
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

A VERY SPECIAL SPORTSMAN JOHN "JACK" ARCHIBALD SMITH

Former Columbia-Greene Rip Van Winkle Chapter member, John "Jack" Archibald Smith was a life-long resident of Palenville and the Saranac region of the Adirondacks. He was a fly tyer and fly fisherman, a bird and deer hunter, golfer, skier, and former World War II Army Air Force pilot. Jack designed and built lightweight custom graphite fly rods. He was an advocate of "soft hackled" flies. The following "remembrance" brings out the true essence of this very special sportsman.

I know in the future, whenever I fish, and by fish, I mean with a fly rod, not the spinning rod from my youth, that I will be reminded of Jack. I will be reminded of him sitting in his stuffed chair, chain smoking, surrounded by photos of large fish, and photos of him in his waders holding a humongous salmon with both hands...salmon, caught in Canada, that made Jack look small...salmon the size of one leg of Jack's waders.

I will also be reminded of Jack teaching me to cast in his yard. I was trying to buy a fly rod and I did not know how to cast, or what I was getting myself into. A friend who I had casually told I had always wanted to learn to fly fish had recommended Jack to me. The next day I was cornered, and after a short ride, I was outside Jack's cottage in Palenville. In a few minutes, and in spite of myself, Jack and I were discussing what type of rod I would want. I grew up with a mountain stream in my yard, so I wanted something short to carry through the woods and up the steep banks. Jack built these light and short wands. Any of them seemed perfect to me, so I decided on a six and a half foot, two or three weight, the lightest rod I had ever held and the first of what would be many rods. Probably not one of the easiest fly rods for a beginning beginner to master, yet what did I know?

...that was the beginning.

Jack would not let me take it home until I could cast it well enough to not embarrass myself (or Jack) if someone was to find me on a stream. I kept driving to Palenville after work to practice casting on his lawn next to an old apple tree. After three or four trips, maybe five, Jack announced "That will catch fish," and finally let me take the rod home. He rigged the rod with a three weight double taper and a small Dennison reel. He added a 5X leader and told me to tie on a tippet after I had changed or lost my fly a few times.

I started walking the banks of the Shinglekill and Catskill Creek. By Memorial Day weekend I had caught a ten to twelve inch brown on a light Cahill in a pool below Barrow's Bridge. (It was probably twelve inches, but I don't want to brag.) Every weekend I would drive to Phoenicia to

buy flies. I had a copy of “Matching the Hatch” and I was trying to stay ahead of the next hatch. I would buy two or three flies in a couple of sizes as recommended by Ernie and, on the way home, look for a place to fish on the Schoharie.

When I told Jack I had bought an old bamboo rod, he sighed and asked why I would want a heavy bamboo rod. Why, there were graphite rods that looked just like bamboo and they were lighter. He would not admit it, not out loud, but with a look that he was concerned I had been taken...that I had bought a rod that was not a rod. He took a look at the Battenkill and pronounced he had a number of them in his attic workroom. I eventually bought a couple of both his bamboo and graphite versions. One bamboo, marked as a six weight, was six and a half feet, but threw a four-weight line from years of use. The guides were so worn they had deep grooves. He boasted that if he had every fish he caught with it, they would fill his cottage. I did not doubt him.

When I explained to Jack that life was too short to tie flies, he produced drab little flies of fur and hackle that looked nothing like the dry flies in the books. He kept them in gray and blue lozenge boxes in which he glued strips of foam. Some boxes were so full the lid would not close. Jack said they were soft hackle flies, flies as old as fly fishing. He also said they worked because you could fish them like a wet or dry fly, that when dries were refused, a trout would take the soft hackle in the surface or bounced along the bottom. So now I had to tie flies and started buying thread, hooks, dubbing, feather and tools. After two hip replacements and seven weeks practicing in the sunroom, I could actually tie a fly. Jack examined a Bead Head Pheasant Tail I showed him for his approval and said, “That will catch fish,” and it did.

Jack would have this impish look and say that fly fishing wasn't just a sport, it was an addiction. Why would someone, forty-three years old, become obsessed with an arcane sport? I know why I did...a curmudgeon in Palenville spent the time to teach me to cast when he could have just sold me the rod and left me to my own fate. George Goth

THE ANTS GO MARCHING ONE BY ONE...

So goes the lyric from a “sing-songy” children’s ditty that I remember from when the kids were little. Why would someone sing about that...to a child, no less? Maybe because they are everywhere, those ants...big ones, little ones...Chernobyls, McMurrays...in the fly box...in our trout streams...in the surface film.

“An ant floating helplessly in the surface film, legs struggling in vain to get back to dry land, is an easy meal for any hungry trout looking up.” That line did not come from any children’s song! The quote is from the promotional introduction to a fly-tying product called **The McMurray Ant Kit**. The kit is the creation and brainchild of Columbia-Greene TU’s own Rick Bobrick who has been fishing and tying flies – off and on, at least - for 35 years. He is really excited about this pattern and will present it at our April 18th meeting. Rick will talk about the idea for his kits, but better yet will share samples with members and teach all who are interested how to shape the balsa wood bodies of this special and effective pattern.

Join Rick on April 18th for a great session.

John La Rocca, ENTERTAINMENT CHAIRMAN

NOT “BAMBOO”ZLED!

Goldman-Sachs, Morgan-Stanley, Wells-Fargo are names that we recognize from advertisements, news articles and possibly personal experience. To most of us they are vague names but well enough known banking firms so that we associate them with certain words like wealth, excellence, leadership and high standards. The names are combinations of two last names, e.g.: Marcus Goldman and Samuel Sachs. How on earth does this relate to our entertainment for the last meeting? Our chapter is lucky enough to have two people, Bobby Fisher and John Libruk, who set the standards of excellence, knowledge, and leadership for their interest and pursuit of fishing with bamboo fly rods. Not only that, but they are willing to share their avocation as evidenced by their presentation and display of some of their rod collections.

Bobby gave us a shortened version of his many notes about the history of fly fishing. He described its origins from 1496 using willow, ash, cedar and hickory, to modern day bamboo rods that developed in the late 1800's, to current models that use state-of-the-art glues and can be impregnated with resins to keep them impervious to water. From cork to windings, we discovered the intricacies of the rod.

John explained the joys, perils and details of owning and using bamboo. From caution in taking it out of its case, to drying it and letting it rest before returning it to the holder after fishing, it became clear how much respect he has for his rods. For those of us who do not fish with bamboo it was an invigorating presentation that could tempt those who would like to try bamboo but have not yet done it. In fact it was good enough so that we all listened intently, and as John would say (when his wife asked him if he had purchased **another** rod), “You could have heard a mouse piss on cotton.”

Fisher-Libruk, (I did this alphabetically guys), our own “gold standard of excellence!” Dick

DAN DONS “STOCKING” HAT

On March 13th I attended the Columbia County Federation of Sportsmen's meeting at the Polish Sportsmen's Club. Dan Zielinski was the featured speaker and he made a short presentation about stocking trout in Columbia County this year.

Stocking levels will remain the same as last year's schedule for rainbow trout, and for yearling as well as 2 year-old brown trout. However, there will be a few more 2 year-old browns available this year. The reason for this discrepancy was attributed to a poaching problem by a rookery of herons that reduced the trout population in the hatchery last year. That problem has been solved so the anticipated number of trout remains the same since the reduction due to birds has been stopped.

Dan also indicated that the DEC did a fish survey on the Claverack Creek and found that the gorge area near Roxbury Road and the Spook Rock area did not yield many trout, but the section from Cashen's Bridge to the COARC complex produced a pretty good population of wild brown

trout. He also mentioned that the Taghkanic Creek, upstream from the Claverack Creek junction, had some browns while the mid stream section had few. Taghkanic Creek experienced some very low water conditions last year, which may have accounted for low fish populations there.

No stocking dates had been established at the time of his presentation, but my guess is that by the time you read this newsletter the program will be underway. Thanks, Dan, for coming out of winter hibernation and presenting your programs to many groups in our region.

Dick Riccio, STOCKING CHAIRMAN

“ALL ABOUT TROUT”

Fran Martino, an environmental educator and member of our chapter, conducted an “All About Trout” program at Taconic State Park on Sunday, March 26th from 1-3 p.m. About 15 people from Poughkeepsie to Schaghticoke attended and were treated, by Fran, to an informational verbal and visual guide to various species of trout and their habitat. This was followed by a demonstration by Bill Newcomb on how to tie his famous Victoria’s Dragonfly and a brief history of fishing in the area.

Following these presentations, that included question and answer periods in the cozy nature center, the group was invited to view and handle the displays of fur and feather that our chapter uses for demonstration purposes. Then anyone who wanted to participate and get instructions on fly tying and fly casting was directed outside for these endeavors. The weather held out long enough so that all those who wanted to be involved with these activities had the opportunity before it started **snowing**.

Fran reported that Ray Doherty, the park manager who attended the session, was pleased with it. The following chapter members and friends should be congratulated and thanked for a well orchestrated program, despite the inclement weather: Fran Martino, Ron Baumann, George Goth, Wendy Neefus, Bill Newcomb, Joe Reina, and Dick Riccio. Dick

HANK'S FLY BOX – A “Share” Request

It’s hard to believe but for over 3 years I have been including fly-tying information in each issue of the newsletter. It has been enjoyable and I have learned a great deal researching most of the flies. During that time several people who are excellent local fly tyers including Ron Baumann, Tom Emerick, Al Galante, Bill Millard, Bill Newcomb and Wendy Neefus, among others, have in some way contributed to the FLY BOX. As I looked around the room at the last TU meeting I realized we have an awful lot of very good tyers in our group...an untapped resource...as a result, I’d like to encourage you to also share your favorite fly or two.

Please just send me the basic recipe and tying instructions with any other suggestions or background you would like me to include in the FLY BOX. If you send it by email I can submit the information as accurately as possible. Thank you in advance for sharing your favorite fly...I promise I will not ask you to share your favorite fishing location!

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

This past Monday would have been Dad's 88th birthday. At the end of the month we will mark the fourth anniversary of the early morning that he died. I miss him; many do, but the grieving is pretty much over. I've been spending significant time in my truck lately... commuting back and forth from project work in Trenton, NJ a few times a month, and driving up the Thruway in the dark of winter evenings...which allows plenty of time to think and remember. And the memories, not infrequently, get to Dad and then lead to others...and the memories are good.

THEY'RE GONE: Rudy La Rocca

Dad wasn't much of a fisherman, never was, I think. The one fishing story I remember was hardly about fishing at all. It concerned a time in Dad's long career associated, one way or another, with the food industry. As a young man he worked for a time for The United Fruit Company and lived in Panama somewhere near the ocean or a bay. Nearby was a slaughterhouse that disposed of its offal in the adjacent waterway. “Blood and gore and lots of barracuda or some other fierce fish...and alligators,” is the way he told the story. To this day I don't know if he actually went fishing in that mess, watched other people fish, or just fantasized about catching some of those big nasty fish to watch the ‘gators eat them as they were reeled in.

Some years later, when it came to helping three little boys learn to fish and then go fishing pretty regularly, he was right on it. I remember a sunny afternoon on Bogart's Mill Pond when Dad had settled into a lawn chair after the three La Rocca brothers were strung out along the walled bank of the pond, systematically slaughtering six-inch yellow perch using bits of worm and perch eyes for bait. We spied what we then called a cement (mixing) tub in the adjacent brush, a large one, and in no time we were poling it out into the pond and catching perch from our new boat. And in no time after that, Dad was aroused from a nodding slumber by a state trooper with a grave tone, “Are those your boys out there?” Today he'd probably be arrested for neglect.

Dad got us to the rocks of the Maine coast where we caught mackerel and pollack by the dozens and taunted the seagulls with small fish attached to our lines and dragged across the wet rocks. He drove us to our first *home water*, the Hackensack River, before school on weekday mornings, so we could cut our trout fishing teeth on “put and take” hatchery trout. A few years later he took us to the Flatbrook River in northern NJ, which really looked like a trout stream and was also full of hatchery trout. And more: he bought a little piece of “weekend” country property in a small lake community where we could, at least when we were there, pretty much fish at will. And we did. A kid who wants to fish can't ask for much more...but there was.

Fred Notaro

When Dad bought that property in Sussex County, he and Mom cleared it (cutting down some oak trees that would scare me now), and then hired a builder to put up the shell of a bungalow.

Next he hired a local plumber/electrician, and as we soon learned, a hunter, fisherman and all-around sportsman. Fred was ten years Dad's junior, but they were like peas in a pod: two Italians with a yen and zest for life and a love of the outdoors. Fred quickly "adopted" the three brothers – then ages 8, 9 and 10. At the time he had daughters; his only son would arrive a bit later. He and his wife, Alice, and their children lived on a small and wonderful dairy farm owned by Alice's father. At the time it was country much like Medusa, NY, where I now live. There were acres of woods and fields, a couple of ponds, wood roads through CCC-planted pines, and even a little trout stream.

Fred taught us all there is to know about and to do on a place like that...and about many things that would serve us well in other places and at other times. The list of things that I, and in many instances my brothers, did for the first time under Fred's tutelage is long and lasting: shot skeet; shot my first deer, my first grouse, my first rabbit; called fox with a dying rabbit call; made what trappers call a "dirt hole set;" caught my first lake trout, my first bass, maybe my first pickerel; learned to drive a stick shift (in Fred's Chevy pick-up driving circles in an old pasture); drove a motorcycle and a Triumph TR3; sweated joints in copper pipes; and boiled corn on the cob by the hundreds of ears! The lessons of woods and water are the ones I remember best...the ones that bring the most pleasant of memories, often when I am on the water or in the woods. Fred died about a year after Dad.

Vince Schaefer

"Vincent J. Schaefer, a self-taught chemist who invented cloud 'seeding' and created the first artificially induced snow and rainfall, died on Sunday at a hospital in Schenectady, NY." So reads the first line of a New York Times obituary of Wednesday, July 28, 1993. I would never have known Vince if I had not moved to Medusa, a move made possible by Dad to a location that looked like Fred Notaro's home ground...so there is the trace if one is needed. Within a year and a half of settling into our old farmhouse I was working at The Rensselaerville Institute where I met Vince Schaefer. He was a "founding trustee" of The Institute, and we met at the first Board of Trustees meeting I attended. Vince stood out among the trustees: a powerfully articulate scientist, with his feet on the ground and more than likely wearing a plaid flannel shirt under his leather-elbowed sport coat (when most trustees wore suits). He was the guy my wife Nancy and I wanted to sit next to at dinner!

Vince was an expert on many, many things natural: clouds (of course), rocks, flora and fauna (especially of the Adirondacks), as well as things of the built world. He invented a saw to cut ultra thin slices of garnet filled-rocks (the slices looked like stained glass) from which he crafted lampshades that look like masterful Tiffanies. The "stained glass" window on the front wall of the Catholic Church in North Creek is actually Vince Schaefer rocks. He was instrumental in the saving and then rebuilding of a number of classic Dutch barns in the area, including the one in Feura Bush. I was fortunate to fish with Vince just once; he joined one of our *A.E. Tours* expeditions to the St. Regis Canoe Area. He was the only one of us who walked out with a pack heavier than when he went in; it was full of garnet rocks. Vince fished with a huge old glass fly rod, a Colorado spinner and a worm, and I watched him catch a brook trout on his second cast. And at night he politely excused himself and wandered off a full fifty yards above our lean-to from which we could all hear him snoring under a big white pine all night long.

Very good memories, indeed.

AND THE MARCH WINNER IS...

...Michael Dodson who won flies hand-tied and donated by Bill Millard. **(Those wishing to donate flies or other door prizes for the free monthly drawings should contact Dick Riccio.)**

FROM THE EDITORS: Justin's Chuckle for the Month

Two anglers were in a bar after a full day's fishing. One said to the other, "I caught a 25 pound trout last week." "That's nothing," said the other angler, "I caught a hurricane lamp and it was still lit!" The second angler replied, "If you take 10 pounds off your fish, I'll blow the lamp out!"

FROM THE INTERNET

TROUT BROOKS & TROUT BOOKS:

A Look Into Justin's Bookcase

Central Pennsylvania can lay claim to a rich fly-fishing history that is second, perhaps, only to that of the Catskills. Continuing in the traditions of George Harvey, Marinaro, Fox, and others, Don Holbrook and Ed Koch combined to produce Midge Magic (Stackpole, 2001). On those occasions where the 7X and 8X tippets and flip-focals are called for, sometimes it takes a little magic to turn the small flies and trout in your favor.

The beauty of many of the patterns featured in the book is the simplicity of tying style and materials selected to produce a wealth of miniscule patterns. For instance, the Diamond Midges consist of a hook, a silver tinsel body, and a cotton embroidery floss rib and head. A few basic colors of these midge pupae in your fly box will cover most any midge hatch you might encounter.

Midge Magic begins with a primer on techniques for fishing small flies, but the possibilities are endless. I've had fair success fishing a midge pupa as a dropper off a larger dry fly – often a hopper or beetle later in the season after the spring mayfly hatches have tapered off. These midge pupae really work their “magic” when fished in the surface film or just below.

Author Arnold Gingrich popularized the notion of a “Twenty-Twenty Club,” where the goal was to catch a twenty-inch trout on a size twenty fly...be sure to let us know how this pursuit goes!

FROM THE EDITORS: Hank's Thought for the Month

In memory of **RANDY KENTON**
a friend and local WHUC and WCKL broadcaster
who always signed off his radio station programs with this thoughtful phrase:

“It’s nice to be important...but more important to be nice!”

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, April 18, 2006

MEETING NEXT MONTH: Tuesday, May 16, 2006

UPCOMING EVENTS!

Monday	April	3	Last Fly-fishing Class at C-GCC	7-9:00 p.m.
Thursday		27	Agro Forestry Fly-tying Class Rte 23, Acra	7-9:00 p.m.
Sunday		30	Claverack Creek Clean-up Cashen’s Bridge, Roxbury Rd	9:00 a.m.
Sunday	May	7	Shingle Kill Clean-up Cairo Cornell Co-op Ext	9:00 a.m.
Saturday		20	STUDENTS’ DAY ON THE STREAM - SCHOHARIE CREEK Art Flick Memorial Rte 23A, between Lexington/Prattsville	9:00 a.m.

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)