



# Fly Lines

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Rob Brown • Peter Caverhill • Van Egan • Mary Haig-Brown  
Bob Hooton • Art Lingren • Stan Ogden

• **SPECIAL WINTER-RUN STEELHEAD EDITION** •

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## **BCFFF Annual Awards -- Call for nominations**

**The Angul Award:** Given to that individual, who is not necessarily a BCFFF member, for their outstanding contribution to the heritage of the Arte and Science of Fly Fishing in British Columbia.

**The Gilly Award:** Given in recognition t that BCFFF member who has continuously given exceptional service to BC's Fishery, the Sport of Fly Fishing, and the BC Federation of Fly Fishers.

**The Arthur William Nation Award:** Given to a junior conservationist fly fisher or fly tier who displays leadership in conservation as it pertains to the art and craft of fly tying.

**The Jack Shaw Fly Tying Award:** Given in recognition to that BCFFF member who has excelled in the art and craft of fly tying.

**The Conservation Award:** Given to that BCFFF member club in recognition of their contribution to the conservation and enhancement of BC's fishery for a specific conservation-related project.

**The Appreciation Award:** Given to that individual, group or business in recognition of their support of the BCFFF.

Nominations should be submitted in writing by any BCFFF member before February 15, 2003 to:  
BCFFF P.O. Box 2442, 349 Georgia St. W., Vancouver, BC V6B 3W7, or emailed to [artlingren@look.ca](mailto:artlingren@look.ca)

## **2003 BCFFF Annual General Meeting, Banquet and Auction**

**BCFFF 30th Anniversary Theme: "Celebrating our Past"**

**Saturday, May 31, 2003, at the Penticton Lakeside Resort & Casino ([www.rpbhotels.com](http://www.rpbhotels.com))**

Guest speakers and slide shows, trade show and exhibits, special presentations and collectible auction items  
More details coming soon at the BCFFF web site and the next issue of *Fly Lines*

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## On our Cover:

### *The Evolution of the Black G.P.* Originated and tied by Art Lingren

ON FEBRUARY 13, 1984, a certain black fly took its first steelhead from the waters of Roderick Haig-Brown's Campbell River and has since continued taking steelhead and every kind of Pacific salmon, trout and char from almost every water it has found its way in for nearly two decades.

The effectiveness of the Black G.P., originated by Art Lingren and inspired by old Atlantic salmon fly fishing wisdom, has decisively changed the way we think of the traditional bright and colourful steelhead flies. Over the years, by varying the size of the hook, the amount of dressing, and the texture and appearance of some of the materials, without altering the general concept of the fly, Art Lingren has gradually developed the "one fly" of absolute faith and confidence in any fly fisher's box and for every fly fishing situation (page 11).

The influence of history and classical fly fishing literature in the origin and evolution of the Black G.P. provides a fitting story for a man whose life-long passion and singular pursuit has been the study, recording and reporting of every fly pattern and its use, every important fly fisher and event, and every significant river, lake and location from the very beginnings of British Columbia fly fishing history.

As the officially recognized BCFFF historian, Art Lingren has always been the one to write about others. In this issue of *Fly Lines*, in acknowledgement of his latest contribution to British Columbia fly fishing—his recent book entitled *Famous British Columbia Fly Fishing Waters*—we have decided to write about him (page 6).



An Art Lingren tied *As Specified* from the inside cover of the special limited edition of *Famous British Columbia Waters*, available from Frank Amato Publications.

## From the President

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AS THE SNOWS AND RAINS OF WINTER FALL and the year comes to a close, it is time to reflect on past events and fly fishing. On September 11, as I walked along the bank of the Skeena River I reflected on last year's tragic events. I will remember this year's September 11 too for a long time. It was the morning when I managed to hook seven summer-run steelhead from one of those huge, long Skeena River bars. The year has been good and rewarding to me, with many fly fishing trips to rivers for steelhead and to still waters for rainbows.

On the BCFFF front, we have had our problems communicating with some direct members but we hope that we have come up with solutions that will keep those members informed. Through the summer and fall months the BCFFF has been busy on a number of fronts:



Art Lingren and his favourite game fish.

- ? We managed to get the Coquihalla River open to fly fishing only for a six week period from mid-September to the end of October. This is only the second time we have had an opening on this river since 1990. Unfortunately, the drought of summer and fall and the low water turned the steelhead into dour, difficult to catch creatures. We hoped that Fisheries would have opted for more difficult fly fishing regulations such as our floating-line-only, no-weighted-flies suggestion but they didn't. Nonetheless it was good to cast a line on that river: the birth river of British Columbia steelheading.
- ? In mid-September the Recreation Panel released its preliminary recommendations and the BCFFF provided comment and suggestions. The report with its recommendation on the future management of Fish and Wildlife resources is due to be presented to the Minister in late fall. We will be paying more to fish in British Columbia, but the proposed increases are quite modest. License fees are very reasonable especially when you consider the variety of fly fishing waters and species of fish available to BC fly fishers.
- ? This fall we again convinced government that wild steelhead are precious creatures and we defeated the same gang of killers whose only reason to exist is to kill wild Skeena River steelhead. Thompson River steelhead returns were dismal this season and something is surely wrong on that watershed. The small Coquihalla River this year had a run of over 500 steelhead. You have to wonder why such a large system like the Thompson is getting somewhere between 1000 to 1500 fish. We have made inquiries to the Federal Minister of Fisheries asking why Fisheries & Oceans Canada continues to allow chum gill net fisheries on waters when the endangered Thompson stocks are migrating through.

In the June issue of *Fly Lines* we listed the businesses who support our fund-raising efforts and I hope that you remembered to patronize these companies for your Christmas shopping. In closing, I want to wish all the members best wishes for the New Year and to thank the BCFFF board for their work throughout the year that passed.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Art Lingren".

**Art Lingren**  
President



## Editorial Lines

ALMOST THIRTEEN YEARS AGO, under the railway trestle of the Little Qualicum River, I caught my first winter steelhead with a spinning rod and a piece of earthworm. When I went back three years later with a fly rod in hand it was already too late. The steelhead had stopped coming back. The Little Qualicum was not alone. The disappearance of the steelhead was taking place at an alarming rate up and down the East coast of the Island, and within a span of only a few years some wild stocks were facing extinction while others vanished forever.

This grim reality could not, in clear conscience, make a persistent steelhead fly fisher out of me. Up to this day, every winter I go searching for steelhead with my friend Jim Paterson only reluctantly. Under the best of circumstances, Jim and I and all our fly fishing arsenal put together pose no real threat to the steelhead of the Island. Yet we fish only from the beginning of February to the middle of March and aim to catch one fish each. Two years ago we did it in four trips and then stopped fishing. Last year we went to the river five times before we started running into fish already on their spawning beds, and then we stopped fishing. If one is determined to catch lots of steelhead, there are still places, times, and methods (of dubious nature) to do so. But as we shall see in this issue of *Fly Lines*, there is also an urgent need to show a different kind of attention to the steelhead.

Senior fisheries biologist Bob Hooton relates the sad story of the Englishman River as a case study of destruction that has taken place on almost every watershed on the East Coast of Vancouver Island. The steelhead just happened to hatch, grow, and return to spawn there. The consequences for their survival should have been predicted long ago. The current state of affairs leads one to unavoidable pessimism, yet only hope can mobilize us to bring the steelhead back. The heroic proponents of the Greater Georgia Basin Steelhead Recovery Plan, under the respected leadership of Craig Wightman, are desperately clinging to such hope. We have no other option—everyone must help. On page 17 you'll find the link to a website that can get you started.

Winter steelhead with their infamous reluctance to rise to the fly have traditionally inspired attention-seeking patterns with bright and gaudy colours. Van Egan offers three somber-looking options that have proven themselves of great interest to winter steelhead, questioning the unconditional favour that has been shown to orange, red, and other ornate flies, which under certain circumstances may put one at a disadvantage. Art Lingren seals the argument with no less than ten variations of his Black G.P. In turn, some members of the Osprey Fly Fishers of B.C. (the BCFFF member club featured in this issue in an intimate profile written by founding member Pete Caverhill) counter with their colourful designs.

In this issue we are also privileged to an insider's account of the life and times of the Haig-Brown family at Above Tide, the property and house of Ann and Roderick Haig-Brown. Mary Haig-Brown, the second of four children brought up at Above Tide, draws an apt connection between the principles reflected in her parents' daily lives and the principles to be pursued by the newly founded Haig-Brown Institute. In light of the abandonment of heritage properties by the provincial government, the Haig-Brown Institute was formed with the uncompromising vision of continuing the social, cultural, environmental, and literary work of Ann and Roderick Haig-Brown.

Rob Brown's eloquent story telling sets a thoughtful mood at the close of this issue, and our reader Tim Couch has sent us one of the most flattering letters yet (we do not shy from praise—it is the fuel that keeps volunteers going).



Loucas Raptis playing a Cowichan River steelhead  
(Photo by Jim Paterson)

**Loucas Raptis**  
Editor



## Profile

### *The Passion of Art Lingren*

By Loucas Raptis

IN THE FALL OF 1993, suddenly and irreversibly, I was converted to fly fishing after reading Roderick Haig-Brown's *Fisherman's Summer*. Coincidentally, during the same year a colourful little book was published which pulled me headlong into fly tying too. Appropriately, its title was the *Fly Patterns of Roderick Haig-Brown*, written by Arthur James Lingren. The author had searched through Haig-Brown's writings, going beyond the obvious titles and the hitherto known patterns, and had come up with a comprehensive list of twenty flies, beautifully tied and photographed, based mostly on the written descriptions given by the famous writer. These were exciting times for me. With every reading of the book, I would go out with a shopping list searching not only for more fly tying materials but also for more Haig-Brown books. A new world of angling started unfolding before my eyes.

Until that time it had not occurred to me that a simple pastime such as fishing had a history in this province worth delving into and worth knowing about. After all, fly fishers and fly patterns come and go, and their stories linger around among small groups of friends until they disappear forever. No one really thinks that catching fish in local waters, with this or that fly pattern, is material for posterity. But obviously, someone had a different idea, an idea that ultimately became his passion.

Of course there are written records of our fly fishing past, books and manuscripts and correspondence, photos buried in archives, flies and journals forgotten in the attic, and even unwritten memories fading fast in old age. And one man took action, and started searching through it all, and gathering notes and records, listening to stories and visiting the famous fly fishing haunts, and finally brought it all together in one place: his own writing.

The name Art Lingren did not take long to pop up again. In fact, in an amazingly auspicious way, the role and significance of the man started becoming clear to me after reading the issues of *Fly Lines* published in the early and mid 1990s. There, through his profile articles of legendary B.C. fly fishers and fly fishing waters, he defined himself as the writer and fly fisher with the uncontested authority of the official BCFFF historian.



Art Lingren by the banks of the Dean River, summer 2000.

Since then, besides being honoured with numerous accolades and distinctions, he has produced six books of his own and has contributed chapters in several others, with a regularity that reflects the discipline, commitment, and diligence of a true scholar.

In 1994, his *Thompson River Journal* revealed the true nature of fly fishing tradition inexorably tied to a sense of place. A whole culture of fly fishing has evolved around the annual, almost nomadic visitations to places such as the Thompson River—not only in search of magnificent steelhead, but also in search of a common bond and a sense of sharing a passion in a celebrated place and time. Six years later, he offered us the same insight to another holy grail of the summer steelhead with his *Dean River Journal*. After nearly twenty seasons of fishing the river as a member of the Totem Fly Fishers, he conveyed sentiments of attachment to the river, its steelhead and its people that few can claim to truly understand from experience. Those who cannot see these books as anything more than revealing fishing guides are seriously losing out on the most meaningful values of their sport.

It was in 1996, however, that he presented us with a remarkable collection of B.C. fly fishing lore in his *Fly Patterns of British Columbia*. What he had done three years earlier with the fly patterns of Roderick Haig-Brown he had now accomplished with every notable fly fisher in British Columbian fly fishing history. Hitherto unknown fly patterns by General Noel Money, obscurities designed and used by Tommy Brayshaw, precursors to chironomids and dragonfly nymphs by Bill Nation, and the little-known sedges of Bryan Williams—they all made their appearance for the first time in one volume with the most detailed accounts of their origin and use. The research that went into this one volume was astounding. One would be at a loss just thinking of how difficult some of the sources and

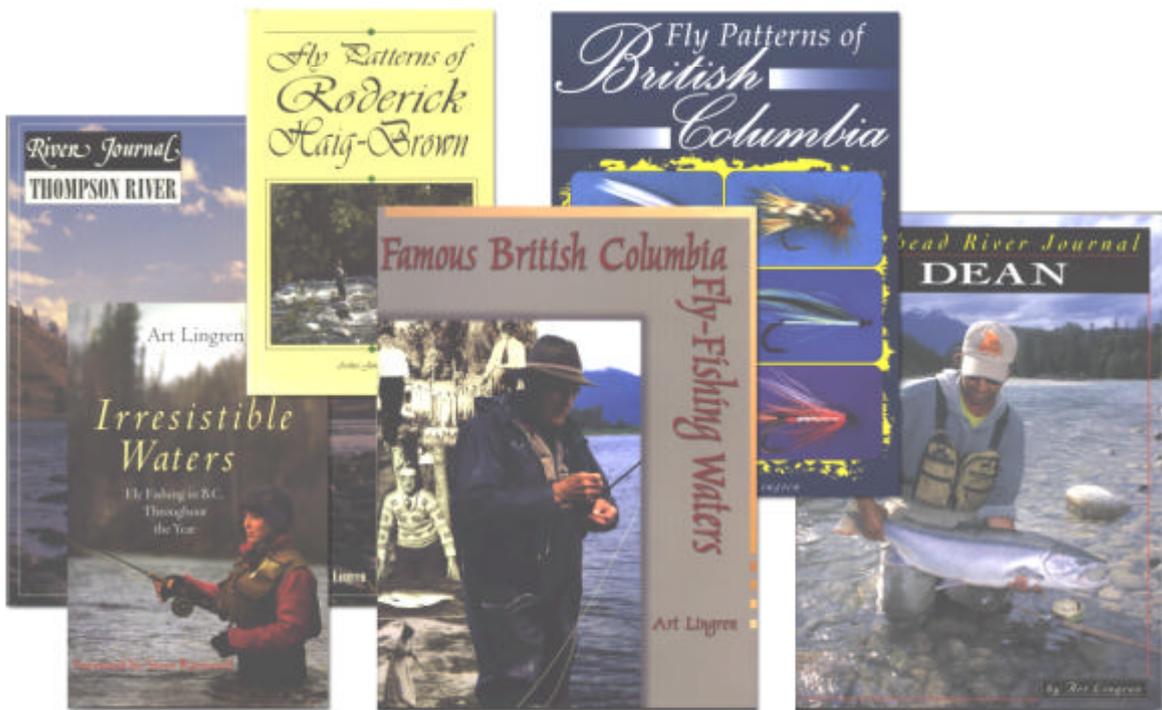
material used in the book would have been to obtain. And this was all done in favour of the rest of us through the labours and intensity of passion of one man.

But still, amazing as it might sound, the job was not yet done. The fly patterns told us only part of the story. They were generally designed for the specific challenges of certain game fish in certain waters. And the history of each fly is inexorably connected with the history of place still waiting to be told. After a monumental effort of several years, Art Lingren has now given us the rest of the story in his recently published *Famous British Columbia Fly Fishing Waters*. One could summarize the book by describing its contents as “our whole British Columbia fly fishing heritage in a nutshell.” One, of course, must first read the book to appreciate the depth and magnitude of this compendium. Fifteen watersheds and groups of lakes with related waters are profiled in fifteen chapters. The tale of each river and location is traced back to its earliest recorded history. The protagonists that lend life to these famous waters are legendary fly fishers with their unique exploits and accomplishments. Rare archival photographs and recreations of their flies document their lives, catches, and creations. Their stories are interspersed with the account of the author’s personal experiences in the same haunts in which they once cast their flies. This skillful juxtaposition of parallel experiences leads the reader to contemplate the grim reality of today. From the accounts of the earliest recorded flies to the profiles of the contemporary custodians of these waters, the stories reveal a repeatable pattern of discovery, exploitation, abuse and finally

earnest efforts for protection. In each case, the special relationship of the fly fisher with the river and its fish becomes the most meaningful argument for their intrinsic value. The book is a clear revelation of what we once had and what we are now left with. And it leaves no doubt that if we cherish the same waters for the same reasons that the fly fishers before us did—the people whose experiences made these waters famous—we have the inescapable responsibility and obligation to protect them and safeguard them for those who will follow.

One would think (although one wishes otherwise) that Art Lingren has by now uncovered everything there is to be told about the past of fly fishing in British Columbia. Fortunately, nothing could be further from the truth. He is currently putting the finishing touches on his next book, a historical account of fly fishing on the Kispiox River, and starting work on yet another writing project.

As an artist and writer with a special interest in British Columbia fish and fly fishing, I can hardly put pen or pencil to paper without an Art Lingren book as my reference and guide. Looking back on my early days of fly fishing and the path I have followed over the years, I cannot think of any contemporary fly fishing writer who has had a greater influence on my thinking than Art Lingren. From reading his articles in the pages of the early issues of *Fly Lines* to eventually becoming the editor of the publication, I don’t think I could have followed a more appropriate path to express my gratitude. †



# Fly Tying

## Jezebels in Black

### Three Winter Steelhead Fly Patterns of the Somber Kind

By Van Gorman Egan

#### The Marabou Lodge

IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY it was at a British Columbia Steelhead Society Auction, crowded and noisy as friend met friend pouring over the tables of desirable items on which to bid. This fellow, Ray Wykes, nudged me and handed me an envelope. He whispered cautiously, eyeing those nearby, "Stand behind a tree when you tie this one on."

I looked in and saw something black, something straggly and misshapen, like a piece of crow's out wear, torn from its carcass and left to the elements. Later, at the dinner table, I removed this bit of messy debris and stroked the ruffled feathers and, behold, there it was, a black marabou fly, nicely tied on a large upturned-eye hook.

This was in the spring and it wasn't until fall had settled in that I tied Wykes' Black Marabou on my leader, cautiously of course, from behind the big maple that overlooked the Main Island Pool of the Campbell River. The water chilled my legs and a thin mist rose in the cool air as I made my way onto the bar. My first cast, drifting the fly along the edge of the drop-off, tempted nothing more exciting than the cobbled bottom, that bit and spit and then released the darling Jezebel. Another cast a few feet further out also had its bumps but the fly swung free as the current swept it straight below me. And so it went, two or three steps down, the cast extended a few feet, the current catching the fly, playing with it, swinging it quickly downstream. But then it happened. With the fly nudging the edge of the bar, the line drew straight and the rod downward. He had it, and running the line out to the backing he stopped, shook violently, jolting the rod in my hand, and the fly came out.

For nearly an hour I fished as much of the pool as the rather strong flow allowed, and not another offer. What about this guy, Ray Wykes? An *honest angler* old Izaak would say: surely his claims would prove true.

In the Lower Island Pool, a short time later, another fish took the fly. Took it hard, and with slow, unstoppable strength swam into the swift water. Swam slow and powerfully as if there was no reason to panic, and then turned down, into the long rapids where trying to follow would be foolhardy at this level of the river.

But easing up on the pressure turned the fish and started it back, right up through the heaviest current.



Van Egan at the tying vise (photo by Nick Didlick)

For some moments I had hope. This fish could be kept in the pool. He kept the pool all right, but not the way I envisioned it.

With the line slicing nicely through the broken water, the jars on the rod coming in measured tempos, suddenly our communications changed. All came to a standstill. I thought of a sulking Chinook, but it was rather too late in the season for that. Or a large chum salmon. Possibly, but they usually take to the current, using it to their advantage, heading back the way they came. It had to be a steelhead. And now the line was humming a frightful tune, like modern fly lines do when pulled taut against an immovable object.

Rocks are immovable objects.

Breaking was the hardest work I had done all day, for the fish had jammed the line into a tight crevice between two boulders. With five wraps of fly line around my arm, I finally managed to break, and left ten feet of sink-tip along with leader, fly and fish. The fly shops should love the Campbell River; this was the third fly line it had claimed from me.

Fortunately, I had scrutinized every detail of Wykes' Black Marabou and back at my vise I fashioned another. On a No 1 heavy hook I began at the tail: a tuft of black marabou about three-quarters of the hook

length; body of black mohair ribbed with oval silver tinsel and a stiff dark gray hackle palmered along the rib (to keep the marabou from lying flat along the body in a current); a small tuft of marabou as a beard and a larger tuft as a wing (black, of course). A couple of winds of black hackle as a collar and the head of black tying thread completed the fly. I was ready.

A few days later, again at the Islands, my new fly was taken by a strong fish well up in the Main Pool. He moved slowly across and down, and then up and down, telling me in its every change of direction that I should be able to beach this fish in the flat water at the tail of the pool. Wrong again!

Into second wind, he was suddenly into the rapids, stripping line at shocking speed and after a stumbling race over slippery rocks we both landed in the Lower Island Pool. And I am the winded one, and once again a splendid fish had found the two boulders that would lead to freedom. This time I lost only the fly.

Obviously, to test Wykes' fly properly required more than one, which I made in preparation for the main winter run.

If is one week before Christmas and I am back on the bar of the Main Island Pool. Both air and water have the feel of winter in them, yet it isn't long before a steelhead nibbles at the tantalizing undulations of black marabou. Jezebel is working her charms. A quick pull, actually, and the line straightens and then goes slack. There is interest but no foolish daring. And it is repeated several times, in different parts of the pool. Temptation offered to reluctant paramours.

The cautious mouthings suggest a fly with a shorter tail. It happens that I have one.

In that eternal quest of the *perfect* fly that fly tiers seem to possess, but never realize, I had made one with a shorter tail of black squirrel tail and modified the body to include a butt section of flat silver tinsel about a third of its length. To the collar was added a single wind of teal. I dubbed it the Marabou Lodge for its slight resemblance to a famous Scottish salmon fly, the Mar Lodge. Like Wykes' Black Marabou there was plenty of movement in its parts, and I was pleasantly surprised to have it taken first cast by a steelhead of 13 or 14 pounds. The hook had taken hold and the fish brought to beach.

That was in the Main Island Pool, and half an hour later in the Lower Pool another steelhead grabbed the Marabou Lodge. At first it made several slow maneuvers as it figured out its predicament, then bolted with such force that the rod flew out of my hand. For one stricken moment I watched rod and reel disappearing in the depths of the pool. And just as quickly a reflex, both mindful and fearful, plunged me headlong into the river. Cold water poured acutely into my waders, but I saved the rod and got the fish, and felt pretty good about my latest fly.

### *The Black and Blue*

A look through one of my fly boxes will bear out what I'm about to put on paper. For steelhead I like a choice



### ***Marabou Lodge***

(Originated and tied by Van Egan)

**HOOK:** Salmon hook No 6 to 1/0

**TAIL:** Black squirrel tail

**BODY:** 1/3 flat silver tinsel, 2/3 black mohair with a palmered black hackle

**TRIB:** Oval silver tinsel

**WING:** Tuft of black marabou

**COLLAR:** Single wind of teal

of three basic fly types: one black, one bright orange or orange-red, and one with a silver body. For any one of these general types, I may, and usually do, have several differing patterns, not to say that one black fly works better than another, but, yes, I'm one of those fly tiers from the usual mold: I can't just tie one fly pattern over and over without a change of scenery in the vise.

So it's Black G.P.s for a time, then perhaps a few Skunks or Black Bears or a Black & Blue, a pattern of my own design, or so I thought until one day on the river I met friend Bruce Gerhardt. "What have you been using?" he asked, and looking at the fly in the keeper of my rod, said, "Oh! A kind of glorified Blue Charm." Well, that was a mind thumper.

But he was right, my "invention" was more an "innovation," a slight glorification of an old standard Atlantic salmon fly. Strange, I didn't recognize that until Bruce brought it to my attention. But then, is there really anything "new" under the sun?

When I first tried out the Black & Blue I had a shattering experience with it. It was November in the Main Island Pool of the Campbell and the river was at that good temperature yet that seems to inspire steelhead to their greatest displays. In a space of time so short I would be afraid to estimate it, I had three steelhead grab on. Each struck the fly with a fierceness that set my heart on edge; each was off in a fountain of spray that allowed for no nonsense like "keeping control"; and each ended by throwing the fly back at me, as if to say "take that, you deceiver!"

Well, once I had settled myself back into a state of near equanimity, I thought I had invented the ultimate fly, the grail of every fly tier. Of course, I hadn't, as I found out again and again. But it has had its successes for me—on the Campbell and Quinsam Rivers, the Gold and the Nimpkish, and the Dean. So here are its secrets, if secrets they be: you will see that over time I have varied the dressing to meet different conditions, particularly as applies to summer-run versus winter-run steelhead.

You see, close to the Blue Charm, just as Bruce recognized right off, but with the addition of that fancy married section of colourful goose.

One other variation I use a lot is a change to a hair wing, again for winter-run steelhead. For this I start with small clumps of dyed polar bear hair in colours blue, yellow and red, and top them with brown bucktail. Omit the golden pheasant topping, but include the jungle cock "eyes" along the sides, that is, if you can get them without spending the family mortgage money.

### *The Black G.P.*

The Holy Grail of the fly tier is to create the irresistible fly—the fly that will score with fish in all circumstances. Of course, it will never happen. But it is pleasant to fantasize and to try, and even to innovate on fly patterns that already have a heady reputation, with expectations of enhancing it.

The Black G.P. is the latter, an innovation of Art Lingren, fly fisherman extraordinaire and a fly tier with many useful patterns to his credit (i.e., As Specified, Claret and Black), all of which have been thoughtfully designed. I have used his flies and copied them on my vise and caught fish with them enough to have great confidence when swimming them through the lies of steelhead. Most of all I like his Black G.P., the one fly I would settle on if given the choice of fishing the rest of my days with but one fly.

G.P., of course, stands for General Practitioner, a bright orange/red pattern invented by Colonel Esmond Drury in 1953 for Atlantic salmon in the U.K. Drury's fly imitates a prawn, a bait much favoured by salmon fishermen in the rivers of Scotland and England. To meet the conformations of a prawn the fly is tied sort of backwards, with the head end at the bend of the hook.

The standard G.P. dressing soon made its way to the west coast where it was found to be an excellent steelhead fly. But here it is often tied in the more traditional design of both steelhead and Atlantic salmon flies with the head near the eye of the hook. The tail is kept long, at least as long as the hook shank and its two stalked eyes, imitated with golden pheasant collar feathers, are set backwards from about a quarter of the distance from the tail. I never bother with the "eyes," and I doubt they have any magical powers to lure steelhead. But the colour surely does, and so also the motile actions of the tail and wing.

So I tie my Black G.P.s much as Art Lingren ties his, leaving out only the stalked eyes. It can be tied



### *Black and Blue*

(Originated and tied by Van Egan)

**HOOK:** Salmon hook No 6 to 1/0

**TAIL:** Golden pheasant crest **RIB:** Oval silver tinsel **BUTT:** Seal's fur dyed blue

**BODY:** Originally black silk floss, but black seal fur or mohair works best **HACKLE:** Blue **WING:** Narrow sections of dyed goose in red, yellow and blue, married together, over which is veiled bronze mallard with a topping over all **SIDES:** Jungle cock eyed feathers



### *Black G.P.*

(Originated by Art Lingren, tied by Van Egan)

**HOOK:** Salmon hook No 8 to 2/0

**TAIL:** Black bear hair or dyed squirrel tail, long, and over this a short tuft of red barbs from the body feather of a golden pheasant **RIB:** Oval silver tinsel

**BODY:** Black mohair **BODY HACKLE:** Black saddle, beginning at the second turn of silver ribbing and laid along it—with striped barbs from one side of the hackle, except for the part wound tightly at the front of the body **WING:** A small bunch of bear or squirrel tail hair (as used in the tail), over which two black hen hackles are laid flat.

on either standard or low-water salmon hooks in a range of sizes—from 8 to 2/0. 🍣

## *The Black General Practitioner*



## *The Evolution of the Black G.P.*

*By Art Lingren*

EVER SINCE THE FIRST WINTER STEELHEAD WAS CAUGHT WITH A BLACK G.P. in the Campbell River on February 13, 1984, I have adapted the size and dressing of the fly for a variety of water conditions. Over the years, the ten variations described below have accounted for steelhead from at least 35 rivers throughout the Pacific Northwest, fourteen of these being summer-run waters, twenty-one yielding winter-run fish, and six surrendering both winter and summer steelhead. Although the Black G.P. is my standard fly for sunk-line steelhead fishing, it is also a good fly fished just under the surface of the water with a floating line when the light and water conditions are right.

- 1) This is my regular size 2 Black General Practitioner as per the sample in my *Fly Patterns of British Columbia* book. I weigh the regular Black GP by wrapping lead wire around the front half of the hook shank.
- 2) I don't dress the fly with tippet eyes or red over the tail anymore. I dress a plain Black GP. At times, however, I too like a little colour and to accomplish that with this pattern I often add some Krystal Flash in the tail. This sample is dressed with pearlescent Krystal Flash on a standard number 2 hook.
- 3) and 4) The same as 2 but with black and red Krystal Flash respectively in the tail.
- 5) This is my low-water Black GP dressed on a Tiemco Model 7989 size 4 hook. I use the low-water Black GP in gin clear water in poor light conditions.
- 6) I like the Gamakatsu red hook as another way of adding colour. Sometimes I will add pearlescent, red or black Krystal Flash when dressing GPs on this hook.
- 7) This is my Marabou Black GP. It is dressed the same as the standard Black GP but instead of winding a body hackle up the shank, I wind a collar of marabou at the head of the fly. I prefer the marabou feathers that have less fluff on the fibres. I dress this variation with and without Krystal Flash.
- 8) A number 10 Marabou Black GP. I dress standard Black GPs and Marabou Black GPs for trout on low-water hooks in sizes 10 through 4 but prefer number 6 and 4.
- 9) This is my Spey Black GP. Not too much different from the Marabou version and probably a waste of valuable heron or other hard-to-get and expensive substitutes, but it is a fish catcher. This one has black Krystal Flash in the tail, but I dress it with or without Krystal Flash of varying colour.
- 10) This is a Marabou Black GP dressed with a trailer hook. I used trailer hooks back in the mid-1980s because of short taking fish. In those days I dressed the fly on tandem hooks, but then the regulations changed and we had to use a fly with a single point only. Tandems were out and I really didn't find them to be as effective as I had hoped. This year on the Skeena I had an afternoon in the bright sunlight when there were steelhead on the move through the water I was fishing. It is difficult to attract travelers to the fly but I did manage to get takes from about a half dozen fish but they just plucked at the tail. None was hooked. So I thought I would dress some Black GP's with a trailer hook for next time I run across the same light and water conditions. I dress the fly on a number 2 Mustad or Eagle Claw down eye hook with a number 4 trailer. I cut the number 2 at the bend so I am fishing a fly with only one point.

# The Fly Patterns of Roderick Haig-Brown

## The Golden Girl A Winter Steelhead Classic

By Art Lingren

DURING WORLD WAR II while Haig-Brown was away from steelhead fishing his thoughts repeatedly turned to what he considered to be the make-up of the ideal winter steelhead fly pattern. Believing that winter fish had a preference for reds and oranges, he envisioned a fur, feather and tinsel combination much simpler than, but similar to, the more elaborately dressed full-feather winged Atlantic salmon flies such as the celebrated Durham Ranger, Red Ranger, William Rufus, President, and the Red Sandy. All of these patterns, with the exception of the Red Sandy, utilized large golden pheasant orange with black bars and tips, called tippet feathers, for wings. The Red Sandy too had full-feather wings, but not golden pheasant tippet, instead its brilliant red-orange winging consisted mainly of large Indian crow feathers.

The pattern Haig-Brown developed was a combination of the slim-bodied Red Sandy and the golden pheasant tippet-winged Durham Ranger without many of the frills. In an 18 May 1949 letter to Al McClane of *Field & Stream* magazine, Haig-Brown says that "the Golden Girl—the one with tippets—is a final dressing and has proved itself many times for winter steelhead." And later he gives the dressing for the Golden Girl:

Tag: Orange Silk  
Tail: Indian Crow  
Body: Flat gold tinsel  
Hackle: Yellow  
Wing: Two large tippets, back to back,

enclosing orange bear fur. Topping over.

Haig-Brown remained loyal to this dressing but with one slight alteration: he substituted a golden pheasant crest feather, often referred to as a topping, for the Indian crow tail.

Almost two years later in a January 1951 letter to a Seattle fisherman, Haig-Brown says that the Golden Girl "is primarily a winter steelhead fly, in sizes 2/0 to 2" and that he has "also taken cutthroats and summer steelhead on it in sizes down to No. 8."



### Golden Girl

(Originated by Roderick Haig -Brown)  
(Tied by Art Lingren)

**HOOK:** Number 2/0 to 8

**TAIL:** A small Indian crow feather

**BODY:** Flat, gold tinsel

**THROAT:** Yellow hackle

**WING:** Two large golden pheasant tippet feathers back to back, enclosing orange polar bear fur with a golden pheasant topping overall

The Golden Girl is an attractive pattern that catches the eye of both the fly fisher and the fish. It is one of the oldies that has survived the passage of time and can still be found in many fly shops, particularly in the Campbell River area. However, it has been some years since the Golden Girl has swam through the riffles and runs of the Campbell. The steelhead stocks native to the streams of the east coast of Vancouver Island were severely affected by the last El Nino. Now with steelhead ocean survival on the increase and with the aid of the dedicated steelhead biologists and technicians of the Fisheries Branch, the river that Roderick Haig-Brown made famous may see anglers once again casting the Golden Girl to returning steelhead. 🍷

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# Fish Habitat

## Expectations

By Bob Hooton

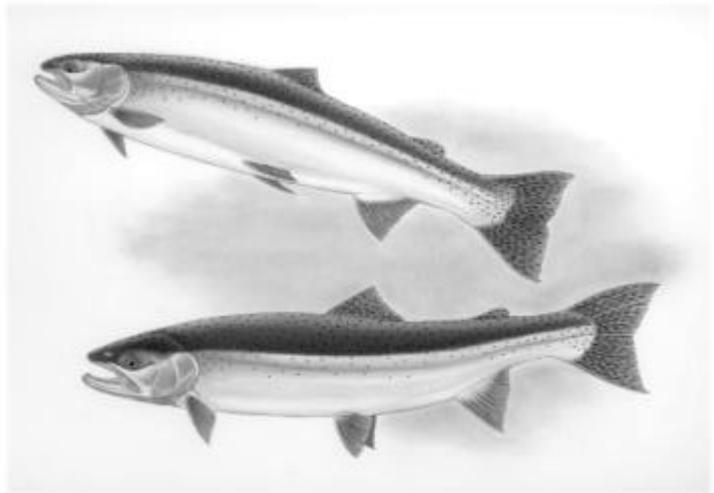
*“As discomfoting as it might be to disclose the future of wild salmon relative to society’s apparent values and preferences, our most useful contribution as fisheries scientists is providing information and assessments that are policy-relevant but policy-neutral, understandable to the public and decision makers, and scrupulously realistic about the future. Otherwise, we simply squander our professional credibility to become acolytes of delusion.”*

*Robert T. Lackey, 2001. Defending Reality. Fisheries, Volume 26, Number 6, pp 26-27.*

IN EARLIER DAYS I often heard the talk of how fishing used to be. A generation of us armed with more time, more money, better equipment, more knowledge and competitive juices no longer found among those we followed were less than tolerant of such laments. The era of catch and release was emerging and with no incentive to stop fishing at a daily limit of one or two fish we quickly learned just how many steelhead could be had on good water and good days. Lost in the euphoria of it all we fished and fished with little thought of the past or the future. Perhaps it is an age thing but, as the saying goes, now I am one. Now it’s my turn to talk about the way things were and the prospects for re-creating those circumstances.

Among the rivers I was introduced to shortly after taking up residence on the proper side of the Strait of Georgia in the early 1970s was the Englishman. On one of those early days there I recall vividly fishing my way downstream to a point where daylight was fading and the water lacking in appeal. Last casts were made from a twin cedar log that had toppled into the river long enough before to have its next generation growing from the flared butt that was a permanent feature of the stream bank. The distinctive feature of the logs was the small platform someone had constructed between the two spires at their downstream end, most likely for summertime purposes. Little did I know that six years later I would own that property.

Living on the Englishman afforded ample opportunity to watch and monitor. I was but one who knew the fishing turf intimately but probably alone in noting carefully the changes that occurred. The reference period was narrow in any true historic sense, only 14 years, but the evolution was dramatic.



Steelhead Pair

(An illustration by Loucas Raptis from the book by Van Gorman Egan *Rivers of Return*, to be released in March 2003)

I left the area in 1986, photographs and diaries carefully tucked away. In recent weeks I revisited some of my former haunts. A walk along the now gated road and streamside trails once used almost exclusively by anglers but now the preserve of mountain bikers, four wheelers and horses got juices flowing. The stark contrast between then and now, together with implanted messages about the demise of Georgia Basin steelhead and the heroic efforts toward a recovery program, was enough to make me speak.

For the first seven years I knew the Englishman the freshet to freshet and year to year changes were relatively insignificant. I was painfully aware from many days afield chasing wily blacktail bucks in the upper watershed just how extensive the logging was and how little mature timber was left. In essence the valley had been skinned. The time bomb went off in late February 1979 when a classic rain on snow event power-washed those logged hillsides and roads. The flood was severe enough to close the access road between our home and the highway. That prevented me from getting my camera in time to capture the peak of the flood but I did manage a few shots shortly afterward.

So, how best to demonstrate the breaking point and the impacts? Reference to formal records of stream discharge is partially instructive. Gauge readings and rates of rise and fall make a statement on pure hydrology but such “snapshots” do not reflect the damage wreaked on fish and their habitat once the breaking point is reached nor do they reflect the continuum of disruption, once triggered. Despite the limitations it is worth a few photos to try and portray the unravelling of what was one of the best

steelhead streams on the east coast of Vancouver Island.

The first photo captures the February 25, 1979 flood near it's peak. The second reveals just how high the water was and hints at what it transported under such circumstances. In fact the second photo was taken in March 1981 shortly after another major flood not unlike the earlier event. The frequency of occurrence and the severity of the consequences for fish had assumed unprecedented proportions.



For me a prime indication of the unravelling of the Englishman was the twin cedar log I first stood on in 1972. From our front window well above but not 15 meters distant we watched enough whole trees and debris surge down the river on February 25, 1979 to pound half of that historic structure loose. A bankside refuge that had weathered countless freshets was largely gone and sand and silt now filled the former cobble lined hollows beneath and behind it. No competent angler would ever waste a cast on the adjacent waters even if the platform I stood on in 1972 had survived.

A place we called "Grassy Banks" was the first good piece of fishing water upstream from the bridge site used to demonstrate the height of the flood waters. Prior to 1979 that spot had remained relatively unchanged and had been a consistent producer of steelhead for many of us. Following the February 25 event the Grassy Banks was virtually gone and the site continued to undergo dramatic changes with every succeeding freshet of any proportion. The photos taken from the same location in successive years reveal some of those changes. They do not account for inestimable amounts of headwaters real estate and trees of every size and species washed seaward past that point.

A visit to Grassy Banks, camera in hand in November 2002 could do little to photo document changes since the mid-1980s. Alders and maples completely obscured the view from the high point on the now gated road. The little beaver pond at the point where the trail to Grassy Banks broke away

from the logging road was formerly inaccessible to anadromous fish because the undersized culvert at it's outlet had long before been crushed by the weight of heavy equipment. But the culvert has been replaced and catchy new white signs with "Caution, Fish Habitat" and the logging company logo now mark the spot. A reasonable gesture, of course, but a bit ironic those responsible for the demise of the Englishman now seek recognition for their sensitivity toward fish habitat. Much of the bar on river left in the 1983 picture has been colonized by alders. River right has chewed its way south. There are still a few logs on river right but new ones on every freshet. The only conifer still remaining on that side hangs acutely over the bank until the next flood claims it. A relatively fresh 30 meter fir, every branch and root pulverized from ploughing fish habitat on it's downstream journey, sits high and dry on river left, it too destined for Georgia Strait.

My 2002 wanderings along the former blue ribbon fishing waters upstream on trouty Englishman were enough to bring a tear to the



eye. Rampaging waters had claimed almost all of river left at Long Run where we commonly angled and seined brood stock for a hatchery program we hoped would mitigate some of the damage wreaked by timber harvesting. The run, once invisible from the road, was now not more than forty treeless feet from it's centre line. A handwritten sign implored horse riders to stay out of the chum spawning riffles. What remained of the decent stems along that bank was now cabled together in a desperate effort to preserve both. The Power Line run had migrated south considerably. More logs placed and cabled in three locations on river right looked to be saving productive riparian soils for awhile longer. Traffic was obviously crossing the river regularly at that point. The tangled mess of braided channels upstream was unrecognizable from former years. Gone was Hole in the Bend where Ric Olmsted and I had stalked an impressive school of steelhead on frigid mornings between Christmas and New Years in

1979 before advancing ice cover ended our fun. The river was not even visible from where I photographed him with the largest fish caught. I didn't bother venturing further to the Claybanks and South Fork. I'd seen enough.



Grassy Banks, Englishman River, March, 1980. The favoured fishing spot formerly centre right was already largely gone but the log jam on river right and the general curvature of the river through the area remained.

The Englishman is not unique. It is one of many rivers that flows through privately owned forest land on southern Vancouver Island. The influence of fish managers on how business is done is small and growing smaller. Breaking points in terms of how much of the mature canopy has been removed have been surpassed in all these watersheds. There is no longer any capacity to buffer the influence of rain on snow events or even major rainfall. The stumps and roots have rotted and lost their hold on soils. Drainage paths once numerous along hillsides have been re-directed and concentrated in ditches and culverts that all too often fail long after loggers departed. Suffocating volumes of hillsides continue to be deposited and re-deposited in quieter places downstream on successive freshets. Relentless aggradation of channels continues to force flood waters laterally where even more material is washed into motion.

The grim reality is the Englishman will not recover soon. Only time, not money or missionary zeal and certainly not hatcheries will fix it, and only

if we leave it alone long enough for that to happen. Yes we can do some things to address road and drainage problems, yes we can apply band-aids to failing banks, yes we can develop some off-channel areas that will support juveniles (more salmon than steelhead) and yes we can enrich what water continues to flow in late spring and summer. But, until we have enough larger trees with their soil binding root structures growing on those well washed hillsides and stream banks, the channel will display no element of stability and in-stream habitat is not going to cleanse itself of mountains of sand and sediment that now clog the spaces juvenile steelhead call home.

Thankfully the steelhead are more resilient than often given credit for. The fact they have absorbed all nature and anglers have mustered in the past thirty years and are still returning is testament to that. But don't look for dramatic rebounds in numbers. If we get a series of years where winter floods are not catastrophic, where summer flows and temperatures provide adequate space and food and where smolts that do make it out of the river survive

their ocean sojourn at long term average levels we may see some reasonable fishing opportunity sooner rather than later. The odds on all those factors falling into place coincidentally are not attractive. The next generation of anglers will have a different reference level than us. As disturbing as it might be to contemplate, their "good old days" may be here and now. Take lots of pictures. 📷



Grassy Banks in early 1981. The deposition of material in the foreground was impressive and the river channel was becoming increasingly straight.



Grassy Banks in early 1983. A log jam on river right remained but the logs were all new. The channel had shifted progressively to river right and straightened even more.

# Fly Lines on the Water

## The Double-Handed Rod and my First Winter Steelhead

By Loucas Raptis

DURING THE WINTER OF THE YEAR 2000, I convinced myself that I was in desperate need of a double-handed rod. The truth of the matter is, of course, that I simply wanted one and had to produce the arguments to justify the expense. The purchase of a new rod is something of a poor compromise without the purchase of a matching new reel. Furthermore, in the case of a double-handed rod, a new line is implied without question. And once you've gone through all this trouble, a spey line with multiple tips is, of course, the wisest choice.

By the time I had finished putting the parts together, I was staring at a price tag that demanded some serious explaining. From my brief exposure to double-handed rods—without even having touched one—I was convinced that, at least in theory, this was the outfit to address my winter steelhead problem on a river named Cowichan that had me stumped for nearly eight years. If I had indeed nailed the solution, the price would have been a bargain.

During the previous summer, as a guest of the Totem Fly Fishers, the oldest fly fishing club in British Columbia, I had watched two of the club's venerable members, Art Lingren and Pete Broomhall, gracefully swing 15-foot long spey rods and effortlessly fling their lines across the glacial waters of the Dean River. Surprisingly, in a river such as the Dean one does not need to cast long lengths of line. The summer-run steelhead of the river follow the banks quite closely, well within reach of a moderate single-handed cast and knee-deep wading. Nor is there any need to worry about one's backcast. The river's expansive gravel bars can be as wide as the river.

Under the right conditions, a large river with summer-run steelhead offers many opportunities for the single-handed rod, and under especially wrong conditions both single- and double-handed outfits can be at an equal disadvantage. During my last day of the two-week trip, I decided to fish only the waters that my single-handed outfit could fish most pleasantly. With a size 2 Black G. P. and a light sink-tip on my floating line, I hooked a fish in every run I covered—five altogether—and landed my largest steelhead on a fly—a 34-inch male, that I chased for a hundred yards downstream and then brought back behind another hundred yards of backing.

A steelhead river in its winter rage is a different matter altogether. A river like the Cowichan can be cruelly unforgiving. Its waters run fast and deep, pressing the angler against an impervious wall of willows and overhanging branches. For the better part of winter, when trying to cover the best holding water from the bank, the use of a single-handed rod is nothing short of self-inflicted punishment.



The habits of the winter steelhead are no fun either. The word at the Totems' camp, five miles from the mouth of the river, is that a summer-run steelhead would race to take your fly all the way from the estuary if it could only see it. The word along the Cowichan is that you have to hit a steelhead over the head with your fly first and awaken it from its winter stupor before you even start to fish for it. And this is no pedantic wisecrack.

Despite my new-found confidence, courtesy of the Totems and the Dean River, I still viewed the prospect of winter steelheading on the Cowichan with burning fear and loathing. But now I was holding a new weapon in my hands: a seven-weight, 14-foot-long double-handed rod, powerful enough to pick up a heavy sink tip from the water, and without a hint of a back cast, shoot it across the whole wide Cowichan, and then, with easy mending and gentle coaxing of the line, bring the fly face to face with any steelhead, anytime, anywhere.

Obviously, the casting was still at the mental stage. I had to learn to spey cast first and to that end I set up a quick and comprehensive two-step program. First, I watched a couple of spey casting videos and then I decided to go out and just do it.

I picked a February weekday for my trip, not so much to avoid competition on the river, as to avoid being seen and laughed at. I had decided to try my usual spots in the fly fishing section with the farfetched notion of simulating a real life, real fishing situation. I wouldn't even think of walking with an assembled 14-foot rod down the narrow, overgrown trail, so I put the rod together by the banks of the Spring Pool. Casting right-handed, I had the side of the river calling for the single spey cast. Upon picking up the line directly from downstream, I had to bring the fly in light touch with the water just in front and upstream of my position before I would load the rod with the D-loop and finish the cast with a snap of the rod tip. *Right.*

I consider myself fortunate I went through my first couple of hours of spey casting without shattering the rod to a thousand pieces. The fly invariably refused to even touch the water, the D-loop kept twisting into a B-loop, and several times the gentle snap of the rod tip brought the whole 14 feet

of graphite in full slamming contact with the raging river. But this is my preferred way of learning, alone and self-absorbed, teetering on the brink of catastrophe. Yet, slowly and steadily, I pressed on with my spey casting comedy all the way down the pool, pretending to cover the water methodically. When I finished with the Spring Pool, thankfully undetected, I hiked further down the trail to the Beaver Pool.

Here, amazingly, my timing seemed noticeably improved, but then I realized that my fly had long since broken off my tippet. But I enjoyed the improvement in my casting so much that I didn't bother tying on another fly until the next stretch of water.

When my eyes first fell upon the Cabin Pool, all tomfoolery suddenly vanished. I was completely captivated by the flow, speed, and direction of the water, and from my Dean River experience I could read "steelhead" all over it. I opened my fly box and pulled out a fly I had put together by the banks of the Dean River. I had named this fly pattern the "Dean River Cuss," after Pete Broomhall's expression "good natured cuss," repeated throughout his irreverent story telling. In John Wayne's western movie vernacular the word means a "fellow," but of

course the word also means a "curse," a perfect double meaning for a fly: an enticing-looking object with the singular purpose of causing trouble. The Dean River Cuss had claimed the largest fish of the trip, a 38.5-inch male steelhead caught by my third companion in the Totem's Camp, Rob Williams.

The very minute I stepped into the water, I lost all interest in exploratory moves and learning possibilities. I now wanted to fish, and fish properly, with a plan and clear expectations. I could distance myself by only three feet or so from the tangle of willows behind me and I was going to get that fly out there any way I could, no matter how clumsy it might look.

On a floating spey line, I had looped a home-made sink tip, 250 grains heavy and ten feet long, and the Cuss was hanging from the other end on a six-foot straight 14-lb leader. I picked about thirty feet of line from downstream and hesitantly rolled it down and across the main current. I threw a quick mend and the river took the fly and slowly swept it across the main current and then held it steadily just inside the slow water of the seam. It was pure heaven. I could literally feel my fly swimming, glittering, and undulating enticingly right off the bottom. I picked it up and sent it out again with another roll-cast. It was clumsy work all the way to the bottom of the pool and many times I had to backtrack and send the line downstream on purpose so I could lift it off the water and load the rod again. Soon enough I was closing in on the tailout of the pool, which leaves one with a finite number of remaining casts, but also with the best, most enjoyable drifts a pool



Dean River Cuss

can offer. Here, the right water makes few demands of the angler. It moves the line in a straight sweeping path, and all one has to do is point the rod at the fly. Even when the current seems to move things too fast and the fly is at the edge of spilling over to the next pool or about to be swallowed by the rapids, there is always hope and the realistic expectation that a steelhead will show up out of nowhere and take one's fly in the nick of time.

It was during one of those perfectly geometrical sweeps that the line, without stopping, was pulled gently away from my rod tip. I lifted the rod to free the line from what I thought was the bottom, and in a sudden panic the fish set the hook all by itself. It took off downstream and just before the lip of the pool into the fast water it jumped what

looked like a mile up in the air. It was a large steelhead as bright as the day. I had dreamt of this moment for eight whole years and never got even close to how it really felt. The steelhead turned around and went crazy back and forth within the pool, exploding into a half dozen magnificent jumps. I broke out into hysterical laughter.

I was in no condition to play a fish properly. All I could manage to do was keep some tension on the line. I laughed and kept tension. The fish exhausted

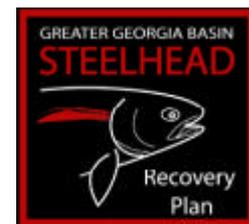
itself jumping. It was determined to throw that hook while in the air, but the hook was not going anywhere. Even without a barb, it was stuck firmly at the tip of the fish's tongue and even I had difficulty removing it. The steelhead, a buck of about ten pounds, was at first uncertain of its freedom and held quietly near the bank just upstream from where I sat. But then suddenly it darted into the current and vanished. I was still sitting on the bottom of the river, slapping the water and laughing.

I could never and will never try to understand, not to mention justify, the kind of profound joy that I come upon when I go fly fishing. But it is this very joy, circumstantial as it invariably is, that gives me my one and only, good enough reason to own my double-handed rods. Oh yes, I forgot to mention, or rather confess, that I actually bought two double-handed outfits. A second, nine-weight 15-foot long, double-handed rod was expeditiously procured to tame another, even more inclement winter river, somewhere on the west coast of Vancouver Island. 🍷

#### What happened to our Wild Steelhead ?

Find out about the state of the Greater Georgia Basin Steelhead and what is being done for their recovery. Visit the website of the BC Conservation Foundation

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# From the World of Roderick Haig-Brown

## The Haig-Brown Institute A new vision is born at the house of Ann and Roderick Haig-Brown

By Mary Haig-Brown

THE HAIG-BROWN HOUSE stands on the banks of the Campbell River as it has done since 1922 when it was built by Herbert and Dolly Pidcock. In 1936 Roderick and Ann Haig-Brown bought the house from the Pidcocks. They had been living next door in a house owned by Herbert's brother Reg since they arrived, newly married, in Campbell River two years before. They named the house Above Tide because it never registered any tidal influence, unlike the house immediately downstream where they had started out. The Haig-Browns lived in this house for the rest of their lives, a fact that might have surprised them when they settled there in 1936. By this time Roderick, aged 28, had published three books. Being a writer was not a lucrative calling, but it was a calling not to be denied.

As the years went by the Haig-Browns worked on the gardens started by Dolly Pidcock, expanding and altering them as fancy and needs dictated. By the time Roderick was accepted into the army in 1943, the lawn and a perennial border stretched from the house to the riverbank. Birch trees, and other exotic species were planted between the house and the road. There was a large vegetable garden with a section devoted to raspberries, loganberries, red and black currants, gooseberries, and even a grapevine. A new orchard supplemented the still producing Old Orchard, and a large asparagus bed augmented the marketable produce. Across the road were a barn large enough for the four cows and two calves, storage, and a glorious hayloft, as well as two chicken houses, old and new. By this time the Haig-Browns had three children who were constantly in need of food and clothing. The fruit, vegetables, milk and eggs provided good food for the family with enough left over to take to the grocery store to exchange for other food. The time taken to create and look after this enterprise took away from the writing time for Roderick, but it did provide sure food.

The river was ever the inspiration. The sight and sound of the river are an important part of Above Tide. A wing dam was built to provide a sheltered swimming spot, and terraces were built on the bank for shady suppers. A pool at the western property line, called Line-Fence Pool, provided fish for the table as well as a time for contemplation and information for the ever-increasing body of knowledge being collected for the writing yet to come. If time permitted, a walk up the riverbank to the Sandy Pool or farther to the Islands Pools gave Roderick a full day of pleasure and thinking time. *The Western Angler* was being written at this time and the contents of each fish's belly were examined carefully; as well, scales were collected and examined under a magnifying glass in order to read their life histories. The



Ann and Roderick Haig-Brown at Above Tide  
(Photo by Christopher Springmann for an article by Paul Grescoe published in the Jan-Feb 1977 issue of *International Wildlife*)

children were growing and Ann was on the local School Board. Roderick became a Stipendiary Magistrate. The local church, Fish and Game Club and Ratepayers Association all saw the Haig-Browns among their members.

When Roderick was ready to leave for the army, Ann had a fleeting thought of taking the children to her mother's house for the duration, but a look around at all they had done in the seven years at Above Tide convinced her to stay and carry on on her own. Other than going down to one cow, they made no obvious changes to the way of life at Above Tide. The big difference was that Roderick was not there, and morning and evening milking, planting tending and harvesting, child watching and community commitments all fell to Ann. She, of course, was not alone in this situation and the women of Campbell River helped each other do what needed to be done. The Army paycheck was a very welcome addition to the household income. It was the first regular paycheck they had had during their married life.

War over, the pace of life quickened. A new study was built to accommodate the growing collection of books and give more room for Roderick's writing, magisterial work, fish research and fly tying. The old study became a bedroom for the fourth child who was born in 1947. The building necessitated some changes to the garden, as did the overgrown state of the perennial border. Part of this was turned over to shrubs which required less attention than did the flowers. A terrace was added by the new study, providing a sheltered place for outdoor dinners. Ann decided to keep the vegetable garden as her own and enjoyed the process from seed catalogue to table. She tried a huge variety of fruits, vegetables and flowers. One year there were watermelons the size of gooseberries. There were wonderful globe artichokes, Brussel sprouts, cauliflower, leeks, eggplant, a large variety of beans, squash, corn and almost any other vegetable available. Fruit and vegetables were preserved for winter use, and given to anyone who needed them. Nothing was wasted, which made the fall a very busy time. Sheep were added to the farm

after the war, and it was often that Ann could say, as she presided over a sumptuous meal, "Everything came off the place."

The growing children shared in their parents' enthusiasm for the world around them. The names of plants and birds were discussed. Where they grew, what they ate, where they were when they disappeared were all good for conversation. Alternative names were discussed. Books called swamp robins Varied Thrushes, and balsam trees were called Grand Fir. "Let's look it up," was a commonly heard phrase in any good discussion. Books and magazines played a very important role in life at Above Tide. A package arriving from a Montreal, Victoria or London second hand bookstore was a cause for great excitement. New books were also important for the writer. A look at the library will show first editions of Hemingway, Steinbeck, Virginia Woolf and other writers of the day. "The Old Man and the Sea" was read first in *Life Magazine*. Rachael Carson wrote in *The New Yorker*. Discussion with other writers may have been rare, but reading their works was not. The typical response to, "Dinner's ready," was "Where is my book?" Dinner was a time to read and discuss what was being read. It was a great relief to the younger members of the family when they were finally old enough to read books small enough to be placed on the table instead of the larger picture books of early childhood.

The work as magistrate took more time, as the town of Campbell River expanded rapidly after the war.

Roderick spent many hours talking with people needing help or advice. His careful consideration of the needs of the people who lived and worked in the area did not go unnoticed, and he was often asked for advice on matters far from the courtroom. The unfair treatment accorded First Nations people and the unconscionable internment of the Japanese during the war worried Roderick, who often spoke out on their behalf and always worked quietly in the background to mitigate wrongs being done. The house often became a temporary place of refuge for people in need of safety and quiet. Children lived there for varying lengths of time, and women worried about an abusive husband found time to catch their breath and make plans. After Roderick's death Ann carried on with these roles and gave help and counsel to people in groups such as Parents in Crisis, Women's Transition House, John Howard Society, and Friends of Schizophrenics.

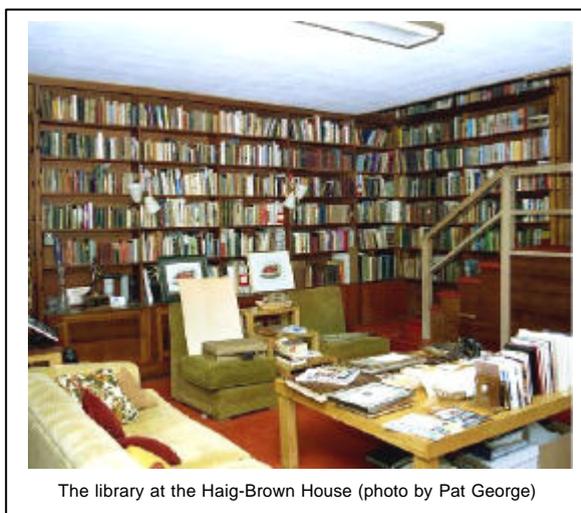
As the populations of the town and the province grew it became increasingly obvious that the use of the land on which we live needed to be carefully thought about. Continual extraction of resources would lead to the desecration of the land and all that depended on it. Roderick was an acknowledged expert on fish, and he used this reputation to speak up for all the life forms that were being

ignored in the rush to "develop" the province. The monumental battle to save Buttle Lake from being flooded in order to supply hydroelectric power was partially successful. The work against the Moran Dam on the Fraser River prevented that great river and its fish stocks from being totally destroyed.

A reading of Roderick's writing and observation of the conservation work and the life style he and Ann chose reveal a philosophy of understanding, tolerance and celebration. This philosophy has inspired many people to do things they might not otherwise have done. In 1975, unable to pay the property tax and hoping to preserve a little green space, Ann and Roderick sold Above Tide to the provincial government, retaining lifetime tenancy in the house. Roderick died suddenly a year later. His friends, as a fitting memorial, carried on a project he had been working on to divert Kingfisher Creek from a culvert to a new course through the property of Above Tide. They formed the Haig-Brown

Kingfisher Creek Society and successfully completed the diversion of the stream which now is a fine salmon spawning stream. Ann died in 1990 and the house reverted to the Heritage Properties Branch of the Provincial Government. Since that time the house has been fully restored and the study has been made suitable to house the priceless book collection.

Throughout the restoration period the house has been run as a Bed and Breakfast and an Education Centre. In the spring of 2002 the government announced it would devolve the operation of Heritage Properties to interested local



The library at the Haig-Brown House (photo by Pat George)

groups. A consortium of Campbell River groups including the Campbell River Museum, which had been overseeing the contents of the house since Ann's death, the Haig-Brown Kingfisher Creek Society, Greenways Land Trust, the Municipality of Campbell River and other interested people met to discuss an appropriate plan of action. From these meetings evolved a plan to form The Haig-Brown Institute.

The mission of the Haig-Brown Institute is to support the dignity of all people and recognize their economic needs while conserving our cultural and natural environments. The goals are: 1) to develop and encourage the philosophies of Ann and Roderick Haig-Brown, 2) to protect, conserve and interpret the cultural and natural heritage values of the Haig-Brown house, garden and property in Campbell River, B.C. 3) to encourage the discovery and inter-relationships of the environmental, economic and social ethics of Ann and Roderick Haig-Brown and 4) to build on work that Ann and Roderick Haig-Brown did in their lifetimes including the areas of conservation, community involvement, justice, education and literature. The Institute has a dedicated Board of Trustees who will raise funds and oversee the completion of projects carried on as a fitting continuation of the work of Ann and Roderick Haig-Brown. 🍷

## Featured BCFFF Member Club

### *The Osprey Fly Fishers of British Columbia*

By Pete Caverhill (Founding Member)  
With Illustrations by Stan Ogden

IN 1999, THE OSPREY FLYFISHERS OF BC marked their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Now, after three decades plus, a lot of water has passed to the sea, a few trout have received some educational training, and many members have come and gone. Our original reason for coming together as a group hasn't really changed. We exist to fly fish, to tie flies, to learn, to promote fly fishing and conservation, to enjoy comradeship and ... most of all to have fun!

We have the distinction of being the second fly fishing club to form in British Columbia. Until we emerged from the muck in 1969, only the Totem Flyfishers dominated the club scene. We owe our existence to the fact that the Totems were not accepting any new members, and in 1968, one of the Totems urged several desperately aspiring Totems to form another club. The original dozen Osprey founders met in various basements, and by the spring of 1970, had a formal constitution whipped into shape. About this time, the original "Osprey News" appeared as faint type on several pages spewed from a wonky, borrowed gestetner. The BCFFF was hatched in 1973, and we have supported and participated in this worthy umbrella over the decades.

To put the older days of the club into better perspective, the world of 1969 was a much simpler place. There were no personal computers or Internet, no faxes, no videos, no CDs, no telephone answering machines or even cell phones. Commuting on the Lower Mainland was no big deal, so vehicle cup holders weren't a necessity. Power steering on the few 4X4's that prowled the roads was still an option – not needed by the true back-roader (all Ospreys), whose arms, wrists and fingers were stronger than now. For fly fishers, the cane era had given way to fiberglass, while



graphite was pretty much a twinkle in some rod designer's mind. The choice in media devoted to fly fishing was limited to a few books and magazines. Secret fishing spots remained secret, even though we blabbed a lot.

Early on in the club's evolution our operational pattern was established and hasn't changed substantially since. Meetings were held once a month and the locations have varied from member basements, liquor company meeting rooms (when free promotional booze wasn't a no-no) to the subterranean vaults of a prominent Burnaby Church. This last location was during our religious period, but we were finally evicted for leaving feathers on the floor and swearing! We now meet primarily at the Legion in Coquitlam, but also try to have 3 to 4 dinner meetings a year at local restaurants, with guest speakers presenting interesting topics. In addition to the regular meetings, we also have a monthly evening "methods session" to explore a variety of topics related to fly fishing (from tying steelhead flies to winterizing outboard motors). Fish-outs also occur monthly, usually featuring our famous "tailgate lunch", which is prepared by whoever has been railroaded/volunteered for the function. The club takes a break from all activities during the summer months of June to August.

The "Osprey Grande Auction" started in the mid 70's and persists as our principal fund raiser. We hold it every second year, and it is well known for the quality of items crafted by talented members. Our last Grande Auction (2001) included a day-long seminar, as well as the evening dinner and auction. In the old days, we also raised money by selling BCWF Conservation

Lottery tickets at various local malls. This was a hoot because malls didn't used to have policies regarding high pressure sales techniques by charities and we could harass the passerby to our heart's content. It worked, as we sold lots of tickets! Our other money raiser was a six-week night school fly fishing course. We taught this at John Oliver High School in Vancouver for about 12 years. Funds that are raised assist the club's operations, but most importantly, they bolster our conservation account for "Special Projects".

While the club is primarily for fun and fishing we do have a conservation side, as dictated by our constitution. Over the years, Ospreys have been active on a number of issues such as: Juniper Beach Park Acquisition, Skagit Anglers Committee, Lower Mainland Angling Regulation Signage, and Coquihalla River Stewardship. We have a "Special Projects" Committee that oversees our conservation account, reviews proposals and recommends worthy projects for donation. Over the past 5 years, donations have gone to local stream keeper groups on the Sunshine Coast, Langley, West Vancouver, and Maple Ridge. Our official publication, "The Osprey News", is our most important communication tool. It is the basic glue that sticks the club together. In by-gone times (pre 1996), the "News" was drafted with pencil and paper, typed by a typist, delivered and picked-up from a printer, collated, stapled, folded, stuffed, licked, sticked, stamped, and mailed – whew! Now the paper is artistically produced electronically, flying through space

to about 90% of the club membership. The Osprey Flyfishers are one of the very few BC fly clubs that have a website ([www.ospreyflyfishers.com](http://www.ospreyflyfishers.com)). In 1999 the club produced a hardcover book to celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary called "Backcasts and Forecasts – History of the Osprey Flyfishers – 1969-1999." It featured material from past newsletters, as well as member profiles, including favourite flies and comments from some of the original members.

At present (2002), our membership stands at 30 regular and 5 associate members. In addition, we have 1 lifetime and 1 honorary member. The size of the club is voted on every year, and our members feel comfortable with the present numbers. Guests are always welcome with an invitation from a member. The prospective member comes as a guest, registers, checks out the club, and gets to know the members. The guest finds a couple of sponsors, attends the required number of club functions, then waits a year for an acceptance vote. Members range from age 15 to the senior years, and include both men and women. Osprey angling interests range from trout (mostly interior type), steelhead and salmon to the more exotic bonefish and tarpon of southern waters. Most of the members are dyed-in-the-feathers stillwater 'trouters'.

So ... there you have the Osprey Flyfishers of BC. It hasn't been all rosy over the years, but the club has lasted for more than 30 years and there is no reason why it won't still be going strong in the year 2032. 🍷

## *Stan Ogden*

### *Musician, Artist, Heavy Equipment Mechanic*

SOMEHOW IT SEEMS INCONGRUOUS that Stanley was all of these. His prepared-for-the-bush exterior, with tool-scarred hands and less than pristine headgear, belied what lurked inside. Despite his considerable talents, Stan was modest to the point of self deprecation. His guitar was always present when campfires burned. This instrument seemed to be the trigger that exposed a normally hidden, boisterous side to Stan. With songs, drink and general ribaldry, Stan would often lead the group happily into the night, as long as the sparks drifted skyward.

With family roots in BC's interior, Stan was born to love hunting and fly fishing. He covered the angling destinations – Morice, Lakelse, Dragon, Skagit and waters south of the border.

However, he was particularly fond of the Fraser watershed in the Lower Mainland. Coho and cutthroat were out there, and fishing for them was an all year proposition. Stan's sunken green Tom Thumb was deadly! I remember an early spring day at Popkum, when he proceeded to clean our clocks on cutthroat with the subsurface TT. To make this success more emphatic, Stan did most of the catching from a relaxed, seated position on the stream bank!

His work with black scratch-board and needle tools amazed us all, and his generosity in donating this art to Osprey auctions allowed some of us to retain a valued piece of the man. If Stan was still here, he'd be darn proud to be sharing his work with readers of *Fly Lines* – but at the same time there'd be a bit of embarrassment, and he'd be telling us it was "really nothing".



-- Pete Caverhill

# Fly Box *(Edited by Will Wright & Peter Caverhill)*

FOUR WINTER STEELHEAD FLY PATTERNS tied by past and current members of the Osprey Fly Fishers.



## *Ladybug*

(Originated and tied by Pete Pedersen)

**HOOK:** 4 – 2/0 salmon **THREAD:** Orange  
**TAIL:** Red squirrel tail with 4 strands of orange bucktail on top (shrimp feelers)  
**RIB:** Fine copper wire  
**SHELLBACK:** Pink chenille  
**HACKLE:** Orange **BODY:** Brown chenille

Note: Named after a ladybug lighted on the originator's hand while tying the fly on for the first time.



## *Squamish Streaker*

(Originated and tied by Trevor Venables)

**HOOK:** Mustad 9049, sizes 2-4  
**TAG:** Gold or silver tinsel  
**RIB:** Gold or silver tinsel **HACKLE:** Hot orange palmered **BODY:** Orange chenille **WING:** White calf tail under a heavy topping of marabou

Developed for the steelhead and Dolly Varden of the Squamish River



## *Egg and Skin Fly*

(Originated and tied by Rick Jones)

**HOOK:** Heavy Mustad size 2  
**UNDERBODY:** Lead wire **BODY:** Fluorescent red plastic **COLLAR:** Fluorescent red, yellow, or orange wool or egg yarn alternating with white wool  
**HEAD:** Fluorescent red thread

An easy to tie and highly effective salmon egg imitation



## *Simplified General Practitioner*

(Contributed and tied by Steve Hanson)

**HOOK:** Salmon hook sizes 4 – 2/0  
**TAIL:** Golden pheasant tippet over orange polar bear or buck tail **RIB:** Gold oval tinsel  
**HACKLE:** Orange hackle tied palmered  
**BODY:** Orange dubbing  
**WING:** Two or three red body feathers from a golden pheasant tied flat over the body

Use black materials for a Black GP with a tippet tail

# Writing

## Change

By Rob Brown

THE FRAME IS UNEVEN AND WHITE. Blood red fish with dark heads are bounded by it. They swim through copper water under stained glass, between and through the reflection of twisted dead arms that cradle five eagles.

There is a house with a trailer core at the top of the incision where the road used to be. No smoke rises from its chimney. The sky is gray and low. It is noon. In the flat light it could be mistaken for late in the day.

A man on skis follows the snow-covered roadway. There are three dogs in front of him. One dog is large. It is the colour of rust. The others are degrees of Border collie, black with white tipped tails and white streaks on their necks. The big dog plods. The others dart, leap and roll through the snow like fish through waves. When the smaller dogs have run ahead, the man whistles, calling them back over their tracks so that he may use the newly broken trail.

When he reaches the place where the red water spills out of the pond and runs over the rusty rocks and black gravel below, the man bends over to remove his skis so he can make his way over the snow-covered beaver dam that bridges the creek. The dogs splash through the water. The picture in the mirror changes: two eagles spread their wings and spring from their roosts in the cottonwood; the red salmon disappear into black water.

The trail is longer than the year before. After half an hour the man is standing on a high bank looking over the part of the river where the moose cross; an hour after that he nears the part of it called the Fire Pot. There is the swish of skis against snow. The dogs snap twigs sporadically. There are river sounds. There are no other sounds.

To reach the river the man is forced to shed his skis and wade through a hundred yards of brush. With each step he sinks to his thighs in snow. When he breaks free of the woods, he is sweating. There is a log at the head of the run. Another man is sitting on it, next to a fire, his rod resting on a forked stick. The other man stands slowly and turns stiffly at the sound of the dogs. He is old.

—How's fishing? the younger man asks as he approaches. He says this awkwardly. The older man tosses a branch on the fire.

—It's been better, the older man says, resuming his seat on the log.

—I didn't see your truck or your tracks, remarks the man with the dogs.

—I came a different way, says the old man, the way I've been coming for over fifty years now.

The older man's speech is slow and deep, soft and resonant. The younger man notices the dogs are sitting now. They seem comforted by the sound of the old man's voice.

—Do you mind if I fish here too, just below you?

The younger man motions downstream.

The old man shakes his head no.

—I guess you've seen some changes to the valley in the last fifty years, says the younger man as he assembles his gear.

—I've seen nothing *but* change, the old fisherman says. Used to think some of it was good and some of it was bad, but I'm not sure anymore. My wife passed away last year. That was change, good because she's stopped hurting, but bad because I miss her. All I know for sure now is that it's change. Change is the only thing I believe in. It's the only thing I know for certain these days.

The old man looks out over the river then continues:

—I can't remember things for long anymore, he says, that's another change.

—That's too bad, says the younger man. He doesn't know what else to say.

—No, just nature's way of dimming the lights, says the older man. My kids put me in a home. Afraid I couldn't take care of things anymore. That's been a big change, a *real* big change. Still remembered my way in here though. Just like I have on every Christmas Day since I got back from the war.

The two men sit and talk. It's the kind of conversation that hurries time. They talk of dogs and bears, of fish and fishing, of rivers, of the sea, of storms. The talk moves with a gentle insistent motion. It washes in and out like waves against a smooth beach leaving images behind instead of grains of sand.

The young man realizes the light is failing. He glances at his watch. There is less than an hour before dark. It's getting colder.

—We'd better be going, he says, as he prepares to leave.

—I'm going to fish until dark, says the old man.

The younger man understands. For a while he stands still, feeling stiff and awkward, not knowing what to do or say. Then he realizes nothing needs doing and there is nothing more to be said.

—I hope you fish past dark, he says at last.

—Me too, says the older man. Have a Merry Christmas.

—Merry Christmas, says the younger man.

He makes his way back slowly. He thinks of the older man, and how the trail looks different now. 🍷



Stan Ogden

# From our Readers

## New Blood

A RATHER STRONG AURA OF NOSTALGIA seems to be enveloping contemporary society. Whatever the reason may be, the yearning for the simplicity and values of yesteryear seems just. Personally, I satiate my nostalgic appetite through the collecting of vintage fishing tackle (the stuff I can afford that is). Indeed, time spent browsing eBay auctions has even eclipsed actual time on the water (the irony of using a modern, high tech medium as a conduit to the past is not lost on me). Are we simply blindly romanticizing the past here? Is there any truth in the phrase that “nostalgia is a seductive liar”?

Being a native Islander raised in a sport fishing charged family, I was introduced to the legacy of Roderick Haig-Brown at an early age. My older brother would regularly regurgitate episodes from classic Haig-Brown passages. The man quickly grew to legendary proportions in my young mind. Years later, along comes Mr. Raptis, bursting with reverence for this mythical figure of my childhood. Through the Waltonian ramblings of Mr. Raptis, I was soon inundated with wonderful tales and facts about not just Mr. Haig-Brown, but all of the legendary figures comprising BC’s angling heritage—fellows like Bill Nation, Tommy Brayshaw, and General Noel Money. I soaked it all up. Together, we often deliberated whether there would ever be figures of their importance in the future.

This brings me to *Fly Lines* magazine. When Loucas informed me of the magazine’s emphasis on the time-honoured traditions and historical figures of BC fly fishing, I naturally became intrigued (that nostalgia thing again). Delving into the June 2002 issue, I instantly recognized the quality of the publication. Like all good

literature should do, it stimulated me to explore some of the topics further. Art Lingren’s book excerpt made me re-visit a recently acquired copy of *The Contemplative Man’s Recreation*, which details the origins of the Harry Hawthorn Foundation. This book also contains a small descriptive biographical treatment of Tommy Brayshaw, who among other splendid contributions, made an important posthumous donation of his library, notebooks, and artwork to the foundation. Reading this tribute written by Roderick Haig-Brown, it dawned on me that all might not be lost as far as the perpetuation of BC’s angling heritage is concerned. While their significance may not yet be as readily apparent as that of the grand masters of yesteryear, there exist people today poised and capable of carrying the torch of future legacies. Several individuals, contributors and featured fly fishers, that have already made an appearance in *Fly Lines*—and I assume many others to appear in the future—would qualify for the title.

While casting the publication in such a flattering light may seem like a cheap ploy to extort more flies from the vise of its editor (and my dear friend), it is merely a personal exercise to reinforce a notion of optimism. That is, optimism for the continuing “Inculcation and Propagation of the Principles and Ethics of Fly Fishing” within the time-honoured framework built by the old masters. Having said that, my supply of your bass fry imitations is getting a little low Loucas.

Looking forward to the next issue of *Fly Lines*.

—Tim Couch, Victoria



### Join the BCFFF & the Fly Fishing Community of British Columbia

(Mail to: BCFFF, P.O. Box 2442, 349 Georgia St. W., Vancouver, BC V6B 3W7)

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