

Even though the Firehole is so good to me and my soft hackles, it is not so good to other fishermen I have met on it who were using either dry flies, western streamers or other kinds of wet flies or nymphs. Many fishermen I have talked with said they had very few fish.

The productive water I'm speaking of is pretty much overlooked. It runs right along the main road to Old Faithful, and if you're not too far in the water, you will have to watch your back cast else you might catch a tourist's car.

One minor accomplishment of the soft hackled fly occurred here 4 years ago, during the early part of October. I was winding up a phenomenal day's fishing. I hooked and released at least 40 trout, mostly rainbow, on the orange; and partridge and the yellow and partridge. The rises missed numbered into the 50's. I was sated and it was getting dark, but I was still going.

Chuck Fothergill, drove by in his VW bus and pulled over to the side to see how I was doing. We had met a couple of years earlier in the Madison in the Park, and then later at his fly tackle shop in Aspen. He introduced me to his beloved Roaring Fork and showed me how he takes 30 or 40 trout per day, fishing upstream with weighted nymphs and weighted leader. Our styles were at complete opposites. He was on the bottom, I was on the top. He used lead. I; used nothing but the bare fly. He fished upstream. I fished down.

Sticking to my own style and fly, he could outfish me 10 to 1 on the Roaring Fork, and I was amazed and a little stunned by his ability. He once said he never saw any one fish the nymph downstream with a slick line and without any weight as I did. And I think the soft hackles were new to him.

When he stopped on the Firehole to watch me, I was elated. I told him I had caught more trout that day than I could count. Would he watch me while I tried to take another? Yes, okay. Oh, that I could just catch one more and do it as quickly and easily as I had with all the others. I stepped in the water and cast. Not a long cast, and the mend was not required. In the classic way, with no drag, almost as though rehearsed over and over again by the trout, the fly and me, the 14 or 15 inch rainbow acted the part beautifully. I looked up at Chuck, the fish doing his thing to the end.

Chuck said, "Okay, you convinced me."

Chapter IX

If you were fishing dry fly and decided instantly to switch to any of the soft hackle flies in the book, and the mending method, you wouldn't have to change a thing except the fly. Your dry fly rod would be from 7 feet to 8 and 1/2 feet long. Your line would be a floater. And your leader would be tapered to a pretty fine point, say two, three or at the most four pounds.

The rod may be fiberglass or bamboo, the leader knotted or knotless and the line probably one of the new, plastic floating lines.

You would have to change styles, however, from upstream to across and down, and bring in the occasional mend we talked about earlier.

I still use bamboo, possibly because my fishing life started and grew with this material. And I have returned to silk lines during the last couple of years. I guess the reasons for preferring the bamboo rod and the silk lines are the same. They are both solid with no air space in the center, or built in as it is in the new plastic fly lines.

The air space puts me off. In a glass rod, it makes the butt too large and the tip too obvious. The rod feels "light as a feather", but seems to lack stamina in the middle.

In a plastic line, the trapped-in air cells inflate the diameter of the line at least a size or two larger than the same size or weight line in silk.

The larger diameter of the plastic line causes more wind resistance and cannot be controlled in casting or mending as easily as the silk line. With any amount of backing, the plastic line needs a larger capacity reel, because of the extra bulk.

It is true, the silk line has to be greased and greased regularly to float. But as one British writer said recently, you can play tunes on the silk line by greasing only a part of it, leaving the last few feet ungreased, giving the angler a sinking tip. Or, you can leave the whole line ungreased, in which case all of the line will sink.

New ~~silk lines~~ manufactured in England by King Eider are not made with a silicone dressing which is supposed not to require drying the line. I usually uncoil the line at night on a sofa, and grease it in the morning before going out. The line will require another greasing at mid day in order to keep it floating. String it up between two trees or lay it on the grass or weeds, let it dry for a few minutes and regrease.

There are no special qualifications for the leader in this style of fishing. My leaders are never much longer than the rod I'm using. I make them up from Maxima leader material, starting at the butt with ~~number 6~~ line at 20 pounds, then 15, 12, 10, 8, 6, 4 and 3 depending on how small a fly I'm fishing. Each succeeding piece of material is slightly longer than the preceeding. With an 8 foot rod and

a number 7 line, I start with 25 pound material at the butt.

Maxima is the finest material I have ever used for leaders.

It seems to have the right stiffness to roll out high on the back cast and to turn over the fly on the forward cast. Even though there are other monofilaments with smaller diameters, I like it better because of the color (or lack of it) and the transparency which makes it difficult to see in the water. Dry or wet, it has the feel of silk worm gut leaders we used many years ago. The material also ties and holds the blood knot very well. I have never seen leaders ready made from this material, so you will have to buy it on spools and make your own.

When Pritt and Stewart were taking their 15 and 20 pounds of trout per day with the soft hackle flies, they were doing it with more than one fly on the cast. In fact, Steart says, "The number of flies that should be used at a time is a matter upon which great diversity of opinion exists; some anglers never use more than three, while others occasionally use a dozen." He goes on to say the bigger the water, the more flies the angler might use.

Today, when the fly is taking very well, it is tempting to put a second or even third fly on the leader, in the hopes of catching two trout at a time. I have done this a couple of times, and there was a time when I was using two and three flies quite often.

It can be a good practice to start out fishing this way, if more than one fly is permitted on the water, where one does not know what kind of subaqueous life exists there, or what artificial is taking, then

switch to the single, most successful fly, after it has proved itself over the others. That one fly appeals to the trout more than the others happens quite frequently and then it is really quite useless to have the others on, unless they are the same pattern and color. This fact proves selectivity of fishing feeding under the surface.

The best way to attach the second or third fly to the leader is to use one of the blood knot ends of the leader material. Instead of cutting this end after you tie the knot, just leave it stick out 6 or 7 inches and tie the dropper fly on it. This should be done toward the fine, tip end of the leader where the material is fine enough to let the fly work.

Some public or part water prohibits the use of more than one fly at a time and I don't know why this should be so when most fly fishermen that I know, today, do not even kill minimum limits.

It is more sporting, however, and I feel, more in the classic tradition to use only one fly. Besides, the dropper or droppers will invariably catch each other or the tail fly during the act of casting and create knots other than those tied in by yourself. In weedy rivers, the junction of the dropper has a habit of collecting floating vegetation which has to be removed from time to time.

Chapter X

If you are not an absolute grouch, you will meet other fishermen along the way of the trout streams you fish on, who, from strangers will turn into friends. There is a natural inclination to keep to one's self, specially since the sport demands the concentration of the cast alone. There is also anatural selfishness to keep the location of the gooldgools and riffles to oneself and not to divulge the fly apttern one knows is good or taking on that partidular water.

I have met a few fishermen who wouldn't give you the time of day, let alone valuable information which might help you take a fish. But I have met many more who would share with you, a perfect stranger, his flies, leaders and his most productive and favorite water.

Such a man is Jim Rader. He lives in Baldwin, Michigan, just a few miles from the Pere Marquette. His home is modest. His job is running equipment for the state conservation department. As a native, or "local" he does everything in Michigan that can be done in the fields of fishing and hunting. He starts the fishing season (he really never ends it) with steelhead fishing in March on the Pere Marquette, now open to fly fishing only, all year long, from route 37, downstream for about 10 miles.

On that river and the Little Manistee and other steelhead bearing rivers nearby, he will take 70 or 80 steelhead ina year, many on flies and many on spinners of his own making. He was one of the first fishermen in the area to take giant Chinook, close to 40 pounds, in the rivers as they came up to spawn. He fishes from a boat in Lake Michigan

for lake trout, now making a comeback in that water. And he is one of the best trout fly fishermen I have ever met.

His knowledge of fly fishing is staggering, yet he never read a book on the subject. He casts tiny dry flies, big "caddis" at night, weighted steelhead flies, all with equal ease and proficiency, yet he doesn't own an Orvis, Leonard, Thomas or Young. He knows when the brown drake, the iron blue or the "Caddis" will come off, yet he can't tell you the four stages any of the insects go through.

He frequently takes browns to 7 pounds on flies, and 20 inchers are commonplace to him.

I met Jim in Ed's tackle and fly shop in Baldwin, without introduction. He was buying flies for some evening fishing and I was checking the hatches with the proprietor, and buying fly dope or insect repellent.

Jim is straight forward and unpretentious. He has a natural confidence which betrays his background and minimum education. After the usual fishermen's salutations, he came right to me and asked if I wanted to go fishing with him that evening.

An offer like that from a local is worth more than gold and if you ever get one, don't turn it down. Even though I was a non-resident, I did, however, know the P.M. quite well. I knew many access roads, the knowledge of which is absolutely necessary to fly fishermen in any

trout area. And I had been fishing the river since 1948.

I followed Jim to his home and we transferred rods, waders and other fishing needs to his "fishing car", a 1957 Chevy.

We went downstream toward Bowman's Bridge. Jim was talking about the "caddis". They were not up yet in full force, but he saw a big fish working a couple of nights ago on a stretch of the river above the bridge.

Like other "local" fly fishermen, Jim, too, was a trophy trout hunter. They were all after the biggest fish in the county, competing with each other in their own, exclusive "club", with no trophies or prizes, but just the simple remark from any or all of them, over beers in the local tap, that Jim or Fred or Al was ^{a goddam} good fishermen. In this club, big fish in Lake Country, Michigan and other trout counties in this state are hunted by the locals as bighorn sheep and royal elk are hunted in Montana and Idaho.

For every night of fishing, the local spends at least another or two nights just walking the bank, rodless and waderless. They listen and watch... walk somemore and listen and watch. This is no easy chore, for there are no pathways along these silent, secret stretches of the river. The hunters cross, mud filled spring bogs, and crawl through jungles of weed and shrub, often in total darkness.

Invariably they find the unmolested trophy, for these are not silent feeders, but loud and clamorous with spectacular bravery.

Once the fish shows himself to one of these locals, he is doomed. The fisherman makes the spot, studies the water, casting positions and angles (if it is not pitch black), where to enter the river, cross it and get out. The local backs away then and gloats to himself for a day or two before coming back and taking that big fish out of his home.

Now we ^{*Crossed Bowman's*} ~~were at Bowman's~~ Bridge and turned upstream of the main road. In all my years of fishing the river, I never saw that road before. It was so obscure, I don't think I could find it again by myself.

We drove in, the old Chevy grinding through the sand with branches of the trees scraping the sides of the car. We came to a little clearing and parked, the river not far away.

This was bigish water running over an all sand bottom. The current was strong with a fairly even surface. There were deep, dark pools, making crossing the stream difficult. And tress, tag alders and stumps lined both sides of the river. It was rather spooky, but it was the kind of water chih you felt harbored big browns.

There was still a lot of light left in the sky, and since the "caddis" was not expected yet, we started fishing right away.

Jim put me in at the exact spot he saw the big fish a couple of nights ago. He described the area and pointed to where he saw the fish rise. I tried it with big "caddis" dries and then with a green drake bucktail, but I couldn't find the big fish.

Jim was downstream. I decided to work down to him and switched to a partridge and green. I started wading down, fishing the soft

hackle against the far side of the bank. I saw a light colored fly on the water against the bank and a nice trout took it with a little commotion.

Was this the big fish Jim saw higher up in the stream? I changed to the partridge and yellow and cast it two feeds ahead of the rise and the fish had it just like the natural a moment ago. It was a good fish, but not of the gigantic proportions described by Jim.

As I played him, Jim hurried up. I landed the 16 inch brown just as Jim got there and was taking the partridge hackle out of the fish's mouth. It was a size 12, the hackle all matted down against the hook. Jim saw the fly and asked what it was. He claimed he never saw one like it before. I then showed him my fly box, filled with nothing but the soft hackles. He was a little amazed.

I give Jim four or five flies to try and he went off downstream. I went back to fishing, too, but I could hear him yelling out everytime he had a rise on his new flies.

Later that evening, in Jim's kitchen, I tied a dozen mixed soft hackles for him. I was leaving the next morning and I knew I wouldn't see him for a while. I was glad for him to have the flies and I knew that they would have a good and convincing try out.

In august, I received the following letter from Jim, Dated August,

3.

Dear Syl:

I'm sending you some partridge feathers, I picked up and skinned out. One old hen and two young ones, and will save you more

when I get some. I still haven't been able to get any wood duck feathers but will keep trying.

You made a believe out of me with your nymphs. I finally took two nice 20 inch browns on them, but I wore them out and would like to get some more if you have them.

By now, you probably have heard that the fly only water won the fight and will be open year around, so you will be able ^{To try} ~~to try~~ some spring fly fishing. I did pretty good on the fly hatches. I took 64, the biggest 7 pounds. (caddis hatches) italics mine.) Now, I'm working on the lake trout out in Lake Michigan and doing real goods.

Sincerely Jim Rader.

Chapter XI

A minor revolution has been taking place during the last few years in the style of fly fishing for steelhead as practiced in the west.

The style has been turned topsy-turvy from big, heavy weight flies; sinking lines and sinking shooting heads to small, sparsely dressed, unweighted flies; and the floating or greased line.

Before, where a steelhead fisherman was using two's and four's, he's now using 6's, 8's and even 10's. Before, where he was raking the bottom, his fly is now riding in the upper four inches of the stream. Before, where he let the line belly in the current, he is now mending the floating line just as AHE Wood did when he caught all those salmon in Scotland during the earlier part of the century.

The ghost of Wood haunts the banks of the Clearwater, Snake and Salmon rivers in Idaho; the Grande Ronde, Imnaha and Deschutes Rivers in Oregon; and the Rouge, Umpqua and Klamath rivers in California.

The mending fly fishermen are having fun they never dreamed of. Steelhead to 20 pounds, committing head and tail rises like small trout are now taken in this new style likened by some to dry fly fishing for trout.

What a fishing bargain this is. The thrill amounts to the one from fishing Atlantic salmon with a fly, without the high price tag generally associated with it, for in these areas mentioned all you need is

is the fishing license, the equipment and the method.

That method is the same one I use with the soft hackled fly for trout, with smaller rods, lighter lines, and, of course, smaller, soft hackled flies. Once you learn the system for trout, you can, with the addition of the double haul, step right into any of the great riffles on these rivers and try for the fishing thrill of your lifetime.

Or, if you are already one of the steelhead fishermen already mending, then it will be easy for you to fish the soft hackls for the smaller trout.

In chapter IV, I described Wood's greased line mending method briefly. Now we can go in and out of the book, and get answers to special problems right from the horse's mouth.

Question? What's the theory of greased line fishing?

Answer: "The basic idea is to use the line as a float for, and controlling agent of, the fly; to suspend the fly just beneath the surface of the water, and to control its path in such a way that it swims diagonally down and across the stream, entirely free from the slightest pull on the line".

Question? How does one know when the fly is dragging if you can't see the fly?

Answer: "Watch the line for bellying, or, whenever you feel the pull of line on the rod, you know that drag has been set up".

Question? How do you mend with the line laying on the water?

Answer: "The line should be removed from the surface of the

water by raising the rod almost horizontally and keeping the arm stiff". (I said earlier that I held the rod parallel to the water, but as high as could off the water. I still think this is the best way with singled handed short rods we use for trout fishing. AHE Wood mixed his salmon fishing with a single-handed rod of 12 feet and longer rods for two handed fishing.)

Question: What's wrong with drag?

Answer: "As there is little a fish does not see, the fly ought to behave naturally all the time, as an insect or other live creature would do in the water, and try to let the fly move with all the eddies it meets, as will and living thing that is trying to move in the water with the stream and across."

Question? What is leading?

Answer: "By moving the rod in advance of the line---but not of course dragging it---you help the fly to swim more ~~down~~ stream than across".

Question? How will I know when I'm doing it right?

Answer: "The reased line, if fished properly (and this is by no means the case every time,) has no drag and ofen is all slack and crooked".

The last answer brings to mind the classic photograph of the expert dry fly fisherman, having just cast his line in loose "S"'s and curves.

The question must come to the mind of the reader, as it did to mine when I first started reading about the grease line, what do do when the line eventually swings clear around to the fisherman's side as it must do in any kind of current?

The answer is nothing, because it's time to recast. The lower part of the cast in greased line fishing with the soft hackles is the least important. Lawrie said Scotch and border fishermen never even let their spiders or other soft hackles go that far, but that they were fishing just the upper part of the cast, without drag, casting short and frequently.

"Greased Line Fishing for Salmon" by Jock Scott", is one of the finest books on instruction of fly fishing I have ever read. Even if you never fish for salmon, or get a chance to try the system for steelhead, the lessons there will serve you well in the fishing of the soft hackles, or other kinds of nymphs and wet flies, as it did for me.

Two other books, "Salmon Fishing", Frederick Hill, 1948, and "The Floating Line for Salmon and Sea-trout", Anthony Crossley, 1939, also treat of the floating mended line.

Chapter XII

There is a little, light mark more than half way up the butt section of my 7 and 1/2 ~~little trout that measures~~ just over 22 inches from the butt of the reel seat. The mark will be there forever to remind me of my big fish, because I never keep big fish, and rarely keep a small one or two for a camp supper.

I don't believe in mounting fish and even though I am and have been for many years an avid duck hunter, I also don't believe in mounting birds, or other animals, big or small. The memory should be enough, and always has been for me without staring at some dusty specimen on the wall of the den or the office.

The memory can be pulled out of the mind, or heart, whenever I want to, to dwell on for how so ever long I want to. I dwell on this one quite often during the quiet, winter months, and will now display it, in this, the last chapter of this little book.

I was photographing big crawler tractors in Idaho and Montana six years ago in the early part of September. I finished my work near Butte on a Friday and drove to Ennis to fish the Madison there on the weekend.

When I saw the river in and near that town the next morning, I realized why this was a great mecca for the fly fisherman. At Ennis,

and below, the Madison splits up into several small streamlets, and I fished a couple of these, taking a few small fish.

There was a regional retriever trial near town and I watched the Labs, Goldens and a few Chesapeakes perform for a few hours in the afternoon.

I wanted to try the river upstream and was told there was a ranch about two miles up where fishermen were permitted to cross the private land to get to the river. This was on the western side of the stream.

I like this part of the Madison much more than the downstream part. It was big, strong water with long, thin islands dividing it into smaller water. You could fish close to your bank or venture out near the islands without going too far out in the main and treacherous part of the river. The current was very strong with a nice, broken surface, and even on the "lee" side of the islands, wading was difficult.

It was good water for the soft hackles, and I was having fun with frequent takes from smaller fish.

Fifty yards upstream there were two islands, a very long one on the left, near the center of the stream, and a shorter one on the right. Between them there was a beautiful scour that was sure to be four feet deep. I waded straight up in line with the smaller island and intended to go all the way up and fish the scour down. I was about half way up the length of it, still wading and not yet fishing, and I saw my big fish.

He rose just once, in the middle of that scour, not more than 8 or 10 feet away from me. The rise was slow and deliberate, head first, then the big, vermiculated body curving over and going in. There were no signs of a hatch or a single fly on the water, and I don't know what he took.

Showing himself to me, so close, I felt sure he saw me, too, and slacked off back downstream. I was not going to fish him now. I'll give him plenty of rest so that he might forget me, if he did see me. We can make an appointment for tomorrow night at the same time.

The next day, I returned to the field trials. Being a regional trial, there were many good dogs and their classy retrieves kept me pre-occupied. They finished about five, and I went back to the motel to get the Orvis, waders and flies. In the motel room, I checked the line and tied on a new leader.

It was six by the time I waded out to the edge of the scour. I stayed wider this time, however, and kept looking for any signs of my friend. I saw none. Now, I was at the head of the scour, just below the smaller island, and I put on a Tups.

I was above the spot where I saw him, but I intended for it to be this way. I didn't want to undershoot him, I wanted to put the Tups right where he lived.

I cast several times, throwing nice slack line and moving down very slowly. Something welled up inside me. The fly was running down the center of the scour. He had to do it, if he were there. He did!"

The rise was almost the same. He didn't come so far out of the water as he did 24 hours earlier, but there he was, and I had him.

I looked at my watch. It was 6:05.

What a difference a big fish makes. He moves hardly at all at the beginning. The feeling is of authority. The heaviness is inviolable. You know this is not going to be easy and you feel a little outclassed.

Things started to happen slowly. At first, no big runs, ^{no} ~~surprising~~ leaps high in the air, just the fish lying there, jerking his head like a dog. When is he going to go, when is he going to realize this could be the fight of his life?

Right now! And he started upstream taking life off the reel the handle spinning wildly under my hand. He was going fast and could have kept right on going up around the island and down on the other side and that would have been it. But he turned and came back down and we started to slug it out in the scour.

Now, we settle down to a long series of runs up and down and over against the bank of the island. More sulking and holding and jerking of the head. He never relented. I never slacked off. I just wanted to tire him out, to pull him by my feet and see what he looked like close up.

Really, I overplayed him, and I'm sure that a more eager fisherman could have played him out much sooner. But finally he was at my feet on his side and it was 6:35.

I never took him out of the water, but set the Orvis over him, the butt of the rod at the tip of his tail. I plucked the rod with my thumb and forefinger right over the end of his nose to measure him, and held it tight so as not to lose the place.

Then with my left hand, I unhooked the Tups. I turned the big fish over to right him and gave him a little shove upstream and he was gone. I scratched the light mark on the rod with my fly scissors where my thumb and forefinger were and started in.

A yellow cow dog was on the bank and apparently was watching me the whole time. Before I got to the shore, he was in the water swimming out to me, struggling hard against the current. Now he was up to me and turned to follow me in. We got to the shore and started up the bank. I walked slowly across the meadow, the yellow cow dog following and he seemed as happy as I was.

1.

*to return it to its
rightful place*

Introduction

No dry fly fisherman has challenged me to write this book. It is being written because the soft hackled ~~flies~~ ^{fly} and the mending method of fishing ~~them~~ ^{it are} rarely, if ever, discussed in magazines or in hard back books in America. The author has never seen another fisherman, on many of the famous trout waters of this country, fish ~~a~~ ^{a soft hackled fly-} And although "mending" is now popular with steelhead fishermen in the west, it is not used by trout fisherman using the sunk fly.

One can hardly buy a soft hackled fly in the most respectable shops in any large city or famous fishing center of the country. Yet, the 14 soft hackle flies in this book are easy to tie from perfectly mundane materials...floss, fur and the feathers of very ordinary birds. You need no rare cock hackles, no paired winging quills and no exotic animal skins. And the method of fishing the fly is so simple that a beginner can learn it immediately...and a dry fly purist, depending on how dry he is, a little longer.

*So
noble
a
beginning...
so tragic
an end?
not of B
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helped.*

*The soft hackled fly, the ~~first~~ fly first
mentioned ~~in~~ first in the ~~first~~ same
Juliana Berner's list of 12 flies...
in "the treatise of Flyshyngge wyth an
anale*

1

Introduction

~~The term, and title of the book~~

~~The term, soft hackled fly, and title of this book~~

The term, soft hackled fly, is used generically throughout this book, and applies to a class of ^{wingless,} sub-aquatic flies, the hackles of which come from ^{mostly} ~~game~~ birds such as partridge, woodcock, grouse, ~~and starling~~ snipe and starling.

No dry fly fisherman has challenged me to write it. It is being written because the soft hackled fly and the mending method of fishing it, ^d outline in the book, are rarely, if ever, discussed in magazines or in angling literature published in America.

The author has never seen the soft hackled fly used by any other fisherman. This observation has been made on many of the finest and most famous trout waters of the country. And although mending is now popular with some steelhead fishermen in the west, it is ^{generally} not/used by trout fishermen using the sunk fly.

The soft hackled fly is not ~~not~~ to be easily found in even the best-stocked fly shops in the country. Yet, the flies are easy and quick to tie from easily obtainable materials,. And the mending method of fishing the fly is so simple that a beginner can learn it immediately ...and a dry fly purist, depending on how dry he is, a little longer.

2,
The book is also written for many of the older, dry fly fishermen I have met who embraced the sport late in life. In a three day fishing school in Vermont, ^{Colorado Montana} ~~Aspen or West Yellowstone~~, these men learned to fish dry, but lost a great deal of fishing fun by not learning how to fish a sunfly downstream.

Because the soft hackled fly is nymph-like, the book may help practiced and to show ~~fishermen~~ would-be nymph fishermen a new way to fish ~~like~~ their favorite nymph patterns, or to try the soft hackled flies instead. The instructions here eliminate the need for ~~a fisherman~~ for the average fly fisherman to be an amateur entymologist. He need not know the difference between a stone fly nymph and and a small mayfly nymph, He can forget emergence dates, ~~the~~ fly sex, ^{and} maturity or immaturity. And he can travel from one stream to another, east or west, and ~~have~~ enjoy ~~some~~ the sport as it was meant to be enjoyed in the beginning...without cult, ~~mystical~~ ritual and mystery. Because history is important and interesting to many fly fishermen, the book also traces the evolution of the ~~soft~~ soft hackled fly in angling literature. The repeated discoveries of the mention of them in the most highly regarded books on fly fishing is quite remarkable.

3
The ~~Donne~~ fly

Yes, even in the first english word written about fly fishing, ~~there~~
a soft hackled fly, the ~~Donne~~ fly of sister Berners, is the first
of twelve in her list. ~~The~~ With ^{so} noble a beginning, it is
the purpose of ~~this~~ book, to restore the soft hackle to its
rightful place.

With ~~so noble a beginning~~, the soft hackled fly should be ~~restored~~
~~to its rightful place.~~

~~That's what this book tries to do.~~

I saw my first soft hackled flies some fifteen years ago in Paul H.

Young's tackle shop in Detroit, Michigan. The flies were simple, yet extremely attractive; drab, yet enticing. The slender bodies were of silk floss in any of three colors; orange, yellow and olive green. At the head of each fly was a partridge hackle, wound very sparsely around the hook. Lying there together, mixed in the box, the flies looked alive and natural and very much like real insects, due mostly to the minute, freckled markings on every barbule of the partridge hackles.

CYoung ~~called the flies~~ named the flies

Chapter I

I saw my first soft hackled flies some fifteen years ago in Paul H. Young's ~~store~~ in Detroit, Michigan. They were simple, yet extremely attractive, drab, yet enticing. The bodies were of silk floss in any of three colors: orange, yellow or olive green. ^{The hackles were partridge} Lying there together in the box, the flies looked alive and natural, and very much like real insects, due mostly to the minute, freckled markings on every barbule of the partridge hackle.

Young called the flies, "P.H.Y. Partridge spiders". His catalog advertised the flies saying, "Fished like a nymph. This is one of the best all around wet flies I ever used. Fish down and across stream, and take trout. Hackles lay back along the hook when wet, and crawl or work in the current."

That advertising message, written by one of the great bamboo rod makers of America seem^{ed} too simple, too pat. Yet the flies excited me and appealed to some facet of my fishing makeup, and I went out of the store with six of them, two orange, two yellow and two green.

I didn't know then, that these simple, two part flies would, in a short time, shape my whole fishing

future and become the nucleus for a sunk fly fishing method that would exclude every other kind of fly.

It is the object of this book to show how, and, perhaps, why, this happened.

To retrace one's fishing steps to the present time or state of the art can be at once, pleasant and enlightening, difficult and even embarrassing. One is affected first by locale and the easily available water, and by the successess or failures recorded on this water either by the fisherman, himself or by his friends or strangers he happens to meet at the water's edge. The fickle fisherman will discard a certain lure, bait or fly pattern or fishing style as soon as he finds something else more successful, or more appealing to his inner senses.

Once addi~~cted~~ed to fly only, he moves laterally or horizontally from wet only to dry only, or from wet most of the time to dry some of the time, or from big, shiny streamer only, to nymph only, or from day fishing to night fishing. In most movements, he seeks to catch more fish or bigger fish,

but finally he seeks a personal satisfying doing what, to him, elevates him with the pleasure he's looking for. This is why the fisherman always wears the same old hat, or torn vest. Why he prefers his bamboo rod to a glass one. Why he'd rather cast a silk line instead of a plastic one. Why he sticks with one fly or kind of fly or method instead of some other. Or even why he prefers to fish, in solitude, an obviously less fruitful stretch of water on his favorite river, instead of jamming up with the other fishermen in the popular pool or run just around the bend.

So it was with my own fishing evolution. It started on the west side of Cleveland, in the late 30's, at least 150 miles from the nearest trout stream. True, I had Lake Erie a few blocks from home, and I can remember first, fishing with a hand line and trolley for Perch and Pike, as they swarmed the breakwalls and piers in search of food. Huge schools of white bass also scourged the shallows chasing madly anything that moved. They came in right up the beaches, boiling the surface. The school moved across the water in one large mass and it was easy to catch a bushel basket full of them with a

bait casting rod and multiple winding reel. This was more fun than still fishing for perch or pike. The favorite lure for the white bass was a piece of white cloth, a quarter of an inch wide and about an inch long. The piece of cloth was stuck on to a smallish hook and two or three or even four of these were tied on to a four or five foot piece of gut. The gut was attached to a small section of broom handle with screw eyes on either end, one for the casting line and the other for the gut.

The broom handle was the plug and supplied the weight you needed for the cast and it kept the "flies" up on the surface during the retrieve. You threw that plug right in the middle of the school and worked it back in jumps and jerks. The white bass went mad after it, chasing the white pieces of cloth, hooking themselves, fighting to get off, unhooking themselves, so that another could grab it before it was finally retrieved. Three fish, up to 10 inches long, were frequently caught at one time. And you could see it all.

Not all of white bass fishermen used the pieces of cloth. Some¹ used a real fly, a small white or yellow streamer type made from plain chicken feathers. I don't think they were any more effective than the cloth, but once I saw them, I knew I had to try them.

Glen didn't pay too much attentoion to me and went right on tying the flies. ~~I inched closer to him~~ Feeling like an intruder, I inched closer to him. He was waiting for me to speak first. I dont know why, but I felt embarrassed. I started asking silly, ;elementary questions about fly tying and fly fishing. ~~It was stupid, I was hitting~~ ~~something, but I didn't know what.~~ Like any professional/s attitude towards the rank ^{beginner} novice, Glen was so bored, he couldnt answer. I got nothing out of him except the suggestion to visit the main branch of the public library in Downtown Cleveland where I could;find all the inform^a mation I wanted on fly tying and fly fishing.

Before I left the shop, however, ;I bought fifteen or twenty cents w orworth of hooks and white and yellow chicken feathers for the white bass flies.

The first tyings were terrible.

rewrite page 8 and 9 and etc.

Coming into hccc this shop, or , more precisely, when I opened the door, I stepped into a wrold which I had never known

Thatever

Whatever ~~it was~~ the mysterious elements playing on my mind in that room

Inside, framed colored prints of trout, salmon and fishing scenes hung on the wall. Black and white photos showed a smiling glen and other fishing friends standing near streams and fish ing in them. Two barber chairs were on the left, and if, as customers sat in them, they could look to the other wall, where hung long, glass cases filled with trout flies, bass flies and even fully dressed salmon flies.

Glen Buckel had no customers and was bent over a vise on a table in the back of the room. Here, too, were the cabinets and closets which contained huge stocks of fly tying materials. Rod cases, sections of bamboo rods in various stages of completion leaned in a corner of the room, for I found out later, Glen made bamboo rods from raw cane.

At that point in my life, I was 16 or 17, I know now that I ~~experienced~~ felt the ~~first major traumatic~~ romantic experience. It was love at first sight. It is hard to say what and how I was in love with. For, I had never before seen a trout fly, a trout, a trout stream or ~~any~~ read a sigle word about them.

rewrite page 8

The shop was small with a large window on each side of the door. One window had a display of fly tying materials and there was a ~~large white card~~ framed white card

One window had a display of fly tying materials; packages of hackles, tinsels, hooks, furs, chenilles, ~~xxxx~~ paired wing quills and other fly tying materials. The other window had a framed large card on which was attached all the materials required for a dry Quill Gordon. The ~~fish~~ finished Gordon was also stuck to the card, and I wondered how a feather, piece of quill and slips of yellow wood duck could be turned into such a beautiful work of art.

Inside, ~~I could see~~ ^{colored} framed prints of trout, ~~and trout~~ salmon

and fishing scenes hung on the wall. Black and white photos showed a smiling

~~of Glen and friends~~ other fishing friends ~~in various~~ standing near and

streams, fishing in them. Two ~~bar~~ chairs were on the left, and

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fully dressed salmon flies.

Glen Buckel had no customers and was bent over a vise on a table

in the back of the room. Here, too, were the cabinets and closets

which contained huge stocks of fly tying materials. Glen didn't pay ^{attention} to much attention to me, and I couldn't blame him, for it was obvious from ^{of bamboo rods in various stages of completion} ~~corner of the room~~, for, I found out later, Glen made my worn sneakers and shabby clothes that I wasn't coming in the shop ^{bamboo rods from raw cane} to be outfitted for a salmon fishing expedition.

The flies were available from a barber, Glen Buckel, who had a shop on Detroit Avenue, just west of the neighborhood I lived in. I rode over there on my bike the first chance I got.

The shop was small with a large window on each side of the door. One window had a display of ~~fly~~^{fly} tying materials and there was a large white card with all the materials required for a dry Quill Gordon stuck to it. A finished fly was also attached to the card by the point of the hook and I wonder ~~and~~^{ed} ~~was amazed that a~~^{how} ~~hookle~~^{feather}, piece of quill and slips of yellow wood duck could turn into such a beautiful work of art, and I went in to get my white bass flies.

Inside, I could see framed prints of trout and trout streams, and ~~trout flies~~ hanging on the walls. ~~Black and white photos of~~^{Black and white photos of} ~~both banks and other~~^{both banks and other} There were long ~~and~~^a narrow glass cases also hanging and these were filled with flies, wet and dry, each one stuck to small corks^a all in a row. One such frame contained ~~salmon~~^{salmon} ~~shadefinethinking~~^{shadefinethinking} flies, fully dressed and beautiful beyond description.

Glen Buckel had no customers and was bent over a vise on a table in the back of the room. He didn't pay much attention to me, and I couldn't blame him, for it was obvious from my worn sneakers and shabby clothes that I wasn't coming in the shop to be outfitted

the fact
later that
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for my fly
all over
U.S. &
Canada

for a salmon fishing expedition.

My first reason for coming there slipped away as I became more and more infatuated with the aura of the place, even the smell of the moth balls used to protect the necks and skins became delightfully fragrant.

I went round and round the room, not being able to get enough of the newly found joy that the flies, the prints and the materials offered me. To put it mildly, I was spellbound, and it was all the more amazing because at 16 or 17, I had never before seen a trout fly, a trout, a trout stream or read a single word about them.

Glen shook me loose from the romantic mystery by asking what I wanted, and I had to answer that I really didn't know. I would like to make flies like those in the store, but how did I go about it? What equipment and materials did I need? Did trout eat those things? And, of course, how much would all this cost?

Glen didn't answer all the questions and since he wasn't running a fly tying school for kids of parents on relief, he suggested I go to the main branch of the public library in downtown Cleveland, for books on the subject.

Before I left, however, I bought fifteen or twenty cents worth of hooks and materials and started a hobby that has been a real and important part of my life for more than 30 years.

My first tyings were terrible. I had no vise, no hackle pliers, no thread bobbin. I fashioned a vise from a pair of square nosed pliers, put the hook in the jaws and wrapped a stout rubber band around the handles. I made a pair of hackle pliers from a piece of coat hanger, and from the same material, I invented my own thread bobbin, which I still use today. My mother supplied thread and flosses from her crocheting and sewing basket.

I couldn't figure out how to get the hackle fibres to stand out perpendicular to the hook shank as they did on Glen's flies. I thought each fibre was tied in separately. I couldn't tie a half hitch. The tinsel wouldn't lay flat. It was frustrating and I was getting nowhere.

There was nothing left to do but take Glen's advice and head for the library. ~~after all, this service was free.~~ Over a period of a year, I read every book on fly tying and fly fishing the library had to offer. I would take home for seven days at a time, books by Halford, Skues, LaBranche, Hewitt, Hills, Bergman, Knight and many others. In one of the British books, I saw photo-

graphs of the Test River and of the Village of Stockbridge on that river and the Grosvenor Hotel, where fly fishers met to fish this great stream. How easy it was for me to read these books! What fascination they held for me! How unexplainable that a kid from the west side of Cleveland, without a single fly fishing friend or relative; without ever having seen a trout stream, would spend teen age days and nights reading about a subject so remote and trying to tie flies for trout in streams still unseen and unfished.

Armed with the knowledge I was getting from the books, I visited Glen more and more. I would show him the flies I tied and he would show me where and how I made the mistakes. He taught me the right way to set and tie wings, to make half hitches, to wind hackles around the shank, and to handle tinsels. He talked with me like a streamside brother. He told me of the great trout streams in northern Michigan where he had come from originally and where he spent two weeks every year on vacation. He spoke of trout streams near Kane, Pennsylvania. These were the closest to Cleveland, he said.

The more he talked, the more I knew that soon I would have to fish one of these rivers, to be baptised or married forever because the courtship had gone on long enough.

He warmed up gradually, for it was obvious I was an enthusiastic pupil, as he had never encountered.

So, in the spring of 1938, I made plans to fish the streams near Kane. I had been working at odd jobs around the neighborhood, cleaning a bakery, selling newspapers and whatever. I had enough money to buy a pair of boots, a fly rod and reel, and I had enough left for the Greyhound bus ride to Kane and back and room and board for the weekend. And I had my own flies.

My mother worried about the trip. To her it was an odyssey to the ends of the earth. I was going alone and I didn't know a soul in Kane. How would I get to the rivers from town? Where would I stay and what would I eat? I told her I could take care of myself. I could hitch hike to the streams or walk if I had to.

The bus left Cleveland late in the evening. I never slept a wink, and by dawn I could see the purple black outlines of the low altitude mountains in north central Pennsylvania. All that I read about and dreamed about was going to come true. Or was it? I couldn't cast, I couldn't make the dry fly float. I couldn't wade because the rocks in the streams were too slippery and I went into the icy spring water more than once. In the British books that I read earlier, I saw the patterns of the Butcher and the Alexandra. These flies were such killers that they were outlawed on many British streams. I had tied many of these for the Kane trip and tried them

over and over, but nothing came to them. I haven't used them since.

I can't remember if I caught a single fish during that weekend, but I can remember seeing some small trout in a basket of another fisherman and their beauty of form and color convinced me that the baptismal was worth it. The mountains, the clear water and pure air also helped to entrance me.

Back in Cleveland later, I was fishing Rocky River with ringed-eyed flies and spinners. Now, at least, I was stuck ^{to} ~~on~~ a fly rod. The river divides Cleveland from Lakewood and runs through Metropolitan Park. I don't know what the condition of the river is at the present time, but back then it was quite clear and delightful, with some rapids and slow pools and many sharp bends against small cliffs of shale. As its name implies, there were many rocks in the river which split the currents and hid some very nice back bass.

A fast retrieve was necessary to keep the spinner blade turning in the slower water, and I learned the figure "8" left hand retrieve. After a while, I learned to read the water, and would move from ^{one} pool to another looking for places that resembled the previous striking place.

During this time, I was also using live hegramites on the fly rod. The river was full of them and they could be caught by upsetting rocks in the faster current against a piece of netting held by yourself or a friend below. Once obtained, the helgramite could be secured to the hook with a small rubber band slipped over his abdomen. The helgramites were as mean as the bass were. With their powerful pinchers at their heads, they would grab onto your finger or onto the lip of the bass that you caught using the helgramite, if it wasn't already in his stomach.

The fly and spinner combination on a fly rod followed me into the Army in 1942, and I was using them with great success for rainbow on the San Gabriel River, near Los Angeles where I was stationed for a time. In that same river, I was fishing a wooly worm, which was becoming popular on the west coast. The ringed-eyed fly and spinner combination has almost disappeared from American trout fishing, due perhaps to considerable fly-only legislation, yet in the early forties, it was a very popular way to fish. One could buy the flies separately and attach them to his own spinners, or buy the fly-spinner combination.⁶ These flies were very colorful and almost always had some red in them. Today, most fly material catalogs do not even list ringed-eyed hooks.

In December of 1943, the Army gave me passage on

a crowded troop 15.

a crowded troop ship to England and moved me and our fighter control squadron to a small village right on the banks of the Hampshire Avon. I did not fish that river as the trout season was still closed, but I ghillied one day in February for a title gentleman who owned salmon fishing rights and helped him land a 20 lb salmon he had taken on spinning gear.

In April, our squadron moved to an airfield at Andover, just 7 or 8 miles from Stockbridge, and the Test River. What a coincidence! What a stroke of fate! As soon as it was possible, I was on a bus to the village and that fabled river.

The hotel was there, just as in the photographs I had seen earlier in the British angling books. The Test, not far from the hotel, ran smooth and evenly, with long weeds, limpid as hair, obscuring the white lime bottom. The river seemed to flow as if one large glass mass, with little difference in depth from one bank to the other. Close, you could look right through it, but a few steps back and the smooth, even surface turned into a shining mirror that reflected the sky and the trees and the birds.

Looking into the river, I felt the fishing temptation as I had never felt it before or since and hurried back to the hotel. I found out soon

enough, the entire ~~of~~ river was private from beginning to estuary, except that the Leckford club up stream might permit a GI to fish on its four miles of water. And it was true! I met the club secretary the same day and he informed me that due to the war, the club members were not able to get to the river in any number and that American soldiers were invited to fish the river, in their absence. Permission granted, the visitor had to abide by club rules: dry fly only upstream to rising trout or grayling; beat fishing on the number assigned for the day or evening; fishing from the bank only with no wading; and killing of all fish caught.

The secretary told me I could come whenever I wanted. All I had to do was to report to Mr. Bains, the river keeper, at his small cottage near the middle beat.

I had brought no equipment from America, and so purchased an 8 foot, two piece rod from a tackle shop in Ander~~er~~. I had not much choice in selection because it was the only rod in the store. The joints were of the Hardy spiral lockfast type and the windings, close spaced the whole length of the rod in typical British fashion. The action was medium, much like American rods.

Mr. Bains was a nice, ^{ev} old man, taciturn, yet

friendly. He offered me one of the club rods, with Hardy reel and double tapered silk line, but the rod felt too heavy. It was about 10 feet long. He could sense I was anxious to try my own, new rod and lent me a reel and line and knotted silk worm leader. I had my own dry~~ies~~ from Glen Buckel. Mr. Bains thought they were well tied, but too large for the river. He gave me a small tin box with several Test patterns in it: olives, iron blues, orange and ginger quills and Welshman's buttons, in 12's, 14's and 16's.

The Leckford water was about four miles long. It was divided into ten beats, the same number as the membership of the club. Beat numbers were marked on stakes driven into the bank on both sides of the river. Bains explained that I was not to fish until I saw a trout rise.

Benches were placed along every beat so the fisherman could sit on them and watch the water for the rising fish. No wonder the English call this, "The contemplative sport".

I sat and waited, my eyes glued to the river. After a short time, I began to see swallows buzzing the surface of the river, dipping down here and there for the first flies of the hatch. Then the rises started, slowly at first, then faster, until I could

see a half dozen fish feeding immediately above and below me. I tried the closest fish. He rose and I struck, but too fast. Another try on another fish and I lipped the fish, losing the fly. After a few more tries, I finally got one, a fish of about a pound and a half. I was starting to throw more slack, to give the fly a longer, natural float before any drag occurred. It seemed better to wait a second to set the hook after you saw the rise, than to strike immediately. I fished out my whole beat and raised many fish, but I only caught one other slightly larger than the first.

These two fish, on my first day on the Test, were the largest I ever caught in about 7 years of fishing. Reading now, about how difficult it is to catch Test trout, because of their "education" and wariness, the clear slow water, their selectivity and aversion to drag, I think I did quite well.

I continued to fish the test through May and the first part of June. I learned to strike slowly, to stalk the fish from a low position on one knee, and to throw slack. I caught many "brace" of brown trout and a few grayling, a fish the Test fly fisher disdains, and calls "gray bob". The largest fish I saw there was caught by another gentleman on a different beat from mine. I helped net the fish after the man fought it for some 25 minutes on a size 16 orange quill. The fish

weighed one ounce less than 5 pounds.

The way the British fish the Test and other chalk streams is a good example of many fishermen doing their own thing in their own way. Most Americans would not agree with the system, and there are and have been some British fishermen and writers who thought the dry fly only rules were all wet and proved it. Now, these rules have been modified, I understand, and some clubs have succumbed to limited sunk fly fishing upstream.

Writing these pages, I am reminded again of the generosity of the members of the Leckford Club. I don't think I fully appreciated the privilege of fishing the Test when I was so young. Mr. Bains has departed, and as I suspect sadly, so have many of the fine gentlemen I met there during that troubled year. But, it's always sad to reflect on good times and good friends.

Chapter II

After the war, I pursued a college education in my home state of Ohio. I built my first bamboo rod and was tying more and more flies. I saw Glen less and less, but on our first meeting, I told him about fishing the test, and I thought I saw a tear in his eye.

Fishing came during spring and summer breaks when I would hitch hike from Cleveland to Grayling or Baldwin, Michigan.

I had returned to wet fly fishing mostly with bucktails in the early part of the year and small, winged wet patterns later on. I always carried dry flies with me, in case a hatch came on, but looking back on it, I can remember very few first rate hatches during daylight hours.

What a difference from the British way and the American. Here I was sharing the river with worm fishermen, spin fishermen, egg fishermen and other fly fishermen. They came and went in front of you upstream and down. The animosity was always the greater, the coarser the tackle and style. I feel that most American fly fishermen would like to fish finer or with dry fly only, but that on all-systems rivers, they must compete with the live bait or hardware fisherman, and so resort to large bucktails. One

rarely sees good, healthy hatches on these rivers and even when they do occur, the fish do not seem to feed on the insects.

After college, I never moved far from the mid-western metropolitan areas of Detroit, Cleveland and Chicago, and for a time was limited to opening days and weekends on the Au Sauble, Pere Marquette, Little Manistee, the Boardman and other rivers in Michigan. With fly, only, either bucktail or wet fly, I was catching my fair share of the regular sized fish in these rivers, planters or natural spawners, but rarely would put into a 20 inch fish.

Yet, big trout were in these rivers and local fly fishers caught them regularly. Their secret was night fishing with big, non-descript hair and feather flies, dry or wet. Fred Koernke, was one of these local fishermen. He lived in Lovells, Michigan, on the north branch of the Au Sauble. He, too, was from Cleveland, but gave up the city life to spend more time on a trout stream. He and his wife operated "The Pines" restaurant, and every evening after closing, Fred was on one of the branches of the Au Sauble or some of the smaller creeks not too far from home. He rarely fished during the day time.

The restaurant was a kind of meeting place for many locals of the area. Fred sold flies, rods and

reels. Two six or seven pound nocturnal browns were mounted on the wall.

I fished the north branch quite a lot because it had no canoe traffic on it and because it was fly only. I ate every meal I possibly could in his restaurant and would often drive 40 miles out of my way, hoping he would invite me with him on one of his evening's sojourns. For a while I felt a non-resident like myself might get an invitation to the white house easier than being invited to one of Fred's hotspots, but he finally did offer and I accepted.

We left the restaurant at about 9 p.m. and drove for about 1/2 hour in a downstream direction. At the end of a long pole fence, he stopped and turned into a small rutted road. We parked and walked about a quarter of a mile towards the river. There was still enough daylight left to see our way over the rotted tree stumps and tall spreading ferns. The river below was quite fast and its sound came to you before you could see it. We clambered down the steep bank and sat on a felled trunk of a large tree. Now, we waited. We were waiting, Fred said, to hear the first sounds of the whip-poor-will. He kept looking up into the waning sky for the first signs of the "Caddis" hatch. Misnamed in Michigan, the "Caddis" hatch is really the hatch of the large,

burrowing May fly. These flies will have a wing span of about two inches. The nymphs of the species are called wigglers and are large enough to be impaled on a hook as live bait. No other hatch in Michigan causes so much excitement among fly fishermen. Every trout in the river will gorge themselves on these hapless fliers, and it is during this time that fish of over 5 and 6 pounds are taken. The fly rarely comes off before dark.

The light was fading fast now, and the whip-poor-wills were answering themselves up and down the river. Then, in the remaining light of the sky, through the trees, we saw the first "caddis" flies winging their way up stream. Fred said it was time to get in. He put me in just a few feet down from the tree trunk and he went down stream some 50 yards.

It was pitch black from the surface of the river to the tops of the trees, but you could hear the trout sucking in the "Caddis" here and there. How acutely my hearing had become! Robbed of sight, I was listening with an inner ear. I started casting to the sounds, having made sure I was far enough in the river to clear the back cast. Immediately, I had a strike, the sound from the rise to the artificial louder and more vociferous than the regular suckings of the spent natur

naturals. I landed the fish of about 12 inches, and started in again. I was asking myself where were the 7 and 8 inchers I normally caught in water like this during the daylight hours, when I heard quite a large commotion in the vicinity of my fly and set the hook again. I had a good fish on just going crazy on top of the water. If he hadn't stayed so high, I might have had him, but I lost him.

I brought the line in to check the fly, put the ^{lighted} flash light in my mouth ~~and turned it on~~. The fly was gone and so was the ~~match~~. I [^]sined the light [^]onto the water and there were no more "Caddis". Now, I could see Fred's light moving up and down on the bank and I got out and joined him. He didn't do much better than I did and we walked back silently dodging the rotted tree stumps and brushing the tall ferns with our thighs.

Since then, I have tried other night fishing on the Au Sauble, the Pere Marquette and other rivers in Michigan. A few times I have caught fish over the 20 inch barrier. I will admit that on these waters, this is the way to get big fish. But there is so much for the sight to enjoy when fishing in daylight, that much of what I fish for seems to be gone, once the whip-poor-wills begin their answering service.

Chapter III

It was on the same water, the north branch of the Au Sauble, that I first tried Young's partridge spiders. I started fishing the fly the same way I fished winged wets and bucktails. In slower water, I would jerk the fly in its down stream course, and in faster water, I would let it drift freely. I always threw a fairly tight line so that I could feel the strike even when I couldn't see the fly or the swirl of the fish. The fly performed well from the start, but gradually I noticed an increase in the amount of action when the fly was drifting freely in any kind of water. The longer the natural, free running drift, the better the results.

With a tight line, the fly would run down without drag for a short time, then start to cross over to my side as the line bellied in the current. I did not like that part of the cast and was trying to change it. I wanted longer, natural drifts and started throwing a slack line with "S"'s in the cast, much like I did for the Test trout with the dry fly. This kept the fly "over there" longer in the eddies or packets or flats I read as good holding water.

Instead of casting straight across, I started casting up a little, moving the rod tip toward my

bank to keep the line tight to signal the strike, then moving the red tip toward the other bank as the line and the fly passed my level in their down stream phase of the trip. To lengthen the amount of free drift, when the cast was spent, I would let out line, the amount governed by the speed of the water.

Of the three colors, the green, yellow and orange, I and the fish were partial to the orange. If I fished strange water anywhere, I always started out with this color, and would try the others if it didn't work after a half hours' fishing. I believe, however, that the three colors pretty well represent almost all the colors of insect life, nymph or emerging fly, one might find on any stream in the country.

I was so enamored of these partridge hackle flies, that gradually my fly box contained nothing but them in three colors and in sizes from 8 to 14. My own tyings of them became even more slender and sparse than the first ones I bought from Young.

I gave up fishing all streamers or bucktails in daylight hours and rarely tied and used any more wet flies with any wings on them whatsoever.

My confidence in the soft hackled fly gained each time I went out; I could follow other fly fishermen down the river who would fish a nice stretch of water without a single rise, and take fish right at their

backs. When they asked what I used, I would tell them and they would ask puzzled. They never heard of the fly. Then I would give them a couple and invariably they would say "is that all there's to them?"

I would fish the fly any time of day on any water, and was surprised to see it take trout even during a hatch. Normally, the arrival of a hatch usually means the end to wet fly or nymph fishing. Not so with these soft hackles. Without knowing what fly was on the water, I would use the yellow bodied fly when the natural insect was very light or yellow, the orange bodied fly when the natural was reddish or brown, and the green bodied one when the natural was blue or dun or any other dark shade.

With a floating line, the fly was just below the surface of the water. I could see the rise in the form of a swirl or bulge in the water, but I really didn't have to see it, because I could feel it as well. This was what I really like about the soft hackled system.

The classic upstream nymph fishing method requires keen eyesight watching for a "brown shadow", or "wink", a bulge, a tightening of the line or leader or some other mysterious, intuitive message. But, I believe a blind man could successfully fish my flies in the manner described.

So, after 20 years of fly fishing, wet fly and dry, upstream and down, American~~x~~ and England, I had come back to a simple, two-part fly, body and game bird hackle, and a fishing system that was easy and productive, satisfying and esthetic.

During the next five years, however, it was to get even better. Here's why. I discovered other soft hackled flies besides those made with partridge feathers. I started fishing western streams with fast, shallow riffles, even more suitable to the soft hackled fly; I began to fish for steelhead; and I read Jock Scott's book, "Greased Line Fishing for Salmon".

Chapter IV

In 1968, my work assa free lance industrial photographer took me to western Wyoming, Idaho and Montana. I had never seen or fished the famous rivers in those states before: the Wind, Madison, Yellowstone, Rock Creek, Gallatin Snake and others. The fisherman, on first seeing these rivers is awed by their size and speed, the clarity of the water, the openness of the valleys through which the streams run and the breathtaking beauty of the mountains all around.

Most of these rivers can be described as long riffles from source to end. The rivers run "flat," just barely skimming the earths surface, except for canyons where fishing is almost impossible. There is much free or open water to fish. There is a great deal of fly only water, and there are relatively few fisherman. In addition, the average trout will be 6 or 7 inches longer than the average from the midwest or east, and a four pound brown or rainbow barely raises an eyebrow.

I have been lucky enough, since 1968, to find work in those states and great fishing pleasure, on many streams at least twice every year. On these trips

I have fished the soft hackled fly almost exclusively, but I must admit trying out such local "western" tyings as the Bitch Creek, Montana Nymph and wooly worms. These are big, ugly, weighted flies, most of which represent the prevalent stone fly nymph or even the helgramite. Casting them is difficult and unenjoyable. Most fishermen there cast them upstream, roll them down on the bottom like a worm and set the hook when the line stops moving in the current. This is not my preferred way of fishing a fly, so I stuck with the soft hackles and improved the method of fishing them after I read "Greased Line fishing for Salmon".

In this book, first published in 1935 and just recently re-issued, Jock Scott, the author, tells how A.H.E. Wood landed 3,490 salmon from 1913 to 1934 on a Scottish river using small, slimly dressed flies and a greased, floating line.

Mr. Wood's method of "mending" the line to increase the natural float or drift of the fly was exactly what I was looking for to eliminate drag or bellying of the line, and still permit me to fish downstream and to feel the rise without the necessity of seeing it.

With this method, the fisherman can fish the fly in a natural manner, the fly traveling very near the surface and presenting a side view of itself to the fish.

With the soft hackled fly, the method is deadly for trout.

So what is mending? It is the lifting or raising of the troublesome, or dragging, part of the line and turning it upstream or down, without really moving the fly. To accomplish the upstream or downstream mend, you must use a floating line. You must learn to throw a slack line. I do this by throwing the line high, waiting until it is fully extended, then drawing back on it while it is still suspended, so that it falls to

the water in loose "S" curves. *The beginning fly fisherman, who has not yet learned how to throw a tight straight line, does*

Most small rivers will require an upstream mend *line, this is very well at the outside in* because there is usually more fast water between you and the fly. But on large rivers, you may find much slow water between you and the fly, and this situation requires a downstream mend. *is a good prospect for greased-line mending with*

If the water you're fishing is all in a "shee", that is, the same velocity from bank to bank, then mending is not required.

Mending the line either up or down is like turning the pages in a precious book from the the bottom. You don't corkscrew the page, but rather turn it all at once, stiff and lifted over. Hold the rod high, but parallel to the water and turn the line over, either up stream or down, depending on where the drag is. Don't try to mend too much line. In most cases, you will not need more than

10 or 15 feet, and with a high, floating line you will not find this too difficult.

As the line continues downstream, you must keep on mending, as long as drag occurs, until the cast is fished out. To help you in the process, lead the line with your rod in its downstream journey and hold it high so that the mend will come easy.

With the soft hackled fly and the mending method, hooking the fish is almost automatic. First, you will see the rise, or swirl, or splash or bulge in the water where the fly is, then you will feel the contact in the next instant. You will know what to do after this.

It has always seemed to me that dry fly fishing is considered the higher art of trout fishing and wet fly the lower, because there seems to be more to do about the dry fly. In dry fly fishing, you have the floating line and the natural float. You have the finer leader, the greater stalking, the better knowledge of the fly on the water and the exact imitation. More art and more science, hence greater pleasure? Maybe? But, the soft hackled fly fished with a floating line, and mended upstream and down, with fine terminal tackle gives the most sophisticated dry fly fisherman plenty to do in the arts and science department, and a lot more to feed in the fun department.

There is plenty of proof. With the soft hackled fly you're tempting the trout a great deal more of the time. You're tempting bigger trout, those that don't like to expose themselves to a hole in the surface of the river every time some minute insect comes floating down. And with the soft hackled fly, you rouse the rapacity of the most lethargic trout, and he'll come charging from a great distance or depth to snatch that thing away from you. *That's why* The take when fishing these flies and this method is powerful and extremely physical.

In dry fly fishing, the trout with no real urgency ~~or unaction~~, reaches for the fly, if it is straight over his head, but it is the fisherman who set^s the hook into the fish, and the battle between fish and fisherman ensues. With the soft hackled fly, the trout throws caution to the wind, because he's not afraid to move under the water and speeds to the fly with urgency, setting it into itself. The contact is more violent and forceful, because it was the trout's decision and not the fisherman's.

Upstream fishing with a weighted or unweighted nymph can be compared in the same way. The fisherman watches for the slightest hesitancy of the line or leader, or hint in the water, and tightens the line to set the hook, feeling nothing until that has been accomplished.

and it has been observed by many fishing writers that two and three or more different kinds of nymphs can be hatching from the same water simultaneously.

Any attempt to imitate any specific nymph or dun, would seem to limit the appeal to the trout by the exact imitation. This is why I have never used or believed in the hard bodied nymphs, the flattened imitations or rubber molded ones. To me, they look exactly like lifeless imitations and I'm sure the trout feel the same way.

Any sunk fly, to be good, must transform itself in the water into something alive, something suggestive and moving, something that looks good to eat. ~~A fly~~ ^{Such a} ~~fly~~ ^{fly} ~~that~~ ^{that} looks different in the water than it does out of it. The best way to demonstrate this is to look at the soft hackled fly dry, then wet it and take another look. The transformation is amazing. The soft partridge or snipe or starling feather with its tapered barbules, mold themselves against the body with the tips away and toward the tail of the fly. There is a natural lump or ~~thrust~~ created at the front of the fly, by reason of the tapering of the barbules, the thicker and closer to the stem of the feather than at the tips.

Floating naturally down stream, with no movement from the fisherman, these barbules close in and out, squirm against the body of the fly, and react in a lifelike way to

different ball
game under
the water
on top you
want the
exact imitation
but under the
best imitation
works better

All of the above was written during the latter months of 1972.,
~~In the next chapter xxx~~ and I believe that much of what I said
to be true. ~~However, xxx~~ Since that time, however, I have
read, "Nymphs" by Ernest Schwiebert, published in 1973. , which
~~Leafing through the beautiful pages of~~ Leafing through the pages
of this book and admiring the ~~colored xxx~~ the beautiful, colored
plates of various nymph species, I came across the plate; of
caddis larvae. The green, gold, yellow, ~~and xxx~~ brown and orange
of the slender bodies, the small, drooping wings and the ~~floppy xxx~~
long, floppy, hanging legs of the nymphs
Leafing through the pages of this book and admiring the beautiful,
color ed plates of various nymyph species, I came across the
plate of caddis ^{pupal} ~~larvae~~. I was struck by what I saw....the green, gold,
yellow, brown and orange of the slender bodies,; the small, drooping
wings and the long floppy, haning els of the nymphs. ~~xxxx If these xxx~~
~~arent soft hackle flies xxx~~ "These are soft hackles", I thought....the
closest thing I ever saw in print of a living nymph, to the soft hackle
flies I had been using so well for so long.
Hunggrily, I read through the ~~two chapters xxx~~ three chapters on the caddis
and microcaddis. Schweibert said there were hundreds of species
of these insects and that they were to be found just about anywhere.
He believed them to be the "most numerous of the qaquatic insects

extant in American trout waters, making their availability factor relatively high". The class of insects, he said, were more hardy than the mayfly class and less susceptible to pollution and pesticides. He also ~~said~~ hinted; that the caddis is better fished as a ~~xxx~~ shallow sunk fly than as a dry, ~~xxxx~~ because the dry was ~~xxxx~~ difficult to immitate as a fluttering insect on or above the water ~~xxx~~ and that it was easier to imitate the swimming pupae, which were ~~easier~~ more easily caught by the trout.

Schweibert's ~~artificial flies~~ ~~xxx~~ list of the artificial ~~nymphs~~ caddis nymphs ~~almost~~ ~~xxx~~ include almost all of the patterns ~~ju~~ his Almost all of the artificial caddis nymphs in ~~these~~ chapters are tied with partridge, grouse and similar bird, soft hackles, and Mr. Schweibert pays respect to the earilier british, and north country angling writers who wrote about them more than 100 years ago.

After seeing his paintings of the caddis nymphs and reading his clear and ~~thorough~~ ~~xxx~~ sane sentences about them, I feel I have to ~~amend~~ ~~xxx~~ ammend my own ~~xxx~~ impressions of what the soft hackle flies do, in fact, imitate, and thank him fro being ~~xxxxxxx~~ "crazy" enogh to write a book like that.

Chapter V

What is it about the soft hackled fly that has led a fisherman like myself to give up entirely the use of all other sunk flies in fishing for trout? What special appeal does it have? What does it represent or imitate? What makes it so universale that sometimes it fishes just as well during a hatch as without one?

First, I believe the fly suggests any of the four *when I first started working on this book in 1973* *thought* types of nymphs or their duns of the ephemeroptera; the order of insects generally considered to be of the most interest to fly fishermen. In the order, there are: 1. flat or clinging nymphs such as the March Brown; 2. swimming nymphs such as the Pale Evening Dun; 3. crawling nymphs such as the Blue-Winged Olive; and 4. burrowing nymphs such as the "wisaler" of the large Michigan May fly.

The various nymphs prefer different kinds of bottoms from mud to sand to stone to large flat rocks, and bottoms with weeds and without. The shapes of the nymphs differ considerably; some long and slender, some short and fat and some wide and flattened. Some rivers can actually produce all four kinds in a very few feet,