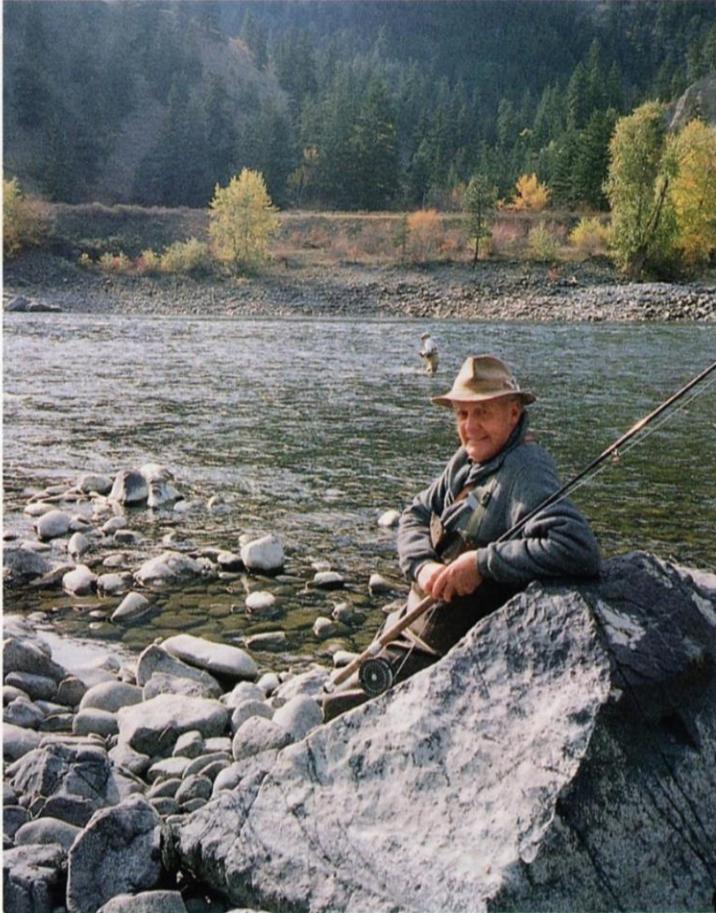


Jerry Wintle--Legendary British Columbia Steelhead Fly Fisherman Died January 22, 2016

AJL Facebook Post January 23, 2016

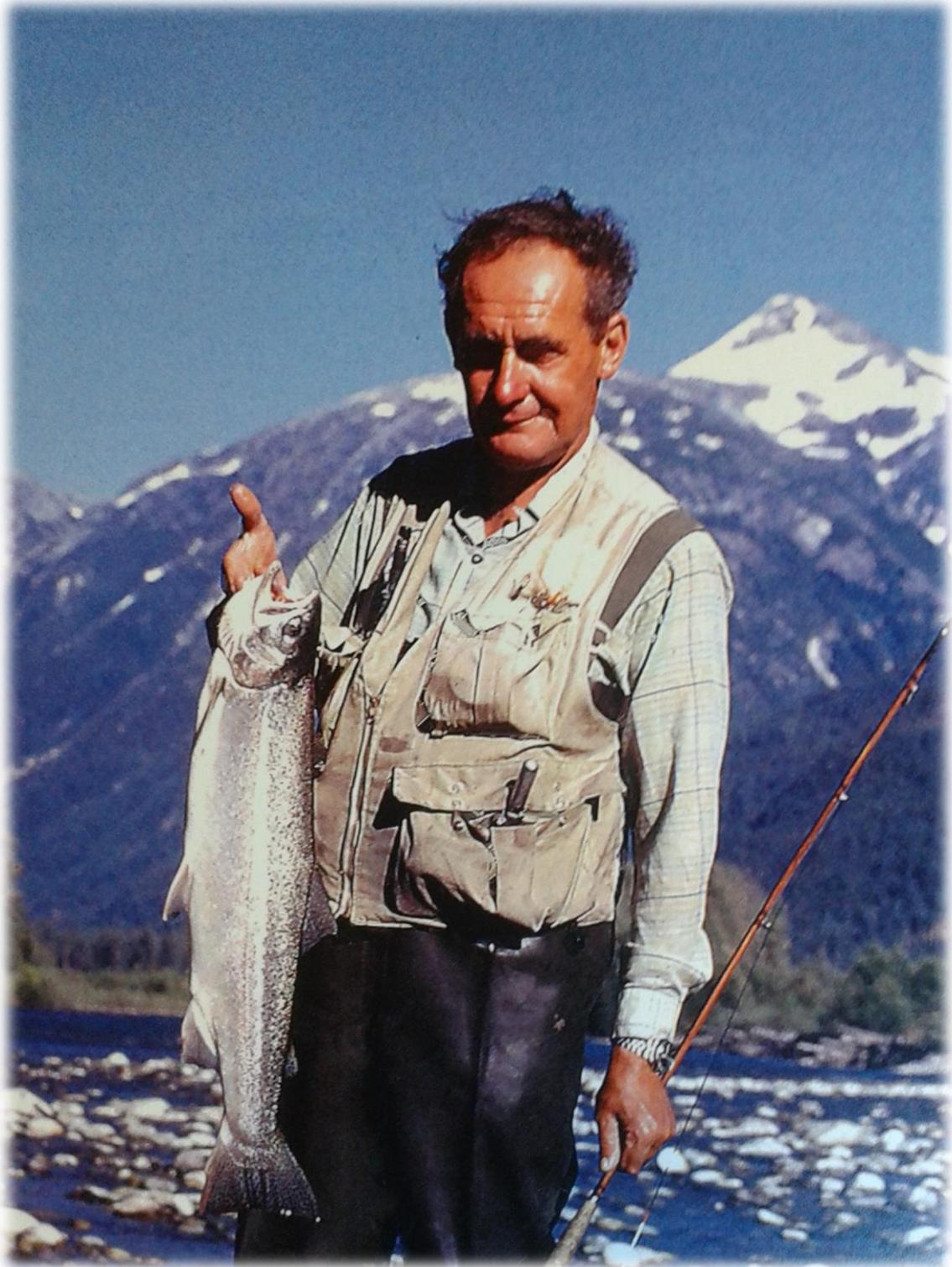
Jerry Wintle waits his turn while partner, Dave Winters, fishes the Big Horn Pool. These two ardent fishers popularized the floating-line technique on the Thompson in the early 1970s.



I met Jerry Wintle and his wife Gene on the Dean River in 1983. I was a little shy about meeting a BC steelhead legend. This was my first trip to the Dean and I was up fishing the Fir Pool in the early part of the trip and I hooked a steelhead but before I left I was adjusting backing and a new DT fly line on my Hardy St. John and after a few attempts where I had to remove the line cut some backing, put line on I thought why am I knotting backing to line when I have to remove it to do another adjustment. I must have got distracted and as this first Dean steelhead took out line I soon found out that I had forget to knot the backing to fly line and I was dismayed as my brand new fly line slithered through the rod guides and into the river. I had another spool with sink tip line so I switched over to that and carried on fishing. In the meantime an hour or so later, Jerry was sitting in his camp about ½ mile downstream watching the river flow by and saw a floating fly line and

managed to wade out grab it and to his surprise there was a steelhead on the end of the line which he landed and released. He gave me my line back but insisted on keeping the Green-butt Black fly that I had hooked the fish on. He paid me a real compliment when he said that the sparsely dressed green-butt Black was ideal for floating line fishing.

I have included words about Jerry in my Thompson River Journal (1994), Fly Patterns of British Columbia (1996), Dean River Journal (2000) and Famous British Columbia Fly-Fishing Waters (2002). In the latter book I summarized Jerry's steelheading in The Capilano River chapter. I have included the Wintle paragraphs in this post. It was on the Cap where he started his steelhead fishing at the age of 12 in 1942. He had just turned 86 in December of 2015. Jerry and Gene were fixtures at Barrett Station on the Bulkley in September and I want to thank some of the other guys for the pictures of Jerry.



A younger Jerry on the Squamish River. Charlie Brumwell likes to tell me the story of Jerry catching Squamish winter runs in the spots where gear fishermen stood after they waded downstream



Jerry and I enjoying a glass of wine at Barrett Station on the Bulkley. I usually tried to stop by and visit the gang here on my way home from my Skeena trip. Jerry and Gene were welcoming hosts.



When the salmonberries are ripe, the summer-runs are in the Upper Capilano.

over half of the 20th century, the Capilano River reigned supreme as a fly-fisher's dream. But it was the runs of steelhead, particularly the summer-runs, that made it renowned and many anglers were christened into the world of steelhead fly-fishing by Capilano summer-runs. Jerry Wintle is one of the most respected and well-known steelhead fly-fishers in the Pacific Northwest. He cut his teeth on Capilano summer-runs.

Jerry, an east-end Vancouver lad, was born in December 1930. He started to fish for steelhead at the age of 12. He vividly recalls his first encounter with this grand gamefish, and says:

I rode my bike over to the Capilano River's Salmon Pool, armed with an old, brittle, greenheart rod my grandfather had found in his attic, and it was with that old, dried-out rod, a poorly lubricated reel and a wooden float and worm that I hooked one of those big summer-runs.

When the fish took, I leaned into the rod. The fish took off and this old, unrolled Nottingham reel froze solid. I ended up holding a rod that had shattered into three pieces.

Wintle took up fly-fishing early in his fishing career and stuck to it, even though he grew up in an era where most fishermen took the easy way and spin- or float-fished. Wintle started fly-fishing in the early 1950s, and caught his first fly-caught steelhead in Campbell River's Line Fence Pool in front of Roderick Haig-Brown's home.

Already adept at finding steelhead with float gear, Jerry didn't take long to hone his fly-fishing skills. The Capilano, Seymour, Vedder and Allouette rivers were his haunts in the early 1950s, then the Thompson in 1959, the Morice and Kispiox in 1961, and the Dean in the early 1970s.

If you ask Jerry for the secret to his success, he gives a modest, casual answer: "All you need do is chuck the fly out, bring it around properly and you will catch fish." A simple statement, yes, but to do it with Wintle's proficiency requires skill and much knowledge. You must know steelhead habits, be able to judge the

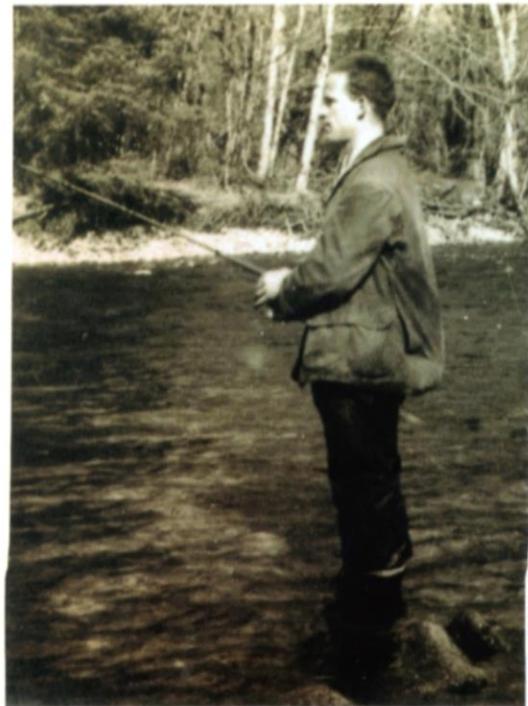
river's currents, (i.e., "read" water), pick a fly that suits the current speed, water colour and temperature, know the correct presentation technique, and cast and control the fly line so that the current brings the fly across the lie properly.

Not many fly-fishers combine all those things the way Jerry can. He is so skilled at picking just the right spot and presenting his fly so well that far more fish are tempted by his presentations than they are from us mere mortals. Where others might hook one, Jerry hooks several. But, one of the drawbacks of superb presentation skills is that, although many fish are attracted, not all are well hooked and many are lost. Therefore, Jerry talks in terms of fish hooked, rather than landed. Even then, his landed-fish count usually far exceeds those of other "good" fly-fishermen.

Wintle does tie flies, but more from necessity than desire. Rather, over the years, he has developed a technique for getting others to part with their creations. He is a master fly-wheeler. Most of us who know that cunning have become guarded about showing him our fly boxes. However, there still are many unwary victims out there along the river banks.

A man of ideas, Wintle, the innovator, usually inveigles others to do the work. Jerry thinks, for instance, that he may be the first person to design a sink-tip line. In the early 1950s, the Cleveland Dam was being built on the Capilano and the new, plastic-coated, sinking fly-lines had just been introduced. Jerry thought that he could fly-float-fish the deep Salmon Pool if he spliced a section of sinking fly-line onto his floating fly-line.

Paul Moody Smith fly-fishing a favorite run on the Capilano.



COURTESY OF PAUL MOODY SMITH



COURTESY CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES

The famous twin peaks called the Lions look down on the upper reaches of the Capilano.

He took his lines to a local sporting goods store where his friend, Don Traeger, worked and asked Don about joining the lines together. Traeger contacted Bob Taylor, another friend of Jerry's, and asked if he could do the job. Because it was for Jerry, Bob spliced the lines. The Salmon Pool on the "Cap" is deep, but, with his new line Jerry could cast it upstream and let the sinking tip take the fly down to where the fish lay. Jerry proceeded to use the newly developed line with his usual success.

Jerry has spent his lifetime seeking, finding, hooking and landing or losing steelhead, appropriating others' flies, and honing his fishing craft to become the master he is. Rare is the steelhead fly-fisherman who learns to fly an airplane so he can fish; even more rare is one who purchases his own plane to fish. Wintle is one of those rare breeds. Now retired from B.C. Hydro, he can be found with his wife of many years, wherever steelhead are running in the Dean, Thompson, the American Skagit, the Bulkley at Barrett Station and many other rivers. He is a living legend amongst steelhead fly-fishermen in the Pacific Northwest and it all started on the Capilano River.

