
The Newsletter of the Columbia-Greene Rip Van Winkle Chapter #569 of Trout Unlimited

TU...TO CONSERVE, PROTECT & RESTORE NORTH AMERICA'S COLD WATER FISHERIES & THEIR WATERSHEDS

BANQUET BONANZA

When it was first mentioned that our chapter should have a banquet, AND that we should try to make some money at it, AND that we should have a lot of prizes including bucket raffles, AND have silent auction items, AND have it in the middle of winter, AND complicate it by announcing that a chicken dinner would be the entrée, AND that we could have a good time on top of all this, I silently cringed. I thought that we had bitten off more than we could chew (so to speak) because we have never really had a dinner of this magnitude. We got together for a Christmas banquet once at O'Brien's Restaurant in Leeds, but that was basically a social gathering. It would have been roughly equivalent to a 1 on the Richter scale. Now the proposal was equivalent to a 5 on that scale. It was a bold and ambitious plan and the folks who supported it and joined the committee to make it happen, did not appear to be influenced or guided by some drunken or drug induced decisions. These are respected down-to-earth folks who had not lost their mental capacities.

It worried me that if it turned out to be a catastrophic failure, that it would embarrass and hurt the feelings of the committee members and that we may not ever try it again, even on a smaller scale. They met, set out a strategic plan, investigated dinner sites, lined up Bert Darrow as entertainment, and began soliciting gifts from local merchants. Pretty soon it became apparent that local business folks have very generous hearts as they donated gift certificates, food, baskets of cheer, books, and lots of other items...and one very generous, anonymous donor gave fly rods (including a new bamboo one), fly-tying equipment, and other materials used as silent auction items...but TU members and friends were apparently not hungry for a chicken dinner. I made our reservation for the dinner in mid December and was the 15th person on that list. That was worrisome, but in about another week, 45 had signed up. The goal for at least 50 people was approaching. In a few days the list increased to 64 and more reservations were still being made. I, for one gave a silent sigh of relief.

January 7th arrived and the weather was pleasant and dry. When we got to the Freehold Inn, lots of cars were in the parking lot. We stepped inside to a welcome site of a greeting committee presenting handfuls of tickets for the bucket raffles that were lined up on tables (with real white tablecloths), along with silent auction items against the walls of the restaurant. People mingled, socialized, noshed on the large platters of cheese, fruit and crackers, and took their chances on some nice prizes before moving upstairs for the main event.

It turns out that any quantity of a variety of fruits, cheeses, crackers, rice pilaf, mashed potatoes, snow peas and carrots, chicken marsala, beef in gravy with mushrooms, pasta primavera, tossed salad, rolls, butter, sour cream, warm chocolate cake with French vanilla ice cream and fresh

strawberries on the side, coffee, tea, and water is considered “a chicken dinner.” Shortly after completing this gastronomic feast, Bert toured us through some of the major Catskill trout streams with a well-done slide show. Lots of prizes, from the many bucket raffles and silent auctions were then distributed and that concluded a wonderful evening that not only allowed us to socialize with folks we knew, but also enabled us to meet some new ones.

It also set a precedent – our first real banquet. By many accounts, most of the 80 people who attended enjoyed the very mellow but festive evening. Congratulations and praise to everyone on the banquet committee: Wendy Neefus, Joe Reina, Fran Martino, Steve Matheke, Justin Seeley, Bill Newcomb...and to those who assisted or advised the committee. Your efforts, perseverance, and vision not only met or exceeded the goals you set, but they gave you a 6 on the Richter scale. I cannot wait for next year’s “chicken dinner.” Dick

GO WEST YOUNG MAN...(AND WOMAN)

John La Rocca introduced the entertainment at the last meeting, but his sartorial splendor, which included a gorgeous maroon shirt and beaming multicolored necktie, was so bright that I could not see his face as he introduced Dave Rudloff and Tom Poelker as the guest speakers. They and some other folks including Tom’s brother, Bob, visited the Green River in Utah near the border of Wyoming and Colorado. Guides were used and they described the fishing as some of the best they ever had.

Browns and rainbows were the main quarry in the tailwater fishery and they caught many during their float in the historic area where Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid as well as other outlaw gangs once roamed. Flies they used varied in size from huge golden stoneflies, cicadas and beetles down to tiny size 22 nymphs. They frequently had doubles (two fish on at once)...and fish in the 19 to 24 inch range were the norm. Thirty fish per day per person was not unusual. Bob, however, the beginning fly fisher who had never cast a fly, caught the biggest brown, measured at 29 inches, which attracted a crowd of float boats during the 45 minute battle. Two interesting techniques described were; using a balloon blown up to the size of a golf ball as a strike indicator, and a rig that included a sinker at the end of the leader and tying dropper nymphs above it about 18 inches apart.

The fishing was called fabulous but not sexy like some of the well-known rivers in Montana and Wyoming. Photos, flies and brochures accompanied their presentation. Unfortunately a slide presentation that they planned could not be shown due to technical difficulties. It was a very enjoyable evening describing a fishing journey that many of us would like to have. I’ll bet John La Rocca was smiling as he introduced them because he knew we would truly appreciate their report. Dick

FROM THE EDITORS: Hank’s Thought for the Month

*“It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare,
it is because we do not dare that they are difficult.”*

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

CLASSES UNDER WAY!

The first of this year's classes at C-GCC are under way! As Education Chairman, George Goth has organized the fly-tying series and 6 enthusiastic students have already participated in three nights of instruction.

Our next class session, which often draws many more students, is the fly-fishing series which begins on Monday, February 27 and runs for 6 Monday nights, ending on April 3rd. Similar to the tying class, it will begin at 7:00 p.m. and end at 9:00 p.m. It will be taught in the C-GCC gym as well as a classroom, yet to be assigned. The cost is \$50 (plus a \$3 registration fee).

George has put many man-hours into making these two courses a success however, we still need several more volunteer instructors. If you can, please give George and the chapter a hand...you will enjoy it, and get some early season casting in as you help the beginning casters. To volunteer contact George Goth (622-0837) or Hank Theiss (851-9442). Hank

TO SIGN UP TO TAKE THE CLASS PLEASE CALL C-GCC AT 828-4181, EXT. 3342

PRESIDENT'S NOTE:

At our Board Meeting January 10th it was decided that our regular TU meetings will begin promptly at 7:30 p.m. and run only until 8:30 p.m. in order to allow enough time for the after meeting entertainment and social time that is planned. In order for me to prioritize the agenda for each meeting so all the critical items are covered by 8:30 p.m., it is important that I am made aware of any major topics to be discussed at least one week prior to the meeting night.

Thanks for the help with this to make our meetings run more smoothly. Hank

La ROCCA'S CORNER – “Fish Tails & Fish Tales”

“D. **Made by Stetson** – famous since 1865 for durable fur felt hats – on our original Moose River Hat blocks. Classic 2-3/8” brim. Slightly tapered crown can be pinched for an individual custom fit. USA.” (\$79 – L.L. Bean)

“D. **BUZZ OFF WIDE BRIM CAPED HAT** - Tough, breathable all-cotton Elephant Bush Poplin with a wide brim and a cape of Marquesas cotton to fend off the sun and provide further protection from biting insects. The cape is easily concealed under the brim. Grommets allow venting and a throat latch keeps the hat securely in place. An ideal hat for traveling and fishing.” (\$49 – Orvis)

“TT-94215. **Cover Cloth Cap** – Lightweight 100% cotton cloth with an oil finish. Resistant to wind and water. Made in USA.” (\$27.95 – Cabela's)

Green and yellow John Deere baseball hat. (Free when you buy a push mower or larger machine.)

WHERE'S MY HAT?

I've lost more fishing hats than I've owned. It seems that every trout season I lose at least one, and more than likely, two. The season is a couple of months away, but it looks like I've lost another...already...before even getting out on the water. It's upsetting; this is one of my favorites because it is more than just a fishing hat – sort of an all occasion, moderate weather, outdoorsy hat. I bought it in Nashville more than a dozen years ago...flat brimmed, dark brown felt in a semi-cowboy style that I think some people refer to as a Montana hat. The thing maybe “a bit much” for a guy of my stature, but I felt good wearing it. It's not a summer fishing hat, but in spring and fall it is quite comfortable, providing both sun and rain protection. But unless I find the darn thing it won't provide much of anything...on a trout stream or anywhere else.

Not that I'll be without a hat the next time I get out to fish. I have lots of them...on hooks, in drawers, looped over clothes hangers, on shelves and behind the seat of my truck. I can't remember the last time I fished without a hat, and for that matter, I can't remember the last time I saw a serious trout on the water without headgear. It is just part of the “non-uniform” uniform. If you want the reasons, just look again at my introductory paragraph: warmth, cooling, glare reduction, insect protection, all of them great rationale for wearing a hat. If you need added reason, especially if you are like me, talk to your dermatologist the next time he or she removes one of those little rough spots on the top of your dome. (Although my doc told me that I could fish or ride my surfboard the rest of my life without a hat and do no more damage...it was done years ago!)

Without question I don't need all of those hats, but they all have a place and a reason, so I do try not to lose them. My most recent acquisition was a gift from a friend who spent a couple days on Cape Cod with us last summer; we did not fish, but we talked about it a few times. I think he watched my head get sunburned and figured I needed to cover up. It is a classic tan ball cap with embroidered flies, lures and spoons on the front and I'll wear it. This new one does not yet have much in the way of associated memories, but with enough wear there is hope that can be corrected. For now it joins the coat-hooked ranks of other ball caps, many with strong memory connections.

The black one on the left is from the Bighorn River Lodge and brings back wonderful memories of a trip to Montana a couple of years ago with brothers and our sons: glaring sun, searing heat, and large numbers of big, strong trout. The green cap on another hook has an imprint on its face that reads *Durangers on the San Juan*. That one came from a trip to the San Juan River in New Mexico with my brothers. There were lots of big rainbows caught on that trip also, but one abiding memory is of our guide from Durangers wading off across the river with a “follow me, we can cross here” wave. Half-way over he looked back and was startled to see three diminutive La Rocca brothers just about over our wader tops. A few years later I was fishing the San Juan alone, and the six-foot, four-inch guy behind the counter at the fly shop said “The river is down...trout are easy find...and a guy like you...you can wade most anywhere.” Thanks! The last ball cap in the line is the green and white one that I had made up during the zenith of our Adirondack expeditions. *A.E. Tours – Fine backcountry fishing!* is the front panel inscription; A.E. being the initials of the Adirondack Elf. That's me. There are a dozen of those hats around somewhere in friends' homes (or maybe, more likely, long since lost).

Every once in a while, when the weather is warm, I dig out an old jungle fatigue hat...standard issue, OD, more than thirty years old. This one is special because I had my wife's name, *Nancy*, embroidered around the back brim at a little shop on Ben Hoa Airbase a few miles from Saigon the day I arrived in the country. There are lots of memories connected to that one. One of the few pleasant ones concerns the time I loaned it to an old catholic priest who joined my buddy Tom and me on an Ausable trip late one spring. Our guest did not do well; he just couldn't figure out that nymphing thing, and got very frustrated. So much so that he failed to heed our care-in-wading warnings, and at one point I looked up to see only the hat floating downstream. Things worked out well in the end; the reverend bobbed up a minute later and I managed to snag his/my hat. Count that one not lost but saved...like a soul I suppose.

And then there is the fishing story about the little league hat. My old fishing pal Dutch and I coached little league together for years. Our ritual on uniform day was to issue all the kids a team hat, and before they left the field we would magic marker their names under the brim. One spring, a full year after the little league season was over, Dutch and I were on the Ten Mile below Rensselaerville braving the cold and picking our way around flood debris piled high in the trees and brambles along the creek marking the water level from late winter floods. Lodged high in one of the brush piles was a Preston Hollow Little League hat. Dutch and I looked at the hat, looked at each other, and in the same breath specified the child to whom it once belonged...and we were both right! If they did such a thing, this young man would surely have been voted "most likely to lose his hat!"

Back to my lost Nashville hat...I do need to find it. I fished with it for a few years and then I gave it away. A colleague of mine, based in Seattle, had the misfortune to develop breast cancer a few years ago. She had surgery and then endured a pretty harsh chemotherapy regime, losing, as usual, her hair. We, all of us at work, kept up on her progress, and at one point, responding to my inquiry concerning what she might need or want to help her along, she said that she was looking for a funky hat to cover her then thin but returning hair. We talked, I told her about my cowboy fishing hat, and I sent it off to her. She loved it, wore it frequently, and looked a heck of a lot better in it than I. A year later she returned it in a big box. Nice...very nice. I need to find that lid.

But if I can't, I'm thinking about a bowler...maybe a fawn-colored bowler. I never saw one on a trout stream, but why not?

TROUT BROOKS & TROUT BOOKS:

A Look Into Justin's Bookcase

Gary Borger begins his book Presentation (Tomorrow River Press, 1995) with the pronouncement that "fly fishing is often described as a game, a friendly rivalry, a test of skills between fish and fisher. But as a game, it's totally one-sided. The fish are not a partner in our game. What fish are is prey. What they are is wary, spooky, flighty, wild animals." It is that assertion that should guide our angling actions.

To many, presentation is simply the selection of a fly and the careful delivery of it to the quarry. While this definition is suitable for some situations, if you fish over wild or large trout, or on waters that receive a lot of fishing pressure, you're quick to learn that there are many more factors in the equation of success. Borger defines presentation as "the culmination of everything you are and everything you know and understand about the whole of fly fishing." While I'll concede that it is impossible to glean a lifetime's worth of fishing knowledge from a book, Borger presents such a solid foundation of knowledge and anecdotes covering such topics as the vision of trout, life-cycles of trout-food, and equipment, that it is impossible to walk away from reading this book without gaining some useful tip or idea, no matter what your experience level.

I purchased my copy from the Little Lehigh Fly Shop in Pennsylvania several years ago after an exasperating day of watching oversized fish refuse my equally small offerings. I thumb through it on a regular basis, and just reread it in its entirety for the third time. If only I had read it more carefully this summer, then that twenty-inch or longer Farmington River brown I managed to hook (it grows a little each time I think of it) might have paid a visit to my landing net.

HANK'S FLY BOX – The Basic Spinner

Christmas has passed, a wonderful C-GTU banquet is over, and our fly-tying classes at C-GCC are underway. The fly-tying class started me thinking more about what is left in my fishing vest. After doing a little inventory I found very few spinner patterns. As most of us recall mayflies go through incomplete metamorphosis; that is they start as an egg, become a nymph and grow to an adult (or dun) and lay eggs to start the life cycle over again. In the final adult stage, the duns have a thinner body, larger eyes and clearer wings...we call them spinners. If you have ever been in the middle of a spinner fall you would be happy if you looked in your vest and found a spent wing patter in the appropriate size and body color. I found several brown spinners with white wings in my vest but I plan on tying some that are olive, tan and black too. This is the simple recipe that editor Dave Klausmeyer put in the Nov/Dec 2005 issue of American Angler and is very similar to what I have used in the past.

THE BASIC SPINNER

Hook: Mustad 94840, sizes 10-18

Tail: Tan or dun hackle fibers or Microfibbets

Thread: Size 8/0, color to match the body

Body: Superfine dubbing or your favorite dry-fly

Wing: Light dun or white polypropylene yarn

dubbing, color to match the natural insect.

TYING DIRECTIONS:

1. Start the thread on the hook. Tie on a narrow piece of polypropylene yarn one third of the way from the hook eye. Secure the yarn with 2 or 3 figure-8 wraps of thread.
2. Wrap the thread to the end of the hook shank. Tie on several hackle fibers or Microfibbets for the tail. Splay the fibers to imitate the tail of the real insect.
3. Add a pinch of dubbing to the thread. Wrap the body up to the wings.
4. Make a figure-8 wrap of dubbed thread around the base of the wings to conceal where you tied the yarn to the hook. Continue wrapping the dubbed thread to the hook eye. Tie off the thread and clip. Coat the thread head with a drop of cement.

FROM THE EDITORS: Justin's Chuckle for the Month

"It has always been my private conviction that
any man who pits his intelligence against a fish and loses
has it coming."

JOHN STEINBECK

AND THE JANUARY WINNER IS...

...John Jaronsik who won a t-shirt and 3-month certificate for the Hudson Health and Fitness Club...donated by the club.

Those wishing to donate flies or other door prizes for the free monthly drawings should contact Dick Riccio.

UPCOMING EVENTS!

Annual Columbia-Greene TROUT UNLIMITED Classes at C-GCC:

Fly-tying January 12, 2006 - February 16, 2006 (6 Thursdays)

Fly-fishing February 27, 2006 - April 3, 2006 (6 Mondays)

Seeking volunteers to help teach classes...please call George Goth at (518) 622-0837.

C-GTU MEETINGS

EVERY MONTH: Our regularly scheduled meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. **at the Cornell Cooperative Extension Building on Mountain Road in Cairo, NY,** the 3rd Tuesday of each month (except July and August) unless otherwise indicated.

MEETING THIS MONTH: Tuesday, February 21, 2006

MEETING NEXT MONTH: Tuesday, March 21, 2006

COLUMBIA-GREENE RIP VAN WINKLE CHAPTER #569 OF TROUT UNLIMITED

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KEEP CURRENT...WITH THE CURRENT!

Dick Riccio, **Hank** Theiss & **Justin** Seeley (**Editors**)