



The Evening

Hatch

The Newsletter of the Michigan Fly Fishing Club

DEC 2014 & JAN 2015

Fly Fishing the Beaver Island Flats

By Sybil Hunter

Captain Kevin Morlock invited everyone to go fish Beaver Island when he spoke at the first 2015 MFFC meeting. "Every thing is near the surface," he said. It is flats fishing. "Sight fishing," he called it, because the rising and rolling fish are very visible, the birds help locate the fish, the current and the wind changes - "the fish will adapt to that," and there is always cloudy water. "The fish make the cloudy water," said Morlock. That is how you know they are there.

The Beaver Island flats house small mouth bass, among a variety of other fish. "They are not as big in number, but big in size," said Morlock. There are also northern pike, salmon, trout, not to mention drum - "a neat bonus fish."

The water level rises and falls. "The water came up 14 inches and into the vegetation," said Morlock of the last time the water levels were high. "The water is up 30 inches now, I can't wait to fish it!"

"Use 8 to 10 weight rods with weight forward lines," advises Morlock. "Fly weights are too heavy and splash too much."

"There are 40 pound carp," said Morlock. He sets his drag at six pounds of pressure to reel in something that large. "Even an eight pound carp will take you to your backing."

Great fishing locations to fish are diverse.

- Fish the river mouths. There are contrasting water temperatures there, it is good for spawning.
- Fish the harbors. "Harbors are

gonna heat much faster than the rest of the lake," says Morlock.

- Fish the beaches. "The are either hot, or they are cold. The fish are either in, or they are out." Beaches around Ludington are particularly good fishing he said.
- Fish near shore. "Just like the beach, it depends on how the wind is blowing."
- Fish the estuaries. "They warm quickly in the spring."
- Fish off shore. "Look for something different...and upwelling, lighthouses, anything that changes the water pattern."
- Fish the flats. "It's a huge broad area that's pretty shallow. As water warms, the fish will hoard into that spot, moving in an out dependent on the temperature."
- Fish the deltas. "My favorite kind of fishing, there is almost a current. You never know what you re going to get."
- Fish man made structures. Structures out of nowhere, change the water patterns and attract fish.

As the seasons change, so does the fishing.

In the spring, "There is lots of spawning, like pike, steelhead, smelt...all looking for warm water. That goes for salmon and steelhead, they want warm water, as does what they feed on."

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January, 21 2015

Activities Meeting

Clarenceville Middle School

Livonia, 7:30 p.m.

February 4, 2015

Speaker Meeting

Speaker: Steve Sendek

Topic: NorthPoint Fisheries

Clarenceville Middle School

Livonia, 7:30 p.m.

February 25, 2015

Activity Meeting

Clarenceville Middle School

Livonia, 7:30 p.m.

Continued from Page 1

- In summer, “You need the mostmost knowledge. You need to know the species. You need to find patterns.”
- In fall, there is cooling water, spawning and migration.
- In the winter, fish any kind of warm water discharges.

Also, the fish have varying preferences that have to be considered.

- Small mouth. “Fish deeper water, blind casting,” said Morlock. “Although that is different at Beaver Island where you can sight find them.” In hot water they are feeding, and are fast and aggressive. “When they are on the bite, they are on the bite. When they are off the bite, they flee. Don’t chase them.” Around Beaver Island the lake is 60 feet deep and crystal clear. In cold water they are inactive, low and slow. “You have to meet them about half way.”
- Gobies. Gobies are in the two to four inch range, and getting a little bigger each year. Use sculpin patterns.
- Carp. “Think first when fishing carp,” said Morlock. “Their main forage is mayflies running around in the silt. So...fish out of the silt with mayflies. They (carp) are not as observant. If you wreck an area by motoring into it, I usually have to leave it and come back the next day. The fish release a pheromone when they flee. They stink up the area. It wrecks that area. Carp are difficult and quirky. Plunk a fly on their head and it’s the most terrifying thing to them. Lead them, and strip the fly back to them. Pick a target; you gotta sneak up on them. Carp can see the fly about three feet out. They have a 3D strike zone. They are poor predators. They are kind strange because you have to biggest fish out there with no natural predators and they are afraid of everything!”

Then there is always Carp Baseball. “They come in and stare at you but won’t feed,” said Morlock. “I put on my best fly...give it my three best presentations...look for a reaction. If they don’t bite, I try another good pattern. Do the same thing. If that doesn’t work, try the opposite. Do it with three flies. Three patterns each. If I can’t get a reaction, I pick up and leave that area.”

The secret spot in Traverse City, everybody knows is Mission Peninsula. On Beaver Island there is a sweet spot too. The guaranteed spot is a bay on the west side of the island. “Go where the wind is in your face,” was all Morlock would say. “You can always find fish there...there is always warm water there. Given that mile, fish can always find warm water.” You have to know the sun and the wind. “As with any flats fishing, the farther the cast, the greater the working area.”

How do you get there? Morlock says, “Drive to Charlevoix, pay \$50 for the ferry, or take the plane and get there in 20 minutes for \$100. There are five hotels and a bunch of beach summer houses.” And of course, if you want a guide - give him a call.



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Capt. Kevin Morlock



The Evening Hatch

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Corrections: Contact me with any corrections.

Photo contributions are always needed.
Please submit any photos for the Photo Gallery to me.
- Sybil Hunter, Editor of *The Evening Hatch*.

ANDY PARTIO

The Development of Fly Fishing

By Sybil Hunter

"You gotta be careful turning a hobby into a job," said Andy Partio, manager of the Old Au Sable Fly Shop in Grayling at the December MFFC speaker meeting. "When I was 12, I picked up a fly rod. The first time I tied on a fly was an act of practicality. I became addicted to that...the thought...the action...the rising fish."

"When I was 16, I could drive. Then it really took over my life," said Partio. "It's all about the trout. I would camp there (on the stream) two to three days a week. I toured national parks. I think I toured every national park. I keep coming back to West Yellowstone. Then Rusty Gates offered me a job...I spent five years at Gates, two years at Dan Bailey's, then in 2008, Old Au Sable opened."

Working where he did, provided Partio perspective on the fishing industry. THE Movie. Conservation. The gear explosion. The rods arms race. 9-11. Technology. The fly boom. Spaghetti & Meatballs. The streamer revolution. Not to mention the internet and all devices we now love.

1991. THE Movie. We all know it. We all love it. It changed the sport forever. *A River Runs Through It*. The movie, based on the Big Black Foot River, packed the streams around the nation. Millions of people flooded to the Big Black Foot. The tourism made the river a viable fishery. "Oh how the movie crowded the streams," said Partio. "The book was published in 1976, sold 1 million copies. Then in the fall of 1991, the movie came out. There was 60% growth in 1992 in the fly fishing field, plus 60% growth in 1993 in the fly fishing field."

Next came the gear explosion. "There are 1,894 fly fishing shops in the U.S.," said Partio. "That is 60% of all fly shops in the world total." This same gear explosion fueled the the rods arms race. "The influx of money allowed rod companies to expand R&D."

Then came 9-11. Post 9-11, came the shrinking of shops, the economy took a crap....the post 9-11 multi-piece rod came out. You can't fly with anything else," said Partio. "I was in Salt Lake City for 9-11. I called my friend who worked in the stock market. He had nothing to do, so he drove all the way out from Michigan....and we drove back to Yellowstone."

Technology. "I always hated fast rods - they are just lifeless, dead sticks," said Partio. "Now it's different." The increase in cash flow, fueling the increase in R&D, allowed rod makers to create rods that were "fast with feel."

The fly boom was "invented" in the wake of the movie. The Adams changed colors to be the Purple Haze. Make a yellow one and it's a Yellow One. "If the fish were not biting, people wouldn't be out there. If they are not biting, you can't be doing it wrong. It *can't* be that. It's gotta be the fly," said Partio. "You know you've got it bad when you buy your own flies back from your own shop..."

The Chernobyl Ant. "Call it what you want, these things work," said Partio. "It's like riding a moped, nobody wants to admit it....now I'm using a fast rod with a big foam fly." Partio

"AS LONG AS YOU'RE HAVING FUN, YOU'RE DOING IT RIGHT!"

shrugged.

Spaghetti and meatballs. (You know, eggs and worms.) "Everybody fishes above the Madison. We fished below the Madison," said Partio. He was nymphing. "My buddy was kicking ass," said Partio. "So I asked. He was using a Bunion Bug. You know what that means...get walking and go borrow one."

"As long as you're having fun, you're doing it right," advises Partio. "Don't let anybody tell you otherwise."

The streamer revolution. "Some of the first flies I ever tied, were streamers," said Partio. "Back in the '90's, there weren't that many guys who streamer fished. Now everyone streamer fishes." Books fueled the modern streamer revolution. "Unweighted flies," said Partio, "The Circus Peanut - two wooly buggers tied together. Four to five inches flies. \$10 for nine inches files. Modern rods and modern lines make this possible. They work," said Partio. "The game changer came from Umpqua, (a streamer with) a fully articulated spine with six to eight joints. I don't think it's a fly....but who am I to judge."

He then flashed the obligatory gratuitous fish picture. Ooos and ahs filled the room.

Last but not least, he addressed "the internet and all the devices we love." "I didn't get an internet address until '92. I was well into college," said Partio. "The internet empowers us to educate ourselves, but beware of bad information. There is still a lot of good information."

"UTube is the second largest search engine out there," said Partio as he showed multiple videos. He also suggested www.animatedknots.com, magazine sites (for entertainment, How Tos, and destination information), radar sites for the weather, river reports, river flows. "Use the archives," suggested Partio. "Our memories fail us. What time did the hex come last year? The worst thing is there are no arguments. That ruins all the fun of the college dormitory!"

Don't forget social media. "Brag a little," jokes Partio. "You can find out what happened just now. Watch the pictures. Hawk the background. You can track progression of the hatches. If I know where the hatch is today, I have a really good chance of guessing where it is tomorrow."

"My favorite use, is to find secrets," said Partio. "It all starts at the fish stocking database. Go to the regs." What do you do with this? Partio suggests going to Google Maps, find something that looks good and get information on it. "It's a little tiny lake, there it is! And it's close to that road! We gotta go!" You can find the state of the river, fish trend viewer, and fish populations. "It's a tricky game to play," says Partio. "There are gaps in the samples."

"Some say change is never good," said Partio in closing. "It's not good if you don't change with it. I say take advantage of it. We're all getting better all the time. It's a much more even playing field." andy@oldausable.com.

JANUARY SPEAKER



CAPTAIN KEVIN MORLOCK

“In summer you need the most knowledge. You need to know the species. You need to find

DECEMBER SPEAKER

“Some say change is never good. It’s not good if you don’t change with it. I say take advantage of it!”



ANDY PARTIO

“The internet empowers us to educate ourselves, but beware of bad information. There is still a lot of good information.”

Thunder Creek Minnow

January's Fly of the Month!

By Todd A. Schotts

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and a glorious New Year! Hopefully you got those fly tying and fly fishing items that were on your list for Santa. If you are still looking for that special fly pattern to fill your new fly boxes, here is one that you really should have in your fly box.

This month's Featured Fly will be the famed "Thunder Creek Minnow." This fly was originally designed by Keith Fulsher from Eastchester, New York, who early on tied flies for the renowned Angler's Cove in Manhattan. That was when he came in contact with Lew Oatman and Alex Rogan, two great Streamer Fly Tiers. After this encounter Keith started experimenting with streamer construction so he could come up with more precise imitation for bait fish.

This fly is tied in a way which the bucktail is tied in by the butts right behind the eye of the hook, with the tips extending forward and then pulled back. This was not a new idea at the time, but it created what Keith was looking for, a more streamlined minnow with a big head which was able to sustain large eyes. This reverse tying style evolved from wet flies that used the same process where the stem was bent back over the shank and secured again. Mary Orvis Marbury included these reversed heads in *Favorite Flies and Their Histories*. Carrie Stevens was an early practitioner of this style for her saltwater flies. However, in Keith's designs, the



THUNDER CREEK EMERALD SHINER

HOOK: TMC 9394, Mustad R75S, Daiichi 1750 Sizes 2 - 10

THREAD: 6/0 or 140 Denier - White

FLASH: Peacock Krystal Flash

BELLY: White Buck Tail

BACK: Green Buck Tail

GILLS: Red Paint

EYES: Black Pupil on White eye or Stick on Eyes

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idea was to match the fly to the local baitfish in the watershed. By using these techniques he was able to match the form and coloration of these tiny stream lined morsels.

The flies got their name from the location where Keith tested his new creations, Thunder Creek, which is a low flow, tannic, small stream with a large quantity of beaver ponds in Northern Wisconsin. The first members of this new family of flies were tied back in 1962. Then in 1972, he published his book *Tying and Fishing the Thunder Creek Series*. In addition to his book, he has contributed articles regarding the flies in the first editions of Fly Tye Magazine. At that time, the entire family of Thunder Creek flies consisted of Shiners, Darters, various minnows, trout, bass, and attractor styles.

Now many tyers use the molded stick on eyes instead of painting on the eyes as in the original pattern. Another major change is from the red band for gills to painted gills just on the bottom side of the fly. The last change is that the original pattern used lacquer to glue the heads, while epoxy is now favored of many tiers - except for us few who are epoxy illiterate. One common, major mistake, made when tying these flies is to not streamline the bodies. If the body of the minnow becomes too bulky, or thick, the fly will not "match the hatch" and most likely will tangle up your line by twisting and rolling. It will not look like a natural wounded minnow. So remember when tying these wonderful flies, sparse is a must!!

Other changes that have taken place since the first Thunder Creek Minnows were conceived is the invention of synthetic furs, flash materials, and the use of marabou as body material. However you tie them, just remember the flies must be slim and streamlined, with a big head and large eyes, just like the baitfish you are trying to imitate. Until next month, tight lines and snazzy flies!!



QUIGLEY CRIPPLE

December's Fly of the Month!

By Todd A.Schotts

With Christmas coming upon us, if your wish list includes any flies that will aid in your tight lines - here is a wish come true! In December, we will be tying another dry fly/emergent type pattern. This one is from a legendary western tyer that has created so many productive flies, not just for out west, but for fishing anywhere in the U.S.

It is the "Quigley Cripple." This pattern represents mayflies that are just emerging, or got stuck in the shuck during the process. Those crippled insects are the ones that will not be going anywhere any time soon. The water inhabitants recognize this very vulnerable stage feeding on them with ease. This pattern sits right in the water, like the crippled insects they resemble. I can personally attest to the fact that it catches fish.

Bob Quigley is the gentleman that designed this fly back in the mid-1970's, along with a couple of other famed patterns (the Loop Wing Pardon and the Hackle Stacker). He came up with this pattern while fishing Fall River in Northern California. The Quigley Cripple is very distinguished with a forward wing of either deer or elk hair extending over the eye of the hook and on to the butt of the wing. It is trimmed in



HOOK: TMC 100 sizes 8 to 18

THREAD: 8/0 or 70 Denier to match body

WING: Deer or Yearling Elk

BODY: Sizes 8 to 14 Marabou or yarn
(color to match insect intended)

Sizes 16 & 18 turkey or goose biots, pheasant tail fibers or stripped hackle quills
(color to match insect intended)

RIBBING: Sizes 8 to 14 Medium
(color to match insect intended)
Sizes 16 & 18 Small
(color to match insect intended)

TAIL: Marabou or Z-Lon

STUCK IN THE SHUCK FOR EASY PICKIN'S



line with the dubbed thorax to represent an emerging dun. For the larger sizes, up to 14, marabou or yarn is used for the body, with medium wire for the rib. For sizes 16 & smaller, turkey or goose biots, pheasant tail fibers, or stripped hackle quills are used for the body, with small wire for the rib. One thing that Bob Quigley really liked was how the marabou gave the fly more bugginess.

The concept of this fly was to have the top half of the fly to reside above the water surface while the lower half is beneath the water surface. The original pattern was designed on dry fly hooks TMC 100, but curved hooks (as in TMC 2312, 2302, or 2487) are also used to lower the fly in the film of the water surface.

Other flies that Bob designed include the Crime Scene Caddis, Stoned Hopper, Hen Wing Caddis, Carrot Midge, Double Bead Spey, and Jig-a-Lo just to name a few. If you are interested in tying more of his flies check out his DVD's *Tying Bob Quigley's Signature Flies I and II* or on the website "Idylwilde Flies" looking under Bob Quigley.

Remember when fishing this unique fly, *use your floatant only on the front half of the fly*, instead of the whole fly. Let the fly drift through your intended target area. If you come across a "hatch blizzard," make sure to try a Quigley Cripple. Since it is different than what the water inhabitants are seeing, it might give you a chance to catch the fish of a lifetime!

So until next time, hopefully your stockings will be filled with awesome new fly fishing and tying materials.

ZONKER STREAMER

January's Featured Fly Tyer

By Todd Schotts

Who better to start off our 2015 Featured Tyer program at the January activity meeting by exhibiting his master fly tying skills, than our outing chairperson supreme; the great host of the Trout Opener; and bamboo enthusiast himself? That would be none other than Al "Hackleman" Haxton!

If you are not familiar with Al, he has been a member in the Michigan Fly Fishing Club for more than 26 years. Out of those years, aside from being on the board, he has also served as club President, and is an invaluable component of various club functions. He chairs the famed and popular "Yellowstone Outing." Besides tying, and all he does in our club, he enjoys fishing the AuSable and Manistee Rivers near Grayling (I wasn't able to get the level of authorization for clearance to divulge his exact fishing locations).

One thing about Al that I will never forget...at my first meeting, an activity meeting, he was the featured tyer. I was camping out in the back of the room at one of the tables, not knowing anyone, and was contemplating possibly sneaking out the back unnoticed. That is when Al came over, introduced himself, and invited me to come up and sit next to him for the tying. We tied, what else, but a soft hackle that night, and from then on I was hooked on the club. Thank you Al for that warm welcome back in the day!



HOOK: 3XL to 4XL sizes 2 to 10

THREAD: Black 6/0 and Red 6/0

WEIGHT (optional): Non-lead wire wrapped around hook or DS style

BODY: Silver Mylar tubing along hook shank.
Gold or other colors may be used also.

WING & TAIL: Natural grey rabbit strip.
(Other colors may also be used.)

COLLAR: Webby grizzly hackle wrapped at front.
(Other colors may also be used.)

TYING WITH AL "HACKLEMAN" HAXTON

Al will be bringing to us the famed "Zonker Streamer." This fly was designed by the late Dan Byford out in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, back in 1975. It is known as one of the "big fish catching flies." His unique design using Rabbit Zonker's and Mylar Tubing was a far departure from the typical hair wing streamers used up to that point. The original Zonker consisted of a lead tape underbody folded over the hook shank and trimmed into a triangular shape. Mylar tubing was slid over the trimmed lead underbody, tied in at the head, pulled tight, secured at the bend of the hook and featured rabbit strip that was trimmed along the grain of the skin roughly 1/8" wide.

Patterns for this fly range in style, material, eyes and gills, yet still basically have the same original format. You can now buy the pre-cut rabbit strips, known as Zonker strips, in different sizes (1/4", 1/16" and Magnum strips which come in a wide range of colors) or you can still trim the rabbit strips yourself from rabbit hides, as Dan did back in 1975. In addition to using Rabbit Zonker's, you can also use Fox, Mink, and Squirrel Zonker's, but as Dan noticed when designing this fly, rabbit hair pulsates and adds a lot more movement to the pattern than other furs.

For fishing this fly you don't want to have your streamer chasing towards your target. This usually spooks the fish because they are used to seeing the baitfish fleeing from them. When you have your fly in the area of the fish you are targeting, strip the fly away from the area fast. This will make your streamer appear more natural in the water. Remember, dead drifting a Zonker doesn't have the fly moving like a minnow, leech, or muddler, so don't forget to strip, twitch the rod, and give your fly some Zonker-like movement.

With the Zonker turning 40 years old in 2015, it is a time proven design that elicits vicious strikes from a variety of fish in lakes, rivers, streams, and saltwater alike. So bring your tying tools, vise, and note taking material to tie a Zonker or two with the Hackleman. Until next month, tight lines & snazzy flies.



Two Cents Worth

Garage Sale

By Terry Drinkwine

Despite not needing or wanting anything, I - along with other weak minded individuals - left the last meeting with “stuff” bought from members with stronger wills than mine, who had decided to part with items they obviously didn’t need or no longer wanted. But, like P.T. Barnum said, “There’s a sucker born every minute.”

A garage sale organized by sportsmen – fly fishers in particular – is a lesson in, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” In other words, some sellers felt their “stuff” – things their spouse told them to get rid of – appreciated with age and use. A more suspicious individual than me, might come to the conclusion they didn’t want to part with it but needed someone to blame their having to bring the “stuff” back home on.

Now, Mama Drinkwine didn’t raise any stupid children (keep your opinions to yourself) so I won’t mention names or items... suffice it to say, Orvis would have been proud at the pricing of some of the items. Undoubtedly, they came with a 25 year warranty.

Nostalgia plays a big role in selling fly fishing “stuff.” Old reels and rods that haven’t been around for years, but triggered memories of yesteryear, were bought, in some cases, for more than they originally cost. Just seeing and holding those items lightened the step of a few as they walked out of the meeting.

But enough of the psychobabble, as I said, I walked out with a few items too ...none of which I couldn’t have done without, but, like watching a trout rise, I couldn’t help myself, and went for it. (I figure if I can get Mike Swope to buy me lunch sometime this year, I’ll break close to even.)

Al Haxton had a nice little bamboo rod for sale (that’s right, Al was *selling* a bamboo rod) that I might have made an offer on, but Joyce was there watching so I knew there wouldn’t be much chance of negotiation the price down. After all, no one wants to lose face in front of their “She Who Must Be Obeyed.” (Rumor has it, he’s still on probation.)

The sale of the night was made by Peter Albertson who sold me an expo shirt that I tried to buy from him before the expo, only to be told he didn’t have my size then...good job Peter, pressing the shirt and re-attaching the tags.

Having attended several other club garage sales, I came away with a few observations; suggestions on how to improve them. First: Aside from offering warranties on items, gift wrap them so the packaging matches the price. Second: Think about offering a \$25 off coupon... of course they would only apply on a purchase of \$50 or more. Only one coupon per item and all sales are final!

By the time this edition of the Hatch comes out, it will be January. I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas (that’s right I said Christmas) and has a prosperous New Year!

TD

“Chris was a wonderful resource. If I had a fly and I’d plop it on the table, if it was real slow, or slow enough, he’d tie one for me. I saw him the weekend before he passed away. I’m glad I got to see him, we ate steak. We talked and ate steak.” - Jim Holly

“Catching Grayling in Saskatchewan was on my bucket list. We got a young Indian guide. ‘You got a spinner?’ he asked. ‘You have to have a silver or gold spinner.’ I had a fly - we made a believer out of him! Chris Helm was on the trip with us. He took a couple of trips with us. We had a great time! It was great to know him.” - Jim Holly



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Ettiquette

By Terry Drinkwine

Making someone feel welcome is perhaps the nicest thing we can do when they come to the club for the first time. It is a simple, no cost thing that creates a first impression to otherwise anxious visitors, who don't quite know what to expect and might be a little intimidated by our numbers and by the small clusters we form at the round tables.

Making someone feel welcome doesn't have to be more than - after they identify themselves as first time attendees - going up to them and saying, hello at the break. People come to the club for the first time for different reasons. They may have heard about us from friends, visited our website, read about us somewhere or maybe have attended the Expo for years and finally decided, the guys who put it on are having a lot of fun, and they might like to be a part. Whatever the reason they come to a meeting, the impression we make decides whether or not they join our ranks.

Dave Nowicki, membership chairman, and a committee organized for the purpose of welcoming new members, have brainstormed ways to cut the time it traditionally takes a new member to feel being a part of MFFC.

Having said all that, it's important to know that the club hosts a membership of between 350 – 400 members. Each year the club gains 25 – 30 new members and loses 15 or so. The point is, we are one of the largest fly fishing organizations in the state and we boast that with not having any chapters.

I remember how I first found out MFFC existed: I and hundreds of other piscators attended the Rochester Orvis "going out of business sale." Standing in the line that wrapped around the store, my son-in-law spotted a guy holding an armful of rods, reels and a host of other items, waiting to check out. They started a conversation and Al Haxton told Sam Lynch about the club and that the items he was holding were being purchased for the club's raffle that was held at every meeting. He gave Sam the website and once home we checked it out. The website was so informative and alluring, we attended the following meeting and no one's been able to get rid of us since. (Those who think I should belong to the "worm dunkers club," can blame Haxton.)

We all have reasons for why we first came to a MFFC meeting, but the reason we came back and joined is because of what we found and whether or not we felt welcome. While there are many activities the club offers – some just for new members – it is important to make a person feel just as welcome at the first meeting they attend as we would if we met them on a stream, where our purposes for being there were the same; practicing stream etiquette is speaking a universal language and lets us share the water with one another.

I guess what I'm taking the long way around the barn to say is, maybe we ought to apply stream etiquette with new members ...you never know, it might result in a new fishing partner a new fly pattern and even the sharing of a new "honey hole."

Think about it.

Chris Helm In Memorium

"Chris Helm was so open, so gracious, never pretentious. He was open and caring, there was no false facade. He was extremely knowledgeable with anything with hair on a hoof. We lost a treasure." - Mike Duchin



"He never realized what he really knew. He never thought a second moment about his knowledge. He never hesitated to use his knowledge to help others." - Mike Duchin



Member Spotlight

Jim Holly

“In 1969 to ’70, I started fishing,” said Jim Holly. “I still call the Au Sable my home water.” However, Holly lived in Toledo and had a boat on Lake Erie, at the time Lake Erie earned its reputation for world class walleye fishing. “In 1971, I had the Orvis catalog with fish cleaning tools and beer coolers and a whole bunch of other stuff they won’t admit they ever carried.”

Holly also had the Herter’s catalog, which has become such an icon of the industry that it now carries a hefty price on a myriad of internet websites. “I taught myself to fly tie from the Herter’s catalog. I still have the vice I got from them.”

Then one day, as has happened to many of our members, he heard the call. “I went over to an Orvis Store.” Holly was a self-professed regular at the shop in Rochester Hills, right on Paint Creek. “I fished Paint Creek before everybody was fishing Paint Creek,” he said.

“I attended the expo several years before I said, ‘I gotta go to a meeting!’” said Holly. “I like the idea we are a fishing club - not politics. It’s a fishing club, and that’s what we do. You can’t take it all too seriously. Life is too short.”

“The club has excellent opportunities to relax and enjoy. It fits right in with what I’m all about, I guess,” pondered Holly, who enjoys the trips to the Au Sable, the Trout Tune Up, and all the volunteer opportunities, just to name a few things. Tying flies with the kids and the veterans really makes him happy. “I get as much out of it as I give,” he said.

“Bubba (a.k.a. Charlie Gray) and I actually showed up for the first time on the same night. We both stood up that night,” said the other half of the notorious Bubba and Skeeter. “We didn’t go fishing together for a few years.” They started out as mere sittin’ buddies at the meetings.

“You can’t take it all too seriously. Life is too short.”

“Eventually we ended up going on a number of trips for which we earned our reputation,” said Holly chuckling.

Then the worlds of Bubba and Skeeter collided for good. “Bubba and I got together. We took four or five trips out to the Big Horn...I think we even got ‘em looking forward to us going out there!” Said Holly, “I’m going again this year. We drive one year, then fly the next.”

“I enjoy driving,” said Holly, who has not only spent 36 years designing and developing the Motor City’s vehicles, but was also a professional driver. “At one point, I was paid to drive,” said Holly. “We would organize a ride and drive. People would actually listen to me,” he said with a laugh. “I was the surrogate customer. I would go out and ride around, drive around and decide what customers would think of different vehicles.” It sounds like a dream job to me.

Getting back to fishing, Holly mentioned, “I have a screen saver of me in the Bahamas with a bonefish.” (Evidence provided below.) “We walked around a lot of flats. John Pinto taught us how to read the wind, read the weather, read the sun...” One afternoon in Mayaguana they were out in the water, a school was tailing and Pinto “told me to figure it out. Bubba got one on the same walk.” (Notice how Bubba is surreptitiously missing from the photo?)

“Life is good,” relayed Holly. “I don’t take too many things too seriously.” Currently Holly has four grandkids in the area. “Anything I can find, I go along with and just enjoy,” said Holly before a burgeoning sound of little laughter and excitement beacons him away.



Bubba check out my bonefish! Where’s yours?

Fly-tying master's legacy forever tied to generosity

MATT MARKEY BLADE OUTDOORS EDITOR 12/07/2014, 12:00am EST



To those that just knew of him, Chris Helm was an artist. He was a magician armed only with foam, fur, feathers, thread, tinsel, and deer hair, but from that stack of disjointed items he could create life — in the form of fishing flies that would fool even the most wary brown trout or bonefish.

To those that knew him well, Chris Helm was one of the most prominent apostles of fly fishing. In just a few minutes, he could make the case that all man really needed to survive was food and fly fishing, and the company of others.

To those that knew him intimately, Chris Helm was not just a remarkably talented fly-tier, but someone who dispensed his wealth of knowledge with kindness and passion, and in unlimited quantities.

But to the fish in the Au Sable River, Yellow Breeches Creek, around Crooked Island in the Bahamas, or in the Pichileufu River in Patagonia, Chris Helm was a svengali whose flies were so precise, down to the most minute detail, that they could manipulate and override the strongest instincts in a trout or a cagey permit, seducing it to strike.

Chris Helm died on Thanksgiving, his 73rd birthday, and many years after making his first cast in his long war under the microscope with some wretched blood cancer known as Waldenstrom's Macroglobulinemia. When he passed, legions of anglers and fly-tiers around the globe sighed, felt the uneasy tickle of a tear sliding down against their nose, re-told their best bits of Chris Helm folklore, and then accepted the final dose of that warmth they had won from time spent with him.

And when Chris Helm passed, millions of fish no doubt said: "Amen".

The trout and the bass and northern pike and permit and all of their piscine brethren had been fooled too many times by Chris Helm creations.

Glenn Weisner was a junior high student at Springfield who was struggling to complete a science project on the diet of trout when he met Chris Helm, an introduction brought on by the shortage of information on the topic in the local library, and the extensive knowledge of the subject residing inside Helm's head.

"I was a nervous 14-year-old kid when I first called him, and Chris told me to come on over to his house sometime," Weisner recalled. "I went there on a night when he and some of his buddies were tying flies in the basement. Chris pointed me in the right direction and invited me back. His passion for that sport, and the teaching component, was incredible."

Weisner was a devoted student of Helm, soaking up everything he could about the myriad nuances of tying tiny flies and handling such irregular materials as deer hair. After Weisner's college days, the duo reconnected and remained very close for decades.

(continued on next page)

Chris Helm Blade Article *(continued)*

“Me and my friend Wayne Samson are both disciples of Chris,” said Weisner, who owns Glenn River Fly Co. Ltd. “When it comes to flies and fly fishing, everything we know, everywhere we’ve been, and everyone we know is because of him. His reputation in this sport stretches around the world.”

To those that knew him, Chris was one of the best on the planet at the delicate art of tying fishing flies. He seemingly could take the scraps from my grandma’s sewing basket and create a bass bug that would fool even the most obstinate largemouth in the pond.

Helm won international fly-tying competitions, and was the recipient of the prestigious Buz Buszek Memorial Award from the Federation of Fly Fishers. He was a certified FFF Fly Casting Instructor who also taught classes in fly-tying, did demonstrations at fly fishing shows, and produced more than a dozen instructional DVDs. Helm’s teaching legacy lives on in those materials, Weisner added.

“Chris meant a lot to the fly fishing community, and he was probably better known outside of Toledo,” said Tom H. Logan from the International Federation of Fly Fishers in Montana. “He was known as an expert on materials, and someone who was always willing to help. Chris was just a fine man.”

He had a solid Toledo pedigree — Chris was a DeVilbiss grad who worked at Bob’s Upton and Berdan Service Station, was a professional big band drummer, earned a Masters from the University of Toledo, taught in the Washington Local system, and then worked in personnel services at UT for nearly a quarter of a century until his retirement in 1991.

Then he got very serious about this fly business, and when Chris opened Whitetail Fly Tying Supplies, he put Toledo on the fly fishing map.

“He singlehandedly changed major parts of the fly-tying industry,” said Weisner. “Chris conducted extensive tests to standardize tying thread, he pioneered tools, and he had the greatest knowledge of working with deer hair in the world. And everything was self-taught. Sure, Chris had a tying material business and was happy to make a sale, but what Chris really wanted to do was teach others and share what he knew with everyone he met.”

Helm donated fly-tying materials and equipment to underprivileged kids and to inmates serving prison time. Others just crossed his path and were immediately struck by his generosity. Mandy Hertzfeld encountered that after seeking permission to do an oversize painting of one of Helm’s signature flies.

“The most special part about knowing Chris was, that even with as big of a rock star as he was in fly fishing, I could go over to his house and just talk about casting, or he would give me financial advice, or talk about my career goals,” said Hertzfeld, who now works as a fly fishing guide in Colorado. “When I got out here, everybody knew about him. I just feel so fortunate to have known him — he did some awesome mentoring.”

Hunter Hayes is an 18-year-old whose grandparents lived near Helm. When Hayes was just 12 and already tying flies, Helm gave him a top-of-the-line fly-tying vise worth \$250.

“He had that much faith in me, and he was always so patient, so willing to teach,” said Hayes, who works as a fishing guide in the area. “All he wanted was for people to succeed and have fun and catch fish.” Although he was a true master at tying trout flies and his creations were in demand, it was not all about trout for Chris — quite the contrary, Weisner said.

“That’s the thing people did not know — he tied trout flies and he was an expert at it, but he did not fish for them much at all,” Weisner said. “Chris liked to fly fish for pike, bass, and bluegills, and he loved fly fishing in salt water.”

Helm was one of the pioneers in that aspect of the sport, and considered the pinnacle of his fishing career to be that day in the Bahamas when he landed a permit, a powerful sport fish of the saltwater flats, and a very challenging quarry on fly tackle. He intended to pursue permit again in the coming year.

“Chris took things to the highest level,” Weisner said. “His thirst never stopped — he had an endless passion to explore.”

Helm explored fly patterns, tying materials such as hackle and hair, and processed more than 2,000 deer hides himself, by hand, he explored tools and better ways to make them, he explored hooks which led to several design changes, he explored fishing destinations around the globe pioneering trips to remote locations.

“And he didn’t do this for the purpose of resale or self promotion,” Weisner said. “Rather, he did it to learn and share everything with others. He was trying to catch people.”

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Nine Foot Eight Weight

I was in a meeting with some principals of a well-known fly fishing company and they were looking at products to add to their arsenal. Fly rods were an easy choice, except for the fact that there are so many models if you attempt to cover every fishing condition.

How many people would buy a 4-wt?

Are 2-wts even necessary?

Should we bother with an 11-wt?

Should the rods be 3-piece, 4-piece or 5-piece?

After much debate and close examination of the competition it was decided to take the thinking outside the box. Finances also dictated that approach as well. The debate finally settled on the offering of just two models of line weights and the hope to cover as many fishing conditions as possible with these models. The selection was very critical.

For trout conditions the 5-wt was chosen. The reason simply being that an angler can cover most trout fishing conditions with a 5-wt. A 5-wt would enable the angler to use most of the flies in the box from #24 dry flies to #4 streamers. I thought about this, somewhat agreed but offered the suggestion that a 6-wt might be a better choice. The 6-wt can achieve the same results as the 5-wt with the exception that it can be utilized for night fishing when the largest trout flies are used. If you are going to cast night time flies the size of small birds, you had probably choose a 6-wt over a 5-wt. Besides, I knew from my days of selling Fenwick rods that the 8-½ foot 6-wt HMG rod was the top selling trout rod nationwide for a long time. The bantering went back and forth, arguments were made both ways. The 5-wt emerged as the final choice. (I still preferred the 6-wt!)

The selection of the second line weight took only minutes, and the 9-ft, 4-piece 8-wt rod was chosen. The 9-ft. 8-wt. How well I know of thee! *This rod is the most versatile rod an angler can own.* There were many nights where I float tubed a Michigan river armed with an 8-wt. casting bird flies with ease.

The 8-wt easily covers the entire range of bluegill and bass poppers.

And although carp flies can be casted and turned over with a 6-wt., the 8-wt will cut through whatever wind is present, with more ease. I would rather fight a large carp on the 8-wt.

Going to Canada on a fly-in trip where pike are present? The 4-pc 8-wt goes into the float plane quite easily and most large pike flies can be turned with this rod.

Steelhead fishing? Again, the 8-wt covers the range of flies and is a good fighting stick when a large lake-run trout is hooked.

Teaching somebody to fly cast? Put an 8-wt in their hands and they will learn faster.

Several years ago at the Denver Fly Fishing Show, the trade show for all companies involved in the fly fishing industry, I was told by several rod manufacturers that the 9-ft 8-wt was now their most popular rod. This is not surprising news and one only has to look at the explosion in the popularity of saltwater fly fishing. There is no more perfect fly rod selection for bonefish than the 9-ft 8-wt. Every day, from January through June, dozens of nine-foot-eight-weights are toted through the Nassau airport, as these lucky anglers are catching connecting flights to magical places like Andros,

**“THE 8-WT EASILY
COVERS THE ENTIRE
RANGE OF BLUEGILL
AND BASS POPPERS.”**



Eleuthera, Mayaguana and Exuma.

Again at the Denver trade show a few years ago, I met Harvey Blackwell from Macon, Georgia. Harvey was known to one and all, had absolutely no connection to the trade, and how he got into the show without the proper credentials remains a mystery. Nobody seemed to care as “Bubba” was a very funny guy and kept everyone laughing. He would spend all day going from rod company to rod company and then spend hours casting each rod at the pond. Only Eight Weights! You’d see him casting the new Orvis saltwater 8-wt or going through the rods in the Scott booth looking for any new 8-wt they were introducing. He would come by my booth several times a day and give me full product reports on what he had found.

Why just 8-wts I asked him?

“Johnny!” he replied. “We got some big ole redfish along the Georgia/Florida line. I need a dawg that’ll hunt!”



A FISH TROOPER

Fishmobile, Flies & A Thermos of Hot Coffee

By Todd Schotts

Many years I have gone winter fishing for our bountiful Michigan river inhabitants, but this past November (before and during Michigan's rifle hunt) I decided to load up the Fishmobile, flies, and a thermos of hot coffee, leave my warm heated hunting blind, and head to the pristine waters to fish in cold, snowy conditions. Yes there were winter conditions in the fall of that year....can I say, "Thank you Mother Nature?"

This trek takes place on one of my favorite rivers, the Muskegon (as for where, I cannot tell). One good thing about the Fishmobile, is it has 4-wheel drive, which makes it nice when trying to get into access points when there are wintery blizzard conditions including eight inches of fresh snow. One thing I noticed, was that I had my choice of parking spaces! I remembered the great advice from the movie "Lampon's Vacation" by Clark Griswald, and why they didn't park up front at Wally World, "because it is easier to get out at end of the day." So with that great knowledge, I parked toward the middle of the lot. Now when the lot filled up I could get out easier, but I noticed it is a longer walk to the river and I was the only car there. I decided to stick to his great wisdom and the Fishmobile parking spot. Before I quieted the motor, I glanced at my trusty temperature gauge. It read a scorching 19 degrees and that wasn't Celsius! (As Celsius it was minus 7.2 degrees. I think I will stay with Fahrenheit; it sounds much warmer.) With that, I looked at the USGS info for the Muskegon; water temp was 41 degrees and flow was down. Okay, it's time for the ice man to cometh.

Gearing up for cold weather fishing is actually more of a challenge than fishing in the frigid, snowy conditions. The week before, I fished in cold piercing water that penetrated right through my cold weather attire, and I can honestly say it was cccchhhhiilllly. This time, I thought I would try something different, so I put my insulated hunting-blaze-orange-bib-overalls under my waders, then put the rest of my layers on. The fly boxes were loaded up with morsels of Czech Nymphs, spey flies, streamers, eggs, dries, and (I almost forgot the last item!), my flask of warming spirits - a necessity for cold weather fishing.

Walking to the river, after layering up on the cold weather gear, I felt like a kid when their mom puts them in enough clothes that they waddle, teetering back and forth as they walk, because they can hardly move. I was hoping I wouldn't fall over! If I did, I would be trapped like a turtle lying on its back, floundering.

As I entered the pristine waters of the Muskegon, I waded up to my favorite spot without falling over, a great challenge for sure. My idea to wear insulated hunting bib overalls was working out great; I could not feel the chilly waters stabbing through the layers to my skin. After casting my spey flies with great success, a few juvenile Browns took the offerings, I landed a small steelie that decided he just wanted to take my fly home to frame it on his wall. As things turn out, he would have to try again, because when the great battle ended, he was in my icy, snow covered net. What a battle! With a few more battles on various Czech

BAPTIZED IN THE HOLY WATERS



Nymphs, other spey flies, some landed and some not landed, I decided to put on a size 18 Adams Parachute.

The coldness was starting to set in after 2 hours. I was just hoping I would get a few more great presentations before the ice decided to form on this tiny morsel, like it was on the guides of my trusty fly rod. With a great cast and presentation, even with the gale force winds and snow that Mother Nature threw at me, half way through the presentation, BAM, I had a taker and a good battle with another average size brown. Making this my last fish of the day, I decided to head to the rocky shore line, but Mother Nature threw a knuckle ball at me - a complete white out. If anyone has fished the Muskegon, they know this does not make a good scenario with this river. I kept pushing forward, carefully stepping around the abundance of rocks, gumbo clay pockets, deep holes, and the ever fast current until I finally came to the icy snow covered shore.

Now with the coldness starting to set in, I was starting to shake. When I wasn't paying attention, down I went into four inches of icy, cold winter water, baptized in the Muskegon. If you fish with me, you know I get baptized quite a bit from the waters in which I fish. This is nothing new, however at this time of year with the wintery conditions, it makes your great day of great fishing turn into a wet, miserable cold one. Surprisingly though, from the depths of the cold four inches of water, I sprung back to my feet. I did NOT lie there like a turtle on its back floundering in the cold!

With my final trek (the parking lot was empty except for my trusty Fishmobile, like in Lampon's Vacation when Wally World was closed) the walk was long, cold, and wet. Finally I reached my last destination and started my trusty Fishmobile.

Next starts the process of removing layer after layer of wet clothes; this reminded me of my cold weather training with the Marine Corps in Norway. There, we jumped into the frigid ocean waters from a helicopter, swam to shore, put on dry clothes, and did a 25 mile force march in a snow covered area that would give trouble to the vertically challenged. But since I already did my force march, luckily there was nothing left except for driving back home in the heated Fishmobile. I noticed, and was amazed, at how much water fleece jackets can absorb in such a short timeframe.

Finally with dry clothes on, I found my trusty thermos and poured a cup of hot, steamy coffee. This tasted so good, as I waited for the Fishmobile vents to start pushing out heat. I glanced up at the temperature gauge only to see it was down to a balmy 15 degrees, just in time for the whiteout to start once again. With the second cup of coffee poured, heat returned to the Fishmobile and another fishing adventure came to a close. What a great day of fishing despite the icy cold conditions. Now it's back to my tying lair to tie up more flies for my next fishing expedition...Tight Lines and Snazzy Flies!!

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