



Fly Lines

The official publication of the British Columbia Federation of Fly Fishers
Spring 2006 **Volume 7, Number One**



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Fly Lines

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Members as well as guest writers are invited to submit articles, photographs and artwork related to the pursuit of fly fishing. Send unsolicited material, with a self addressed stamped envelope for return to:

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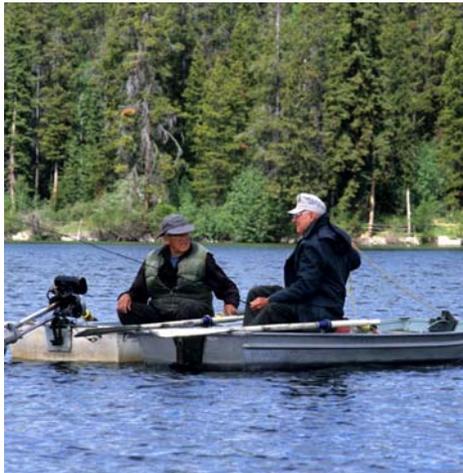
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On Our cover . . .



Barney Ruston & Jack Shaw photo thanks to Bob Jones, Courtenay, BC

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President's Message



What Can I say?

Well, my two years as president of BCFFF are fast drawing to a close as we approach our AGM in May. This will likely be my last (and eighth) "Presidents Message" to all of you in BCFFF. After elections, I'll likely have the role of "past president", so I won't be heading off into the sunset. I've been associated with BCFFF for too long to simply disappear. Perhaps I'll be able to work on some of the issues that always plague an organization like BCFFF. Some of these issues are internal to the organization- like how can we make our Gilly Fund more efficient and effective? Or,

they may external – like how in the world can we deal with all of the angling/conservation issues that keep floating down the river and into our laps?

I feel that I must leave you with one message. Please pay attention as this is important!

BCFFF has a very long and honorable history in this province! Many decades of volunteers have struggled to work on behalf of BCFFF fly clubs and other BC fly anglers. They have labored to preserve and improve the recreational fisheries that we love, to speak out for the conservation and sustainability of the special fish that we chase, and to capture and share the rich history of BC fly fishing. For many reasons, these times are making it extremely challenging to effectively continue this momentum that began in BCFFF over 30 years ago. The world, and our immediate environs, has become so much more complex that we are tempted to throw up our hands in despair. We suffer from information overload, apparent government and public indifference to our concerns, and a multitude of vocal stakeholders, all with differing agendas and concerns. We compete with peoples' very busy lives to inspire those few who will work for the cause.

Under these conditions, volunteer organizations like BCFFF teeter on the brink of extinction. It can happen! Thus, all of you must consider devoting some of your "resources" (however large or small) to the cause. If you love to fish, you have an obligation to work for the future of angling and the fish! When there are issues to deal with, meetings to attend, processes to sit on – be prepared to step up to the pool!

Peter Caverhill

Reports, Upcoming Events, Notices and Items of Interest, Letters to Editor

Editor,

In reference to the article “Hatcheries as a Consideration For Thompson River Steelhead” by Bill McMillan in your last issue, we in Spences Bridge would like to make some comment. We find ourselves here in the uncomfortable position of being perceived as in favour of hatcheries as a solution to the problems of Thompson River steelhead and forced to defend our actions in hosting a meeting to present information on this very emotional subject.

We are not apologists for the poor performance of hatcheries in the past and we recognize that opinion on this subject is very divided. However, we do want to include this issue in the ongoing debate and are prepared to suffer the controversy of bringing it to the table in our search for relevant facts. Mr. McMillan’s article did very little in presenting relevant, fact-based reasons for the positions it put forth. Stating that Canadians should not look to the US for facts is one such example. This opinion, coming from a US citizen, is slightly self-contradictory and lends nothing to the debate. We should search for facts wherever they may come from.

Dr. Brannon’s presentation provided specific examples of studies used as evidence against hatchery augmentation and presented the argument that this evidence did not support the facts they sought to portray. He provided descriptions of other studies and explained how the evidence does speak in favour of hatcheries. He’s not arguing that hatcheries worked in the past but rather how they might work in the future. “Might” is an important word here.

Now it’s time for somebody to pick his evidence apart in the same way. What we need in response is a fact-based rebuttal of his presentation. Heaven knows, he has provided plenty of ammunition. Telling us that hatcheries contribute to the gradual decline in steelhead numbers lends nothing to the debate unless we are also provided with facts showing cause and effect. These facts should be unsullied by other variables like poor management, over-fishing and habitat deterioration.

Rebuilding Thompson steelhead stocks will require a variety of responses, some of which will be controversial but all of which need to be examined scientifically in order to succeed. It is unfortunate that people and organizations who have worked hard for these fish over the years, refuse to even listen to a hatchery debate. We encourage all of you to attend the next hatchery meeting in March. Attendance does not mean you are in favour of a “hatchery solution”. It just means that you are interested in a fact-based solution.

Yours Sincerely
Spences Bridge Steelhead Advocate Association

Dean River Advisory Group Meeting, Williams Lake, December 2, 2005

Recollections of the Meeting by Art Lingren

I attended on behalf of the BCFFF this one-day advisory meeting. In order to get there it required flying to Williams Lake the day before and staying in the Fraser Inn, where the meeting took place on the Tuesday. This year's meeting was a little earlier than last year but December is not the best of time for meetings on fisheries issues. Nonetheless, this river attracts anglers who are passionate about their sport and nearly 40 people braved winter travel to attend the meeting coming from as far away as Vancouver Island, the Lower mainland, Kamloops, Quesnel, Anaheim Lake, Bella Coola and perhaps other places not mentioned by participants. The meeting was chaired by Mike Ramsey, Region 5 Fisheries Senior Biologist with Jack Leggatt, former Fisheries Section Head now retired, co-chair.

The 2005 Season: The Dean River had one its worst years in the past two decades. The run of steelhead was well below the 10 year mean and estimated to be about 1685 down from the 10 year mean average escapement of 3750. No reason was given for the poor return this year. The total sport catch is about 1620 (not all data is in) steelhead down from the 10 year average of 3660. Many steelhead are caught more than once. Catch per angler effort was down from the five-year—1999-2003--average of 0.99 to 0.54. Because of high water events through the off season, the river structure changed significantly and where good runs used to be piles of gravel now exist. In the Five-Mile to the Canyon—about 2 miles of river--there was only about ½ dozen pieces of water and some not great pieces of water to fish. The angler effort also dropped in 2004 down to 3017 days compared to the 1994-2004 average of 3908 days. It was not a good season with many anglers and/or groups of anglers catching few fish for their week's stay.

The Dean River Salmon Fishing and Chinook Study: The Chinook salmon run in mid-June through July followed by the steelhead run are the target fish with many anglers coming just for the Chinook fishery. In 2005 anglers landed 295 fish.

The Dean's Chinook run is one of the Pacific Salmon Commission's indicator streams and they want to do a Chinook mark-capture study in 2006. DFO sought input from the group as to how best do the work causing the least disruption to the sport fishery and were at the meeting looking for anglers and groups of anglers to participate in the capture and tagging program. When combined with other information, the information from the Chinook-mark capture program will help establish habitat-based escapement goals glacially-influenced rivers in northern BC.

The Lower Dean River Angling Use Plan: The presentation and discussion of the above two agenda items were basically complete before morning coffee and the rest of the morning was spent on a discussion about the Lower Dean chiefly concerning 4 items:

- 1) *Do we continue to have an 8 day restriction on the Dean for non-resident aliens (unguided or guided)?*
- 2) *Do we continue to have an 8 day restriction on the Dean for guided non-resident aliens (guided not restricted)?*
- 3) *Do we continue to allow people who have been through the draw successfully permission to also fish the lower river?*

4) *Do we need to institute a draw now on the lower river, or should we wait for the completion of the 3 years we said we would to collect data to make a more informed decision?*

The Lower Dean below the canyon to tidewater was made into a Class 1 water for the 2005 season. At last year's meeting two principles for the reclassification were adopted and they were:

1. The rules governing the Class 1 water below the canyon should be the same as those that govern angler activity above the canyon
2. That the reclassification of the water below the canyon has no detrimental effects on the Class 1 water above the canyon.

The Branch recorded the comments on the four items discussed and they were to condense and consolidate and come back to the larger group with some ideas for further comment on regarding those four specific items. The meeting adjourned at noon.

Working Together to Increase Angler Participation

(A workshop sponsored by the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC)

December 1, 2005 at Fraser Valley Trout Hatchery, Abbotsford

By Pete Caverhill

Introduction:

I attended this workshop on behalf of BCFFF.

This is the 3rd Workshop that the FFSBC has sponsored to deal with declining angler participation. The main purpose of this session was to review a draft action plan (BC's Action Plan to Increase Angler Participation – Draft – 2005).

There will be a more complete set of minutes produced by FFSBC within the next few weeks.

What I am providing here is simply my perception of the workshop and the emerging Action Plan. I attended to represent BC Federation of Fly Fishers. I was not present at the previous two workshops, which were attended by other BCFFF reps.

There is great concern in most recreational fisheries management jurisdictions (especially North America) that people are not being recruited to angling or they are dropping out. The outcome of this trend, if it is allowed to continue, will be a serious marginalization of recreational angling in the eyes of the public and decision makers.

Workshop Observations:

- 1) The facilitated session (by Julie Paul) was attended by about 25 people and lasted all day. Folks attended from a variety of government and non-government organizations (ie. BC Fed of Drift Fishers; BCFFF; BCWF; Trout Unlimited; various commercial sport fish groups; Family Fishing Society; Ministry of Environment (at least 6 people); Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts; BC Outdoors Mag; BC Parks). DFO could not make it.
 - 2) The main purpose of this workshop was to review a draft strategic plan that has been in the works for awhile. I won't go into any detail here. The detailed results of the discussions will be available for circulation in the new year. I'll just report any points of interest that came up.
- Many groups are producing fishing guides for the various regions (tourist objectives). There is a desire to get these groups together to sing a common song.

- Most important to get info on angling into the school system. “Salmonids in the classroom” program mentioned. Some teachers feel that angling is bad (provide the PETA message to kids).
- Quality Waters Strategy mentioned – concern that “perceived” complexity of angling regs/licensing is a deterrent to entering or staying in angling. Province supposed to reduce provincial regs by 30% (status?). Mentioned Washington Dept of F & W as a model website for explaining regs. And discussing angling topics.

Don Peterson Presentation:

Don is President of FFSBC. His talk on declining angler participation, and FFBC plan to deal with it, was very interesting. Here are some of the facts/figures that he provided:

- License sales (freshwater) are down by 30% over the past 10 years (was a shock). Tidal has been down but now leveled off.
- Decline in participation is widespread but there are some exceptions where the trend has been reversed (Britain, Saskatchewan).
- BC has the best recreational fisheries in the world! Angling is the mainstay of backcountry tourism here.
- 650,000 licensed anglers in BC (tidal/fresh evenly split); 9000 jobs associated with angling; a number of advocacy groups for angling; \$1.2B in benefits from angling.
- A \$1.2B industry that government spends approx. \$250,000 to promote.
- People learn to fish in freshwater. Mentors who are teaching others to fish are disappearing (they are the foundation!). The downturn in participation will be much more severe in the near future.
- Why are anglers (potential/existing) turning away from the sport? BC has 150,000 fewer anglers but the population of the province has increased by 500,000. There are many “systemic” obstacles (difficulties with buying licenses; regs are confusing and restrictive and ??)
- Britain has turned the trend with license sales up 41% in past decade. How? By adopting a “marketing” approach to recreational fisheries and fisheries management. Conversely, BC has always had a “build it and they will come” approach. This isn’t working.
- FFSBC funds are tight now because of the downturn in license sales but have a contingency fund built in to help.
- The FWFSBC “plan” in its most basic is: secure support (Oct/Nov 2005); complete situation analysis (Feb ‘06); complete 5 year “Strategic Market Development Plan” (April ‘06); implement plan 2006 to 2010.
- Nancy Wilkin (MoE ADM) and AL Martin (MoE-FW Director) believe the marketing approach is the way to go. They will be attempting to get senior DFO people (Paul Sprout) on board.
- David Ransom (BC Parks) is being seconded to FWFS for 6 months to prepare marketing plan (he has recently done the same for Parks).

Remainder of Workshop:

Participants were asked to identify their view of priority strategic plan areas for FFSBC. It worked out as follows:

Marketing Plan (30 votes); education curriculum in schools (17 votes); fishing facility development (10 votes); solve liability concerns (9 votes); fund raising (9 votes); annual review (4 votes); communicating (4 votes).

Participants were also asked for where in the strategic plan they felt that they could contribute? BCFFF responded by volunteering in the “learning to fish” area (Goal 3-1)

Fisheries Committee

By Gil Sage

1. Nicola/ Merritt Water Use Plan

Really have not been on top of this since attending meeting in Merritt on Oct.1/06. They are still holding meetings; I have received some minutes but may be missing some.

2. Skagit Watershed Recreational Review

Requested and received copy of the report “ Upper Skagit Watershed Recreational Needs Assessment “ prepared for the Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission (SEEC) by consulting firm. In February 05 we attended a workshop in Yarrow, which was part of the consultants study. I need to read the report again but my initial feeling was that the consultant vastly under estimated the importance of fishing in the Canadian portion of the Skagit and their breakdown on recreational activity is not accurate.

On March 6 and 7 I attended another SEEC workshop entitled “ Protecting an International Watershed: the Upper Skagit” this workshop was an attempt by SEEC to identify issues that need to be addressed to protect the watershed and they would direct funding towards those issues rather than receiving funding requests for projects on an ad hoc basis.

3. Quality Water Classification (QWC)

In a letter, dated Oct 25/06 to Peter Caverhill (PAC) Miles Stratholt (MOE) informed PAC that the quality water strategy was being implemented as drafted and regional staff has begun the process of engaging stakeholder involvement. Rob Stewart, BCFFF’s rep, has resigned from the initial committee and Art Lingren has agreed to take over with Gil Sage acting as his alternate. Bob Taylor, sitting as an independent angler, had previously resigned from the committee due to his frustration with the process and lobbying by certain parties. I do not know if he has been replaced

Mike Walden and Sharon Robertson are both serving on the Skeena region QWC. We do need people to serve on the other regional committees (Cariboo, Kootenays, Thompson/Nicola and Lower Mainland)

4. Cheakamus River

PAC and I attended the open house held Feb. 8 in Squamish. Basically this was a poster session outlining the extent of the known impact caused by the spill as well as outlining some of the future work to be undertaken. The format was designed to minimize full-scale public discussion. In conjunction with Rod Clapton (BCFDF) we meet with Shane Simpson NDP environmental critic prior to the open house to discuss our concerns regarding the government’s actions to date in response to the spill.

While the river is classed as a wild steelhead river, one of the recovery options under consideration was a limited hatchery program to produce 33,000 smolts and a letter was sent to MOE supporting that if it was in conjunction with habitat improvement and fully monitored. It appears that the

limited hatchery program will not proceed and there is a fair amount of anger amongst the majority of stakeholder groups.

5. Rockfish Conservation Areas

PAC sent out e-mail to clubs with details on the various meetings the DFO had planned on the implementation of more RCAs. I have not had the time to follow upon this issue.

6. National Marine Conservation Area Reserve (NMCAR)

On Nov. 28/05 Steve Hanson and I attended Parks Canada open house on the proposed Southern Strait of Georgia NMCAR. Basically if established it would not eliminate commercial or recreational pursuits in the established area, however it would prevent mineral extraction and certainly the possibility of restriction on certain activities such as fishing could be implemented for conservation reasons. The feasibility study is extremely complex takes about five years to complete with 2007 being the target. There was the opportunity to provide feedback on the various poster presentations and we expressed concern on possible restrictions to beach access as well as the need to consider using tackle restrictions as a conservation toll rather than resorting to total fishing bans as happens in a RCO.

7. South Coast Steelhead Coalition

Attended meeting on Jan. 5/06

8. Hatchery Steelhead Forum (SHF)

Steve Hanson and I attended the SHF organized by Spences Bridges Steelhead Advocate Association. Rather than a forum it was really a presentation by Dr. Brannon on the pros and cons surrounding steelhead hatchery programs. Dr. Brannon's position is based primarily on the US experience and his opinion is that a properly run hatchery program should be capable of rebuilding a run he does not feel that there is anything wrong with a steelhead that was hatchery raised, he does feel that many of the hatchery programs have failed due to decisions made by hatchery managers in regards to selecting stock, rearing conditions and timing of release. It was unfortunate that the provincial government was not there to make a presentation on the provincial experience as many of the concerns expressed by Dr. Brannon are addressed in the BC hatcheries. A letter was sent to MOE expressing our concern that there was no provincial representation at this meeting.

The BCFDF are arranging another forum, on April 29 at BCIT, and in addition to Dr. Brannon there will be presentations by both the provincial and federal agencies.

9. Thompson River Steelhead (TRS)

The BCWF held three workshops on the TRS. The first two workshops were held in Richmond on Feb 11/06 and I attended. Workshop 1 "Stock Assessment" Rob Bison (MOE) was the main presenter and there was little new information presented, although the discussion on the methods to assess the stock returns was interesting. Workshop 2 "Increasing Adult Returns" consisted of a presentation by Paul Ryall (DFO) regarding managing the south coast fisheries to protect TRS and a second presentation by Ted Down (MOE) outlining the complexities, goals and objectives in managing TRS.

Breakout sessions were held to brainstorm the two topics.

The third workshop "Habitat Protection" was held in Merritt on March 4/06 and PAC attended.

10. Steelhead Stream Classification Policy

On October 25/05 Miles Stratholt wrote indicating that the policy had been put forward to the Ministry executive and the final particulars of its implementation will be developed when a final decision has been made. As part of item 12 we received information that apparently the policy is planned for implementation in April 2007 and there is a notice of this intention on page 2 of the 2006/2007 Freshwater Fishing Regulation Synopsis.

2006 AGM “Passing the Rod”

Where: University of Victoria 3800 Finnerty Road

Friday May 26th: Wine and Cheese Party UVIC Commons Block

Saturday May 27th:

BCFFF Annual General Meeting 9 to 12

Fly Fishing Flea Market 1 to 3 pm

Every Fly Club gets a free table(s) to sell their used or new fly rods and reels, fly books, flies, float tubes, or whatever they want at their table. Individual members can sell their own equipment for prices that they set and control, or club members can have the Fly Club’s Table Coordinator sell the equipment for them. At the end of the event, the fly club Table Coordinator gives 10% of the proceeds from all sales to the BCFFF. In addition, the BCFFF will have a table themselves. The concept will be to remove some of the more minor items from the Silent Auction and Auction to shorten the timelines for both of these events restricting them to major items. Vendors will be invited to bring “entry level” outfits so the members can pick up new rods and reels for their grandchildren.

Passing the rod

Panel presentation of speakers on the challenges associated with increasing youth awareness of fly fishing in the communities:

- Denise Maxwell, Panel Moderator, BCFFF New Education Director
- Ian Muirhead, Casting Instructor, St. Michael’s University School
- Interior Club, Youth Program Coordinator
- Don Peterson, President, Freshwater Fisheries Society
- Gary Betteridge, Westcoast Fly Fishers

Social, dinner and auction: starts 6:30 pm. Tickets are \$40 and will be available from Dale Francis, BCFFF AGM Registrar – Dale Francis Email: dalefrancis@pacificcoast.net Phone: 250-472-1104. For more information check www.hbffa.ca or bcfff.bc.ca

Sunday May 28th: Kenzie Cuthbert’s Lodge, Cowichan River Fly Casting

Tournament: Casting to hoola hoop targets anchored in the water in conditions that simulate actual fishing. Every participant gets a ticket for a draw on rod and reel. Winner of event gets a crappy trophy of “World’s Best Dad” variety. **Fishout:** Host club participants pair up with participants from visiting clubs fishing at a variety of spots and locations along the river. **BBQ:** At a particular

time, participants gather for an informal barbecue and beverage consumption. Goofy trophies awarded: Skunk, Smallest fish, Most flies lost, etc.

Book Review

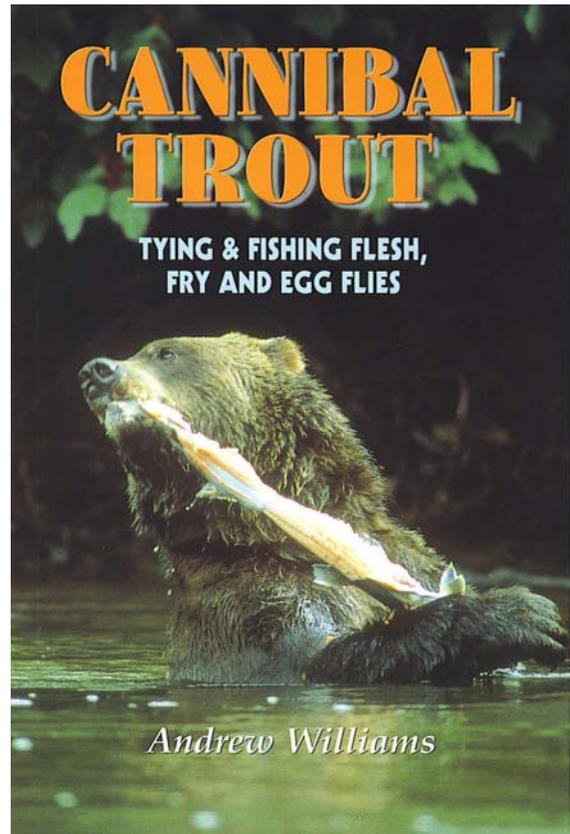
Cannibal Trout

By Andrew Williams

Frank Amato Publications, Inc. P.O. Box 82112,
Portland, OR 97282

2005, 80 pages, Softcover \$16.95 US

Andrew Williams has written extensively for fly fishing and outdoor periodicals, but this is his first book. Since moving to the Skeena area in 1989, Williams has spent much of his fishing time in pursuit of trout and char that frequent salmon-bearing streams, and this book is about the dependence that these fish, living in or near salmon bearing streams, have on salmon. They gorge on salmon eggs during the salmon's spawning, feed on the spent carcasses through fall and winter and, after a long winter, gorge on salmon fry in the spring. Some of the larger trout target smolts on their migration to the sea. The decaying salmon carcasses are an integral part of the ecosystem, providing nutrients to the surrounding forest and food for the bugs that trout eat. As Williams points out, trout and char dependence on salmon as a staple food source is far reaching.



The author provides the fly tying reader with many salmon fry, smolt, flesh and egg imitations, with detailed tying instructions and colour pictures of more than 30 patterns. Some are British Columbia classics such as Brayshaw's Egg 'n' I and Haig-Brown's Silver Brown, Silver Lady, General Fry and Humpback Fry patterns, whereas many others are recent innovations that are sure to catch both fish and the eye of the fly fisher.

Complimenting the text, Williams has included many colour pictures and supplemented those with his artwork, all of which make the book a pleasant read. In addition, the Hong Kong printer has done a faithful job of reproducing the colour in the images.

If you are a trout and char fly fisher who frequents streams in which Pacific salmon spawn, then you will find this book most helpful in understanding the reliance those fish have on salmon.

Understanding that relationship, together with using the flies and fishing techniques described in this book, promises to assist greatly in increasing your catch.

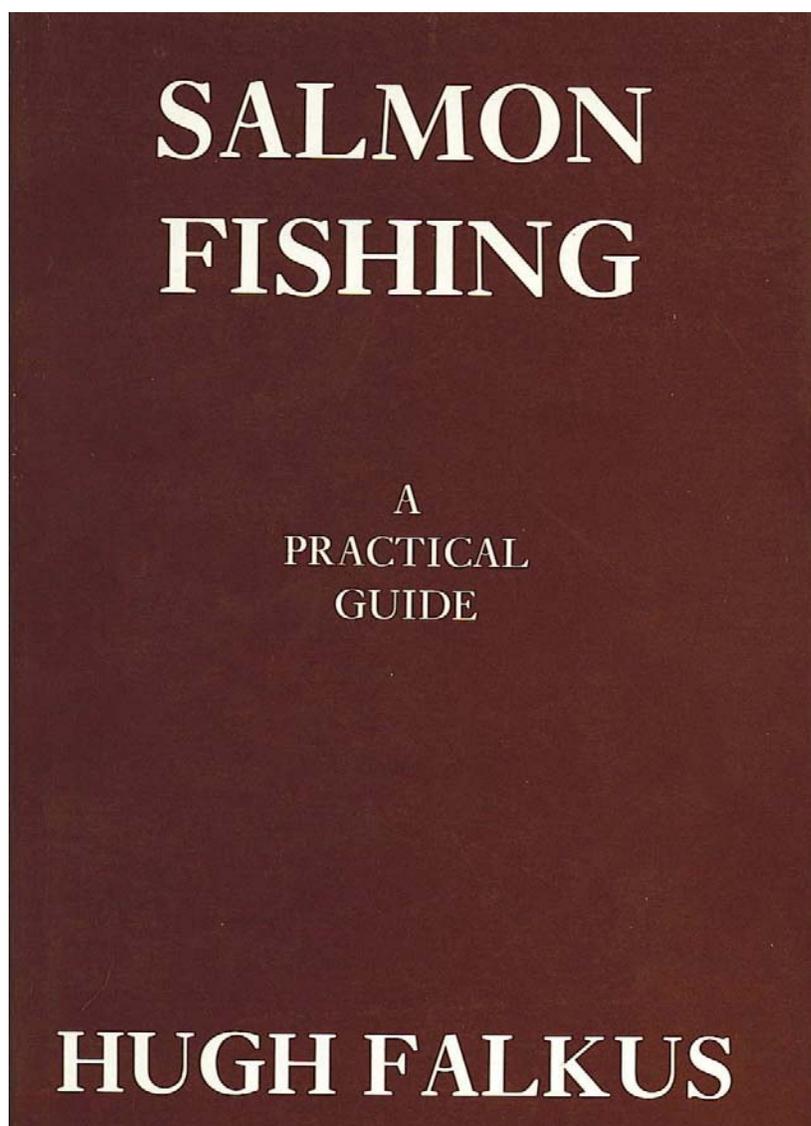
Reviewed by Art Lingren

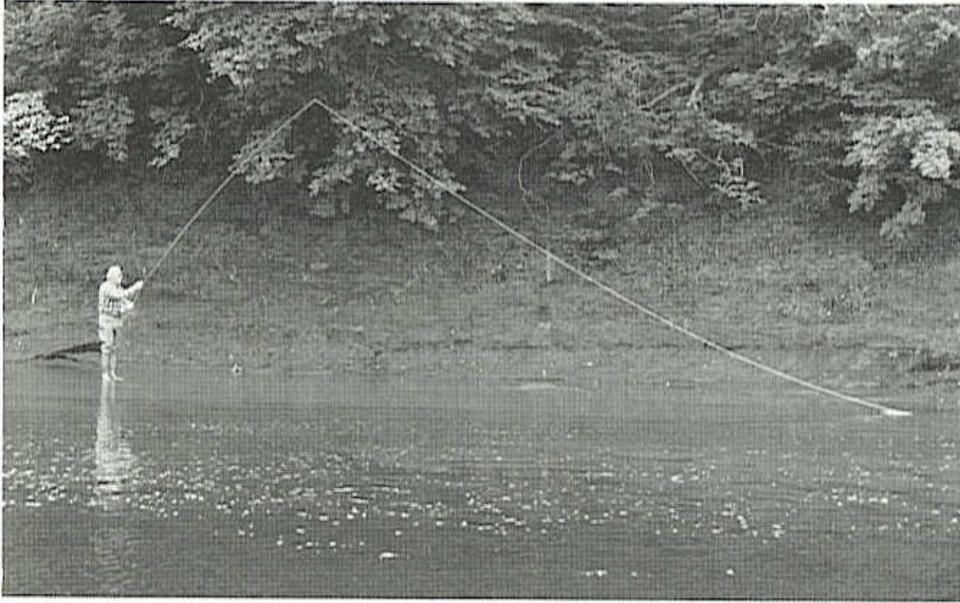
The Spey Cast or Welsh Throw: History in Great Britain, Roots in British Columbia and Popularity in North America

Part II: Falkus, Early North American Literature—Phair, Haig-Brown and Lynde

In the 1980s another book, *Salmon Fishing* (1984), was written by Hugh Falkus and in it Falkus provided valuable information for learning Spey casting. It is worth mentioning here that in the early 1980s I was dealing with an antiquarian book dealer R. J. W. Coleby in England to fill out my fly fishing library. Coleby and I, through our correspondence, became friends and he would let me know when new titles in my area of book interest were published and he gave me advance notice of limited editions. Some of those books I bought from Coleby are beauties and prized possessions in my angling library. Falkus was friendly with Coleby and it was through Mr. Coleby that I learned about Falkus' books, was able to correspond with him and meet him when he visited British Columbia in 1987.

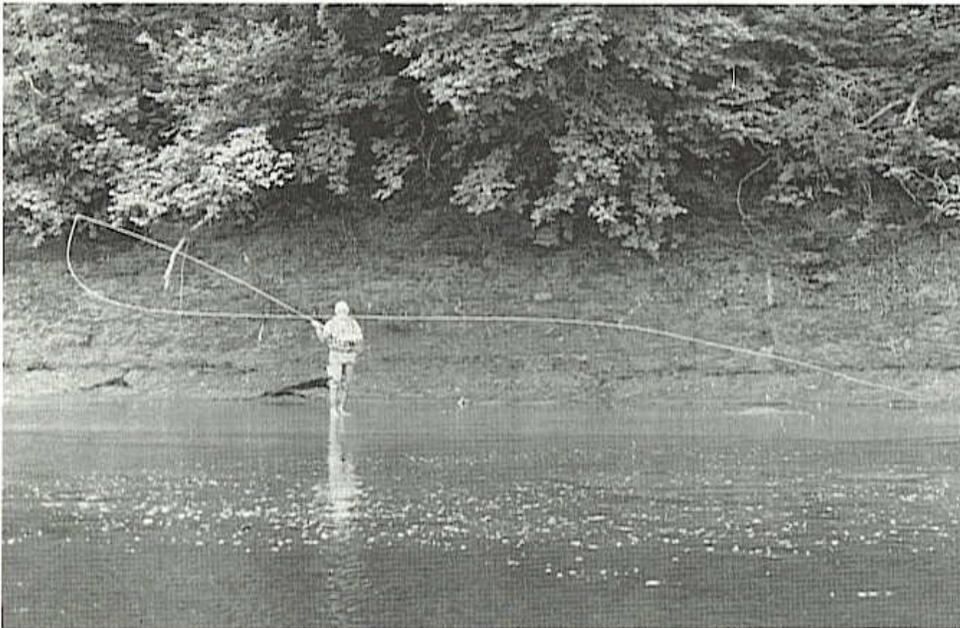
Falkus' book is still available through British book dealers and deserves a place in all Spey casters libraries. I will not repeat Falkus' words, because it is his series of photographs showing the Spey casting steps that provided far more detail on Spey casting than anything published previously.





1. The angler's intention is to retrieve the fly from its position downstream, where it finished up after fishing out the previous cast, and place it in the water just upstream of his right shoulder; then (in the same continuous movement) form a loop of line that with a strong flick of the wrists will carry the fly out towards the camera.

To do this, the rod is swung slightly inshore and raised, all in one movement.

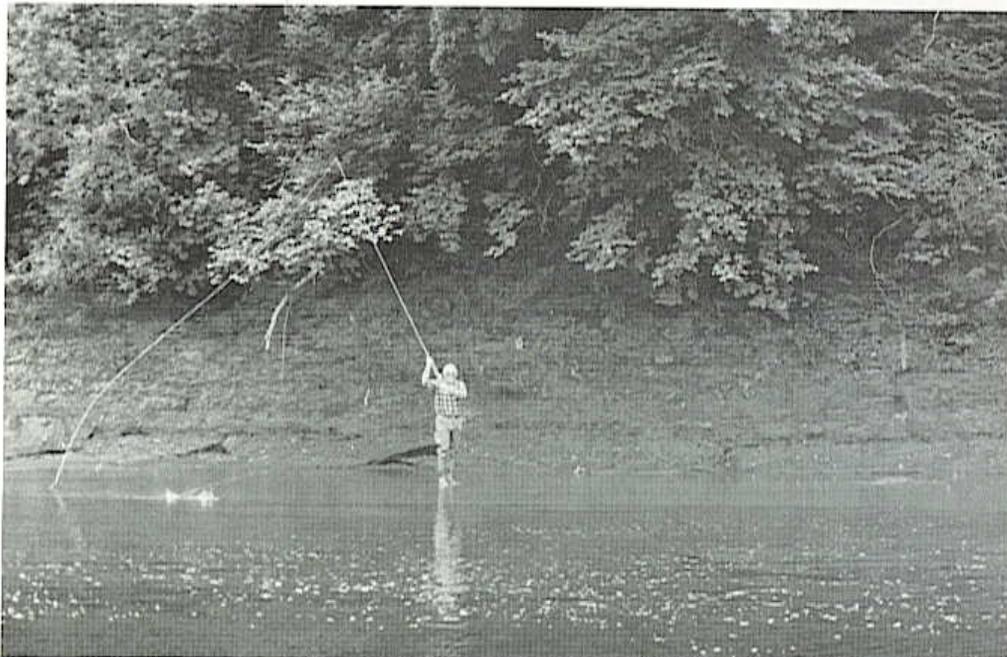


2. Now the angler swings the rod round upstream in front of him, bringing the line and fly up off the water. As the rod moves round, it curves downwards almost to the horizontal so that it *guides the line and fly* towards the splash-down position just beyond his right shoulder. (Note downward curve of line near the rod).



3. "Now the great thing in this cast, the pure essential part upon which it entirely depends, is to compel the line to strike the water after lifting it out instead of sending it back in the air."

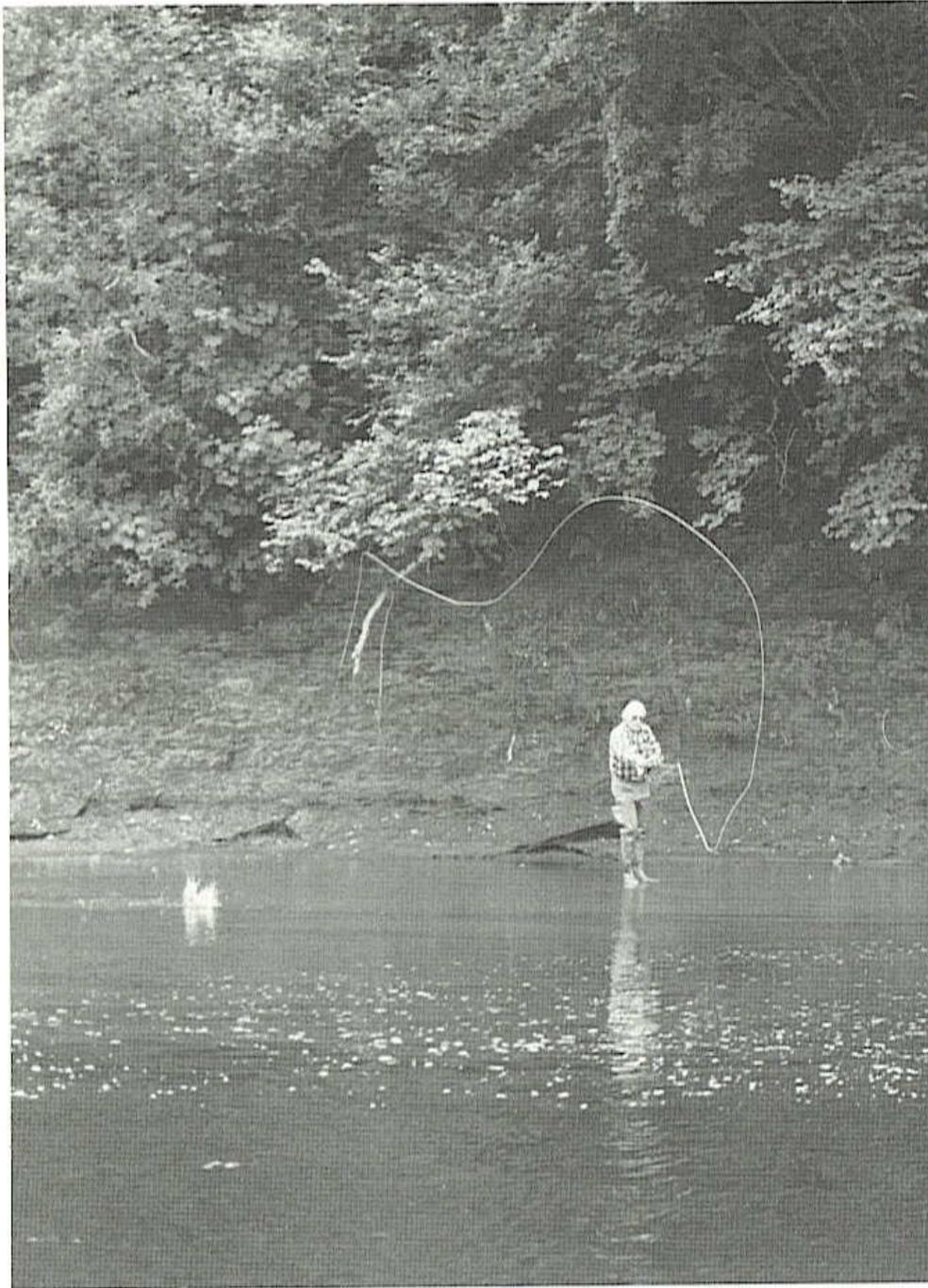
Geo. M. Kelson, *The Salmon Fly*, 1895.



4. The splash-down. The fly, together with leader and the last few yards of line, has been placed just upstream in the intended position. From here it can be cast at the required new angle without its fouling the line as it shoots out.

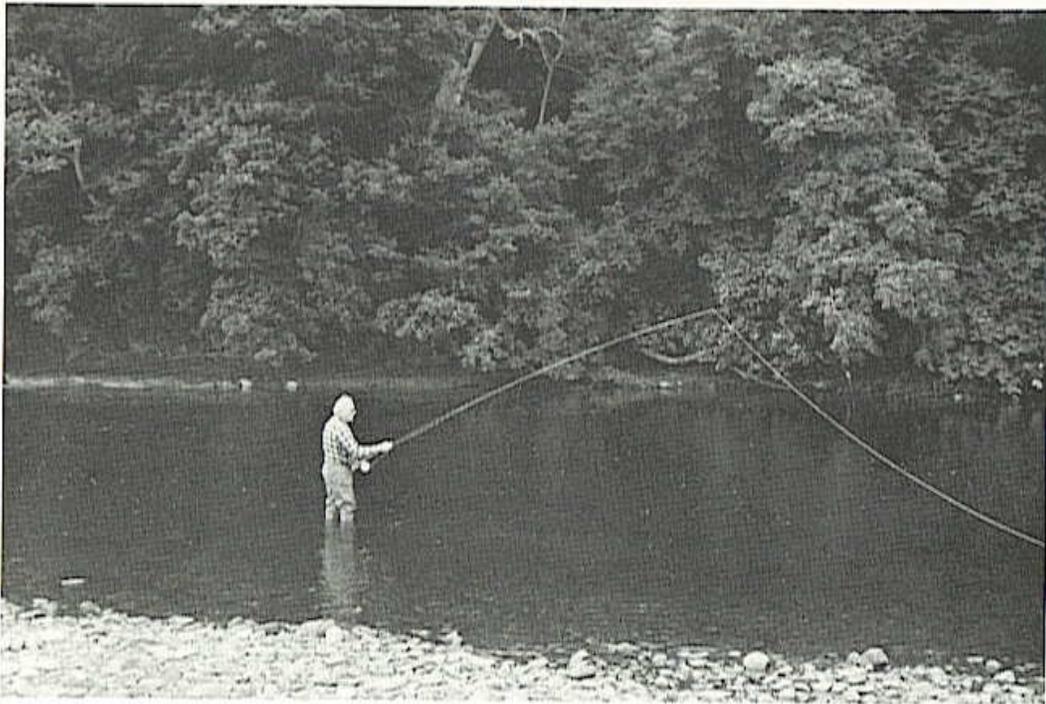
The moment the fly hits the water, the angler forms a loop of line by swinging the rod round and bringing it up just backwards of the vertical, raising his arms slightly as he does so to bring the reel level with his face. (Note stance: right leg slightly forward).

THE SINGLE SPEY CAST

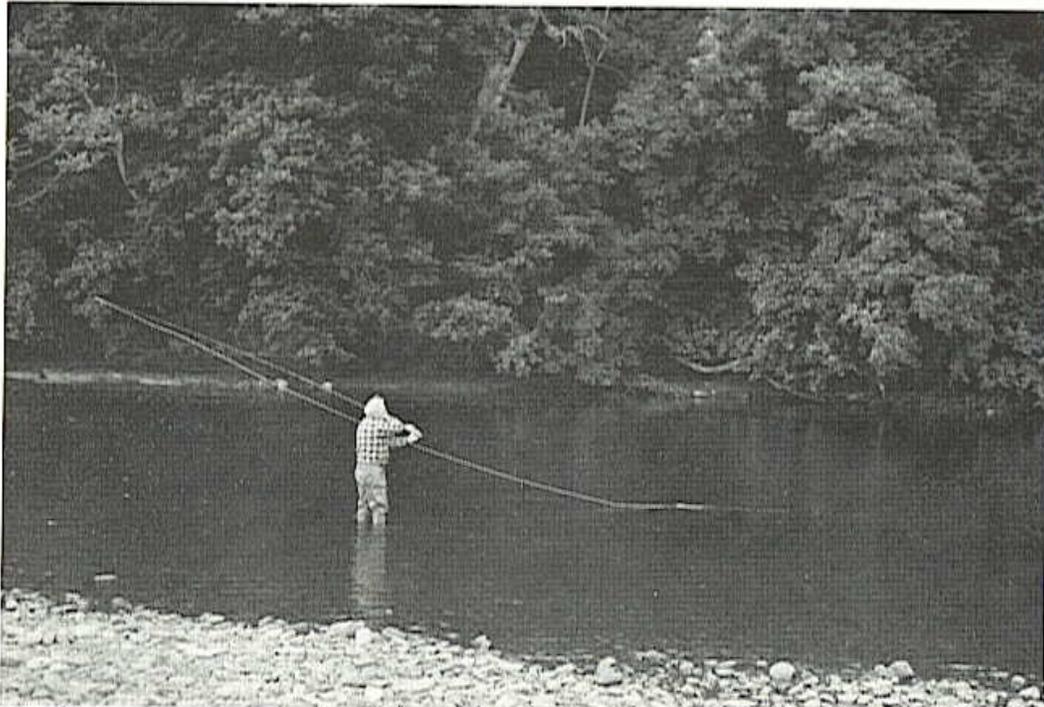


5. The forward stroke is made, the angler's weight being taken on his right leg as the loop of the line followed by leader and fly starts to curl out across the water.

The Double Spey Cast

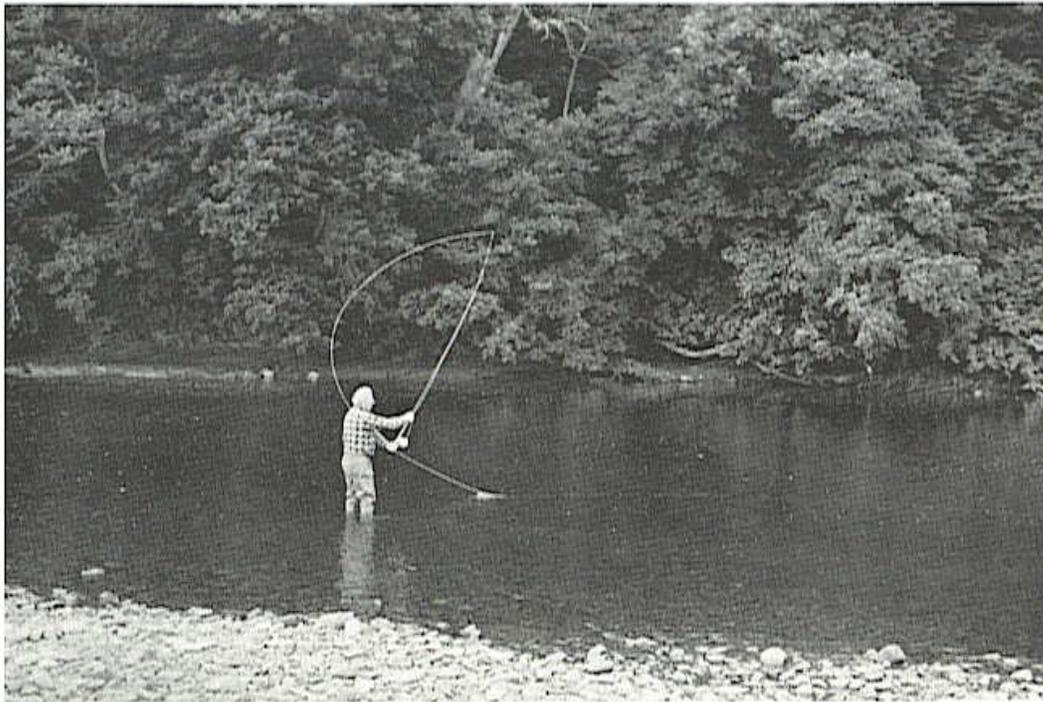


1. When making his first cast, the angler strips off a fishable length of line and lets the current take it downstream. To ensure that his fly is on the surface he raises his rod slightly . . .

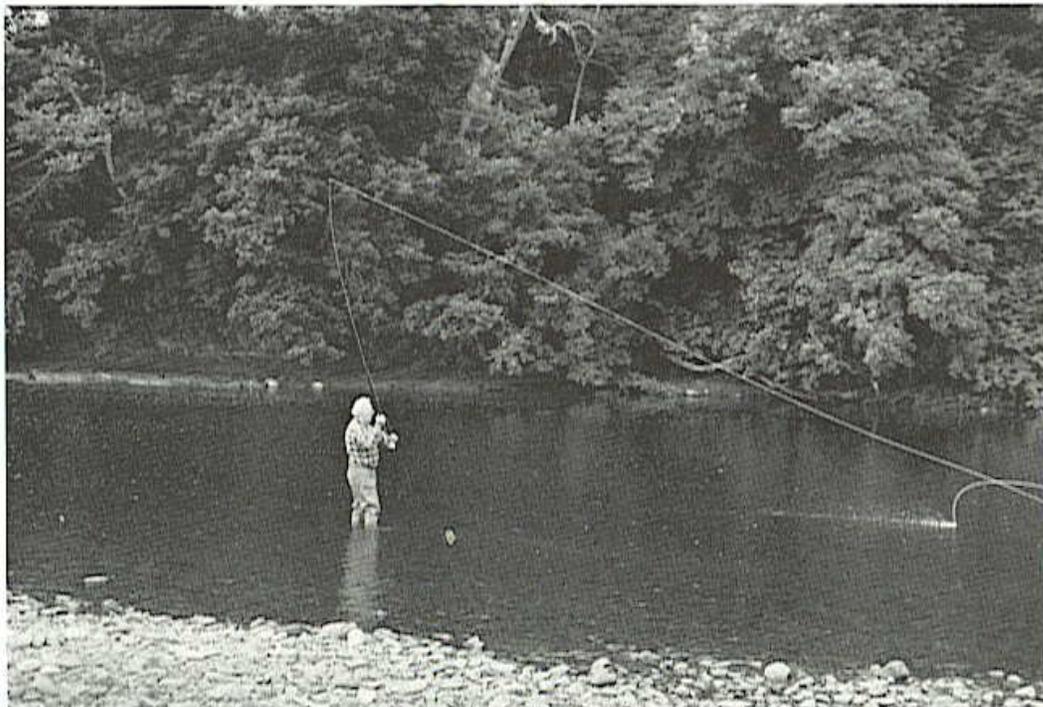


2. . . then swings it round in front of him upstream through nearly 180° —which brings the fly feathering along the surface towards him.

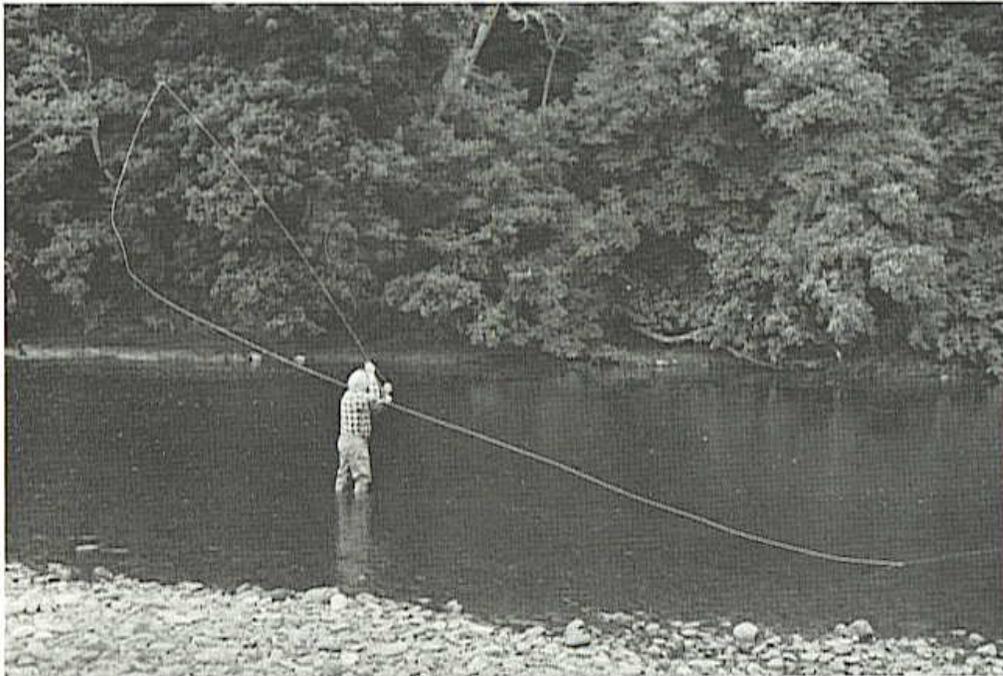
Note. When starting the double-Spey it is essential to leave the fly *below* the direction in which the forward stroke is to be made.



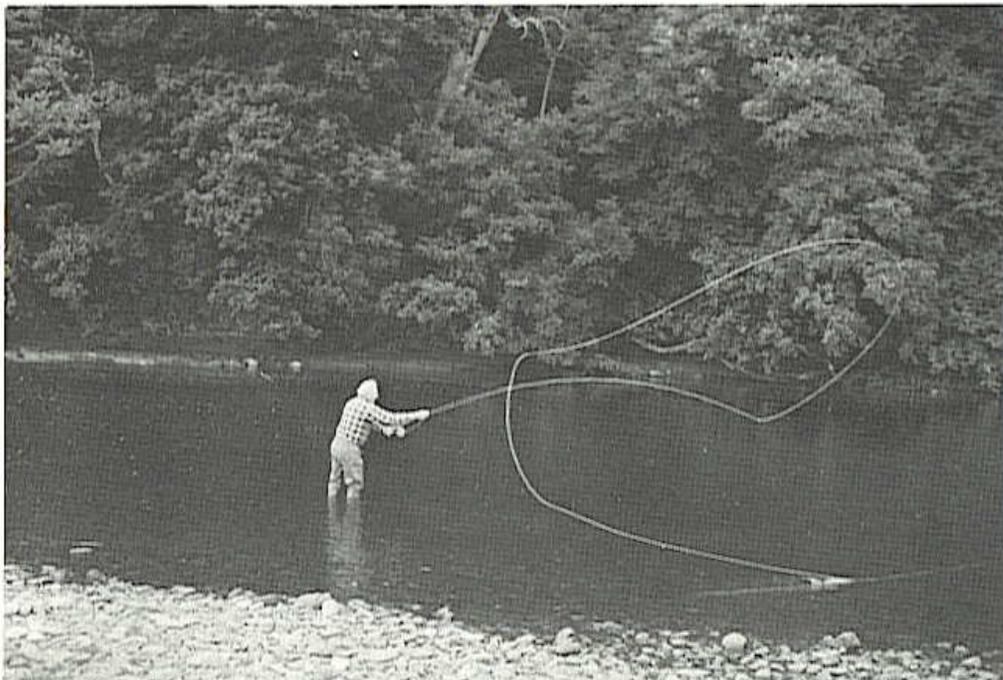
3. The angler then swings the rod back downstream. As he does so a loop of line follows leaving a little ruffle of spray on the surface.



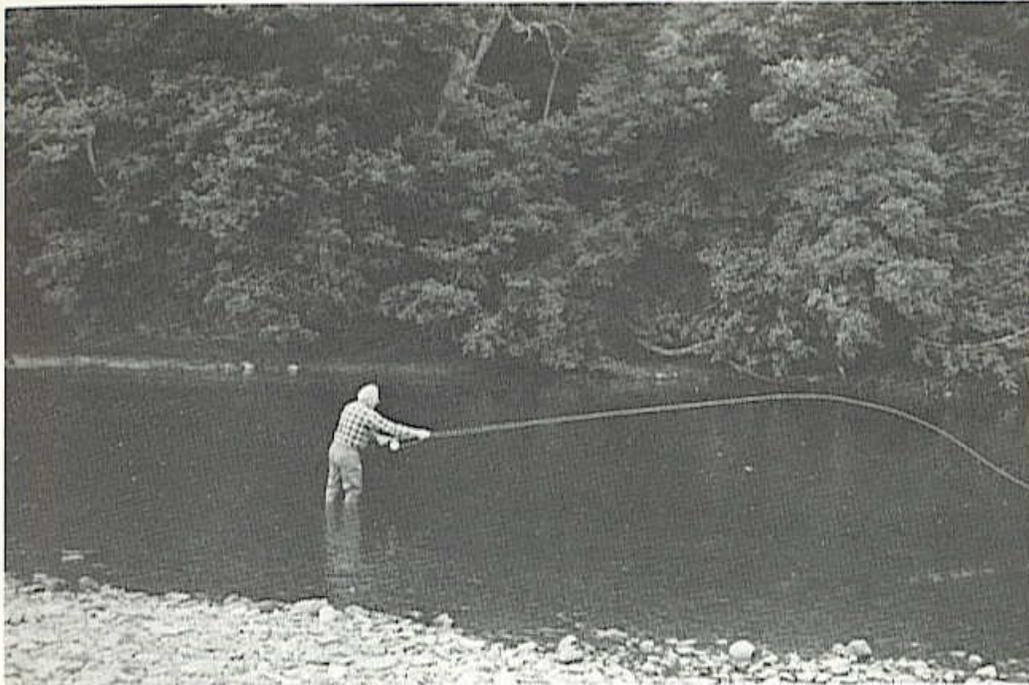
4. As the rod (having been swung round downstream through the position shown in Fig. 1) is brought up towards the vertical beside his right shoulder, the angler starts to raise his arms . . .



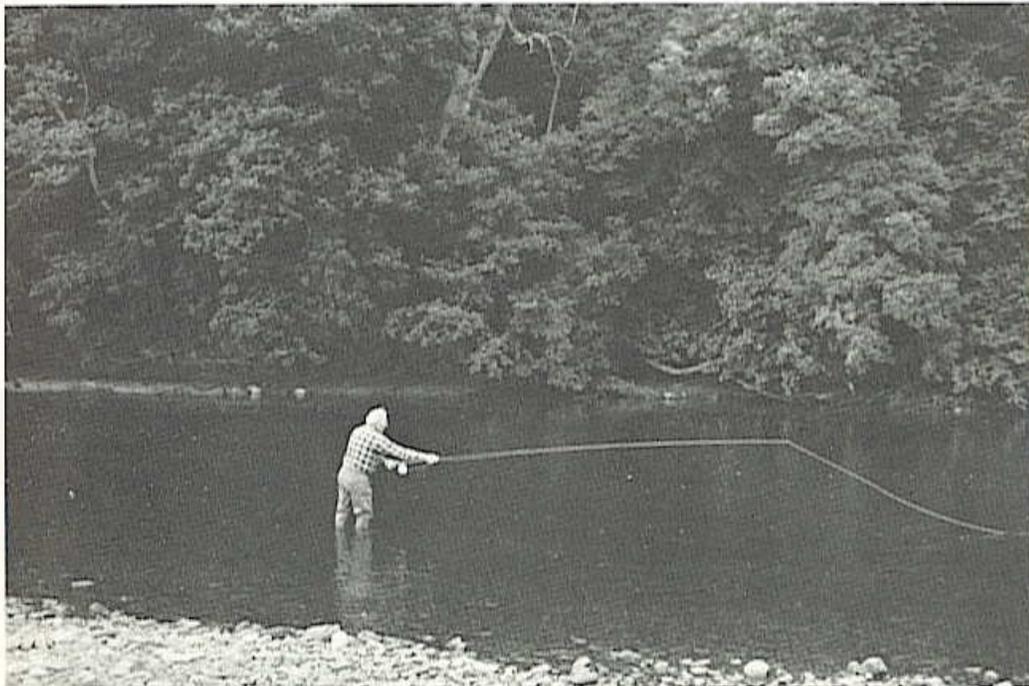
5. . . . bringing the reel level with his face. Then, just as the surface riffle comes to an end (with the rod slightly past the vertical, and a big loop of line formed beside him), the angler makes the final stroke with the same flick of the wrists used in roll and single Spey casting.



6. Aimed slightly upwards, the loop of line shoots out above the water, taking with it the fly leader . . .



7. and 8. . . . which curls over and straightens out to complete the cast.



Pre 1980's North America Spey Casting Angling Literature

There are few early North American fly fishing books that include words on Spey casting. Charles Phair, an American who spent most of his salmon-fly-fishing life in Eastern Canada, in his book *Atlantic Salmon Fishing* (published by the Derrydale Press in 1937) provides one of the few descriptions of a Spey cast and mentions the difficulty in writing an accurate description of how to perform this cast. He does not provide enough details from which one could learn the cast and his book includes no illustrations. However, he does say that this cast is difficult and requires a great deal of practice. Other notable Atlantic salmon angling authors such as George La Branche, Edward Hewitt, Lee Wulff, Joe Bates and Gary Anderson, who write about Canadian salmon fishing, do not mention this cast. Because it was considered a cast for two-handed rods, it is ignored in trout fishing books.

Roderick Haig-Brown, in the 1939 Derrydale edition of his classic *The Western Angler*, advises fly fishers that in addition to the overhead cast they should have in their arsenal the roll or Spey cast. Haig-Brown then describes how to do a roll cast but doesn't mention anything on a change of direction, the essential component of both Spey casts. He repeats the limited description in later editions of *The Western Angler*. This cast was not commonly used by fly fishers of the day; Haig-Brown mentions its lack of use and explains it by saying that "too many fishermen either have not heard of it or do not bother to learn it" (p. 108, Vol. II). The common trait of single-handed fly casting prevailed until the Spey cast was reintroduced and adopted with a fervour in the 1980s. Years later, in *A Primer of Fly Fishing* (1964), Haig-Brown provides concise, well-written instructions on the use of and how to execute the single and double Spey casts.



*Haig-Brown using a double Spey cast on a heavily treed Vancouver Island River
Van Egan Photo*

He is one of the few fly fishers up to that time to recommend the Spey casts for the single-handed rod user. He writes:

There are two variations of the roll cast that completely overcome this difficulty, the spey cast and the double spey cast. Both were developed on Scottish salmon streams by men using long, limber doublehanded fly rods, but both can be adopted to the uses of the modern fly-fisher with his light singlehanded rod; together, the two of them enable a wet-fly fisherman to work over any stream, no matter how heavily brushed its banks, with a high measure of efficiency and complete comfort.

The spey cast is started with the fly trailing in the current directly downstream of the fisherman and the rod pointing downstream toward it. The fisherman is facing across the stream, in the direction he wants to cast, and he draws the rod, at full arm's length, with a steady sweeping motion across his chest. The effect of this is to bring the fly riffling upstream towards him and to lift it, still a few feet below him, into the air. It passes him, a rod's length in front of him, and as it does so he drops his rod hand so that the fly is pitched to the water on the upstream side of the rod. As it touches the water the fisherman sweeps the rod back over his right shoulder and loops the line out in front of him in a roll cast; the fly will follow and the direction may be controlled almost as one wishes—upstream, straight across or quartering downstream. In other words the direction can be changed as much as a hundred and fifty degrees or so in a single cast.

The advantages of the cast are obvious. It has two disadvantages with a singlehanded rod: the timing is fairly difficult and must be reasonably exact and the abrupt change of direction can overwork the rod if one tries to cast too far. With a glass rod of good quality this probably does not matter, but it is easy to spring the gluing of a cane rod or even to break it at the ferrule. I usually limit myself to forty or fifty feet with an ordinary trout rod, though one can shoot some additional line, especially with a forward taper. The cast is used by a right-handed fisherman from the left bank or by a left-handed fisherman from the right bank.

The double spey is an altogether easier and smoother cast and so comfortable to use that I often fish it when an overhead would be possible. This is a right-hander's cast from the right bank or vice versa. The start of the cast, again, is with line and fly trailing straight downstream, the rod pointing straight to it and the fisherman more or less squared towards the direction of his cast. The rod is swept upstream at full arm's length, as in the spey, except that the movement is now backhanded. The fly does not leave the water, but ruffles upstream until it is directly opposite the fisherman, in fast water, or a little below him in slower water. The rod is raised straight up and circled back, the rod hand passing at face level, then rod and line loop are dropped backward over the right shoulder and the rod is brought round and over for a roll cast in the chosen direction. At this point the fly must be slightly downstream of the axis of the rod's travel, so that it will pickup and loop out without striking the rod. The whole cast is a single, continuous movement, perfectly smooth and quite easy to time and control. One can get good distance without straining the rod and when the timing is right the line shoots well (pp. 83-5).

If Haig-Brown had illustrated these instructions, they would have made learning these casts much easier. John Lynde in *34 Ways to Cast a Fly* (1969) did what Haig-Brown didn't—provide the student with a concise, illustrated description of Spey casting. Lynde was born in England and after serving in World War II immigrated to British Columbia where he spent the rest of his life. About Spey casting, Lynde writes:

The Spey Cast

The single Spey cast may be used for all occasions except against a strong wind or across a downstream wind, or from a high bank. For a downstream wind the double Spey cast is to be used.

While the Spey cast originated on the River Spey in Scotland, there is no reason at all why it should not be used for fishing any other river with a fly, for it possesses a number of features which can be put to very good use. It has already been pointed out that the overhead cast requires a lot of space for the back cast; the fly never goes behind the angler during the Spey cast, therefore it is ideal for fishing pools when there are obstructions behind. Since the Spey cast is designed for picking a line up from downstream and casting it across, it is an

efficient method of fly-fishing a river. When the wind is from behind or either side, a common occurrence with the overhead cast is a "whip-crack" signifying that the fly has gone, and knots often form in the leader; but these problems are eliminated in the Spey cast which is assisted by a wind from behind or either side" (if we include the double Spey cast). With the Spey cast there is no fear of breaking a hook on the rocks behind, or of the fly getting hung up on a bush or long grass in the back cast. Furthermore, almost as long a line can be cast with the Spey cast as with the overhead cast.

There is, however, one drawback to Spey casting. It imposes severe torsion on fly rods, which will in time break down near the ferrules, unless, as mentioned earlier, they are specially built to withstand such stresses or are spliced.

For this reason your rod for Spey casting must fall within these two categories, and only on rare occasions or for short periods should an ordinary ferrule-jointed rod be subjected to Spey casting.

Conditions for learning and practicing the Spey cast are similar to those for learning the roll cast. Therefore, if it is at all possible, find a fast shallow river in which you can wade or stand on a gravel bar. Spey casting should be learned both right-handed and left-handed, so choose a place to cast right-handed where the flow is from your right to your left, and left-handed where the flow is from your left to your right. Casting from a high bank is out of the question. Your tackle should comprise your sunk fly outfit.

Assuming that your first casting session will be right-handed, stand facing across the river and slightly downstream with your feet comfortably apart, the left foot a little towards your own bank. Curl your left hand around the butt, and hold the grip with your right hand near the top. Lay out about fifty feet of line downstream with the overhead cast or roll cast.

The Spey cast is performed in four phases, the last three phases in equal timing. First, withdraw a few feet of line with the left hand while you raise the rod tip slightly to surface the line against the pull of the current. Holding the loop of spare line with your right forefinger, in the second phase continue raising the rod to an angle of about sixty degrees, which, if done properly, should bring all except the leader and fly to the surface (Fig. 68). If it fails to do so, make a roll cast and raise the rod again. In the third phase swing your body and rod to the right, allowing the rod tip to dip in the middle of its arc. This should lift the line just clear of the water throwing it outwards by centrifugal force in such a manner that the leader and fly will pitch on to the surface in front of you while the belly of the line forms a "D" behind the rod (Figs. 66, 67 and 69).

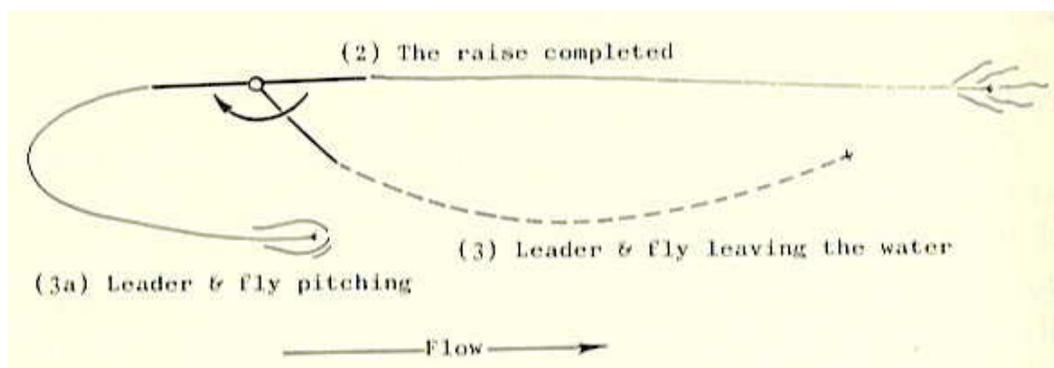


FIGURE 66. Plan of the Spey cast.

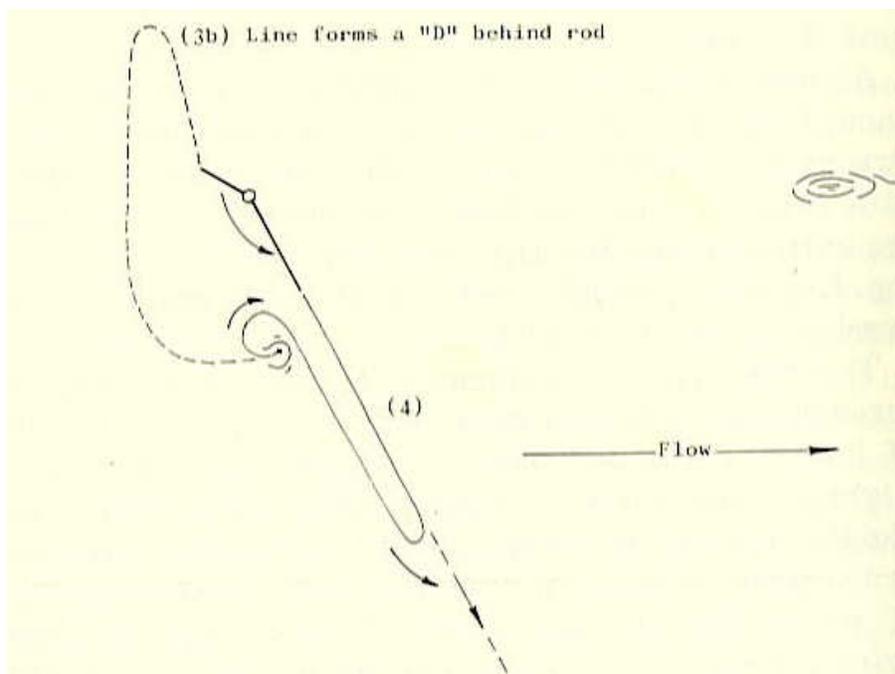


FIGURE 67. Plan of the Spey cast.

The swing of the rod is continued so that your right hand comes to rest close to your shoulder in preparation for the forward cast. In the fourth phase, swing your body a little to the left and at the same time throw your right arm outwards to its full extent in a forty-five degree direction across and downstream, driving the rod forwards in a nearly vertical plane, and shooting the slack line a little before the rod finishes its downward movement in the forward cast (Figs. 67, 70 and 71). When the Spey cast is done properly the line, leader and fly should sail out straight and true without thrashing the water. Timing for the second, third and fourth phases is an even "one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three" (slow waltz time). As for all casting, the movements of the Spey cast should be smoothly blended together into a rhythm free from hesitation and jerks.

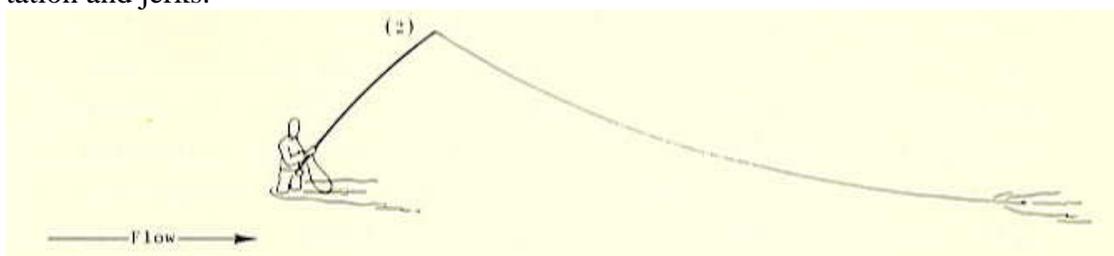


FIGURE 68. The raise completed.

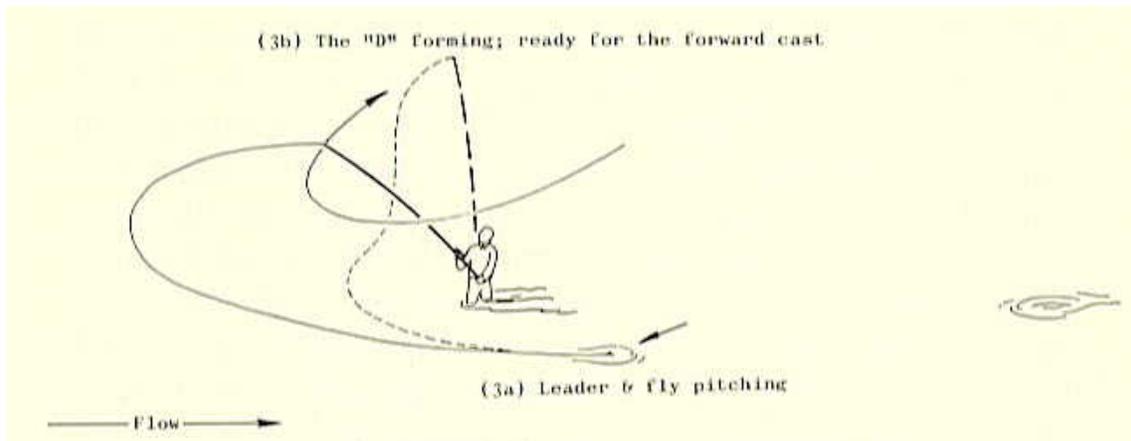


FIGURE 69. The swing.

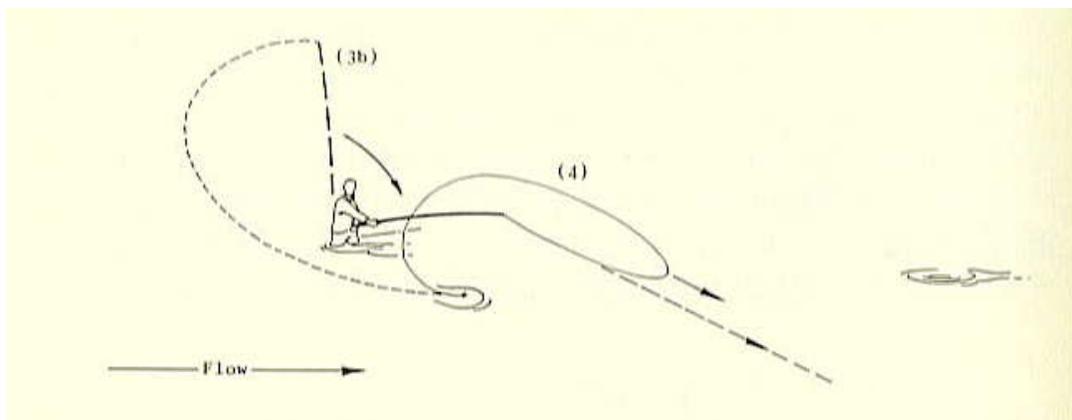


FIGURE 70. The forward cast.

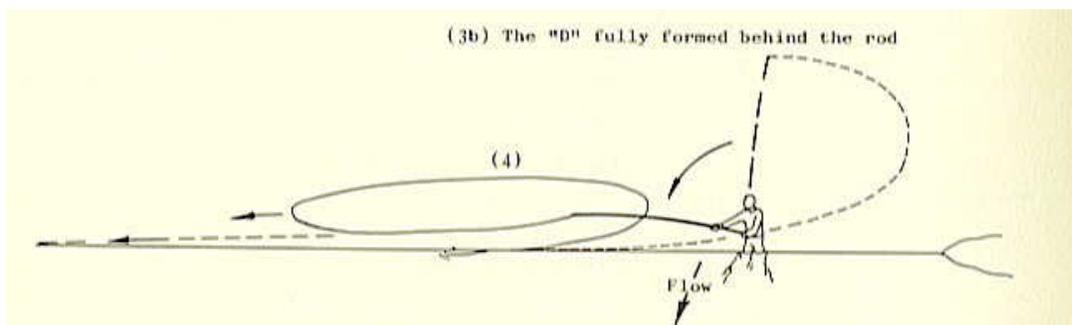


FIGURE 71. The forward cast (viewed from downstream)

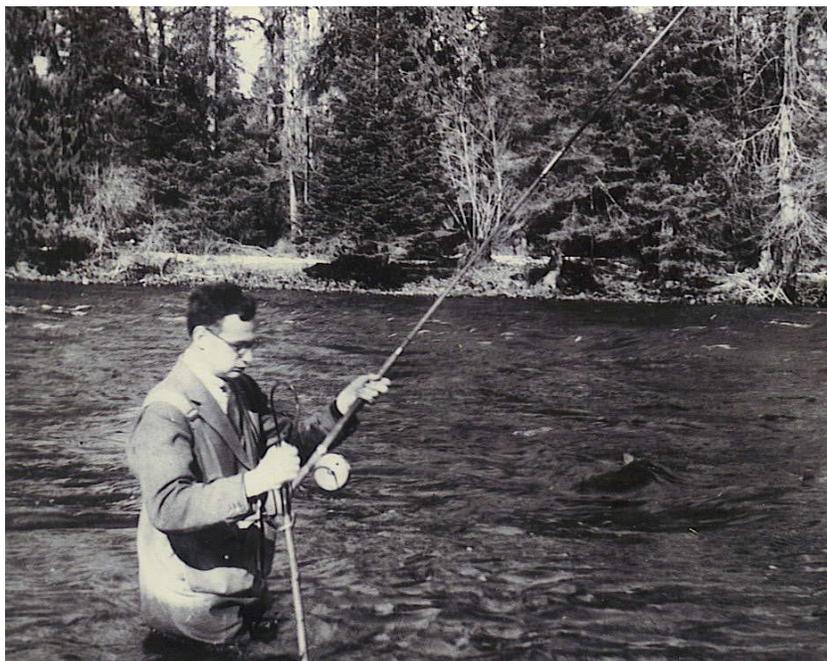
When you have completed a Spey cast, to save time pick up and place the fly downstream by means of an overhead cast, or a roll pick-up and overhead cast, preparatory to making another Spey cast.

You are likely to experience difficulties at first in timing the first and second phases so that only the leader and fly are in the water as you swing into the third phase; in pitching the leader and fly to the surface in the correct spot during the third phase; in achieving a satisfactory loop, or "D" of line behind the rod; and in timing the "shoot" to pull out all your slack line smoothly in the forward cast. All these difficulties can be overcome with practice, and with experience exact manipulation will become instinctive. The placing of the leader and fly in the third phase is achieved partly by the power of the swing and partly by the dip of the rod tip,

and you will find in practice that there is no need to wait any longer than is necessary for the fly and leader to touch the surface of the water, for they will settle as the rod is brought into the vertical position ready for the forward cast. The proper place for the leader and fly to pitch is in front of you, but just out of the way of your forward cast. If it is in the way, your forward cast will cross your leader and foul it; if it has been swung too far upstream, the belly of the line will fail to form an adequate "D," so your forward cast will lose power and control. Shooting the line depends on the power of the cast and perfect timing, which only trial and error can teach you.

When you have mastered the Spey cast with a short line, strip a few more feet of line from your reel, arrange it in loose coils in your left hand, and add a further coil or two to it as you pull in line from downstream in the first phase of your next cast. Try to shoot all this line, and continue to practice with the extra length. Keep on persevering with increasing lengths of line, practicing with each length until you can handle it confidently before attempting to progress further. When you can reach out to eighty or ninety feet you are doing well. Alternate your sessions between right-handed and left-handed casting until you are proficient in both. Remember to hold the rod butt close to your body, to swing the rod in a dipping sideways movement in the third phase, and to make your forward cast in a nearly vertical plane,

somewhat similar to an overhead forward cast.



John Lynde, Campbell River early 1950s. Jack Lillington (Pintail) photo

The Double Spey Cast

As mentioned earlier, when there is a downstream wind the single Spey cast cannot be used, because the wind will blow the line against the angler before the forward cast can be completed. But the double Spey was designed for casting across a downstream wind, and it retains the characteristics and efficiency

of the single Spey.

There are two major differences between the single Spey and the double Spey. First, the positions of your hands (but not of your feet) are reversed, so that you will be casting left-handed from the left side of a river and right-handed from the right side; and secondly, an additional movement is incorporated between the third and fourth phases of the single Spey to transform it into a double Spey cast. The rest of the double Spey is similar to the single Spey cast.

Assuming you will at first be casting left-handed, the water will be flowing from right to left as you face the opposite bank. Begin by laying out fifty feet of line downstream. Now move your left foot a little further forward than for the single Spey, so that it is more or less directly downstream from your right foot, and hold the rod left-handed, your right hand at the butt and your left near the top of the grip.

In the first phase, withdraw line with the right hand and bring the line to the surface against the pull of the current, roll casting if necessary. In the second phase, raise the rod to a sixty degree angle. Continue into the third phase by swinging to the right and bringing your left hand across your body so that the rod makes the same sideways arc as in the third phase of the single Spey, but without approaching the vertical position, and the fly pitches approximately in the same place. Now swing left in the fourth phase, continuing the arc in precisely the same manner as in the single Spey until your rod is nearly vertical, but taking care to leave the fly undisturbed where it was pitched. The downstream wind will help this movement. By now the belly of the line should have formed a "D" behind your rod, ready for the near-vertical forward cast across and down river, which is the fifth phase; so complete your forward cast as in the single Spey, shooting the slack line. Timing is equal for all the last four phases, slow waltz time (please refer to Figures 72 to 75). Provided you can accomplish the single Spey cast proficiently you should have no trouble in mastering the double Spey.

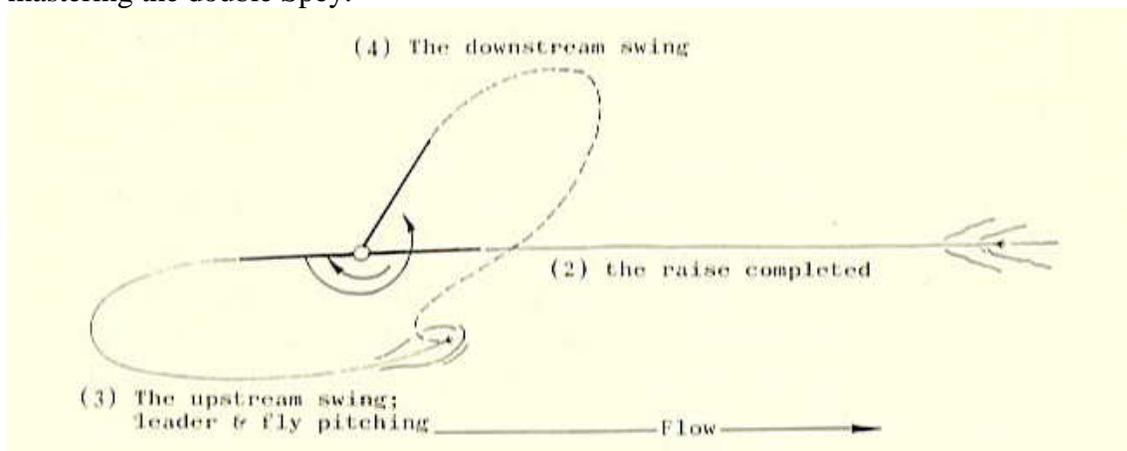


FIGURE 72. Plan of the double Spey cast.

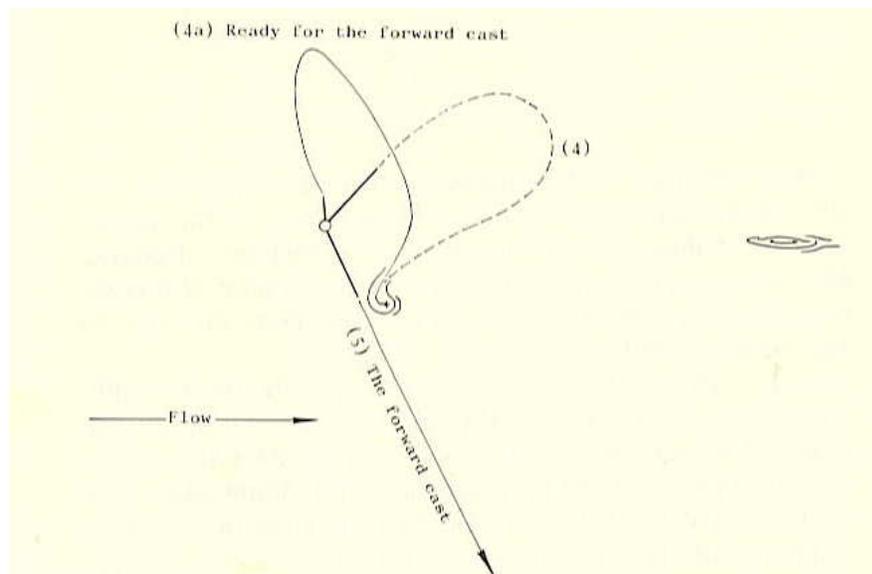


FIGURE 73. Plan of the double Spey cast.

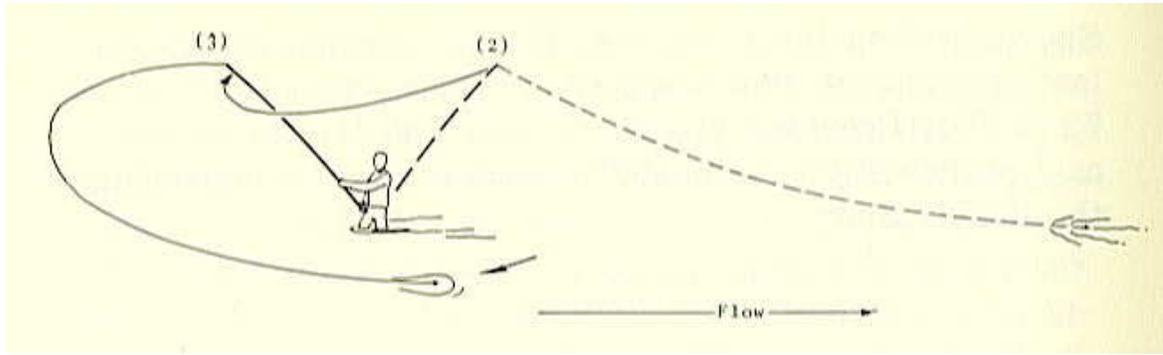


FIGURE 74. The upstream swing

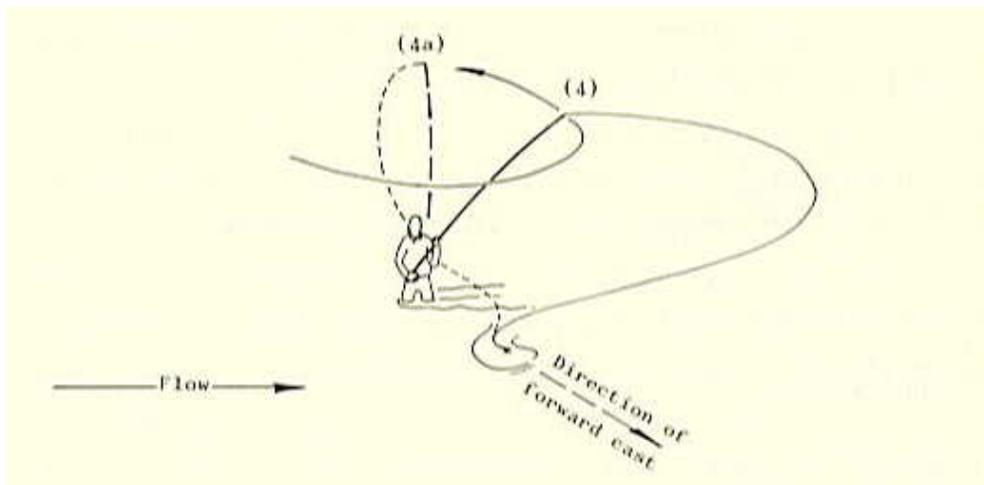


FIGURE 75. The downstream swing.

Practice the double Spey cast with varying lengths of line, both left-handed and right-handed, from places where the flow is in the appropriate direction. Of course if you can cast from a gravel bar in the middle of a river you have the ideal set-up for changing from one side to the other at will.

The single Spey and the double Spey casts are probably the most valuable in your repertoire of salmon fly fishing casts. With either you can pick up your fly from downstream and reach far across in a single change-direction cast, regardless of whether the bank is clear behind you; fishing your fly around, moving a foot or so downstream and repeating the procedure becomes a pleasant rhythm in itself, as you cover a stretch of river thoroughly and efficiently (pp. 118-26).

John Lynde back in the 1970s and '80s frequented the Bulkley River and could be seen wandering the river with his bamboo two-hander, casting to those fabled steelhead. Some aspiring Spey casters back in the late 1980s who managed to have or find a copy, found Lynde's book helpful in learning the single and double Spey casts.

Part III: The Reintroduction of the Two-Handed Rod to British Columbia's Steelhead Waters and Its Spread Elsewhere *will be in the June issue of Fly Lines*

OF BAMBOO RODS, SILK LINES AND GUT CASTS: Reflections on My Early Fly-Fishing Life

By Bill Jollymore
Photos by Art Lingren

The strains of “Red Sails in the Sunset,” “I’ll Take You Home Again Kathleen” and many other oldies penetrated the smoke from my Father’s and Uncle’s cigarettes and filled the old 32 Reo Touring car. There were my Mother and Father, Uncle, Aunt and four children, along with, tent, blankets, cooking needs, groceries, clothes and fishing tackle, the car barely making the maximum speed limit of 40 MPH. Everyone sang many songs on such a trip and listened to stories on almost every subject. We children were willing listeners and hung onto every word. In those days my Dad, along with almost everyone in the work force, worked a 44-hour week. On Saturday morning my Mother and Aunt Sadie would pack the car and get things ready to leave on the big trip when the men arrived home. Owning a car was a great thing and my Father was one of the few with a driver’s license.



On this trip we were headed for the Margaree River, it was probably late June. That year we had a new young King and Queen and two Princesses in England. The year was 1937. I was very young and only have scattered recollections of the trip. I do remember my Dad carrying me to the river on his shoulders and setting me on a rock with very stern instructions not to move.

Many more trips were to come and others of the family joined in with various cars in a caravan. We camped wherever we could find a spot as there was no such thing as an organized or dedicated camp ground. I remember many of these forays to the Margaree and other Cape Breton rivers. Every year several were made and I enjoyed them until 1950 when I joined the Army and was gone.

One Saturday evening in 1942 my Father, Mother, Sister and I went to a movie (called the "Nickel" as this was the matinee price of admission). After the movie we went to MacLeod's Bookstore for the Toronto Star and Boston Advertiser, my Father's Sunday reading. MacLeod's was a stocking dealer for Hardy, Milward and Alcock fly fishing tackle. When my Dad looked at the price of Hardy full dressed salmon flies, which as a result of the war had gone from 25 cents to 27 cents each, he exclaimed "Bill, you are going to learn to tie these." Immediately he bought one of those terrible little beginners fly tying kits and a small green metal tackle box to hold its contents. We went home and took apart several pillows for additional feathers. My first Salmon was a 6-pound



grilse taken from the Tidal Pool on Grand River in June of that year. The #4 Silver Grey that it took bore absolutely no resemblance to those tied by the British commercial masters. However, I kept at it and learned by mistakes and stripping flies with broken hooks that were donated to my cause. Fishing trips were many and the flies of my efforts became better. I graduated from a Thompson "C" vise to a "B" and finally at the exorbitant price of \$6.50 I got a new "A" model. This was in about 1946 and I retired this vise about five years ago for a new rotary type.

That same year, 1946, I went to work at the Sport Mart in Sydney. I was their "Go Fer" and helped with the fishing tackle. It was there that I was blessed with meeting some of the great of the fishing world. Joe Aucoin, master fly tyer was among them and I learned a few things from him about tying. Joe was also kind enough to let me buy materials from him as they were still hard to get on the local market. During this time I tied flies for Nip Ross, Rusty Bolton, Joe Corey, Alex Libbus and Dr. Clyde Ormston. My fly tying skills had of course improved vastly. I also sold a few flies to the Sport Mart and to the two hardware stores in town. As of this time, in my 70's I still tie the classic Atlantic Salmon flies for donations to various conservation organizations where they command an auction price of \$250-\$400 US dollars.

The most drastic change in fishing then and now, no doubt, is the tackle. If the Salmon fisherman of the 30's to 50's eras could see today's offerings, it's hard to know what they would say. All Salmon

rods then were double handed. Ten feet was short, 13-16 feet were the norm. The weight of a rod was from 15-24 ounces. The rods were large and strong as the Salmon in those days were quite large and there were a lot of them. Hardy, Milward, Alcock and Walker were the common maker's names with Hardy the most desirable. They made rods of double built construction and some with a



solid steel centre. This was known as a "Hardy double built steel center rod." Swinging one of these all day was a big chore and not for the weak and timid. All rods had intermediate windings. When you take one of these rods and add a 4 1/2 diameter brass reel, filled with a double taper fly line, and backed with 200 yards of Irish linen, one almost wished for a small mule to move the tackle around.

The 4 1/4" Hardy Perfect was probably the most popular of the reels. It was smooth, had a good drag and great line capacity. There were many others, most of which I cannot recall, but all were heavy and for the 40's market quite expensive. Fly lines of the period were silk. Weight forward was almost unheard of and the double

taper was used almost exclusively. There wasn't the "number" weight system of today. Salmon line was by a number which gave it dimensions. A rod 14-16 feet long, regardless of weight or action, took a number 4 line. This would be .044 thousands on the tips and .064 centre. Trout lines were X fine- I-E-I, Fine- I-D-I, and there were sizes H-E-H, H-D-H, and H-C-H, equivalent to our #5, #6, and #7. Lines made of braided silk and getting its weight from oil, every maker had a different version of size and weight. To make them float a coating of Hardy Cerolene or Mucilin was applied. It was usual, at noon, to see lines stretched between trees, sun dried and redressed for the afternoon fishing. In those days, balancing a rod and line was next to impossible.

The Jock Scott

Leaders were gut casts. Some were knotted tapered, but almost



everyone used straight gut, nine feet long and of level size from 10-25 pounds. The fisherman in those days didn't just grab his tackle bag and head out. The gut had to be soaked for at least a day before fishing so it would be soft enough to tie to the line and tie on the fly. The turtle knot was the most popular tie. After a day soaking in wet newspapers, the leaders were transferred to small round metal cans which contained wet discs of felt for the trip to the river.

Flies were another matter. All were English ties of the classics, Jock Scott, Silver Grey, Silver Doctor, Thunder & Lightening, and Black Dose were the most popular. As the Silver Grey took my first Salmon and was my Father's favorite it too, remains mine and I still use it on the Margaree and Cheticamp rivers as well as Newfoundland waters. More large flies were used 2/0 down to #6 but mostly in June's high water #1/0 to #2 were most common. Hair wing flies were introduced by Joe Aucoin, with his Black Bomber in about 1929 but met with a lot of resistance until during the war when flies became scarce. By 1946-'49 almost everyone's fly box contained some of Joe's flies.

These too eventually fell out of favor for newer innovations. Heavy hooks were the order of the day and just to mention a light wire hook would be reason for expulsion from the traditionalist crowd.



The Silver Doctor

Fly boxes likewise came in several styles.

Hardy Neroda (Bakelite Box) was

the possession of the well to do and Aristocracy. A No. 1 Neroda Salmon fly box holding 40 flies cost 9 Schillings 6 Pence, or about \$2.50. This box today carries a price tag of \$200.00 U.S. Hardy and other makers had aluminum boxes with clips made by Richard Wheatley, who also marketed boxes under their own mark. Needless to say, my family was not in this class and my Dad's as was my own box, a 50 flat cigarette box lined with automotive gasket cork.

The well-attired fisherman of the day didn't spend a lot of money at the local fly shop. There was no such thing as a fly-fishing vest. These came much later, a development credited to Lee Wulff. An old wool suit coat was normal attire, with some wearing a rust-colored canvas coat with a corduroy collar and many pockets. This jacket served secondly as a duck hunting coat. A fedora hat or a billed cap was part of the attire. There were no chest waders, everyone had rubber hip boots which were all black and predominantly one of two labels. The Red Ball (USA) or the Blue Bar (Canadian). They sold for about \$3.00 and without felt or studded soles wading was at times quite perilous.

A precious piece of equipment was the gaff. Now illegal to possess near water, it was an essential part of Salmon fishing success. The gaff was placed in the water hook up and the angler led the Salmon over it. The gaff was then quickly jerked in and up and the Salmon was impaled, sure to end up in the Angler's bag and on his dinner table.

There were no polarized glasses, sun screen, sun gloves, wading staffs or yokes around the neck with tippet spools, pliers, clippers, bottles of dressing etc. on it. Insect repellent consisted of a pump tank apparatus that sprayed Flit all over the body and cloths. But, there were fish, many of them and it didn't take a weeks wages to get to them or to catch them. They were there for the fortunate few who thrilled to the sound of the Hardy reel singing the song of a big fish on.

So, this is how it was when I started fishing and tying flies. I'm still at it today and this past July enjoyed my biannual trip to Newfoundland where I first fished in 1949. That trip was funded by the sale of my early fly tying efforts and probably will always be my most memorable. My wife and I will be fishing the Margaree next fall and will introduce my daughter "Minnow" to the Atlantic Salmon. I know she will be hooked just like her old man.



