Pete needed Jim to tie some winged flies to be photographed for their book, Jim couldn't, but trusted Pete to do it for him: "...as working on the W.P.A. [the federal Works Project Administration] my fingers are so rough, to tie wings the feather fibers won't slip down between a rough finger and thumb—so don't ask me to tie winged patterns. You must tie the winged patterns yourself." [letter to Pete, Nov. 12, 1940]

Reading and listening, it did not take long for Pete to learn about the roles of Theodore Gordon and George La Branche in selling Englishman Frederick Halford's dry-fly doctrine to Americans. Pete saw that there was yet, in print, no American counterpart to Skues—no reasoned, alternative voice for the submerged fly. Pete could see that Jim Leisenring had the know-how to be that voice, as did others on the Brodhead.

But there was a problem. While the fishing and fly-tying styles of Skues and Leisenring were similar, there were differences too. Skues was a brilliant writer, and he had no qualms about divulging his fishing innovations in print. Jim, on the other hand, hated writing, and was secretive. My father told me that prior to the book's publication, Jim brushed off inquiries from envious fishermen who wanted to know how he did it.

Nonetheless, Pete coaxed Jim to start writing, believing that



Jim Leisenring preparing to fish.



his unique approach to wet-fly fishing needed to join the American literature of the sport. Jim reluctantly warmed to the idea. Having enjoyed teaching Pete, he agreed to doing it on a larger scale, in print. With editorial supervision from his young helper, Jim wrote the chapters in his Victorian script. Pete edited and typed the manuscript, and supervised the photography. Pete's persistence finally resulted in the first American book devoted to the art of tying and fishing the wet fly—a tribute to Big Jim, the reluctant fishing genius.

As the friendship with the old man blossomed, so did Pete's fishing and fly-tying skills. Pete was starting to earn a name for himself. Jim, Pete, and Dick Clark fished the other prime trout streams that were within reach of Philadelphia and Manhattan. I remember my father speaking of fishing on the Neversink, Paradise Creek, the Beaverkill, and its tributary, the Willowemoc. It was on those trips that Pete may have first encountered Sparse Grey Hackle and Arnold Gingrich. He also formed friendships with three of the great Catskill fly tiers, Harry and Elsie Darbee, and Reuben Cross.

And it was during that time that Rube Cross's second fly-tying manual, *Fur, Feathers, and Steel*, primarily devoted to the dry fly, was published by Dodd, Mead in 1940. Taking a keen interest in Jim and Pete's project, Rube helped them place the book with his editor. Dodd, Mead published *The Art of Tying the Wet Fly* in 1941, in the same size and binding as Rube's book. In the introduction, Rube wrote:

"I have learned to have a great deal of respect for Pete and his particular types of nymphs and wet flies as created by

**Map of the Catskill and Pocono Highlands fishing areas and associated people.**

**Also shown is Springfield, Ohio, Pete Hidy's hometown.**

**CATSKILL FISHERMEN AND FLY TIERS**

- George Labranche*
- Theodore Gordon*
- Edward R. Hewitt*
- Preston Jennings*
- Lee and Joan Wulff*
- Art Flick*
- Reuben Cross*
- Walt and Winnie Dette*
- Harry and Elsie Darbee*
- Roy Steenrod*
- Sparse Grey Hackle*
- Arnold Gingrich*
- Ed Zern*
- Nick Lyons*
- James E. Leisenring*
- Vernon S. Hidy*

**SOME CATSKILL TROUT STREAMS**

- Willowemoc*
- Beaverkill*
- Esopus Creek*
- Neversink River*
- Paradise Creek*



**BRODHEAD CREEK, POCONO HIGHLANDS FISHERMEN**

- James Leisenring*
- Vernon S. Hidy*
- Charles Rethoret of Hotel Rapids, Analomink*
- Richard G. Clark*

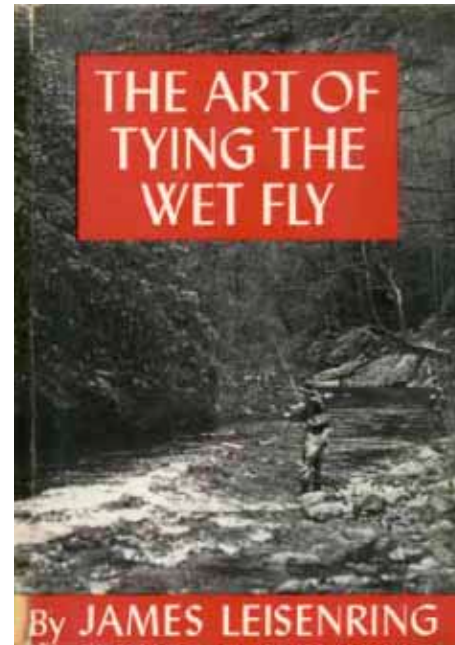
- Ernest G. Schwieibert*
- John Alden Kight*
- Preston Jennings*
- Ed Zern*
- Charles McKinley Wetzel*
- Charles K. Fox*

himself and Jim Leisenring. I have seen them take trout in Catskill, Adirondack and Pennsylvania streams where and when a great many other patterns and lures have failed to raise a fish.

The angling fraternity of America has long stood in need of a good book describing the whys and the wherefores of the wet fly, which in recent years has been happily restored to its rightful place in anglers' kits. The wet fly, I am convinced, will take more trout consistently throughout the season than any other type of lure.

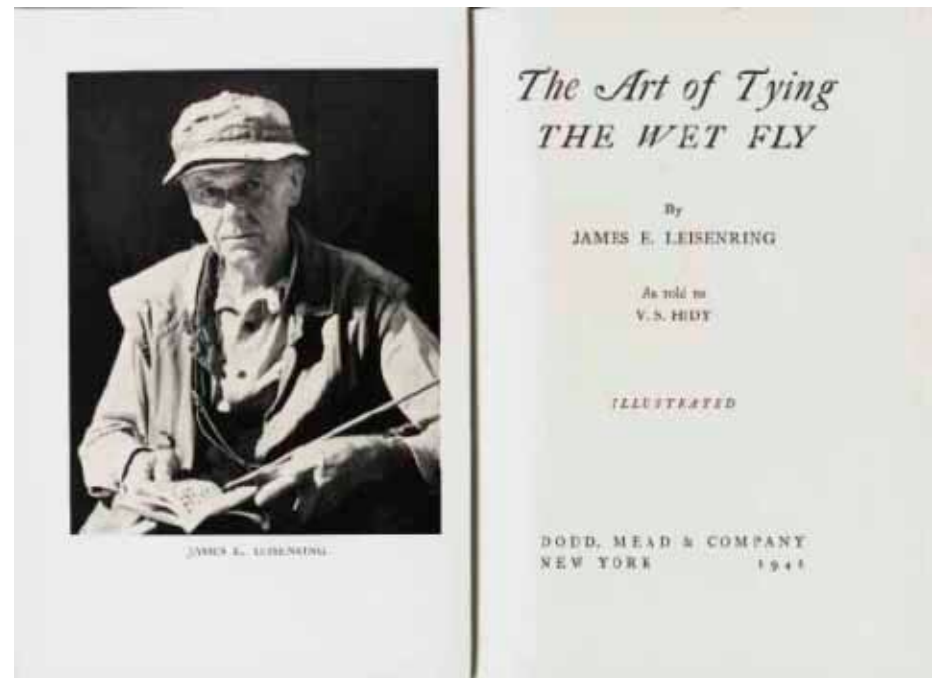
It was with keen delight that I learned of *The Art of Tying the Wet Fly* by Pete and Jim, for I know of no other two more enthusiastic anglers more capable at this task.

Today, this modest little book of 106 pages has become a landmark in angling literature, although it barely made a ripple at the time. The authors knew that the wet fly would be a hard sell in a dry-fly world—especially since Jim's writing style could never come close to the charm of Skues' books. Arnold Gingrich, an avowed dry-fly purist, had not been won over by Skues, so he surely was not going to capitulate to Leisenring either. He wrote "I'll grant what everybody already knows anyway, that he [Leisenring] was a substantial and significant figure in early twentieth-century American angling practice. (That still doesn't make me like him as a writer. So was John Alden Knight.) [from *The Fishing in Print*, 1974]. Then, just a few months after publication, came Pearl Harbor. As the country and its fishermen went to war, the book was all but forgotten.



LEFT: The dust jacket to *The Art of Tying the Wet Fly*.

BELOW: The title page spread with the frontispiece photograph of Jim Leisenring holding his wet-fly wallet and Leonard rod.

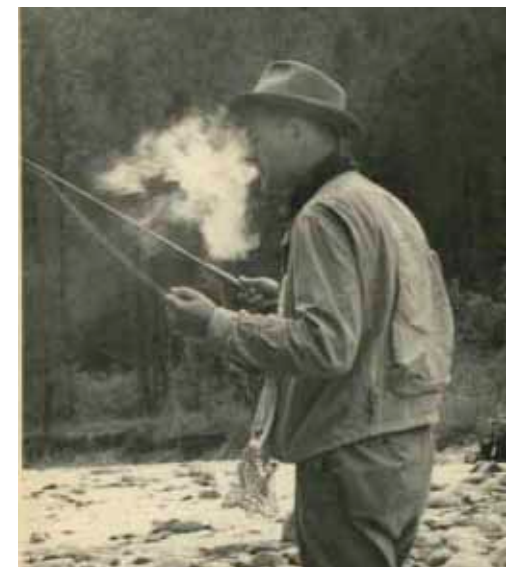


Pete soon joined the Navy, and then after the War, he and my mother Elaine moved to LaGrande, Oregon, where, as a sports reporter for the local paper, he sharpened his editorial skills. Several photographs from the fall of 1946 (I was born in April of that year) show my father fishing the Lostine River in northeastern Oregon's Willowa Mountains.

While my father struggled to make a living, first as a journalist, and then as a traveling salesman in the paper products industry, our family moved to southern California. It was during that time, in 1951, that Dick Clark wrote to Pete with the news of Jim Leisenring's death. Soon afterward our little family returned to Oregon, buying a house at 3120 S.W. Sherwood Place, in Portland Heights. It was during those years

that a series of events unfolded that would be a prelude to Pete's creating the Flyfisher's Club of Oregon.

The first of these occurred on August 16, 1954, when the magazine *Sports Illustrated*, made its debut. From the first issue, *SI* contained articles about fly fishing. In the magazine's bylines Pete recognized names from his fishing days on Brodhead Creek and in the Catskills, including Ed Zern and Sparse Grey Hackle. Then, in the April 6, 1959 issue, there appeared an extraordinary, 6,000-word article by Sparse, *Trout: End and Beginning—The Perfect Angler*. The beautifully-written piece was amusing, full of insights about the sport, and sprinkled with names of the great fly fishermen of the Northeast—with one glaring omission: Jim Leisenring.



LEFT AND ABOVE: Pete fishing on the Lostine River in northeastern Oregon, September, 1946. Lance Hidy collection.

During the next three weeks Pete crafted a letter to the Managing Editor, Sidney L. James, proposing an article about Leisenring—a long shot, to be sure. Here is an extract:

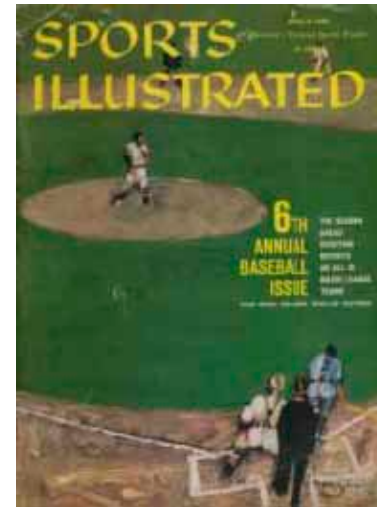
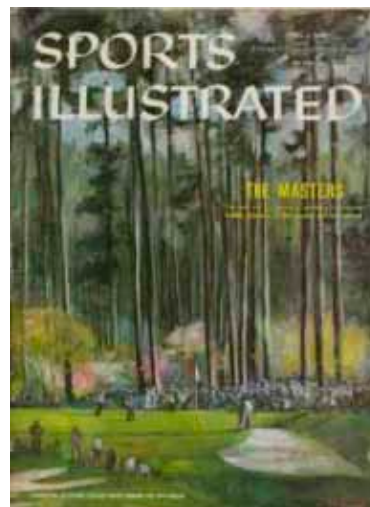
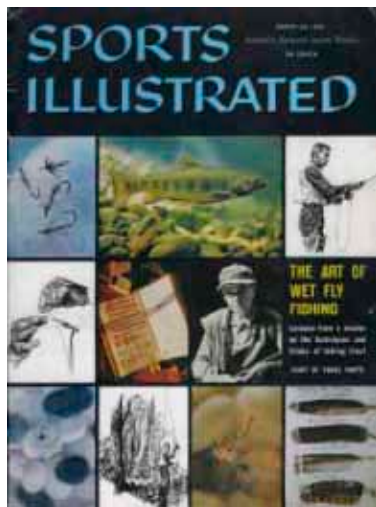
A quarter of a century ago I met an unknown, uncommunicative yet remarkable fly fisherman on the Brodhead at Analomink in the Pocono mountains. Together we wrote a book, *The Art of Tying the Wet Fly*, (Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1941), and shortly thereafter several of his deadly trout flies were on display in the Flyfishers' Club of London.

The man's name was James E. Leisenring. In America his fame as a great fly-fisherman should rank with Thaddeus Norris, Theodore Gordon, Ed Hewitt, and George La Branche. In the tying of trout flies and painstaking selectivity of hackles, hooks, thread and fur he has no peer.

As one who loves fly-fishing, angling literature and lore, my responsibility for writing up my experience and knowledge of Mr. Leisenring is clear. In retrospect the significance of his skills and techniques increases in importance. This

can be done in the manner of John McDonald's "Gordon's Fly Box", if you like, or treated as a crisp analysis of the special qualities and techniques he possessed. Perhaps you have a better suggestion.

Mr. James, we may

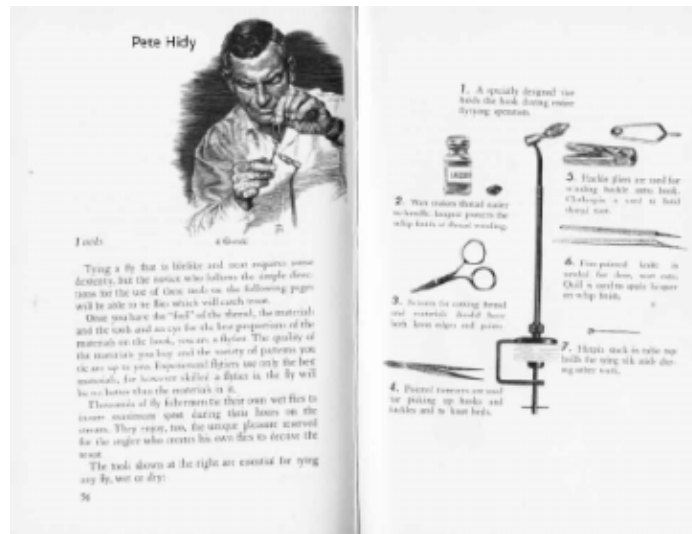
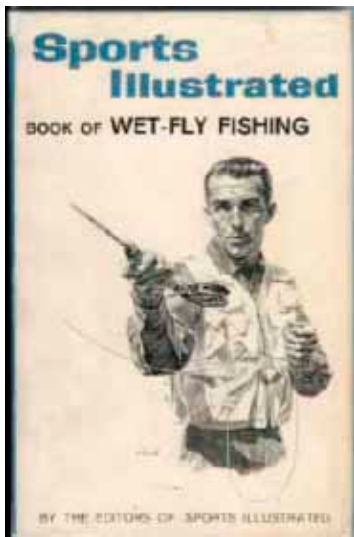


Pete's 1960 *Sports Illustrated* articles on fishing the wet fly appeared on March 28, April 4, and April 11. The photograph of Leisenring with his wet-fly wallet appeared on the first cover.

presume, circulated this letter to his fishing writers, including Sparse Grey Hackle, and Ed Zern—men who could vouch for Pete, and for the veracity of his claims about Jim Leisenring. They had all fished the same water, and either knew, or knew of, each other. Some had surely been to Hotel Rapids in Analomink and seen the painting of Jim over the fireplace.

Pete's timing was lucky. Partly because of the success of recent how-to-do-it articles on golf featuring the masterful scratchboard illustrations of Anthony Ravielli, the proposal was not only accepted, it rapidly snowballed into an unprecedented three-part fishing tutorial, appearing during March and April, 1960—with Ravielli's step-by-step illustrations. Leisenring's iconic portrait with the wet fly wallet appeared twice: in the cover montage, and on the opening page.

The following year, 1961, the three parts were reformatted, and published as a hardcover book. Although the photograph of Leisenring had been cut, Pete began the book



The three *Sports Illustrated* articles were republished as a hardcover book in 1961, the year that Pete Hidy would start the Flyfisher's Club of Oregon.

with a handsome prose portrait, expanded from the magazine version to add some historical context:

“Trout fisherman James Leisenring’s life was a bachelor’s odyssey that took him from his Delaware Valley home to the more primitive waters tumbling out of the Rockies and the Sierra. East and West, anglers remember him fondly: a tall, bronzed man with piercing brown eyes sensitive to all that was happening in and along a stream. Wearing an old Trent fishing hat, a cavernous creel slung over one shoulder, he could shoot a Quill Gordon upstream with a flick of his Leonard rod or bring it alive with shorter casts over along the bank under the hemlocks and rhododendron. Most of the time, however, when the wiser trout would not rise to a dry fly, he would knot on a jewel-small wet fly imbued with the mingled colorings and bewitching movements of a swimming nymph or insect. Maneuvering it ever so

carefully, he could make the fly become deadly, as if bringing some magic out of feathers and fur.

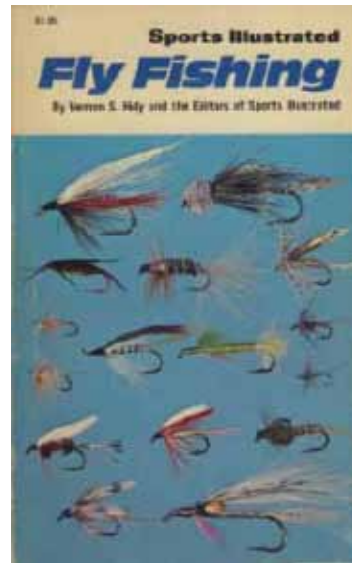
Although Fisherman Leisenring enjoyed the dry fly—at his touch one would bounce, dance, skitter or float cleanly without drag—he preferred the wet fly because it enabled him to fish a great deal more water, imitate more stages and types of insect activity and thus deceive more trout, especially the large ones that he sought. The wet fly remained Leisenring’s favorite even during the years when the dry fly became the overwhelming choice among angling experts. Early in this century, after Theodore Gordon, a shy, nature-loving fugitive from the hard business life of New York, introduced the dry fly in America, and George LaBranche, a successful broker and vibrant sportsman, dramatized it, thousands of angling purists joined them in “abandoning the wet fly for good and all.” Then one day in the ‘30s, the venerable dean of American anglers, Edward Hewitt admonished his friends: “Let any

dry-fly man who has learned the easiest method of trout fishing, fish alongside a skilled wet-fly man for a day, and he will find he knows little about the real art of catching trout. I have the highest respect for the skilled wet-fly fisherman, as he has mastered an art of very great difficulty.”

James Leisenring was one of those who truly mastered the art of the wet fly. A nimble-fingered fly-tier and a strategist soundly grounded in stream ecology, he brought a high degree of perfection to the wet fly during and after its period of fashionable neglect. He combined in the flies he tied the subtle colors and qualities of nymph forms of insects. Then, after studying their clambering, crawling behavior underwater, he devised a technique that imitated their trout-teasing struggle up through the water to the surface as they were hatching. Here was a golden moment, Leisenring found, to hook trout, since they naturally feed beneath the surface most of the time.”

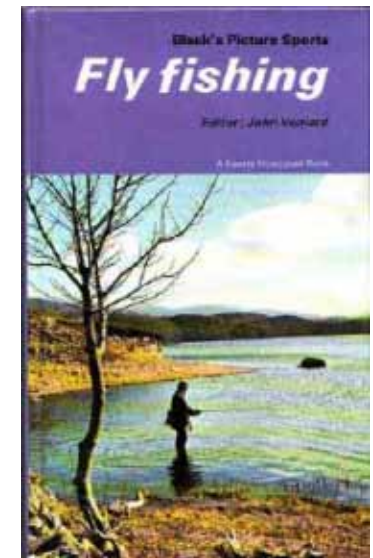
Because of the prestige of *Sports Illustrated*, fly fishermen everywhere were proud to see their sport thusly celebrated—although the wet fly was still a hard sell.

Overnight Pete became a celebrity among Oregon’s fly fishermen. Longing for the camaraderie of the old Broadhead and Beaverkill days, he welcomed his new-found fishing friends in Oregon. Within months of the publication of the *Sports Illustrated* articles he persuaded them to form a west



As the market-conscious editors realized how little interest there was in the wet fly compared to floating flies, the revised 1972 edition of Pete’s book (left) had only a brief mention of Leisenring, putting more emphasis on the dry fly. Pete’s name remained on the title page, however.

The 1976 London edition (right), replaced Pete’s name with that of John Veniard who provided some new content. Leisenring’s name was cut entirely, but Pete’s could be found on the copyright page. Still more dry flies were added.



coast club, inspired by The Angler’s Club of New York—the story that was told in part one.

In that momentous first letter to *Sports Illustrated*, in 1959, Pete articulated, for the first time, that Jim Leisenring belonged in the American fly fishing pantheon along with Thaddeus Norris, Theodore Gordon, Ed Hewitt, and George La Branche. As Leisenring’s protégé and fellow-American, Pete’s opinion might not carry as much weight as if it came from a more objective source. One such authority, perhaps, is Terry Lawton, the English angling historian. In his most recent book, *The Upstream Wet Fly*, (Robert Hale, 2011) he guides us through more than three centuries of wet fly history, highlighting important practitioners, regional schools, and the famous rivalry with dry fly purists. When, in the ninth chapter, Lawton turns his attention to the United States, the first

eighteen pages dwell upon the contributions of Leisenring and Hidy. In the opening paragraph Lawton writes,

“Just as Theodore Gordon, in particular, took English patterns of dry flies and adapted and modified them for use on American rivers and streams, so the English or Scottish spider patterns often referred to as soft-hackle wet flies were the basis for the flies known today as flymphs. Between about 1910 and 1940 James E. Leisenring played a role similar to the one played by Gordon for the dry fly, and it was his friend and pupil Vernon S. ‘Pete’ Hidy who was to come up with the word ‘flymph’ to describe the flies the two of them were tying and fishing.

With published information about Leisenring and Hidy woefully scarce, Terry Lawton has been working “at my side,” via e-mail and post, as we delve deeper into their legacy. It is hoped that as more detailed portraits emerge, the positions of Jim and Pete in the history of fly fishing will become better



**A QUINTESSENTIAL HIDY FLYMPH**—An unweighted hook with an up-eye; wingless; blue dun hen for hackle and tail; body of hare’s ear fur spun on the pure silk thread designated by its maker, Pearsalls, as Ash.



Angling historian Terry Lawton and his 2011 book, *The Upstream Wet Fly*, that includes an extensive section about Jim Leisenring, Pete Hidy, and the flymph.

defined—aided by Lawton’s expertise not only as an historian, but also as a fly-tier and fisherman.

During Pete’s Portland years, 1956–67, with the *Sports Illustrated* articles and the founding of the Flyfisher’s Club of Oregon and *The Creel*, it became clear that Pete had become far more than a spokesman for Leisenring, and was making major contributions to the sport in his own right. Another seed that he planted during that fertile period, as noted by Lawton, was coining the word *flymph* c. 1962–63. At this writing, Pete’s morphing of *fly* and *nymph* has yet to appear in any dictionary, although it has become well-established in the literature of the wet fly in America and in Europe. Pete



An assortment of Pete Hidy's flymphs. Collection of Lance Hidy.

worked tirelessly to promote the flymph soon after he relocated to Boise in late 1967—and the message did get through to some. Three angling writers in particular took an interest in Pete and his flymph, and wrote persuasively about it: Dave Hughes, Allen McGee, and Gunnar Johnson.

That Pete would focus his energies on the humble little flymph appears counter-intuitive—but he had his reasons, foremost among them being their appeal to trout, the only critics that really mattered. Admittedly, if an eccentric fly tier sought to invent the most generic, non-descript patterns, using the drabest threads, furs and feathers, with the intention of arousing the interest of the fewest number of

fishermen—the results would surely be something very much like a flymph. Indeed, when Orvis did a test marketing of a box of Pete Hidy-style flymphs, they promptly discontinued them due to poor sales. But the flymph never was intended to appeal to fishermen.

As Pete once pointed out, a flymph is not a “fly,” strictly speaking, because it has no wings. And with its soft hackle and fuzzy body on an unweighted hook, neither does it fit into the nymph category. Let's read Pete's formal definition of the flymph and flymph fishing from *The Art of Tying the Wet Fly and Fishing the Flymph* (1971, Crown):

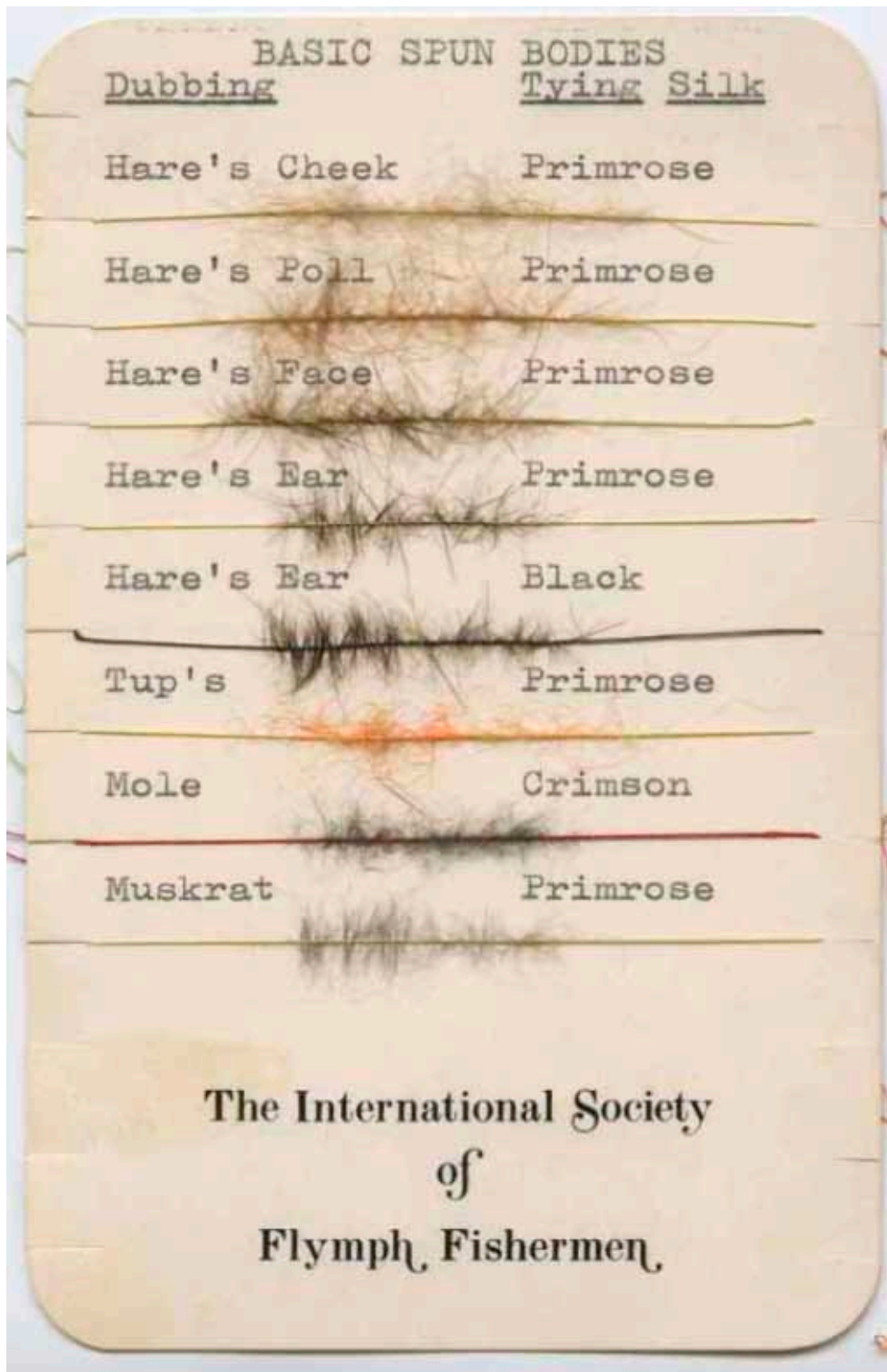
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**Flymph**—a wingless artificial fly with a soft, translucent body of fur or wool which blends with the undercolor of the tying silk when wet, utilizing soft hackle fibers easily activated by the currents to give the effect of an insect alive in the water, and strategically cast diagonally upstream or across for the trout to take just below or within a few inches of the surface film.

---

**Flymph Fishing** is that technique which, by comparison to the “chuck-and-chance-it” use of the winged wet fly, or the hard-bodied or weighted nymph fished deep, strives to simulate the hatching nymphs of the mayfly, caddis fly, or other aquatic insects as they struggle up toward the surface or drift momentarily in or just under the surface film. In suspense, visual excitement, and pleasure, flymph fishing equals or excels dry-fly fishing because the strike is usually visible and the fly must be placed upstream from the trout with considerable accuracy and skill.





The most important component of a flymph, other than the hook itself, is the spun body. Jim Leisenring spun the fur fibers between the two halves of a folded length of waxed silk, also called a dubbing loop, that he stretched along his leg at the knee. After the fur was secured in the twisted threads, it became like a tiny, hairy rope that would, in the words of Jim and Pete, “stand up under the ‘gnawing’ of trout’s teeth. A body which has been scraped down and worn well—practically worn out—is better than a new one for catching fish, so it is well to construct them for long wear.”

Richard G. Clark wrote that Jim’s “method requires a degree of skill and conduces to an untidy trouser leg, so I developed a spinning block to achieve the same result more easily and tidily.” [CONTINUED ON PAGE 28]



ABOVE: Pete experimented with variations of the Clark Spinning Block. Some of the white pads are black on the reverse, for use with pale dubbing. Collection of Lance Hidy.

LEFT: A spun body sampler prepared by Pete Hidy. Collection of Lance Hidy.



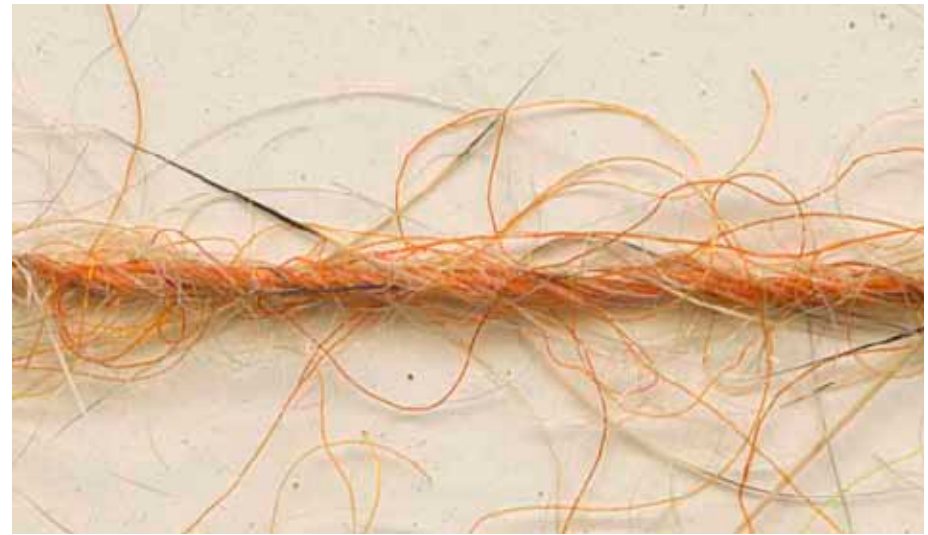
Dyed Mohair-Wool Mix on Black Silk



One-third each Hare's Face, Muskrat, Mole Mohair, on Ash Silk

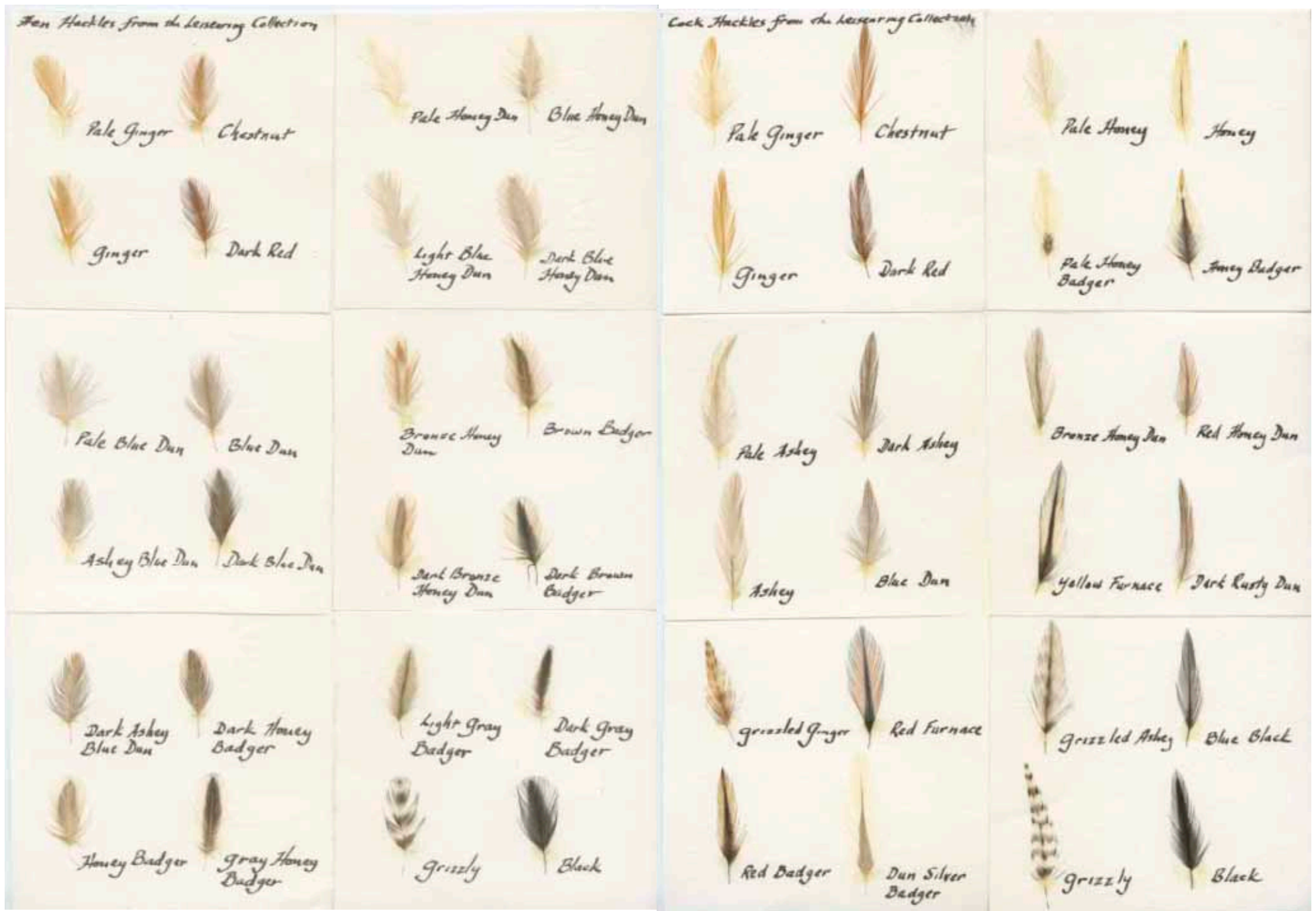


Mole on Primrose Silk



Hare's Cheek, Dun Wool, Cinnamon Wool, Persimmon Wool

**ABOVE:** Details of typical bodies spun by Pete Hidy. He experimented with mixtures of dubbing fur. In later years used more dyed wool and mohair, sometimes blended with Mole, Muskrat, Hare's Mask, and Fox fur.



Jim Leisenring gave Pete an extensive selection of prime hackles, organized in envelopes hand-labeled by Jim. Pete created and labeled these notebook pages to display a sampling of the most useful hen hackles (left) and cock hackles (right) from Jim's envelopes.

Pete adopted Dick's invention, making spinning blocks by the dozen, so he could give them away to anybody who showed a sincere interest in the flymph. Dave Hughes still gives demonstrations using the block that Pete gave him, in addition to an extensive exposition of the Leisenring-Hidy methods in his book *Wet Flies*. Allen McGee gives a beautifully illustrated guide to the spinning block and other flymph craft and history in his book, *Tying and Fishing Soft-Hackled Nymphs* (2007, Frank Amato). Dick Clark's own notes on how to use the block appeared posthumously in *The Anglers' Bulletin*, Vol. 47, No. 3, Oct. 1968.

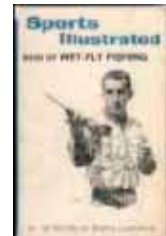
The majority of Pete's writing appeared in journals, or in pamphlet format. Several pieces appeared in anthologies, and he occasionally wrote introductions to books by his friends. Here is a chronological review of his most important statements on fly fishing and the flymph, including those described in the preceding pages.



Two books that have explained Leisenring, Hidy, and the flymph, are *Wet Flies* by Dave Hughes, 2005, Stackpole Books; and *Tying and Fishing Soft-Hackled Nymphs* by Allen McGee, 2007, Frank Amato Publications.



**1941** James E. Leisenring as told to V.S. Hidy. *The Art of Tying the Wet Fly*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company. Hardcover.



**1961** The Editors of Sports Illustrated. *Sports Illustrated book of Wet-Fly Fishing*. Text by Vernon S. Hidy with Coles Phinizy; illustrations by Anthony Ravielli. This is a slightly revised version of the three articles that appeared in *SI* during March and April, 1960. Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company. Hardcover.



**1970** Vernon S. Hidy. "A Salute to Leisenring and Skues." *The Creel*, Volume 8, No. 1, December. Portland: The Flyfisher's Club of Oregon.



**1971** James E. Leisenring and Vernon S. Hidy. *The Art of Tying the Wet Fly and Fishing the Flymph*. New Introduction by Ernest Schwiebert. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc. Hardcover.

This revised edition of the 1941 book was published as part of Sportsmen's Classics series while Nick Lyons was still at Crown. The three new chapters in the section titled "The Art of Fishing the Flymph" were full of insights that branched

out from seeds planted by Leisenring. Ernest Schwiebert wrote the introduction. Unfortunately the illustrations (including many new ones) were more poorly printed than those in the 1941 edition in which coated paper was wisely used for the plates.

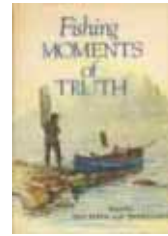


**1972** Vernon S. Hidy. *The Pleasures of Fly Fishing: Photographs and commentary on Streams, Rivers, Lakes, Anglers, Trout & Steelhead. Including a Selection of Memorable Observations from the Classic Writings of Angling Literature.* With 87 photographs by the author in color and monochrome. Foreword by Sparse Grey Hackle. New York: Winchester Press. Hardcover.

Pete's photographs of the fly-fishing experience, mostly taken in Oregon and Idaho, were one of the reasons he was a popular speaker. Fishermen who visited his home were also likely to be offered a private slide show in the basement, near the fly-tying bench. The passages from Pete's favorite angling literature were given importance equal to that of the images.



**1972** Vernon S. Hidy and the Editors of Sports Illustrated. *Sports Illustrated book of Wet-Fly Fishing.* Illustrations by Anthony Ravielli and Kyuzo Tsugami. Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company. Hardcover.



**1973** Eric Peper and Jim Rikhoff, eds. *Fishing Moments of Truth; including V. S. Hidy's "Moments of Truth on the McKenzie."* Illustrated by Milton C. Weiler. New York: Winchester Press. Hardcover.

Pete's contribution to this anthology was a tribute to three members of the Flyfisher's Club of Oregon: Dale LaFollette, Thomas Tongue, and especially to the recently deceased Judge James W. Crawford. Illustrated with photographic portraits, it appeared simultaneously in the June issue of *The Creel*. The jacket blurb lists the contributors:

"*Fishing Moments of Truth* assembles the rare experiences of 22 of the most able and eloquent fishermen in the world. Included in the elite group of authors are Nelson Bryant, Angus Cameron, Homer Circle, Art Flick, Charles Fox, Arnold Gingrich, Grits Gresham, Roderick Haig-Brown, Pete Hidy, Ed Koch, Dana Lamb, Nick Lyons, Steve Raymond, Charles Ritz, Jack Samson, Ernest Schwiebert, Pat Smith, Robert Traver, Lamar Underwood, Charles Waterman, Lee Wulff, and Ed Zern. Most of the stories were written expressly for this anthology and are appearing in print for the first time."



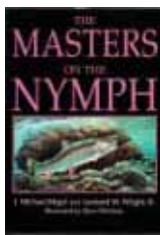
**1973** Vernon S. Hidy. *An Open Letter to The International Society of Flymph Fishermen.* Boise, Idaho; Gold Hawk Press, privately printed, signed and numbered by the author. Eight pages, sewn in paper wrappers. Two photographs by Hidy, and two drawings by J. Swanson. Two flymphs tied by the author, a toothpick, and two spun bodies were mounted into the pamphlet.

In this essay Pete focused on mimicry and hydrofuge, by which he meant the ability of spun bodies made with certain furs to resist water absorption (hydrofuge), and to retain lifelike air bubbles when submerged (mimicry). He instructed the reader to “place the tip of this toothpick through the eye of the hook on which this flymph is tied and immerse it in a clear glass of water.” For possibly the first time in fishing literature, Pete published a photograph of the bubbles on a submerged artificial fly. Angler-entomologist Gary LaFontaine would concur with Pete about the importance of air bubbles in living aquatic insects in his 1981 book, *Caddisflies*. Then in the 1995 book, *Wet Flies*, Dave Hughes followed up with his own photograph of bubbles on a submerged fly.



**1974** Vernon S. Hidy. “The Origins of Flymph Fishing;” *The Anglers’ Club Bulletin*, Volume 53, Number 3, Autumn. Illustrated with a drawing of six flymphs by Charles DeFeo. New York: The Anglers’ Club of New York.

In four pages Pete explains the flymph’s allure, and why he found it necessary to coin the word. This is more of a literary piece than a how-to-do-it.



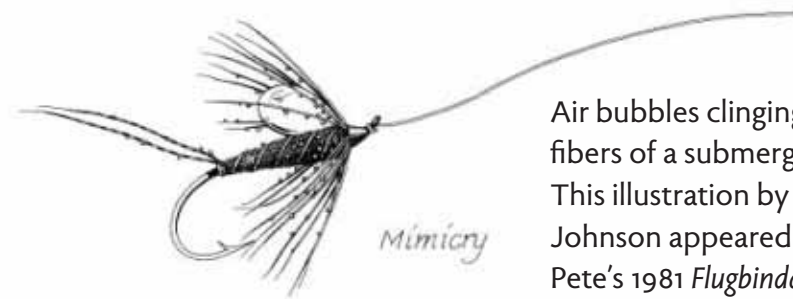
**1979** J. Michael Migel and Leonard M. Wright. *The Masters on the Nymph*. Illustrated by Dave Whitlock. New York: Lyons Press. Hardcover.

Pete contributed about seven pages, celebrating the flymph in fresh words. More importantly, he explains the reasoning behind the special fly-tying techniques and materials that he used—including his favorite little up-eye hooks from Mustad and Veniard. Flymph-tying recipes are given for a caddis imitation—Partridge and Hare’s Ear, and three Mayflies—Honey Dun, Blue Dun, and Iron Blue Dun.



**1981** Vernon S. Hidy. *Flugbindarbrev presenterar Flymfer av Vernon S Hidy: No. 3*. Four illustrations by Gunnar Johnson, plus an original flymph tied by Pete, and a card containing two spun bodies made by Gunnar. Bodafors, Sweden: Gunnar Johnson. Staped into paper wrappers, 12 pages.

This deluxe *Fly-tying Letter* was the third in a series. It presented flymph history, theory, and technique to a Scandinavian audience for the first time. Copying the format of Pete’s 1973 *Open Letter*, writer and artist Gunnar Johnson also designed, illustrated and published this little gem. This was the first of several collaborations between the two men.



Air bubbles clinging to the fibers of a submerged flymph. This illustration by Gunnar Johnson appeared both in Pete’s 1981 *Flugbindarbrev No. 3* and in Gunnar’s 1989 book *Flymfer*.



**1983** Vernon S “Pete” Hidy. *The Leisenring Color & Materials Book*. Thirteen color photographs by Gunnar Johnson.

With a one-page introduction by Pete, this booklet reproduced most of the pages from the hand-made fly-tying materials and color-matching book given to him by Jim Leisenring in 1940. Gunnar photographed the book when he visited Pete in August, 1982. The printed pamphlet was completed a few days prior to Pete’s death February, 1983. Pete’s widow Elaine sold the original, along with other Leisenring manuscripts, and Pete’s collection of angling books, in 1996.



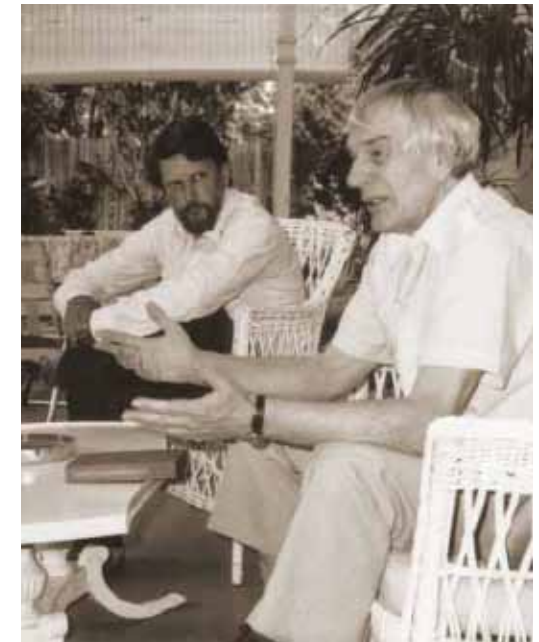
**1989** Gunnar Johnson and Anders Forsling. *Flymfer & andra mjukhacklade flugor*. Illustrated by Gunnar Johnson. Included *The Leisenring Color & Materials Book* that was first issued in 1983. Bodafors, Sweden: Flugfiske i Norden. Hardcover, 128 pages.

Gunnar Johnson introduced himself to Pete in a letter dated Feb. 26, 1981. This sparked such an intense friendship that, at times, they were writing to each other two or three times a week, even though it took six days for their letters to arrive. Gunnar had been developing, all on his own, a nameless class of generic flies that he fished below the surface. They were neither nymphs, nor the usual

winged wets. It wasn’t until he read Pete’s 1971 book, *The Art of Tying the Wet Fly and Fishing the Flymph* that he realized that others had been fishing with the same kinds of flies, and that they had a name: flymphs. Furthermore, his approach, or philosophy, was nearly identical with Pete’s. Both men preferred natural materials, and were match-the-hatch skeptics—matching size and color, but not the little details. They both knew from experience that life-like presentation of the fly to the trout in the water was more important than realistic tying. Or as Gunnar once put it, “The driver is more important than the fly.” The flymph’s generic, insect-like qualities enabled it pass for a mayfly, caddis, or stone fly, so long as



Gunnar Johnson provided this inscribed portrait at Pete’s request early in their correspondence,



Gunnar Johnson visiting Pete Hidy at his home in Boise, Idaho, August 1982. Photo by Leif Johansson.

the size, color, and liveliness of the materials were believable. Especially important were the glistening bubbles that adhered to the feather fibers, and to the bodies made from certain furs such as hare's face or muskrat—bubbles that mimicked those on real nymphs that were metamorphosing underwater.

Gunnar wrote and published several fine pieces about Pete's flymphs during 1981–83, with the stated intention of writing a book on the subject—a goal that was realized in 1989. Pete had seen most of the illustrations, and had advised Gunnar about the table of contents before his death.

From August 1st to the 20th, 1982, Gunnar and his friend Lief Johansson visited Pete in Boise, Idaho, taking notes about flymph tying and fishing. I happened to be visiting Boise then, and was able to meet the Swedes. Their visit to Pete was combined with a whirlwind schedule of lecturing, fishing, and attending the Federation of Fly Fishers conclave in West Yellowstone. Pete's illness kept him at home, but Boise fisherman Clayne Baker acted as host and guide, and would later write an introduction for Gunnar's book *Flymfer*. Pete died six months later, in February 1983, age 68.

Although Pete's collection of angling books and Leisenring manuscripts, including the *Leisenring Color and Materials Book*, were sold by my mother in 1996, much remains here, in my

home. There are hundreds of flies tied by Pete and Jim, including the wet-fly wallet that Pete always carried in his fishing vest. His 1940-vintage Leonard bamboo rod is here, along with his fly tying vise, tools, hooks, silks, and hackles; There are hundreds of Pete's flymph bodies made from mole, hare's face, mohair, muskrat, and other furs, spun on Pearsalls gossamer silk and carefully stored on notched cards. There are photographs and letters, including several in Jim Leisenring's handwriting that somehow escaped the auction block.

Of particular importance is the archive that resulted from the two-year collaboration with Gunnar Johnson at the end of Pete's life. The three-ring binders containing Gunnar's letters, the carbons of Pete's letters, and myriad photographs, drawings, paintings, flies, magazines, etc., span more than a foot of shelf space. The two men combined their lifetimes' experience into this exchange of fishing lore.

This little illustrated essay is a first effort to sort through Pete's archive, to make his contributions to fly fishing, and Jim Leisenring's, more widely known. This year, 2011, the fiftieth anniversary of The Flyfisher's Club of Oregon, and of its bulletin, *The Creel*, is an excellent time to do this.

—Lance Hidy, Merrimac, Massachusetts

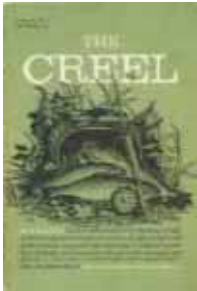


# APPENDIX

The following pages are a miscellaney of information about The Creel, tying flympths, and a selection of Pete's essays

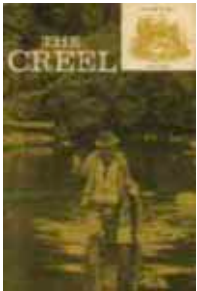
# V. S. Hidy in *The Creel*

These articles are reprinted here beginning on page 64.



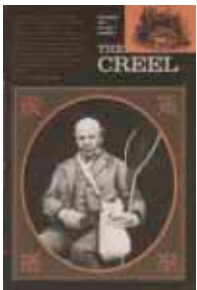
## 1. *The First Lady's Honor Roll*

by A. River Rogue  
Vol. 1, No. 1, Dec. 1961



## 2. *The Champion from Oregon*

Vol. 3, No. 1, July 1964



## 3. *A Salute to Leisenring and Skues*

Vol. 8, No. 1, Dec. 1970



## 4. *Moment of Truth on the McKenzie*

Vol. 10, No. 1, June 1973

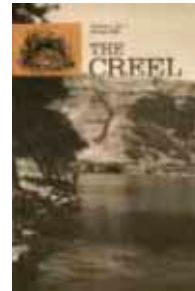


## 5. *Sparse Grey Hackle,*

with A.K. Severeid

## 6. *A Flatlander's Report*

Vol. 14, No. 1, Nov. 1978



## 7. *A River to Remember*

Vol. 15, No. 1, Jan. 1980



## 8. *Ambush at Badger Creek*

Vol. 16, No. 1, 1982

# THE CREEL

## THE BULLETIN OF THE FLYFISHER'S CLUB OF OREGON

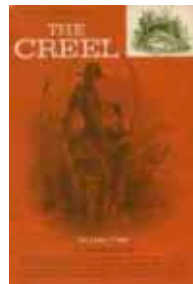
Founded by Bob Beatty, Lenox Dick, Pete Hidy, Fred E. Locke, Robert Wethern, Douglas Lynch, and Fred O. Hallwyler



VOL. 1-1, 1961



VOL. 1-2, 1962



VOL. 2-1, 1962



VOL. 2-2, 1963



VOL. 3-1, 1964



VOL. 3-2, 1964



VOL. 4-1, 1965



VOL. 4-2, 1966



VOL. 5-1, 1967



VOL. 6-1, 1968



VOL. 7-1, 1969



VOL. 8-1, 1970



VOL. 9-1, 1971



VOL. 10-1, 1973



VOL. 10-2, 1973



VOL. 11-1, 1974



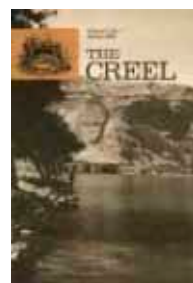
VOL. 12-1, 1976



VOL. 13-1, 1977



VOL. 14-1, 1978



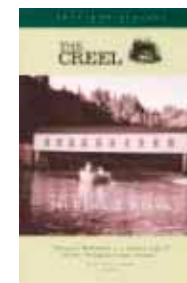
VOL. 15-1, 1980



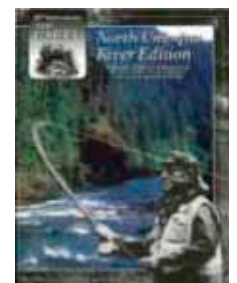
VOL. 16-1, 1982



30th Anniv., 1991

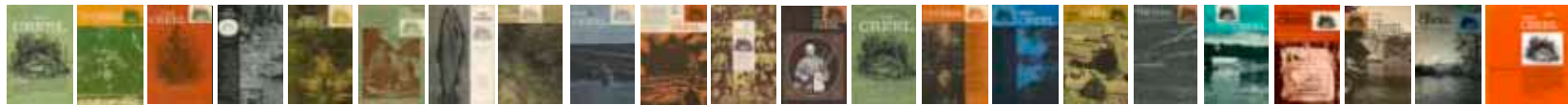


40th Anniv., 2001



50th Anniv., 2008

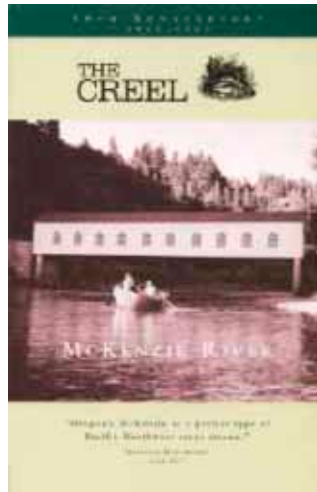
# The Creel Committee Members 1961-1991



1961 1962 1962 1963 1964 1964 1965 1966 1967 1968 1969 1970 1971 1973 1973 1974 1976 1977 1978 1980 1982 1991

	1961	1962	1962	1963	1964	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1973	1973	1974	1976	1977	1978	1980	1982	1991	
Bob Beatty																							
Lenox Dick																							
Pete Hidy																							
Fred E. Locke																							
Robert Wethern																							
Douglas Lynch																							
Fred O. Hallwyler																							
Erskine B. Wood																							
G.F. Whitlock																							
W.C. Block																							
Dean Pollock																							
Thomas K. Worcester																							
Roger Bachman																							
C. Ed Francis																							
Dale LaFollette																							
Nat Wilson																							
Art Chenoweth																							
Clyde Van Cleve																							
Walter J. Price Jr.																							
John B. Fewel																							
Al Severeid																							
Ralph Wahl																							
Robert Hallwyler																							
Philip Trautmann																							
Calvin Cole																							
Virgil Langtry																							
James Bagley																							
Tom McAllister																							
Herbert Lundy																							
Michael Lundy																							
Jack Meadows																							
Ron Powell																							
Frank Rodriguez																							
Dale Pearson																							

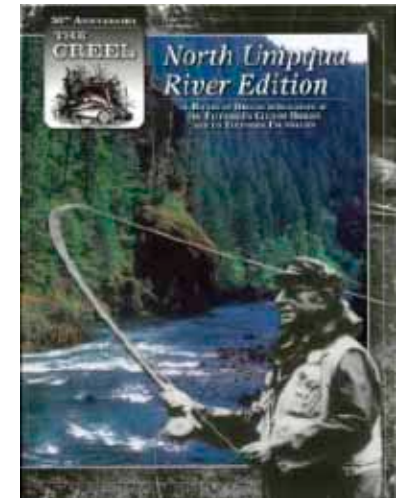
*The Creel* had ceased its function as a club bulletin by 1982, with a brief reprise in 1991 for the thirtieth anniversary. With uninterrupted editorial guidance from Bob Wethern, the club decided to keep the name alive as a book publishing imprint dedicated to the “Rivers of Oregon.” This theme had first appeared in a Deschutes River edition of *The Creel* (1980), edited by Virgil Langtry. Bob and other club members envisioned volumes on other Oregon rivers—a dream that Bob would fulfill handsomely.



The first book appeared in 2001 to celebrate the club’s 40th anniversary. The McKenzie River Edition was a 174-page paperback, 5.5 x 8.5 inches, slightly smaller than the traditional 6 x 9 inch trim of the saddle-wire bulletin. As had been done in every volume of the bulletin, Bob Wethern listed the members of The Creel Committee:

- Mark Metzdorf, MD, Chairman Ex Officio
- Lenox Dick, MD, Chairman Emeritus
- Bob Wethern, Editor
- Roger Bachman, Production Executive
- Greg Smith, Art Director
- Doug Lynch, Art Director Emeritus
- Dan Callaghan, Chief Photographer
- Tom McAllister, Historian
- Frank Amato, Marketing Manager
- Cal Cole, Foundation Representative

Shortly before Wethern’s death in 2008, he and his team brought forth the most ambitious volume of his long career. Three years ahead of schedule, it was titled *50th Anniversary: The Creel, North Umpqua River Edition*. Measuring 9 x 12 inches, hardcover, 192 pages, it was issued both in a trade edition (\$59.95), and a limited edition (\$200) in the catalog of Frank Amato Publications.

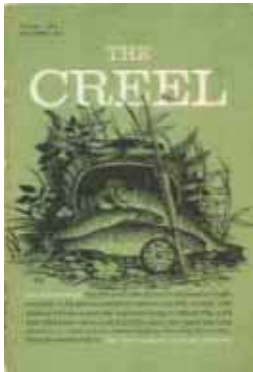


Bob dropped the old term of Creel Committee, instead listing the team in this manner:

#### North Umpqua Creel Staff

- |                                    |                                  |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>Executive Editor</i>            | Bob Wethern                      |
| <i>Chief Photographer Emeritus</i> | Dan Callaghan, dcd               |
| <i>Art Directors Emeritus</i>      | J. Douglas Lynch & Gregory Smith |
| <i>Cover and Book Designer</i>     | Tony Amato                       |
| <i>Assistant</i>                   | Kim Koch                         |
| <i>Technical Advisor</i>           | Travis Reeves                    |
| <i>Historian</i>                   | Tom McAllister                   |
| <i>Senior Field Editor</i>         | Dale Greenley                    |
| <i>Field Editors</i>               | Earle Costello & Keith Topping   |

Bob Wethern and Pete Hidy had been the best of friends, who enjoyed their editorial collaboration. There is no doubt that Pete would be proud to see how Bob kept *The Creel* full right to the end.



**Douglas Lynch** (1913–2009) designed all twenty-two issues of *The Creel*. He wrote this appreciation of Pete Hidy to two of the other founding editors of journal, **Robert Wethern** (also all 22 issues), and **Lenox Dick** (15 issues).

*(Photo Randy L. Rasmussen/Oregonian)*



**Vernon S. "Pete" Hidy** (1914–1983) was the first president of the Flyfisher's Club of Oregon, and the founder of *The Creel*. He served on its editorial board for fifteen of its twenty-two issues.

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## Douglas Lynch on V. S. Hidy

December 17, 1994 [*eleven years after Hidy's death*]

To Lenox Dick & Robert Wethern,

Gentlemen, colleagues and comrade yearners:

This is Penrod Lynes' take on the question:

"Who, in fact, was Pete Hidy?" Mr. Lynes sends copies to both of you, and hopes you may know what to do with it, or where it might fit in. He awaits anxiously as all writers do, wondering if his immortal prose may receive appropriate recognition.

Tight Lines (as they say) about 60 picas,  
and about 65 characters per line.

Thine, PL/DL

---

### *Some Paragraphs for Lenox*

Going fishing with Hidy? Pete often shared time with me, during the fifties and sixties, on some smaller streams

and rivers. The Metolius and Deschutes came later in our repertoire. Only once, however, did I watch him fishing. Usually I was so stream starved and riffle bereaved that I would set up as fast as possible and dash off on my own, leaving Pete to his own rich and mellow muse. Then one day we were together on Fall River, and that's another story.

In my youth Older Brother and I fished the creeks of the upper Grande Ronde and, later, the foothills tributaries of the Willamette. We grew up among early century, small town country folk where every one fished, and fished to kill. Our equipment was frontier vintage; there were no gentrified tackle shops. No one had waders which, anyway, would have been considered effete. We waded Wet! But as time passed the water got deeper and colder, and I got older and more tackle sophisticated. So in a burst of reckless bravado I bought a pair of waders—hip wader!

Well, they worked fine for a while. Streams I fished were medium size with the usual variations of depth—sloping shallows flowing into pools, spring freshets, summer gravel bars. I stayed mostly dry. Then, one day, I stood in my hip waders at the edge of Fall River.

In the mid sixties Hidy instigated an expedition across the mountains to pay homage to the legendary Cal Jordan. We weren't disappointed. Jordan, a soft-spoken master of the angling arts, was intimately familiar with Central Oregon waters. Among other places, he guided us to Fall River where he served as a sort of River Keeper for the Meiers-Cronin compound. But first he put us on the stretch below the campground. This was a river beyond my riffle and pool experience—a gin clear, glass smooth serpentine course flowing strongly over a volcanic sandy bottom. The depth was almost constant, and the first step off the bank was over your butt. Here and there large pine trees had been dropped across the water to create fish shelter.

A nice trout was feeding on the far side of a downed Pine between submerged limbs. This didn't call for a long cast, probably about thirty feet, but it presented a three-dimensional hazard. The fly had to move diagonally across a diagonally placed tree trunk, between a couple upright limbs and land precisely in the pocket. And in hip waders I couldn't step in for a better angle.

I tried a few futile passes before Hidy appeared. He

gave the moment his amused attention, stepped upstream a pace or two, dropped a fly on the trout and brought it to shore without wetting a toe. I swallowed my embarrassment as he released the trout, and expressed my admiration. "Well," he said, "we will call this the Hole of the Golden Mean."

Typical Hidy, classic Hidy, and cherished Hidy! Any ordinary stream-side event, for him, simply honors the noble tradition.

So, was Pete Hidy a good fisherman? Well, as Garrison Keillor might say, "He was good enough." He had fished a lifetime of hours. He had fished the sacred rivers. He had fished and communed with angling's celebrities. He was, indeed, good enough.

But Hidy's relative prowess as an angler is almost incidental. Such comparisons haven't much meaning for anyone who has witnessed Frank Moore coax a steelhead to a fly at the end of a hundred twenty foot cast to the lip of a rapids. Expert anglers are in abundance around here. What Pete Hidy did for us was something more important.

The recorded history of Oregon fishing is very brief. Memories of homestead trout catching "to be fried for family and hired hands" and for community "fish fries" are within an Oregon lifetime. The fish were there in the rivers, plentiful, and the folks took them with any effective tackle. The whole thing was pretty simplistic, and the

attitude very frontier minded: “Did ya catch your limit?” There was of course, among those with means and time, some awareness of the New England celebrities and their famed rivers (and Aberchrombie & Fitch). But our own regional masters tucked away on their provincial rivers didn’t get much published notice until Hidy inspired *The Creel*.

Hidy’s passion for the writing and recording our regional history helps us understand that there’s more to it than a mess of fish in the kitchen sink. It also connects us to the ancient and noble tradition of angling as an “honorable pastime” which comes down to us as a stately procession of literature from Medieval England more than five hundred years ago. And so, when the Saints of Angling come marching in, Pete Hidy will have earned his position in that great parade; and this small town country boy, for one, will be glad to tag along.

—Penrod Lynes  
(aka Douglas Lynch)

## **Doug Lynch to Pete Hidy, probably in the mid-1970s.**

---

“But measured in terms of special audience response, *The Creel* is probably my most effective effort. It has had its impact, first, because of your profound awareness of the mood and mystique of the angling fraternity, and beyond that, your brilliant ability to articulate its editorial form and selection. And second, because the designer you selected was both empathetic and skillful enough to give this mood its precisely appropriate visual and typographic format. It was the collaborative combination of content and form which did it. After all, *The Creel* could have looked like any typical commercially produced house organ. But it didn’t, and the consequences are history.... We achieved a new medium which hadn’t existed before.”



# Tying the Flymph

By Pete Hidy

## THE HARE'S MASK

One of the great secrets of flymph dressing is the resourceful use and blending of the four shades of fur from the mask (head) of the English Hare. The cheeks are light; the poll between the ears is somewhat darker; the face still darker and the short fur on the ears is virtually black...so we have a full range of shades. No other fur creates and sustains translucence with the film of air over the body of the flymph as much as fur from the hare's mask.

Immerse the flymphs below in a glass of water and twist the leader to see the subtle translucence of the fur body. If the translucence disappears, thoroughly dry the flymph and immerse it again. After you have done this, read the note on the back of this card.

HONEY DUN FLYMPH

ASHEY BADGER FLYMPH



The International Society of Flymph Fishermen.



This and the next page are scanned from a card in Pete Hidy's archive.

Note: Since the toughness of the surface film made it necessary for you to push the flymph beneath the water, please keep in mind that the flymph's versatility offers 3 important advantages:

1. It can be fished on the surface as a dry fly.
2. It can be fished in the surface film when slightly wet.
3. You must give your leader a tug to sink the fly after casting it above a fish that is feeding on flymphs beneath the water.

Lay the two flymphs side by side on the surface film and observe that they are buoyant and do not sink when thoroughly dry, thereby demonstrating the buoyancy of hare's fur when thoroughly dried after being wet. You will also note that the soft hen hackle is virtually as buoyant as the cock hackle when thoroughly dry.

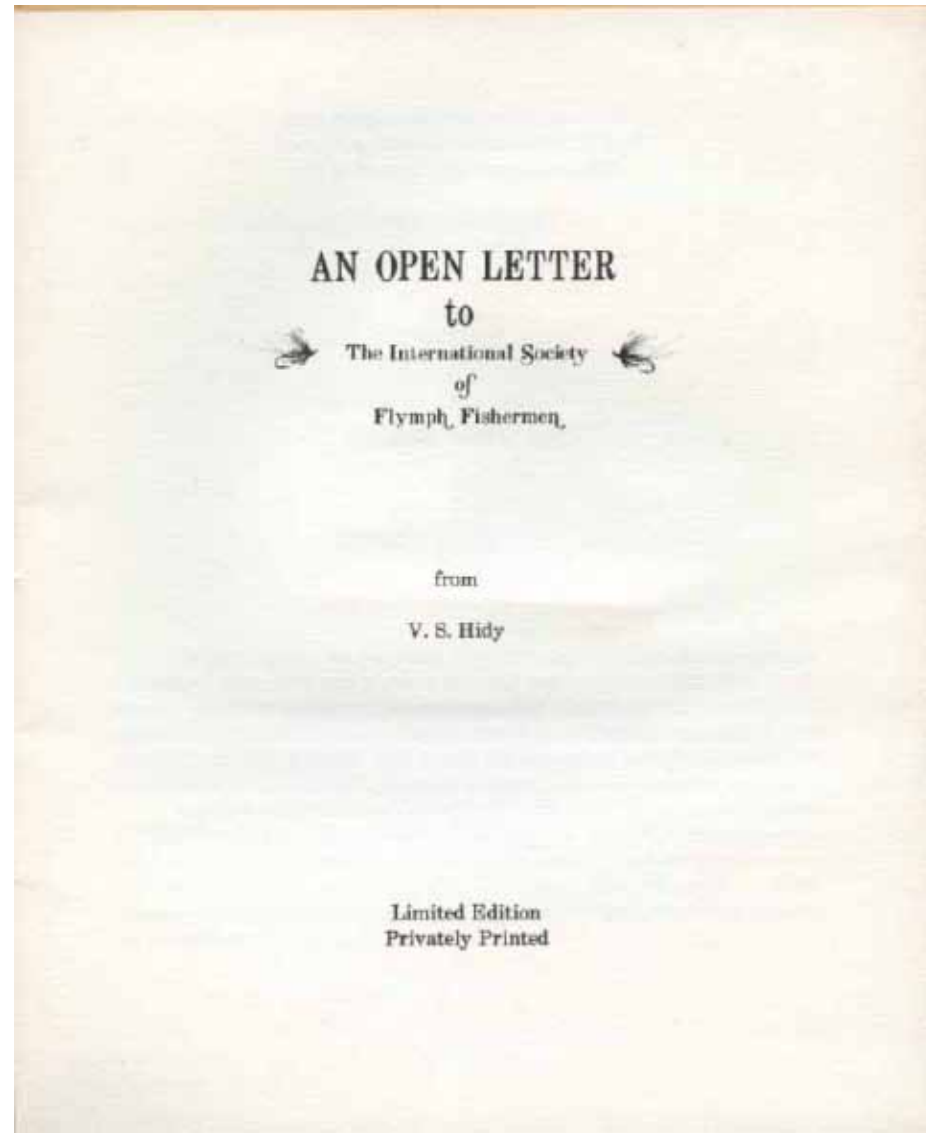
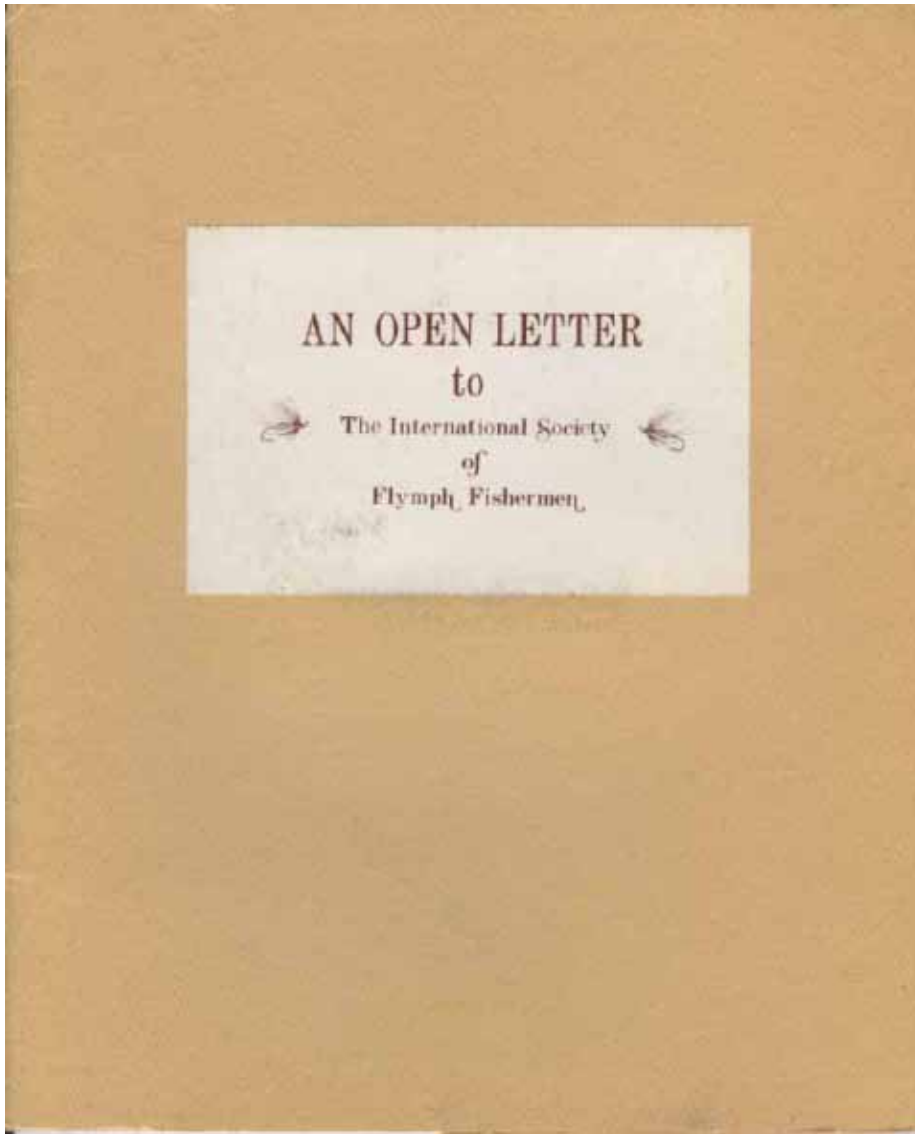
The flymphs are: HONEY DUN...hen's hackle

Body: Hare's poll on Ash tying silk Rib: #27 Gold Wire

ASHEY BADGER...cock's hackle

Body: Dark Hare's Ear on Black tying silk Rib: #26 Silver Wire

Note: Use Kleenex to dry a flymph.



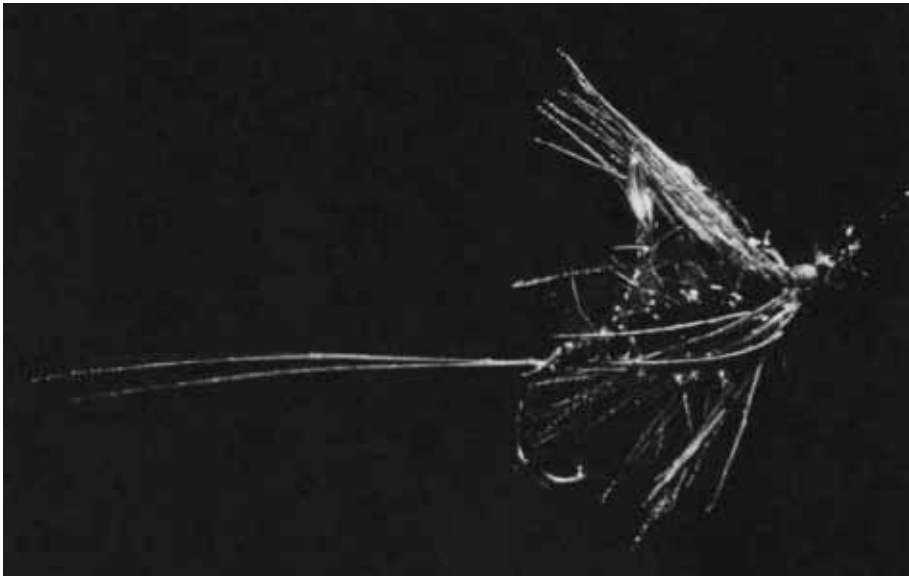
# AN OPEN LETTER

To  
The International Society Of Flymph Fishermen

“Sport is an effort made freely  
for the pure enjoyment of it.”

*Jose Ortega y Gasset*

In keeping with the purposes of the Society, I am pleased to share with you some observations and hints on dressing and fishing flymphs. Here we go across a new frontier into the fascinating world of mimicry somewhat beyond the conventional wisdom of routine fly dressing. So I speak here, for the first time, of “mimicry flymphs” that mimic the film of air and the bubble of air that trout often see during the flymphs’ metamorphosis into adult winged flies.



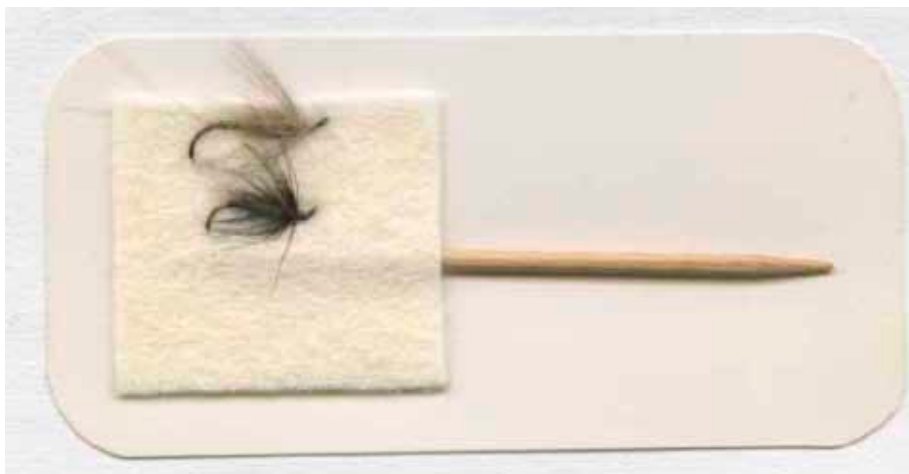
Mimicry fascinates me. I think of it today as a fugitive quality related to translucence. The film and bubble of air capture and radiate light in a manner that trout are familiar with and accept because it is a natural phenomenon. They see it during every hatch of May flies, caddis flies and gnats . . . as the nymphal shuck or skin is being detached and the wrinkled wings emerge from the wing cases.

According to my research, we may now create mimicry flymphs and control the mimicry factor at our leisure with selected dubbings and hackles. Flymphs dressed deliberately to create mimicry appear far more sensuous, if not voluptuous, in simulating the natural hydrofuge (water resistance) of trout stream insects during metamorphosis at the flymph stage of maturity. I believe, therefore, that proper emphasis on mimicry holds great promise for fly dressers and fly fishermen in the future as it has for me and other anglers in the past.

To better understand this sensuous appearance, place the tip of this toothpick through the eye of the hook on which this flymph is tied and immerse it in a clear glass of water. After several dippings, dry it thoroughly with a piece of Kleenex. Then dip it again.

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LEFT—A MIMICRY FLYMPH—As shown here, the use of certain dubbings and hackles can create the phenomenon that I identify as “mimicry” because it goes beyond, but is related to, the quality of translucence. This has led to some interesting comments such as this note sent to me by my friend, Dr. Nat Wilson: “I appreciate the flymph. The more I see of them, the more exciting they become. I rose a beautiful fish to one of your dark mahogany flymphs the last time up in the Rock Bank Hole just above Frustration Flats. When a trout rises to a flymph, he takes it so confidently!”



Trout have taken mimicry flymphs with such gusto in streams East and West that some sophisticated and experienced anglers have expressed astonishment. It is fair to observe, therefore, that such flymphs can heighten the fly fisherman's pleasure and feeling of suspense that Viscount Grey once described as "a delicious sense of impending discovery."

In recent years I have had the privilege of corresponding with several astute and accomplished anglers here and abroad. In addition, I have read widely in the literature of angling, especially those books that deal with the theory and techniques of fly dressing in the Wagstaff Collection at Yale, the Fearing Collection at Harvard and the Kerridge Collection at the University of California at Fullerton. To the best of my knowledge, the essential qualities that excite trout in an artificial fly that gives the illusion of an insect alive in the water are : Color, Undercolor, Natural Color Harmony,

Translucence, Texture, Size, Shape, Proportions, Delicacy, and Vitality.

To these qualities I would add Mimicry.

My research and experiments with mimicry flymphs have demonstrated the importance of Big Jim Leisenring's belief in the efficacy of spinning furs and dubbings that are carefully tapered to achieve lifelike bodies for trout flies. Such bodies are the key to creating lifelike flymphs that possess Undercolor, Translucence, Texture, Shape Proportions, Delicacy, Vitality and, now, Mimicry.

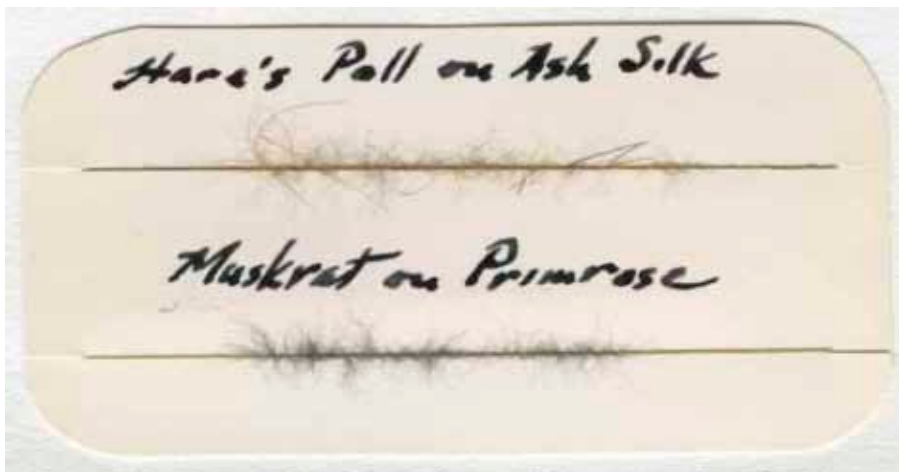


HARE'S MASK - Effective bodies for flymphs are spun from the mask of the English hare. Four shades of fur are used: clockwise from the top--hare's ear; hare's poll from between and around the ears; hare's cheek and hare's face.

Although spinning bodies requires a separate and special operation, I have found it to be very enjoyable and, in the long run, time saving. Certain accessories are essential and these are now available.

The beauty and value of the spun body must be seen and used in your fishing to be truly appreciated. In my opinion this will become a basic feature of all flymphs (and some dry flies) tied by amateur fly dressers in the future. Some of my friends have confided in me that flymph fishing and the use of spun bodies have opened new avenues of adventure for them as fly dressers and fly fishermen. For the first time they were able to deceive and hook some of the trout they found feeding selectively just beneath the surface. They also found a refreshing kind of excitement in the subtle swirls of water that signal the trout's take of the flymph.

Here are some examples of spun bodies:



I trust that you will find this information as stimulating and as useful as I have through the years. If you do, I encourage you to share your own experiences with other members of the Society who, in turn, are sharing theirs. The reports from various regions will be summarized in future letters to enrich and advance the arts of fly dressing and fly fishing.

Sincerely,

Vernon S. Hidy  
1973, Boise Idaho

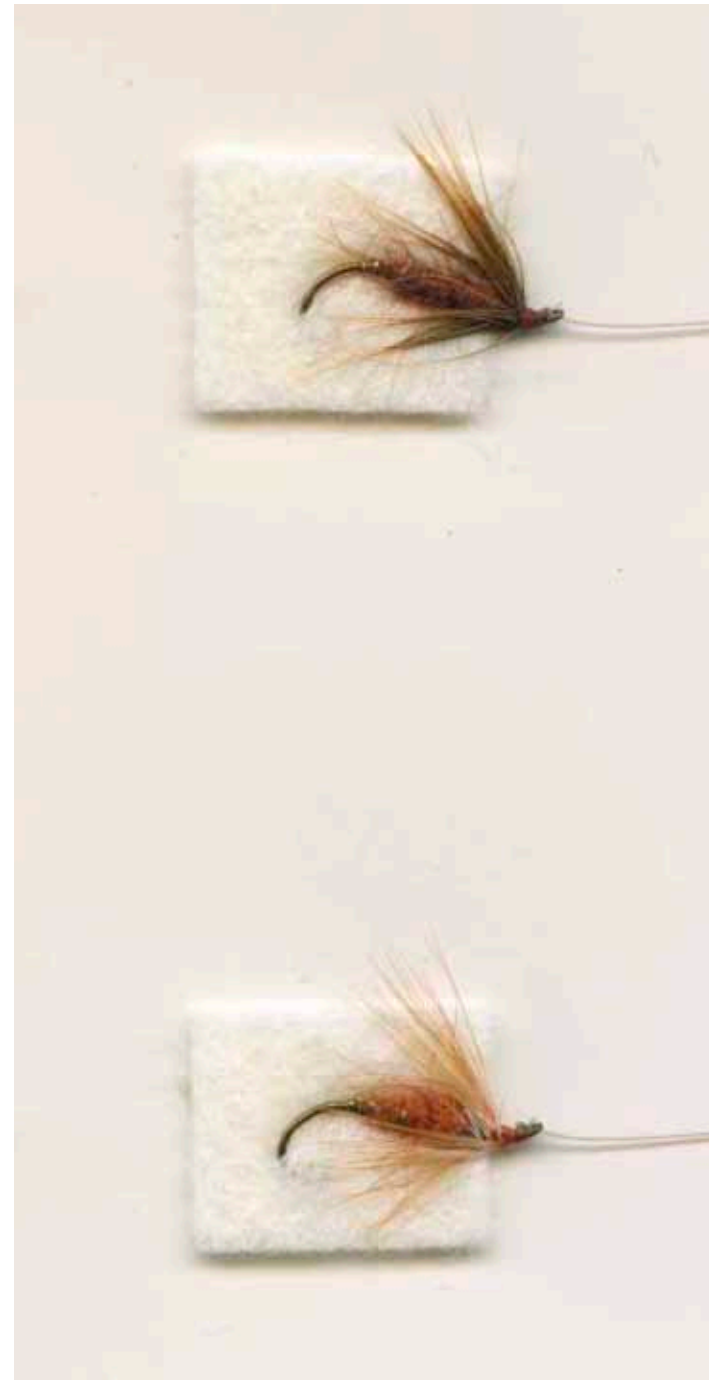
## "PEARSALLS"

"GOSSAMER" EXTRA FINE SILK  
 "NAPLES" FINE SILK  
 "MARABOU" FINE FLOSS SILK

**WOUND SMALL REELS**

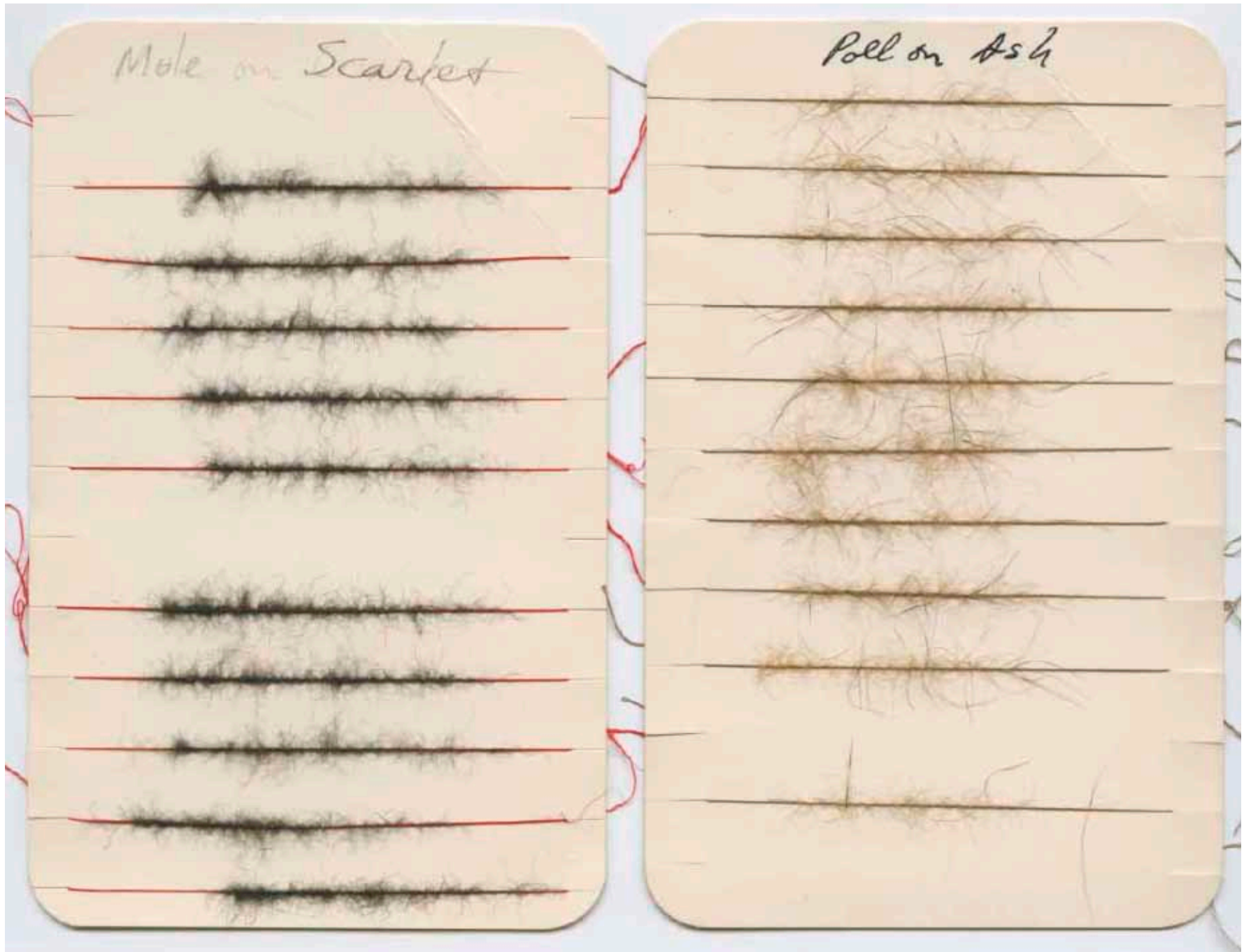
1 <i>White</i>		* † 10 <i>Ashe</i>	
* † 2 <i>Brown</i>		† 11 <i>Gamboge</i>	
† 3 <i>Brownish</i>		11a <i>Sausage</i>	
† 4 <i>Light Yellow</i>		* † 12 <i>Cardinal</i>	
5 <i>Yellow</i>		* † 13 <i>Crimson</i>	
* † 6 <i>Amber</i>		14 <i>Chestnut</i>	
6a <i>Light Orange</i>		† 15 <i>Morom</i>	
* † 6b <i>Strong Orange</i>		16 <i>Olive</i>	
* † 7 <i>Blue</i>		17 <i>Brown</i>	
8 <i>Purple</i>		18 <i>Green</i>	
9 <i>Black</i>		19 <i>Hot Orange</i>	
* † 9a <i>Grey</i>		20 <i>Light Olive</i>	

All Colours available in 'Gossamer'  
 Colours marked \* not available in 'Naples'  
 Colours marked † not available in 'Marabou'









SOME DESIRABLE HOOKS FOR FLY DRESSING

Mustad Styles  
All Size 14

Orvis Premium  
1X Long 3X Fine

Veniard  
Long Shank  
May Fly

Veniard  
Round Bend

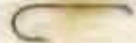
Veniard  
Wide Gape

9671



Size

14



13



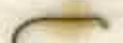
12



10



3906



16



14



13



12



3906B



18



15



14



14



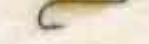
3911A



20



16



15



16



94840



22



16



18



24



The International Society of Flymph Fishermen.



# Antique flies from the Hidy Collection



The following pages show a few of flies tied by Pete Hidy and Jim Leisenring from the late 1930s to the 1970s. These were tied for the trout, and not for show—and many of them have been used.

Fly tyers today who are interested in the history of fly tying often know the exact recipes that were listed in the books, but because of poor reproductions (if any) it is difficult to know the proportions of the finished flies. These photographs provide a rare glimpse into the run-of-the-mill flies tied by Pete and Jim, some of which are described in their books.

*Macro photography by Lance Hidy and Greg Nikas.*



## Iron Blue Dun Nymph

**Hook:** Size 14 or 15

**Tying thread:** ° crimson or claret silk

**Tail:** Two or three soft white fibers tied very short

**Body:** Dark mole fur spun on crimson or claret tying silk with two or three turns of the silk exposed at tail

**Hackle:** Two turns of a very short cock jackdaw throat hackle

The Iron Blue Dun nymph was one of only two nymphs in Leisenring's list of his twelve favorite patterns. This dressing is very similar to that used in England by GEM Skues as recorded in Leisenring's notebook on fly dressings.

He used heavy wire hooks—preferably made by Allcock, in England, when available—when he wanted to fish deep. He never weighted his flies as they did not swim naturally. For fishing in thin, clear water flies must be dressed very sparse and with quite a thin body, on smaller hooks than you would use to dress the same size of natural fly.

He tied the heads of his flies for easy entry, with bodies and hackles that absorbed water readily so that they would sink quickly. He used only natural materials (at a time when synthetics were few and far between).

The choice of colour of tying silk was crucial to the success of the pattern as the spun body, when wet, is very translucent and allows the colour of the thread to show through. When tying a nymph Leisenring sought to achieve representation, or suggestion of something that is alive, rather than imitation. This was why, in his opinion, dubbing outclassed quills and other materials for the bodies of nymphs.

*Terry Lawton*























# Pete Hidy in **The Creel** and Selected Essays



# The First Lady's Honor Roll *by A. River Rogue [V. S. Hidy]*

*The Creel*, Volume 1, No. 1, December, 1961

The first lady of fly fishing was Dame Juliana Berners, the famous nun who tied trout flies in England during the 15th century. Her book of fly patterns was published in 1496. Angling historians agree that "Dame Juliana and her 12 flies ruled the world of angling literature from the grave for 157 years" down to the time of Izaak Walton and his *Compleat Angler*. Today, in Oregon, another artistic lady ties trout flies and influences fly fishermen, as future historians may note.

Last winter when the Flyfisher's Club of Oregon began to take shape one of those asked to suggest names of Oregonians dedicated to the enchantments of fly fishing was a gracious, twinkly-eyed artist with feathers and fur. Her name is Audrey Joy. Her eyes sparkled as she reached for her file on fly fishermen. The very idea of such a club delighted her.

She started through the cards: "Here is a grand person. Be sure to include this man. Has anyone given you this name? Here's a man who fishes all the time, I do believe."

Looking at the next card, she tossed her head back and laughed. "Write this name down! He's a must for an Oregon fly fishing club. . . a real fishing "nut," I'd say. Oh, you men will have fun. Now here's a man who always demands special hooks. He's a doctor."

"This next man," she said slowly, waving the card at us, "is

unique. You must meet him. He simply infects people—the bait fishermen—on the stream. They keep coming in here year after year for flies after they've met him on a river."

"Now here is a distinguished gentleman whose grandson buys him flies for Christmas." And so on, card after card, the great lady talked fondly of her friends.

If there is a fly fisherman wading the rivers of Oregon who had not met Audrey Joy he is short-changing himself in the pleasures of his sport. For several years her booth in downtown Portland has been a landmark and a meeting place for fly fishermen. You need not buy anything. Indeed, Audrey would shun the very idea of any commercial considerations here, as you will learn, for one of the great pleasures of her life is chatting with fly fishermen.

"They are my friends," she boasts warmly, "I love them all. I think I would die if they stopped coming by just to visit. Goodness!"

Audrey's booth is a stage alive with the magic feather-beauty of the partridge, peacock and pheasant, glistening furs of the mink, the beaver and the seal as well as the hair of deer and polar bear. There are tinsels of silver and gold. The colors of the rainbow shine from skeins of yarn and spools of tying silk. As she talks or listens to you, the feathers, fur and thread

twirl about the shanks of finest English and Norwegian hooks.

From Alaska to the Argentine, Chile and New Zealand, Audrey's artistry delights trout, steelhead, and fly fishermen. Her heart, however, belongs to the guides and anglers of Oregon. She has been known to steal time, for instance, during her busiest season, to tie and take to a nearby bus terminal a dozen or so special flies of a pattern and size desperately needed by one of her friends on some stretch of the Deschutes. Such urgent telephone calls are received with proper excitement and pride in the unwritten laws of trout streams which entitle anglers to beg or borrow any fly pattern in an emergency.

While you chat or just watch, Audrey tries, like the man who built better mouse traps, to keep up with the orders. Fly after fly comes to life: the Oregon-born Bucktail Caddis, the Tied-Down Caddis, the Spruce Fly, the Deschutes Stone Fly, Don Harger's Gold Variant. You may witness the birth of the Salmon Fly, either light or dark.

The honor roll of Oregon flies, selected by Audrey and her fly fishing friends, continues: Adams, March Brown, Green Caddis, Hairwing Coachman, Beetle Bug Coachman, Bucktail Royal Coachman, Captain, Renegade, Royal Wulff and Blue Dun.

If you would fish for the great trout of British Columbia, Audrey and her friends know you will want the celebrated Doc Spratley, Carey's Special, Black O'Lindsay, Brown Sedge, Grizzly King, and Cinnamon Sedge among others.

Steelhead flies! The very names, as well as their reputations, will stir your blood. . . every fish will get into your backing, they say! Mark the Golden Demon, Van Luven, Rogue River Special, Juicy Bug and Royal Coachman Hairwing. Can you resist the Umpqua Special, Brads' Brat (Enos Bradner's great pattern), Yellow Hammer, Kennedy Special (in honor of "Mike" who claims he is a "lucky" fisherman), the Silver Ant, Polar Shrimp, Red Ant, and Skykomish Sunrise!

Is not each Joy fly, gentle angler, a thing of beauty? Can you tie such masterpieces? Can you achieve those proportions, that buoyancy, that balance? Do you always listen patiently to the hesitant novice as well as the talkative old-timer? Would you interrupt your work to hurry some flies to a bus terminal and admonish the bus driver to look sharp for your friend at a certain village or bend of the river?

Audrey Joy does these things.

Join us then, here, in saluting our friend as the First Lady of Oregon Fly Fishing. She has won our admiration; she has enriched the traditions created by Dame Juliana herself.

# The Champion from Oregon *by V. S. Hidy*

*The Creel*, Volume 3, No. 1, July 1964

*When Marvin Hedge Went East to the Tournaments He Astonished the Angling World with Big Casts Inspired by Steelhead, the Finest Fish of All.*

Those "Show Me" Missourians at St. Louis on the Mississippi remember him well. The countrymen of Walton and Cotton in London along the Thames, by Jove, could hardly believe their eyes. Charles Ritz and the anglers of Paris beside the Seine uncorked bubbling, vintage champagne and drank a toast to him. . . "A Grand, A Very Grand Champion!" New Yorkers on the Hudson and Philadelphians on the Delaware did not envision such long casts though they practiced and competed many years on the pools in their parks. The classic drama in the history of fly casting had to wait. Finally, long after the advent of split bamboo rods and tapered silk lines, an Oregonian waded into the Rogue, a big river which flows into the sea, and devised a new cast called the Double Haul. His name was lost in the excitement which followed for his discovery led to the hooking of more steelhead, a spectacular fish with more vigor and speed for its size than any other fish in the rivers of the world. This champion among fish, then, logically enough, may well have earned, in absentia, a share of the tournament applause even though Marvin Hedge was the International Champion they cheered.

And rightly so, for Marvin perfected and introduced the Double Haul as it is used today by anglers all over the world. He designed and polished his own lines, told John Wilson and other rod men where to build more power into their rods, and then worked with these tools for hours and days and months until he achieved a fine balance of power and synchronized it with the Double Haul. In doing all of this he splintered many rods; some breakage occurred prior to each record-breaking cast. He also developed a repertoire of skills and tackle-strategies for casting with the wind, against the wind, and in a dead calm. These were decisive in many tournaments.

Marvin's angling career started beside the trout pools of Portland's own Johnson Creek where he fished many days as a boy. He remembers well an afternoon on the Clackamas when he saw a creelful of big rainbows taken, to his bait-fishing amazement, by an angler skilled in the art of the fly. The turning point, however, was that day out on Lake Oswego when he saw fly lines flickering in the sunlight. He walked around the lake, from where he had been picnicking, and said to one of the men, "I know I could cast like that."

We note nothing extraordinary in that sequence of events: the early enchantment by a small stream, the witchery of the artificial fly, and the fascination of a fly line shooting out across the water. But those seven words to a stranger! Here was evidence of the high confidence and the strong desire, which are

the hallmarks of a champion. The stranger happened to be a superlative fisherman—"The finest fly fisherman in the world, bar none!", Marvin says of his old friend, Walter Backus. Thus it was that Walter Backus became the young man's teacher, fishing companion and lifelong friend.

In sifting through the many papers and pictures Marvin graciously placed at our disposal—how they wrote about and photographed this man!—we came upon enough material to write a book. The names of many, many Oregonians, much humor, some tragedy and great sportsmanship are mingled with the accounts of tournaments where he broke the records by casting a fly farther than it had ever been cast before. We noted, too, that the civic pride of Portland matched the enthusiasm of the Portland Casting Club (they had big drives "to enroll every possible fisherman in the county of Multnomah"), and The World's Finest Casting Pool, a story in itself, was built here after Marvin designed it. Also, and this appears to be a significant fact, it would seem that Marvin helped build it for it did not materialize until after Marvin had journeyed far to the East and won some tournaments.

The historic casts by Marvin Hedge were made at Forest Park in St. Louis in 1934. The August temperatures had soared to 114° and the humidity was high. A storm broke the night before the National Tournament and the sweltering contestants who had been practicing in the heat breathed a sigh of relief. The big man from Oregon was finally called to the casting platform by the judges and the Missourians edged forward in suspense. The distance fly casting record was certain to

be broken, they had been told, but they wanted to see it for themselves. In fact, they rather doubted the reports from Chicago which said he had upped the old record by ten feet, unofficially, just the week before. This could hardly be true, they declared, for the world's distance fly casting record had inched forward a foot or so at a time for thirty-one years. And for eleven years, by golly, no one had improved upon the longest cast in history: one hundred twenty-five feet by George Chatt at the tournament held in Denver back in 1923.

"The Westerner went into action," they wrote later, "with powerful rhythmic movements and broke the world's record by twenty-two feet!"

"The gallery went wild!"

We have read several versions of this, including the statistics in the record books, and they all indicate there was a great shouting, an excitement comparable to cheers of Spaniards at the bull fights in old Madrid when a matador whirls, all nerve and skill, to set a sharp piece of steel in the shoulder of a bull.

Well, Marvin brought the championship back to Portland and cast a fly five feet farther still on the big new casting pool during the National Tournament here in 1936. Then, in 1937, Charles Ritz invited him to Paris and Marvin cast a fly nine feet farther than the European Champion, Albert Godart, after much pageantry and banqueting "with champagne bottles every two feet!"

From Paris Marvin went on to compete in London where the best cast by an Englishman had been one hundred twenty-three feet.

We may fairly assume, you would agree, that by the time the man from Oregon arrived in London the British would have jolly well alerted their judges to move back. We are obliged to report, however, that Marvin faced a skepticism there not unlike that in Missouri. This time, strangely enough, the judges were involved and the great English champion, Captain Tommy 'Edwards, will vouch for the story to this day.

When Marvin was called to cast by the officials of the British Casting Association, he noted that the position of the judges in their boat was rather short of the place his fly would likely land.

"Please move back," he called to them.

"You do the casting. We will do the judging," were the words which came back to him across the water. They would not budge.

Well beyond the judges, Marvin recalls, on a bank near where his fly would light if his cast was a good one, stood the Honorable Secretary of the B. C. A., M. H. Riesco, wearing a bowler hat and fingering a goldheaded cane in anticipation of the American's initial cast.

"My first cast," Marvin recalls, "went right over the judges' boat and out past the Secretary on the bank. He was pretty excited. He pointed at the fly in the water with the head of his cane. I heard him shout, 'Hey! I say there! It's sinking! *It's sinking!*' And by the time those fellows in the boat got out there they couldn't find it. It was my best cast of the day, about a hundred sixty-eight feet!"

Unruffled by this sticky wicket, the judges ruled "No Cast!".

But Marvin, who had been told of the etiquette on the playing fields of Eton, Oxford and Cambridge, was very ruffled indeed.

"I could have pushed them out of that boat. I raised one record, it is true, but I had to be satisfied with a long cast of just one hundred fifty-one feet," he declares.

After seeing the champion perform, the British casting instructors began to advertise they had mastered and were capable of teaching *The Marvin Hedge System of Casting*.

We are tempted here to tell more of the achievements of Marvin including the details of how he taught Jimmy Green to cast and paid his way to Europe where he won a \$5000 Gold Cup in a tournament. We are tempted to tell of Marvin's trips to the Rogue, the Umpqua and the Deschutes where he and Walter Backus used to fish White Horse Rapids and return most of their trout to the river. A part of the story behind the story in the record books, however, has never been told. One thing, for instance, has been controversial: Who originated the Double Haul?

"Well," Marvin explained, "the boys had a tournament down at Medford and they were going to fish the Rogue while they were there. I didn't go. When they came back they were all trying to do a new cast called the Double Haul and as soon as I saw what they were trying to do I knew it was a good thing. So I said, 'Let me show you how to do it,' and I took a rod and made one cast and shot it out there. Well, it had to be perfected; it was just a fishing proposition. But when I got back to St. Louis I used it and it was responsible for a lot of my extra distance. There wasn't a soul in St. Louis that had ever seen it.

They took motion pictures of it and, after that, they asked me questions about it until two o'clock in the morning."

"The next year Tony Acetta, a former National Champion, told me, 'I finally gave in. I'm using it just like the rest of them!' Since then I've never gone to a tournament where anyone was not using the Double Haul for distance fly casting."

Another part of the story behind the story in the record books is that the steelhead, by a happy coincidence, was winning recognition as a fish during the very years Marvin broke the records. Michael O'Malley, the noted Irish angler, abandoned his favorite salmon fishing on the Galway River, a stream rich in legend and romance, once he had hooked an Oregon steelhead. That was in 1937. A year earlier Ben Hur Lampman wrote, after a lifetime spent catching all species of freshwater fish, an appraisal of the steelhead which, Marvin agrees, must be quoted here:

"Now it is probable that every land possessed of rivers has a fish that is believed, by the inhabitants of that region, to be quite the most superior and satisfactory of all fishes that swim. And it really is too bad that of so many positive opinions only one can have merit. But there is a duty to declare the fact. The steelhead of our Western rivers is the finest fish of them all."

That is the story, then. It took a fish like the steelhead and a river like the Rogue to inspire the Double Haul. And, though

there were many fine Oregon casters twenty and thirty years ago, only Marvin Hedge went East to shock the Flatlanders and then crossed the Atlantic to astonish the British and delight the French. Only Marvin spliced the lines and balanced them to the rods which broke the records and won the Distance Fly Casting Championship of the World.

And it must have been exciting! They say the boy from Johnson Creek had them roaring like Spaniards at a bull fight when he sent those Double Haul casts whistling far out across the water like they do it down on the Rogue!

Marvin speaks fondly of his friends in the old Portland Casting Club and the older tournament casters such as Cal McCarthy, Joe Weber, Edward Braddon, Tony Acetta, Sib Liotta, Buddy Powell, and many others. He acknowledges with great gratitude his debt to his teacher, Walter Backus, and the genius of John Wilson, who did wonderful things with bamboo. He reminisces, too, once in a while, with Tommy Edwards by telephone across the Atlantic. . . to London where the judges arrived too late to measure the cast witnessed by a man with a gold-headed cane. When Marvin told us that story his eyes flashed fire and he shifted around in his chair. Then he settled back, as a champion will do, and he smiled. . . thinking of all the lines he had spliced and rods' he had broken practicing to make just such a cast as that.

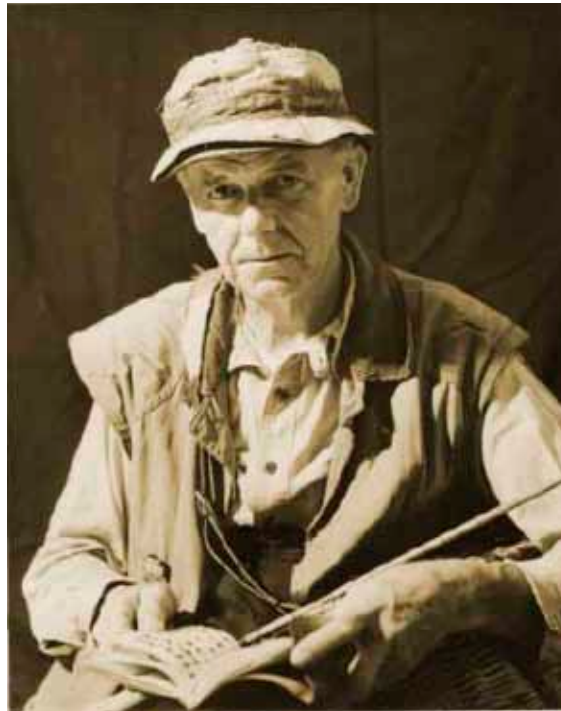
# A Salute to Leisenring and Skues

by V. S. Hidy

*The Creel*, Volume 8, No. 1, December, 1970



G.E.M. SKUES, 1858–1949



JAMES E. LEISENRING, 1878–1951

*James E. Leisenring, a Pennsylvania German toolmaker and G.E.M. Skues, an indomitable British barrister led the way in defending, explaining and dramatizing the pleasures of fishing the submerged and emerging artificial fly with lively, quivering hackles, thereby avoiding the frustrations to which the dry-fly purist is doomed.*

MANY OF US who have developed some versatility in our fly fishing techniques today owe a considerable debt of gratitude to two remarkable bachelors—James E. Leisenring of Allentown, Pennsylvania and G. E. M. Skues of London, England. These two mellow nonconformists never took the time to romance a girl and get married. It is perhaps just as well because few young ladies could have lived with such perfectionists who were inclined to scoff at fashionable trends and ideas. These two men are noteworthy today because they are independent thinkers of fishing the submerged artificial fly. They did this during those easygoing years between 1900 and 1950 when it was fashionable to master only one technique: the two-dimensional strategy of the dry or floating fly

The angling experience of both men is impressive. Leisenring's wanderlust led him to travel more than 25 seasons into the American West, Canada and Alaska. All

his time during his best years was devoted to the mastery of mathematics, metallurgy, entomology and trout. As a result, he became a master tool and die maker, and a master angler. And, although the orders could be piled high in the tool room of the Bethlehem Steel Company, he would depart sometime in July for the Madison, the Rogue, the Feather or the Kern. Depending on the weather, his mood and his finances (he panned for gold and caught trout for hotel dining rooms to earn extra money), he would return to Pennsylvania in the fall bronzed, happy and looking for work. Eventually, if not promptly, the Steel Company foreman would call him back, give him a stern lecture on "Dependability and Loyalty to the Company" and put him to work on the more delicate, precise and urgent jobs at which he excelled.

The angling adventures of Skues included expeditions to France, Germany, Bavaria, Yugoslavia, Turkey and Norway. The character and techniques of anglers he met abroad are discussed with charm and insight throughout his books. For the most part, however, Skues fished on the rivers and chalk streams of the British Isles. During his best years he wrote extensively for *The Field*, *The Fishing Gazette*, *The Salmon & Trout Magazine*, *The*

*Journal of The Flyfishers' Club of London*, and *The Bulletin of the Anglers' Club of New York*. His writings contain many brilliant observations on stream strategy, insect behavior, the character of fly fishermen, the feeding habits of trout, and the dressing of trout flies.

Starting with *Minor Tactics of the Chalk Stream* (1910), Skues proceeded to publish *The Way of a Trout with a Fly* (1921), *Side-Lines, Side-Lights & Reflections* (1932), and *Nymph Fishing for Chalk Stream Trout* (1939). After his death in 1949, two books from his pen were published: *Silk, Fur & Feathers*, a collection of

essays on fly tying which he had written many years earlier for the *Fishing Gazette*, and *Itchen Memories*, a book of previously unpublished papers about his fishing on the river he loved best. In addition, Skues corresponded extensively with anglers in many countries. Excerpts from these letters are available today in *The Angling Letters of G. E. M. Skues*.

Starting with his first book, Skues carried on a rather friendly but deadly serious vendetta with F. M. Halford, England's self-appointed piscatorial pontiff who deplored use of a submerged fly. In Chapter 1 of *Minor Tactics*, Skues praised the "inquiring mind" and stated that his purpose

*"I decline to be coerced into fishing floaters to trout which are consistently nymphing or, alternatively, into abstaining from fishing for them until they have come on to surface food, which may or may not happen at all in the course of my day or week-end. I consider it unethical to hammer a nymphing fish with floating flies. . . or to pester a surface-feeding fish with artificial nymphs."*

G.E.M. SKUES



was “to urge brother anglers to keep an open and observant mind, to experiment, and to bring to their angling, not book knowledge, but the result of their own observations, trials, and experiments—failures as well as successes.” After some sly observations on pages 4, 5, 6 and 7 ... enjoying “sport on occasions and in places when and where the dry fly offered no encouragement, not any prospect of aught but casual and fluky success,” he advances into one of the most charming



An undomesticated, roving connoisseur of American and Canadian trout waters, Big Jim Leisenring understood how to stalk and deceive the larger trout. . . in the weed beds, moss banks, gravel-strewn riffles, swirling eddies and pools. He is shown here with a limit of rainbows caught for a hotel dining room somewhere in the West, probably Yellowstone Park, about 1920. Note the well-worn cloth “creel” over his shoulder.

and most brilliant of all expositions to be found in the literature of angling: *Subaqueous Happenings In Nature*.

“You shall see the trout swashing about in the shallow water covering the weed-beds, in pursuit of the nymphs, and presently the phenomenon known as ‘bulging.’ This is the first stage of the rise.”

“Presently,” he explains, “the trout find attention to the winged fly more advantageous as presenting more food, or food obtained with less exertion than the nymphs—and turn themselves to it in earnest. This is the second stage. Often it is much deferred. Conditions of which we know nothing may keep back the hatch, perhaps send many of the nymphs back to cover to await a more favorable opportunity another day; so it occasionally happens that, while the river seems mad with bulging fish, the hatch of fly that follows or partly coincides with this orgy is insignificant. But, good, bad, or indifferent, it measures the extent of the dry-fly purist’s opportunity.”

Then the hatch “presently peters out, and at times with startling suddenness all the life and movement imparted to the surface by the rings of rising fish are gone, and it would be easy for one who knew not the river to say: There are no trout in it.’ For all that, there are pretty sure to be left a sprinkling, often more than a sprinkling, of unsatisfied fish which are willing to feed, and can be caught if the angler knows how; and these will hang about for a while until they, too, give up in despair and go home or seek consolation in tailing. Often these will take a dry fly, but an imitation of a nymph or

a broken or submerged fly is a far stronger temptation. This is the third stage.”

Skues then points out that, as the dry-fly purist restricts himself to the second stage of the hatch, there are other anglers who enjoy varying their tactics, particularly since “bulging trout are bold feeders ... and once the trout sees the fly the chances of him taking it are far better than are the chances that a surface-feeding trout will take the floating dun which covers him.”

He goes on to say that the flash of the fish as it turns to take the fly may often be seen, so dimly and so momentarily as to be apt to escape notice if one does not know what to look for,”. . . and then he explains that “the commonest indication of an under-water taking is an almost imperceptible shallow humping of the water over the trout . . . caused by the turn of the fish as he takes the fly, and when the angler sees it is time to fasten.”

The chapter closes with one of the classic statements in angling literature: “There are those who wax indignant at the use of the wet fly on dry-fly waters. Yet it has a special fascination. The indications which tell your dry-fly angler when to strike are clear and

unmistakable, but those which bid a wet-fly man raise his rod-point and draw in the steel are frequently so subtle, so evanescent and impalpable to the senses, that, when the bending rod assures him that he has divined aright, he feels an ecstasy as though he had performed a miracle each



A page from Leisenring’s fly book would reveal, as shown here, many small, sparsely-dressed wingless flies designed to simulate the “flymph” —a mature, wiggling insect struggling to the surface to become a fly.

time." Such fascination and charm leads him to "confess" that hooking a fish on a floating fly "seems second-rate in its sameness and comparative obviousness and monotony of achievement."

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, Leisenring had been fishing many more types of water, East and West, and evolving a finesse-and-suspense-filled technique of his own. Like Skues, he found far greater enjoyment and fascination in the three-dimensional challenges of the submerged fly than in the relatively monotonous hooking of fish on the dry fly. He had examined the stomachs of trout, made notes on the colors, sizes, shapes and form of the *food they had eaten*. To simplify this study he made up a unique *Color and Materials Book* which provided a tool for extremely accurate note taking *on the stream in natural light*. His fly-tying techniques and fly dressings were, therefore, based upon original observations. As he states in his book, *The Art of Tying The Wet Fly*, "the art of tying the wet fly rests upon a knowledge of trout stream insect life, a knowledge of materials used for imitating the insect life, and an ability to select, prepare, blend and use the proper materials to create neat, durable and lifelike imitations of the natural insects."

Thus, although Leisenring had read the writings of Stewart, Ronalds, Pritt, Tod, Halford, Skues and many others, he was his own man and an original thinker in his own right. His notebooks, of course, show many dressings and observations by astute anglers copied from books which he studied in his search for knowledge. His *attitude* is shown in the works

(recorded in his notebook) of Hewett Wheatley, Esq. who wrote *The Rod and Line* in 1849: "Obstinacy is the vice of little minds, Credulity the failing of little experience, and Prejudice a villainous compound of both. Dear good, kind friend reader! I pray thee shun the firmness of Obstinacy, the ready belief of Credulity, and the unwilling mind of Prejudice."

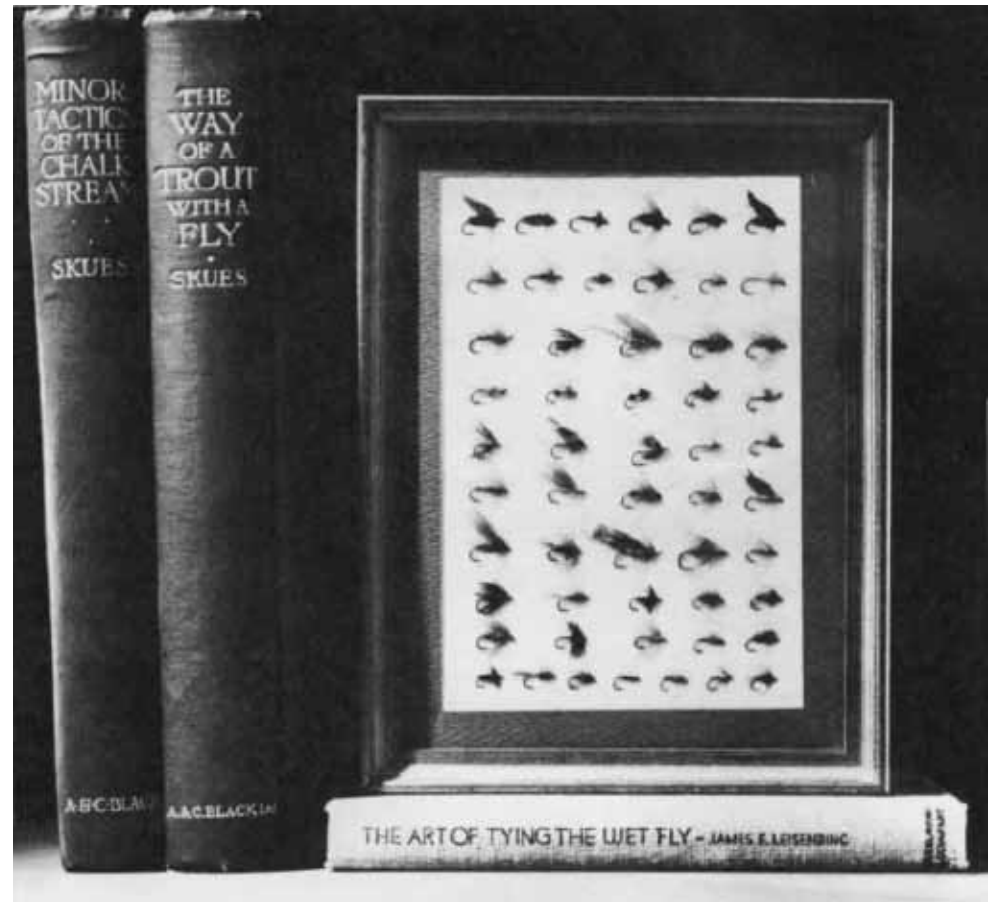
Leisenring, then matched Skues in open-mindedness, finesse, stream strategy and appreciation of the excitement to be found in the submerged fly. Although he could not match Skues as a writer, he perhaps excelled him in his versatility as an angler. . . . due to the sheer number of streams, lakes and rivers he fished in his travels of United States, Canada and Alaska. Long before 1939 when Skues wrote "Though in general the angler will find his best profit in presenting" his artificial nymph as if it were a natural nymph on its way to hatch. . . ." Leisenring had perfected a technique which ultimately became known as the "Leisenring Lift." If he saw a likely spot for a good fish, or saw a fish feeding beneath the surface, he would cast up and across stream. Next he would give his line a tug to straighten the leader. Then, as the fly approached the fish, he would slowly raise his rod tip. He called this maneuver "making the fly become deadly" since it caused the soft hackle fibers and the fibers of the fur or herl bodies to quiver and move as the fly approached the trout. The fish would often take it at once or turn and follow it for a closer view. They usually liked what they saw.

Undistracted by a vendetta with any angler, dry-fly purist or bait fisherman, Leisenring's fame grew on his deliberate,

short and medium casts with an 8½-foot, 4¾-ounce Leonard rod with a medium-soft action, a tapered silk line and a 9-foot Hardy gut leader tapered to 4X, 5X... , or 6X, "I do not try to impart any fancy movements to my fly with my rod but simply allow the fly to advance naturally... the water will do all that is necessary to make a fly deadly if it is properly tied."

Few anglers could match Leisenring's empathy for the trout. "In selecting hackles for the wet fly it is necessary to keep in mind that the trout prefers his food alive," he wrote. "Live insects kick their legs and struggle. They also possess an iridescence, a liveliness of color which vanishes when they die. Therefore, the careful fly tyer will select his hackle according to its ability to act and look alive." Then, completely in accord with Skues and the other great English fly dressers, Leisenring insisted upon a careful attention to color: "The color of tying silk should be chosen to harmonize with the body materials you intend to use in imitating a particular insect, keeping in mind the *undercolor* which you wish to show out through and reflect from the dubbing or body of your completed fly."

Leisenring's virtuosity and skill as a fly tyer and angler, then, were combined with a particularly sensitive desire to please the trout, a quality which does not quite emerge from the writings of Skues.



Three of the books which have achieved the rank of "classic" in the literature of fly fishing. Skues stressed "an attitude of mind—the importance of being earnest, the power of faith, the observant eye, the unfettered judgment, independence of tradition, and, above all, the inquiring mind."

Leisenring phrased it more simply: "Get down to brass tacks and study the insects in the stomachs of trout in the streams you intend to fish."

The flies of Leisenring, shown here, include some immature nymphs such as those, in the bottom row, which virtually duplicated the patterns of Skues. He preferred flies with longer hackles, however, which create livelier fly.

“You must tie your fly and fish your fly so the trout can enjoy and appreciate it,” Leisenring would say to those who asked to inspect his fly book and inquired about his fishing tactics.

I first met “Big Jim” at a pool on the Brodhead at Analomink. After he netted the trout he was playing, I looked at the fly and saw that it was such a fly as you could not buy in a store. A year later I met him again and we became friends. He invited me to his home and, at my request, taught me to tie flies. I found him to be a generous and patient teacher but stern in his demands for simplicity (no half hitches!) and a *perfect* taper in the bodies which we spun between two pieces of Pearsalls tying silk of a selected color.

For more than three years I tried to persuade him, on fishing trips and at his fly tying table, to write down his ideas on fly tying and trout fishing. Finally he agreed, on one condition. “Promise me you will tell them I don’t expect anyone to agree with a thing I say.” I promised and the book was published in 1941. Several hundred copies of the book found their way to England and one of those who applauded Leisenring’s ideas was G. E. M. Skues. Eventually, some of Big Jim’s wet flies and nymphs were on display in the Flyfishers’ Club of London. The supreme tribute, perhaps, was paid by Charles Rethoret, the French innkeeper at the Hotel Rapids on the Brodhead. He commissioned a Pennsylvania artist to paint an oil portrait of Leisenring and it hung there in the bar for more than twenty years.

Leisenring died in September, after the season closed, in 1951. Had he lived a decade longer, he would have scoffed at

spin-fishing. He knew the pleasures of fly fishing with delicate tackle so well that, though others might prefer to excite the rapacity of fish with spinners, he would have always used the fly—wet or dry—as the trout preferred it at the time. . . Stage 1, Stage 2 or Stage 3 of a hatch. If there was no action at all, of course, he could coax and tease the trout. Then, should they just nudge his fly, as if clowning and playing with it, he would offset his hook with a pair of jeweler’s pliers. He often hooked such fish, including some large ones, in the tough flesh on the *outside* of their jaw.

Both men, it seems, achieved their ambitions of understanding the sport of fly fishing in depth, and sharing their knowledge with their fellow sportsmen.

“I would give much,” Skues wrote at the age of 63, “to be able to leave behind me, when I pass over the ferry, a work which would extricate the subject from the confusion in which generations of inaccurate observation and loose thinking and writing have involved it.”

Six years ago, in tribute to these two master anglers whose observations and honest reporting had clarified some of the mystery for me, I coined the word “flymph” to describe the essence of their findings. The word identifies, for the first time in a single word, that brief but critical and dramatic stage of emergence when the aquatic nymphs are struggling to the surface to become flies. This frenzied wiggling and kicking of the legs occurs as the wing cases are splitting open to release the crumpled and still imperfect wings. When it reaches the surface and takes to the air it becomes a fly but

just before that it is neither a nymph nor a wet fly nor a mature fly submerged. Wingless, disheveled and kicking, with a juicy, translucent body, the flymph is of *profound* importance to the fly fisherman.

The phenomenon of trout feeding on the flymph can be so subtle that the average angler misses it entirely, or it can produce an orgy of slashing, furious competition among the trout. To say the fish are feeding boldly, as Skues phrased it, can be a considerable understatement. The rises of the larger trout to the small, wiggling flymphs can be savage enough to snap a tippet.

After the *Sports Illustrated* text of my version of Leisenring's techniques was published in the book *Wet Fly Fishing*, I received a telephone call at my home in Portland one Sunday evening in June. It was an indignant fly fisherman who had tied some flymphs after reading the book. He had just returned from the Deschutes and he was still angry at the loss of several big rainbows which had snapped his leader during an orgy of feeding on flymphs.

"Do you ever fish the Deschutes," he asked.

"Yes, rather often."

"You hook those big rainbows on those tiny flies you describe in the book?"

"Yes, there are times when they ignore larger flies."

"That's the way it was this weekend but it makes me so damn mad when they break my leader. Can you hold 'em?"

"Not always, but I sure enjoy hooking them and seeing them jump before they break off!"

"So do I but I just simply can't stand it sometimes, losing big trout like that so I was wondering if you had figured out a way to hold 'em. They won't take a dry or a wet if I use a heavier leader for that big, fast water up there. I feel better now that I know you can't hold them either!"

That conversation, would have brought a smile and a chuckle from Leisenring and Skues, the two master anglers who delighted in pleasuring the trout just beneath the surface of the water as well as on the surface with a dry fly. Neither angler ever suffered the doomed frustrations of the dry-fly purists who choose to ignore the excitement of the flymph.

# Moment of Truth on the McKenzie *by V. S. Hidy*

*The Creel*, Volume 10, No. 1, June, 1973

*“The west is flaming in gold and purple,  
ready for the ceremony of the sunset.”*

JOHN MUIR

**T**O BOAT AND FISH Oregon’s McKenzie River on a clear summer day is grand experience for a trout fisherman who likes to cast a fly. Compared to our usual habit of hiking and wading a mile or two of river in an afternoon and evening, this is a leisurely approach. The guide maneuvers the boat with much skill and does all of the work while you and your companion take turns catching trout. In this manner you , easily cover twelve or fourteen miles of water in a day, even though you linger at those pools where the trout are most responsive to the pattern and presentation of your fly.

The voyage gives you a generous panorama of the upper ridges of the Cascade Mountains, including giant rock formations poised above miles of rolling forests beneath gargantuan white cumulous clouds. At your elbow are sheer cliffs gnawed eternally by the river, and open glades with meadows of sweetbrier and daisy where the breezes smell

of violets, mint and honeysuckle. Blue columbine and marsh marigolds bloom along the wet banks of the river. As you float along, harlequin ducks, hooded mergansers, orioles, water ouzels and kingfishers fly across the river or through the arbors among the trees. Lunch is eaten in the shade on a sandbar beside currents of turquoise blue. The guide prepares an ambrosia of trout over a driftwood fire while you chill a bottle of white wine in the cold water.

The fame of the McKenzie rests upon more than scenery, birds and trout. You are challenged and seduced with a magnificent variety of water full of surprise. Stay alert, the action can be fast. As you roller-coaster the rapids, the guide at the oars will shout, “Ready now! Right behind that boulder. There!” And he is usually right. A short, accurate cast in such spots will often produce a desirable trout.

At the end of the rapids you may pause to fish pocket water among polished boulders encircled with runnels of foam. From these you float jauntily down shaded or sun-swept riffles. These take you into pools and flats where great beds of moss or aquatic grasses cover the bottom. Here, unpredictably, may be more surprises—mysterious shadows, including trout, flickering and flashing over long, curving ledges of white, gray or multicolored rock. Over these moss

beds, grasses and ledges, you must cast rather far. Then you give your line a tug to refloat your fly. With this maneuver you have a perfect, drag-free float with the boat and your fly moving at precisely the same speed. McKenzie River trout do not take a fly that drags ... unless they are having an orgy and, Heaven forbid!—you are using a dropper fly.

The dropper fly led to my most memorable experience on the McKenzie when I was fishing with three native Oregonians—Judge James W. Crawford, Dale LaFollette and Thomas Tongue—all excellent fishermen with a total experience of some fifty or sixty years on this river. I was, therefore, fishing unfamiliar waters with anglers who knew the river well. We had reservations for the night upstream at Cedarwood Lodge in a weathered but comfortable cabin at the river's edge. The stage setting was deceptively peaceful. There I was to be caught in the crosscurrents of some surprising testimony.

Tom and I were fishing partners for the day and we took turns catching fish. There were several lulls, of course, as well as periods of considerable action. As I recall, Tom caught a trophy trout over sixteen inches and returned it to the river according to one of the laws regarding the McKenzie. The most violent action came toward the end of the day on the pool at Byerly's Flat where the quicksilver currents mirrored the purple, orange and golden colors of sunset.

A great hatch was starting as we arrived and the guide steered the boat under the trees to avoid disturbing the water. As Tom made his first cast, there was a frenzy of swirls,

dimples and splashes. It was an orgy. The trout began to gorge themselves on thousands of hatching caddis flies.

While Tom played his first trout I tied on a dropper fly with the hope of catching doubles. On my first cast a trout took the tail fly and pulled the dropper fly beneath the water. After I set the hook, the rod dipped sharply as a second fish succeeded in catching the dropper fly.

Netting doubles is even more fun than hooking them. As my second pair of trout swerved and jumped, sometimes leaping into the air simultaneously, Tom asked the guide to tie a dropper fly to his leader.

For almost an hour we enjoyed hooking and netting doubles. Two of these rainbows would total two or three pounds and it was a delightful climax to my first boat trip on the McKenzie.

As we drove up the river to the lodge later, I listened to Tom, Dale and the Judge eulogize the McKenzie as the perfect trout stream for fly fishing. Those who enjoyed it were obliged, therefore, to attend it with vigilance and keep the rules of conduct unmistakably clear.

"We are all observers and guardians of these traditions," the Judge said, "And this is entirely in keeping with the character of this great river. It is important that some of us make a special effort to observe and report on the conduct of fishermen, especially those in the category of what I like to call 'borderline' sportsmen. Damned embarrassing sometimes. On a beautiful river like this!"

When we arrived at the cabin, Dale built a fire in the great



stone fireplace and I brought in a pitcher of spring water. There were ice cubes and a choice of scotch or bourbon as we relaxed before the fire and exchanged fish stories in that carefree manner fishermen assume after they have enjoyed a perfect day. You can still feel the thud of the boat against the rocks in the riffles, hear the swishing of your line and the splashing fish at the net. You remember the first few moments of anxious navigation in the rapids and that wonderful giddy feeling as you raced along the white water with the whole world moving madly out of control.

Suddenly the fireplace exploded with a loud cannon shot and a shower of sparks as Tom announced to Dale and the Judge, "I am sorry to report that my fishing partner finished up his day on the river using live bait!"

The McKenzie murmured at the door and another shot sounded from the fireplace. The Judge calmly replenished his drink and pondered this defamatory statement by his trusted friend, attorney Thomas Tongue who became, some years later, a justice of the Supreme Court of Oregon.

"If this accusation is true," the Judge declared, "we have here a very serious charge involving unsportsmanlike conduct. Was it a source of embarrassment to you, Tom, to witness the use of bait by a so-called fly fisherman?"

"Indeed it was. This is no borderline case, your honor. I believe the river and the fish will need some additional protection if such attacks continue."

"Did the defendant catch many trout?"

"Yes. All beautiful McKenzie rainbows."

"Does the defendant care to answer these charges at this time? The court is in session."

"Yes, your honor, I do. We were fishing there at Byerly's Flat and the trout were so hungry they were feeding very recklessly. It was really an orgy so I put on a dropper fly because I like to catch doubles."

"What was the pattern of the fly?"

"It was a small bucktail caddis tied very sparse on an extremely light wire hook, and to say that the fish enjoyed it is an understatement."

"Tom interrupted my testimony. 'It was not so much the fact that he was using a dropper fly, as it was the way he was using it. When the first trout hit, instead of bringing it to the boat, he let it run, deliberately using the first fish to activate the other fly and attract fish to it. I consider this a vicious violation of the spirit of fly fishing'."

"Objection! This is unfair to me and to the fish," I said.

"Proceed with your defense. The accusation is clear," the Judge said. "Dale, do you agree that this is a serious charge?"

As he carefully placed another log on the fire, LaFollette said, "In my opinion, sir, this is a very serious charge."

"You have noticed, your honor, how recklessly trout will feed during a big hatch?" I asked the Judge.

"Yes, of course. It is a remarkable sight and one of the reasons some of us want to protect this river from any abuse."

"Well, I believe trout enjoy chasing these insects as they wiggle and dart to the surface and flyaway. Obviously, they are happy when they catch one. Also, the fisherman is cer-

tainly happy when he feels the pull on the dropper fly. It doubles the sport. It is quite clear to me, your honor, that the dropper fly increases the pleasure of both the fish and the fishermen."

"Don't you feel any compunction at all in using this devious technique on trout that are obviously very hungry and very excited?" "Only on one small count, sir. It does take some extra time to remove the flies and release the fish. They seem to squirm around more in the net when there are two fish side by side. This delay in getting the fish back into the water does trouble me some, but the fish are always able to swim away."

The fire was settling down. Through the door came the sounds of the river and a hoot owl. Dale refilled all our glasses as the Judge pondered the sporting ethics of activating a fly with a fish.

After some time, the Judge rose to his feet and said, "Gentlemen, please join me in a toast to the McKenzie, a great river that has brought us together here for a most enjoyable day of fishing. It is my judgment here and now that, although

the dropper fly may give extra pleasure to both the fish and the fisherman, *the use of a dropper fly should never be encouraged on any great trout stream. One trout at a time is enough.*"

To this day I have observed *Crawford's Law On The Dropper Fly* on all the rivers I have fished. There is no doubt that those who follow the Law will find wisdom, and "wisdom's ways are the ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace."

In retrospect, however, I believe the dropper fly can still be used on the McKenzie under certain conditions. We could use barbless hooks to encourage both fish to escape and we could return to the water all of the fish we catch in this manner, particularly at sunset when the trout are most active. In one sense this would circumvent *Crawford's Law*. In another sense it would be something of a tribute to the Judge who recently passed on. Those who knew this remarkable man and cherish the memory of his devotion to the McKenzie, could call this releasing of trout The Ceremony Of The Sunset, in the words of John Muir. I believe it would tickle the Judge. He had a pixie sense of humor and he approved of anything that was good for his favorite river.

# Sparse Grey Hackle *by V. S. Hidy*

*The Creel*, Volume 14, No. 1, June, 1978

TO UNDERSTAND SPARSE GREY HACKLE and appreciate his talents in greater detail, one should visit his favorite haunt, the clubrooms of the Anglers' Club of New York above historic Fraunce's Tavern in Manhattan. Before lunch there you chat with him and meet his friends while enjoying a glass of sherry. After lunch at the famous Long Table, you relax and talk together on a comfortable davenport in front of a famous fireplace. That is the fireplace, Sparse tells you proudly, that heated this room when George Washington delivered his farewell address here to his generals after the Revolutionary War.

Sparse enjoys having lunch and talking with his friends at the Anglers' Club as he explained in his first book, *Fishless Days*, that was privately printed and published by the Club in 1954. He described that book as "a collection of the small lures on which I have taken many a full basket of friends and good companions from the best of pools, the Long Table of The Anglers' Club."

After he joined the Club in 1931 he volunteered to help his friend Fred White edit and produce the *Anglers' Club Bulletin*, and years later he wrote this tribute to White. (In my opinion it is the best description ever written on the ideal publication for a group of anglers. V.S.H.)

"Dear old Fred White," Sparse wrote, "gave the Bulletin

tone and set not only its basic style but its code of ethics. He stoutly maintained that every member of the Club had a moral obligation to keep the editorial hooks filled with copy without even a reminder from the throne. He would not tolerate profanity, double entendre, slapstick comedy or



*Sparse Grey Hackle is always fascinated by any manuscript on the subject of fly fishing as shown here when he was reading some text by an angling friend before dinner one evening in Manhattan.*

yokelry of any sort. But he was all for brisk, informal, lively narrative and comment, and dead-pan humor, tempered with a considerable amount of sentimentality.”

One of the essays that earned Sparse the title, Dean of American Fishing Writers, is *The Lotus Eaters*. He wrote this “to fill space in the *Bulletin* for June, 1946” and it has appeared in the best anthologies. It is fair to say now, 32 years later, that no other angling essay can match it for descriptive details of a clubhouse for anglers on a trout stream. You are there smelling the kerosene and sharing the idiosyncrasies of the anglers who zealously guard their old sanctuary. It is, of course, an accurate historical document. Could any writer ever match this wry humor? Some of us read the essay every winter to soothe the fishing fever.

Sparse’s letters to his friends are so interesting I keep mine in a special file to share with others and to enjoy from time to time. With his permission we quote from some of his letters here that were written as far back as 1960 when he was an executive in a Wall Street investment service firm.

One February day he wrote: This is when the annual reports fall like the leaves in Vermont, and also when my dear wife decides to visit friends in Jamaica, B.W.I., this latter involving complicated domestic arrangements to prevent me from starving to death before her return.

In reply to some questions about editing, he wrote: I always encouraged the hopeless amateurs to try their hand, and spent a hell of a lot of time in running primary classes by mail—and a lot more in extensive rewriting—simply because

I was and still am committed to the principle that a club publication must be broad-based; it must represent, and derive from, the whole membership rather than the editorial staff, no matter how industrious and experienced.

About his most popular essay: *The Lotus Eaters* is nothing more than straight reporting, although I will admit that it is good, accurate reporting. I have never met any members of the Brooklyn “Flycasters,” as the club used to be called in the Catskills, who seemed to realize that I was caricaturing them. No, caricaturing is exaggeration. Believe it or not, there was no exaggeration whatever in that piece.

On fishing for a big brown in the Neversink: One day I waded into “Lake Superior”—an enormous stillwater pool that Ed Hewitt had insisted on creating by putting a dam below an already smooth but reachable pool. It took me over half an hour to get into position on account of the ripples I generated. But there was this beggar over against the rock at the head of the pool and I knew he was big. It was one of those one-cast situations; you had to get the fly there before the ripples from your casting reached the fish and put him down. He took my fly, and believe me I turned over a fish so heavy that he is one of the few “hit and lost” fish I still remember. I was using 5X gut, and we were even then having “Franco trouble” with our drawn gut from Spain. I lost so many fish on unreliable gut that several years later I did something I had sworn never to do—change over to nylon. I still abominate the stuff, but I will give it credit. It is uncannily strong for its size, and mostly reliable.

On the scarcity of hackle: It just doesn't seem possible to me that nobody can breed acceptable Barred Rock necks, or light gingers of good quality or excellent Rhode Island Red necks. These birds do not have recessive characteristics like blue dun; they're standard chickens. Hell, as long as there are bantams you can get fair to excellent necks from almost all these cocks after about two years. And bantams are fine for fly-tying because their feathers are relatively small; and they're a game strain (they fight like hell among themselves and also against anyone who picks them up), as is the Rhode Island Red. I believe the first R.I. Reds were imported by some old whaling captain as a fighting strain.

Any list of the top five classics in American angling literature will have to include Sparse's book, *Fishless Days, Angling Nights*, published in 1971. The book is a delightful collection, as thousands of anglers who have read it know, of essays that reveal an amazing memory, a wry sense of humor and penetrating observations that flow smoothly through 223 pages. After the book was published by Crown, the editor there, Sparse's friend Nick Lyons, wrote: "He is a grand, generous, legendary fellow who has never been too busy for 50 years to counsel, encourage, inspire and even rewrite the work of both younger and older writers."

If you see a copy of *Fishless Days, Angling Nights*, buy it and share it with your family and friends. There is a fine picture of Lady Beaverkill in it, along with pictures of Theodore Gordon, Harry Darbee and etchings of Sparse's famous friends, George Michel Lucien LaBranche and Edward Ringwood

Hewitt fishing Catskill streams.

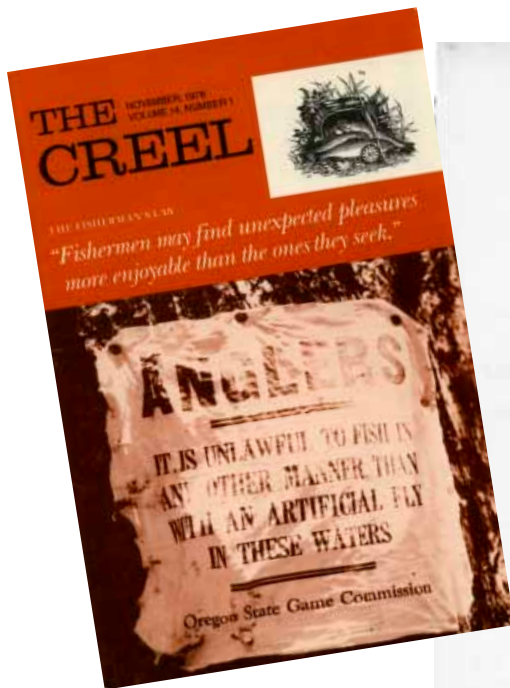
As you read the book, keep in mind Sparse's words in *The Lotus Eaters* ... This is the land of the lotus, to enter which is to come under the spell of a dreaming languor, an enchantment of restfulness which makes the world outside hazy and unreal.

Last summer I met the daughter of one of the Lotus Eaters—Marge Rogowski whose father was Homer Stoughton. "He loved the club's sanctuary on the Beaverkill," she said, "I grew up with memories of his experiences on that great trout stream."

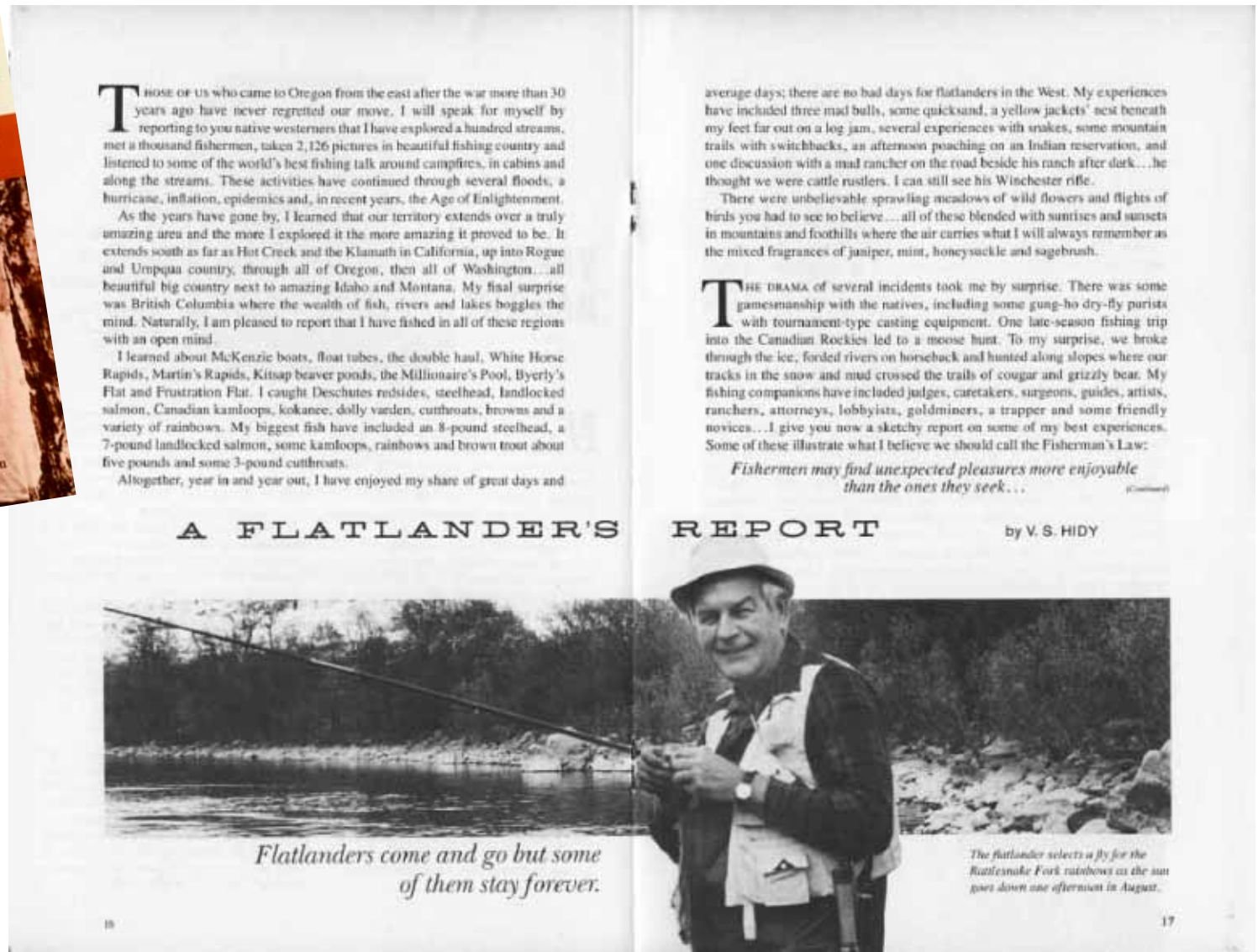
As we talked, Marge and I agreed that Sparse captured the spirit of the club in an unforgettable, unique manner when he wrote:

"For these are the lotus eaters. They live in a little world apart, a world which they found perfect upon entering and which, consequently, they strive to keep unchanged. Does there come one with wealth and social position? They do not comprehend the terms. Angling genius, and the prestige of authorship? They glance up incuriously and return to their concerns. Sportsmanship, pleasing personality, fellowship of spirit? They regard him with unfocused eyes and murmur that they already have these qualities in the club ... " The paragraph continues in this vein and to enjoy it all you should secure a copy of his book.

In all the world of angling, surely, there can be only one man with the sensitivity and skills of Alfred W. Miller. I don't believe we will ever see his equal.



Pete's "A Flatlander's Report" appeared in the November 1978 issue. The cover quoted his "Fisherman's Law" which could be called Hidy's Law, for it summed up his attitude, not only to fishing, but to life itself.



**Hidy's Law** *Fishermen may find unexpected pleasures more enjoyable than the ones they seek.*

# A Flatlander's Report

by V. S. Hidy

*The Creel*, Volume 14, No. 1, June, 1978

THOSE OF US who came to Oregon from the east after the war more than 30 years ago have never regretted our move. I will speak for myself by reporting to you native Westerners that I have explored a hundred streams, met a thousand fishermen, taken 2,126 pictures in beautiful fishing country and listened to some of the world's best fishing talk around campfires, in cabins and along the streams. These activities have continued through several floods, a hurricane, inflation, epidemics and, in recent years, the Age of Enlightenment.

As the years have gone by, I learned that our territory extends over a truly amazing area and the more I explored it the more amazing it proved to be. It extends south as far as Hot Creek and the Klamath in California, up into Rogue and Umpqua country, through all of Oregon, then all of Washington. . . all beautiful big country next to amazing Idaho and Montana. My final surprise was British Columbia where the wealth of fish, rivers and lakes boggles the mind. Naturally, I am pleased to report that I have fished in all of these regions with an open mind.

I learned about McKenzie boats, float tubes, the double

haul, White Horse Rapids, Martin's Rapids, Kitsap beaver ponds, the Millionaire's Pool, Byerly's Flat and Frustration Flat. I caught Deschutes reddsides, steelhead, landlocked salmon, Canadian kamloops, kokanee, dolly varden, cutthroats, browns and a variety of rainbows. My biggest fish have included an 8-pound steelhead, a 7-pound landlocked salmon, some kamloops, rainbows and brown trout about five pounds and some 3-pound cutthroats.

Altogether, year in and year out, I have enjoyed my share of great days and average days; there are no bad days for flatlanders in the West. My experiences have included three mad bulls, some quicksand, a yellow jackets' nest beneath my feet far out on a log jam, several experiences with snakes, some mountain trails with switchbacks, an afternoon poaching on an Indian reservation, and one discussion with a mad rancher on the road beside his ranch after dark. . . he thought we were cattle rustlers. I can still see his Winchester rifle.

There were unbelievable sprawling meadows of wild flowers and flights of birds you had to see to believe. . . all of these blended with sunrises and sunsets in mountains and foothills where the air carries what I will always remember as

the mixed fragrances of juniper, mint, honeysuckle and sagebrush.

THE DRAMA of several incidents took me by surprise. There was some gamesmanship with the natives, including some gung-ho dry-fly purists with tournament-type casting equipment. One late-season fishing trip into the Canadian Rockies led to a moose hunt. To my surprise, we broke through the ice, forded rivers on horseback and hunted along slopes where our tracks in the snow and mud crossed the trails of cougar and grizzly bear. My fishing companions have included judges, caretakers, surgeons, guides, artists, ranchers, attorneys, lobbyists, gold miners, a trapper and some friendly novices. . . I give you now a sketchy report on some of my best experiences. Some of these illustrate what I believe we should call the Fisherman's Law:

*Fishermen may find unexpected pleasures more enjoyable than the ones they seek.*

**Long Lake**—A beautiful lake with a short fishing season high in the Wallowa Mountains. The snow drifts don't melt until early July and storms start dropping new snow early in September. . . some mountain climbers have been caught and frozen to death. Great slices of blue-gray granite overhang the last mile of trail above and down into the lake. To fish here you scramble along a rugged shoreline of brush and rocks from old avalanches. Brook trout cruise around the lake in schools and you try to cast your dry fly near a big one. Any fly that moves a little is irresistible to these hungry fish. The rainbows here are loners; they prefer a dry fly that floats

high and moves just a little with the breeze.

**Minam River**—Flows pure and primitive from the Wallowas down through marshy meadows (full of uncatchable brook trout) into an exciting wild canyon where the water has a prehistoric clarity. . . some of the shallows are often too deep to wade and the shy rainbows there are difficult to catch. Wonderful wild atmosphere all the way to the Chocolate Trail near the abandoned shepherders' cabin. Fascinating warblers, thrushes, jays and wild critters. . . mink, raccoon, marten, elk, deer, bull snakes and rattlers plus some rare blue racers. Two of the blue racers shot across the trail just in front of my toes one day, shimmering over some thick layers of golden grass like two rays of blue light.

**Hosmer Lake**—A narrow, interesting variety of water fished from a boat for landlocked salmon and brook trout that usually feed intermittently from dawn to dusk. Most exciting experience for me occurred when I was fishing alone one afternoon as a storm hit the lake. The lightning crackled so close by and the thunderclaps were so loud that I rowed the boat ashore beside that good water beyond and to the right of the little dock. I rested a while, drank a coke and waited for the fish to start rising as the storm tapered off. Finally I saw a salmon rise to a mayfly. It was cruising along the shore toward me and swirling for a fly here and there close to the brush along the bank. I hooked that fish with just my leader and a couple of feet of line hanging from my rod tip. I can still see the fish jumping up into the drizzling rain and running toward deeper water. It got into my backing twice.



Finally I brought it in and held it there in the water to rest until it swam away.

**Deschutes River**—A moody stream tortured by the sun and the wind, with native rainbows—Deschutes redsides, they are called—often near the bank waiting for giant stone flies, grasshoppers or cicadas to drop in the water. Usually good results on Bucktail Royal Coachman, Dale LaFollette's Float-n-fool or parachute Adams. Other good ' patterns are some of the weighted stone fly nymphs fished deep, and some of my flymphs fished near the surface or in the surface film. Nat Wilson took me below the North Junction bridge one evening to Frustration Flat, a wide flat named by dry-fly purists. The redsides took my Blue Dun flymphs while the purists watched. One of them netted the trout.

Few bird populations put on a better show than the Deschutes kestrels, orioles, nighthawks, honkers and Lewis woodpeckers. Enjoying the birds while one fishes from pool to pool watching for bull snakes and rattlesnakes is great sport.

**Metolius River**—We used to sit and watch the ospreys dive for trout as we ate breakfast there above the meadow beside the stream at Eleanor Bechen's place below Camp Sherman. Another highlight was the year it snowed during the night before opening day. Elaine and Lance and I had decided to open the season by camping out in our tent. I cooked bacon and eggs at sunrise that morning standing in four inches of fresh snow.

I could never resist those canyons and meadow stretches

of the Metolius above Wizard Falls. Fast and slow water with eddies and backwaters where the rainbows, dolly varden and, in later years, landlocked salmon always provided some sport. Through the years I pulled three fishermen out of the river while I was fishing. Two of them had been excited by big fish and lost their footing in fast water. The other was Bob Beatty, a dear friend of mine and a bold wader who could not resist a challenge on a trout stream. For beauty and variety of water on a small stream alive with insect life, the Metolius ranks high. I will always remember the fish hawks, the deer in the meadows and the rhythmic movements of mayflies in their mating flights at dusk.

**Wind River**—Oh, that canyon! A testing ground for wading on polished rocks and climbing up steep, slippery trails. I had the privilege of fishing here with two master anglers who knew the river - Bill Dame and Mike Kennedy. There are few thrills greater than hooking and playing a steelhead on a light fly rod. Woweeeee! When they run and leap I always have the feeling that everything is out of control and some kind of a miracle will be needed to land the fish. Bill Dame told me he has that feeling too when he splashes after a hooked fish down through a deep, slippery riffle. As the fish runs you know it is headed for some big rocks where he will break the leader or the hook will tear out.

**Kitsap Beaver Ponds**—If you are lucky you will be with Bob Wethern, as I was, or a native who knows how to find the ponds in this mystifying backcountry. We used float tubes and fished maybe four ponds a day with mixed but

delightful results. At the end of the day I was chilled to the bone. My right forefinger and thumb were cut and bleeding after removing fly hooks from behind the sharp big teeth of fat cutthroat trout. Bob has fished this country for years and while each trout is jumping he chuckles softly or even yells a little when a big fish surprises him. He has certain favorite fly patterns but I know he can catch cutthroat in his beaver ponds on almost any fly. He *understands* these fish.

**Anahim Lake**—One of the world's unforgettable dirt roads runs west from Williams Lake to Bella Coola, B.C. Every 50 miles or so you see a weatherbeaten general store patronized by ranchers and Indians of the Chilcotin Valley. Eight of us from Oregon stayed in Helmer Christensen's cabins beside Big Anahim Lake that flows into the Dean River. We had brought motors to use on Helmer's boats so we were able to cover the lake's best stretches as well as the good water to and in the upper Dean River. After netting and releasing fish for two Jays, we decided to smoke some to take home. Dale LaFollette said we needed about 100 trout—not too big—and we had them cleaned, dried and ready to smoke the next morning.

I shared a boat with Tom Tongue; we took turns hooking and netting trout. The fish took almost any fly, especially the Doc Spratley, Spruce and Black O'Lindsay. While we fished and during the lulls, the lake's resident loons, eagles and ospreys entertained us. All the birds were lively except the fat, lazy eagles that stole fish from the ospreys. Some of the loons came rather close to our boat and we watched them

dive down into the clear water. One of the pictures I took shows a big osprey delivering a trout to the young birds in its nest near where we were fishing one afternoon.

**Dean River**—The waters of Anahim flow into the Dean through a narrow curving channel that is so full of fish that several eagles are always there during the summer in the big dead trees ready to dive for a trout. Tom and I wanted to fish this channel one afternoon so we anchored the boat close to the eagles. As I recall, we killed a fish or two and threw them out in the currents for the eagles to get downstream at a riffle. While we were catching and returning fish a storm blew in from the northwest and great gusts of heavy hailstones rattled the trees, splashed the water like pebbles and drummed down on the tarpaulin we carried for emergencies. I can still hear the hail and see it all, now, years later. . . four or five eagles watching two fishermen huddled together in a boat preempting the eagles' favorite fishing water.

Some of my other bright moments on the trip included watching an amazing variety of ducks quacking, flying and diving for food near the shore. And then there was the day we all went fishing in the Dean in our waders, wading here and there in the shallows and talking as we fished. Some of us put on dropper flies and caught doubles. Some of us sat on the bank and rested, watching the action in the river. Judge Virgil Langtry found one stretch of water alive with hungry fish that jumped and ran with some of the flies he had tied in the cabin the night before. He stayed there over an hour, delighted that the fish liked his flies and we could hear some of

his comments as they were carried to us by the breeze across the stream. Now, 15 years later, I can still hear him say, “Dale, I’ve never seen so many fish!. . . Look at that baby go!”

**Cowichan River**—On Vancouver Island and a few miles north of Victoria, B.C., I fished an unheralded but impressive trout and steel head river with a fine artist and guide named Ricky Ciccimarra. These are brown trout, the fish I had learned to respect several years earlier in the Pocono and Catskill streams. We went through the woods along trails in thick fern and brush accompanied by Ricky’s Irish setter, Tattybogle—the Gaelic name for scarecrow. We saw fish and we caught fish but not always the ones we wanted.

There was one fine steelhead—it must have weighed 12 pounds—that we admired as it rested in a shaded pool close to the bank. We both tried for it but the fish ignored our flies, including a favorite fly of Ricky’s named for General Money. Then we caught brown trout, fine wary fish that always reserve some energy for an extra effort after you think they are ready for the net.

On our way back to Vancouver we stopped at Ricky’s cabin overlooking a small lake frequented by wood ducks, a bird sought by fly tyers but protected by law in Canada. Ricky got a wood duck one day, however, in an unusual way. . . with the help of a mink. As he was painting in his studio, he looked out and saw a male wood duck flutter a wing and disappear beneath the surface. Minutes later Ricky walked around the little lake to a place where some mink had raised their young. There, of course, was a mink eating the duck. It disappeared

into the water and Ricky got enough feathers for several flies.

**Big Hole River**—You set your alarm for five a.m. if you go fishing in Montana with Art Taylor and Mike Kennedy. Then you eat a big breakfast at the All-Nite Cafe in Dillon, have the waiter fill two thermos bottles with coffee and drive off in Art’s Cadillac. You sit in the back seat because Art and Mike have to plan the day (this can be a rather heated discussion), and their strategy for attacking the river.

One day we drove down a back road toward our first stretch of water, a secret destination, a brushy, wild area where few people would drive a Jeep. We put on our waders in the dim light under some trees and disturbed a horned owl waiting in a tree to make his morning kill. As the morning sunlight warmed the air, the fish started to rise and we had some action in several pools, including a stretch of water named Maggie’s Twitchet. The next day we fished some of the favorite water - big, deep pools - of the late Joe Brooks, the famous angler Art had met and fished with years earlier. Art and his wife Ruth have been drawn up to the Big Hole from their home in Phoenix every summer for 26 years.

**Silver Creek**—When I can’t sleep at night I don’t count sheep. I count trout in Silver Creek. Rainbow trout swimming in the smooth-flowing, crystal-clear, spring-fed currents of Silver Creek. I always find three kinds of trout there: those I can hook, net and return to the water; those I can hook but not net, and those I can’t hook. I fish for and find all three kinds as I go to sleep.

On Silver Creek I may meet two of the world’s finest fly

fishermen: Dick Alfs of Ketchum and Rue! Stayner of Twin Falls. They both operate their own tackle stores, tie and cast beautiful flies, and excel at fishing talk. Alfs can tie three dozen dry flies before breakfast. Stayner has an uncanny touch in creating fly rods. Silver Creek attracts men like these.

When the wind blows hard on Silver Creek you can hold your rod out and let your dry fly dance just above the surface. Often, when you let the fly touch the water, you will get a solid rise from a trout. My wonderful old double-taper silk lines are embarrassingly effective here. My friends have stopped fishing to look at my fly and have asked me why I am catching so many more trout than they are on the same size and pattern of fly. I tell them it must be their heavy weight-forward lines sending sound waves to the trout when it hits the water.

The bird life at Silver Creek is truly fascinating. There is a heron rookery in the aspens there beside Sullivan's Lake, marsh wrens, red-headed and yellow-headed blackbirds, trumpeter swans and countless ducks. My favorite water extends from Loving Creek to Kilpatrick Bridge and down through the private waters of the Purdy Ranch. I could be happy just fishing Silver Creek for the rest of my life. Well, almost.

**Epilogue**—At some point in my travels on the waters of the West I must have learned how to say Howdy and speak enough of the vernacular to pass for a native. No one has called me a flatlander for 25 years now, so perhaps I have seen enough of the territory to become a true native. And perhaps that is why I have not described the Elk Hair Caddis, the Dose Adams and four of my favorite trout streams.

# A River To Remember *by V. S. Hidy*

*The Creel*, Volume 15, No. 1, January, 1980

ONE OF MY most pleasant experiences as a fisherman came in 1965 when angler Berkeley Snow asked me to write an essay on my feelings about the river and to supervise the design and printing of his book, *The History of the Deschutes Club*.

For the club members who contributed money and information to publish the book, this was a proper way to commemorate 33 years (1933 to 1966) of sport, conservation and friendship. The book is dedicated to "The Founding Fathers . . . the 30 men whose sporting spirit, vision, wisdom and energy created the Deschutes Club."

As I wrote in my essay, a significant part of the Deschutes Club's history is recorded in the guest books along the river and in the memories of the fishing guests who have enjoyed the generous hospitality in the cabins there through the years. The members have always shared the Club water with visitors and friends who appreciate the excitement and challenge of a big trout stream. Indeed, the exploits of guests intrigue the members as much as their own experiences, for there is a touch of drama in introducing a newcomer to the

boiling eddies, whirlpools, thickets of poison oak and occasional rattlesnakes.

You always enter the gate and ascend the River Road with high hopes. The driver steers around the sharp rocks and through the narrow cuts blasted into the cliffs by the Union Pacific in 1910. After a stop at the caretaker's house for signing in, you get the feeling of being dwarfed by the soaring slopes of the Mutton Mountains beyond the ramparts of burnished rimrock. Gradually, with several stops for opening and closing gates maintained for the control of livestock, you realize that this rugged and wild canyon is also a surprisingly clean and productive private property. Cattle and calves, sheep and lambs graze along the river; warnings are posted against the dangers of fire; "Return The Spawners" signs remind you that the fish population depends entirely upon this conservation program which is a point of honor with the members.

Through the years many anglers who are not members of the Deschutes Club have parked their cars at the gate up-

stream from Maupin and walked in to the riffles and pools of their choice. As a courtesy to the Club, these walk-in anglers stop at the caretaker's house and sign in, usually giving their name and address. These fishermen often receive a ride up or down the River Road with one of the members, especially on busy weekends. As many as 10 or 15 fishermen may walk in on a weekend and register in the little book placed there for them. Conversations with some of them make plain their appreciation for being able to escape the crowd with just a few miles of walking.

Some of Berkeley Snow's *History* explains in dramatic detail what were described as The Great Nuisances, from the Club point of view through the years. These include petitions by interested sportsmen to open the River Road, some controversy with the Bureau of Land Management and Senate Bill 274 introduced into the Oregon Legislature, a proposal designed either to open the Club area to the public or to close it entirely to everybody as a harassing measure that might cause the Club to capitulate and give up its privacy. The bill did not pass although it had some strong support from many sports organizations, including The Dalles Rod & Gun Club that was willing to give several acres of land on the big flat near North Junction to the public. At one point Governor Tom McCall intervened with an eloquent plea that the Deschutes canyon was one of those rare natural treasures that deserved to be *saved* from a public invasion through easy access. This was a turning point. Today, thanks to Tom McCall and other stalwart defenders of that property, even The

Dalles Rod & Gun Club wants to limit the pressure on the Deschutes River as a valuable natural resource.

A fishing guest is guided to the best water. There you will learn that the currents are both complex and deceptively fast. Gusts of wind whip the line and leader haphazardly through the air but the moment of truth comes when one decides to wade the river in search of those trout which feed some distance from the bank. You must then find footing in dark places among fragments of rimrock fallen from the heights, and some of these may tilt you into the main currents a few feet away. Once in the river, of course, you are fully exposed to the fury of the wind, a wind which has destroyed the morale of perfectionists and sent them back to the cabin in defeat.

Assuming you persevere, and the winds can be coped with, you place your Royal Coachman or Bucktail Cad-dis lightly and precisely upstream from a feeding rainbow. Meanwhile, you are distracted by a thousand swallows darting after the hatch, a kingfisher or two, and the mournful whistling of a long freight train with the flanges of its wheels squealing around the bends along the west bank. If the trout you hook weighs more than two pounds, as many of them do, the chances are rather good he will break away with your fly, for these are explosive natives enlivened since early spring by hatches of the legendary salmon (stone) fly and constantly conditioned by the pressures of the surging Deschutes.

While Berkeley Snow was researching the material for his book, he found a piece of paper sent to "Heck" Cherry by

L. Paul Steffen, one of his guests who had admired the Deschutes trout and the flies used to catch them. Here is the remarkable letter as it was printed on the last page of *The History of the Deschutes Club* beside a picture of the flies preferred by the trout there.

#### A BOX OF TROUT FLIES

*A man with a box of trout flies came into the office, as he had promised. The box wasn't much to look at. It was battered and worn but its proprietor laid it down on the desk as though it held the crown jewels.*

*When the box was opened it was seen to contain, as an incredible matter of fact, such beauty of artistry and feathering as to make any fisherman hold his peace. You don't talk of such things; at least, you do not talk a great deal. They were all there, tier after tier of them, in their appointed places—Coachman, Caddis, Ginger Quill, Wickham's Fancy and all others.*

*He said, with a smile, that sometimes when the river is*

*high—and of nights, it would be, when he tires of reading—he takes the box out of the closet where he keeps his tackle and looks those flies over again. Merely looks them over. Picks them up and puts them back, fly after gorgeous fly.*

*Any fisherman would understand . . . any fisherman since ever that ancient time when, as is credibly reported, the mandarin on his holiday at the river, where angling was to be had, poured a libation of rice wine on the fast-flowing water, exclaiming, "Drink, too, ye spirits of the river!"*

That spirit prevails to a certain extent among the members of the Deschutes Club today as it did in 1962 when one of the members died and asked to have his ashes spread on a certain riffle. The ceremony was simple, according to Berkeley Snow who was there and wrote this report: "Besides drinking to our friend, we drank toasts to the river he loved, to the fish and wild life it nurtured, and to the spirit of friendship it engendered among men."

# Ambush at Badger Creek *by A. River Rogue [V. S. Hidy]*

Note: This version is a slightly different editing from the one that appeared in *The Creel*, Volume 16, No. 1, 1982

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Beyond the end of the road, past the shingle nailed to a dogwood tree warning: MUD HOLES—IMPASSABLE, the way twists and turns and brings you to a stop before a three-strand barbed wire gate easily opened by lifting the stout stick on a wire looped around the post. If “fish sense” or some such spirit of adventure leads you through..... have you not seen Badger Creek on the map! . . . it must be ahead here somewhere! . . . fasten the gate and ease down around the hairpin curve. How far to the first mud hole?

Searching for the secluded stretches of trout streams constitutes a pleasure in itself. You steer a wheel of chance, so to speak, when you drive beyond the end of a back-country road called Unimproved Dirt by the mapmakers. Here, indeed, as with your first casts on any strange trout stream, you enjoy moments of quickening such as explorers and treasure hunters know. Some byways may end in a hodge-podge of ruts such as loggers leave; others just peter out in the brush. But cavernous ruts, fallen trees, crankcase-high rocks, landslides, wash-outs or mud holes may appear at any turn.

Stop the car. Can that gleam of white riffle down through the trees be Badger Creek? By a miracle we find we can cut out across a plateau of deer-nibbled grasses to the very brink of Badger Canyon. The artist and I ready our gear

there on the edge of the world. He is taking deep breaths and murmuring aloud.

To breathe deeply at Badger Creek is to taste a julep blended of the fragrances of juniper and sagebrush chilled by mountain winds. Could this have intoxicated the mapmakers and pioneers? How else explain such names as Devil’s Halfacre, Hootnanny Butte, Bottle Prairie, Postage stamp Lookout and Happy Ridge? We look around and wonder about those early daydreamers, for a mood of delicious uncertainty stretches across the treetops of the canyon into the haze of the horizon.



Pioneers forded the Badger just below Hawk’s Nest Riffle. Photo by Pete Hidy.





At Driftwood Bend you fish beneath fantastic faces on a cliff. Photo of Doug Lynch, the artist, by Pete Hidy

The artist is fond of what he calls “little backcountry streams”. Knowing this, I had used these words casually on the telephone the night before. He had paused in silence. Then he asked what time we would leave. Now he was finding a deer trail down through the rimrock and suggesting that we drop over a forbidding ledge: a short cut.

Safely down the trail which zigzagged through rocks into a brushy flat, we decided upon an early lunch beside the water. This was an unwise decision for the Badger coaxed us so we could not finish, and we cached our food near a bronze-black stump. As we raised our rod tip to pass the line through the guides an eagle

caught our eye hunting high over Happy Ridge for a careless young badger or wild turkey. The artist disappears downstream; the eagle dives out of view.

Upstream at Crystal Pool my yellow caddis sailed over the lip of a riffle, paused in a confusion of currents, and floated clear with deer hair wings still dry. Suspense comes at this instant for the trout, surely, as well as for the angler. Can there be a happier moment for a hungry rainbow than the ambushing of a fly full of juices? See him shooting up for it from the streambed. The pleasures of trouting are magnified here. Pay attention! Raise your rod tip.

He’s off. As I retrieve the caddis to dry it a tanager mocks me from his thicket and flies off on some urgent mission, a blur of red•yellow-and-black. Flick the caddis over to the edge of the brush now. Here comes a ten-incher famished as a shark and he takes it, twisting, diving and jumping. Another beside the rock.

Now find a way through the trees around that jam of polished logs. What’s stirring the leaves? This is snake country but we have here a lizard, another ambusher of insects, a sphinx of a hunter whose long tongue keeps him fat. The sandbar ahead seems uninhabited but when we get there we find it is alive, for a conclave or red beetles had come there that afternoon to play among the grasses and Willow shoots. Sparks of raspberry fire flashed in the sunlight beneath a thousand wings of pearl striped with black. What a place for the lizard! But that reptile knows hawks hunt here and he hears that one screaming at me as it flies from the rimrock. Back to fishing a gray hackle with a red body and gradually, pool after pool, they chew it to pieces.

We do not remember how many trout we caught that after-

noon but we can tell you they were mostly small and it was a pleasure to watch them swim back toward the streambed. One heavy fish swirled impudently at the gray hackle in an eddy but he did not come hard. I was ready for him, too. Again, on my way downstream I tried for him but he would not even swirl. Some unseen forces were conspiring there and that fish was mysteriously involved.

At Driftwood Bend, a dark pool where moss-spangled gargoyles leer from the rimrock, two blue Mayflies flew from beneath a canopy of vine maple and climbed up through the alders together in a mating dance. Out of a stand of saplings a grass-grown wagon road appeared, so charged with memories of pioneers lured down to the sweet waters of Badger Creek from the old Barlow Trail that we could feel hoof prints dimly beneath the grass and kind of hear the harness creaking there where they used to ford Hawk's Nest Riffle.

The artist, by habit, had lost himself in the Wildest parts of the canyon. As elusive a fly dapper as ever deceived a trout on a short line, he moves through the trees like a wraith of mist. Trout never see him. I could not see him either. Finally, a rod tip flashed above the willows, twitched two or three times and disappeared. Then I heard some splashing and a chuckle and a plop. He was putting them back too.

The artist and I fished together briefly there for he had some water down-stream he wanted me to see, a mysterious stretch full of trout that...well, I'd have to see it for myself. So we went there and cast

tor his phantom fish but they were still in one of those moods no tricks with a fly can penetrate.

The sun was low when we remembered the upper world. We found the cache and the trail after getting lost in a spring-fed bog of skunk cabbage. Midway up the trail we could feel deer watching us, waiting to come this way to their pasture above. At midnight a mink would hunt the trout in Crystal Pool.

You could hike into the canyon, I suppose, along the stream from above or below, but would you want to miss the shingle on the tree? However you choose to approach Badger Creek, an ambush of rainbows awaits you there in a blue-domed sanctuary beyond the end of the road.



A wonderwork of rimrock guards Badger Creek. Photo of Doug Lynch by Pete Hidy.

# Reuben Cross

by V. S. Hidy

Introduction to the *THE COMPLETE FLY TIER* by Reuben Cross, Freshet Press, 1971

All who knew Rube Cross will be pleased with this new edition of his writing on the art of fly tying. When he wrote his great little book, *Tying American Trout Lures*, in 1936 he opened the way for many of us to tie high quality dry flies by revealing some of the “secrets” of the professionals. It was really the first good book on the subject published in the United States and it sold well from coast to coast. His influence on American fly fishing became even more pronounced with the publication of *Fur, Feathers and Steel* in 1940.

Among all the sportsmen of the Catskill Mountains there was never anyone quite like Rube. Man and boy he roamed Sullivan county fishing and hunting, observing the behavior of the wildlife and the more bizarre natives along the way. As his exquisite dry flies attracted nation-wide attention, the appreciative anglers literally beat a path to his door when he lived on the Neversink and, later, on the Beaverkill. Manhattan sophisticates and raw novices received the same friendly consideration.

Rube was generous, sentimental and considerate to a fault. You always received more than you gave in trading hackles, hooks, stories or ideas with this friendly man. His stories of hunting or fishing usually sparkled with backwoods humor.

His suggestions and “how-to-do-it” ideas always worked because they originated from his private store of homespun wisdom, native cunning and practical common sense. In addition to these qualities he possessed, of course, the artistic genius required to create perfect dry flies with select materials difficult to come by.

The problems of acquiring high quality materials, as every beginner will learn here, may be solved in many ways and Rube withholds none of his secrets regarding how to identify the best hackles, furs, quills, hooks and wing materials. He even discusses the breeding of birds for those who want to raise their own roosters in order to have the desirable shades of blue dun hackles.

One of the most interesting pictures in the book is the photograph captioned “The Author’s Work Table.” I have sat there watching Rube prepare hackles, strip quill and tie Quill Gordons by the dozen for the members of the Beaverkill Trout Club down the road from his home in Lew Beach. The speed and precision of his fingers were amazing . . . his dexterity with hackle pliers, silk thread, scissors and razor blade left you a little breathless just watching him work! As a novice you knew so well how many things could go wrong! And it took you so much longer to get everything just right! Watching Rube, however, was reassuring. You knew it could be done if you just stayed with it and followed his advice.

The fortunate anglers at the Beaverkill Club did not have to go to Rube for their flies. Inside the door of their clubhouse was a large box with many compartments and Rube had a standing order to keep the compartments well stocked with the famous patterns he describes in his books. During the trout season the members and their guests would frequently raid the box and leave a pile of dollar bills beside it in payment for the flies. It was a point of honor with Rube, of course, to keep the box well-stocked with flies but there were many times when he could not keep up with the demand.

Those of us privileged to know Rube were sometimes invited to ride with him on the narrow, curving dirt roads of the Catskills in his old but smooth-running Dodge. He had abused that car quite a bit, he said, but by golly there she was, dependable and roadworthy. "Let's go," he would say with that delightful laugh as he turned the key in the ignition. A stop at the Beaverkill Club to deliver flies; an invitation from a member to join him and his friends on the porch for a drink and an exchange of fish stories. "I have a complaint," one man said. "The other day I caught a few trout on one of your Light Cahills and it started to fray a little." "Well, I'm sorry to hear that," Rube said. "I'd be interested to know how many trout chewed on that fly even though I'll gladly replace it free of charge!" The man smiled and said, "Thirty two!" Everyone roared and the man said he was just trying to compliment Rube on the quality and durability of his flies.

As we toured the back roads Rube would comment on

the farmers and their barnyard roosters (some of which he coveted), the poachers, Theodore Gordon (whom he had known on the Neversink), the deer crossings, Ed Hewitt (whom he had fished with and tied flies for), the fox dens and the grouse thickets.

During the noon hour we stopped for lunch beside a spring hidden far back in the trees. As we ate he picked a piece of jewel weed and showed me how the underside of the leaves will turn silver and glow when the weed is dipped in water. On our way back to the car he detoured to pick some mushrooms and pause beside a shady pool where the native brook trout were feeding on midges and tiny Mayflies.

A day spent with Rube Cross always had a superior quality because you seemed to be in the center of the world of trout fishing. His knowledge of fish and insects, his appreciation of the sport of fly fishing and his enthusiasm for the beauty of Nature impressed everyone who knew him. I do not know if he is honored in any Anglers' Hall of Fame but he should be. His contribution of knowledge, skill and technique to the art of fly tying has been great and he personified the spirit of friendly generosity which adds so much pleasure to the sport of fly fishing.

*On the South Fork,  
Smith's Prairie, Idaho  
14 November 1970  
V. S. HIDY*