Fly Lines

The official publication of the British Columbia Federation of Fly Fishers

Spring 2005 **Volume 6, Number One**

BCFFF Executive and Directors 2004 --- 2005

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Fly Lines

Fly Lines is the official publication of the British Columbia Federation of Fly Fishers and is published four times a year.

The full colour version can be downloaded and printed as a pdf file from the BCFFF website at http://www.bcfff.bc.ca

Members as well as guest writers are invited to submit articles, photographs and artwork related to the pursuit of fly fishing. Send unsolicited material, with a self addressed stamped envelope for return to:

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On Our cover . . .

A young fly tyer dressing a Woolly Bugger at the BCFFF booth at the Cloverdale fly fishing show Danie Erasmus photo

Contents

President's Message

Signs of spring are unfolding (especially here on the coast)! The deciduous hillsides are touched with a green wash. Skunk cabbages are rearing their yellow heads from the rich, black muck of swamps from Vancouver to Hope and beyond. Bird sounds are heralding the start of another mating season. And, possibly best of all, chironomids and mayflies are coming to life and a-flutter on many of our waters.

For this spring issue of *Fly Lines* I'd like to address a couple of topics:

1) BCFFF AGM 2005 - This will be the last issue before our AGM and Dinner/Auction in Vernon this year, hosted by the Kalamalka Flyfishers. We hope that you will join us for this annual event. It promises, once again, to be a good one! Details are provided elsewhere in this issue and updates will be on the BCFFF website.

2) BCFFF Funded Fisheries Habitat and Education Projects – 2004

We should blow our horn a bit! 2004 was a big year for BCFFF funded projects! BCFFF dollars allocated to projects are briefly summarized below. BCFFF funds are almost always combined with funds from other partners. For more information on the BCFFF Gilly Fund and how to contact BCFFF by e-mail, please check our website.

GILLY FUND

1.The ***Penticton Flyfishers*** received a $10,000 grant towards the Phase 1 cost of removing 800-meters of concrete flume on Penticton Creek.The area of Penticton Creek above the flume has been upgraded over the years to improve the spawning habitat for kokanee and rainbow trout. However, the concrete flume on the lower reaches of the creek still represents a difficulty for returning fish. As there is only a small window of opportunity for working on the flume removal, this project is expected to take five years with phase 1 being the removal of the first 100 meters.

2. The ***Lonely Loon Flyfishers Society*** received a grant of $3500 for their project to install a windmill aerator on Spring Lake in the Okanagan. This very rich small lake will be managed as a high quality trophy fishery.

3. The ***Island Water Fly Fishers Society*** received a $1000 contribution towards the Jingle Pot marsh Viewing platform near Nanaimo.

BCFFF

1.The ***Mid Island Castaways Fly Fishing Club*** submitted a funding application on behalf of the Fanny Bay Salmonid Enhancement Society (FBSES) for habitat enhancement work undertaken on Wilfred Creek. The project had been completed prior to receiving the funding application. Funding was needed to cover cost over-runs and did not specifically qualify for support from the Gilly Fund. However, the BCFFF felt that the work, completed by the FBSES, was extremely valuable. The Federation donated $4000 towards the cost over-run from the BCFFF main operating fund.

(Note: In January 2005, BCFFF donated $1000 to the ***Nicola Watershed Community Roundtable***, to assist in the preparation of a water use plan for the Nicola/Coldwater sub-basin of the Thompson Watershed. This sub-basin is a critical spawning/rearing area for depressed Thompson steelhead and other salmonids.)

OTHER

In addition to funding specific projects, BCFFF allocates dollars annually to support fisheries conservation work that the BCFFF Executive and committees are continuously involved with. These conservation activities generally involve attendance at government established advisory processes on aspects like wild steelhead management and angler use on classified/quality waters. Participation in these activities involves travel throughout the province. BCFFF is also beginning to be more involved with youth education. We participate in at least one major sports show annually, where we encourage kids to become interested in fly fishing by having them tie simple flies.

BCFFF Liability Insurance

This continues to be of great concern to many BCFFF clubs. 2004 saw rates for member clubs become unacceptable because of the high minimum charges that came into effect under the BCFFF "umbrella". This has also been the case for the BC Wildlife Federation. We are not alone, as most non-profit organizations across the country, wrestle with this

problem. Some of our clubs have never taken out liability insurance believing that the possibility of a liability issue would be extremely rare. Other clubs are not comfortable with the prospect of being unprotected by insurance, perhaps because some of their activities bring them into contact with greater liability potentials. We are continuing to work toward finding “reasonable” liability insurance coverage for officers and directors and for general liability. Given that all the stars and moons are in perfect alignment, we are aiming to have a cost-effective BCFFF Insurance Plan in place by the AGM in May 2005 (or before).The very cheap insurance of past years is likely long gone. We do want to find something that won’t strangle our member clubs, all of which are “small” in the world of insurance.

Upcoming Events and Notices

Vernon: 2005 AGM The Kalamalka Fly Fishers of Vernon are the 2005 host club for the BCFFF’s AGM and Fly Fishing Show fundraiser to be held on May 13, 14, and 15 at Vernon’s Prestige Inn. (Phone 250- 558-5991 or toll free 1-877-737-8443) There will be a Wine and Cheese – “Meet and Greet" on Friday Evening. Saturday morning will feature the A.G.M.. In the afternoon there will be demonstrations of fly tying, rod building, and casting and a workshop on "What Makes a Successful Club". This session will be presented by representatives from several clubs. A trade show will feature several local fly shops, and Lodges. The Dinner and Auction will take over the evening. On Sunday there will be a fishout, with lunch supplied, at a local mountain lake. The lake will be accessible by car and we plan to have club members to "buddy" with anyone who wants to fish, but has no boat. As the event nears, check BCFFF’s website (bcfff.bc.ca) for additional details about events and how to obtain tickets.

Notice: Seeking Volunteers or Nominations

The 2004-2005 Board

The Nominating Committee is seeking volunteers or nominations to fill two Board vacancies for 2005/2006. Please call Art Lingren at 604 263-3787 or email artlin8@telus.net for more information especially if you would like to volunteer, or if you have someone you would like to suggest at the May 13, 2005 AGM

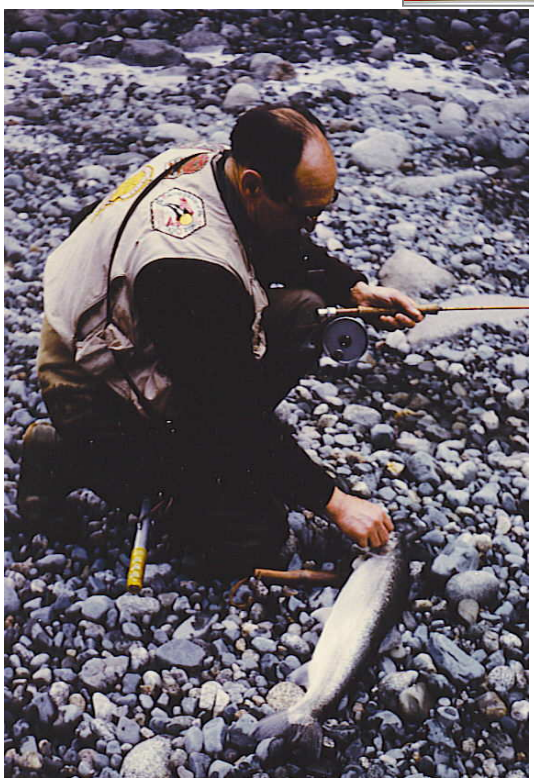
Editor's note: Roderick Haig-Brown holds a special place in the hearts of many in the fly fishing community. It is with our most sincere thanks to Steve Raymond for allowing the BCFFF to publish this address.

Roderick Haig-Brown—an Address to the BCFFF 2001 Annual Banquet, University of Victoria by Steve Raymond

At last year's annual meeting in Kamloops, the BC Federation honored the memory of Bill Nation, one of British Columbia's outstanding fly-fishing pioneers. This year I'm pleased that you've chosen to honor another great figure from B.C.'s rich fly-fishing past, one whose reputation not only transcends the borders of the province but even those of the North American continent.

Roderick Haig-Brown has rightfully been called the greatest angling writer since Izaak Walton, although in my opinion it is Walton who suffers from the comparison.

The Haig-Brown legacy: his words will still be read and revered long after we are gone. **Art Lingren photo**



Consider that Walton is remembered for only a single work while Haig-Brown is known for many. Not only that, but all of Haig-Brown's works were refreshingly original while we now know that when he wrote The Compleat Angler, Walton borrowed liberally from the earlier work of William Samuel. So Roderick Haig-Brown stands alone, and the fact is that he needs no words of praise from us to assure his legacy, for his words will still be read and revered long after we are gone.

Nevertheless, I think it might be instructive to inquire what it is about Haig-Brown's writing that so greatly appeals to us. How is it that his words are so capable of capturing our hearts and mind? What makes them so compelling and leaves them engraved so deeply in our memories? Such things do not happen by accident, and while natural talent certainly is one obvious explanation, there's also a lot of craft involved, a writing style or technique that can only be developed through years of practice and experience. This is something all writers must go through, spending the time necessary to develop their own particular literary "voice," and some are much more successful about it than others. Haig-Brown, obviously, was more successful than most.

Haig-Brown was, of course, much more than a writer; he was also a leader. **Van Egan photo, Rod Haig-Brown, Gold River, 1963**

So, at the risk of perhaps sounding a bit like an English professor, I'd like to spend the next few minutes analyzing the writing style of Roderick Haig-Brown and trying to figure out just exactly what he was up to, and how he managed to craft the memorable prose that several generations of readers have been unable to resist.

Let's begin by taking a look at the man himself. Haig-Brown was, of course, much more than a writer; he was also a leader. He served as a magistrate, army officer, and the chancellor of this beautiful university. He was also an activist, alerting the people of British Columbia to the need to conserve their natural resources. By any measure, that's an impressive resume, and it's tempting to say that Haig-Brown was the very model of a modern renaissance man. Such a role may have come naturally to him, considering his family and educational background, but it also reveals a man of powerful intellect, which is an absolute prerequisite for becoming a successful writer.

Haig-Brown was also an extraordinarily sensitive man, one who felt things strongly and sensed how others felt, and thus he was able to write with great feeling. He also was blessed with great natural curiosity; he was keenly interested in the world around him and spent a great deal of time observing it and thinking about what he saw. These are also necessary qualifications for a writer, especially one whose chief topic is nature—for such was Haig-Brown's chief topic, although he usually approached it from the perspective of a fisherman. That he did so was only natural, because it's axiomatic that writers should write about the things they know best, and Haig-Brown was already an experienced fly fisher when he came to this country; thus he saw it through the eyes of a fisherman, and it was from that vantage point that he mainly wrote.

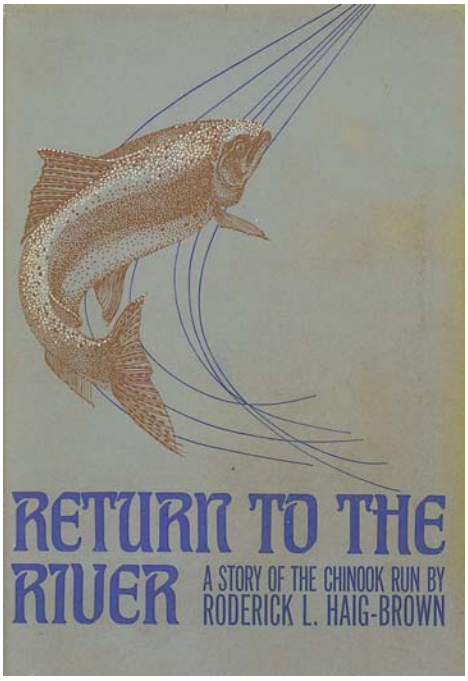
He also loved books, and a writer must love books. You can't expect to write well until you've read the work of others who have written well, and Haig-Brown was devoted to books all his life. In fact, it was this devotion that first brought him in contact with Ann Elmore, the woman who would become his wife.

The Haig-Brown book-lined study is a testament to Ann's and Rod's love of books. Here Ann Haig-Brown discusses some of the books with Cal Woods, long –time secretary of the Steelhead Society.
Art Lingren photo, June 1984

She was working in a Seattle bookstore when they met, and their mutual interest in books was one of the things that bound them together through all their years of marriage. Anyone who has visited the book-lined study of Haig-Brown House in Campbell River can testify to the breadth and depth of their literary interests.

So by the time he embarked on his literary career, Roderick Haig-Brown already possessed many of the requirements of a successful writer—great natural talent, a keen intellect, sensitivity, strong powers of observation, a developing knowledge of a particular subject—nature, or the outdoors, in his case—and a broad exposure to the works of other writers. But even with all this going for him, he still had to serve a literary apprenticeship, spending the time necessary to develop his craft and define his own literary style.

His early books—"Silver," "Pool and Rapid" and "The Western Angler"—all give evidence of this. While they show flashes of the brilliance yet to come, they are still clearly the work of a young writer in search of his own voice. It's true "The Western Angler" had a significant impact on the angling community, but this had less to do with literary excellence than with the fact that it was really the first book to define and catalogue the great fishing opportunities of the Pacific Northwest.



Then, in 1941, came "Return to the River," and it was immediately obvious that the young author had finally found his literary voice. "Return to the River" is, of course, a novel, and it would be less than candid to say it is distinguished for its structure, plot, dialogue or characterizations; it is not. What makes it extraordinary, what sets it apart from anything else Haig-Brown had written previously, is its abundance of lush, lyrical prose. Here, for the first time, we see the full power of Haig-Brown[1] s descriptive writing, the kind of writing that was to establish him as a literary figure of the very first rank.

What makes it extraordinary, what sets it apart from anything else Haig-Brown had written previously, is its abundance of lush, lyrical prose.

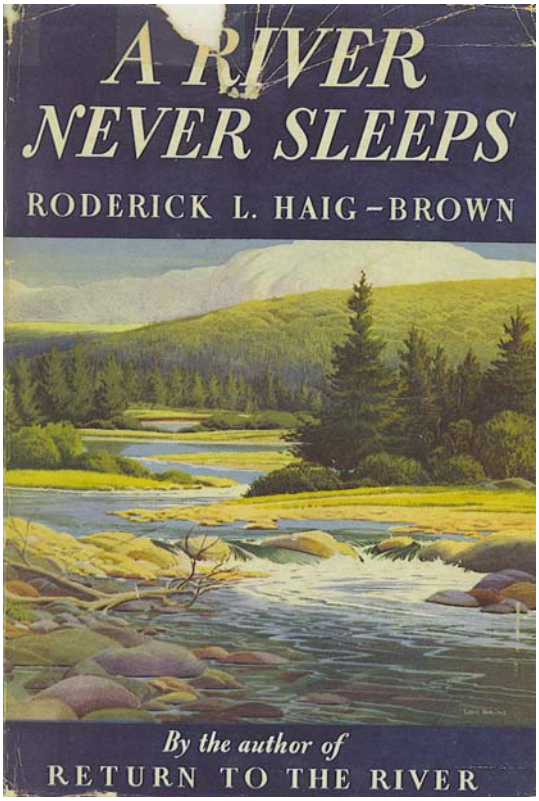
Consider, for example, this passage:

"The water was a little colored, not muddy but less clear than during the brilliance of its summer flow, and brought with it fallen leaves and twigs and dead fir needles. Most of the leaves twisted and swam and swirled a few inches below the surface—alder leaves, some black and rightly fallen, others still green, torn from the trees by winds that had brought the fall rains; maple leaves, sodden, dark brown and fast breaking up; willow leaves, long and slender, some yellow, some black. Under the leaves, deeper in the water, were the salmon."

I defy anyone to read those words without forming a vivid image of the scene, or without being caught up in its poetic rhythm.

Here's another example, one of my favorites:

"The warm wind passed upstream, sighing with its freight of rain, finding always a stronger gust of itself to shatter the big drops from leaves that still held them. It swayed the tall firs almost gently, loading them with water, trembling the water from them again minutes later. Drenched with water, the dark leaves of salal and rhododendron shone and quivered and dripped in penetrated shelter down under the tall trees. The clouds rolled up, white and gray and soft, climbing the valley and misting into the mountains . . . The creeks talked on the hillsides, turning brown and foamy and tumbling faster in their rocky beds."



We who live in the Pacific Northwest are surely among the world's foremost experts on wind and rain, but I think even the most wind-blown and rain-soaked among us would agree that no one has ever penned a better description of our usual weather.

Having set such a tone, Haig-Brown continued it in "A River Never Sleeps," first published in 1946 and now judged the greatest of all his fishing books. Consider his description of steelhead fishing:

The greatest of all his fishing books.

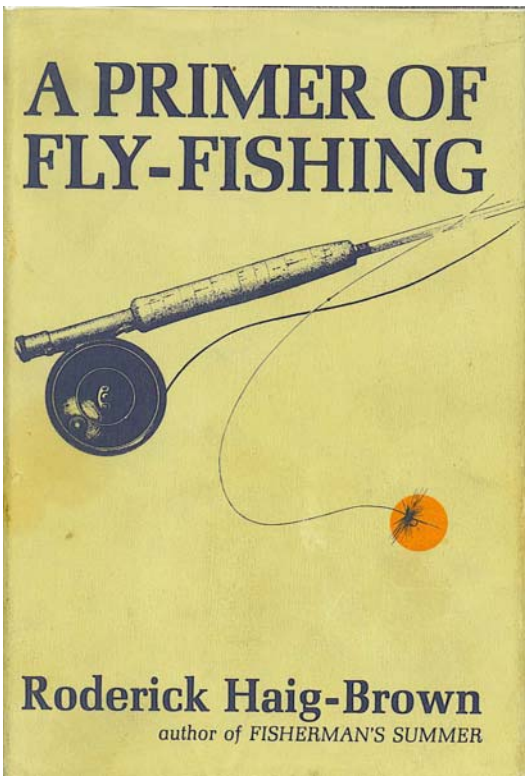
"The steelhead, with the brightness of the sea still on him, is livest of all the river's life. When you have made your cast for him, you are no longer a careless observer. As you mend the cast and work your fly well down to him through the cold water, your whole mind is with it, picturing its drift, guiding its swing, holding it where you know he will be. And when the shock of his take jars through you to your forearms and you lift the rod to its bend, you know that in a moment the strength of his leaping body will shatter the water to brilliance, however dark the day."

Or this account of a mountain sunset:

"The mountains were clear in the sunlight; they are clear still, yet somehow veiled by the lesser light of the sinking sun. Soon the snow slides will be colored with sunset, not pink, though pink is the word that means some part of the color, but flushed and glowing with the reflection of clean, bright flame."

All of Haig-Brown's subsequent fishing books featured the same sort of lyrical prose, but it wasn't confined merely to his books about fishing. For example, when he wrote "The Living Land"—a remarkable inventory of the natural resources of British Columbia—he offered this definition of the meaning of conservation:

"Conservation is a dynamic, not a static, conception. It does not mean simply hanging onto things, like a miser to his gold. It means putting them to use, seeking a valuable return from them and at the same time ensuring future yields of at least equal value. It means having enough faith in the future to respect the future and the needs of future people; it means accepting moral and practical restraints that limit immediate self-interest; it means finding a measure of wisdom and understanding of natural things that few peoples have attained; ultimately, though we no longer see it in this way, it is a religious concept—the most universal and fundamental of all such concepts, the worship of fertility to which man has dedicated himself in every civilization since his race began."



Instructional books about fly fishing are generally the dreariest form of angling literature, but Haig-Brown's "A Primer of Fly Fishing" stands alone because of his application of the same seamless literary style. Fly fishing, he said, "is undoubtedly the best and finest of all forms of fishing, making the strongest demands on the attention and understanding of its followers and yielding in return the greatest and richest rewards; but in this it is exactly the same as the best in music, painting, literature or anything else. Men from every conceivable walk of life are fly fishermen, and good ones, for nothing but individual choice limits membership in the brotherhood."

Haig-Brown's "A Primer of Fly Fishing" stands alone because of his application of the same seamless literary style.

I might point that those words were written in the early 1960s, and I think it's likely that if he were writing today, Haig-Brown would be careful to include women among the ranks of fly fishers.

But enough examples. What is it about these words that make them so meaningful and emotionally charged for us? What technique did Haig-Brown use to make his work so appealing? Or, to put it another way, how did he set the hook and play us as readers?

Well, to begin with, Haig-Brown's prose is always uncomplicated. He said things in the simplest way possible, so there could never be any doubt about his meaning. This seems an obvious thing for any writer to do, yet it can often be devilishly difficult; even the most experienced writer struggles to make things easy for the reader, and many writers fall short of that goal. To be able to write in a simple, uncomplicated fashion may, in fact, be more a function of natural talent than any amount of learning or experience—for it has often been said that the true measure of a genius is in the simplicity of his expression.

Repetition is another technique Haig-Brown used when he wanted to drive home a point. His definition of conservation in "The Living Land" serves as a good example, especially when he said that conservation "means having enough faith in the future to respect the future and the needs of future people." The word "future" appears three times in that single short phrase, and you can't read it and go away without thinking about the future, which of course is exactly what he wanted you to be thinking about.

Haig-Brown also loved alliteration, or the use of similar sounds in a sequence. Consider, for example, the repeated P- and B-sounds when he wrote that the creeks were "turning brown and foamy and tumbling faster in their rocky beds," or the repeated L-sounds when he said "The steelhead . . . is livest of all the river's life," or the sequence of S's when he said "the mountains were clear in the sunlight; they are clear still, yet somehow veiled by the lesser light of the sinking sun." He used these sounds almost as if they were musical notes, and indeed alliteration is a technique often used by composers of music, and it works just as well in writing. If it sounds right, it reads right, and Haig-Brown's frequent and successful use of alliteration surely added to the impact of his words.

There are other similarities between musical composition and writing, and one of the most obvious is the use of rhythm or cadence. I don't know if Haig-Brown was a student of music, but he often wrote with a very deliberate rhythm, and I suspect he did so purposely. Repeated use of the word "future" in his definition of conservation is one example; in fact, the whole paragraph containing that definition has a steady and distinctive cadence. The same sort of

rhythm is apparent in nearly all of Haig-Brown's later works; you may not always be aware of it, but it's always there, reaching out to satisfy some inner need that we all have, perhaps subconsciously driven by the beating of our own hearts.

Another distinctive feature in Haig-Brown's writing is his use of what I call "action" words. By that I mean there was nothing wimpy in his choice of descriptive terms. He used adjectives like "bold," "strong," "live" and "brilliant" often linking them in alliterative fashion.

What's so special about that? Perhaps the best way to gauge its impact is to look for a moment at the work of another writer. A few years ago an absolutely fascinating book called "Reeling in Russia" was published by Fen Montaigne, a former correspondent for The Philadelphia Inquirer. The book is an account of Montainge's months-long fishing journey all the way across Russia from the Baltic to the Pacific, and while Montaigne isn't much of a fisherman, the chronicle of his adventures will keep you absolutely on the edge of your seat. His book makes wonderful reading until he begins trying to describe the wilds of Siberia, one of the greatest wilderness areas left on the planet, and here his powers of description utterly failed him. He tells of forests that are dark, waters that are blue, and mountains that are snow-capped—all bland, watery clichés that convey nothing of the majesty of that great land.

The Master at his work, Van Egan photo, 1957

Imagine how Haig-Brown would have described those scenes. I suspect his Siberian mountains would have been brushed with that same "clean, bright" sunset flame, or maybe something even more vivid. I'm certain he would have found the Siberian rivers bright, brilliant and full of quick life, and his Siberian forests would have stood out boldly against the endless sky. I think you see the point.

So those are some of the techniques Haig-Brown used to construct the word-pictures that first appealed to his readers 60 years ago and still appeal to us today. But he could never have constructed such images out of whole cloth; he had to have the experiences to back them up. So when he wrote of that mountain sunset, he was surely thinking of a sunset he had seen, and when he described steelhead with the brightness of the sea still on them, he was undoubtedly thinking of fish he had actually held in his hands. He used the techniques of a writer to recreate these scenes and offer clues that would help readers construct their own versions. When a reader does this, he or she also naturally relies on experience, so when Haig-Brown says "clean, bright flame," the reader is likely to remember a sunset just like that and say to himself, yes, that's exactly the way it was. It doesn't matter that the image Haig-Brown had in mind might be very

different from the one the reader has summoned from memory; both are just as vivid and just as personal in the eye of the beholder.

And that, I think, is the real secret of Haig-Brown's prose: He described things in ways that bring our own memories to life, and that's why his writing seems so alive, so compelling and so emotionally powerful. He awakens the best of our own recollections, stirs the depths of our imaginations, and reminds us of who and what we are.

I can't tell you if Haig-Brown did this intentionally or merely by instinct, although I suspect it was a little of both. But it doesn't really matter; the fact is that he did it, and we are all the better for it.

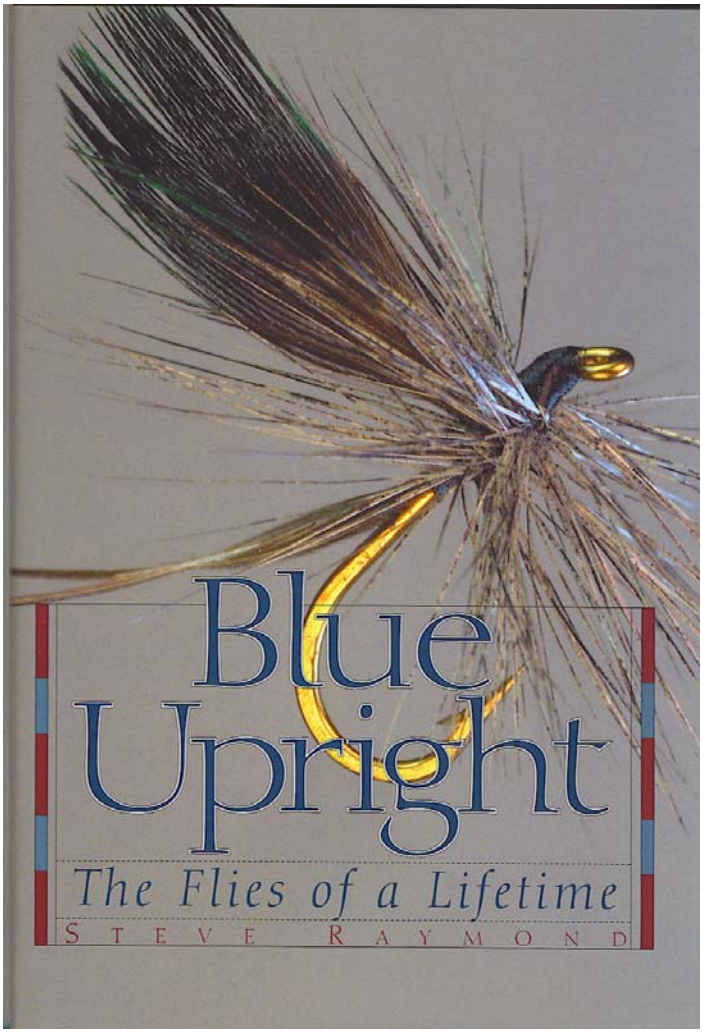
I'm sure you're all familiar with the famous passage from "A River Never Sleeps" where Haig-Brown explored the question of why men fish, and specifically of why he was a fisherman himself. His oft-quoted conclusion was that "perhaps fishing is, for me, only an excuse to be near rivers. If so, I'm glad I thought of it."

I suspect that for Roderick Haig-Brown, fishing was a lot more than merely an excuse to be near rivers; I think it also was a way for him to write about the natural world, as only a fly fisherman could see it. If so, we can all be glad he thought of it.

Haig-Brown fishing tackle: rod, reel, fly box and vest. **Art Lingren photo**

Book Review

By Brian Saunders



Blue Upright: The Flies of a Lifetime

Author: Steve Raymond
Illustrated by: August Kristoferson
Publisher: Lyons Press, 2004

This is the kind of book that you automatically pick up while browsing. The eye-catching dust jacket and the handsome quality of the binding promise quality in the contents: a promise that is kept.

From the title, I did not quite know what to expect, fly recipes?, anecdotes?, how-to's? but this cunningly crafted book contains a little of all of this and more. Each of the 12 chapters (210 pages in all) centers around one of the author's favourite flies, some well known to all of us, like the Carey Special and Skunk, and some more obscure such as the Judge Boldt and the Cutthroat Candy. In each chapter the history, tying and use of the fly are interwoven with personal stories, biology, conservation issues and fishing lore. The selection of flies is varied enough to allow the author to cover such extensive pursuits as lake, river, estuary and ocean fishing for such species as trout, steelhead, Atlantic salmon and bonefish with the majority of the action centering on the Pacific Northwest where the author resides. I particularly liked the chapter on the Carey Special for its description of the history and the development of the fly itself. In this chapter, the author also wanders into a history of his own quest for the perfect system of storing and transporting flies, giving his opinion on the best fly box systems for the job. Perhaps this is not earth-shaking information, but it is the kind that many of us appreciate, having spent countless years and dollars in the same pursuit. In Chapter 7, the chapter on the Blue Upright, I found myself interested in the fly itself, as I was not familiar with it and the tying method seemed intriguing. There are no recipes, per se, for any of the flies throughout the book (the descriptions are not presented in a cook-book style, nor are there tying pictures) so one has to refer back to the text a few times, but the information is definitely there. Once I got used to it, I rather liked the style as it made me go back over the material that I then got more from. Above all, I like the way in which the flies and anecdotes tie together the other content material such as conservation and aboriginal fishing rights issues which can be dry on their own. While there is a level of despondency over some of the changes in our sport and changes in the environment, it is realistic to include these in the book and they do not detract from the overall good feeling one has in reading the book as a whole.

The illustrations are extremely attractive and help the presentation of the book achieve the high quality it has achieved in content. The stand-alone chapters are of a good length to read one at a time such as for bedtime reading. At 24.95(US) or 35.00(Can) this book is very good value for a hardback. Good content, good value, attractive and good price – what more could you ask for?

What Happened on the Thompson?

A brief chronicle of the events surrounding the 2004 angling closure on the Thompson River

by

Dana Sturn

1984

The Thompson River, October 1984: First light on the Graveyard Pool, a lone angler strolls across the floodplain below the roadside pullout heading for the bottom of the run. He knows from years of experience that starting at the last tree will give him a few hours of good fishing over water that hasn't seen a fly since he reeled up last night. He doesn't know that he is stepping into a river that will host one of the best steelhead returns since anglers have been keeping records; he doesn't know that the season ahead of him will be the greatest he's ever experienced or will ever experience; he doesn't know that two decades later the river will face angling closures as business owners, biologists, conservationists and anglers wrestle with the economic and ethical dilemmas facing them as they stand by helplessly to watch a once great river teeter on the brink of disaster.

Bob Taylor (L), Jerry Wintle (C) and Harold Baker all Thompson River regulars during the 1980s .

Art Lingren photo

This morning none of that can be known, and if you were to mention it as a possibility it would be laughable, for by the time he reaches the bottom of the run he will have hooked 3 fish, landing 2 of them, and after breakfast in another pool upriver 2 more fish will come to the fly and still another at last light again at the bottom of this very pool.

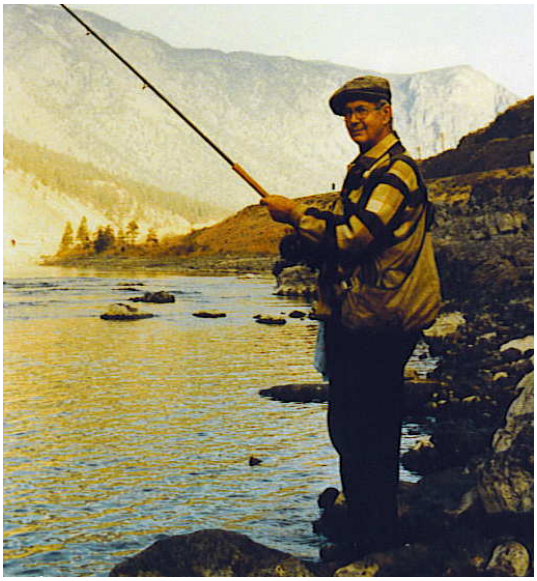
Twenty years later on a similar Saturday morning in October a lone angler trudges down the hill below the pullout at the Graveyard and walks towards the great pool. He is not in a hurry, for there isn't likely to be much competition. Apart from the few people unaware of the situation, the river is empty. For the first time in memory there is no October steelhead sport fishery on the Thompson. The river is closed.

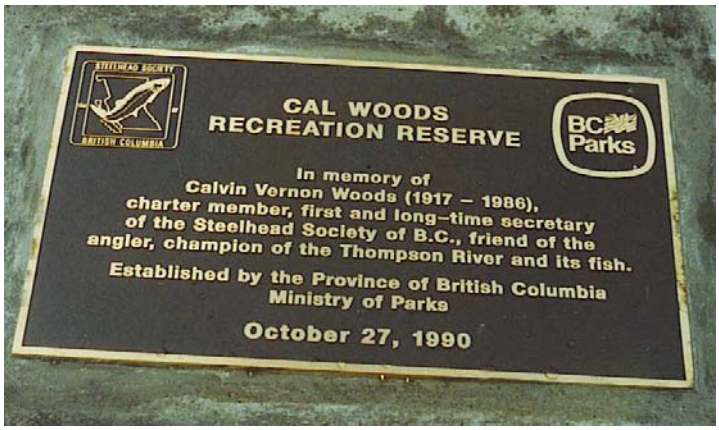
Autumn 2003

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) operates a test fishery in the lower Fraser River at Albion (near Mission, British Columbia) every fall to monitor the abundance of chum salmon. Historically DFO has indicated that the net mesh is too large to regularly intercept other species that run at the same time as the chum—such as coho and interior Fraser steelhead--yet interceptions of these fish are common, so common in fact that the Province of British Columbia Ministry of Water Land and Air Protection (WLAP) uses the Albion Test Fishery as a measure of interior Fraser steelhead abundance. Using a mathematical formula developed after years of comparing test net results with springtime steelhead escapement estimates, Provincial biologists are able to estimate the number of returning steelhead by the third week of October. Some years environmental conditions may make it difficult to get a reliable estimate until late October or early November. In the fall of 2003 it was apparent that either environmental conditions were interfering with the Albion fishery or the Thompson River steelhead were in trouble: there just weren't any fish showing up at Albion.

Angling results on the Thompson were mixed: some anglers were getting fish and some weren't. Rumors were rampant that some were inflating their numbers out of concern that the Province would impose gear restrictions or close the river.

But the situation was clear--there weren't many steelhead showing up at Albion, and the Province was considering its options. After conference calls that brought fisheries managers, biologists, anglers, conservationists and business leaders together it was decided that if steelhead counts at Albion didn't show a marked improvement in the coming weeks the river would be closed. Out of concern for the steelhead many anglers reeled up for the year. In the end it appeared that the fish were late and the river remained open through the season, but weeks of finger-pointing and political positioning underscored the fact that any future in-season closure of the Thompson would not be an easy move. For the fisheries managers the political landmines were abundant and it became evident that if there was the possibility of a closure in 2004 they couldn't have a repeat of 2003; they needed another approach. Thus the decision was made to close the river effective October 1st 2004, with the possibility of an in-season opening if the Albion counts indicated the presence of a run size in excess of 850 fish.





The late Cal Woods, champion of the Thompson River and its fish, would be extremely disappointed at what has happened to his favourite river and its fish. SSBC photo on left, Art Lingren photo on right

Angler versus Angler

For years Thompson anglers have existed in two related but separate camps, fly fishers and drift or gear fishers. Once, they rather peacefully coexisted, but the politics of the 1990s culminating in the "Great Bait Debate" that tore apart the Steelhead Society of British Columbia and led to the creation of the British Columbia Federation of Drift Fishers resulted in an active ill will and distrust that lingers to this day. Anglers favoring bait believe that fly fishers are solely interested in creating a fly fishing only management plan for the Thompson, and fly fishers believe that bait kills fish. While neither perspective is true (not all fly fisher support fly fishing only regulations on the Thompson, and bait fishing doesn't necessarily kill fish), the misunderstandings remain, and anglers, rather than working together for the benefit of the fish and fishery, have remained in these two camps, pointing accusing fingers at one another while the fishery continues to decline. It is important to understand this background because while the Thomson run has been in decline for years, anglers have been too busy wasting valuable time and energy blaming each other rather than finding the common ground that would allow them to work together to address the real and pressing issues that were driving the run towards extinction. It's the watering hole analogy: when there's lots of water in the watering hole all the animals are happy; but when the watering hole begins to dry up all the animals start looking at each other. Great Bait Debate started the anglers looking at each other and as the years passed the issue remained alive through barroom arguments and declining returns. Every year the question would arise again, as anglers wrestled with the problem that wouldn't go away: the Thompson steelhead were in decline.

2004

Several important events happened in 2004. It began with a meeting in January of anglers from both camps about the Thompson. The purpose of the meeting was to bring both sides together to see if some of the mistrust that existed within the angling community between gear and fly anglers could be dealt with. Some folks refused to attend but the meeting went ahead with executive members of the BCFFF, the Steelhead Society, The Totem Fly Fishers, and the Kingfishers Rod and Gun Club attending. The BCFDF was not formally represented, however influential members of that organization were in attendance and it was hoped that the information coming out of the meeting would find its way to

the BCFDF members and executive. The meeting resulted in a commitment among the participants to work towards better communication and cooperation among drift and fly anglers and the clear statement that the fly anglers would not seek fly fishing only regulations on the Thompson. This ultimately led to the BCFFF, in the interests of fostering and furthering cooperation among angling groups, confirming in September that it would not seek Fly Fishing Only regulations on the Thompson.

In the late spring meetings were held in Vancouver to develop a framework for a proposed gathering that would occur in the autumn. Stakeholders and agenda items were identified. Saturday September 18th was set as the date and the word went out that the BC Wildlife Federation would facilitate a meeting designed to begin the process of developing a Thompson River Steelhead Recovery Plan. Anglers were guardedly optimistic that there was the potential for some real cooperation and progress towards Thompson steelhead recovery.

In July, the people of Spences Bridge requested a consultation with WLAP officials to deal with a proposal developed by the town. The proposal outlined various angling restrictions designed to allow the river to remain open until the Albion counts could determine the status of the run. Ministry representatives met with members of the Spences Bridge Steelhead Advocates Association in Spences Bridge. The town was told that WLAP would have a response for them by the end of August. The Ministry hired an independent consulting company to review the town's proposal and the historical Albion test fishery data and make recommendations. Weeks passed and despite attempts by the Spences Bridge group to communicate with WLAP officials no one at the Ministry was able to answer their questions. The town would have to wait while the independent evaluation was completed.

A fog-enshrined Arthur's Seat Mountain stands tall over the town of Spences Bridge and its famous steelhead waters. Art Lingren photo

And so many of us who went to Spences Bridge in late September to attend "The Big Meeting" were expecting that the town's proposal would be addressed and their questions answered. Toward the end of the meeting, Al Martin, WLAP's Director stood up and made a brief statement, then opened to floor to questions. A few angry people held the floor for perhaps 10 minutes and asked a few pointed questions, but the overall tone in the room was one of resignation and the issue was deflated as it became clear that WLAP would not back down and the river would close October 1st. Martin promised that the Ministry would seek funding for the Thompson Steelhead Recovery Plan and that there would be a further announcement in early November.

The Thompson remained closed throughout October as the Ministry monitored the counts at Albion. Unusually high water called the estimates into question, however late in October the fish finally showed up and the river was opened. A steelhead goldrush resulted, and the first few weeks saw large numbers of anglers descend on Spences Bridge, no doubt

of benefit to the town but hard on the fish and the fishing experience. Once the initial excitement abated, 2004 became a typical Thompson season with an estimated escapement of 1100+ steelhead.

The Issues

The opening, of course, has provided a distraction from the Thompson's problems. Since there were fish to be caught why worry about what's threatening them? After all, the river is open, so it can't be all that bad, right?

The threats to Thompson steelhead are real and pressing. Here's a brief rundown:

Ocean Survival

Currently the biggest impact on Thompson and other steelhead stocks is ocean survival. Once juvenile steelhead enter the salt they face a host of new threats and the only way to determine how well they do is to count how many of them return to their natal streams to spawn. There are various theories that account for poor ocean survival of steelhead, including the presence of new predators due to warming oceans and the exploding populations of sea lice near salmon farms. But no one knows for sure exactly what is happening to the fish once they hit the oceans. The only certainty is that *something* is happening, and it isn't good. However, since we can't control what is happening on the high seas, many anglers and conservationists are choosing to focus their energies on addressing those things we can influence.

The threats to Thompson steelhead are real and pressing. Art Lingren photo

Water/Habitat

Water use on the Thompson spawning tributaries—particularly the Nicola River system near Merritt—is another huge problem impacting Thompson Steelhead. This is one that thankfully is being addressed as the naming of the Nicola as one of BC's most endangered rivers (by the Outdoor Recreation Council) has motivated all groups with a stake in the health of the Nicola (townspeople, ranchers, anglers, fisheries managers) to work together to find solutions. The Nicola Round Table is working on a Nicola Water Use Management Plan (WUMP) and is making good progress.

Habitat is another big problem for Thompson steelhead, however some of this is being explored as a part of WUMP. Still, more work will need to be done to ensure that the impacts of ranching, agriculture, development and pollution are mitigated.

Commercial Interception

Loss of steelhead in commercial salmon nets is a big concern. Anglers and conservation groups have long argued that the commercial openings for chum salmon in the Fraser River and approach areas in October and November impact Thompson and other interior Fraser steelhead stocks, but DFO maintains that few steelhead are intercepted and that they manage the commercial openings to intercept less than 15% of the Thompson run, a figure arrived at in consultation with WLAP staff. Some anglers feel that they could live with commercial openings in November as historically the bulk of the returning Thompson steelhead transit the lower Fraser in October. The problem with later chum opening of course is the chum salmon may not be as bright in November and therefore will loose commercial value. A better system would be for DFO and WLAP staff to consult and only open the Fraser once the Thompson run is out of danger. For some strange reason DFO refuses to do this and so commercial interception will always remain a constant threat.

We really don't know how many Thompson steelhead are intercepted in commercial salmon fisheries since there is no reliable method in place to monitor interception. DFO relies on commercial fishers to report steelhead interception, and all intercepted steelhead are required to be released. The problem of course is that gillnets tend to be fairly lethal, and since steelhead are supposed to be live released, there seems little incentive for a commercial fisher to report dead steelhead.

In October 2004 the international angling community responded angrily when, in the midst of the Thompson closure and anticipated poor returns, DFO decided to hold a commercial opening on the Fraser. Although DFO provided very little notice of the opening, anglers and conservationists mobilized and within a few days thousands of voice mails and emails flooded DFO and government offices in Vancouver, Victoria and Ottawa. Whether DFO will heed this response in the future remains to be seen, but there can be little doubt that the department and government now know that the Thompson situation is closely monitored by anglers around the world.

Angler Conflict and Apathy

I view these as the two greatest threats to Thompson steelhead. We are in the midst of a changing of the guard in steelhead circles. Many of the great River Soldiers of steelheading's last Golden Era are hoping that the new breed of steelheader will take up the fight. However, for many of the younger anglers there are so many waters and so little time, and the realities of 21st century life make it difficult to devote the enormous amounts of time and energy required to participate in the politics of steelhead. Many of us have either spent our energies and wasted our time arguing about bait bans and tackle restrictions, or lost interest in a fishery that doesn't seem to offer the rewards that a good interior lake can provide. Steelheaders are a rare breed, and Thompson steelheaders are rarer still, and we need every one of them to care about the river and get involved in protecting it.

2005

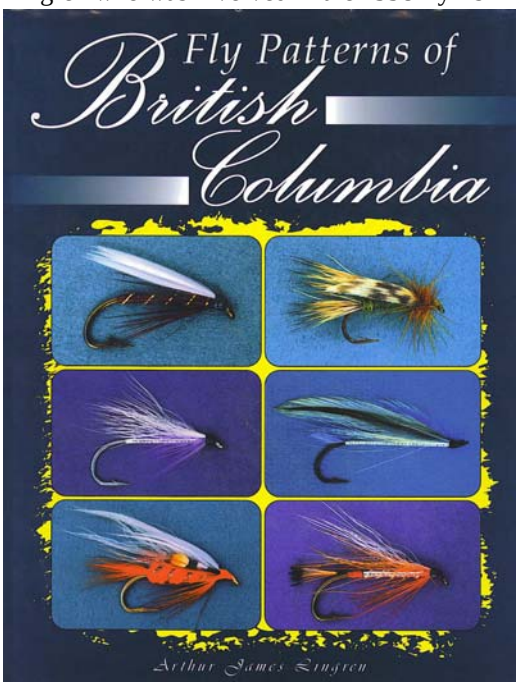
2005 will prove an interesting year. Several questions from 2004 still remain. What was the steelhead escapement? Who is involved in the Recovery Plan and what are its objectives? Will there be any changes to the Thompson Steelhead Management Plan for October 2005? But right now it is winter and other things occupy our thoughts. Will we keep the Thompson foremost in our minds and continue to pursue a Recovery Plan, or wait until next fall to see what happens? Unfortunately, history has shown that our Thompson strategy has always been reactive. I hope the lessons learned the past few years will encourage us to take a different approach.

Dana Sturn is a member of the BCFFF Fisheries Issues Committee and a Director of the Steelhead Society of British Columbia. He is the founder of **speypages.com**, a website devoted to the two-handed fly rod.

The Western Connection: Behind the Scenes of Canada Post's 2005 Fly-Fishing Stamp Series

By Art Lingren

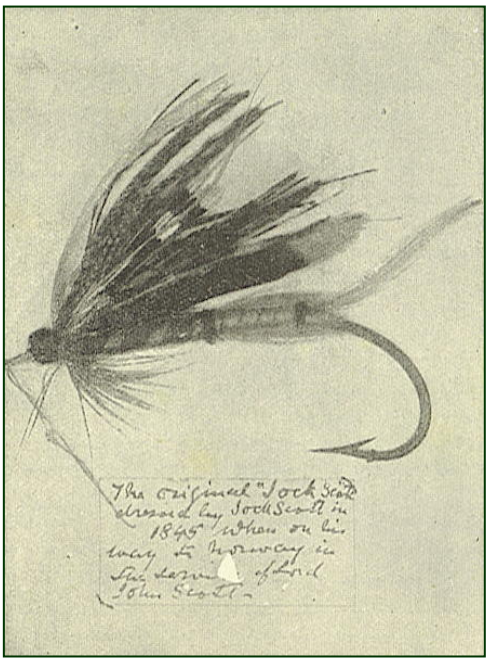
In the early part of 2004 I was at home working on a book when the phone rang and a fellow asked if I was the Art Lingren who was involved in the 1998 fly fishing stamp series. When he gave his name I remembered that we talked back in 1997 when he was working on the 1998 Canada Post fly fishing stamp series. After I confirmed that I was that Art Lingren, the fellow told me about a new fly fishing stamp series due out in 2005. Canada Post had gathered some background information on a few flies and asked a couple of stamp designers to put preliminary proposals together for the new series. The flies to be considered were the Jock Scott, Mickey Finn, Parmachene Belle, PEI Fly and The Alevin. He phoned to ask specific questions about the some of flies, in particular the BC pattern the Alevin. The Alevin has undergone some slight modifications since Brayshaw devised that pattern for Interior trout in the Adams River back in the 1930s. It is now called The Egg 'n' I and is more popular as a coastal cutthroat trout fly.



My book was the BC source for the two fly-fishing stamp series, 1998 and 2005.

Canada Post chose the Alevin from my *Fly Patterns of British Columbia* book, the source for the three BC patterns in that earlier (1998) stamp series. In closing he asked if I could recommend someone to dress that BC pattern.

During our conversation I learned that Canada Post had little historic information on some of the flies. I guess that shouldn't surprise me as fly fishing lore is local. This project originated in Quebec and that fly fishing community doesn't have a lot of knowledge about things outside that province in the English-speaking, fly-fishing world. For example, when we talked about the Jock Scott he said that no one knew where it came from. The Jock Scott is probably the most celebrated British Atlantic salmon fly ever devised, yet this Montrealer had no inkling of its pedigree.



From Maxwell's Salmon & Sea Trout, a picture of the original Jock Scott dressed by Jock Scott on the voyage to Norway in 1845.

The Parmachene Belle, a popular eastern brook trout fly originating in the USA, was another fly they knew little about. Their history on the Mickey Finn was also sketchy. I knew that Greg Clark, long time Ontario newspaper writer and ardent fly fisher, had something to do with the naming of the Mickey Finn. As we ended the conversation I was to give some thought as to who I would recommend dress the BC fly. Also I told him I would search my library for histories on the Jock Scott, Parmachene Belle and Mickey Finn and we would talk again in a few days.

Over the next day or so, I made a list of BC fly tiers who I thought could be considered. From Sir Herbert Maxwell's *Salmon and Sea Trout* (1898) I copied the history on the Jock Scott. The Jock Scott was a good choice for the stamp series as that fly had widespread use in Eastern Canada as well as in the West. It had been a very popular steelhead and trout pattern from British Columbia's early days up into the 1960s, nearly 100 years of Western use. Joe Bates in *Streamers & Bucktails* (1979) included a good history on how the Mickey Finn got its name and became so popular. It too was a good choice for the series, as it came west probably in the 1950s and became a very popular coho salmon and

sea-run cutthroat pattern in the 1960s. In *Fishing With The Fly* (1886) Charles Orvis and A. Nelson Cheney provided the history of the Parmachene Belle. Shortly after completing my research I sent the flies' histories and their western use by email attachment and we discussed potential fly tiers over the phone. Canada Post had certain criteria for a fly tyer to be selected. Canada Post likes to be inclusive in a series like this and rightly so. In the 1998 series the flies were dressed by tiers from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and British Columbia. In this series the tiers were from Newfoundland, Quebec, Ontario and BC and included a fly from PEI. One of the main criteria for a tyer to be involved in the 2005 series was that you could not have been involved in the 1998 series. That eliminated Rob Brown, Van Egan and myself, thus with the other criteria to be considered, it narrowed the selection considerably. Brian Chan's name stood out and was passed on.

That was the last I heard from this Montreal stamp designer. A few months later when I returned home from a fishing trip my wife said someone had called from Winnipeg and was eager to speak with me about the stamp series. This stamp designer and I talked the next day. He wanted information on the flies, a copy of *Fly Patterns of British Columbia*, and as we closed the conversation he asked me if I would be willing to dress four flies that they could use in their proposal. One was the Jock Scott, which is not an easy fly to tie and sometimes requires more than one attempt to get a reasonable tie, but I said yes, I would dress the flies, and gave him a price. His last question was how soon could I do the work and get the flies to him and I suggested a couple of weeks. I could tell by the long pause on the end of the line that this didn't suit their requirements so he upped the price by a couple of hundred dollars as an incentive to do the flies in a couple of days. I was lucky! My first Jock Scott turned out okay as did the Alevin, though I had to dress two PEI and Parmachene Belle flies. Someone else was to dress the Mickey Finn.

In my letter to Circle Design I wrote:

Jock Scott: *It of the four flies may not travel as well and some feathers may need slight tweeking. The tips of golden pheasant crest topping and the golden pheasant crest tail should just touch. The blue macaw horns (slim one-fibre, blue outside and yellow on inside strips should be set as they are shown in the picture.) If you need to do some slight adjustments use a needle to move the feathers around. I have kept the dressing as close to the original as I can and have substituted Weaver bird for the Indian crow in the tail and I dyed some white wood duck yellow as a substitute for the toucan. Both Indian crow and Toucan are on the endangered species list and if you could find a feather they cost a fortune, thus the substitutes.*

Parmachene Belle*: This is the dressing as described by the fly's inventor H.P. Wells in "Fly-Fishing in the Rangely Region" in Orvis' Fishing with the Fly (1898). The only change in this version is that I used the more popular gold rib over Well's silver rib.*

PEI Fly*: I could find no mention of this fly in my books or on the Internet so I dressed it as you described to me "a Red Ibis with gold body."*

***Alevin or Egg 'n' I**: The only change I made when dressing the fly for the preliminary proposal was to dress it with a fluorescent red Antron throat over the difficult to obtain Indian crow, which as mentioned above in the Jock Scott is all but impossible to find.*

In Orvis and Cheney's book they have two Red (Scarlet) Ibis flies, one for trout the other for bass. I dressed the trout version and was surprised that the dressing in the stamp series more resembles the bass fly. Incidentally, on p. 256 of *Frank Forester's Fish and Fishing of the United States and British Provinces of North America*, he describes a fly quite similar to the PEI Fly and writes "last season, 1848, nothing was so successful on Long Island as the scarlet ibis with a gold tinsel body." This predates the Canada Post PEI 1860s reference by many years.

The trout Red Ibis on the left and the bass on the right

My last contact with the Winnipeg people came some time later in the early summer when I was asked about which of the fly fishing river scenes best suited the four flies—Jock Scott, Mickey Finn, Alevin, PEI Fly--that were to be in the series. The Parmachene Belle didn't make the cut.

Usually there are a couple or more stamp designers with graphic artists, photographers, artists, historians and in a fly fishing stamps series, fly tiers, all working behind the scenes putting together proposals on a stamp project. I was the behind the scenes contact from the West. Winnipeg's Circle Design proposal was the one that Canada Post favoured and that firm was commissioned to complete the fly fishing stamp series, released on February 4, 2005. Brian Chan got the call to dress the Alevin. Besides the set of eight stamps there is also a first cover, souvenir set of four stamps, postcards and playing cards featuring a Jock Scott or Mickey Finn.

The souvenir sheet of the four flies in the Canada Post 2005 Fly Fishing Stamp series

Fly Tying

PLWB (PROSPECT LAKE WOOLY BUGGER)
by BARRY STOKES

HOOK: SIZE 6-10 4X LONG
THREAD: 6/0 BLACK
TAIL: MED. OLIVE MARABOU
BODY: "GLO-BRITE" VARIGATED CHENILLE GRN/CHARTREUSE
HACKLE: GRIZZLEY WET FLY, PALMERED
LATERAL LINE: MED. GREEN FLASHABOU

STEPS:

1. Place the hook in the vice, and with Black tying thread, tie in a good-sized clump of medium olive marabou to extend 2/3 hook length past the hook bend. Bind excess down to the hook shank.

2. Return thread to tail tie in point and tie in a grizzly hackle (one side stripped) by the tip. Tie in a 4 inch piece of medium Green/Chartreuse "Glo-Brite" chenille.

3. Wind the chenille forward in tight turns to within 1/8" of hook eye and tie off. Trim excess. Tie in one doubled strand of med. Green. Flashabou on each side the body at the front end, long enough to extend past the end of the tail.

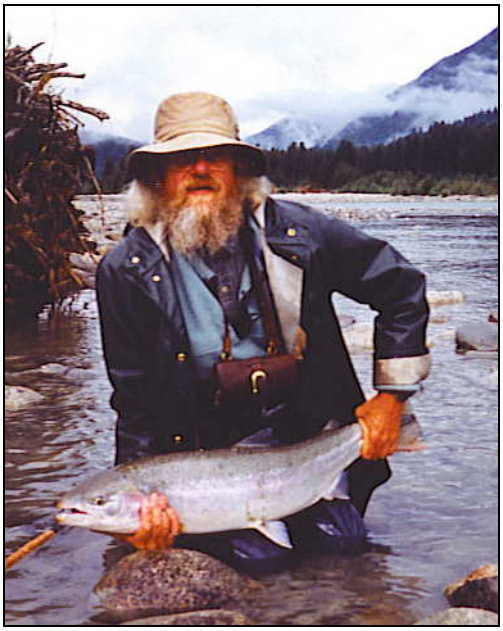
4. Hold Flashabou down each side of the body and wrap the Grizzly hackle forward, trapping the Flashabou as you go. Take a couple of extra turns of hackle at the front, tie off, build a small head and whip finish.

Note: A wire rib may also be added and counter wound up the body to reinforce the hackle.

Comments: This fly is the result of testing a number of colour combinations of the traditional Woolly Bugger. The body colour is critical to the success of this Bugger variation. It has proved to be is a good searching fly on many lakes.

Note: Barry Stokes is a member of the Haig-Brown Fly Fishing Association of Victoria and was recognized for his mastery at the tying vice in 2001 when he was awarded the BCFFF's Jack Shaw Fly Tying Award.

Adventures with a Long Rod
By Rob Brown



Way back in the last century, Webb and I spotted a guy on the far side of the Lower Potato Patch. He was wearing a pork pie hat and one of those coats popularized by Clint Eastwood in a string of spaghetti westerns. Even so, we probably wouldn't have noticed him if he hadn't been packing the longest rod either of us had ever seen.

The thing was half again as long as the ten foot drift rods that we used in the winter, when it was too cold, and way too difficult to catch steelhead with our fly rods.

"Hey, Whadya do when ya gotta make a short cast?" I yelled across the Kispiox, in a friendly tone.

The man stopped. He looked at us for a moment, in what seemed to me an imperious way (though, I must admit, I couldn't really tell this from that distance) then continued on toward the tail on the run, his gargantuan rod wobbling rhythmically with each step.

Some time after that, I was talking to the Judge. We were talking about fishing, because that's what the Judge and I talk about mostly. The conversation slipped from one fishy topic to another and arrived at a chapter concerning tackle, rods specifically. The image of the guy with the wobbly rod appeared on my mental screen. I told the Judge about it.

"House Peter...sounds like House Peter."

"*House Peter?"* I echoed.

"Yeah," said the Judge, "Eric Maison-Pierre – *House Peter*."

The Judge went on to say that he'd run into the guy on the Thompson, where, even on that big river, the latter's enormous pole was a lightning rod when it came to attracting the attention of other fishermen.

Not long after that I came across a couple of articles penned by an Eric Maison-Pierre in back issues of *Salmon Trout Steelheader.* Here too, the man with the long rod stood out. The usual fare in *Salmon Trout Steelheader* were crudely crafted unimaginative articles about a couple of sportfishin' bubbas bonking "giant kings" or "tackle-bustin' steelies" that were caught on secret lure adorned with a gob of bait. Maison-Pierre, on the other hand, wrote about using a floating fly line to suspend scantily clad flies just below the surface film where (he imagined) steelhead could look up at them in the same manner that he might be moved to gaze heavenward by the brilliance of a bright star.

After those encounters with Maison-Pierre, I started rummaging around for information on long rods. This was during the dark times before Googling and net surfing, but I still managed to find some information by more primitive means. Long fly rods, I discovered, were traditionally the salmon rod of choice on the British Isles and were still the angling tool preferred by the anglers who fished the one-syllable salmon rivers of Scotland.

I was surprised to discover that the two-handed poles were not uncommon in British Columbia. If I'd thought about it, I wouldn't have been: this *was British* Columbia, after all, and the fact that British Colonials brought their homeland habits to this colony then passed them on to their progeny was not at all astonishing. It turned out that some of the founding fathers of fly angling in BC waved about two-handed poles fashioned of greenheart and bamboo: Noel Money, Tommy Brayshaw and Bill Cunliffe were three.

It seemed that the passing of those men and their fellows, and the appearance of glass fibre rods as well as a rapidly growing and influential American steelheading tradition, whose practitioners all used stout single-handed rods of the kind the Brits favoured for loch and sea trout fishing, combined to bring the tradition of two-fisted fly rods to a halt in this province.

It lived on in Britain where The House of Hardy and Bruce & Walker continued to spin rods from 14 to 17 feet from glass fibres. When the race to space begat graphite or carbon fibre, as it is known in the UK, the same companies recognized its strength and lightness and were soon crafting two-handed rod blanks from it.

The Orvis Company began in the New World. Surprisingly, it's an older company than Hardy. Orvis has a branch in the U.K. They began making double-handed graphite rods for the overseas market and listed them in their catalogue. I suspect that is where the iconoclast, Maison-Pierre got his. I ordered mine from Hardy through the Northwest Sportsman.

After a month or so I spent what seemed like a small fortune in those days (and probably was, given my earnings and indebtedness) and took my Hardy 15 foot fly rod home. I pushed the three five foot sections together and wondered how in the heck I was going to make it work.

My brand spanking new Hardy fifteen foot double-handed fly rod with its rubber-tipped silver butt piece, nicely turned handle, and dark purple windings, was an impressive pole. I forced the *Salmon #1*, another Hardy product (and the only winch I could find capable of holding the 40 yards of ten-weight double tapered fly line and enough thirty pound backing line for security) into its reel seat.

I ran my right hand along the ridges of the blank, unsanded, according to its manufacturer, to retain as much strength as possible, then proceeded to run the line through the guides. This proved to be a major operation that required putting my precious and pricey reel at risk upon the rocky shore bordering the Pasture Run.

That task complete, I patted myself down to locate the fly box containing my crudely tied facsimiles of fully-dressed Atlantic salmon flies I'd tied specially for the inaugural outing of the new rod. The oblique rays of the newly-risen summer sun caught the butts, tails, tags, tips and tinseled bodies of my ersatz Silver Hiltons, Durham Rangers, and Jock Scotts in all their resplendent radiance. They glittered like mad. I stared at them, proud as the proverbial peacock that had provided so much material for their construction, taking longer to select one because of that, and because I had no criteria upon which to base a selection.

After a while I chose an Orange Parson, not realizing then that I was dooming the poor cleric to a painful death against the rocks behind me because, other than the fact that it couldn't be cast with one hand, I knew nothing of the casting mechanics required to aerialize that fat line and flex my lofty pole.

After all, how hard could it be, I persuaded myself, to make a routine back cast, and send the fly out overhead, as I'd done a million times with lesser rods. The scale was larger, that's all. But I soon discovered it was more than that. Overhead casting with the long rod demanded different rhythms. I lashed the river with the tan line. After a few poor attempts the Parson's vestments were in shreds; after a few more, I lost touch with him altogether.

A couple of Jock Scotts later, I was forced to admit that my debut was a bust. I'd been at it for the better part of an hour and I was now able to put out forty, maybe fifty, feet of fly line for all my labours, but I hadn't made anything bearing even a pale resemblance to an elegant cast. Even worse my shoulders hurt and my right arm throbbed from my exertions.

I was standing ankle-deep in the shallows attempting to decide whether my arms were up to the rigours of more exploratory casting or whether to admit defeat, go home and regroup, when I was startled by the sound of a voice behind me.

"Is that a fly rod?" it asked.

I turned to meet the speaker. He was a young man with a faint mustache. wearing a t-shirt, jeans and packing a casting rod that looked positively tiny next to the Hardy.

"Yeah...a fly rod," I mumbled. The roar of the rapid below us had masked the noise of his approach. He could have been watching my awkward travails for some time. A wave of embarrassment washed over me.

"It's not very sporting is it?" he ventured, not unkindly.

"They fish 'em a lot in Britain," I said indirectly, then hastily packed off wishing him good luck.

For the next few weeks I built up my biceps without attaining much casting prowess, but learning to execute a decent overhead cast at least. I'd heard that the Scots had invented a special way of manipulating their long rods and knew it was akin to roll casting, but though I could roll out more line on the Hardy than I could on my single handed rods, the way a roll-cast rolls out on the water instead of above it was unappealing. There had to be more to it.

Months later I met a Belgian on the Skeena, who told me that, though he didn't have a two-fisted rod himself, he'd fished salmon in Scotland and had seen the indigenous anglers wield them impressively. I begged him to show me. Assuring me that he really didn't know how to do it properly, he said he'd do his best to approximate the moves. Whereupon he picked up the Hardy and performed an awkward aerialized roll cast off his right shoulder then attempted to propel the line forward and lassoed himself in the process.

I began working the Belgian's concept into a credible form. There was more to it, I was sure, but in a time before search engines information on such an arcane subjects was all but impossible to find.

The solution to the vexing puzzle of how to properly wield the two-fisted salmon rod was still exasperatingly distant. I thought of tracking down Maison-Pierre, not a particularly difficult task, I reasoned; how many Maison-Pierres could there be in Washington State? Someone at Kaufmann's Streamborne Fly shop would know of him.

"Uh..I'm looking for a guy with a long rod who goes by the name of Maison-Pierre," I imagined myself saying.

"Oh, you mean House Peter," I imagined the Kaufmann clerk saying, then chuckled at the absurdity of it all.

The problem was, on the evidence of the few casts I'd seen him make, Maison-Pierre didn't seem to

know the proper two-handed technique either, so I saved the cost of a distant phone call.

One day a ray of hope came via post in the form of the *Totem Topics*, the club magazine of the Totem Flyfishers. Inside I found an article by Art Lingren that dealt with fishing steelhead with a two-handed rod. The next day, I phoned Art and gave him the dimensions of my dilemma to him. My plight must have touched him. Two weeks later a package arrived. Inside it was a video cassette and note from Art telling me the videotape was copy of one made by the famous British salmon angler, Hugh Falkus.

Trembling in anticipation I fired up the VCR and pushed in the tape,. After some shots of the English countryside accompanied by some bucolic music, the camera focused on a corpulent cotton-topped gent standing in a river with a long rod casting a long – and I mean *long* – line.

This, then, was the famous Falkus, legendary salmon fisherman with years of experience on the best beats of the single-syllable salmon rivers of Scotland. In a few seconds the opening frames of that tape taught me more than all the arm wrenching labour of the past two months. At last I was able to see how it was done and see that I was doing it all wrong.

"You must make a dee," said Hugh in a way that suggested a man who'd had plenty of experience giving orders, a retired military man perhaps. Yes, that was it: an officer in the RAF. I could picture him as a younger man, sporting handlebar mustache, dashing in his crisp uniform, urging his squadron on and up into the sky after another scrap with the Jerries.

"You must attempt to break the rod," exhorted Falkus as he whipped his two-hander across his chest and pointed it skyward whereupon the tangle of white fly line lying in a heap at his feet snapped to attention and formed a majestic ellipse. He hesitated for what seemed an awfully long time as the loop of line billowed out behind him then brought the rod forward slicing through the air with a loud swish. The line surged out above the water, unfurling in a languorous loop, extended to what appeared to be a full ninety feet stopped arrow-straight with an almost imperceptible shudder then dropped gracefully onto the surface. It was a beautiful sight.

Falkus repeated the performance then changed hands and executed its mirror image.

"Provided one creates the dee," he said, "one can cast from any angle."

As I puzzled over what Falkus meant by "the dee," he deftly fired each arrow in his casting quiver, executing both single Speys and double Speys with both hands and over both shoulders.

I rewound the tape and pushed the slow motion button. Falkus' casting balletics were even more impressive this way. Then, on one of his double Spey casts, I saw it, a giant capital D, its back the big rod, its belly the white fly line. Here was a D indeed, the one Falkus kept talking about, but hadn't defined, or if he had, I'd missed it.

"If you've mastered the single and double Spey casts with both hands," said Falkus before launching into an impressive display of Spey casting with a one-handed rod, "then you will be able to master any problem of wind or water."

I had no idea how much more there was to fly casting. Like most anglers, I could throw a decent length with an over hand cast and a little bit more than that with the judicious application of a single or double haul. I could flip a roll cast out, though I seldom did. But here was a world of exotic maneuvers about which I was almost completely unaware.

Soon I was on the river attempting to emulate Hugh, with limited success, unfortunately. True, I was able to put together a few double and singe Speys off my strong side, but the majority of my attempts failed and my arms, nowhere near as well muscled as Falkus' popeyed limbs, throbbed. When fishing is work, you're doing it wrong. But where was I going astray.

There are some fine book stores on Pender Street: musty places all, with wooden floors that creek underfoot like the planks on the old sailing ships that carried Captain George to the shores of this place that later grew into the city that now bears his name. These craft are small; their aisles few and narrow, dramatically different in scope, scale and intent from the coffee-scented big box boats of the *Borders* and *Chapter* lines that now cruise shopping lanes in the centre of town. There are no CDs here, none of latest magazines, no meals to be had, no T-shirts or book bags, no aggressive promos or noon hour concerts. Used treasure and trash – but mainly treasure awaiting discovery –
are their cargoes and they are captained by curmudgeons who know the value of their freight and yield it grudgingly.

I was waiting for a bus alongside one of these when a rickety sale table caught my eye. There was no bus in sight, affording me enough time for a quick rummage. Under a tattered copy of Dickens' *Mayor of Casterbridge* I found small hardbound text with *Thirty-Four Ways to Cast a Fly* on its spine. Inside the cover the vendor had scrawled "$1.00" in pencil. For that price, a guy can take chance.

I took a seat in the back of the bus and scrutinized my purchase. There was a black and white picture of its author, John G. Lynde, in hipboots with a bamboo rod leaning against him, examining his flybox beside a placid pool. I flipped the page and read the forward.

"Few people," its author wrote, " are better equipped than Mr. Lynde to undertake this intricate exposition. An outstanding caster himself and a fisherman of long experience, Mr. Lynde learned under

some of the great English masters and was himself a professional teacher of flycasting for seven years."

I flipped that leaf and discovered that the forward had been penned by none other than Roderick Haig-Brown in June of 1967. It was the only endorsement the book carried, in contrast to the thousands of how-to books and video cassettes than fill the shelves of bookstores and supermarkets everywhere. It was the only endorsement I needed.

Over the next few weeks I studied Lynde's manual assiduously, translating each paragraph into action on the back lawn and then on the stream, a process made easy thanks to Lynde's precise, uncluttered prose; honest, unselfish words written with the intention of imparting knowledge expeditiously.

Lynde, it soon became apparent, understood his subject and how best to teach it. All casts are derived from the roll cast and the overhead cast, he writes, so, logically, he begins there, insisting on a very specific stance and laying out each step methodically.

Very quickly, I realized that my casting technique, which I thought was pretty good, was adequate, at best. With the use of Lynde's program it improved quickly. After covering roll and overhead casting, Lynde moved on to Spey casting with a single-handed rod, explaining that it was the most logical way to proceed since the Spey cast is a more clean cut, "more decisive and more sophisticated offshoot of the roll cast" that enabled the angler to change the direction of his fly on the move.

As in all of Lynde's instruction, his directions for Spey casting proceed from a very solid stance. The arms are held close to the body. During the execution of the casting stroke, they stay close, and Lynde is always careful to describe their path in reference to parts of the angler's anatomy.

I have to admit that I skipped a few chapters to get to the one dealing with what Lynde calls "salmon fly casting," or casting the two-handed rod. I gripped the butt of my 15 foot rod with my left hand, the top of the corks with the right and, holding my right arm tight to the body, cast the line behind me describing a small arc from my side to my solar plexus until the rod hit my shoulder.

The line shot out behind me in a beautiful arc. I watched it, as Lynde had instructed. Holding the butt to my gut, I pushed the rod forward by extending my forearm then watched spellbound as the best cast I'd made to date shot out over the Skeena. As Lynde predicted, it was almost effortless.

Using that foundation, I was able to execute well-formed double and single Spey casts in no time. When I began flubbing casts, I simply reverted to Lynde's postures and things began running smoothly again.

My Spey casting problems were solved at last, thanks to a little book written by someone who knew and understood and put the profit to others above the profit of book sales.

A large Thompson steelhead reached by Spey casting a double-handed rod

BCFFF at the Western Canadian Fly Fishing Exposition

Report and photos by Danie Erasmus

The BCFFF booth

The second Western Canadian Fly Fishing Exposition was held this year at the Cloverdale Rodeo grounds in Cloverdale, 18-20 February 2005. The BCFFF was invited to have a booth at the event, which co-incidentally was one of the most attended fly-fishing-only shows in Canada. The objectives for the BCFFF were to introduce kids to fly tying and inform the public about the issues we get involved with.

The BCFFF success at the show was very much dependent on the participation of BCFFF members willing to act as fly tying instructors for the weekend. Approximately 70 kids and 30 adults were introduced to tying very flashy woolly buggers and without the help of the following people (club): **Peter Caverhill** (Ospreys), **Terry Bragg** (Ospreys/Totems), **Barry Radelet** (Ospreys-guest), **Terry Robinson** (Ospreys), **Fred Watts** (Totems), **Dan Cahill** (Ospreys), **Alex Carr** (Ospreys), **Ken Baker** (Ospreys), **Don Grimway** (Direct member), **Darren Smith** (Ospreys), **Steve Paterson** (Comox Valley Fly Fishers), **Art Lingren** (Totems), **Gil Sage** (Ospreys/Totems), **Steve Hanson** (Ospreys/Totems), **Will Wright** (Ospreys), and **Doug Wright** (Ospreys) it would not have been possible. Thanks a lot guys!

Steve Hanson helping a young fly tyer with the boy's father looking on

In addition to fly tying at our booth, exposition visitors were introduced to the BCFFF as a voice for fly fishers in British Columbia who are concerned mostly with conservation issues. Questions were answered and literature was distributed to visitors interested in the BCFFF.

The literature included Fly Lines, information on "BCFFF Funded Fisheries Habitat and Education Projects", the BCFFF brochure and the Ethical Angle. In addition a very nice display documenting the BCFFF history, made by Peter Caverhill, completed the booth. Several BCFFF items such as memorabilia and The Compleat Kilburn were on sale as well.

On behalf of the BCFFF, I would like to thank the organizers for providing free space for the BCFFF booth and SuperFly for supplying fly tying materials and equipment.

Dan Cahill and Will Wright ooking on as the young fly tiers construct a Woolly Bugger

Danie Erasmus gives the young tyer her certificate