

September 5, 1990

Dear Mr. Proper,

Congratulations on your 2nd edition. I have finally got my hands on a copy of my own (I'm afraid I tried and failed on the first edition - but was able to borrow one). It is a worthy addition to my very small fishing library: Skues, Leisenring, Wright, & Walton.

I appreciate your thoughtful style which cuts through the dogma and superstition of fly tying & fishing. The information is interesting and the attitude is most refreshing.

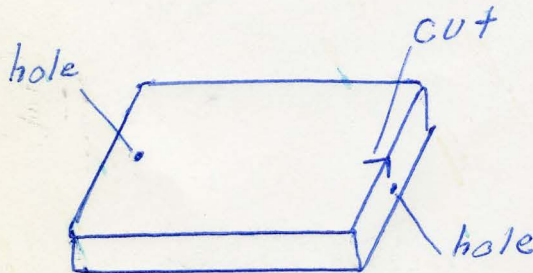
So, I am writing, by way of reciprocation, to submit for your perusal a technique that has been very useful to me.

Your book mentions the lack of an explanation that covers the mechanics of spinning or dubbing all types of fur. Here it is. Along with an explanation of the technique which is the most practical example of the mechanics. It works equally well for any hair, feather or fiber, real or synthetic. It is ridiculously simple and easy and will construct anything from a #22 Irresistible to a #2 synthetic fiber Palmer, without much practice.

This is a variation on Leisenring's technique as explained in his book. The improvement allows much greater ease, flexibility and control over body density, texture, under & outer colors or graduated colors.

It is made thus:

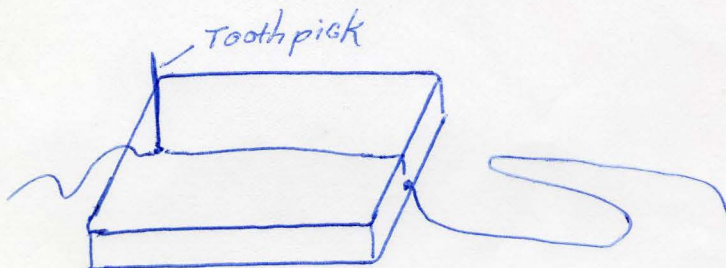
- Following Leisenring's book, make a Dick Clark type spinning block or use any convenient small block of wood about 1"x2"x4".
- Drill a vertical hole smaller than a toothpick near the center at one end.
- Drill another hole the same size horizontally in the center of the opposite end.
- Make a deep knife cut on the edge of the latter end between the two holes.



- Sand the face & rough edges of the block and it's ready to go.

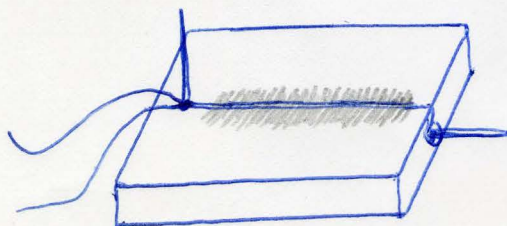
To use it:

- You must have tacky wax. J.H. Keene's recipe in Leisenring's book is best. (This sounds like a lot of trouble, but 20 years ago I spent an hour making it and still have most left.)
- Cut a piece of any type unwaxed thread 12" long, of size & color appropriate to body & undercolor.
- Stick a pea-sized ball of wax on the corner of your fly table & saw the thread back & forth through it a few times quick enough for the friction to heat & melt the wax so it penetrates.
- Lay one end of the thread across the vertical hole in the block & secure it there with a round toothpick in the hole (leave about 3" extra thread at that end).
- Tighten the thread to the other end of the block & pull it down into the cut (the wax will hold it there).



- Now, here is the crux of the thing - take your body materials, cut to the length of the diameter you want the body to be and spread the fibers thinly (or thickly) but evenly crossways down the tight thread a little longer (25%) than you want the finished product to be. Be sure the fiber ends are even & the thread is in the center of the fiber.
- Stick another toothpick in the hole in the end of the block, loop the thread around it, back through the knife cut, carefully and tightly back over the first section of thread (with the body fibers between) and secure with the first toothpick (hold the first thread end tight over the edge of the block when removing & replacing the toothpick).

You should now have:



- At this point all to be done is twist the two ends together very thoroughly and pull them tightly and perfectly in line with the thread on the block. Now, hold the thread down tightly to the block at the vertical toothpick (with a thumb) while still holding the twisted ends tight & in-line with the body thread.
- Pull the toothpick out and, keeping the thread tight, lift the thumb and watch the body spin into a perfect fur (or whatever) chenille. The result is a body with all the fibers sticking out at right angles, perfectly locked between 2 tightly twisted threads, with the thread undercolor showing clearly, even dry.
- Lift the twisted end up, give it a few more twists to tighten the body up, and pin it back under the toothpick.
- Now you can let go of everything, relax, take a couple of drinks & potshots at me.

Result:



Well, that's the mechanics & the technique of the thing and the only part I can claim originality for is the toothpicks to hold everything and more importantly - the method of applying the body materials, i.e., neatly, crosswise & selectively. May I elaborate on that just a little? When I use fur, I cut the skin into 1/8" wide strips, exposing bands of differing color & texture which may then be cut off at the skin and then laid intact along the thread. (I use small flat Japanese shear/scissors & pull them slowly opposite the direction of the cut, causing the fibers to fall neatly on them in a row for easy transfer.) Or, the different layers may be cut off and used separately. Thereby, any combination of undercolor & outer color may be used - as well as any texture/color combination.

The bodies may be as thick & meaty or as thin and translucent as desired. These bodies breathe in water like nothing you've ever seen. They are durable enough to be chewed on by more than a hundred trout and still be in original condition. The fibers will break off before they will pull out of the finished fly. They can be trimmed flat or any shape. If all that's not enough, it even allows the making of a one-piece uni-fly by spinning a hair or feather fiber hackle at one end of the body (deadly if done right). But most importantly, it lets the tyer work with any fibrous material easily and effectively.

Having read all this, it sounds terribly complicated but in practice takes about 2 minutes per body with only a little experience. It's even quicker if you make up a dozen or so at a time and store them on notched index cards Re: Leisenring. It's ideal for those long dark winter evenings when you begin to wonder if you'll ever see a summer stream again.

At last, may I thank you for your endurance and indulgence because you probably didn't need another treatise on fly bodies. You may even have already come across my technique in popular use somewhere since your 2nd edition, making me regrettably redundant. If not and you do give it a try, I hope your results will be as rewarding as mine.

In closing I would like to make some remarks about a couple of other topics in your book.

I have a theory about trout vision that suspects a sensitivity toward the longer wavelengths. Without going into too much elaboration - I will only say that I have conducted near-infrared tests on various natural fly materials and found a strong correlation between certain infrared reflective materials and attractiveness to trout under varying light conditions. Some very significant ones are the iridescent side fibers on cock Ringneck tails, the russet patch between the shoulders of Texas (Eastern?) cottontails, and parts of the varmint known in your part of the world as a Rock Chuck. (Sometimes I think I might give my Left Unmentionable for a prime 5 year old male Rock Chuck pelt.)

Also, you mentioned the scarcity of olive-cast Ringneck tails. Years ago I hunted pheasants around the sage & marsh areas at the south end of the Great Salt Lake. The older cocks there had a definite bluish-green tint over a light brownish tan ground - it was indeed an olive. The pheasants I have hunted in various parts of the country all had different predominant hues to match their environment. The Utah ones evidently matched the sand & sage they lived in.

Well, I will cut this off here and thank you for the opportunity to espouse my fly-body mechanics. I hope you may find them useful.

Happy Troutng,

*Alec Kleinert*

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