

BENNETT J. MINTZ
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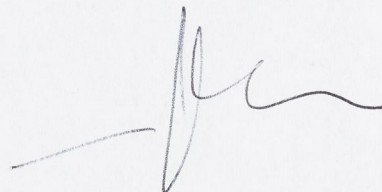
Bud:

As we get a little closer to our wolf-watching, fly-fishing, park-touring, eating-to-excess and general trip, I made up a loose itinerary. Some of the items are carved in stone – arrival, meeting the wolf guys and departure – but the others are very loose. I hope that calling you mid-afternoon on June 4 and fishing the spring creeks the next day works for you.

A few weeks ago I worked a fly-fishing show at a local store as a favor to the Abel rep when lo and behold who was in the next booth but Greg. We chatted on-and-off all day. I told him of my plans to get together with you and he suggested dinner at The Oasis in Manhattan. I'll probably need to nap for at least an hour before doing anything so bold as going into a Montana steak house, so will want to get into a motel by 4 or so. Your suggestion would be appreciated.

I will be accompanied by a longtime ladyfriend, Dr. Joyce Aronsohn. She's a psychotherapist. Luckily for all of us, she doesn't fish.

See you in about 6 weeks.



B

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ITINERARY MONTANA

June 4-10, 2003

Wed., June 4

Depart Alaska #441 to Seattle – 6:30 a. arrives 9:10

Depart Horizon #2328 to Bozeman – 9:55 a. arrives 12:40

Meet Steve Fournier at shop

Shopping in Bozeman

Call Bud Lilly – arrange to meet

Drive to Three Rivers or Manhattan

Oasis?

Thurs., June 5

Fish private water w/ Bud Lilly

Drive to West

Fri., June 6

Stay in West Yellowstone

Tour park

- Old Faithful
- Lake
- Grand Canyon of Yellowstone
- Fishing bridge
- Norris
- Mammoth
- Geysers & Geezers

Evening rise at Reynolds Pass Bridge?

Sat., June 7

Fish Firehole, Madison in Park until around 2 p.m.

Drive to Cooke City

Sun., June 8

Wolves and Bears

Mon., June 9

?? Meet Steve for blue wing hatch on the Missouri?

Gardiner?

Chico Hot Springs?

Float trip?

Henry's Fork?

June 10

Depart Horizon 2328 to Seattle – 1 p.

Depart Alaska 584 to LAX 4:39 p.

Angler's Journey

Believe me, these gentlemen have access to some of the choicest waters in the country. About \$2275/week in Patagonia, \$2625/week in Tierra del Fuego, + air.

There are also a number of elegant estates where you live and dine with your hosts in baronial style, fishing their private streams, riding their horses, and are served by their staff.

Argentina has captured the hearts of a number of the world's most renowned anglers returning year after year. There's good reason. It's a pleasure. To quote a client from last season, "You'd have to be nuts not to go with this outfit. These guys are outstanding. I'm going back next year."

If you have the time and the inclination, this is one winter trip you should not miss.

Chile

A new program is developing in Chile which holds some fascination for me. I have been corresponding with a charming gentleman who talks about near-virgin streams and notably large trout. I've spoken with some of his clients, and his credentials are impeccable. I haven't hit this one yet, but will at the earliest possible moment. It's part of my job. Go explore yourself for about \$280/day.

Honduras

My pal Jim Van Loan was invited on a Permit fishing trip to try the waters at a lodge recently featured in *Connoisseur* as well as "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous." Located on the western Caribbean island of Guanahara, it was once a lavish private vacation home, but the 24-room Spanish villa is now operated primarily as a dive destination, but they have excellent fishing for bonefish, permit, snook, and tarpon as well as

billfish, dolphin, etc. They are now taking 6 anglers only a week to keep pressure on the fish to a minimum.

His report and others indicate this will be a highly desirable destination for salt water light tackle angling as well as a superb spot for non-anglers to be equally amused for \$1395/week.

Bahamas

While the Bahamas can be a crowded tourist factory, careful selection can offer superb fishing for large Bones, and a dream tropical vacation. I am fond of three places which range from \$1500-\$2895/week.

Venezuela

A variety of lodges for pursuit of baby Tarpon, Peacock Bass, and Bonefishing. Call for details.

Russia

Last year I received numerous requests from outfitters requesting I represent their fishing in this newly opened and promising frontier. I must admit it held great allure for me with tales of giant Taimen, and bountiful catches of both Pacific and Atlantic Salmon.

I felt at the time there were too many unknown variables to confidently recommend the trip to my clients. This past season's reports have justified my caution. A friend returned from his trip pronouncing it a marvelous adventure, plenty of fish, but lacking in organization and comforts—fit for only the most adventuresome, flexible, and tolerant.

It's bound to improve as the operations mature a season or two, but in the meantime, if you're that flexible, adventuresome, tolerant person with about \$5,000 (including air) to spend, give a call.



JOHN EUSTICE

Costa Rica

January–November: Tarpon,
Year-round: Billfish

I am particularly fond of Costa Rica. I like the gracious gentle people, their beautiful capital, and especially the fishing. Here one can fish to enormous concentrations of Tarpon and Snook (east coast) and Billfish (west coast). Split the week and do both. Equally enjoyable for me is a few days in its beautiful capital, San Jose. Professional English-speaking guides, well-run lodges, high concentrations of fish, and charming country all combine to make Costa Rica a very special place to visit. One lodge even guarantees a Billfish. Tarpon & Snook, Sailfish or all for \$1695-\$2390/week, + air.

Mexico November–July

Excellent Bonefish, Permit, and small Tarpon in several superbly managed lush tropical resorts south of Cancun for about \$250/day. Wonderful places for the spouse and family as well as the dedicated angler.

Baja July and September–February

Great fishing has often been hampered by poor boats and inadequate guides. No more. Fly fish for a variety of salt species, staying in deluxe accommodations with U.S. guides and first-rate boats for \$2275/6 days. Shorter trips available.

HOW TO BEST UTILIZE MY SERVICES. Use my toll-free number and give me a call. We can look at trips based on such varied criteria as a specific lodge, type of desired fishing, geographic area, budget, group size, time of year, species sought, and so on. I represent a good number of the notable lodges, and many lesser known, but outstanding.

GROUP PLANNING. Whether planning a fishing trip for a family, a group of pals or a company function, being the designated planner is a tough job. It can be as easy as one call to me. You'll obtain a selection of options from thoroughly checked out places. I'll do all the work—space availability checks, correspondence, booking, air ticketing, billing, etc., as directed. What could be easier?

CORPORATE INCENTIVES. Fishing trips make great employee bonuses and incentives. It is also a great way to spend quality time with major accounts.

THE JOHN EUSTICE ADVANTAGE. There are a number of inherent advantages to using my services.

1. I work for my clients. My goal is a satisfied customer who will rebook and refer friends—not just fill space.
2. I "cherry pick" the guides and lodges I represent, and offer a broad price range. I have a special affection for small owner-operated lodges, and represent many superb spots available only through me.
3. I take the risk out of booking a trip. Destinations I represent must have a proven record of superb fishing, and

New Zealand

October–May

Zane Grey called it "The Angler's Eldorado." With an abundance of rivers and streams, trout averaging 3–4 lbs. (and larger), warm friendly people, lovely cities, and majestic scenery. I wish every fly fisherman the opportunity to experience this special place. Simply the world's best place to sight-fish for huge trout. With costs ranging as low as \$60/day for self-guided touring to \$300/day and more for Alaskan style fly-out fishing, New Zealand offers quality angling to suit most budgets. The options are numerous. All trips are individually planned, and typically include various areas, lodges, guides, and city tours, etc.

In Conclusion

If any of these destinations intrigue you, please ring me on the toll-free number and let's talk about it. Also, know that the scope of my destinations is simply too large to adequately condense in these materials. If you have a trip in mind that is not specifically mentioned, call as well. I can book almost anywhere you have in mind. I will consult regarding your area of interest, check availability, supply packing and tackle information, and arrange your air travel. Remember, as my client, there is *no fee to you*.

client satisfying service.

4. I do all the leg work (FAX and call worldwide to check availability), supply necessary packing and tackle information for a successful trip, and arrange your air travel at favorable rates.
5. There is *no fee to clients*.

I can't encourage you enough to plan early. The growing popularity of sport fishing has made it more important than ever. Many of these destinations have a capacity of 8–12, and they do sell out. Last-minute cancellations do occur, but early planning is advisable.

FAMILY VACATIONS. I have a handful of super family destinations which include more than fishing activities. They range from dude ranches to wilderness horse pack trips and floats. Please call for details.

Taking That Dream Trip

If you are at all like me, you have spent many an evening reading marvelous articles of wondrous adventures—looking longingly at photos of majestic places with fishing to make Isaac Walton envious.

You may have discovered that it is not always easy to make that dream trip a reality. Perhaps you have decided on a trip you would like to take or just want to take a trip, but don't know where or when to go.

A long, often confusing, search can go on. Is this place really good? Was the article that I read the result of a free trip and special treatment which may have unduly influenced the writer? Are there perhaps even better places in this particular area which didn't have the connections to be reviewed? When is prime time? What do I need to bring? How do I get there? What is the lowest air fare?

A LOT OF TIME AND MONEY

These trips aren't cheap, and time out of the office or away from home is hard to come by—all compelling reasons to make sure of a prudent choice.

PLAN A TRIP WITH CONFIDENCE

I constantly screen fishing destinations, lodges and guides the world over by personal visitation and a myriad of other highly reliable methods to "cherry pick" those I feel I can recommend and book on behalf of my clients.

It takes a lot more than a slick magazine article or two to get my stamp of approval. The fishery and lodge or guide must have proven to be consistent client satisfiers—exceptional operations.

I consult with clients to get an idea of the type of trip they have in mind, their budget, and then make recommen-

dations which include prime fishing times. Once a destination is selected, I'll make all the reservations (including low fare airline ticketing) as well as supply tackle and packing information.

A few notes on a disconcerting trend. Sport fishing has become a media darling—the hot trend. TV and magazines are filled with guys and gals in waders and vests touting everything from coffee to posh cars. With due credit and admiration to the many honorable and skilled angling writers, this trend seems to have spawned a new crop of "where to go" hackers who, after a free visit and VIP treatment, wax on how this or that lodge is the only place to go—the very best. Not always true. An important part of my job is to help my clients sort out the facts from the media hype.

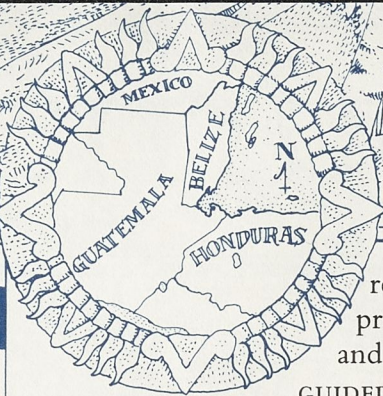
With all that said, I'm sitting in my office scanning my walls covered with mementos and images of glorious trips past, and thinking anxiously of my next upcoming trip. Perhaps I can plan a trip or two for you as well.

Alaska April–October

Alaska is truly a wilderness mecca with unsurpassed fishing. It does, however, take careful consideration to select an area that has not been overdeveloped, and a lodge which is not run like an angling tourist factory or worse. Pick a well-run lodge matched to your needs and budget, and the experience can be sublime.

WHERE TO GO. Rather than a long detailed menu of lodges and camps, I think it is more helpful to describe the various types of destinations available. Once you have zeroed in on the type or types that appeal, give a call, and I can send detailed information on specific spots. Remember, every destination I will





recommend has proven itself time and time again.

GUIDED FLOAT TRIPS.

If you enjoy camping, and want to immerse yourself in the Alaskan bush, this may be your ticket. Varied scenery, abundant wildlife, and lots of fish on some of the best rivers in Alaska—not bad, eh? Most of the floats now have chem toilets and hot showers. Many clients do this year after year. A superb wilderness experience. About \$2500/week + air.

SALT WATER FISHING. There are a number of excellent lodges in Southeast Alaska which specialize in saltwater fishing with some stream fishing available. These lodges typically provide all equipment, and are often ideally suited to company outings. About \$2,700/week + air.

MODERATE PRICED LODGES. Quality operations, often small, some with fly-outs. A group of pals can be the only guests. Ask about the one that features helicopter fly-outs as well as a river float trip. A number of my favorites are in this group. \$2200–\$2995/week + air.

DELUXE FLY-OUT LODGES. Wonderful accommodations, private planes searching out the prime fishing spots, observing the beautiful Alaskan wilderness from a bird's eye view with service like a Swiss hotel—that's the name of the game here. There are quite a few out there, but only a handful are worthy of being called truly great. \$3000–\$4200/week + air.

ALASKA STEELHEAD. There are a few lodges in southeast Alaska who are now getting the knack of fishing the prolific runs in April–May and September–October for about \$2335/week + air. Shorter stays available too.

Canada April–October

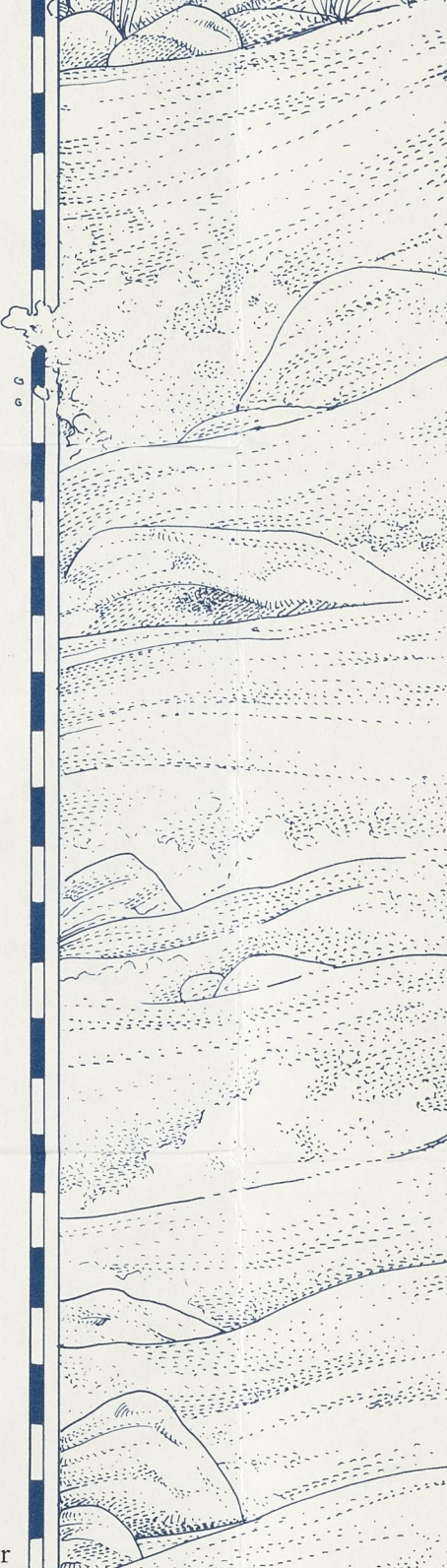
Canada holds a special place in my heart and features a wide range of trips offering wonderful secluded fishing in vast, beautiful wilderness. Floats to sumptuous lodges with float planes and helicopter. \$1700–\$4600/week. To mention a few:

RAINBOWS GALORE. One lodge and 6 anglers in 3000 sq. miles of a stunningly beautiful British Columbia provincial park with crystal clear lakes, rivers, and streams. It's loaded with Rainbows. The catch numbers are remarkable. Includes a one-day trip to Lake X where the average fish can be 6 lbs. or more. It offers an unmatched combination of fly-out fishing, majestic country, and down home cooking for \$3075/week, \$2730/5 days + air. July and August are the dry fly times. Ideal group spot. Sells out early.

RAINBOWS GALORE #2. Secluded B.C. location, wonderful facilities, daily fly-out including a few days on the Dean River for summer-run Steelhead. Always a pleaser. \$3260 including private air taxi from Vancouver.

BOW RIVER—CALGARY. If big Trout on small dry flies appeals to you, try the Bow. I do it annually. The Bow is hosted by one of my favorite outfitters who is truly a fanatic for big fish on small drys. Great spot for a 3- or 4-day weekend. \$290/day for 1 or 2 anglers + motel, air and 2 meals a day. May–October.

BLACKWATER RIVER FLOAT TRIP. 5- and 7-day floats down a small intimate river with an incredible number of Rainbows. Says *The Royal Coachman*, "You should not conclude, however, that a Blackwater trip is for the intrepid or that it is particularly arduous. It is not. If you have a minimum of camping experience . . . you are likely to discover this trip an uncommonly luxurious one. When, after all, did you last have Eggs Benedict for



breakfast as we did on our first morning? or Galliano poured over fresh fruit salad?" 5 days—\$1575, 7 days—\$1775, + air.

BRITISH COLUMBIA STEELHEAD. There is a reason why even residents of the Northwest leave their home waters each fall to fish the rightly famed Skeena and Nass river systems. Scenic beauty and superb fishing for large fish. This is Steelhead mecca. Steelheading is one of my favorite games, and I tell you these guides and lodges are the cream of the crop. One of my clients caught a camp record of 31½ pounds on the Sustut. These will sell out. Book as soon as you can. \$1800–\$4600 + air.

Western U.S.

I have several fishing lodges in Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado which offer superb fishing on often private waters with accommodations and food that can only be described as western ranch posh. Absolutely wonderful for anglers and spouses alike. \$1500–\$2200 week + air.

Montana Big Trout Opportunity

BLACKFEET RESERVATION TROUT SAFARI. A rare opportunity to fish the 1.2 million Blackfeet Reservation with an excellent native guide. The reservation comprises 11,000 acres of lakes and 1,200 miles of rivers, streams, and spring creeks. The beauty of the place alone is worth the trip. Many of these spots are rarely fished. It's a bit like having the whole place to yourself.

In May you can fish 17 spring-fed lakes which yield exceptionally large Rainbow, Brook, Cutthroat, and Brown Trout. Anglers will have numerous opportunities to catch and release trout over 5 pounds, with fish over 10 pounds likely. A client of mine landed over 50 fish in excess of 3 pounds in two days fishing last spring.

Throughout the remainder of the season, it's superb western fishing in a beautiful, secluded setting. I like it. About \$250/day + air all inclusive.

Special Places in Oregon

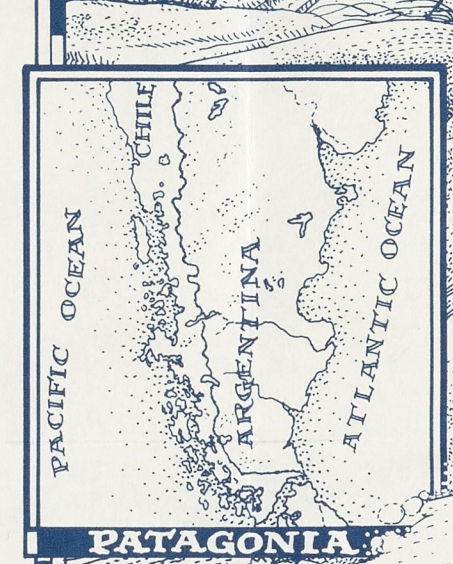
STEAMBOAT INN. I keep a list in my mind called "If I were to die tomorrow, where would I fish today." Steamboat Inn on the majestic North Umpqua River is always at the forefront. A superb country inn, marvelous staff, spectacular food—and that river, 27 miles of "fly fishing only" for summer run Steelhead. Challenging, frustrating, glorious, and home to my heart. The summer fish arrive around the 4th of July, but any time spent at this country inn is quality time. I go there every Thanksgiving just to enjoy the inn. New additions provide several private houses with a river view hot tub in the bedroom.

DESCHUTES RIVER. A good friend of mine who has guided in New Zealand, Argentina, as well as Oregon is offering marvelous floats and/or camp outs on Oregon's famed Deschutes. Salmon fly hatch late May through June, there are abundant hatches throughout the season, and Steelhead September through December. Camping gear supplied. Under \$200/day PP/double occupancy.

GRANDE RONDE RIVER. Recently declared "Wild and Scenic River" status, Oregon's Grande Ronde River has it all, majestic beauty, as well as Rainbows (July & August) and Steelhead on floating lines (September on). Deluxe lodge or wilderness floats. Either for \$250 PP/day.

Dry Line Steelhead School

Bill McMillan is the author of *Dry Line Steelhead*, a book I consider the definitive contemporary bible on the subject. To read Bill's writing is an informative pleasure. To watch him fish a real treat.



To attend his school, a unique experience in the pursuit of Steelhead angling excellence.

This year we will be repeating Bill's acclaimed school on the Grande Ronde River (see above) covering dry fly, skated fly, riffled fly, and much more. 2 schools with limited enrollment 9/26–10/2 and 10/3–8—\$1295 PP. Call for details.

Belize

Belize continues to be the hands-down winner for a tropical get-away. Located in Central America, it is extremely accessible and reasonably priced. Belize has excellent sight fishing for Bonefish, Permit, and Tarpon as well as numerous other species. Historically, April through June has been the favored time for Bonefish, but fish can be skittish. Increasingly clients are discovering September–January can be excellent. The fish are just as abundant, but less spooky after their off-season hiatus. The Tarpon season runs from mid-April to November peaking in June–September.

Outstanding scuba, snorkeling, and Mayan ruins add to the Belizean appeal. It's an enjoyable place to bring a non-angling spouse or friend. There's one spot in particular which lends itself to great romantic interludes as well. This English-speaking country boasts a number of very competent and comfortable lodges in the \$1250–\$1595/week range.

Christmas Island

Imagine a South Pacific island with outstanding bonefishing; that's Christmas Island. Located 1400 miles SW of Hawaii and 114 miles N. of the equator, it is truly a magnificent fishery with extensive flats and abundant fish. It's still fresh and unpressured. The opportunity for catching a lot of Bonefish averaging about three pounds is consistently there

year-round. \$1930/Wed.–Thur. including the 2 hr. 45 min. shuttle from Hawaii.

Argentina November–April: Trout May–June & September–October: Dorado Mid-January–March: Sea-run Browns

FISH OF THE SEASON—AWARD. To Mr. Ray Bregante who caught and released a 32" resident Rainbow Trout estimated at 16–17 lbs. on the Trafal River in Argentina. A picture is available on request. It's still there.

"It's like Montana fishing, but there is no one else there. The people are warm and gracious, and the food and wine are superb. It's a lovely country." Jim Van Loan, Steamboat Inn, Steamboat, Oregon.

I have programs for fishing Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego which I feel are unsurpassed. They feature guides and outfitters who are Patagonian born and raised. There are none better, period!

Flexibility is the key to success here. This is not a packaged tour, but rather a trip planned individually for each client. Each booking constitutes a group whether a single individual or a client designated group. With some other programs clients are stuck in one lodge, and there they fish whether the fishing is happening or not. My programs have diversity and flexibility, keys to success in the pursuit of fish. Clients fish a variety of quality streams as they wish and when they wish.

Escorted by extremely competent English-speaking guides every moment they are there, clients cover a great variety of water, staying at charming *hosterias*, as their country inns are called, which are located throughout the prime fishing areas. Even float and camp on a river a few days if desired.

Note: Prices are deemed correct at publication time, but are subject to change.



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March 14, 2003

Bud:

Your mention of Joe Pizarro got me thinking about some Montana experiences – part of a number of fly-fishing memories I that might someday publish – I thought you might enjoy.

As for the pictures – they were shot by Joe on a day to be remembered somewhere on the Madison. I'm sure you'll recognize it. It was a day of countless trout for both of us. That was a quarter century ago! Damn!

See you June 4.

12:30

FISH TALES

The Trout and the Snowman

By Bennett J. Mintz

My friend Forrest Mulvane worked in the PR department of Western Airlines. At that time, Western (later merged into Delta) flew to West Yellowstone via Salt Lake City and Idaho Falls. I'd depart LAX at 7 a.m. and be in West right around noon. Forrey could put me on a "comp" list every few weeks – he had me listed as an outdoor writer – and I took every advantage of his generosity.

I knew a couple of low-priced motels that generally had a single open even in the busiest of times; or sometimes I'd stay in the "guide shack" provided by Bud and Pat Lilly behind their store for nights when guides were too tired or too drunk to drive back to wherever they called home. It smelled awful and looked worse.

Early one season – about the second weekend in June – I caught a hop up, bummed a wreck of a car from Greg Lilly and set off to fish the Madison River. It was cold, windy, snowy and not a very good time to be shuffling around the Madison looking for the *baetis* hatch. But I persisted.

I was right at Madison Junction about midway out into the river (the Madison in the park is "crowned" so that while it might be quite deep along the banks, it can be comfortable wading the further out you get.) Suddenly I became aware of a lot of noise behind me.

A motorhome had pulled into the turnout and a family had spilled out to watch me fish. It was obviously a grandpa, grandma, grandchildren and maybe a widowed aunt all gawking at me. "Granpa, granpa, granpa," hollered an 8- or 9-year old. "That man is fishin' in the snow! It's snowin' and that man is fishin'."

The grandfather surveyed me for a minute and then let loose with the sum of his intelligence. "He's a damn fool. You cain't ketch no fish when it's snowin', the river is too close to the road and you damn sure cain't ketch no fish with a fly when it's cold enough to freeze snot."

They were perhaps 80 feet away from me, but in the cold air and with their hillbilly twang bouncing off the water, I could hear everything just as plain as day.

I had already caught 6 or 8 12- to 14-inch trout in the previous hour. But the old geezer was right about it being cold enough to freeze snot and I was ready to head for town and a tumbler or two of Jack at one of the local pubs. As fate would have it, at that instant I saw a very fine rise about 10 feet beyond my ability to cast. I inched forward another step or two – the water was just below the top of my Seal-Dri waders – and carefully false cast an #18 blue wing olive twice, then let it settle about four feet above where I'd seen the rise.

Just as I knew the sun was going to set, that the Yankees would probably win the pennant and that God made little green apples, I knew for sure I had that brown trout. The fly drifted only a foot or two and POW!

It was much larger than I thought it was going to be. The fish headed downstream and my Medalist reel chattered. I tried to follow it a bit, but I was cold, stiff and mighty

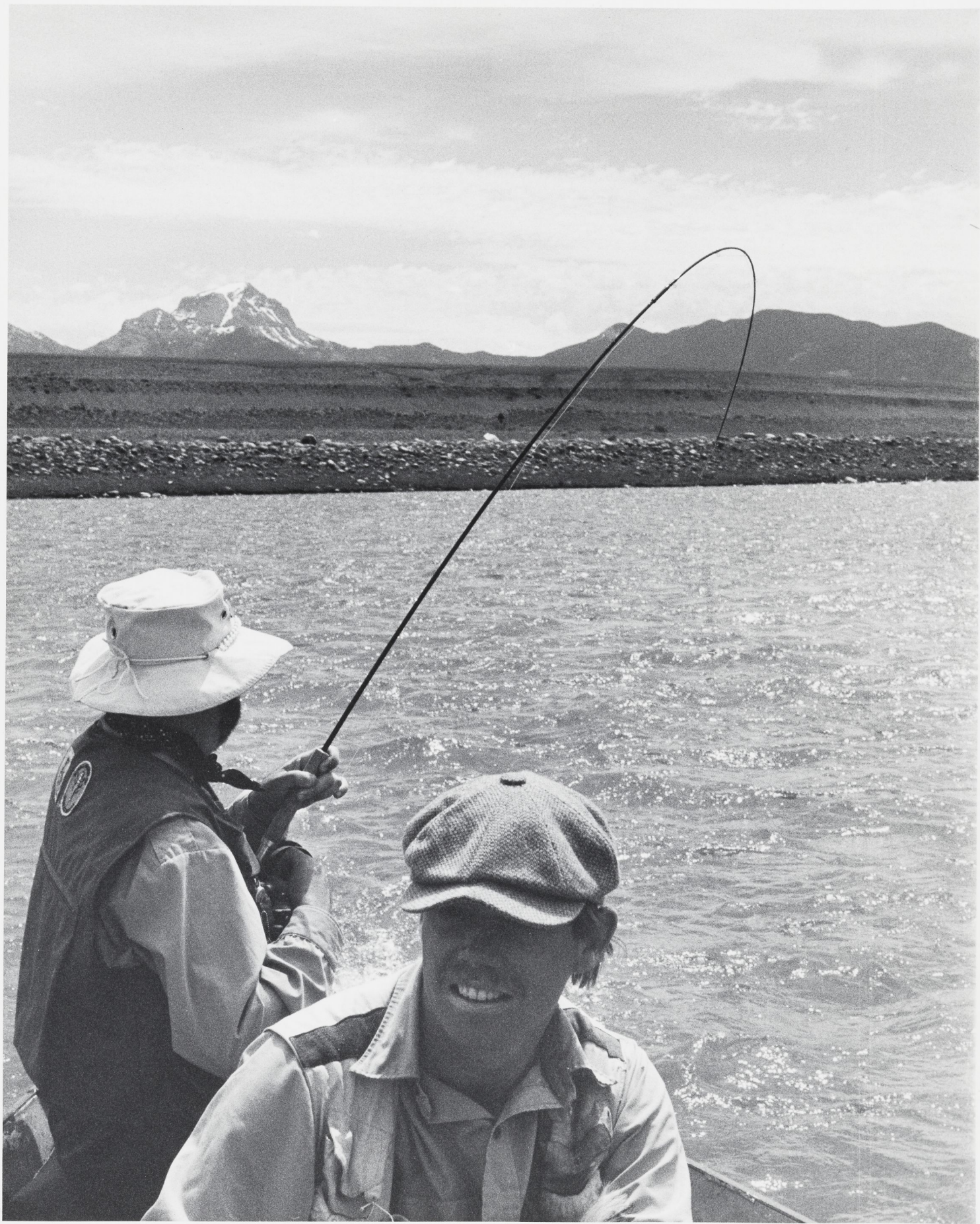
feared of taking a dip in that freezing Madison River. So I pretty much stood my ground and after a few minutes, the fish slid into my net.

At the instant I'd struck the fish, the kid had yelled, "He got one! He got one! Granpa, he got one!" The kid kept up the narration at the top of his lungs during the entire fight during which time one and then the other family member took turns taking pictures of me fighting that big brown trout in the midst of snow flurries.

As I netted the fish, I measured it. Just shy of 20-inches, it was. And with that I turned to face my audience, slipped the hook from the brown's jaw and let her slide back into the river.

The kid went stark, raving nuts. "Granpa, he let it go! Granpa, he let it go! Granpa, he let it go!" the little guy screamed over and over.

The grandfather surveyed the scene and summed it up as best he could. "When I first seen him I knew he was a damn fool."



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JUNE 25, 1978



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JUNE 25, 1978

Mr. Magoo and Firehole River

By Bennett J. Mintz

773 words

It was Forrest Mulvane on the phone, I was informed. Forrey was a public relations colleague of mine, active in the Publicity Club of Los Angeles, and another lover of Scotch. But the thing that most endeared him to me was the fact he worked for Western Airlines (subsequently merged into Delta) and Western Airlines flew to Yellowstone Park via Salt Lake City. Best yet, sometimes he could sneak me on a plane.

Forrey handled magazine and free-lance writers and he had me on some sort of contact list.

“Want to go on a junket tomorrow?” he asked. “Sure,” I responded. “Where?” What the hell, a press junket was a press junket. “To Yellowstone,” he grinned over the phone if you can believe that. It seems that Western had invited a number of writers to go fly-fishing with guides from Bud Lilly’s Trout Shop. The idea was that writers – travel writers, sports writers, family entertainment writers – would write about the ease of boarding a jet, buzzing off to Yellowstone Park, and catching trout in the Madison River. One of the writers pulled out at the last minute and so Mulvane thought of me. “Be at Gate 22 at 6:15 tomorrow morning. We’ll be on the water by noon,” he chortled. Oh, what a scam we were going to pull. Free flight, food, lodging, cocktail parties (plural), guides, and a couple dozen assorted flies. Free. All free.

There were about 10 writers and we divided up into groups of two or three with a guide from Bud Lilly’s. It was early June and what we hadn’t counted on was bad weather. We should have counted on it. It was terrible. It rained, snowed, sleeted and howled either all at once or separately. On Saturday, my group of three had fished an area on the Madison, then headed to one of my favorite spots on the Firehole. It was the picnic area where Nez Perce Creek enters the Firehole River.

When we left the previous spot on the Madison, there had been a deluge just as we got to the car. My leader and tippet were all tangled, I was chilled to the bone with cold, my glasses were all streaked with raindrops and I could hardly see, and I had to pee

something terrible. As we pulled into the Nez Perce Creek picnic area, my companions quickly bolted toward the river while I searched for a place to change leaders, wipe my glasses, dry my hands, and take care of my physical need.

It was extremely difficult for me to see. Besides my water-streaked glasses, I was wearing a rain slicker with a hood too large. The hood didn't move when I turned my head; in order for me to see in different directions, I had to twist my shoulders. Luck was with me as I spotted some rocks and a bit of an overhang just to the left of the parking area. The overhang wasn't large, just a foot or 18-inches wide, but enough for me to get under and out of the blasted storm.

I backed into my little half-cave and almost immediately I felt warmer. I was out of the wind, out of the rain, and relatively comfortable.

First things first. I dropped my Seal-Dri waders, worked through the layers of jeans and thermal underwear and kneeled down under the rock outcropping out of sight to take a whiz. Whew. Then I wiped my glasses, clipped off the old leader, came up with a new one, nail-knotted it on, tied on a hunk of 5X tippet and then a fresh blue wing olive. And headed for the stream which was probably 100 feet away at that point. The whole adventure had taken about 10 minutes, I'd guess.

The guide came running toward me. "What in the hell are you doing?" he screamed. I explained what in the hell I was doing. "Are you nuts or what?" he kept screaming. I explained that you didn't have to be crazy to need to change leaders, dry your glasses, and to pee. He was convinced that everyone from Los Angeles and me in particular was crazy as a coot. "Look," he stuttered, "just, just look where you were."

I turned back toward the rocks and the overhang, and saw, much to my surprise, that there were no rocks and no overhang. There was nothing.

There was nothing except a great big black male bison. In my inability to see, I had mistaken the stoic animal's head for a rock overhang. Why he hadn't stomped me to death is a very good question.

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Joe's Woes Continued

By Bennett J. Mintz

Joe Pizarro was the Director of Communication for the National Council of YMCAs of the U.S.A. and I was his contract communications agency. One of our chores was to conduct communications workshops for YMCAs across the country . . . day-long courses on brochure design and news release writing.

Together we conspired to conduct these workshops where the need was greatest; places like Key West in the winter and Montana in the summer. If we were also able to get in a day or two of fishing, so much the better. We did.

One year in mid-June we found a desperate need to fill the minds of YMCA directors in the Rockies. We did workshops in Denver, Salt Lake City, Boise, Helena and then wound up – surprise, surprise – with time to kill in Yellowstone that coincided with the anticipated salmonfly hatch.

I took advantage of a special deal Hertz was offering, booked a small station wagon to be picked up in Bozeman and off we went.

We did our last workshop in Helena and caught a short bumpy hop to Bozeman. At the Hertz counter, the Wicked Witch of the West informed us that “Hertz in Bozeman was an independent dealer and they didn’t have any special prices, any station wagons or any sorrow and we could take what cars they had or move on, please.” As I listened to her story, I leaned over to the Avis counter and asked if they had any small wagons, any special rates and any sympathy. She said they did, so we moved rods, reels and luggage to the next booth and signed on.

“Are you gentlemen going fishing?” she wanted to know. Obviously, this kid was no Dick Tracy. “If you are, I’ve got a deal for you.” She then explained that they had a special rate where if we took the car for five days, we could have the weekends free. In other words, we’d get nine days for the price of five. And now the *coup de grace*. She offered that her dad owned the Richfield (this was before Arco) station in the little town of Belgrade next to the airport and that he had a private spring creek. All we had to do was tell him that she sent us.

It was late in the afternoon and we had to drive the Gallatin River Canyon to West Yellowstone, but we also needed to get that Hertz lady out of our minds and to dust off the cobwebs on our rods. We fished the little private spring creek for an hour or so and each caught about a half-dozen 11-inchers.

For the next week we fished the Madison and Firehole rivers, Hebgen and Quake lakes, Henry’s Fork (at Last Chance right in front of Mike Lawson’s store) and all the storied waters with little to fair success. It was cold, windy, we had rain, a smattering of snow and the anticipated salmonflies were a few weeks away. We were both dreadfully disappointed.

On June 21 – the longest day of the year – we decided to spend the day on the Firehole. We got started in mid-morning, just in time for the blue-wing olives, and flailed away until late afternoon. We each caught one or two fish in what amounted to a piscatorial disaster. We drove back to West Yell, gobbled double cheeseburgers, and headed back to the Firehole. It was just 6 o’clock when we pulled into the little turnout at Biscuit Basin.

Three guys were spilling out of a car with Wyoming plates and one of the guys looked like maybe he knew what he was doing. "Say," I said, "any you guys know a place around here that holds a fish?" A big, burly, balding guy kind of stepped out. He said he wasn't exactly a guide, but he worked at the Jackson Hole newspaper and he was "kind of guiding" these guys. I guessed later that he was being evasive in case we were from the IRS, Fish & Game, National Park Service or some other hated government agency. As the two guests strung their rods, the guy – who turned out to be Paul Bruun – and I chatted about small town journalism, the state of outdoor writing, and other issues. Then he said, "Look, you guys follow me. I'm going to go past where you should start fishing, but I'll wave and point when I get there. You wait a bit and then go on in. There's been a helluva rise there every night for a week."

Paul trudged upstream and we held up a minute, then fell in behind him as he made his way along the path that skirts the lodge pole pines that rim the Firehole. Suddenly he began to wave and point. When Joe and I got to the spot, it looked forbidding. It was deep, fast and uninviting as the water tumble out of Biscuit Basin. Bruun looked back at us looking at the creek. He took leave of his "clients" ostensibly to take a leak, but he came back to where we stood and explained that it was only kind of deep along the edges and that the center was crowned. Once we got out two or three steps we'd be fine. I was, but Joe – being maybe 5-inches shorter than I was – couldn't get into the water without swamping his waders.

I shuffled out midstream and scanned the water waiting for the promised hatch. And then they were there. Little slurps and swirls 3 to 5 inches from the bank. I had a #16 yellow belly humpy (goofus bug) already tied on and since I couldn't spot what the fish were eating, it was as good as any. Besides, I thought, these little dinks would take anything. I made a short cast and mended the fly close to the right hand bank and in a second I was hooked to a really big trout. It was an 16-or 17-incher. I caught another and another. All were 15- to 18-inches and all fought like demons possessed. I walked a few paces downstream and repeated things. I had caught 12 or 15 trout in the first 20 feet of the run and I had another 200 yards to go.

By this time, of course, Joe was beside himself. Not only hadn't he caught anything while I was nailing one after the other, he couldn't even get into the creek. I waded to the bank and told him to walk ahead of me maybe 100 yards to where things smoothed out. Off he went.

I continued catching one after the other. As I neared the end of the run, I cast to a large rock that was maybe 15 feet off the bank and took a 5-pound brown. It had spots the size of dimes and a yellow banana belly. It got itself downstream of me and I couldn't bring it to net in the current, so Pizarro slogged back to me and as he lifted the fish, he grunted like a guy moving a piano.

It was 8 or 8:30 (longest day of the year, remember?) so we walked up the stream right where I'd started and did it all again. This time I caught maybe half the number of fish I caught the first trip through. But, believe it or not, I caught that same mother of a 5-pound brownie behind that same rock.

We finally quit around 10, drove back to West Yell and sat down to another brace of cheeseburgers. Joe sucked on his vodka Martini like a kid with a popsicle. He said that my fish-catching feat was the damndest thing he'd ever seen in his life. "Bout how many?" he asked. I counted, 10, then 12, then 6, then 3, then 9, then 10 and rounded it

off to about 100 trout. And how many did you get? I stupidly asked. Joe took another dose of Vitamin V, cleared his throat and said none. "None. I got skunked. I had four or five on, but I didn't land one. I got skunked."

He ordered another vodka Martini.

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