

A collection of fly fishing gear is displayed on a dark surface. In the center is a fly rod with a cork handle and a black reel seat. To the left is a silver fly reel with a perforated top. To the right is another silver fly reel with a smooth top. Above the rod is a large coil of light-colored fly line and a smaller coil of light blue fly line. In the background, an open wooden fly box contains several artificial flies with various feathers and colors. A white octagonal container with a green label is also visible on the left.

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

By Art Lingren

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

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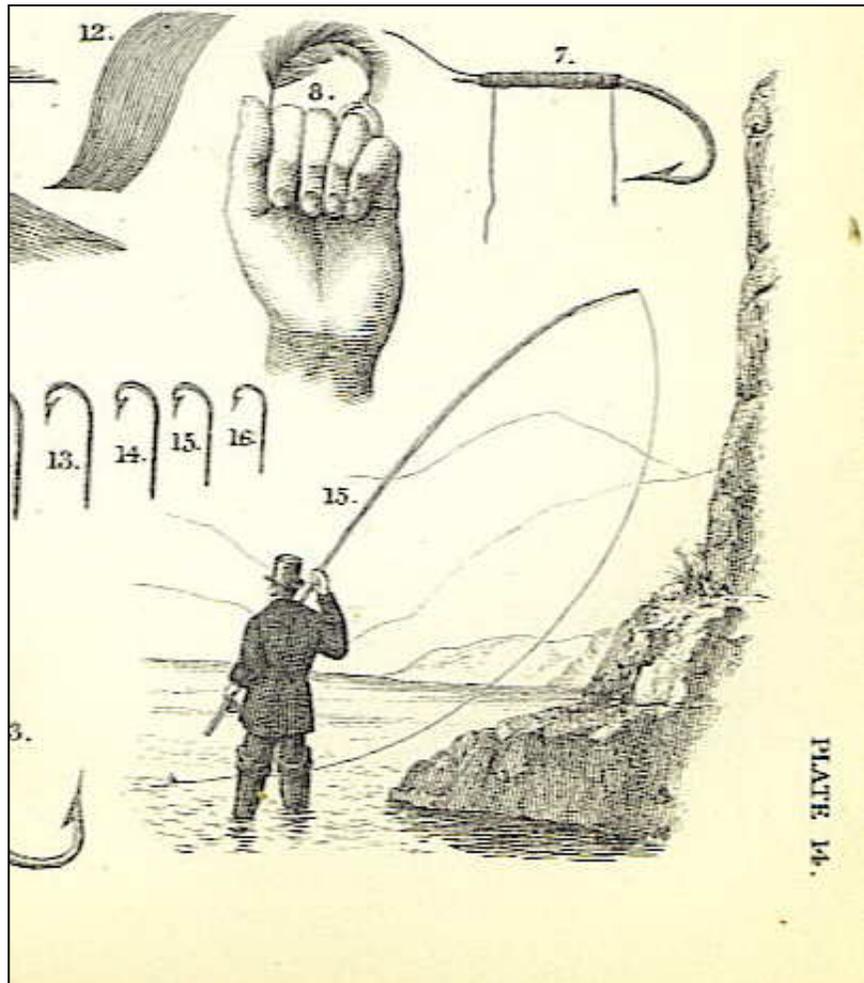
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Part I: The First Hundred Years: Fitzgibbon, Francis, Kelson, Taverner and Scott

In the last ten years Spey casting with a two-handed rod has spread throughout the steelhead fly fishing world. This is a very old cast originating on the salmon rivers of Great Britain. It was first mentioned in *The Book of the Salmon* (1850) by Edward Fitzgibbon, who wrote under the pen name of Ephermera. He said that in the Spey or Welsh throw, the fly is first to touch the water. However, in Fitzgibbon's book there is not enough information about this particular cast from which one could learn the mechanics to perform it.

Francis Francis was one of the more distinguished editors of *The Field* and it was Francis who made the first attempt to describe the mechanics of the Spey or Welsh throw. Eric Taverner in *Salmon Fishing* (1931) credits Francis for attempting to put into words 'switching' or the Welsh or Spey throw and says that it was a very difficult thing to do.

About switching or the Welsh or Spey throw, Francis Francis writes:



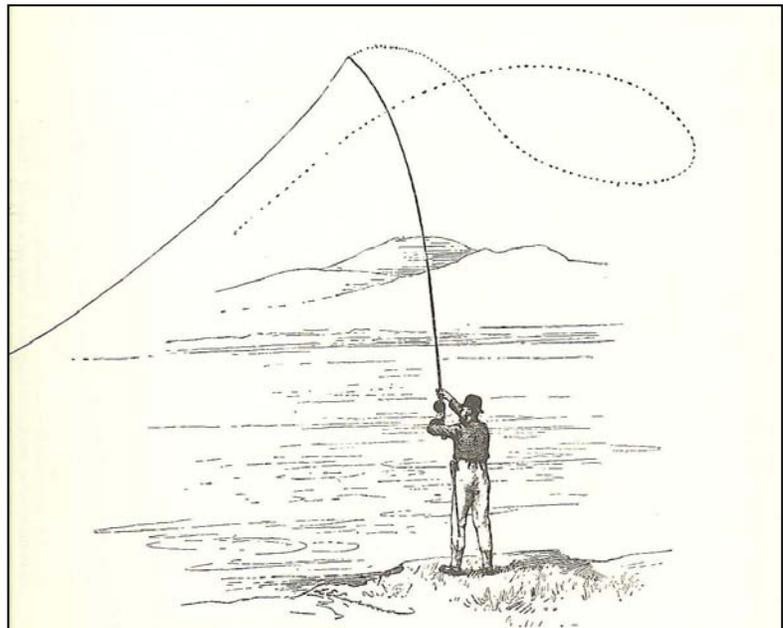
It is a species of cast that is made when there are high banks or rocks at the angler's back, so that he cannot send his line behind him. And it is one that requires some practice to make from the right shoulder, and a good deal more to accomplish neatly from the left. In switching, if the angler can contrive to wade in a yard or two, he will be able to switch with far less danger to his fly, and more ease to himself, than when standing on the shore, as the object is to deposit the fly on the water previous to

casting. If the fisher fetches his fly home only a yard further than it ought to come, he either smashes it or hooks some obstruction.

Having got a certain length of line out, somehow or anyhow, and being desirous of making a new cast, he raises his hands well up and carries the rod up to his shoulder pretty smartly ; but he does not send the fly back over the shoulder, but rather fetches it in towards his feet, and he must take care that in doing so it does not come too high above the surface of the water, or it will not catch the water again at the right spot. About two or three yards above him to his right hand, and a little in front of him, the fly must touch the water, but must go no farther. This action brings the line into the form of a great bow or arc, to which the rod is the chord. The instant the fly touches the water (and the angler must keep his eye upon it, for if it misses it and touches the bank at all he must not make his cast), a sharp downward turn and cut is made, not towards the spot you wish the line to go to, but to establish a sort of centrifugal action (somewhat after the fashion that a juggler spins a hat or plate with a stick), and the line flies towards the point required; in fact, the cast is the result of the laws of centrifugal force, the line forms the tangent to an arc of a circle described sharply with the rod-point, and the angle at which the tangent flies off is controlled by the practice and experience of the angler. It is not an easy cast to make, and requires a good deal of practice. It is hardly possible to describe it, and must be seen and studied to be understood clearly. Fig. 15, Plate XIV, will show the position of the line and the attitude of the fisherman at the most critical moment of the cast (*A Book on Angling* pp. 325-6).

We refer to this type of cast as ‘Spey’, but in the 19th century it was practiced on rivers other than the Spey. Francis Francis in a footnote in his *A Book on Angling*, [my copy is the fifth edition published in 1880] says that “This cast is called by various names ; sometime ‘the Welsh or Spey cast’, or according to the name of some other river where it is practiced.” Those old terms such as switching and Welsh were long ago abandoned and this cast is now commonly referred to in the salmon and steelhead fly fishing world as the Spey cast. If you had not practiced the cast before, I think you would have a fairly difficult time in learning the Spey cast from Francis’ words and his one illustration.

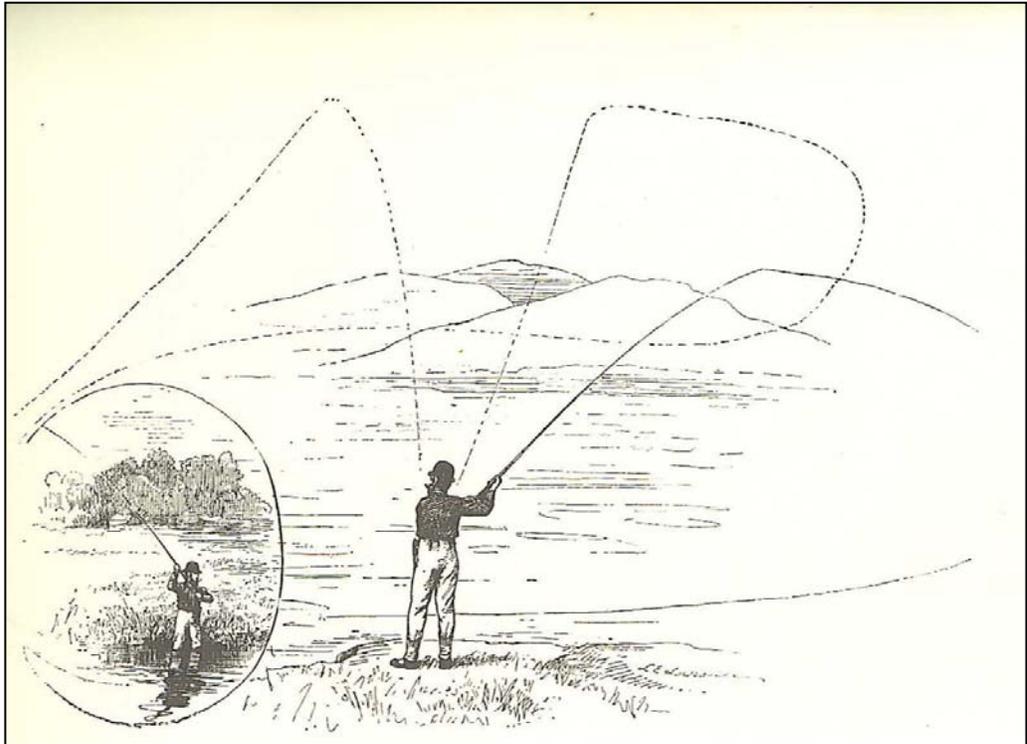
Another two decades or more passed before another salmon fly fisher attempted to describe and illustrate the mechanics of this type of fly cast. Eric Taverner in *Salmon*



Fishing (1931) gives due credit for this to George Kelson of *The Salmon Fly* (1895) fame. Kelson devotes 40 pages to the different casting techniques of the day, with 15

pages on Spey casting and discussions about it, as well as three full-page illustrations to illustrate the Spey technique. Space doesn't permit all of Kelson's discourse. He writes about the cast's essential steps:

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



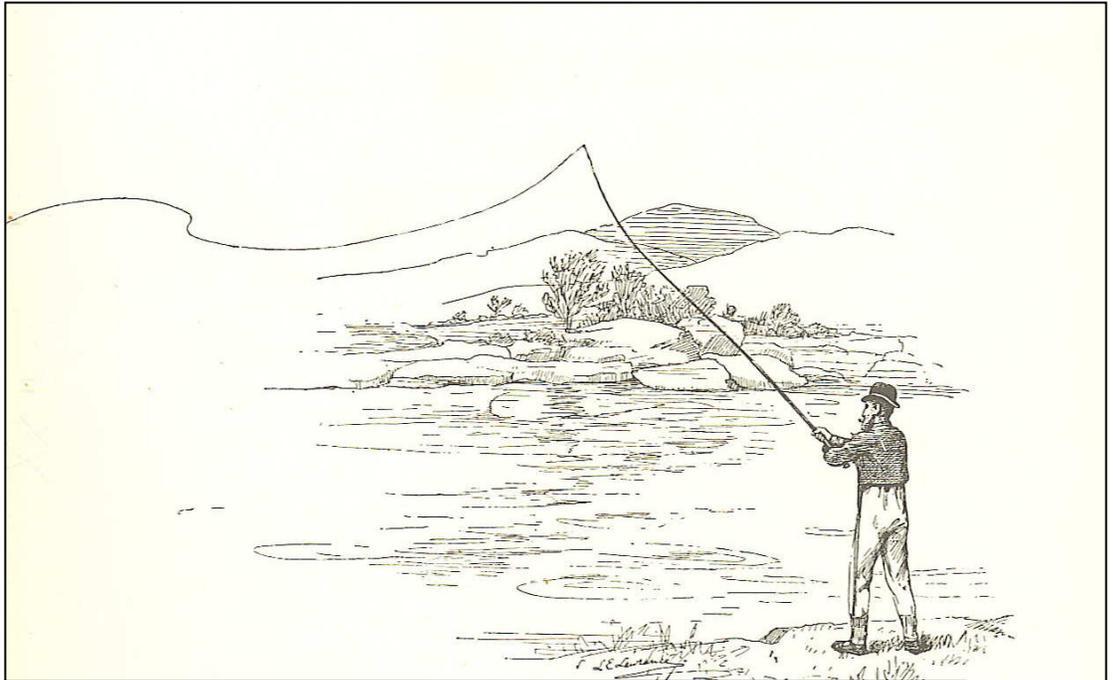
the air. Bearing this in mind, let us fix our attention on the special features of the procedure from beginning to end.

The tackle being extended down stream, you first get a *downward* curve in the portion of line out of water, by raising the rod somewhat gently towards the position seen in Illustration No. 1; then, without any intermission, you get the curve in the contrary direction (*upward*) on the eve of lifting the fly-end out, by slightly dropping the rod-point when near the perpendicular, *outwards*; and, still carrying the rod easily and regularly back and round *inwards*, so that the point of it forms the outline (see Illustration 1) of a reversed letter S, you finally complete the cast, just as the fly-end of the line is lightly striking the water near your outer side, by a hearty "thrash-down" aimed at the destined direction of the fly, as depicted in Illustrations Nos. 2 and 3.

The student should get these few words fixed in his mind and be able to follow their meaning before perusing further explanations. When he has succeeded so far, having, I take it, become intimate with the "Underhand," if only by the association of ideas, he can mentally draw comparisons between the early part of the two casts, and form a clear notion of the design and purpose for which each is done. He will realise that in the Spey cast instead of the fly being drawn out of water higher and higher from its surface until it turns up and round in the air behind the Angler, it has (with one brilliant exception) to be drawn no further up-stream than beside him. And he will understand that by the law of mechanics as the fly has to strike the water beside him, the point of the rod *must* descend for that purpose before it finally rises to make

the thrash-down. The very fact of this descent and ascent compels the fly to take an up-and-down course in the air before it strikes the water (pp. 336-340).

When I read Kelson in 1981, I found that the wordiness in his descriptions and his distractions confused rather than aided me in learning to Spey cast. However, the Spey casting seed was planted.



It was left, however, to other angling writers to water that seed from which growth flourished. Eric Taverner in *Salmon Fishing* (1931) writes about earlier fly fishing writers' failure to pen a concise description of Spey casting and in his book he includes nearly four illustrated pages on how to do the single and double Spey casts. This is the earliest attempt I have found in which the author describes the two Spey casts and is worth repeating. He writes:

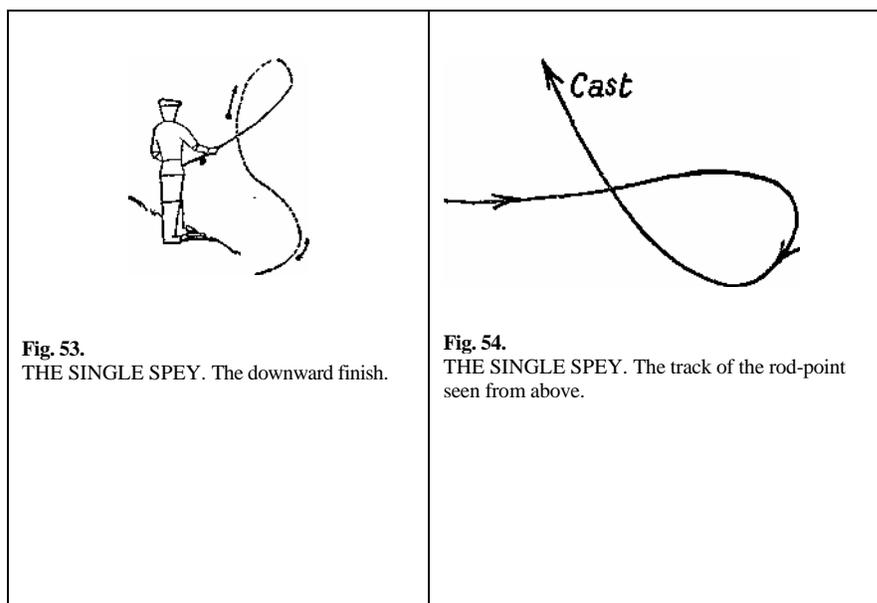
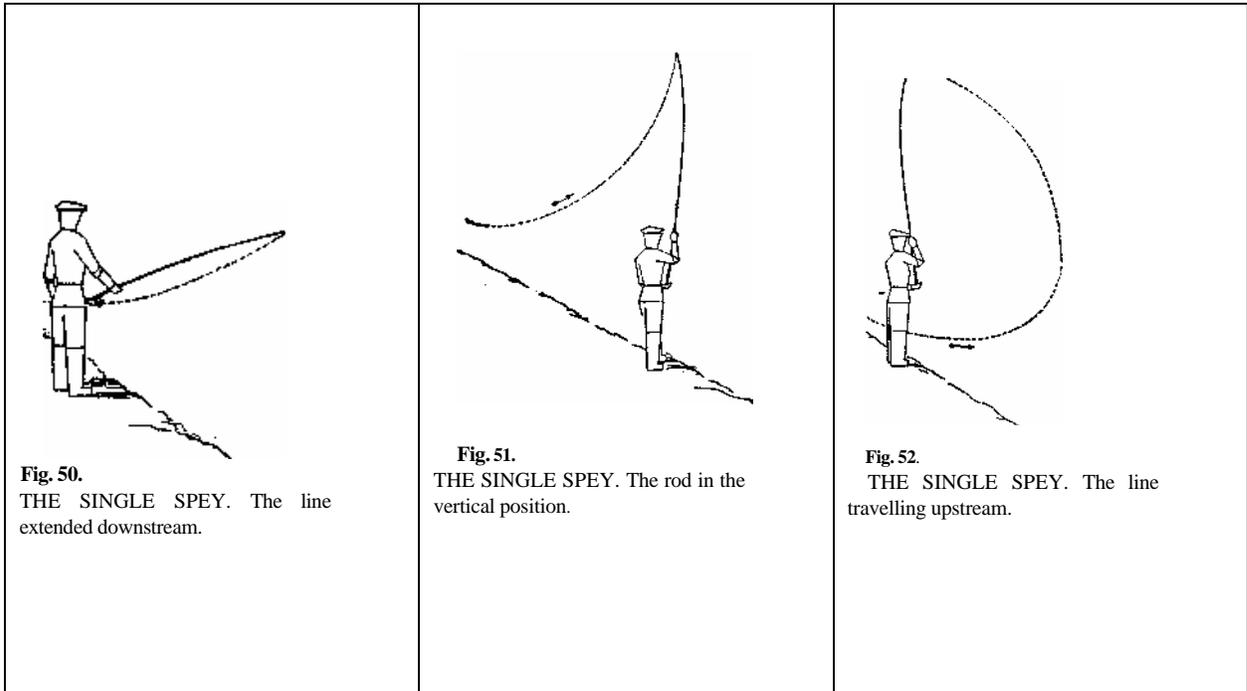
The Spey-cast.

This cast is really the same as a switch done sideways. The difference lies in attempting to place the fly outwards, over the river, instead of returning it to the same plane ; also there is far more power put into the forward stroke, so that the fly and the line may clear the rod, when the last-named is brought downwards in the new plane, viz. outwards and across the river.

Of all casts this is by far the most difficult to describe. It has been attempted several times without much success ; and these notes and diagrams are offered in the hope they will make more intelligible the teaching of an expert by the river, for that is certainly the only way to learn how to do the Spey or Welsh throw. The analysis of the actions of the cast are not intended to supplant the instructions of the experienced caster, but are meant as a grounding in the principles that will relieve him of elementary explanations and will make his teaching the more valuable.

Imagine there are behind and a few yards above you trees, bushes, or other such obstacles that in the ordinary way would constitute almost insuperable difficulties, if you employed the overhead cast. For even if you were able to throw the line sideways upstream, you would find it no light task to place the fly across the water at the desired angle. It remains, therefore, to use either the Spey-cast or the Switch. Let us also imagine there is flowing at our feet a moderate current, which will make it

possible to get the full extension of the line and to ensure the fly being near to the surface. The latter is a most important factor in the successful achievement of the Spey-cast ; and lack of an adequate flow of water, from which the fly may be easily picked out, will make this throw most difficult and sometimes out of the question.



The first thing to settle is where you wish to place the fly and then to turn your body towards it. Let the inland foot be slightly advanced. Then lower the point of the rod, so that the distance travelling by it in being raised may be as great as possible and the maximum impetus imparted to the line.

As soon as the line is well extended downstream, place your left hand under the rubber button, so that, when the rod is in the upright position, it shall rest on the open palm. The right hand, which is to do most of the work, is to maintain a moderate grip on the upper portion of the cork-handle.

Then start lifting the rod into a nearly-vertical position, accelerating slightly to maintain the *pull* of the line at a constant strength. The line will at first follow in a downward-curving belly and the fly will be drawn to the surface and follow without actually losing touch with the water.

When the rod has arrived at a vertical position, incline it outwards and a little downwards, so that the belly receives a twitch that will cause an upward humping and the fly to leave the water and to travel just upstream and close beside the caster. Describe with the tip of the rod an ovoid path, the return portion of which comes back over the right shoulder and proceeds outwards and across to the spot aimed at.

The outward inclination of the rod is made with the object of giving time to the fly to reach a position just upstream of the angler. From there the line and fly can be propelled across the stream without getting entangled ; and the fouling of the line is a frequent danger against which you ought to guard most assiduously. You must satisfy yourself the fly is either opposite or above you, before making the cast, otherwise the hook will most likely take a firm hold in some part of your body, probably the ear. If the fly is not in this position, the line should be cleared downstream with a switch and the motions of the cast should be repeated.

As soon as the line is travelling in the desired direction, you can safely add the cut-down finish to the throw, that is, bring the rod down rather smartly with a flick of the wrist to a position a little higher than the horizontal. But, although the rod should be permitted to follow through the body ought to be consciously held back.

It is a very common fault in those accustomed to overhead casting to raise the arms as high as they naturally would in that cast; but in Spey-casting, double or single, the upper hand should not be lifted higher than the ear.

The essential part of a really good throw is the maintenance of the rod's motion throughout. There should be absolute smoothness without the suspicion of a pause or a jerk ; but the two conditions precedent are : the use of a suitable rod, limber, rather heavy in the middle and joined by splices, and of a line of a weight adapted to Spey-casting, namely, one that has a steep taper and a moderately heavy middle. Without this type of line you will find, in throwing against even a light breeze, that the fly will be projected in the right direction, but will fall short; and possibly both it and the cast will be doubled back.

Both kinds of Spey-casts are apt to throw the line on the water before the fly and also to disturb the pool unduly. You ought to try and cast at a point a yard or even more above the place at which you are aiming, which may have the effect of reducing these disadvantages.

The double Spey-cast.

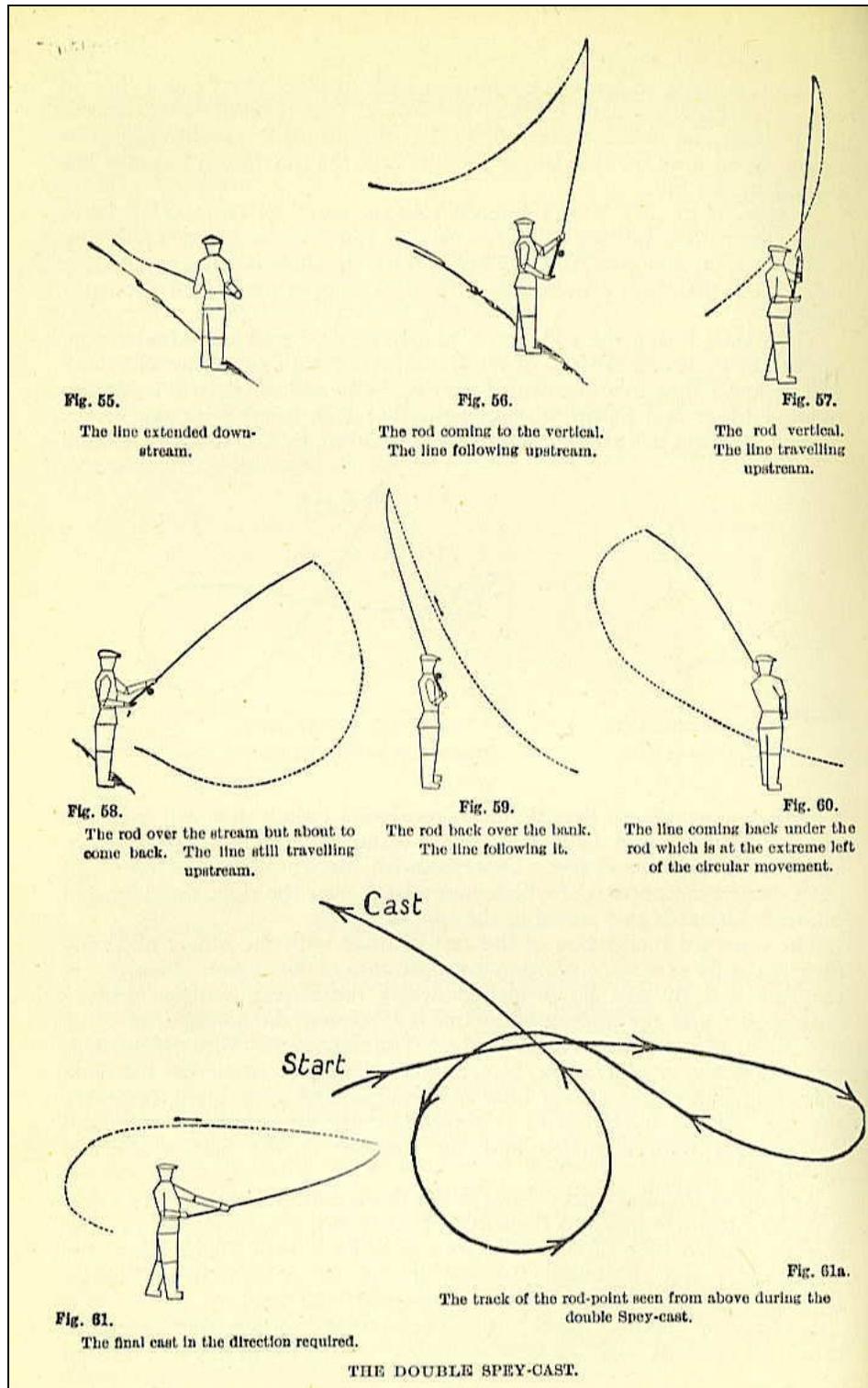
When a strong downstream wind is blowing, it is dangerous to employ the ordinary Spey-cast, as the fly is carried against the angler's person when it is being propelled across stream by the downward cut of the rod. If only his cap is hooked he is lucky ! The double Spey-throw has, accordingly, been devised, which gives the angler the power of casting a fly under these disadvantageous conditions and of casting it, if anything, often too straight across.

If you wish to use this cast and are still fishing from the left bank, you must place the left hand uppermost on the rod and the right hand underneath the button. The left hand will do the work of guiding, controlling and propelling. As soon as the line is well below you, raise the rod exactly in the manner of the single throw, except that the rod-point comes round to the vertical, having followed an outward path. When there is a long line out, the rod should be brought into a plane much beyond the vertical and the hands and the elbows should be crossed, left over right.

It is then taken across to the left side and inland of the body and brought round to pass over the left shoulder until it is opposite the spot to which the fly is to be thrown. The rod is then brought smartly down and the body is again held back. The diagrams will explain the path of the rod-point far more lucidly than the most careful description in words could ever hope to achieve. It is worth noting that the fly never travels in the air above the caster ; and that it touches the water just below and close to his left side, instead of just above him. The danger of his being hooked, therefore, does not exist. In this cast also the movements ought to be continuous with slight accentation, as the point reaches the vertical positions over the right and over the left shoulders and in the finish.

If there is a really strong gale blowing downstream, which is making it an impossible task to extend the line behind in the overhead cast, a double Spey-cast, employed very indifferently, is infinitely better than the former, provided the angler can carry out properly the final movement of the cast.

In making the overhead cast the importance of feeling the *tug* or *pull* of the line on the rod-point was insisted upon. The essence of all forms of underhand casts, switch and both Spey-casts among them, is that the *tug* shall proceed from the line being held down by the water. The shorter the line to be thrown, the longer ought the caster to postpone the forward stroke, always long enough to allow the fly to sink a little in the water close to him and thus get firmly enough anchored to give the *tug*. This is of prime importance. I have mentioned it in the last paragraph of the chapter, in order to emphasize it (pp. 144-8).



I found Taverner's illustrated words helpful, however, there were a couple of other works that played crucial roles in my effort to learn how to Spey cast. In 1952, Jock Scott's book *Fine and Far Off* was released and it details the casting techniques of the all-time master, Alexander Grant. Scott dedicated this book to Grant calling him "The

Wizard of the Ness . . .” Grant grew up in the Spey Valley and learned his salmon fly fishing and casting skills on the pools of that famous river. In later life he moved to the Ness where he perfected his switch-casting technique and his style of fishing “fine and far off.” In his introductory chapter, about Mr. Grant’s fishing skills, Scott writes:

Perhaps it is unfortunate that Mr. Grant's name and methods are most frequently associated with record casts, and controversy thereon—of which, more later—but in this volume I am interested only in his methods from a fishing point of view. The value of his method lies, to my mind, in the fact that the ordinary mortal may make casts of tournament length under actual fishing conditions, if required. What he himself has done in the past merely serves to show what can be done, and what he did was far more than is needed under fishing conditions—maybe 20 yards more—for he has actually cast a fly 60 yards. However, while such colossal casts may be done under favourable circumstances, they are exceptional; but I should like to emphasise the fact that he habitually—not occasionally—hooked and killed fish at from 40 to 50 yards' range. He deliberately, and from choice, approached his fish from that distance, and his long list of catches, ranging from 6 lb. grilse to a salmon of 55 lb. from the Garry, proves that he was working on sound lines (p. 28).

Grant developed his own cast, a variation from the Spey cast of his early fishing, and called it a switch cast. That Grant was an amazing switch caster is well documented in *Fine and Far Off*. On the River Thames in the 1890s, R. B. Marston measured and recorded in *The Fishing Gazette* a Grant cast of 56 yards. However, his longest cast took place in a competition on the River Ness in 1895 and on that day he switch cast an amazing 65 yards. Grant did not shoot line and he picked up the entire line in one effort with these amazing casts. About Grant’s casting technique on pages 98, 108 and 109, Scott writes:

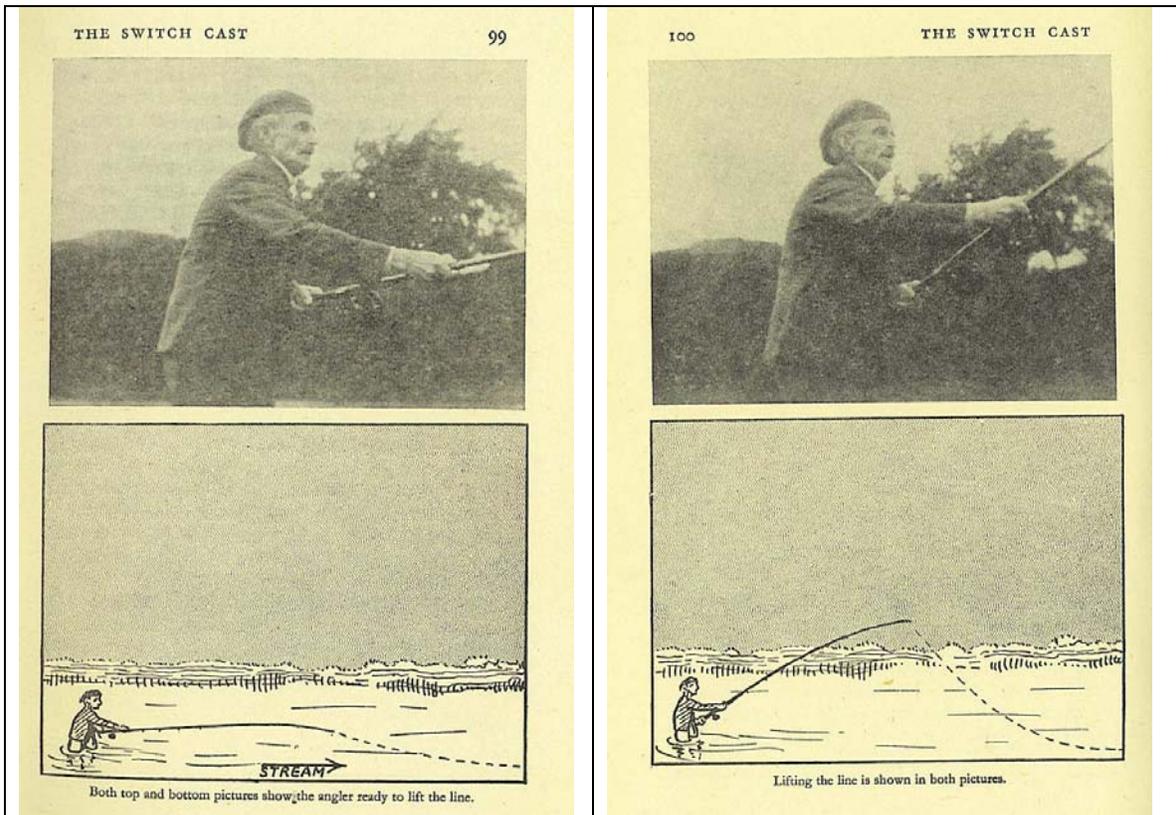
To make a cast in the Grant style, the rod is gripped as previously described The line is downstream, parallel with the bank, the previous cast having been fished out. The rod tip should nearly touch the water, and the line be tight in the stream. When you feel that you have all the weight on, *i.e.*, that line and fly are tight, very slowly raise the rod to an angle of about 60°, or rather higher, then pause. Look at the line, and judge how much is left in the water. If you think that the rod is not high enough, raise the hands until you are satisfied that the amount of line left in the water is such that you can comfortably pull it out. Having levelled the rod—adjusted its height—make sure that your leading arm is straight out from the shoulder. Now you are ready to cast.

Turn the wrists slightly outwards, so causing the rod-point to turn away from your shoulder, then, without pause, pull back by flexing the arm until the rod-butt is close up to the shoulder. Do all this slowly and without a jerk. Several things happen. The slight outward turn causes the line and fly to jump off the water by sending a little upward wave travelling down the taut line. The pull-back now brings the line flowing through the air on an absolutely horizontal line, a dead even keel, as shown in the photographs and sketches.

This turn and pull-back are the critical phase; if they are correct, the rest of the cast is bound to be so. It will, perhaps, help if I describe how the cast feels.

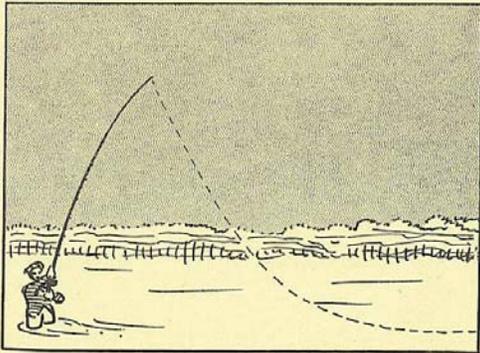
The rod is levelled ready to cast. You then turn your wrists slightly outward—not back towards you, but outwards—and feel for the weight of the line. As you begin to come back you get hold of the line and can feel its full weight. Pull away at it until the rod is close against your shoulder, and your elbow is right out with the arm doubled, then stop, as in the overhead. Suddenly you will feel all the weight go off the rod-top; the line at which you have been pulling will momentarily run off your hands and, as it were, disappear into the blue. That is the signal to make the forward shot. Immediately you do so you will find that the line has reappeared from nowhere and that you are pulling at a solid weight. Do not cast by extending the arm; merely give a short, sharp flip with the wrist, and away goes the line beautifully, easily and as straight as the proverbial die.

The words describe the casting technique well, however, on pages 99 through 108, Scott included a series of photographs with corresponding sketches showing Grant's technique that proved to me that a picture is worth a thousand words.

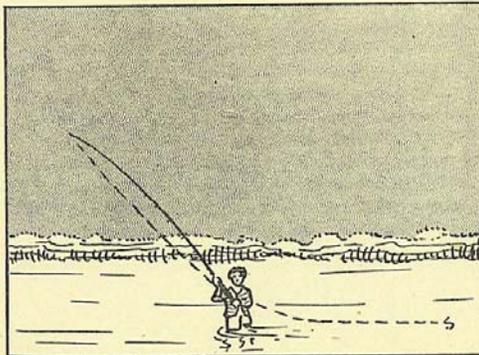
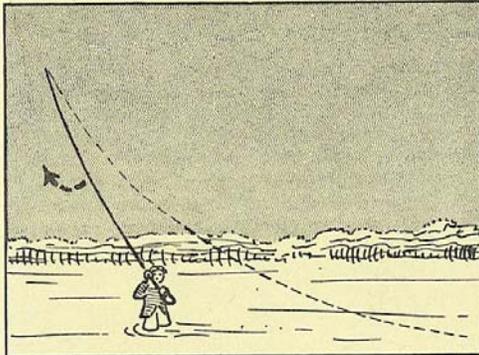
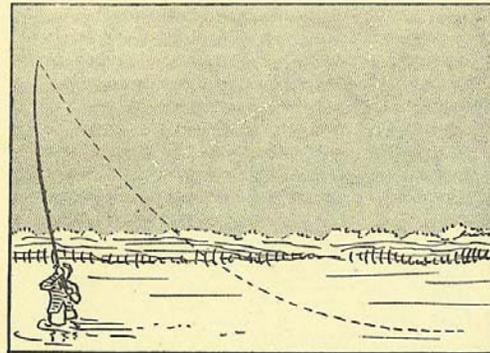




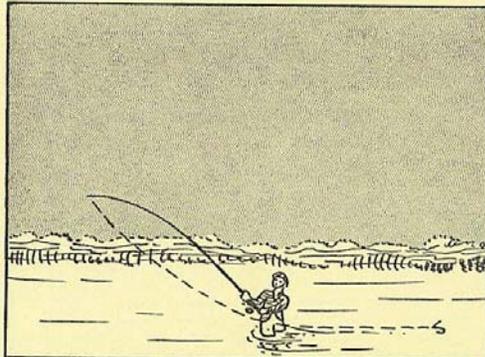
This and the following two illustrations show the line lifted and the swing about to begin.

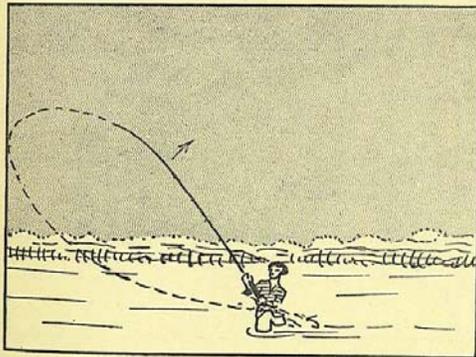
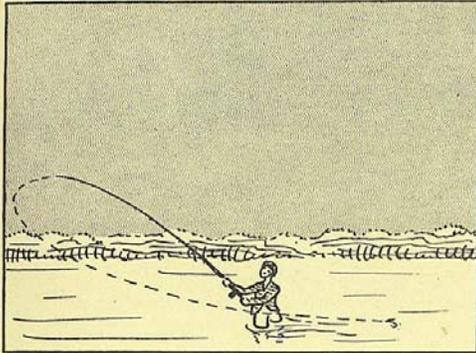


The swing beginning and continued in the two following sketches.

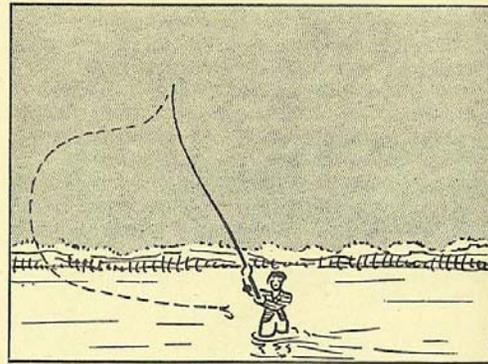


Here the swing is continuing and the action shown in the three further sketches.





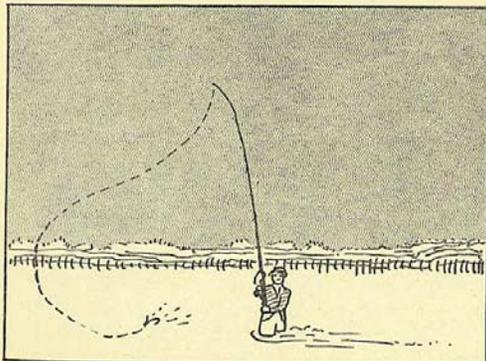
Both pictures show the rod right back and reversing its curve.



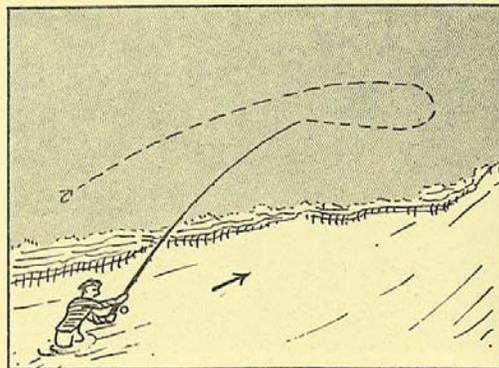
Rod reversing its curve.



Shows the beginning of the forward shot.



Rod moving forward.



The end of the forward shot.

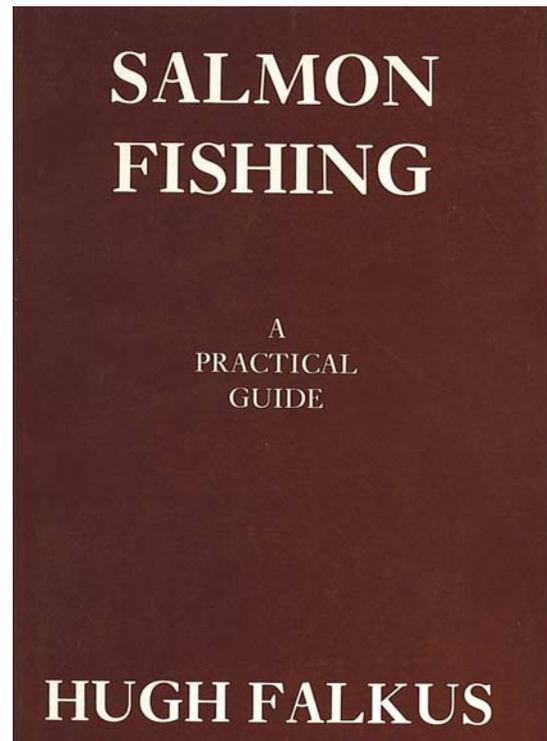
Grant's switch cast is similar to the single Spey and when I acquired *Fine and Far Off* in 1983 this series of pictures and sketches helped me considerably to learn the basics of the single Spey cast. Many British salmon fly fishers have sections in their book on fly casting and some say that the Spey is a refinement of the switch. Most modern day books make no distinction. John Ashley-Cooper, with approximately 10,000 salmon killed on his rod, is one of the greatest Atlantic salmon fly fishers of the 20th century. In the Spey River section of *The Great Salmon Rivers of Scotland* (1980), Ashley-Cooper, about switch-casting and rods specific for that purpose, writes:

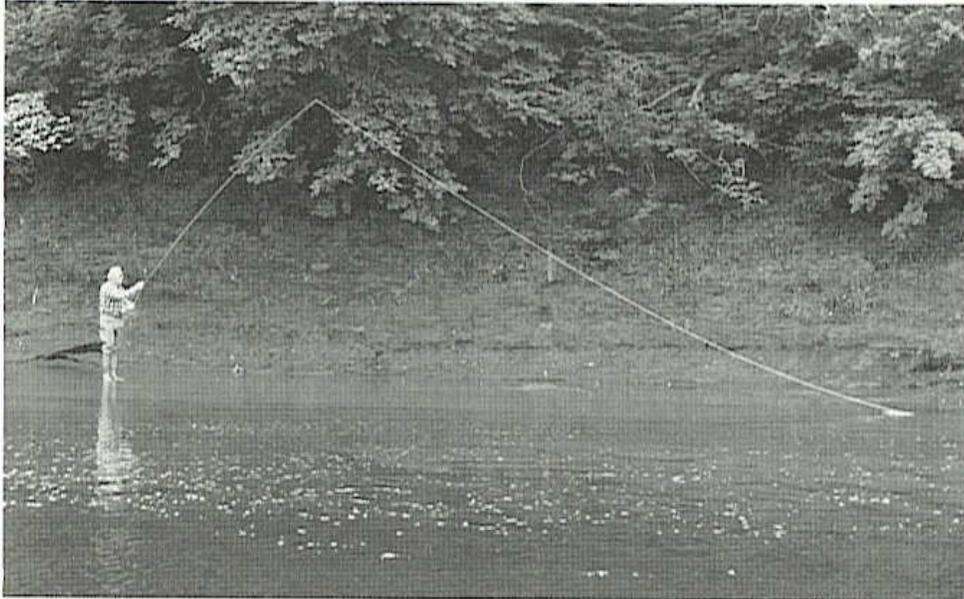
The Spey has given its name, as is well known, to a method of switch-casting which nullifies the obstacle of high banks or rock faces behind; and it is a joy to watch this cast when practised by a skilled exponent, of which there are many in the neighbourhood. A special type of rod has even been designed for perfecting this cast, the renowned 'Grant Vibration' spliced greenheart, which was first produced in the late years of the last century by Alexander Grant of Inverness. Grant, a schoolmaster by profession, and a violinist as well as a fisherman in his leisure hours, was a redoubtable champion in the fishing world of his day. He is recorded as having switch-cast sixty-five yards without shooting any line (p. 23).

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.

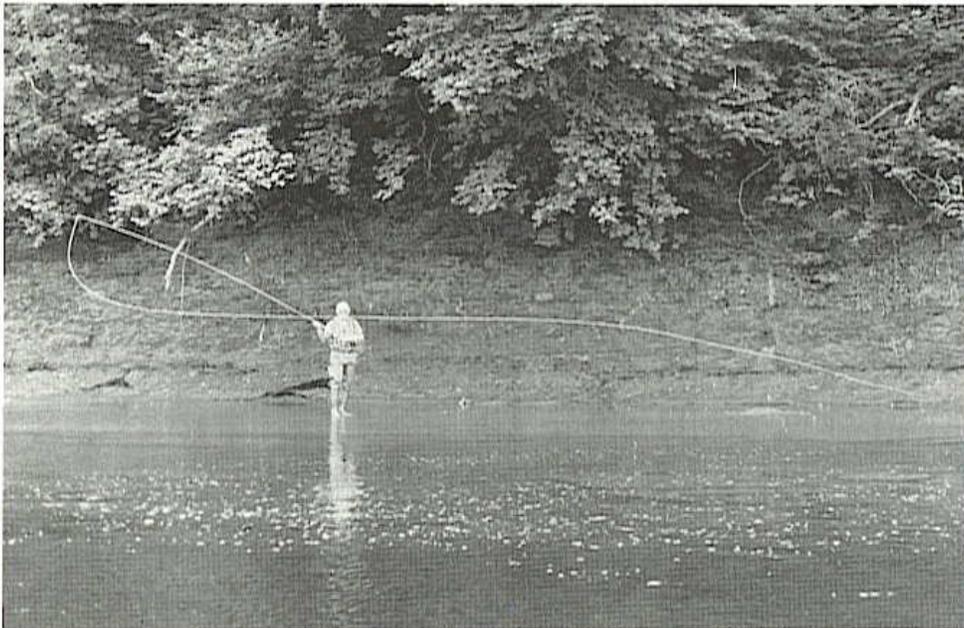
Falkus' book is still available through British book dealers and deserves a place in all Spey casters libraries. I will not repeat Falkus' words, because it is his series of photographs showing the Spey casting steps that provided far more detail on Spey casting than anything published previously.





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.

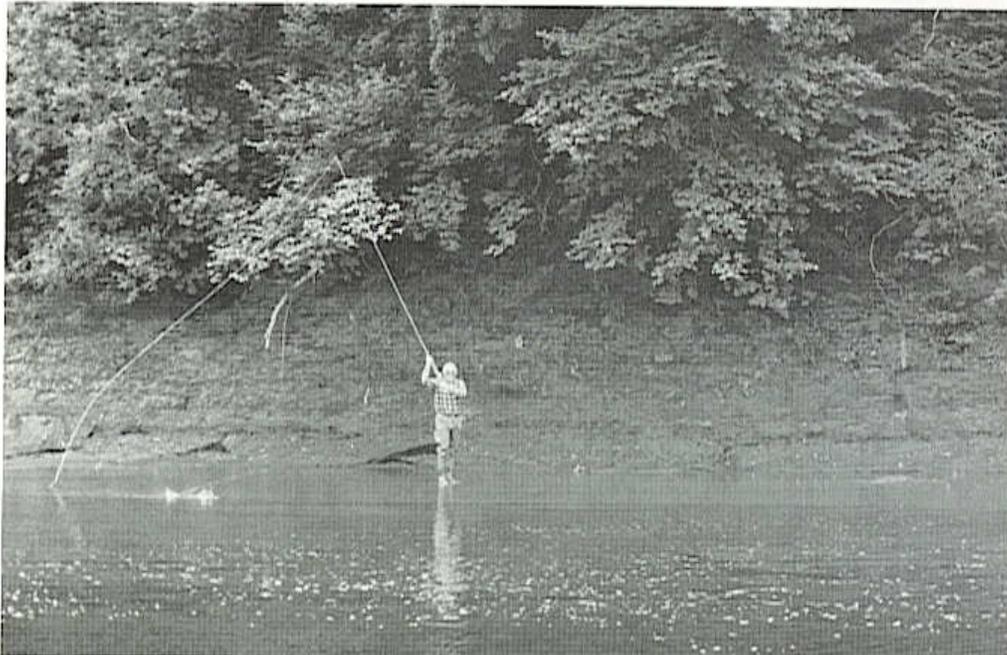


2. Now the angler swings the rod round upstream in front of him, bringing the line and fly up off the water. As the rod moves round, it curves downwards almost to the horizontal so that it *guides the line and fly* towards the splash-down position just beyond his right shoulder. (Note downward curve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

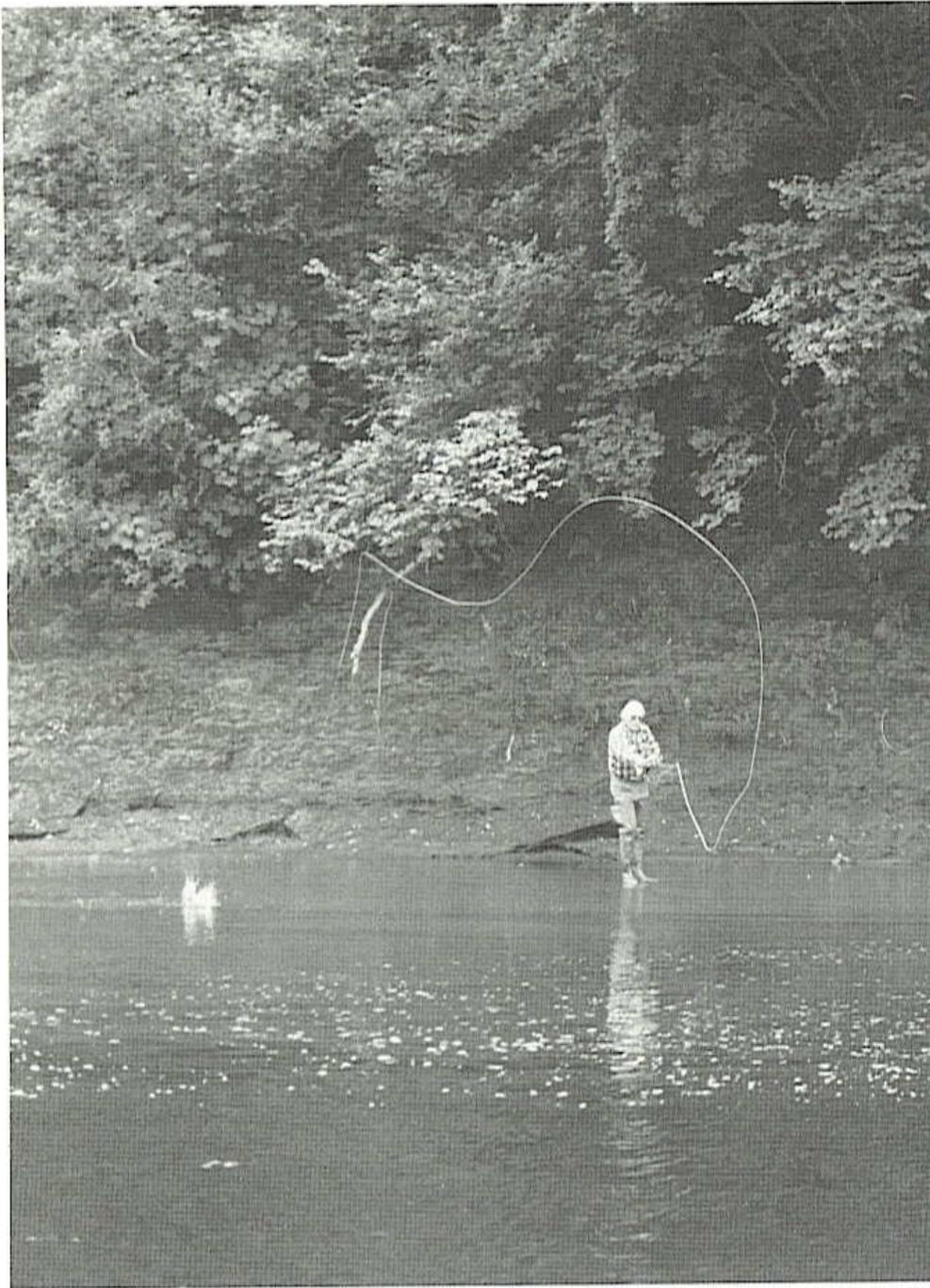
Geo. M. Kelson, *The Salmon Fly*, 1895.



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.

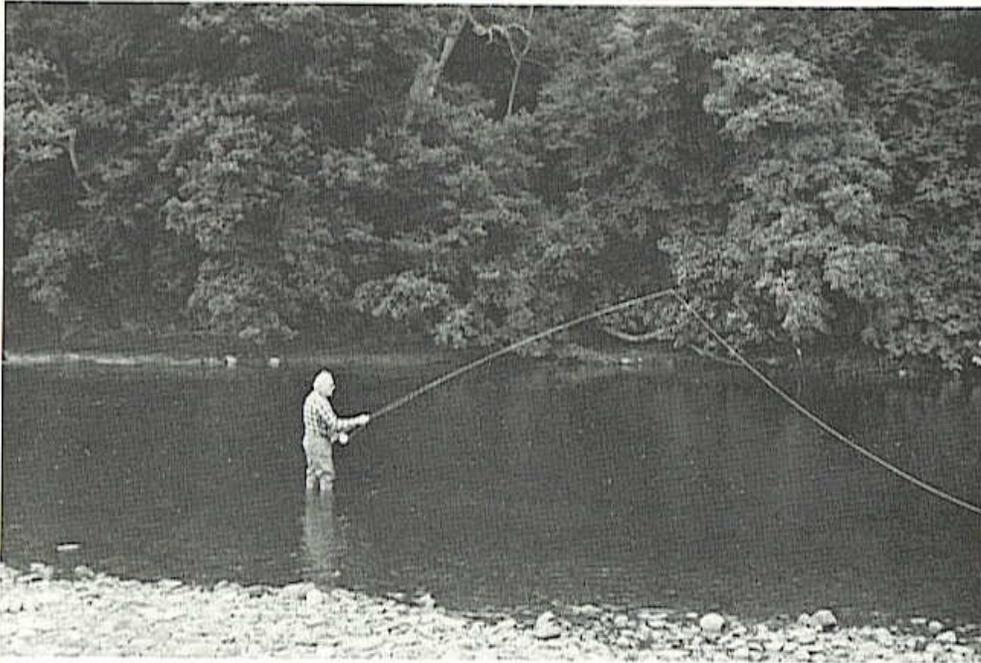
The moment the fly hits the water, the angler forms a loop of line by swinging the rod round and bringing it up just backwards of the vertical, raising his arms slightly as he does so to bring the reel level with his face. (Note stance: right leg slightly forward).

THE SINGLE SPEY CAST

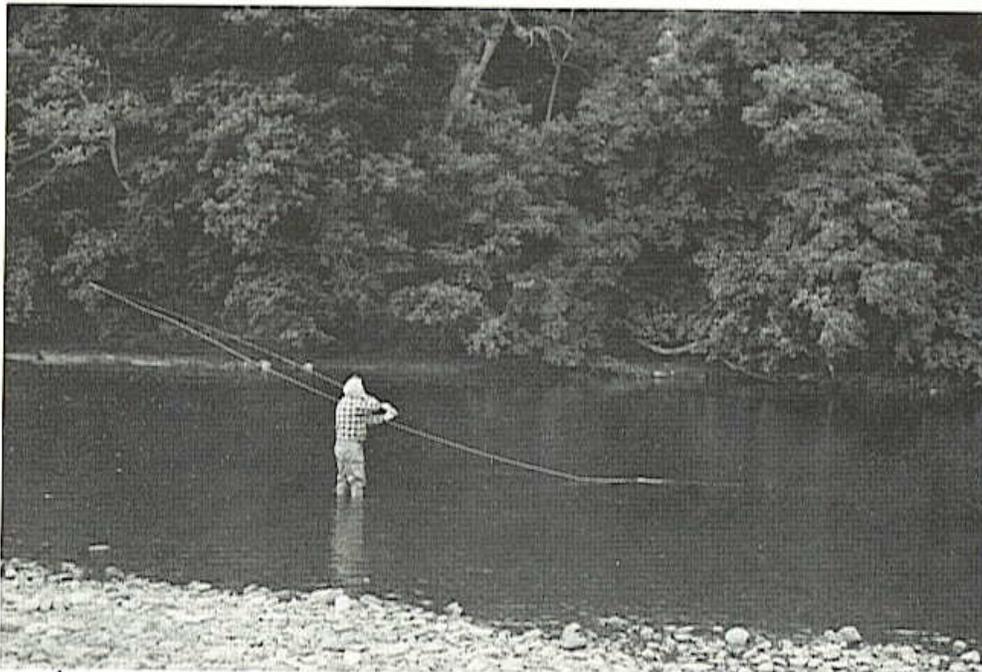


5. The forward stroke is made, the angler's weight being taken on his right leg as the loop of the line followed by leader and fly starts to curl out across the water.

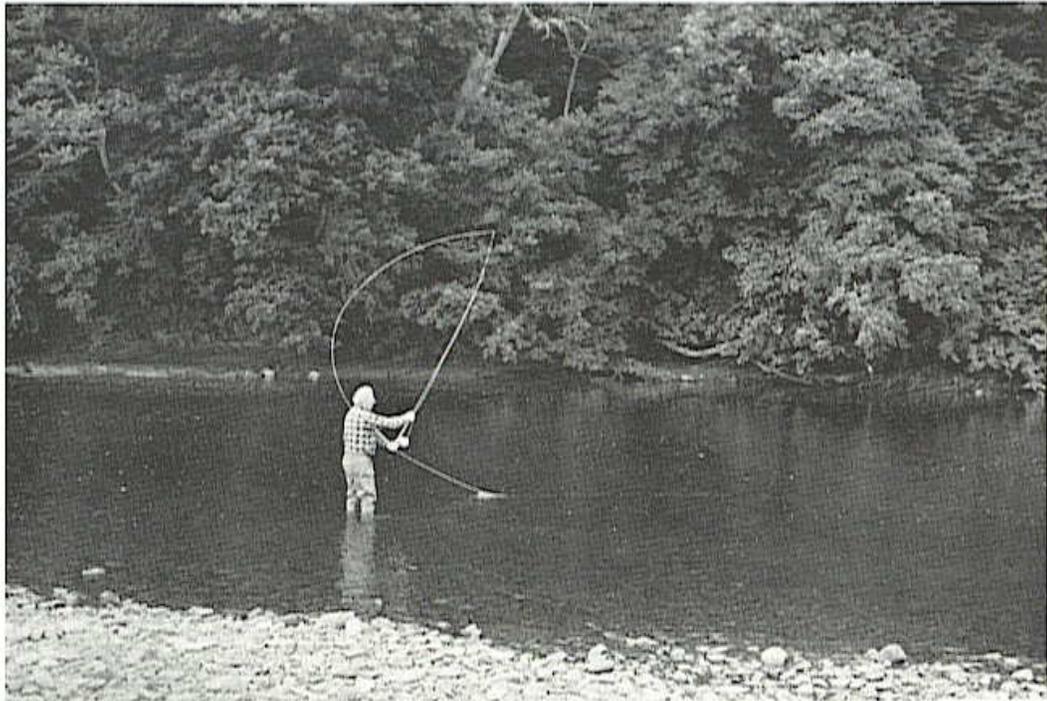
The Double Spey Cast



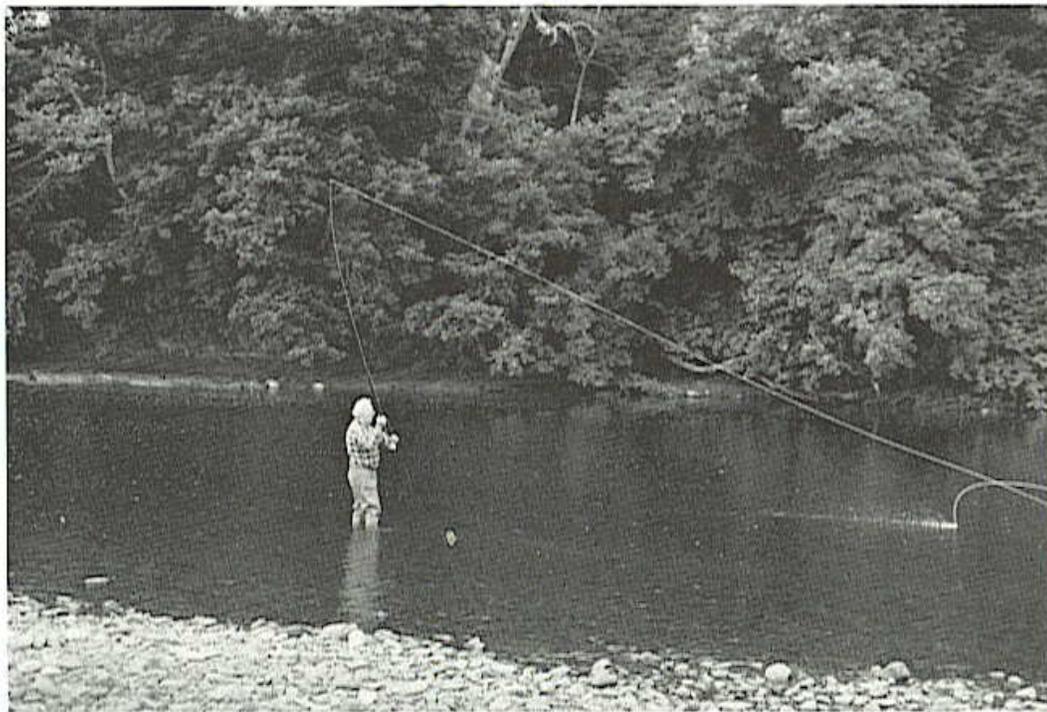
1. When making his first cast, the angler strips off a fishable length of line and lets the current take it downstream. To ensure that his fly is on the surface he raises his rod slightly . . .



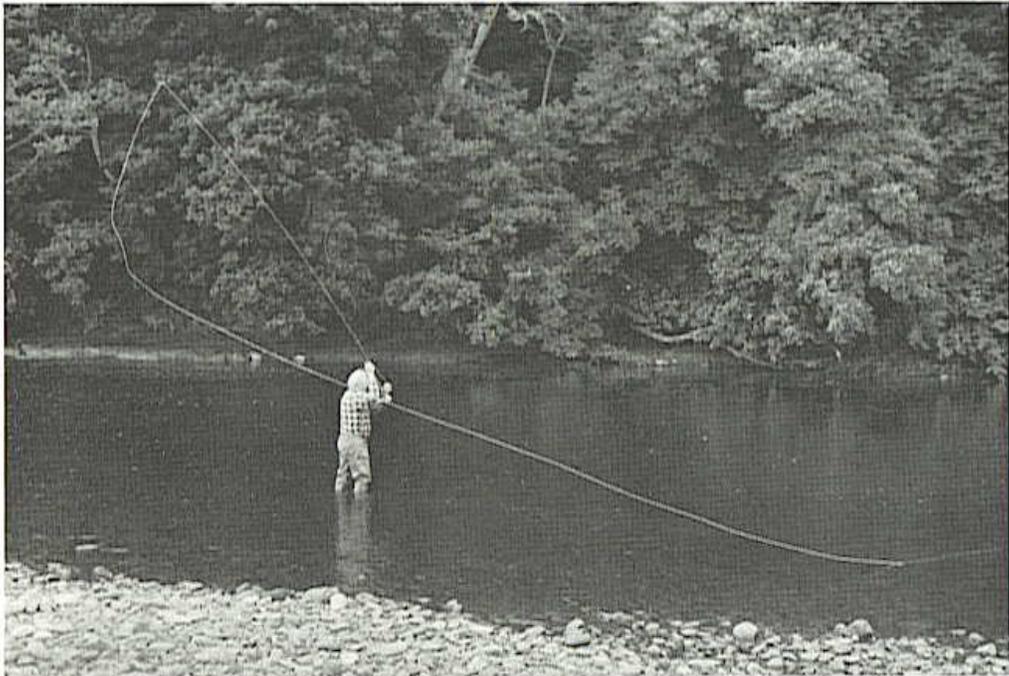
2. . . then swings it round in front of him upstream through nearly 180° —which brings the fly feathering along the surface towards him.
Note. When starting the double-Spey it is essential to leave the fly *below* the direction in which the forward stroke is to be made.



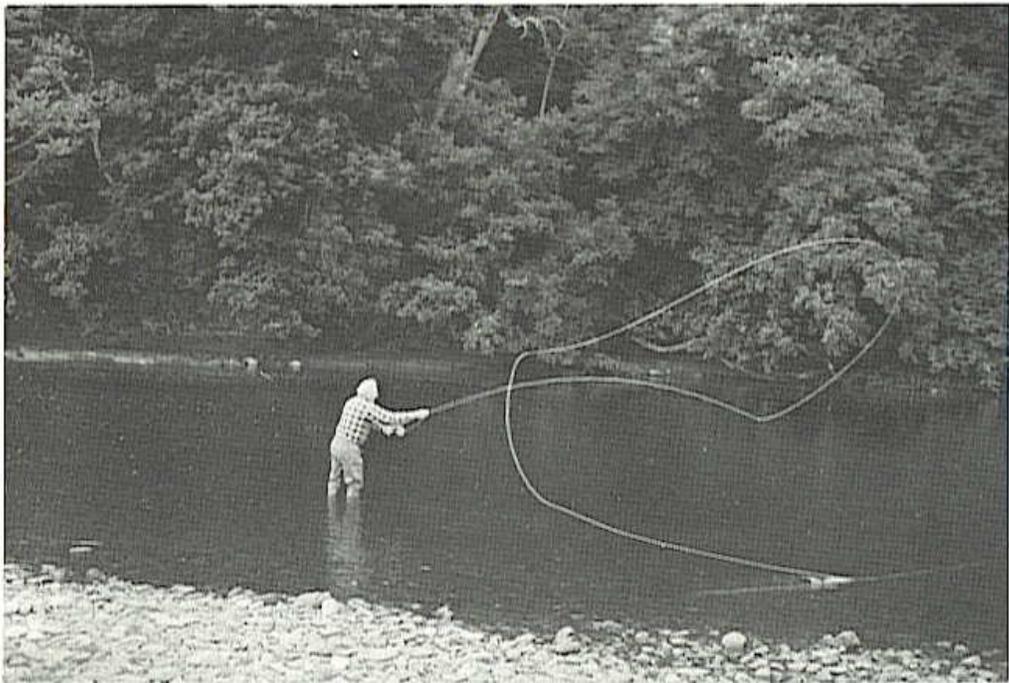
3. The angler then swings the rod back downstream. As he does so a loop of line follows leaving a little ruffle of spray on the surface.



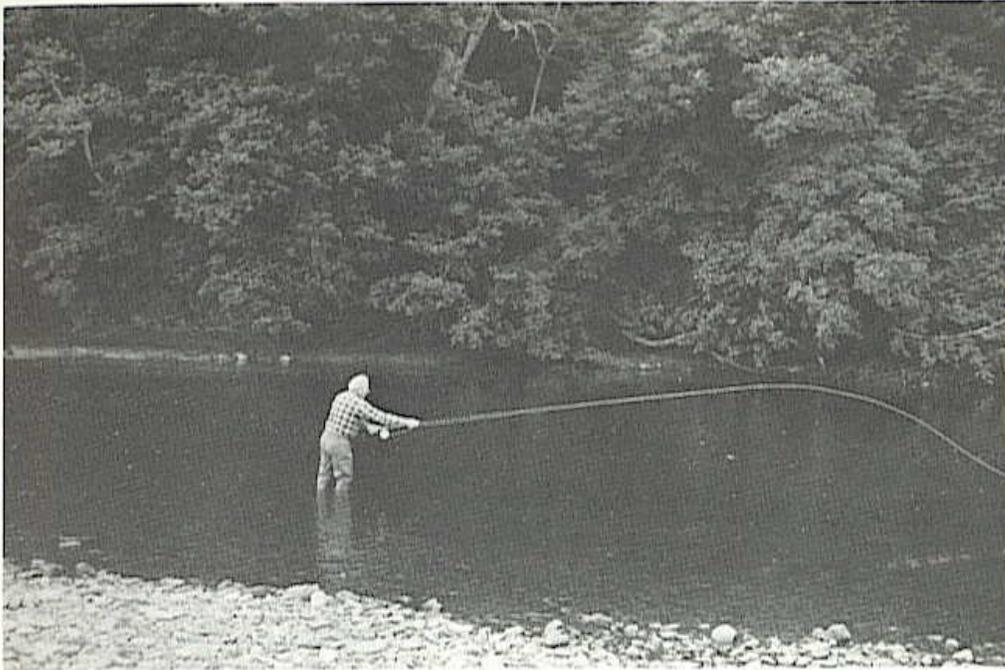
4. As the rod (having been swung round downstream through the position shown in Fig. 1) is brought up towards the vertical beside his right shoulder, the angler starts to raise his arms . . .



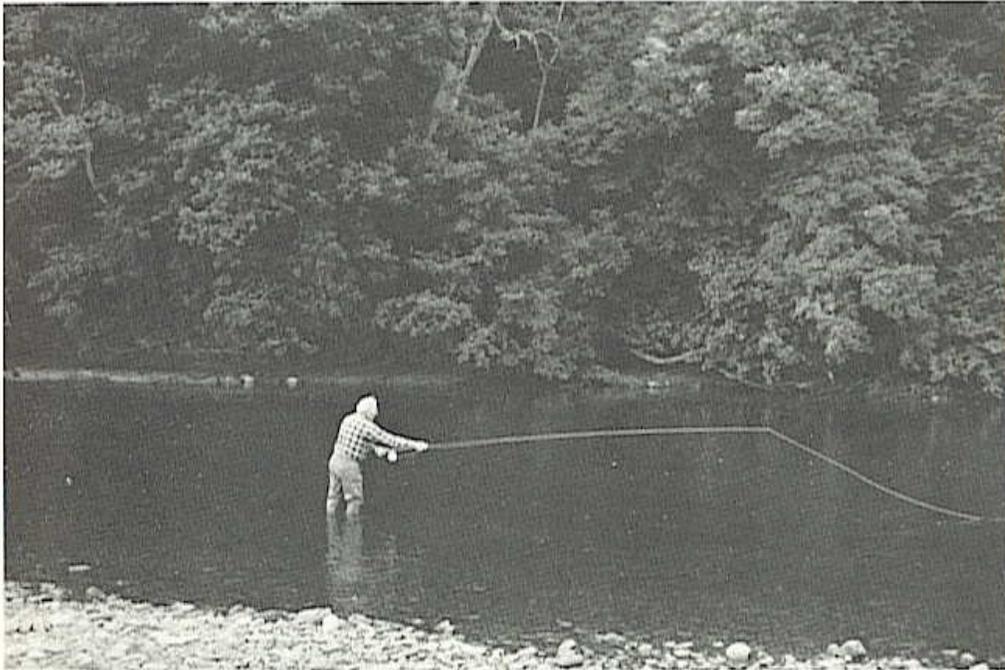
5. . . . bringing the reel level with his face. Then, just as the surface ruffle comes to an end (with the rod slightly past the vertical, and a big loop of line formed beside him), the angler makes the final stroke with the same flick of the wrists used in roll and single Spey casting.



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).

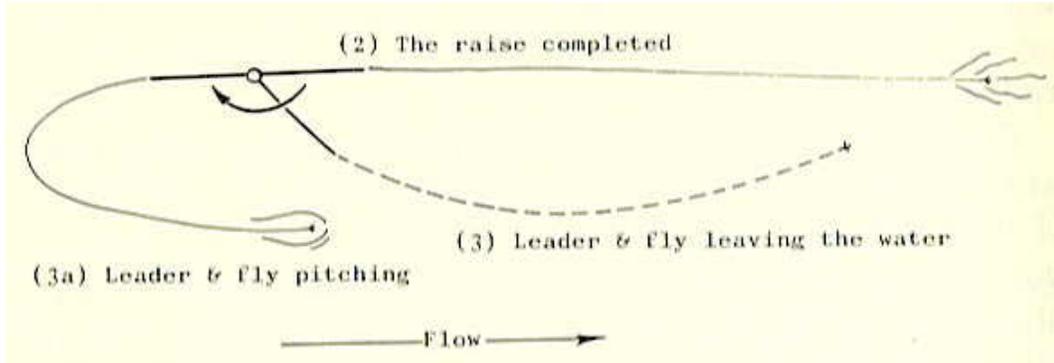


FIGURE 66. Plan of the Spey cast.

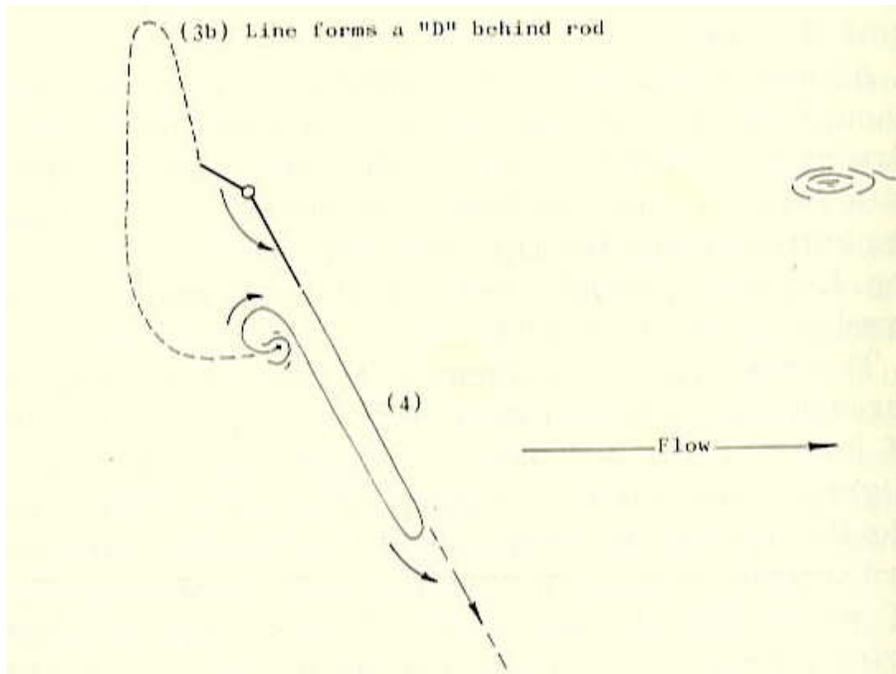


FIGURE 67. Plan of the Spey cast.

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.

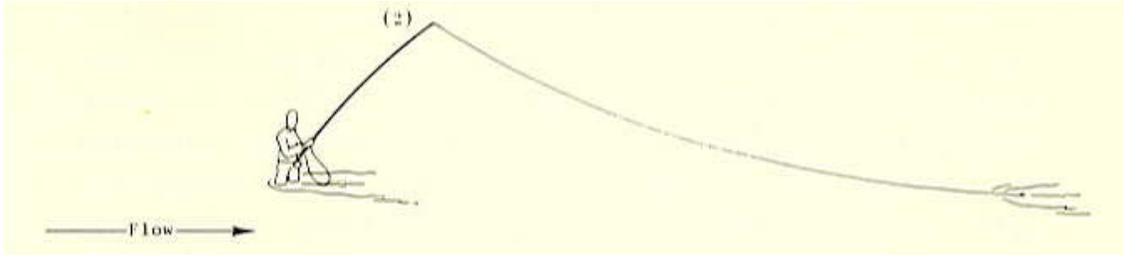


FIGURE 68. The raise completed.

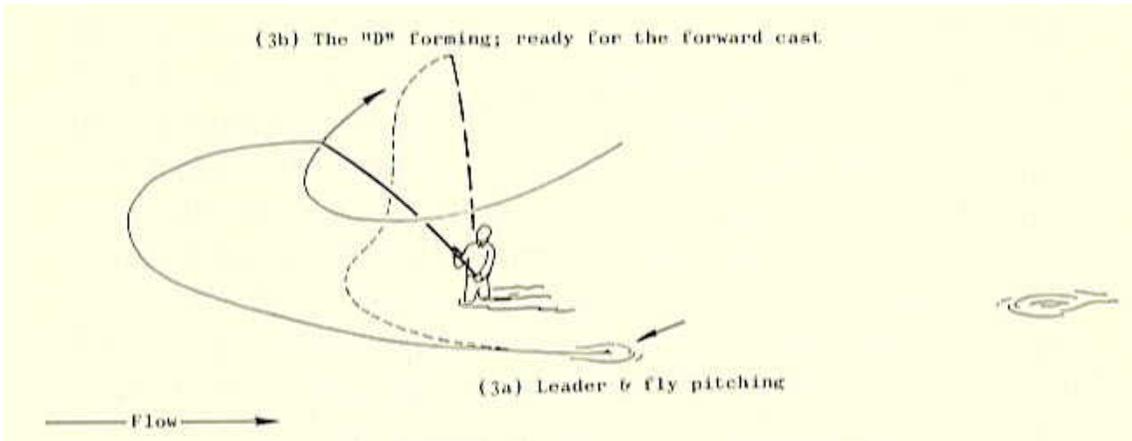


FIGURE 69. The swing.

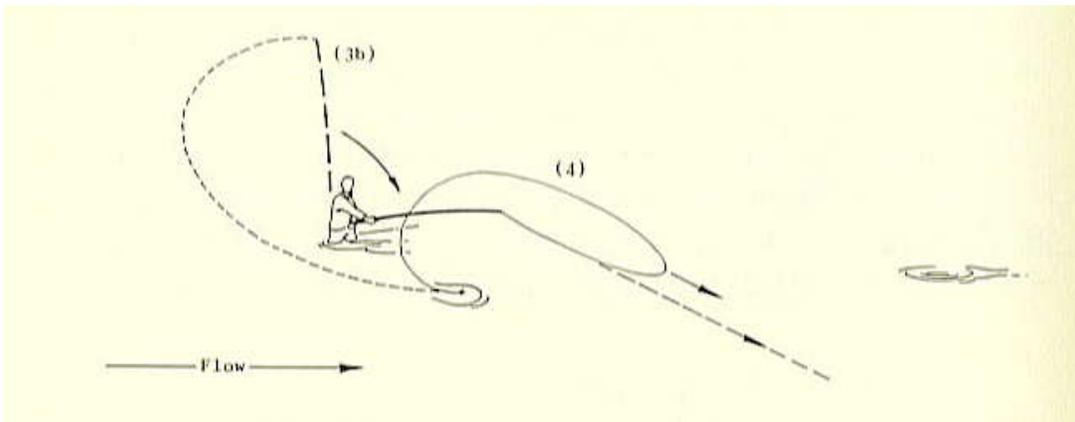


FIGURE 70. The forward cast.

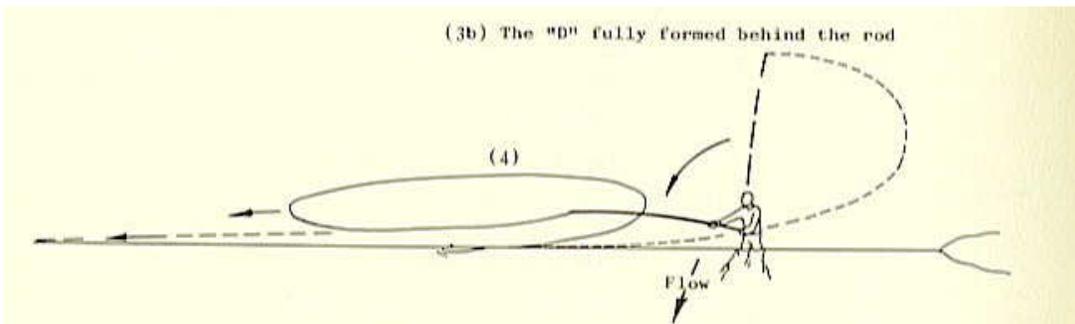


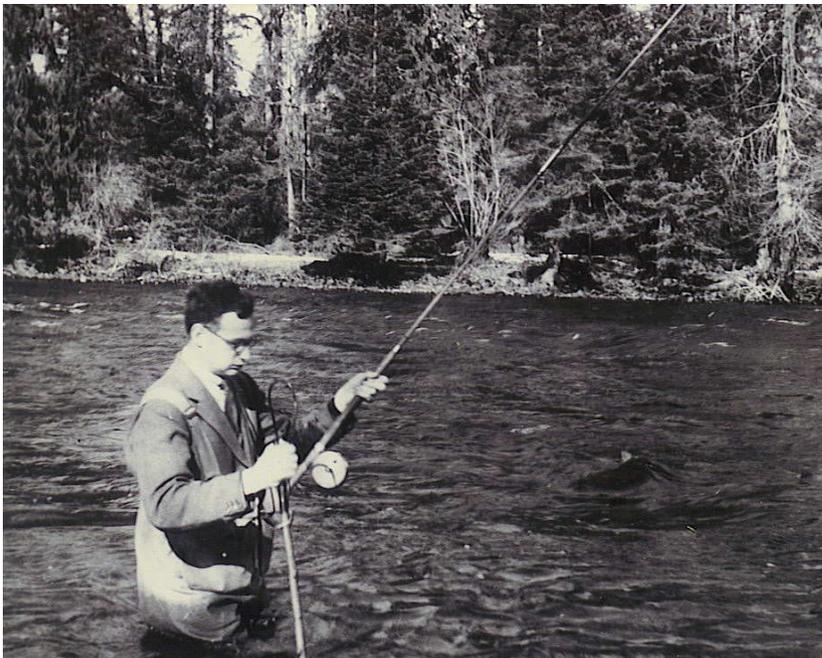
FIGURE 71. The forward cast (viewed from downstream)

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.

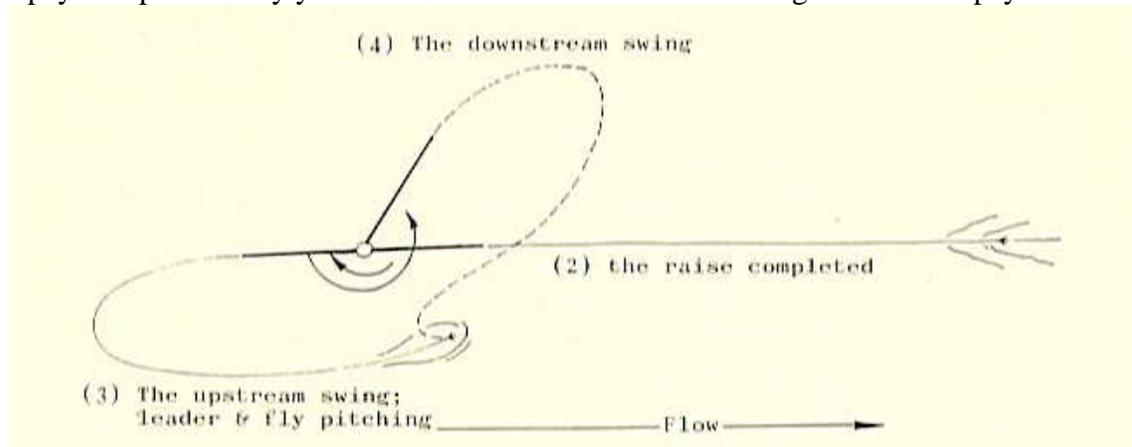


FIGURE 72. Plan of the double Spey cast.

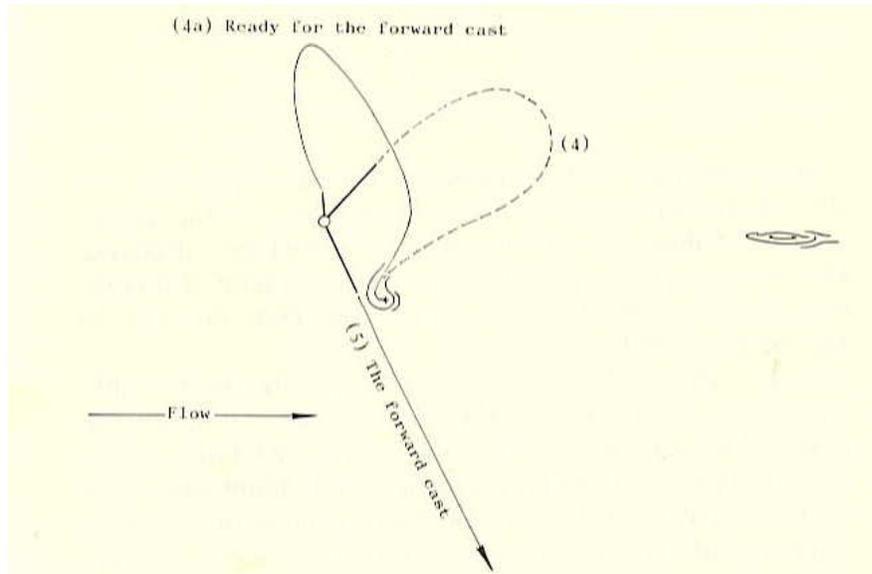


FIGURE 73. Plan of the double Spey cast.

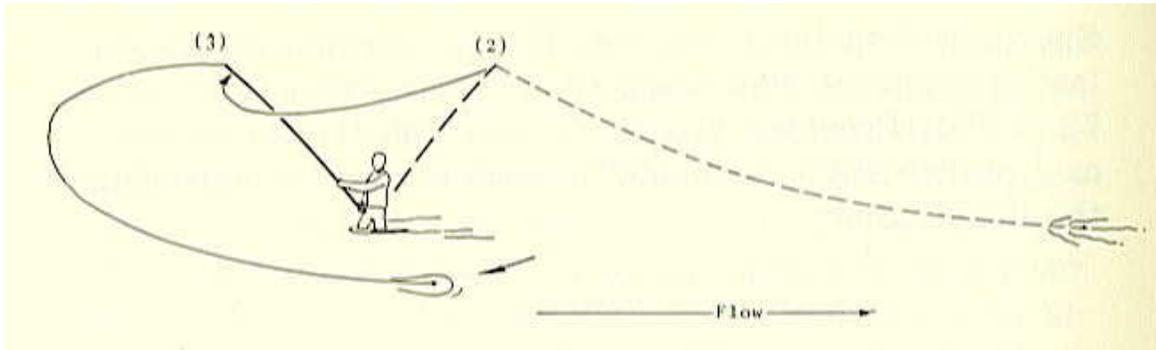


FIGURE 74. The upstream swing

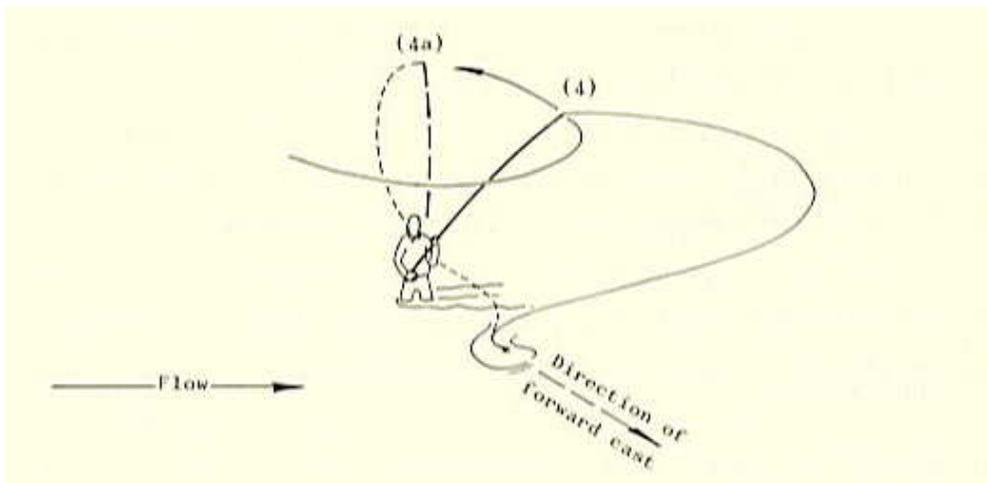


FIGURE 75. The downstream swing.

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.

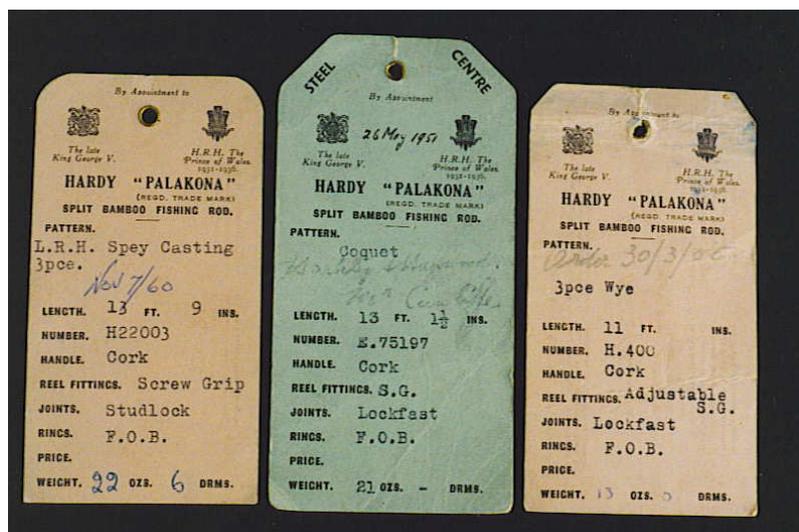
Part III: The Reintroduction of the Two-Handed Rod to British Columbia's Steelhead Waters and Its Spread Elsewhere

Two-handed bamboo rods were heavy and expensive but were the tool used most by the few B.C. steelhead fly fishers of the day such as General Noel Money, Tommy Brayshaw and Bill Cunliffe, during the first five or so decades of the 20th Century. Rod Haig-Brown was one of the first to recommend a single-handed rod for summer steelhead and he summarized his thoughts and the practice of the day when he writes:

As to the rod—well, the streams are of fair size, particularly early in the year, and spey or roll-casting is the only way of getting out line in many places; so a double-hander thirteen- or fourteen-foot split-cane is not out of place for fishing an honest wet fly. I belong to a young and cocksure generation, and prefer for myself a single-handed eleven- or 12-foot rod of the Wye or Wood type (p. 162, Vol. I, *The Western Angler*, 1939)

Haig-Brown writes more about single-handed rods and mentions some that he has used weighing as little as six ounces. Even then Haig-Brown's 12 foot Wye weighed 13 oz and the two-handed 13 to 14 footers weighed over 20 ounces.

A sample of tags from Hardy bamboo rods in use during Haig-Brown's time



After the Second World War fiberglass rods, which were lighter and much cheaper to make, became the choice of many fly rod purchasers. The two-handers were on the wane and by the 1960s few were seen on our western rivers. By the 1960s and 1970s most steelhead fly fishing rods were made of fiberglass and 9 to 9 ½ feet long. However, in the 1970s space-age technology resulted in the much stronger and lighter graphite material. Those graphite rods (called carbon fibre in Britain) were so light that rods started to lengthen and around 1983 a few two-handers in the 15 foot range started to show up on British Columbia rivers.

What happened when and who did what back in the mid to early 1980s can be difficult to report accurately, especially if one relies on memory. I kept most of my correspondence from that time and, if it is fishing related, often I have comments in my fishing diaries. What follows is my recollection of events supported by considerable documentation.

But first it is worthwhile describing the steelhead fly fishing practices of the early 1980s. We need to keep in mind that fly fishers are conservative, don't like change and change came slowly for some and with others they vehemently opposed the re-introduction of the two-handers. In the early 1980s most steelhead fly fishers used rods of 9 to 9½ feet with either a shooting head system consisting of a 30-foot long sinking line attached to a running line or weight forward floating lines, some with sinking tips. The weight forward lines had short bellies and were designed for shooting the line and the sink tip lines had poor sink rates. Few anglers used double taper lines. Bill McMillan was writing extensively about dry-line fishing and it was one of the things in vogue during the early 1980s. McMillan's dry-line technique consisted of fishing large wet flies naturally drifted on long leaders to bottom-hugging steelhead. I have caught the odd steelhead using short casts and a fly fished naturally drifted on slow moving waters. Back in the 1980s I did notice anglers attempting to use McMillan's method on some of our faster flowing BC streams. The flow seemed too fast for me for this technique. To get depth they would cast upriver and then throw loops of slack line in behind the drifting fly to get the fly down to the fish. Some early mid-1980s two-handed rod fly fishers saw the big rods as a tool to use even longer leaders to get the fly deeper. On slow water you can maintain some control but with this technique you throw away virtually all control to get depth; thus I shied away from it. I learned to steelhead fish using a Silex reel, and lures or bait with a float and knew that you did far better if you kept a tight line to the float. Steelhead could take the lure so softly that unless you had the "feel" and struck at almost imperceptible movement of the float you missed the fish. The dry-line technique remained in vogue for a while but hooking a fish in faster-flowing water was achieved more by accident than design.

By the end of 1983 I had experimented with the single Spey cast from books previously mentioned. For my sinking line fishing I had abandoned the shooting head system in favour of looping onto a level 9 floating line a home-made sink tip with short leader of about three feet—the norm for shooting head fishing was the standard nine-foot leader—and I added lead weight to my General Practitioners to make sure the fly sank at the same rate as the sink tip. For my floating line fishing I went to a double taper line. It was with these tools that I fiddled with the single Spey using a single-handed rod.

In 1983 Jim Green of Sage started experimenting with long rods and had made some sixteen-foot blanks, one of which he gave to Jerry Wintle. All early North

American double-handed rods were designed for weight forward lines and were too limber, often like a half-cooked spaghetti noodle. They were certainly not built for rugged work. Jerry had the 16 foot Sage experimental rod on the Thompson River in November 1983. I showed interest in the rod and he said go ahead and try it in the morning, if I wished. I recorded in my diary for November 6, 1983 that

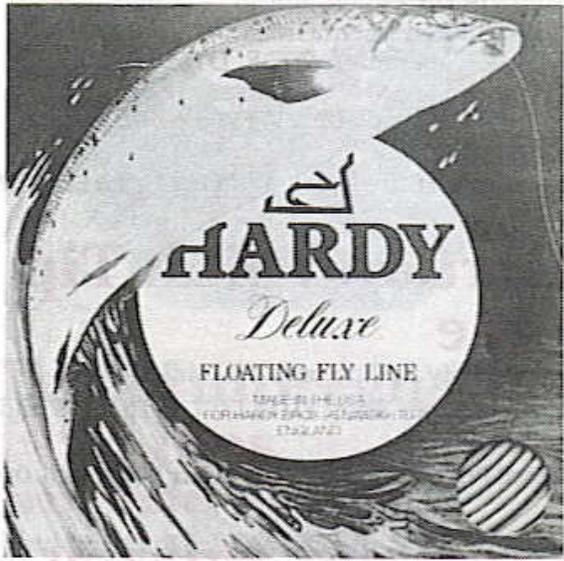
Hit a nice fish after about 2 casts this morning. I was trying out Wintle's new 16 ft. rod. Fish took a 2/0 Claret & Black in tail[out] of Wye at 7:10 this morn.

Hardy Deluxe Floating Fly Line

A new design of floating fly line with a super smooth surface finish to give easier shooting and better air penetration and turn over. Also has better buoyancy due to microscopic glass air filled balls in the coating. In sizes 10, 11 and 12 it is made 40 yards long (36.6 metres) to suit the new Hardy Graphite Carbon Salmon Fly Rods with which one can easily spey cast and overhead cast beyond the normal line length of 25 metres.

Colour Straw.
Double Taper 25 metres: DT5, DT6, DT7, DT8 and DT9.
Retail Price £23.15 **Our Price £19.70**

Double Taper 40 yards (36.6 metres): DT10F, DT11F and DT12F.
Retail Price £31.95 **Our Price £28.75**

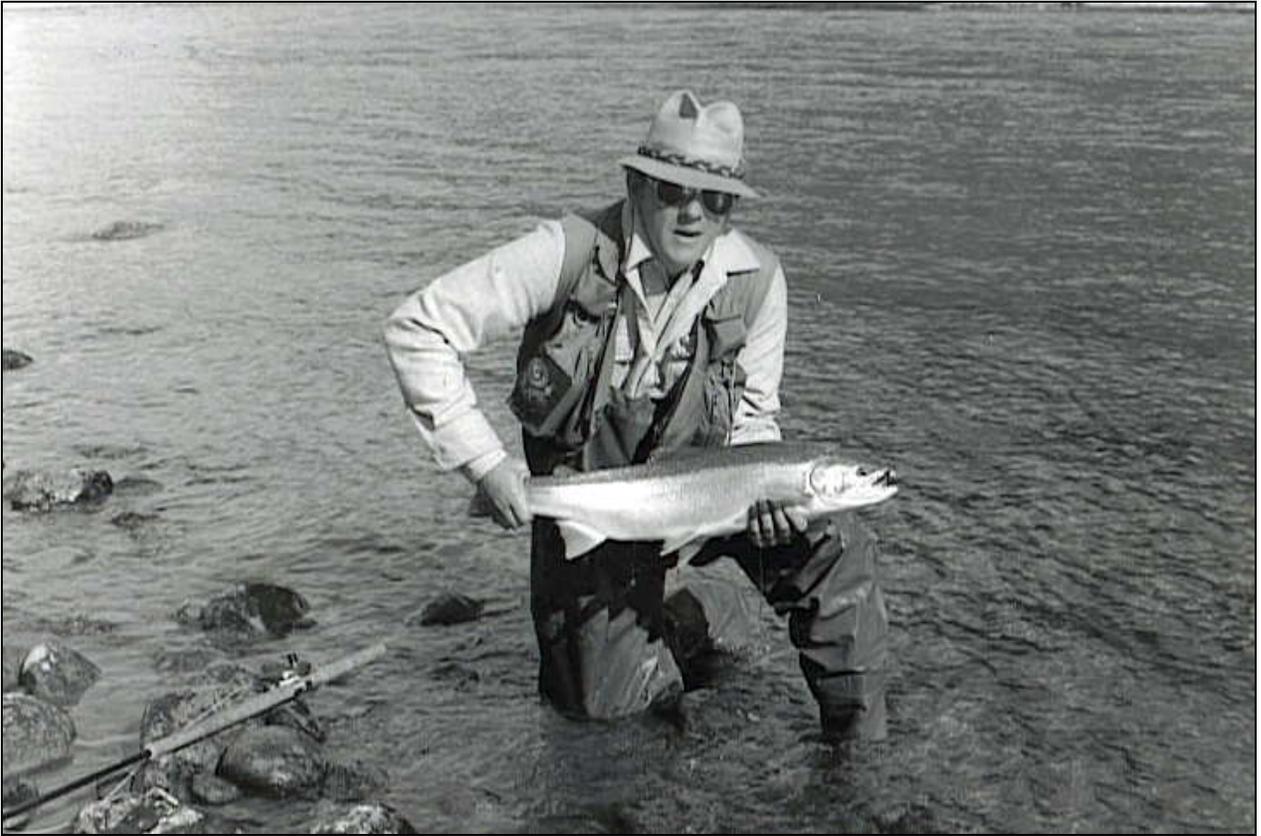


The image shows a black and white illustration of a fish, likely a salmon, leaping out of the water. The fish is curved, with its mouth open and tail up. In the center of the fish's body, there is a circular logo containing the Hardy brand name 'HARDY' in a bold, serif font. Below 'HARDY' is the word 'Deluxe' in a cursive script, and further down, 'FLOATING FLY LINE' in a smaller, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the logo, there is a small line of text: 'MADE IN THE U.S.A. FOR FISHING IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND'. The background of the illustration shows stylized waves and a fishing reel.

That was my first steelhead hooked on a two-handed rod. Sometime in 1983, Ruddicks fly shop brought in some Orvis two-handed rods made for the British market and Wintle had purchased one of them. He thought that with the 15-foot Orvis he could better present flies fished ala McMillan's dry-line technique. The two-handed Orvis cast better with a double taper line but most early two-handed rod users used the weight forward line they had on their reels and they rolled or overhead cast. The Orvis didn't perform to Jerry's expectations and he asked if I was interested in buying it. It was some months before we finalized the deal and I picked up the rod. The Orvis was made for Spey casting, which is what I bought it for, and I went out and purchased a Hardy Marquis Salmon 3 and a Hardy double taper 40 yard #11 floating line.

On May 9, 1984 I noted in my diary that I took the new Orvis to the Stave River and gave it a try and I recorded "I liked it but it will take some casting to get it down pat." I took the rod with me in June on a trip to Campbell River, where I fished the Gold and Campbell over three days. It was during that trip that I got a better feel for the new rod and managed some pretty lengthy single Spey casts

with the floating line. One afternoon on the Gold I decided to try some Spey casts with my 10-foot home-made tip looped onto the floating line. It pleased me how well it cast.



Art Lingren, Dean River 1984, with steelhead taken Spey casting a 15 foot Orvis, with a 15-foot homemade tip looped onto a DT 11 floating line. Van Egan photo

For sunk-line fishing, British fly fishers Spey cast a full-sinking double taper line. I did buy a 40-yard full-sinker and it fished well, but I had a different mind set and was thinking about the superb line control I had when fishing my homemade tips looped on a floating line.

The Dean River is a more turbulent and coloured water and to be successful I needed to fish a deep fly with good control. In the early part of the season the river is higher and more coloured and it was then that I was going in the first group to the Totems' camp. I thought I would make longer and heavier tips for that upcoming trip to the Dean. The ten-foot tip weighing 100 grains was made up of 7 feet of lead core and about 1.5 feet of manufactured sinking line spliced to each end. For the Dean River I made up a 15-foot tip consisting of 10 feet of lead core, with a two to three-foot piece of manufactured fly line spiced to each end. That tip weighed about 160 grains. I made two other tips, one by cutting a 30-foot fast-sinking #9 head in half and another made from 10 feet of lead impregnated line. That third tip weighed a whopping 350 grains.

The 15-foot Orvis, combined with Spey casting my home-made tip looped onto the DT 11 floater with the Black GP on the end of a short leader turned out to be a truly deadly combination. Spey casting a double-handed rod with a sink-tip looped onto the end of a floating line was not the norm back then. It was a new idea. When you do something out of the normal there is one final ingredient that is a must in fly fishing if you are to influence others. You can be the best technical caster in the world but unless

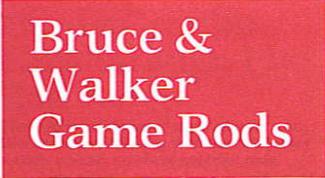
you catch fish no one will pay much attention. Not only did I catch fish, but on my 1984 Dean trip I caught a pile of fish.



Art Lingren, Adrian Cooper, Van Egan and Bob Taylor, Totem Fly Fishers Dean River camp, I (left) was the only Totem to use a two-handed rod during the 1984 season and found it a superb tool for steelhead fishing. One year later every one of the group was sporting a two-handed fly rod.

After putting up camp on July 26th, we started fishing on the 27th and on that day single-Spey casting my new 15-foot homemade tip looped onto the DT 11F line with a Black GP I hooked five steelhead, landing two. On this trip using this setup with its great line control I got the fly into the mouths of over one hundred steelhead and hooked on average over seven fish a day with a high of 13 fish hooked on one day. For the last four days when the river cleared I removed my sink tip and Spey cast just the floating line, doing very well. I account part of my success on that trip to the superb line control I had with the 15-foot Orvis and Spey casting a floating line or a sink tip looped onto a floating line. Also, with Spey casting I didn't need to strip and false cast, both of which takes time. In steelhead fishing, part of your success is determined by the how well you control your line, and thus the fly as it comes across the current, and the amount of time your fly is in the water. One of my companions timed my Spey cast once the line had fished through to when I picked it up, Spey cast it and the fly started fishing again. It was a matter of seconds, while others using the single-handed rod and shooting heads took considerably more time stripping-in the running line, false casting and then shooting the cast. If I remember correctly I was able to fish three casts to their one.

My two-handed Spey casting adventures on the Dean sparked considerable interest within my group of Totems. By the time 1985 rolled around, all had purchased or borrowed two-handers for that trip and our group hooked close to 200 steelhead on that trip. I bought two new Bruce & Walker double handers, one 17'-6" and the other a 12 foot grilse. The long rod cost \$425 and the 12 footer \$250. I almost lost both of them. The rods were too long to ship by regular post so I asked they be sent to the airport in care of Lee Straight. Lee just happened to be going to England on a holiday so I asked if he wouldn't mind bringing the rods back with him. When Lee went to pick up the rods at his airline counter they told him that they almost destroyed them as it was an unsolicited package. Lee managed to sooth the clerk and was able to get the rods and bring them home. I liked both rods; the big one I don't use much any more, but the 12 footer is one of my favourites.





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Carbon Salmon Fly Rods
All with shaped cork handle, reel fittings housed "W" with sliding ring, spigot ferrules, rings tip, special hard; intermediate, snake; butt, Fuji.

S20 Carbon Salmon Fly Rod (special order)
For great anglers on great rivers, this is the supreme fly rod.
It lifts 30 yards plus of floating line with the greatest of ease and on the forward cast it shoots as many more yards as you wish. Then, with the fly fishing at maximum range, the rod gives fully effective control.
Thus, on big fast-flowing rivers, the kind of sport that is only attainable at the extreme performance limits of lesser rods is brought within comfortable reach by the S20.
Lines: 10-12.
Sections: 4.
Retail Price £292.00 **Our Price £248.20**

Bruce Carbon Salmon Fly Rods
General purpose salmon fly rods – floating and sunk line fishing.
Excellent for both overhead and spey casting. Their action and balance are such that there is no problem with the timing – one feels perfectly at home with them in just a few minutes.
Sections: 3.
Length: 15ft, Lines 9-10.
Length: 14ft, Lines 8-10.
Length: 13ft, Lines 7-10.
Length: 12ft, Lines 7-9.

	Retail Price	Our Price
15' Bruce	£189.75	£161.29
14' Bruce	£174.22	£147.99
13' Bruce	£155.25	£131.95
12' Bruce	£151.80	£128.99

Walker 15ft and 14ft Salmon Fly Rods
Built to suit the taste of very powerful casters who enjoy the feeling of very great reserves of strength in a rod, these models are stiffer and have a faster action than the corresponding "Bruce" rods.
Naturally, they are not as versatile when it comes to Summer fishing with finer tackle, but they do make a very light work indeed of coping with the heaviest of weighted flies in the early season.
They are excellent for harling.
Length: 15ft, Lines 10-12, Sections 3.
Retail Price £189.75 **Our Price £161.29**
Length: 14ft, Lines 10-12, Sections 3.
Retail Price £174.22 **Our Price £147.99**

Walker 16ft 6in Salmon Fly Rod
The overall performance of this rod falls very little short of that of the "Walker" 17ft 6in, but it is much easier to handle for those anglers who cannot remain in as regular practice as they would wish.
For most anglers it soon becomes the "everyday rod" for both their Spring and Summer fishing.
Lines: 9-11.
Sections: 4.
Retail Price £227.70 **Our Price £193.55**

Walker 17ft 6in Salmon Fly Rod
Experienced anglers will find that this rod gives them long range water coverage with a very considerable saving in effort – and in time – as compared with the use of shorter rods.
Floating and sunk lines can be used equally well, and the very large flies required for the early Springers and Autumn fishing can be handled with ease.
The rod is superb for Spey casting, yet it will give very fast delivery with overhead casts, thus achieving a high standard of accuracy.
Lines: 9-11.
Sections: 4.
Retail Price £262.20 **Our Price £222.85**

Small Fishery Rod
Similar type of rod to the line cheater but designed basically for reservoir fishing.
Length: 9ft 9in.
Lines: 5-9.
Sections: 2.
Handle: Shaped cork.
Reel fittings: Screw grip.
Ferrules: Spigot.
Rings: Seymo.
Retail Price £100.56 **Our Price £85.45**

The British have been fishing Atlantic salmon with two-handed rods since they began fly fishing for salmon. Part of a single page from a 1985 British angling catalogue advertising two-handed rods. This catalogue offered for sale over two dozen models and makes of two-handed rods.

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16 Apr 85

Mr A J Lingren
Vancouver B C

Dear Mr Lingren,

What a nice surprise to receive your order of 26 March! My heartiest thanks to you. Your own two books are packed with the club order but invoiced separately. Since my catalogue was compiled the publisher raised the price of 14 Ashley-Cooper by £1 (and in fact it is now out of print but I have a few copies left). I'll let you know should the Hodgson or Fred Hill titles come my way.

Hugh has gone back to live in his Cumbrian cottage, which is about 2½ hours driving from here, but for a nice order like this I did not mind making the trip to get them signed and Hugh too was delighted to oblige. He said that he had written to you only that day, but would write again to thank you for your efforts on behalf of his books, which he greatly appreciates. I was admiring the flies which you sent him and which are now framed and occupying a prominent place in his lounge, and he tells me that I am not the only person to have admired them. There is a single example in his flycase, still awaiting immersion. I think that his last trip to the Tweed three weeks ago coincided with water conditions which were unsuitable for flyfishing; he spent the day chest-deep in pretty cold water and has been off-colour ever since. His hand-writing is not always very easy to read, so I hope that you can sort out the various recipients when you receive the books! My last two copies of the 2nd impression at the lower price were inscribed to Messrs Janz and Bird, I think, but that was quite fortuitous and no doubt you'll arrange to strike an average price for the 16 copies. I omitted to send a copy for Bob Taylor because I hope to be able to send a limited in due course; I have been waiting since January for the last few copies but the publisher has been having problems getting them from the binder and I'm still uncertain when they'll reach me. If they fail to materialise, I shall get a copy of the ordinary edition inscribed by Hugh and will send it with a separate invoice.

We have had copious rain for the last few weeks and my local river has generally been too high to fish but at least this water may get some salmon upstream into the stretch which I fish. I have in fact had a couple of brief sessions, using your Black G.P. both times, but so far I have touched nothing. I did make one discovery - that you cannot leave latex chest waders lying unused for 20 years and still expect them not to leak! I hope that your own fishing is more successful and again, my sincerest thanks for your support.

Yours sincerely,



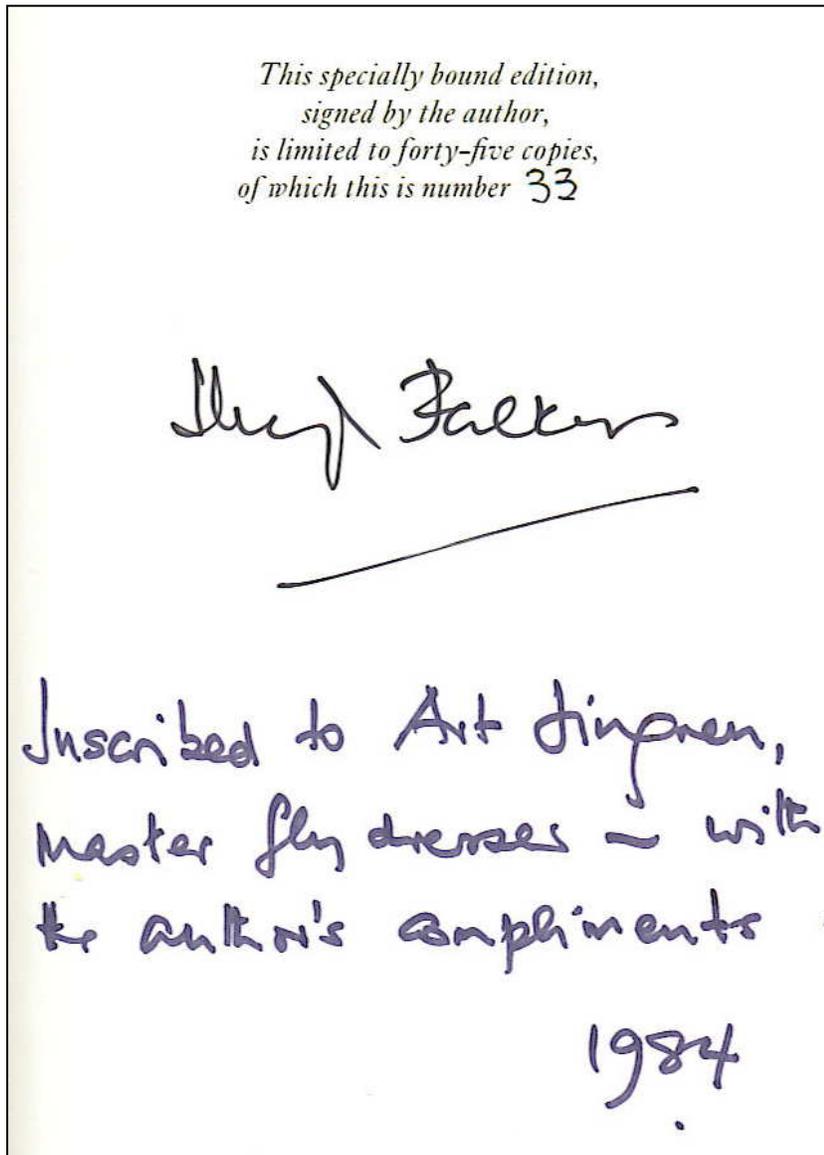
An early 1985 letter from my English book seller, Ron Coleby, that accompanied the invoice for my order of 16 copies of Falkus' Salmon Fishing. Other orders for the same book followed during the year.

In late 1984 through 1985 into 1986 other Totems became interested in the two-handed rods and Spey casting. During late '84 and in '85, two important developments regarding Spey casting took place. In September 1984, Ron Coleby, my English book seller, informed me that Hugh Falkus' new book *Salmon Fishing* had been released. I ordered a copy of the limited edition, a beautifully bound book and only one of 40 for sale and made more special because of Falkus' inscription.

I enjoyed reading the book and recommended it to the Totems. In early 1995 I ordered close to 30 books, mostly for Totems but the odd one went to other steelhead fly

fishers. By this time many Totems had purchased double-handed rods and read Falkus' Spey casting section. In September Bob Taylor, Lee Straight, Adrian Cooper and I tested a number of two-handers on the Stave River. Adrian was interested in buying one so we put lines on and cast the 17'- 6" Bruce & Walker, 15' Orvis, and 16' Hardy. As well, Straight bought along his 13-foot Brayshaw-made bamboo rod. The bamboo rod had quite a different action compared to the graphites. That session went quite well and I thought some Totems may be interested in a similar casting session and I organized the first Speyclave. On October 5, 1985 at 10 am, a dozen or more double-hand rod Spey casting

enthusiasts gathered on the banks of the Stave River below Ruskin Dam and I demonstrated Spey casting the 17'- 6" Bruce & Walker, the 15' Orvis and 12' Bruce & Walker. The Totems who attended the Speyclave brought with them an array of Hardy, Bruce & Walker, and Orvis rods of varying lengths and line sizes and we tested those rods as well.





Not one of my better casts. Art Lingren Spey casting the 17'- 6" Bruce & Walker, September 2, 1985

Months later, in July 1985, Ron Coleby enclosed another note about Falkus, mentioning that he was making a fly casting video-film. Books are sent surface mail so it took some weeks for them to arrive. Coleby's note prompted me to write a letter to Falkus and on October 7, 1985 I wrote:

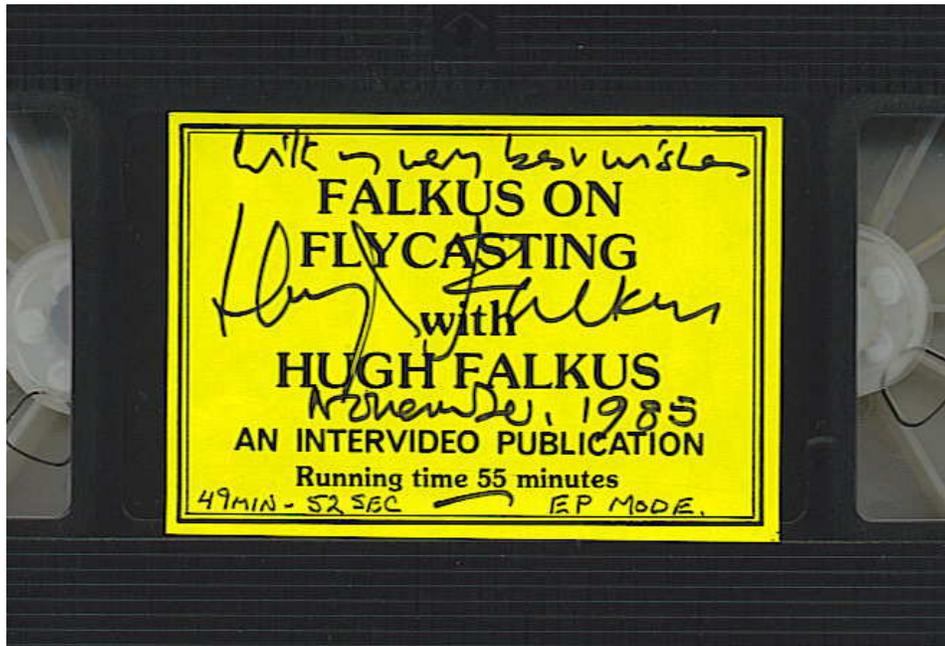
Before I get to the reason for this letter I would like to say that I just reread the fly fishing chapters in *Salmon Fishing* and I really enjoyed them again.

One of the sections that I found particularly interesting was the section dealing with Spey casting. Last year when I went over to double handed rods for my steelhead fishing I managed to teach myself the single spey reasonably well but the double spey puzzled me. Both these casts were virtually unused in the Pacific Northwest, so there was nobody to help me. Anyway, I could not get the double spey right from reading about it in the available books. When your book arrived I found it extremely helpful in describing both of these casts and the pictures really helped. I am now a reasonable spey caster with average casts of 80 to 90 feet with the occasional single spey to 110 feet but I still need some improvement on my timing. Also many of my fellow club members would like to learn this cast and I am not a good teacher, so I should get down now to the reason for this letter.

In one of my past orders with Mr. Coleby, he mentioned that you are doing a video on casting. What I would like to know is the video dealing with spey casting, is it available, and if so who should we contact to order one?

On October 17, Falkus sent me a post card note saying that the video was about Spey casting and that he would send me a copy. The video arrived in mid December but when I put it into my player to watch there was no picture, only Falkus speaking. I

learned that day that the dots-per-inch on British TV screens was different than those in North America. It cost \$150 to get that video converted.



Copies of Falkus' video were a popular item in the fledgling Spey casting community

In 1985 Roger Turner of Turner's Fly Shop brought in Bruce & Walker rods for sale which a number of the Totems had purchased, and others had purchased Hardy and Orvis two-handed rods. We had had our Spey casting method session last October but most of the fellows were interested in learning more about Spey casting and were waiting for the Falkus video. On February 24, 1986, 17 Totem Fly Fishers packed into my recreation room for that first viewing. Many of those who came to the showing acquired their own copy of the video and they in turn shared it with their fishing companions here and in the USA. Falkus' video was one of the most popular items in the fledgling Spey casting community and it more than anything previous helped many learn the single and double Spey casts.

Over the next couple of years or so I lent my tape to a number of people and they circulated it further. Roger Turner for example copied the Falkus video and lent it to customers who were buying two-handed rods. Paul Smith of Parksville in March 1987 writes, "Returned herewith is your tape of "Falkus on Fly Casting". . . I found it most helpful." In response to a letter from Rob Brown thanking me for the Falkus video I replied on Sept. 18, 1987 and said "I am glad the Falkus Spey casting video was of help in your casting." An inquiry from Al Shedd in Crescent City California in October 1987 prompted me to send him a copy of the tape with the note: "Regarding your Spey casting inquiry . . . I think you will find everything you require to learn to Spey cast properly." Mark Walsh on the Queen Charlotte Islands in May 1988 writes that "I appreciate everything that came in the package, especially the Falkus video tape. I have only been able to get out once to practice my Spey casting after watching it, but his instructions are so clear and simple that I feel I've almost got it already."



Bob Taylor, Hugh Falkus and Art Lingren, Sproat Lake, Port Alberni, September 1987

About double handed rods I advised Mark in a May 14, 1988 letter that

I am glad you enjoyed the Falkus tape and that you were able to get a copy of it. If you get a double-hander you must be careful about getting the right action of rod for Spey casting. Most that are around and especially American rods are developed for shooting heads and weight forward lines and tend to be tippy. The Yanks are experimenting with rod tapers and I am sure they will come up with some good rods eventually.

Scientific Anglers has "the right fly line for you", no matter what the conditions.

Floating Lines (Scientific Anglers invented the original modern floating fly line in 1954)

	Available Weights
Air Cel Supreme® - known for its excellence around the world	3 - 13
Air Cel® - standard of the industry	1 - 11
Concept® - designed for the inexperienced fly fisherman	5 - 9

Sinking Lines (Scientific Anglers has the largest selection of sinking lines and they are available in the widest range of distinct sink rates):

Wet Cel I® - sinks slowly, for fishing a few feet below the surface	5 - 11
Wet Cel II® - most versatile of all our sinking lines	4 - 12
Wet Cel Hi-D® - for fishing deep or fast moving water	7 - 11
Wet Cel Hi-Speed Hi-D® - for fishing super deep or extra fast moving water	6 - 15

Floating/Sinking Lines (front section sinks, belly section floats for better control):

Wet Tip® - 10 ft. of fast sinking tip	4 - 10
Wet Tip Hi-D® - 10 ft. of extra fast sinking tip	5 - 13
Wet Belly Hi-D® - 20 ft. of extra fast sinking tip	7 - 10
Wet Head Hi-D® - 30 ft. of extra fast sinking tip	7 - 10

Intermediate (Wet Cel® brand, slowest sinking line made, or it floats if dressed)

Wet Cel®	5 - 13
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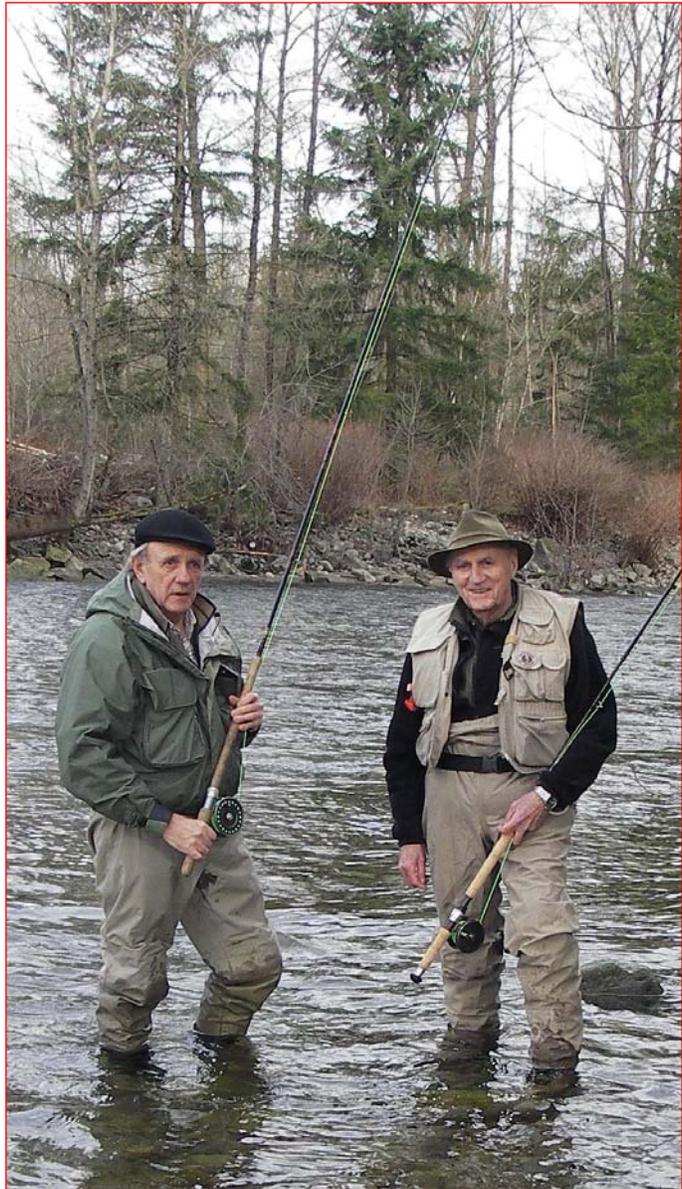
In issue #77, Winter 1986, of the *Totem Topics* I wrote a piece on two-handed rods including a brief history and some suggestions on what one should look for when buying a two-handed rod to be used for Spey casting.

Manufacturers didn't include sink rates on their packaging

A couple of other things that I was doing in late 1985 and into 1986, both relative to the use of two handed rod and Spey

casting, involved line sink rates and test-casting lines. In a 4” diameter clear plastic tube about four feet long and using a stop watch I timed a 2-inch piece of line as it sunk in a horizontal position a certain distance. I did this for a number of lines with different densities. From those measurements I determined the line’s sink rate. With that information I made up different sink tips varying from those that sank very slowly to those that sank up to 6 inches per second.

Line sink rate wasn’t readily available on the manufacturer’s packaging whereas I wanted to know line sink rates so I could make a judgment on the river as to what sink-tip to put on to match river flow. As well, I weighed all my sink tips using a powder scale. With my 15’ Orvis and 17 1/2’ Bruce & Walker and looping the tip on a #11 DT 40 yard line I could cast some fairly heavy tips, up to 375 grains. The really heavy ones were difficult and I preferred the tips of about 200 grains and less. One nice thing about the Hardy double taper salmon lines is that I could cast my sink tip looped onto the line without cutting the taper back. Cutting the taper off lines made for the North American market was a common practice starting around 1985. Steelhead fly fishers preferred # 8 or 9 lines for shooting. The limber North American rods casting the softer, lighter lines just didn’t Spey cast well with all but the lightest tips. I couldn’t understand why people would butcher an expensive DT line when you could buy a level line for 1/3 the cost. By cutting back the taper, you end up with basically a level line not much different than the 9 level I used with single-handed rod back in 1983. I altered my 15 foot homemade tip and made it 16 feet long, weighing 185 grains. It had a sink rate of about 5” per second and it or my 10 foot homemade was my choice of tip over the next few years.



Art Lingren & Bob Taylor trying out some Scientific Angler lines, February, 2006

I remember a day in March 1986 on the Squamish River when Bob Taylor and I tested lines and sink tips. The first thing we did was to determine the run’s current speed. After marking a measured distance with my long tape and using a stop

watch we recorded the times it took a stick to float a certain distance. With that information I calculated the water's surface velocity. We then measured and recorded length of casts with floating line with and without sink tips looped on the DT line and, as well, we test-cast and determined the depth that sink-tips and my 40 yard Hardy full sinking fly line fished in that particular current speed. We choose a run with a flow that steelhead prefer. I would cast the line with varying lengths and weights of sink tips and sink rates and Bob would be downstream with a marked staff. I positioned Bob so that the hook point would catch on the gauge as the fly swam by. Then we gently removed the gauge with the hook embedded in the wood and Bob would tell me the reading. I summarized the information and shared it with fishing friends. One such letter to Rob Brown in September 1987 provides a good example of the type of information shared:

Regarding lines, I use a full forty yard type two sinking line some of the time. It works okay but the depth that the line fishes in a given current is directly proportional to the amount of line one has out.

For most of my sunk-line fishing I use home-made sink tips of 10 to 16 feet in length. These sink tips vary. Some are from cutting shooting heads in half, to combination tips consisting of lead core with pieces of sinking line attached to each end. The best sinking one, which I handle easily looped onto the end of a DT11F Hardy line and Spey cast, is constructed of 4 feet of extra fast sinking line, ten feet of 12 grain/ft plastic-coated lead core and 2 ft of #8 or 9 Hi-Speed-HiD, all spliced together. The loop [to attach to the floater] is at the extra-fast sinking end and the total weight is about 160 grains. I make a similar 10 foot tip with 2 ft, 6ft and 2 ft respectively of the above lines.

This 10 foot tip when looped on to the end of a DT11F in a current of 2mph will fish at a depth of 3.5 ft. This is the same depth that you get when you have 60 ft of an extra fast full sinking Hardy line. The line control with the floater/sink tip is superb because you can mend all the floating section of line. This is what I referred to as the modified Alexander Grant system. He looped different diameter sections of sinking lines together to get the fly down to the depth he wanted. His exploits are detailed in Jock Scott's book *Fine and Far Off* (1952).

A few of the sink tips I tested and used in the early to mid-1980s

This system of multi-tips with different sink rates and weights that I

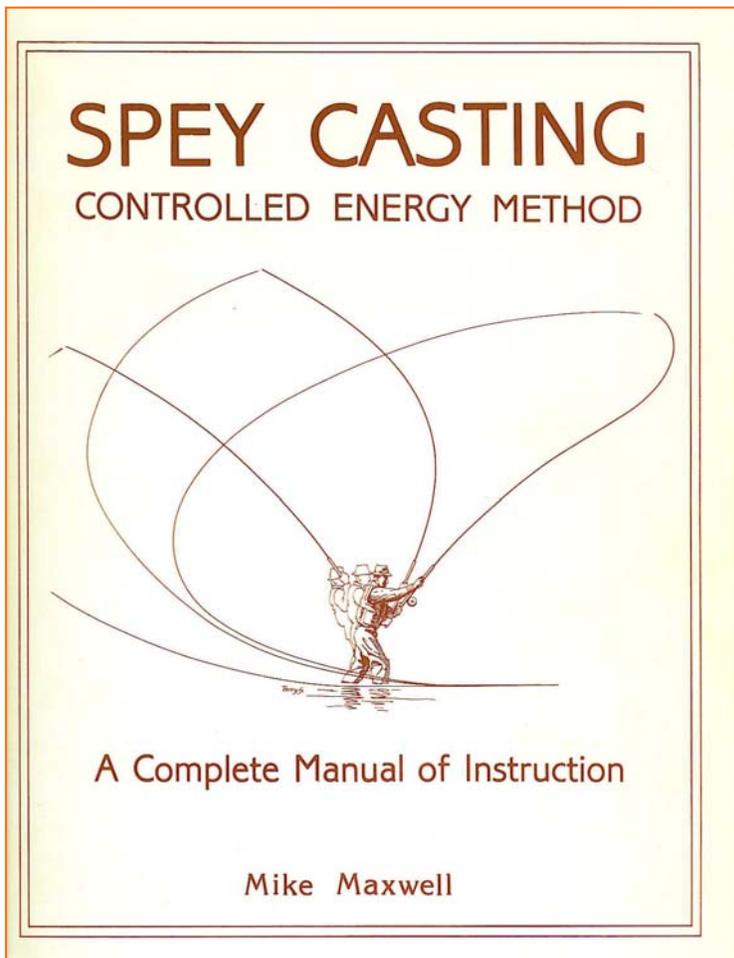


and a few others produced in the early and mid-1980s was the forerunner of the multi-tip lines that companies produced later in the 1990s. I was glad, however, when in the 1990s the multi-tip lines came out with a line that had a sink rate of six inches per second. I didn't need to make my own.

Two-handed rods were expensive tools back in the mid-1980s and when you pay four or so hundred dollars you expect that they will last for some time. Prices have increased some over the past 20 years and brand-name two-handed rods now come with a price tag in the \$500 to \$1000 range. It wasn't long after I got Jerry's 15-foot Orvis—a matter of months—when I broke the top section. It is common in Spey casting for joints to work loose, and that feature, combined with the stresses put on a rod with Spey casting, can often result in rod breakage. Fortunately, Wintle had bought the Orvis at Ruddick's, which was an Orvis shop, and the rod had a life-time guarantee against breakage. It took some months for me to get a replacement tip and I used a Scottish-made Daiwa that Bob Taylor had borrowed from Don Traeger for part of the season on the Thompson until the replacement tip came in November 1984. Others who had purchased Bruce & Walker rods in 1985 were having breakage problems as well. In March 1986 after almost a year's use a crack appeared near the handle of my 17'-6" Bruce and Walker. It shattered one day on the Dean as I struggled to send a Spey cast into a strong upstream wind. I wrote a letter to Bruce & Walker about the breakages and specifically asked if casting sink-tips attached to a floater was too hard on the rods. In their September 30, 1986 response they wrote:

We well remember the rods with broken male spigots and Mr. Walker telephoned Turners Fly & Tackle Shop to explain that in his opinion, the rods had been overworked for the job which they were originally designed for. The 16' 6" rods are for floating line 10 Spey casting and summer rods. For shooting head sunk line and heavy tube flies, the Expert range of 16', 17' and 18' rods are the best. For heavy Spey casting, the 17'6" is most popular or the Expert 16', Walker 15' or Norway 15'.

From Falkus' video we learned that we should tape the joints. Breakage is often a result of loose joints and we were more careful after getting the Bruce & Walker letter about casting heavy tips. For example, with the replacement 17'-6" or my other two-handers I didn't try Spey casting a 350 grain tip on the end of my floating line anymore. In the ensuing 20 years I have broken one more two-handed rod, my 12 foot Bruce & Walker. Fortunately, it cracked on the spigot housing and the crack ran to the first rod binding a couple of inches away. I managed to get the spigot out, cut the tube down to the binding and re-epoxy the spigot. I lost 2 to 3 inches in length of that rod. It still is a lovely tool and one of my favourites. However, even today two-handed rod breakage is fairly common.

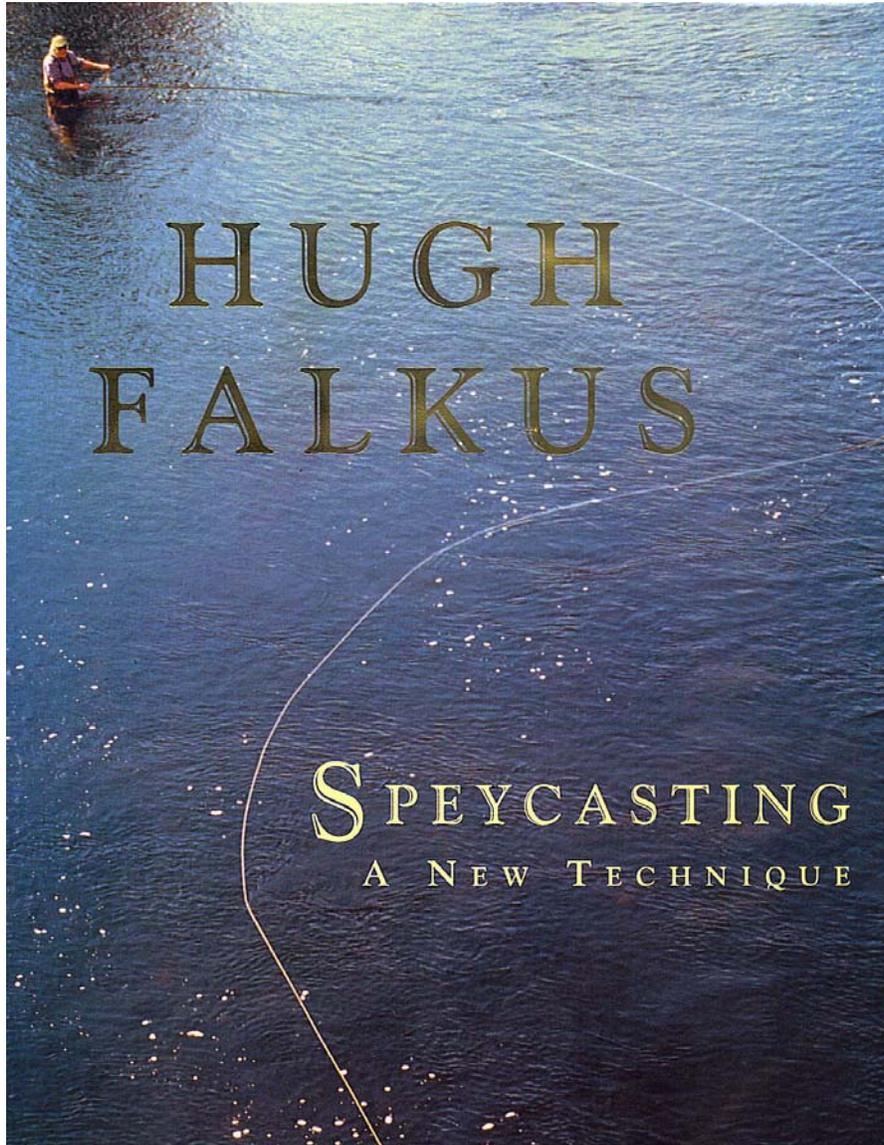


In 1987 Mike Maxwell produced the first North American Spey casting video with accompanying instruction manual—*Spey Casting: Controlled Energy Method*. Maxwell was the only professional North American casting instructor offering lessons in Spey casting in the late 1980s. He taught a number of steelhead fly fishers south of the border how to Spey cast the big rods and Maxwell attended the FFF Conclave in August each year where he demonstrated Spey casting to a mostly American audience. Because of that I refer to Mike as the American Connection. Maxwell passed away on September 30, 2004 but from 1987, when his first instruction manual was released, he produced two more books on Spey

casting—*The Art and Science of Spey fishing* and *Advanced Spey fishing*. Maxwell also developed two-handed rods, but his early rods were typical of the North American rods designed for the practices of the day. They certainly didn't have the backbone for the brawling streams of British Columbia that I fish, but were perhaps satisfactory for the more placid waters of the Bulkley River where Maxwell did most of his fishing. Mike was an early promoter of the two-handed rod and Spey casting; however, because he was so opinionated, he often didn't endear himself to others in the fly fishing community.

By the early 1990s, during the evolution of double-handed rod use and the Spey casting community, there was considerable experimenting going on with rods and lines. Sage came out with their 14-foot 9140 about 1990. Too, many fly fishers were experimenting with lines and sink tips. From the mid-1980s on word spread through the Pacific Northwest fly fishing community about the "new" Spey cast being used in British Columbia. The cast was not "new" to B.C. for those few fly fishers who were familiar with B.C.'s angling history but it was certainly "new" south of the border. There was a sharing of information with some Americans who fished the Dean and Thompson rivers, but for many of our friends south of the border who didn't visit B.C. or have easy access to things British and thus a sound schooling in the mechanics of two-handed rods and Spey casting, they developed whippy rods and a bastardized system of Spey casting using a short belly line and shooting the running line. In British Columbia we continued being

true to our British roots and beholden to anglers such as Hugh Falkus and Alexander Grant. Falkus' books and casting video laid a sound foundation in the Spey casting community, and for that we thank him.

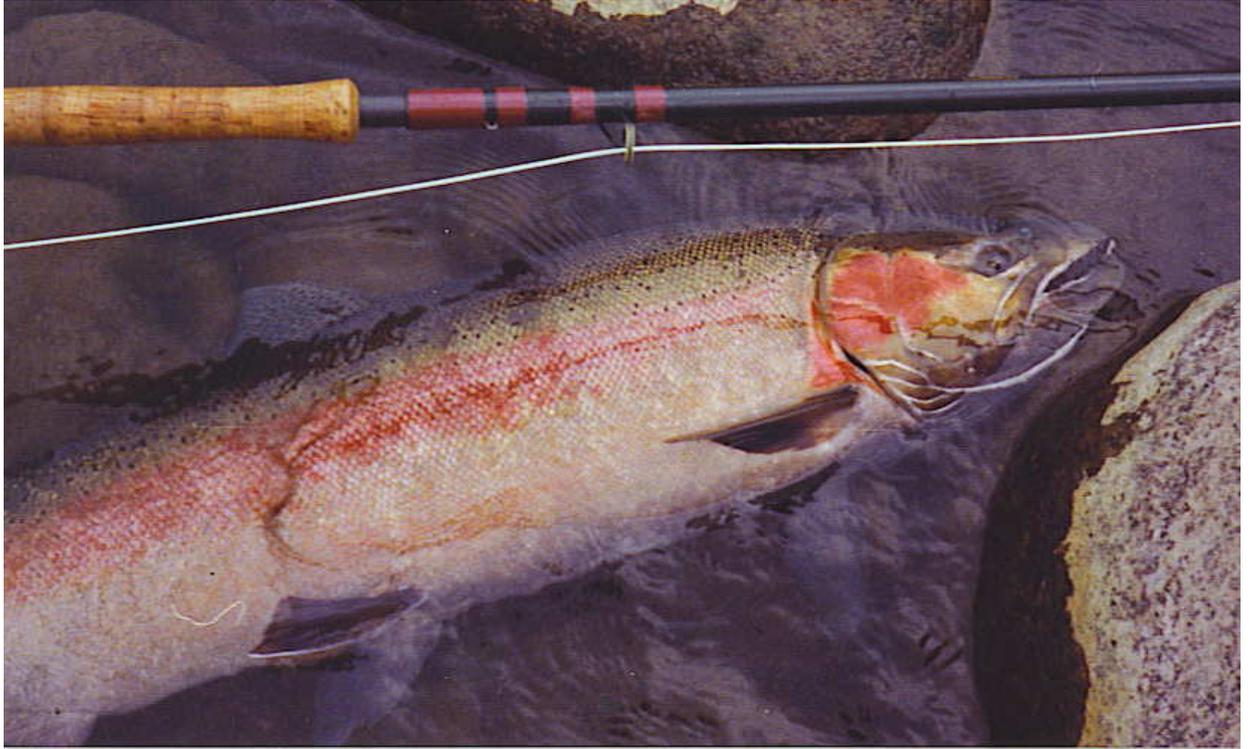


In 1994 with the publication of *Speycasting*, Falkus summarized his contributions to and achievements in Speycasting.

Other than to a very few who had read Jock Scott's book *Fine and Far Off*, Alexander Grant was unknown to the Pacific Northwest Spey casting community. In 1991 I wrote a short piece on a single taper line Bob Taylor made in which I introduced Alexander Grant and his amazing casts to a larger audience. Part of what Bob did with his line and others did as well on lines resulted in the manufacture of the long belly Spey lines. That article was published in issue 94, Spring 1992 of the *Totem Topics* and as well in issue 52, Summer, of *Fly Lines*.

I am repeating the relative part here as it is a good example of the experimenting that went on around that time.

"That's a pretty good cast" said a familiar voice from behind. "Oh, Hi Jerry. Yes, it's not bad, I'm trying a new line designed and made by Bob Taylor. I have almost the whole line out, just about 40 yards, and it's going into this Thompson River wind very well, too." I said to Jerry Wintle. Fishing was slow on that trip but, later in the week, I christened Bob's new line with a 39-inch male steelhead.



The Super Steelhead Single Taper - SSST- line that Bob made is not a new concept. Alexander Grant of Britain was using something similar when making those magnificent 40, 50 and 60-yard switch casts with his Grant Vibration rods and single-taper lines around the end of the 19th century. Grant's exploits with rod and reel for Atlantic salmon are detailed in Jock Scott's 1952 book... *Fine and Far Off*.

Bob remembers in the 1950s, up on the Coquihalla River, school teacher Bill Cunliffe talking about his preference for a single-taper line, and we have often speculated on how single-taper lines might cast with our double-handed fly rods. Unfortunately, none is commercially available. Earlier in 1991, when Taylor was persuading the Scientific Anglers firm to donate fly lines for the Totems' casting school, he asked them about making a single-taper, 40 yard line, but they were loath to manufacture an unproven design. They did give the club numerous lines for our casting school and also offered Bob numerous double-taper lines, in sizes 6 to 12, and suggested that he could make his own. Bob took them up on their offer and, like Grant, determined the tapered sections with a micrometer and spliced them together, producing a continuous-tapered fly line. Bob's new single-taper line was about forty yards long but Grant's, to make those long casts he was famous for, were much longer. Bob could continue his taper if necessary but he would need stouter lines. Also, with the less potent double-handed rods we now have, few anglers can Spey or overhead-cast 40 yards, anyway.

On our recent Thompson River trip, because the SSST line cast so easily on my 17-1/2 foot Bruce and Walker rod, I used the line most of the week. We did plan on trying the line on other rods to see how it worked with them but Taylor or Rob Brown of Terrace, -who was with us, could not wrestle the line away from me. I did try the new single-taper with a 10 foot sink-tip looped to the end, and it worked all right, but,

because the end of the line is a thin 0.040 inches in diameter, there, at times, were energy transfer, timing and piling up difficulties. Taylor has already worked out that problem. Again like Grant, he plans on terminating the line taper at around 0.055 diameter, and having the last tapered section as a loop-on. That will permit the use of heavier sink-tips and help eliminate the pile-ups that I had with the sink-tip on the prototype. When one wants to use a finer floating line presentation, all one has to do is substitute the looped-on sink-tip for the finer floating section and he's away to the races.

In early December Taylor and I tested the line on three other double-handed fly rods. The line cast well on the 15 and 13-1/2 foot Orvis and the 12 foot Bruce and Walker. Even though we kept on running out of river and, at times, hanging up the line on the other side of the Seymour River, we managed casts of about 90 feet for the 15 foot Orvis, 80 feet for the 13-1/2 foot Orvis and 70 feet for the 12 foot Bruce and Walker. With these tests we proved what we thought, that the same line suits rods of varying weights. Spey-casting distance is a function of rod strength and length.

The mid-to-late 1980s into the early 1990s can be considered the age of discovery and laying a foundation for the Pacific Northwest two-handed rod and Spey casting community. British Columbia is the birthplace of the re-introduction of Spey casting in the Pacific Northwest.

In the last 10 to 15 years, most who have taken up the big rods and learned to Spey cast refer to all two-handed rods as Spey rods. That usage of that term negates nearly 150 years of history where two-handed rods were called salmon and two-handed rods with some suitable for Spey casting. Not much can be done about this misuse of term—the damage is done—however those who call a two-handed rod a Spey rod and use the term Spey fishing display disrespect and an utter lack of knowledge or an appreciation for the rich history of two-handed-rod fly fishing and the Spey cast.

Now when one of these latter-day two-handed rod fly fishers sees a picture of pre-1980s fly fishers with a two-hander they assume that the fly fisher uses that rod to Spey cast. Not true. Spey casting was not commonly practiced by the average two-handed rod fly fisher. In the opening scenes on his 1985 video *Falkus on Casting*, Hugh Falkus shows a typical fly fisher of the day overhead casting and in the introductory remarks Falkus says that “It’s a fact most anglers start by learning the overhead cast and almost invariably use it on all of their fly fishing.” The overhead cast was the staple cast and few Spey cast. Falkus was determined to do something about that and the remainder of the video is about Spey casting.

The 1990s was the decade where American rods and lines took over the two-handed rod and Spey-casting line markets. Through the 1990s to today, fly shops and rod manufactures sponsored Spey casting clinics. Experts like Derek Brown, from England, made a living traveling around demonstrating and teaching two-handed rod Spey casting techniques. I still have my 15-foot Orvis, which I use occasionally for heavy work. My two Bruce & Walkers rods bought in 1985: the 17’-6” Bruce & Walker sits on the rod rack mostly, the 12-foot Bruce & Walker grilse sees use each year on the smaller Skeena system rivers and remains my favourite two-hander. In 2001 I spent six weeks of helicopter-exploring remote waters along BC’s mid-coast and the sponsor gave me a 14-foot Sage 9140 graphite III rod, which is my staple two-hander for fishing rivers such as the Skeena and Thompson. In 2005 I bought a 13-foot Cortland two-hander from Jim

Butler of the Nanika Fly Shop in Smithers. I bought it because it broke down into five pieces, was good for travel on airplanes and was cheap compared to the big name rod makers.



Bob Taylor, Seymour River, February 2006 trying out a Scientific Angler mid-Spey on 13'-6 Sage

Today we have a huge selection of two-handed rods from which to choose, as well as some very good lines. During the Dean trip in 2005, Bob Taylor brought a number of Sage rods to try. He was testing a 13 ½-foot Sage 7/8 rod with the 7/8 Scientific Angler mid Spey line and asked me to give it a few casts. I had not used either rod or line before but within seconds I was single Spey casting 75 to 85 feet. With that

line and rod I made some of the nicest Spey casts I have ever made. Taylor made the comment that he wished he had a video camera to get a record of the testing. The rod and line worked great together but that is only one example of the excellent equipment we have available today. However, even with all the technological advances in designing rods with space-age materials and some great lines none of today's great Spey casters is the equal to the greatest caster of all time, Alexander Grant. On page 96 of *Fine and Far Off*, Jock Scott recorded a summary which correlated Grant's casts to rod length, with the proviso that a taller man should be able to get more distance.

prior to commencing the cast. That is a definite rule; so much so that Mr. Grant found by experience that certain lengths of rod would cast to distances which bore a relation to the rod-length. This ratio is 3 yards of line to each foot of rod—assuming that the line and rod suit each other. His table of distances therefore works out at:—

13-foot rod—	32 yards cast.
14- " "	—35 " "
15- " "	—38 " "
16- " "	—41 " "
17- " "	—44 " "
18- " "	—47 " "
19- " "	—50 " "
20- " "	—53 " "

It must distinctly be understood—although I do not expect to be believed by all my readers—that these figures represent the lengths of line which can comfortably be picked up and thrown, without shooting. A tall man will exceed these figures, and if more force is used, greater distance will result. As an instance, when Mr. Grant cast on the Thames in the 'nineties, and used an 18-footer, he reached 56 yards, as measured by the late Mr. R. B. Marston and other judges, and recorded in the *Fishing Gazette*. On this occasion Mr. Grant shot no line at all; he picked up and threw the entire 56 yards in one effort. Consider-

Scott's table that correlates Grant's rod length to yards cast.

For the aspiring Spey caster Grant set a high standard which few anglers can expect to emulate or surpass. Consequently,

there are some present-day competition casters who are skeptical of Alexander Grant casting abilities. Back when he was making those enormous casts there were doubters, even then. To get a better idea of how Grant performed those casts you need to read *Fine & Far Off*. There are some things that Grant did that assisted him in making those tremendous casts:

1. He designed and built his own rods so that he got the action he wanted. I expect the weight of those old Greenheart rods too has something to do in transfer of momentum from rod to line and a 21-footer must have weighed quite a bit.
2. He designed and built his own lines and preferred and found no other line performed better than a square plaited line. Grant tapered his line from tip to butt in one long single taper and he looped on sections of line to refine the taper to suit fly size, i.e., for small flies of summer the line had the finest taper.
3. One other thing and I am not sure how it helped his casting but his line did not float. It didn't sink far, but it did sink, and Grant was able to rip the line from the water and bring the line around and cast in a single motion and without shooting line.



Two-handed rod enthusiasts getting instruction from Dana Stern, Feb. 5, 2006, Peg Leg Bar

About Grant's longest cast, the controversy over it and Grant's not-told secrets, Scott writes:

This took place on the river Ness in the year 1895, when Mr. Grant was in his prime. Mr. Corballis, a magistrate who then resided at Moniack Castle, Beaulieu, organised a casting competition in which Mr. Grant and other local experts took part. Mr. Corballis was a keen sportsman, and a sporting author of some repute, his book *Forty-five Years' Sport* being his best-known work; and he was anxious to see what the local talent could produce in the way of a long cast. The competitors stood in an anchored boat and cast straight downstream alongside a measuring board supported by stakes driven into the river bed. Mr. Corballis and his fellow-judges stood by to mark the fall of the fly. Mr. Grant's chief rival, using a 21-foot rod, switch-cast the great distance of 56 yards—two yards longer than the American overhead cast record of recent years. Then came Mr. Grant's

turn. The boat was anchored in a fair stream, of the kind which makes ideal salmon water. Mr. Grant also used a 21-foot rod, and proceeded to make hay of his opponent's figures. His longest cast was the truly colossal distance of 65 yards, which sounds like a bait-casting event. Had I not seen Mr. Grant cast, and were I not in a position to know that the judges were men of unimpeachable accuracy, I would not believe it. This cast, incidentally, is about 20 yards longer than the present switch-cast record, and 11 yards longer than the present overhead cast record. I do not suppose it will ever be beaten. It should be remembered that no line was shot; the entire 65 yards were picked up and thrown. It is, no doubt, possible that some caster, by shooting a tremendous length, may equal the feat, but I very much doubt if any man ever will pick off the water and throw an equal length of line with a salmon fly at the end thereof.



Aaron Goodis, demonstrating two-handed rod casting to enthusiasts on April 15, 2006 at Peg Leg Bar

Mr. Grant's opponents did their best to discredit his achievements, but the facts are indisputable. For some time after the event, there was an acrimonious correspondence in the sporting press, and much ink was spilt. However, such controversies do not interest me in the slightest, as I am not very keen on records. What I am interested in is fishing, and as a long caster under fishing conditions Mr. Grant stands absolutely alone, whether he is or is not the world's record holder, about which he cares not a straw.

There are a few more tips in connection with this cast, but I think that I have said enough; why should one tell everything which one has learned? In this connection I am reminded of one of Mr. Grant's pet stories. He was casting on the Ness, and showing the late Lord Zetland how it was done. While he was busy casting an enormous line, an old Invernessian, a well-known and rather pawky old character, passed by. Glancing at the tremendous line ripping across the water, he cried, without breaking his step, "My gosh, what a throw! Tell him naething; tell him naething!" and continued on his way!

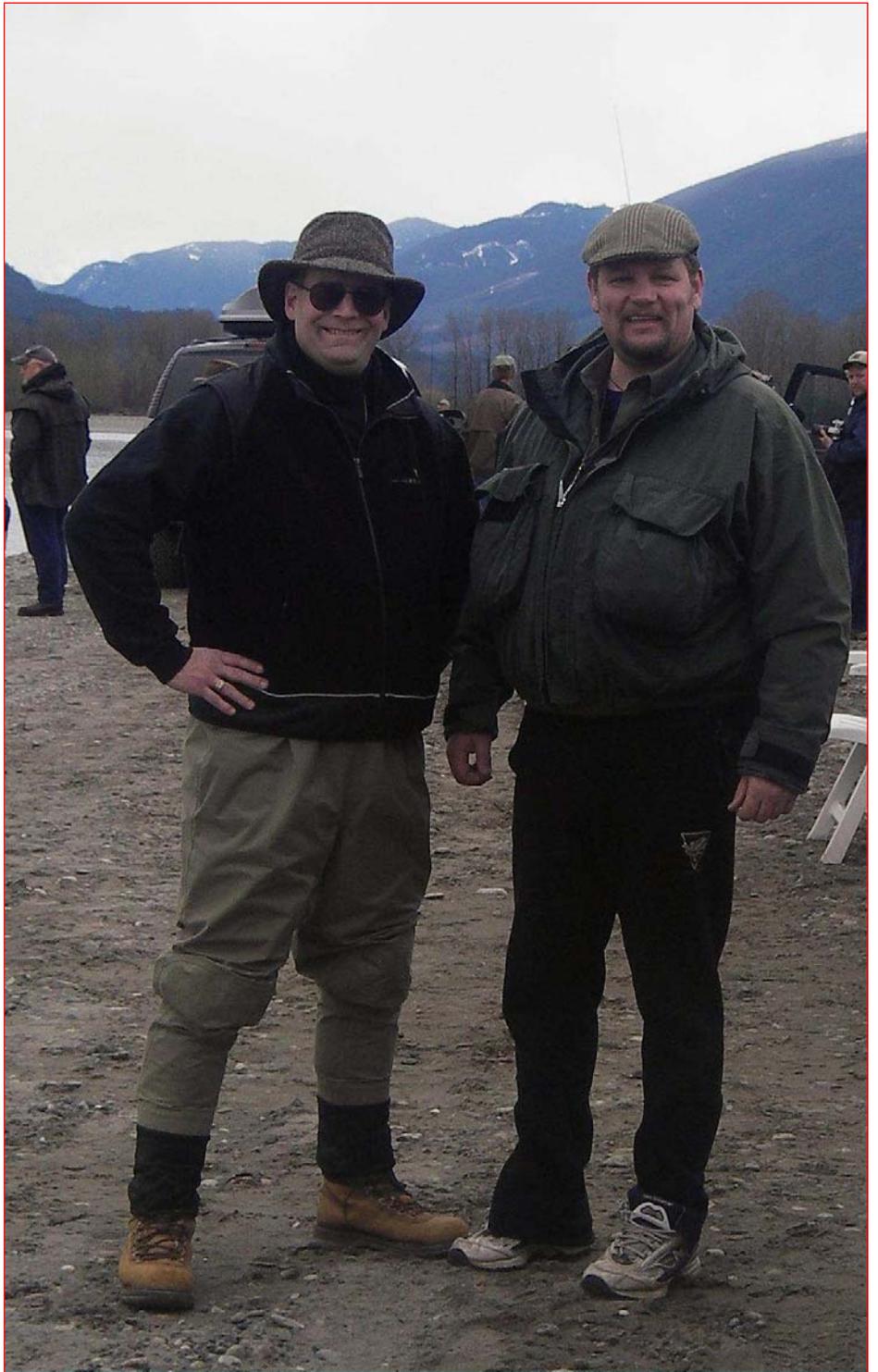
Even with technological superior equipment in the hands of some good casters they can't believe that they can't surpass his 65 yard cast. Over ½ century later Scott's early 1950's prediction came true. Scott said that perhaps someone by shooting tremendous length of line may surpass Grant's amazing cast. A British angler, Scott MacKenzie, last

year managed to cast 66 yards but to get that distance he had to Spey cast and shoot line. Not telling all his secrets, Alexander Grant went to his grave and remains the undisputed champion with 65 yards picked up and cast without shooting.

Today, flyfishers with the big rods dominate the steelhead streams of the Pacific Northwest. In the last couple of years other books have been published on Spey casting. As well there are many of the younger generation of fly fishers who excel in the use of two-handed rods and Spey casting. Dana Stern is one of many and his love of steelhead and Spey casting lead Dana to develop the *Spey Pages* and *Spey Clave* websites, now widely regarded as the most comprehensive resources for two-handed fly rod enthusiasts on the internet. Dana is also a FFF certified fly-casting instructor who teaches and demonstrates Spey casting across Canada and the United States. For current information on what is going on in the two-handed rod and Spey casting community visit

<http://www.speypages.com>

Dana Stern (L) and Tyler Kushnir both masters with the two-handed rod





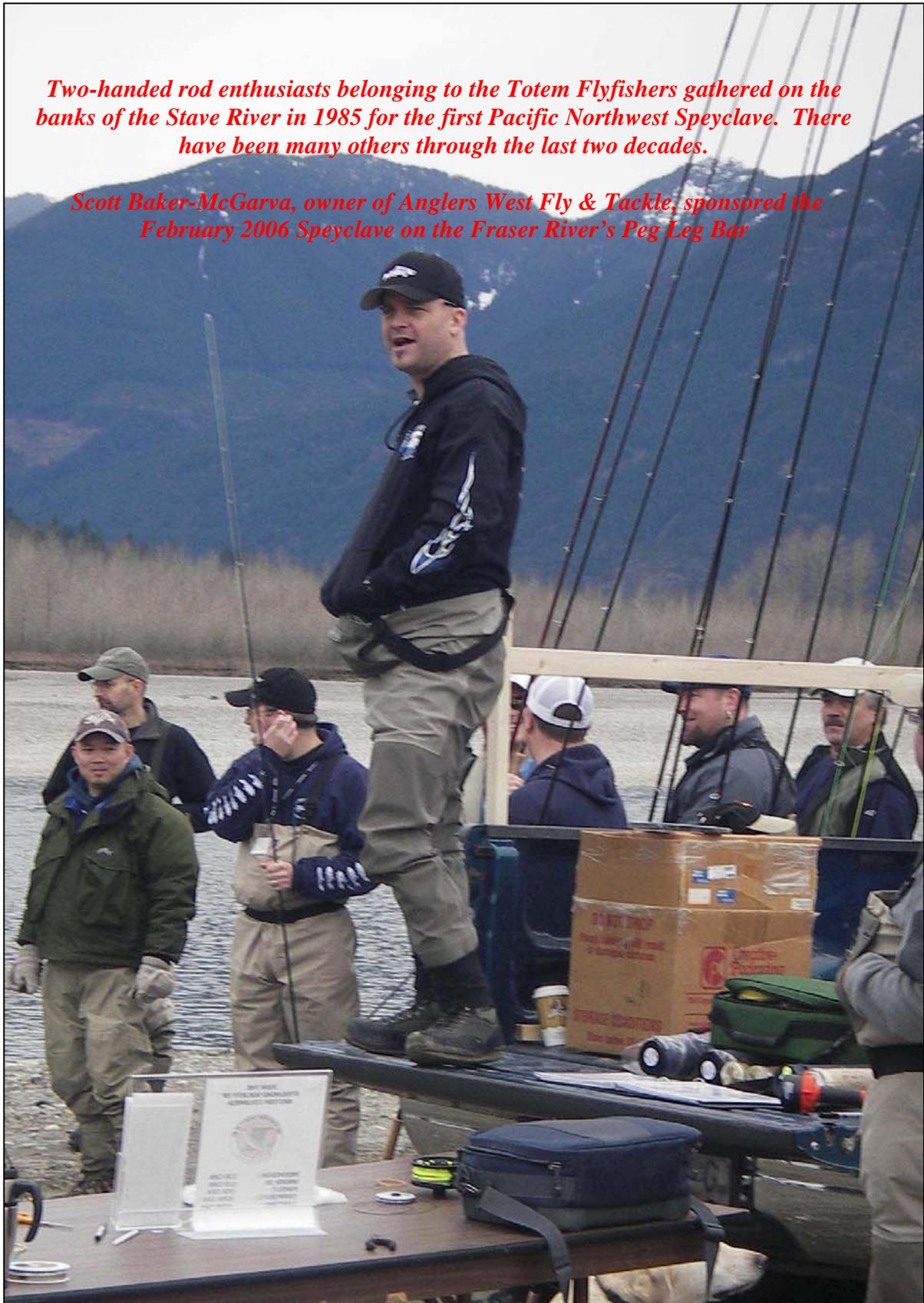
Peter Morrison has been the Sage rod representative in British Columbia for many years.

Art Lingren with a nice Dean River chinook caught using a Sage 9140 two-handed rod



Two-handed rod enthusiasts belonging to the Totem Flyfishers gathered on the banks of the Stave River in 1985 for the first Pacific Northwest Speyclave. There have been many others through the last two decades.

Scott Baker-McGarva, owner of Anglers West Fly & Tackle, sponsored the February 2006 Speyclave on the Fraser River's Peg Leg Bar



Aaron Goodis of MY Flyshop in Vancouver demonstrated Spey Casting at MY Fly Shops Speyclave on April 15, 2006 on the Fraser River's Peg Leg Bar

