the extra length or rod would be a marked advantage in cases where the line has to be kept high to clear bank obstructions.

The modern fisherman equipped with a carbon fibre rod, a light floating line and a nylon cast has a much more efficient outfit than his grandfather who was limited to a whole cane/greenheart rod terminating with hair for the line and cast.

Letter from America

Dear Editor,

At last my first copy of the "Flyfisher's Journal" has arrived. When one waits impatiently with anticipation it does seem an abominable amount of time elapses. I had visions of some dolt at the local post office fingering my Journal during his coffee break and it arriving laced with stains. This brings to mind a Hardy Catalogue of a few years back arriving in such a crumpled state and with the pages stuck together, with I can't imagine what bonding agent it was other than salt water; it was quite impossible to separate them. I am happy to report the "Journal" did not suffer a similar fate. It is a very smart publication and I felt one up on my fellow tiers when I showed it around at last week's session. I shall require a measure of discipline in apportioning my readings over several nights in order to savour its contents as long as possible. Without question it should be accompanied with a glass of port and a slow pipe.

The first rumblings of a new controvery are slowly being heard here in the State of Michigan, and this in connection with salmon fishing. Our Department of Natural Resources is formulating plans for the planting of 40 million trout, and salmon yearly in our rivers. This gigantic effort does not set well with local fly fishermen and their various clubs and organisations are mobilizing in an attempt to halt or delay the programme. This must sound strange to an English salmon fisher. But you would have to understand our situation here and how it differs from yours. Your salmon and trout fishing has been moulded by centuries of fine traditions and love of the sport itself. Our trout fishing as a sport, blossomed in the eastern portion of the country and gradually extended westward as the country expanded. Tradition here was and is greatly

influenced by English anglers with modification to suit our particular atmosphere.

However, as for salmon fishing here in the Great Lakes area is concerned, this is a relatively new sport only originating in little over the past decade. Also, one major difference between your clime and ours lies in the ownership of the waters. Here the rivers belong to the state and are open for recreation to all citizens. Not all states in the U.S. has this provision but Michigan does. As I understand the situation the waters over there are in the hands of private parties, individuals, clubs, hotels etc. Even though our rivers are bounded by private ownership and individuals, and one is not allowed by law to trespass, they do not own the river bottom. Many access points have been set aside, such as bridges and state land where one can enter. In addition, to set the scene, you would have to visualize the state shaped like a giant hand with Lake Michigan as our western boundary and Lake Huron as our eastern. Running off into both bodies of water are hundreds of rivers of all sizes and description. Many of the major rivers such as the Au Sable have large dams situated not many miles inland. Many of these same rivers have received plantings of chinock salmon, brown trout, and steelhead and of course they return hefty in size and weight to fulfill their spawning urge. However, they cannot penetrate further than these dams. This all sounds fine for the adventurous fisherman, and it does reflect a tremendous undertaking on the part of our Department of Natural Resources. However, here is where we tack in a different direction. There are regulations of sorts regulating the fishing in these areas, but the officials are too under manpowered to be of much effect. Worst of all snagging has been allowed. As a result when the spawning run is on during fall and winter, hoards descend on the rivers to line the banks. A 'meat hungry menagerie' who have little or no respect for private property and even less for the game they pursue can be seen casting treble hooks across each other's lines.

They swill their beer and whisky and strew the banks with their refuse. Some are there whose sole purpose is to strip a fish of its spawn in order to sell spawn bags and then leave the carcass to rot. I have heard descriptions of how the fellow with the stoutest rig will gain the fish. For he is the one who will drag in crossed lines and all, accompanied with much arm waving and cursing to gain his prize. Now as I have said this occurs only ahead of these dams. But now the proposal is to open the dams, and construct fish ladders in order to accommodate increased plantings. If this is allowed to happen the fly fisher not only sees a glut of chinocks

penetrating prime trout water, some 3,000 miles of streams are under consideration, but he also is having palpitations over the vision of a hoard of snaggers following in hot pursuit.

Salmon fishers whom frequent the salmon rivers of Canada and Maine are respected and maintain the sport on a high level. But the lot that heave their grappling hooks in our own waters seem to be a different breed altogether. This account is rather sketchy but as you are a salmon fisher I thought it might interest you. I'll keep you posted on further developments.

I have just been assigned the duties of organising this year's banquet for the Mich. Fly Fishing Club and I wish I could arrange to have us seated in your Club's Dining Room.

Your truly,

Frank Hursley, Birmingham, Mich.

Club Notes and News

House Dinner Night is always on Thursday

THE ANNUAL DINNER

The Annual Dinner will be held at The Savoy Hotel on Thursday te 13th October, 1977.

Would Members who wish to speak to Tim Rickett by telephone please call him on:—

01 629 6776

When booking rooms would Members please do so by calling The Bath Club on:—

01 493 1276

Would they also please state that they are Members of The Flyfishers' Club.

wasting my time but he assured me that inside half-an-hour the lake would be boiling. I didn't really believe him, there were not even any midges in the air, but I put up my rod and armed it with an ordinary loch cast of three wet flies. The temperature became a little cooler but the lake remained unruffled, the air empty of creatures. Suddenly the lake started to boil and in a quarter of an hour I had half a dozen trout on the bank, lovely ¾ pounders in fine condition. I took them straight home and scooped them. Their gullets contained absolutely nothing. I can only assume that they had come to the surface for a nightcap of oxygen. My flies must have seemed like Manna from Heaven.

Letter from America

Dear Editor,

I was delighted to find you had answered my letter. And what a delightful surprise to read that you are sending a book on Flyfishing for Salmon, I certainly look forward to receiving it. I confess I am not a salmon fisher as such. All my casts are made from the arm chair where I settle on a winter's night with an angling book on my lap and a glass of sherry not too distant. Outside of Lee Wulffs, "The Atlantic Salmon" most of my readings have been authored by your own countrymen. Althur Oglesby's "Salmon", Spencer's "Salmon and Sea Trout in Wild Places" and the classic "Greased Line Fishing" by Jock Scott comprise most of readings.

I would like to experience salmon fishing in all its excitement and tradition but to do so here would entail an 800 to 1,000 mile journey to Maine or to the eastern region of Canada. Perhaps some day. A few years ago a salmon planting program was carried out here in Michigan. Two or three rivers were planted with Atlantic Salmon brought from Quebec. They did not fare too well — upon maturity some were caught, however most died from disease.

There is a laughable, merry-go-round activity engaged by meat-hungry anglers that occurs here in Michigan during the Autumn season. In fact it is probably well under way at the present, This is the Coe Hoe and Chinock salmon craze which takes place at the mouth of some of the rivers emptying into Lake Michigan. I

witnessed this bizarre happening about five years ago and determined then this form of fishing was not for me. One of my sons and I had fished all day on the Platte River. This is a crystal clear stream with a sandy bottom and is reputed to hold some fine trout. Needless to say we achieved nothing that day that enhanced the rivers reputation nor that of our own. It was one of those lovely September days, crisp and cool with the sun popping in and out from behind massive clouds. The two of us passed the entire day by ourselves with the exception of one solitary fly fisherman whom we passed along the way. Upon retiring to the car in late afternoon we thought we would follow the river for a short drive to the lake. The sight that awaited us was certainly an eye opener, only a 30 minute drive brought us to the most confusing spectacle connected with fishing I had ever seen. Automobiles, trailers, and campers lined the road, before we reached the mouth of the river. Once there a huge area was jammed with other vehicles. People were everywhere. Boats of all description and size were being launched while others were being beached. A steady stream of boats were heading out into the lake to gain a solid circle of others trolling for these huge fish. A police boat was among the pack, fruitlessly trying to warn of an impending storm. We saw two fellows return in a small row boat who feared that they would swamp in the heavy waves. They had not wet a line. On the beach a pair of enterprising chaps had a fish cleaning business in operation. Even a temporary tackle shop was set up in a weather beaten shanty. And as I say people were everywhere. A movie director with a spark of imagination could make a capital movie on the order of the old Keystone Cops. I recall reading about this area a number of years before, when the first of these fish began being caught. Some sort of melee much as I have described must have occurred then also. A severe storm had been predicted for Lake Michigan and the authorities had made every endeavour to encourage the fishermen to return to shore. Many ignored the warnings and as a result seven fishermen were drowned while numerous others were washed ashore. The shoreline was littered with debris from boats too light for such an emergency.

I must say trolling for salmon and lake trout is an enjoyable sport in itself. However, to be subjected to a shopping-centre styled crowd to do so, is beyond comprehension. As for fly fishing the rivers for trout I have never experienced a crowded situation. The most congestion occurs opening day weekend which is usually the last Saturday in April. After the opening it seems many turn to golf or other sports and the rivers are left to the more dedicated anglers.

This year's opener found eight of us strung out along our Au Sable River starting out in the morning in a light rain. By afternoon it had turned to a driving sleet storm and then to snow by evening.

The next morning the temperature was 26 degrees. On my 200 mile drive home I ran into a blinding snow storm and wished I had stayed over night. Notwithstanding the rigors of the elements it was a memorable week end and I did manage to take a few trout. As the season advances you have the rivers largely to yourself and may not see another soul in two days fishing. The trees are ablaze with the fall colours and the days are crisp and cool making it a delight to be out with the long rod. Some of us who gather for the opener also try to get together for that final week end in October.

Although I must say, the long drive home seems strangely quiet, saddened by the thought we will not be able to uncase our rods, except for an occasional wiggle, for months to come.

The drought in England which you mentioned must seem unreal. There are occasional accounts in our local newspapers and I am sorry to hear of the hardships it is creating. Being an amateur Anglophile anything that touches England touches me also for I have long and deep feeling for your mother country. Perhaps this explains my enchantment with fly fishing for it is English to the core. Its development and many fine traditions we have inherited from your shore. I only wish our climate (it does get beastly hot here in summer) allowed us the dignity of wearing tweeds while astream. But then I suppose even this mode of dress over there is fading due to the inroads of blue jeans and the younger freer living set. 'Tis a pity — if so. We here cherish our English tackle. My Hardy reels, Wheatley boxes, Hardy bags surpass anything made here. I have one Constable cane rod which I use often. I have often wondered if there are other rod makers besides Hardy. Farlow-Sharpes and Constable for these seem to be the only ones we hear of. Would you know if Wheatley publishes a catalogue of their complete items? The rising expense has forced some shops here to discontinue some of their fine products. I must say it was very thoughtful of you to be sending the book and I wish to thank you in advance. I would think the Journal should reach here some time next month. If you should find the time it would be a delight hearing from you.

Yours truly,

Frank Hursley, Birmingham, Mich.

Letter from America

Dear Editor,

"Fly Fishing for Salmon" has arrived. I have read it and I have enjoyed it immensely. The basics of salmon fishing are certainly well presented and told in such a brief and concise style that the entire effort is quite unique. The only major criticism I have is its brevity. And this I do not imply in a negative sense for there is just enough there to arouse my interest in more of the author's works. His knowledge and apparent experience is immense. Is there other material of his published?

I must say it does seem strange to us over here to read of 13′ to 15′ greenheart vibration rods. The term "vibration" is a new one on me and I cannot recall having seen this used in relation to rods. As you probably know, the short rod is in favour here whether for trout or salmon and we would stare in disbelief at anyone wielding such long tools. I prefer 7½′ myself and currently have on order an 8′ Thomas and Thomas. Most of my fellow anglers go afield with stubby 6′ to 6½′ rods. My 7½′ comes in for some heavy ribbing but I feel the joke is on them for I believe they cannot sense the lovely feel of flexing cane. However, I do believe the trend is reversing back toward longer rods. Within the past year there have been articles entolling the practical virtues of 8′, 8½′ and even 9′ rods capable of casting 4 and 5 wt. lines. Their ability to mend across varied currents is the primary argument in their favour.

There is one item in connection with salmon fishing I would like your opinion on. Through my various readings on the sport I do not recall mention of casting to salmon while they are on their spawning beds. I gather it is while they are passing upstream or when they are holding in a pool that they are fished over. Never on their redds. The reason I bring this up is a recent issue of our "Fly Fisherman" magazine which carried an article by Carl Richards about steelhead and chinock salmon fishing. Also, recently he lectured and presented a slide show at a meeting of the Michigan Fly Fishing Club on the same subject. The technique used here in Michigan for these fish and one advocated by Richards is to stalk them by walking the bank until they are spotted on their redds. It is then that they are cast to and usually it is the male who strikes expressing his fury over the intrusion. This method does seem rather unsporting. And now the current issue carries a letter from a group of west coast anglers completely denouncing Richards'

techniques. Their points being the complete lack of feeling for the fish itself and also that it runs counter to a programme of conserving the quarry.

I interrupted this letter long enough for one final trip north to close the season. The chaps I usually close with decided on duck hunting instead so I had to make the 200 mile jaunt north alone. The weather man promised a week-end of sunny skies and 50 degrees temperature. He was wrong on both counts. When I left home Saturday morning it was heavily overcast and remained so throughout the day and the temperature never exceeded the mid 40's. I fished the main stream of the Au Sable. Normally the stream is avoided due to heavy canoe traffic but at this time of year this is not a problem. I fished wet using a Cosseboom streamer that I tie based on a salmon pattern originated over here back in the 30's. A scattering of blue wing olives were in evidence as well as several midge but I did not expect any surface activity. In time two brown trout came to the streamer and were released. As I fished on I came to a bend with deep run along one bank and took extra time to swim the streamer through the deepest part. This provoked no interest and I was about to move in when I heard a surface slosh behind me. In a moment it was repeated. Those midges were about but nothing else in evidence. I waded back to the start of the bend and changed to a Greenwell's Glory. The only reason I chose this pattern is because I asked our master tier to show us the pattern just the week before and this would be the last opportunity to use it until next year. Darned if it didn't work ! But not on the fish that was rising. A few casts and I was into a fair sized brown. At the same time my rod was arched into him two chaps came by in a canoe and asked if I was hung up on the bottom. Before the day was over that Greenwell's accounted for three more fish landed plus two hooked but lost. The next time the sherry decanter is passed I'll raise a glass to a lovely old fly that helped make the last casts of the season memorable. When I awoke the following morning for the drive home the ground had a layer of snow and I had to chip ice from the Auto. Another happening that complimented the trip is that the previous day my knickers arrived from the Orvis Company. Their latest catalogue illustrated a line of clothing from the Cambrian Flyfishers which included their moleskin trousers. These I could not resist. Is there anything you can tell me about the Cambrian Flyfishers ? I intend writing to them to see if they have a catalogue of their complete products.

Yours truly,
Frank M. Hursley, Birmingham, Michigan.

taking a nymphing fish. That is my experience resulting from years of practice of both methods.

"B", page 79, line 32.
I have known many occasions when the nymph alone was being taken, the hatched dun being wholly neglected and but few occasions when trout feeding on the surface fly were wholly unattracted by the nymph.

I was born in the interval between the invention of printing and that of television and in consequence was taught to read as a child. Though now in my second childhood I can still read — with the aid of glasses.

Letter from America

Dear Editor,

THE temperature is 15° and we have had 6in. of snow overnight with 4in. more scheduled for the day. This is Monday morning and I should be bustling off to work but under these conditions I think I shall postpone the effort until tomorrow. To date this has been a bitterly cold winter with many days in the low teens and the night below zero. Snowfall has not been overly heavy until last night. Farther north where the trout streams are there is a minimum of 3ft. of snow on the level and hardly a day has past since last October that a fresh dusting has not been added.

Christmas I have always cherished and try to adopt English traditions as much as possible. Christmas Eve at our home has become an institution. To me, roast goose has seemed the epitome of an English Christmas — inspired I would say by Dickens' "Christmas Carol", and we did serve goose but found as the family increased a brace was required and finally had to add a turkey in addition in order to serve adequately. In fact on Christmas Eve our home groans under the demands placed upon it.

Leafing through my journal for the year '76, Sunday, May 9 (we celebrate this as Mother's Day here) stands as uppermost for the year. That rare occurence of being at the right place at the right time fell on that one day. We were staying at Gaylord in Northern

Michigan and for dinner we took my wife to a favourite restaurant. Even though the fare was substantial and most enjoyable, it was not quite forceful enough to intrude on my vision of rising trout. My gear was in the car parked outside and I could hardly wait for the final sip of coffee. But the honours for the day did come to an end and I was free for an afternoon on the Manistee River. The river originates in Northern Michigan, flows southward then westward adding to its muscle until it becomes a major waterway emptying into Lake Michigan. During the Indian era it has served as an across the state water route in conjunction with the Au Sable. Only a few miles portage between the two rivers was necessary with, depending on an east or west direction, polling against the current in one river and drifting with the current in the other.

The drive to the Manistee took me through the old lumbering town of Frederick where barely a year and a month previously a tornado had re-arranged some of the buildings. A scant few miles north from the bridge where I enter the river lies the overgrown foundations and remnants of a 300 building village. This is Deward once the centre for a thriving lumber industry that boasted the largest saw mill in the country. It shut down in 1912 after a ten year flourish that completely exhausted the timber in the area. It had been believed that an endless supply was on hand. Needless to say the vanished town is one more memorial to man's myopia. Left behind are acres of decaying tree stumps.

At the bridge I waded in just upstream. To fish the down-stream side of the bridge is to become an aiming stake for an endless parade of carefree canoeists who noisily enter at the bridge itself. The river is largely smooth flowing but with deceptive little sub-currents that wisk your fly off in unwanted directions. The bottom is sand which undulates into deep dark holes around sunken logs. That time of year coincided with our cherished Hendrikson hatch, however, being uncertain just what to expect I knotted on a Coachman as an attractor. The choice was short-lived. I had no sooner entered the water when a swarm of gray caddis swooped upstream with some barely over the surface. The reaction to this darty cloud was unbelievable. Trout rose with complete abandon — leaping and splashing in an effort to intercept the flight. Rather shakily I changed to a caddis imitation we had recently tied in class. Called locally the North Branch Special — it is simply — bind deer hair horizontal to the shank and hackle with grizzly on a size 16 hook. I could not have offered a more tantalizing morsel even if it was alive and kicking. In a brief 50 yard stretch I landed and released 15 brown trout on that one fly. Five came to the net without moving

one step. The flight of caddis was sparodic — a large cloud would sweep by, triggering absolutely gleefull rises and then all would return to quiet, until another flight inspired other responses. Since that day I have returned several times this past season to the same area and would hardly find a willing fish. It just happened to be one of those singular outings when I had the river to myself, had the right fly, and the fish were reckless beyond measure. I left the Manistee that day with the sun hovering above the trees, drove past the tree stumps and through the tornado scarred village and saw nothing. Reality had not as yet neutralized the marvellous contentment I was still reveling in.

After waiting (5) months my new cane rod arrived during the holidays. It is a lovely 8 foot, for a 6 wt., line made by Thomas and Thomas of Mass. This makes a companion piece for the 7½ foot — 5 wt., I received from them last summer. They are of a medium full flexing design, fully varnished and with a screw lock reel seat with walnut spacer. I like to remove them from their cloth sacks and sit on the floor making visual comparisons and imaginary casts. My family thinks I am quite dotty when they pass by and catch me sniffing the varnish.

Frank M. Hursley, Birmingham, Michigan.

Club Notes and News

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Letter from America

Dear Editor,

My proposed Catskill trip withered on the vine and because my wife tired of seeing me punch the walls in disappointment, understanding soul that she is, she 'signed my travel papers' and granted a weekend north. For a week previous to this bonus jaunt I anticipated just how I would net endless numbers of trout and I mapped out various stratagems that would insure success. While at the office when I was supposed to be earning my keep, I was instead, deciding in advance what would be the most productive fly or taking mental inventory of the flyboxes wondering if a few compartments would allow further stuffing. I should know better than to pursue the anticipatory ritual but then I have found from experience that the best results are achieved before a line is even wet. Golf is much the same. The most perfect shots are taken while sitting behind a desk.

When Saturday morning did arrive both feet were flung out of bed before the alarm had tolled a fraction of a moment. It was set for 4.30 a.m. Within an hour I had lunch prepared, and gear loaded, and was backing the station wagon down the drive. An hour on the highway found light rising on the horizon and rain falling on the pavement. Three hours from home I drove into the town of Roscommon and happily drove out of the rain. Roscommon, a cross roads village by today's standard, was another lumbering center in its heyday. When travelling alone I usually stop here for breakfast at an old ramshakle restaurant, where, although the building itself has known former glory, a substantial meal is served at a reasonable price. Manouvering across the floor can be an unpredictable adventure. Time has seen it settle into an alarming incline with as many undulations as a putting green. A staunch north woods breakfast of hot cakes, eggs, hash brown potatoes and sausages is my normal fare for an impending outing and helps immensely to anchor both feet on the river bottom. The next stop is always at Jack's Fly Shop also in Roscommon. Strangely, the farther one travels north to where the trout rivers are the fewer the

tackle shops catering for fly fishermen are found. Some general fishing gear is carried by hardware stores and even gas stations, but there is little to interest the ever acquiring fly-fisher. Jack is noted for the excellent leaders he hand ties. Even though I tie my own there is nothing like placing confidence in a leader that is professionally tied. Mine have a disconcerting tendance of parting at a middle knot at the most crucial moment. (I should send you one to prove my point). Jack is also renowned for what he calls Luzerne clay for use as a leader sink. A small kernel, wetted and rubbed on a leader sinks it immediately and I must say it works better than any commercial preparation I know of. Jack is rather fond of discoursing on the merits of his clay which he gathers in the town of Luzerne and his eyes brighten when he find a convert willing to listen. He will profer a chunk the size of a tennis ball free of charge, if his wife isn't there. At present I must have ten year's supply on hand and before trouting I break off pea size fragments to carry in a plastic vial tucked in my fishing vest. The shop is also a source for information on river conditions and news of current fly hatches.

Roscommon is on the South Branch of the Au Sable, Grayling is on the Main Branch and both are popular centers for canoe clubs. The North Branch is fortunate in not having any canoe clubs and this is the primary reason for fishing this Branch on weekends. What few canoes do come down are peopled by cabin owners who react in a civilised manner when confronted with a wading fisherman.

It was the North Branch I headed for that Saturday morning after leaving Roscommon. Flashlight Bend is where my friends the Paddons have a cabin and it is roughly a thirty minute drive from Jack's Fly Shop. Except for the keen anticipation of casting the fly once more the drive itself is uninspiring. The countryside alternates between flat uneventful expanses and gentle rises. The landscape has a depressing quality. The soil is sandy and lies exposed beween patches of dried grass. The pines are scraggly and appear deformed, being second growth after the lumbering era as well as the aftermath of numerous forest fires. I passed whole sections that were burned over. Two years ago six separate forest fires raged simultaneously. In fact two friends had been fishing the Main Branch when one of the fires leap-frogging through the tree tops approached dangerous close and in order to escape they had to run in their waders to the car. A sheriffs patrol circulated from cabin to cabin encouraging the occupants to evacuate. There have

been many major fires in the past history of this state before much of the land was cleared. Entire towns burned with much loss of life. As a result of the recent fires of two years ago you can pass acres of blackened tree trunks which serve as a startling reminder of what can happen.

The real beauty lies along the river itself. In fact I have often thought fishing the Au Sable is like playing golf at a posh country club with their tailored fairways. After spending the past two holidays in the Adirondack Mountains of New York state, where wading rivers filled with boulders and moss covered rocks the size of cabbages was the norm, it was a relief to return to the Au Sable. For it's a level bottomed stream of gravel and sand, comfortably wide, with long shallow runs only interrupted by deep holes that are easily skirted for safety sake. Lined as it is with towering poplars and birches and low sweeping cedars a renewing display unfolds around each bend. Even though the fall brings the close season in sight, it is still my favoured time to be out with the long rod. It is a time when the high banks along the river are ablaze and the cool breezes allow the comfort of wool shirts. And the summer time gin and tonics are replaced by sherry and fruit flavoured brandy.

The Paddon's cabin is reached by turning off the main road for a short run on nothing more than sandy wagon tracks that twist and turn to the river. When I arrived there the sky was still overcast with low hanging clouds that threatened a sudden downpour. The Paddons were not to arrive until later in the day so I suited up and set off to fish what we call the Cummins water. This stretch is reached after a twenty minute walk along the car paths leading in to the various cabins, followed by a jaunt along a trail running through a wooded section. I have yet to see any of the deer herd in the area but when following the path there are always fresh tracks in the soft sand. Previous walks to the Cummins water have always been in company of fellow anglers, with me ambling along concentrating on the scenery. I thought I knew the route. However, as it turned out, I mistook the proper turn off into the woods and promptly became lost. After much scrambling through waist high bracken, and over fallen trees with no evidence of the trail, that state of affairs was confirmed. I realised there was no call for panic. The feeling I entertained was more of a nature of being at odds with myself for my stupidity. I knew I would eventually strike the river. The only problem was the maze of twists and turns it ambled through and unless I matched its course I could have found myself

drifting off 'into orbit'. What did concern me was the thought of gashing a hole in my waders while throwing a leg over a downed tree. I never did come upon the river. Instead, after much thrashing about generating enough heat to stew myself in those waders, I came out of the woods onto the very same path from which I had entered. And this was not far from my starting point. For a moment this really stupified me. I just could not fathom how I could have circled back to my point of origin. My next action should have been to bunt my head on the nearest tree as a confirmation of my deficiency in wood craft and to register the loss of fishing time.

For a second attempt, rather than try to locate the true path I determined to follow the car trail, for I knew it would lead to a cabin on the river. This deduction proved fruitful and for safe measure I hugged the bank as it coursed through the woods until my destination was finally in sight. All the while I had been wearing a waterproof rain jacket and by the time I entered the water I was dripping with perspiration and was ready to squat in the river for relief. By then I was not exactly the picture of the happy fisherman traipsing over dingle and dell communing with nature and answering the birds with a twitter on his lips.

The Cummins water is a tag we have coined for identification, for it is the name of the property owner who owns both banks covering several acres. It is a lovely stretch of water which starts at a deep narrow bend, runs straight for a distance and then shoots along another bend in the reverse direction. As it flows out of the first bend the river widens over a shallow, gravel run with a deep channel midstream with another deep run in the far bank, which is undercut. We normally fish the midstream channel first and then work the undercut bank. Both brook and brown trout can be taken. This particular morning I had tied on a small streamer called the Picket Pin in order to explore the water at will. I worked the streamer through the deep run casting slightly upstream in order to let the fly sink as much as possible. The method worked for two lovely little brook trout. By your standards our brook trout would probably be used as fodder for your leviathan browns. Here in Michigan they average only seven or eight inches, while a ten incher calls for standing a round at the pub! But they are lovely little fish, fat and plump, and scrap all the way in. While in their full spawning colours there is not a more beautiful fish to be found. Regardless of their small size we respect them and cherish their existance here.

I next waded in closer to the far bank. A topping of tall grass leans profusely for a shaggy dog effect and hides the deep under-cut from which an occasional, fat brown can be coaxed. With a lucky cast a fly can be flicked into the grass and as the current wisks away the line the fly will gently drop right at the bank and hang motionless for a moment before being pulled away. I moved slowly downstream performing a high ratio of casts to any one that hit the grass just right and thus allowed the fly to drop gently. Most fell short and were swept away in the current. However, as luck would have it one cast finally triggered a jack-in-the-box explosion. If the sun had been shining that day there would have been a momentary rainbow colouring in the spray that erupted as a brown trout charged from his lair under the bank and nailed that quivering Picket Pin. His surprise as well as mine was instantaneous. He swirled and thrashed before diving deeper for a cross eyed look at the fuzzy little morsel that had manifested such an annoying hold on his jaw. I let him have his way until I felt a reduction in his resistance and then I gradually drew him closer while at the same time I swung the net into position. My final display of confidence was too much of an affront as far as he was concerned. A few feet away and he slipped the hook! One of us should be the wiser from this experience but I am sure the odds lie in his favour. He went his direction to sooth his swollen jaw and I turned in mine to mend a wounded pride.

The Picket Pin has proved a noble and worthwhile companion. My introduction to it originated two years ago when we tied it as an assignment in our fly-tying class. The name has a military connotation to it, for me at least, and I even thought of it as being on an English pattern with shades of Waterloo and the British square thrown in for added measure. However, upon researching a few books I found it listed as one of our Western patterns. How deflating! In any event it is so homely and buzzy looking that while still in the vise it appears capable of spitting venom. The tie is simple: a peacock herl body palmered with a soft brown hackle tied off at the bend to leave a hackle point tail. The body is then topped streamer fashion with grey squirrel tail and then a bulbous head is formed with more peacock herl. What it suggests to the trout I cannot imagine. I prefer to think they take it out of desperation feeling it is wiser to attack than be attacked.

Often in print I have read of a method that takes fish. As productive as it may be I have not as yet found it successful for me. Simply, all one has to do is rest one's rod in the crook of one's arm

allowing the fly to trail nonchantantly in the current while one is engaged in filling and lighting one's pipe. Periodically I have employed this pose out of desperation. Nevertheless, my ruse seems to harbour some flow needing correction for, whereas it is productive for others, my success ratio has been nil. Perhaps a change in tobacco!

While filling my pipe in the next area of contest, a fast, narrow midstream run I came upon a few splashy rises. The Picket Pin, was retired in favour of a floater that has gained nationwide popularity as a caddis imitation — the Henryville Special. As the body is palmered this is a fine fly for fast, ripply water. Upon repeated casts, the fly rocked and danced on its hackle tip toes until two successive brook trout in need of refreshment nailed it abruptly. After this action I decided it was time to join the Paddons at their cabin. My way back was not detoured upon any zig zag tour of the countryside and I arrived to find the Paddons engaged in a mild discourse on the back porch. Perhaps you recall my mentioning in a previous letter how they had locked themselves out and we had to remove the door for entry. This time they had embarked from home with bag and baggage for a week's stay but the cabin key remained 200 miles behind. Experience does endow a measure of wisdom at times for they had the foresight to leave a spare key at a neighbouring cabin. All they had to do was to wait until the neighbours returned from a round of golf.

Before I post this tome I want to mention a delightful book I have just finished reading. It is written by an American member of the Flyfisher's Club, Robert Deindorfer. Perhaps you know him, as he mentions in the book having attended two of the annual dinners. This is a slim volume of 155 pages called facetiously "The Sucomplant Angler". As I am always searching for stories concerning my adopted country, England, I find this book a particular joy. From what originated as a casual remark about fishing the same rivers Izaak Walton wrote about in "The Compleat Angler", Deindorfer expands the notion into an actual pilgrimage. To mention only a few of the rivers he samples there is the Test, Thames, Hampshire Avon, and of course the Dove. At one point in order to ensure a measure of authenticity he weilds an eighteen foot rod complete with a horsehair line. He records his adventures in a thoroughly amusing style with a streak of pungency in his comments. He encounters various breed of fish and uses live baits in the manner prescribed by Walton as well as adopting the fly in some rivers. The use of live bait I find distasteful although the

method would not be vintage Walton otherwise. What I find particularly engaging is the description of the pastoral setting as he brings into focus the beauty of the English countryside. Pubs and inns and village restaurants as well as the personalities encountered, such as a female water bailiff on the Dove, publicans, fellow anglers, and general onlookers, are amusingly detailed. The book exudes charm and is laced with unusual experiences that can only befall one attempting to emulate the past master of the angle in a modern setting. Quotes from "The Compleat Angler" are uniquely inserted to complement or to contrast Deindorfer's actual experience.

I received your letter of July 4, and was happy to read Keane's book made a safe transition between our shorelines. I do wish there was a similar publication doing honours to the British rod maker. Perhaps you could be persuaded in filling the need. A few of the rod builders you mentioned I have not heard of, such as the Eggington brothers and Malloch of Perth. We receive rather scanty information on British makers over here, as it is. There are very few individual rod makers left over here and most rods are now produced by companies employing mass production methods, such as Orvis. Recently I saw for the first time a four strip rod which was a lovely creation of Carlsons, who was mentioned in Keane, I would like to hear more about your rods. What is your opinion of Hardy's current cane models? I understand that for a while they had stopped producing any cane rods but public pressure inspired them to begin again.

The weather here has been hellish. We recently had the thermometer reach 102 degrees. It was enough to unravel one's tweeds. I would like to know what happened to those experts, who during our frozen winter were predicting a return to the ice age.

Frank Hursley, Birmingham, Michigan.

man Meredith was looking after us. When re reached the appropriate part of the water I proceeded to tell of the pre-war Easter experience. Meredith's eyes opened as wide as saucers and, in the nicest possible manner, he appeared to cross-examine me somewhat. When apparently satisfied he told me that all this was one of Jim Watkins' favourite bar stories and that he was seldom believed. Our prophecy of some ten or twelve years earlier had proved to be correct but Meredith promised to add his support if and when he heard the story repeated.

Letter from America

Dear Editor,

THE month of January is now past although it will be long remembered for its devilish temperament. January's severe weather has made monumental entry in the record books and for only one day reached 32° and there were twelve days of below zero temperature. Three foot long icicles hang like pikes teeth from the eaves. Far north the Au Sable River has frozen over, the first time in many years of people's memory. Regardless of how noisily the wind howls outside and how deep the snow drifts in the drive I can still sit in my tying room and tie flies, read, write letters, ponder over catalogues, or work on the rod currently in progress. My "little room" was the result of my wife's imagination. Being triangular — wide at one end and narrow at the other, its rather odd shape resulted when a former owner made a renovation in order to house African violets. It opens just off the dining room and for years after we had moved into the house it became an unsightly catch all for the children's school books and for whatever else may have haphazardly landed there. As clutter will unsettle any wife's temperment, and my feathers and fur was usually referred to in that manner, it was suggested the room be finished off as my private domain. This we did. An oak floor was laid, I built book shelves on one wall, on the other wall indoor shutters were hung on the windows, and for an Elizabethan touch, thick beams were hung in the ceiling. The width is cramped but allows just enough space for a desk and chair and it is here I can be found nightly surrounded by feathers and fur. My cherished 'clutter' is now well out of the path of that roaring monster — the vacuum cleaner which more than once has threatened to ravage a wayward hackle. The room is strictly off

limits for all other household personnel and any barefooted violator runs the hazard of treading a mine field of dropped hooks. At the end of the room my rod cases lean against the wall. My tackle vest hangs on a brass hook at one end of the book shelves along with a tackle bag crammed with reels. Space on an upper shelf is reserved for tweed hats.

I found "For Poachers Only" listed in a 1976 catalogue from R. E. and G. B. Klay and posted an order to them hoping it is still available.

There may not be a market for British angling books over here but I have several I would not be without and currently I have three titles coming from The Barn Book Supply, I have also used James Thin in Edinburgh on occasions. Recently I sent a subscription for "Trout and Salmon". Can you suggest any other magazine devoted to angling? A few years back my oldest son gave me a year's subscription to "The Field" but this is much too expensive to receive over here.

I have been reading again the 1976 winter issue of the Flyfishers Journal. The sensitive editorial is sheer poetry as well as being a mustering call for the constant struggle against the overpowering forces of ignorance and callous progress. Your informative obituary on David Colquhoun illustrates not only the loss of a great friend but also indomitable courage required to overcome a hardship. Angling affords that unique comradeship of men that no other experience quite equals. Sheona Lodge has been published in our "American Flyfisherman" the journal of the American Fly Fishing Museum in Vermont. "The Muse of Angling" is exceptional and I am glad I have made her acquaintance in print. After many years in service to your club, Dora Ratcliff must have wealth of untapped anecdotes.

Can you tell me what the menu was for the annual dinner ? I recently attended the banquet of our local chapter of Trout Unlimited, however I know its modicum of magnificent could not have approached that of such an august body as the Flyfishers. Currently I am embroiled in organising the annual banquet for the Michigan Fly Fshing Club which will be held on April 1st. We anticipate an attendance of from 25-30 members plus their wives. Our guest speaker will be Hollis Halladay, our master fly tyer and whose cousin originated the Adams dry fly. He has had over a half century at the vice as well as the casting of the fly. We had hoped to have a lady speaker as well, and I invited Mrs. Halladay to relate her impression of sitting bankside for 50 years while her husband

fished. However she declined for health reasons. It would have provided a great opportunity to get her revenge. I next approached the widow of Paul Young the rod maker, but she declined also. So we may have to drop the idea entirely.

I wrote to 18 tackle houses and requested catalogues and whatever they could donate for our prize drawing. The response has been amazing. My little room has been converted into a tackle warehouse, as I have received so far 24 items including lines, reels, books, wallets, etc. In order to instill a touch of atmosphere that evening I am trying to organize a display of antique tackle. So far the member who has to travel the greatest distance that evening (he is coming 150 miles from Ohio) has written offering a list of mid 19th century rods and reels he can bring.

I wonder what kind of sensation it would create if I followed suit and proposed a toast to the Queen. After all, our meagre traditions and techniques are borrowed largely from England.

Our main prize by the way is a glass 7½ft. rod called the Sceptre (a local brand name I presume). The blank is by Fibatube in Alnwick (is this a Hardy plant?) and it is finished by Constable. My choice of this rod came from my owning three Sceptres, a 7½ft. an 8ft. and 8½ft., and finding them delightful to use.

Perhaps my next cane rod will be English made. Can you recommend a rod maker of your own preference ? I have one Constable, but perhaps a Hardy would be a choice if for no other reason than a sentimental one. Everyone should own at least one Hardy.

I have a copy of T. Donald Overfield's *Famous Flies and their Originators*. A fascinating work. The first biography concerns A. Mackintosh with a mention of the Driffield Angling Club. Overfield made it sound so interesting that my curiosity is aroused. Can you tell me anything about the club ? Also, what is the Edinburgh Angling Club ? It this simliar to the Flyfishers in the sense of being a gentlemen's Club located in a major city ?

You might be interested to know that the gigantic salmon planting scheme proposed for Michigan streams has come to a complete halt. Apparently it has been tabled until further studies are made. Such was the howl raised by various angling associations and prominent anglers that some recognition of the consequences attending the programme had to be acknowledged.

As for returning fish caught, most of my angling friends follow this by principle. For we realize that if we keep a selection for the pan everytime we venture out we would soon be reduced to the pan only. In fact none of us carries a creel anymore ! I'll cover more of this in the future and relate the extinction of the grayling which was in abundance as a native of Michigan until the turn of the century.

I have certainly rambled hither and yon and touched a lot of subjects in this letter.

Frank Hursley, Birmingham, Michigan.

Book Reviews

FLY FISHING FOR TROUT

by Carl Massy

Published by A. H. and A. W. Reed Pty Ltd (1976)

Carl Massy has been fishing in Australia for more than sixty years and this book reflects both his experience and his expertise. It also provides an interesting insight into the extensive and diverse trouting available in New South Wales — from alkaline streams like Rock Flat Creek and the Maclaughlin to the great expanses of still-water, Lakes Eucumbene and Tantangara.

Australia is not steeped in flyflshing folkelore. The history of the sport there only goes back to the beginning of this century. Those who pursue brown, rainbow and occasional brook trout in the waters of the Snowy Mountains and the Great Dividing Range do so unfettered by the traditions and conservatism that sometimes constrain their counterparts in the United Kingdom. Although Mr. Massy bemoans the Australian fisherman's need to rely on techniques and fly patterns imported from abroad, it seems that he and his countrymen have taken the best of British experience and American inventiveness, seasoned their acquired knowledge with sound practicality and skilfully adapted the results to local conditions.

Fly Fishing For Trout is a dual purpose book. For the beginner, the author discussess choice of tackle, fly selection, the characteristics of various types of water and minor tactics in considerable detail. His advice is clearly presented and generally sound. The book is little the worse for having been written in a

Letter from America

Dear Editor,

Before I could find room for a sheet of writing paper the vise had to be shifted to one side and space cleared among the necks, furs, and vials of hooks reposing in disarray on my desk. Those "messy toys", as my wife refers to them, had been left where they lay, after a last minute, feverish bout of tying flies for the opening of the trout season. The fly boxes were already bulging, nevertheless there is always room for a few more — just in case. However, by now the anxiety that was nurtured by anticipating has subsided. The "opener" is once more history and its noble tradition is once more honoured. The cane rods have survived another trip north and are polished and back in their cases. My vest is lightened of its swollen fly boxes and wallets and again hangs from its alloted hook. Except for the scattered furs and feathers all the gear again reposes in silent testimony as if they had never really left their respective niche. And they hadn't for six long months while awaiting the termination of the close season, except that is, for an occasional uncasing of a favoured rod to re-acknowledge its action or to run a finger over the varnish.

My new Thomas and Thomas 8ft. rod is now a veteran of the sport. It was baptized on a few fish, although I will not admit how shamefully few the take really was, for the fishing was rather poor even though the conditions at least appeared perfect.

However the lasting reward of opening day diaries is from just being there. Whether absorbed in the scenery, or looping out a long cast, or pausing to chat with another angler similarly laden with all the accountrements of the fly fisher, that is the real stuff of the day! On the other hand if a trout should accidentally become a throbbing member on one's line, that extra dollop of pleasure is too sweet to refrain from broadcasting the event both upstream and down. Even so, beyond such a welcome bonus, the meat of the day is to once more renew acquaintances unseen since the previous year. After this one day we sharpen our hooks and become a determined lot.

I stayed with a friend who has a comfortable cabin on the North Branch of the Au Sable roughly two miles upstream from the cabin I wrote of earlier. It is quite rustic in appearance. Built of full rounded logs with the logs exposed on the inside it affords a touch

of the frontier days. A mammoth stone fireplace inspires a dreamy warmth at is compliments a pipe full and a glass of brandy.

Incidentally, the only grayling I have ever seen is mounted above a massive mantel. Until the turn of the century the grayling was native to the Au Sable. Extensive lumbering and unrestricted fishing ended its once generous numbers and it is now extinct. As they came freely to the fly they were removed from the river by the wagon-loads in order to grace the menus of prominent Michigan hotels. Any grayling taken too small to qualify as a suitable embellishment on a dinner plate was tossed on the banks to rot. As for the lumbering, great girthed logs were floated downstream gouging out the spawning beds as the current propelled them along like battering rams. The fish were further doomed as bark fragments clogged their gills. Also, the excessive bank side timbering allowed the water temperature to warm thus sealing their fate for ever. During the height of the fishing spree the town of Crawford, once a major lumbering centre located on the Main Branch, changed its name to Grayling. Although the name change drew attention to the bountiful sport to be had, it is now a memorial to a gallant little fish and even more so to the myopic activities of our fore-fathers.

It is also a mark of tradition for cabin owners to be "up" for the opener. They inspect their cabins for whatever damage the winter may have wrought and generally clean and refurbish. It is hoped they have not been broken into during the long winter, for this does happen on occasions. From this week-end on, most owners can be counted on to spend every week-end up north away from the cities.

On the Friday night when we arrived at my friend's cabin we set about dusting and vacuuming and arranging the furniture back into a liveable position. A rousing fire was built in the fireplace and we relaxed from our labours and contemplated the next days fishing. A six month wait was about over.

The next morning I was greeted by welcome sunshine flooding the bedroom. In short order I was into by knickers and other trappings and with rod in hand managed to exit without snapping the tip in the door. Along the bank I passed a row of tree stumps knawed off at knee height, that the beavers had been active on. Woodpeckers sounded in the trees with that strange knocking that nature endowed them with. Until, that is, they were muffled by the roar of a chain saw as someone was cutting fireplace wood. The river

itself has already reached mid-summer level — clear and low. The lack of rain has left the area tinder dry and the amount of forest fires has already exceeded those of the same period last year.

There was no fly on the water nor any sign of fish. In the morning I did manage to take one small brown on a Mallard and Claret after going through many fly changes. The lone fish turned out to be my sole take for the day. Even so, it was a glorious day with many puffy-white clouds overhead and the sun shining brightly between and the temperature in the 60's. By afternoon a few sporadic Hendriksons and Black Caddis made their appearance. But still no rises to speak of. In late afternoon I did come across one active fish on the far bank of a deep pool at a sweeping bend. He must have been following a different drummer than his brethren for he was the only one to make an appearance. His devil may-care slashing suggested he was after Caddis and he annoyed me enough to make a pass at him. I had been fishing wet so I changed to an Adams dry. The first cast and I was solidly joined to the tree opposite his nose. The only way to retrieve the line without putting the fish on his guard was to tug on the line until the tippet broke. Instead of the tippet my home tied leader parted at a knot at the mid-point. The fish did not seem to be as nonplussed as I for he continued to splash away oblivious to my clumsy performance. By the time I could restore a new leader and knot on another fly a flyfisher whom had been following along behind now made his close appearance around the bend. Rather than hold the chap up I decided to move on and let him decide the fate of that lonely riser. He probably had more finesse at his command anyway.

That evening my friend and I drove to the Au Sable Lodge to have dinner. This is a bankside motel-like complex on the Main Stream of the Au Sable which caters to the fly fishing fraternity. Each year the same anglers congregate here for opening week and with some place their reservations a year in advance. Fellowship was not lacking as we reclined in chairs along the bank and shared in the common complaint about the days lack of success. The stories circulated almost as rapid as the ice cubes. As it turned out, we had a front row seat for a little curtain riser mother nature decided to provide for us. As if on cue an amazing hatch of Black Caddis took place sending up enormous clouds of fly against the backdrop of the declining sun. Watching the magnitude of the hatch developing we feared, what with the river itself at mid-season condition, that mother nature's time table had tilted out of adjustment. The hatch was so mammoth it appeared her mechanism was

running out of control and her standard allotment would be expended leaving nothing in the bank for a later date. Apparently the trout were preoccupied or failed to receive notice of the activity or simply just felt reluctant to rise to the occasion. While the performance was still in progress our own ravished natures dictated, so we trooped into the dining room and sat down to a feast the portly Jorrocks would have done justice to. No ones casting arm seemed to have been over taxed as there was still muscle enough for hoisting a few bumpers to one more grand opener.

The following morning after a hearty north woods breakfast we repaired the dock in front of the cabin. The winter had been so severe that the river had completely frozen over for the first time in the memory of my friend's 12 year ownership of the cabin. As a result the crunch of the ice breaking up damaged the pilings the dock rests on. Upon our chore being accomplished we had time for another sally at the trout. This time a small measure of success brought three browns to the net before it was time to case the rods and turn south.

In case you feel I was a little harsh on the canoeists I have just received the "Bulletin" of the Theodore Gordon Flyfishers of New York. Apparently the problem is such that they are calling for the licencing of canoeists in much the same manner the fisherman is. They are even suggesting each canoe must contain one licensed member. It seems a rather extreme restriction. Here in Michigan we are suggesting a more disciplined release of so many per hour plus the use of other less congested water ways.

Frank Hursley, Birmingham, Michigan.

Book Reviews

JOHN VENIARD PUBLICATIONS CATALOGUE

If I were given the choice between buying a slap up meal or a book, I would not have to think very hard, I would settle for a book, I can feed off words, and books on fly fishing are like manna from heaven to me. John Veniard Publications in their well produced little catalogue provide a menu of reading enough to satisfy the most hungry of readers of the printed fishing word.

Letter from America

Dear Editor,

What with the depth of the snow outside it appears that a visit to the water will be a long way off and I can only resort to a few moments set aside for day-dreaming, which isn't altogether bad in itself and I am certain you will agree that even a non-fishing day in the middle of the close season can have its compensations. I have in mind such a recent day. As we have been experiencing a severe winter, while at the office on that particular day, the main 'topic' of interchange revolved around the ordeal of driving home in the midst of a pending blizzard. True to Michigan weather patterns a frosty blizzard did penetrate our defences and came blowing its way from out of the north west, complete with roaring winds and drifting snow. By the time it was the hour to clear the desk and button up the overcoat the roads were solid with creeping autos trying to harness all that horsepower but in effect only spinning their wheels fruitlessly. For myself the drive home that evening topped any similar ordeal experienced within the past several winters. An extra hour was added to my normal driving time before I finally sighted the driveway. During the brief walk from the garage to the rear door the wind that roared through the adjacent graveyard completely erased my foot-steps in the snow.

My relief at reaching home was enhanced even more for I found that the mail was rather kind that day. My first issue of the "Fly Fisherman" magazine had miraculously resisted being blown from the mail box and had been thoughtfully placed on my fly tying desk. Often in the long pull the grandest rewards can stem from the simplest of pursuits. Gorged on a substantial evening meal followed by lifting a generous log on the fire and then befriended by a glass of Findlaters' Dry Fly accompanied by a lighted pipe, the scene was set for settling down to enjoy the "Fly Fisherman". The elements outside could do what they pleased, I was warm and content and home safely for the night. The next morning's drive back to the office was too distant to even intrude on the moment.

Turning to the magazine the first inner page carried an ad., by H. L. L. Leonard Rod Company. Even scanning ads., can consume

many pleasurable moments and I often sit propped in bed contemplating what new item of tackle could be added to my bag. This ad., by Leonard was worth lingering over, in the forefront was a Leonard rod of exceptional beauty. Its characteristic reel seat and grip that tapered to meet the mellow toned cane, signified the firm's reputation of rare quality. Directly behind was another rod; only this one was from a vintage era of rod building when the grips were wrapped in cane and the reel seats were all metal. The two rods symbolised the span of longevity of an honoured company.

Outside the storm continued unabated. A sudden gust of wind would set the metal weather stripping on the threshold of the front door vibrating like an off key tuning fork. The street light highlighted the sculptured snow drifts as they continued to form in the yard and across the road.

I turned inward passing other ads. that catalogued those treasured items essential to the well appointed fly fisher. A brief story by J. Barry-Lloyd caught my attention and I paused to savour its contents. It was well written indeed, although it smacked of one more situation wherein the nonchalant fisherman whose garb runs to the shopworn scores one up on the alleged 'snob' who is splendidly full rig in the smartest tweeds. Once more the era of the non-heroic is reinforced.

Next came an engaging article by Tom Maxwell, one of the founding rod builders of the Thomas and Thomas Rod Company.

Maxwell's great respect for rods and rod builders was even foreseen in underlying tones throughout the article. I was prompted to uncase one of my own Thomas and Thomas rods. I rediscovered the beauty of the workmanship as I let the light from the burning logs play on the golden hue of the varnished cane. It was good to feel its limber action once more, although the pitch of the storm outside was a stark reminder that months were to pass before it would deliver a fly to a rising trout. But then, the imagination knows no such seasonal bounds and holding the rod once more brought thoughts on a late season trip to the Pigeon River in Northern Michigan. I had been staying in Gaylord, a northern town that has adopted a pseudo Swiss village facade in order to compliment its being a centre for winter sports. To reach the Pigeon required a pleasant drive farther north past rolling hills and pasture and then off on a washboard road that twisted through thick woods until an old steel girdered bridge across the river was

reached. That particular morning dawned with a substantial downpour. Uncertain as to whether I would wet a line that day I had periodically surveyed the laden clouds looking for a patch of blue sky that might signal a change for the better. If there was a barometer on the premises I would have exercised the ritual that hotel fishermen are prone to — tapping the glass out of desperation. Eventually a breach in the clouds did materialise and my chance did come. After bouncing through numerous mud puddles by the time I parked at the bridge the car and the windshield was spattered with sandy splotches. The river was soiled and somewhat deeper than it had been earlier in the season, so my strategy that day was to mount a sink tip and to tie on a plump bodied leadwing coachman. A path hugging the bank ran through the woods and this I followed until sighting a downed tree that nearly spanned the river from bank to bank. From past encounters I knew there was a deep hole that swirled from under the umbrella-like clump of roots upturned at the far bank. I quartered the fly to the far bank letting it swing on an arc short of the hole — testing. I sent out several casts, alternatively lengthening out line and then wading a step closer. I had become acquainted with this particular hole earlier in the year. The season opened with the river pathetically low and it remained so throughout a torrid summer. In order to find fishable water levels it was necessary to wade along, sometimes in water barely meeting my ankles, until a deeper run was located. Notwithstanding the poor condition of the river, in reality it was an opportune way to locate trout and to learn its secrets. It was in just such a manner that I discovered the hole under the tree roots, whereas in normal conditions I would probably pass by oblivious to its potential. Usually a wet fly hung in the current could account for at least one trout. A measure of judgement was also demanded, for the maze of roots was quite adept at snarling a fly and breaking it off. I also learned that by fishing dry on the otherside of the tree, trout could be taken from a narrow chute that emptied out from the hole itself. With an upstream cast, the fly had to be delivered as close to the tree trunk as possible, barely skimming it, and then letting it fall for a swirling drift through the chute. Most success came by using a good floater, such as a hairwing coachman with a bushy hackle and a clump of calf tail tied downwing.

However, on that particular day I have been reminiscing about, I had rigged wet and had confined myself to inching closer to the target in ever widening concentric circles. A brisk tug signified my friends under the tree roots were still in residence and in a sociable

mood. Eventually, two browns did accept my repeated offering sending my Thomas and Thomas into that gratifying arc. I may even have caught those same two before and to assure that there may be another chance, I slipped them back. I have another pleasant memory of that day for I surprised a deer that was standing midstream drinking from the river. Something triggered my pressence, for he glanced back in my direction and then bolted, throwing a shower of spray before he disappeared from view into the woods with his white tail bobbing gracefully.

Such are the memories that sustain us throughout the twilight season when we are confined to the hearth and can only divert ourselves by turning to the printed word or to the surveying of our tackle. That blustery night my thoughts were not on the morrow — all that mattered was the moment.

Frank Hursley, Birmingham, Michigan.

Alec and Two Creeks

by

JOHN THORBURN GOLDSMITH

IN the North Island of New Zealand it is no longer easy to find accessible rivers where a fisherman can enjoy solitude. But the South Island is still a paradise for the angler wishing to tempt with dry fly or nymph wild brownies in the 3½ to 6½ lb. range. (Trout of 10 lbs. and over can be taken by anybody who can afford to hire a helicopter and is prepared to camp). Prospective visitors from UK seem to be discouraged by the fact that since the war the number of New Zealanders taking out fishing licences has multiplied enormously, with thread-lining the normal method of attack, and the few who have been tempted have too often gone in packaged parties, spreading their time piecemeal on many waters, and have returned disappointed.

This article is confined to a few miles of two adjacent 'creeks' (rivulets too small to earn the title of 'river') and to the experiences of one angler, Alec Begg, during the last three seasons.

Letter from America

Dear Editor.

You mentioned canoeing as a problem over there. I hope it does not become as Gargantuan as it is here. Many of the popular rivers have canoe liveries where groups can rent canoes for a half day, full day, or for an extended trip. Pick up points along the rivers are pre-arranged so that a party can canoe a specified distance and then be transported back to the livery. Unfortunately, the sport has become so popular that it is now completely out of control with little or no regulation of the hoards that participate. It has raised the hackles of the fly fishing fraternity, although being in the minority our organised howls are listened to but politely ignored. I can understand the appeal canoeing has for I have enjoyed several trips myself. It can be a medium for becoming part of nature and for experiencing the lure of the river itself. However if I see a wading fisherman, I try to glide silently by away from the water he is casting to and not test my expertise by running him down. Many of our rivers are not affected by over use and one can fish happily along. The main branch of the Ausable is quite a different story. The traffic on a weekend is of such heavy proportions that we do not fish there except for early in the morning or late in the evening. By mid-day on a Saturday or Sunday there is a continuous stream of canoes spaced a mere few feet apart and in packs of ten or twenty. Some gregarious souls believing they must continue their social activities while afloat will lash three canoes side by side into one compact but unwieldly flotilla. Few are experienced canoeists and the great majority are ignorant of any form of stream etiquette. Invariably they can be heard long before they are seen as each stroke of the paddle careers off the gunwales. On occasion if their approach is not announced by this discordant whacking an advance convoy of bobbing beer cans may pass silently by. This is a warning to reel in and seek shelter. Often I have had to send an errant canoe tacking a different course in order to avoid being rendered part of the floating flotsam. I do not say a collision course is deliberate it is just that their inexperience with a strong current finds them looking and sounding much like the dodge-um cars at an amusement park. It is hilarious to watch a chance medley of flaying paddles trying to gain control of their twisting and turning craft as they career off logs, low hanging branches, and an occasional disgusted fisherman. They are an extremely friendly lot. Hardly a single canoe passes without registering their extreme interest in your welfare by asking "Catch anything?" After fifty or sixty repetitions of this in various tones of inquiry, your composure becomes rather jarred and you are ready to reply with a brace and bit below the water line. Especially if you have not had a fish on.

There has been some legislature introduced by the Department of Natural Resources and promoted by Trout Unlimited, not to curtail canoe traffic entirely, but to regulate the flow. It has been suggested that the livery companies set up operation on the less popular rivers in order to thin out the congestion that occurs on such rivers as the Ausable. To date every attempt has been stymied by the livery owners, who being organised, have mustered a powerful lobby of opposition. The Department of Natural Resources is keenly interested in the problem, because they see first hand the extensive damage being done to the habitat along the river. Vegetation has been trampled, paths worn, trees felled for fire wood, plus the continual battle with litter is within their province of interest. To illustrate the habitat problem created from over use, the Mason Tract on the south branch of the Ausable is a good example. George Mason a one-time president of the American Motor Corp, had purchased 14 miles of both banks of a section on the South Branch, this he wanted to remain as a natural wilderness area. What cabins had been standing he either tore down or let nature reduce in her own way. He did build a chapel about mid-way into the Tract for the fisherman to pause and refresh himself spiritually. Upon his death he deeded the area to the state with the stipulation that it would be fly only water and would remain as he left it, that is a wilderness area. The area is so popular with canoeists it is now impossible to fish after 10.00 a.m. or before 6.00 p.m. The regulations prohibit camping or ground fires but this is often violated by people who canoe down for an overnight outing. Marble tiles have even been broken off at the Chapel and someone has even built a fire on the floor. Due to a restricted budget and lack of man power the Department of Natural Resources has little hope of policing the area effectively.

Often I fish at a certain bridge on the Manistee River. I have learned from experience that as long as I fish upstream from the bridge I will not be pestered by canoes. The bridge itself is a pull in

point for the liveries. Trucks will drop off a dozen canoes as fast as they can unload them and then depart for another load. The canoeists mount the canoes en masse and push off in snarled confusion with much shouting and noise. I am happy to state I was witness to one exception to the general pattern. I had been fishing on the "wrong side" of the bridge one day when a troop of boy scouts, looking much disheveled, marched out of the adjacent woods. They had spent the night camping in a rain storm. The Scout Master very politely asked if I would mind if they put their canoes in, as I was right in the way of their launch area. I reeled in and backed out of the way while the scout master delivered a final lecture on their proposed 130 mile journey. This done two boys would launch a canoe and set off. When they were well on the way the next two set off. This was repeated by each pair without hooting and shouting until the entire pack had silently glided from sight. I stood there admiring their finesse and wondering why others could not follow their example. I suppose I could go on and on about the dumpings, the paddle splashing fights, and the lost equipment floating downstream but it seems I have taken you through too much white water as it is.

Yours sincerely,

FRANK M. HURSLEY,
Birmingham, Michigan.

Correspondence

DEAR SIR,

I am, and I expect many other members are too, most grateful to Captain G. C. Adams for his series of articles on "How The Fly Appears to The Trout". Such articles appear all too infrequently in the angling press and so are the more welcome when they do so.

I must admit that some of the more scientific reasoning was away above my head but the conclusions were so clearly drawn that even I could understand them.

In the penultimate paragraph of Part 2, Adams states "Most salmon and sea trout flies are presumably representative, or reminiscent, of something, and it is possible that the taking fly of one day may differ considerably from their taking fly of another, etc.

This paragraph is understandably and sensibly cautious and speculative. I would personally question, though it cannot be proved one way or the other, whether it is because the orthodox salmon fly *is* representative or whether it is because it *is not* that prompts the non-feeding salmon to take it? And does the acceptable pattern vary from day to day?

We may think it does but we cannot prove it. I may go out today and have a splendid day using a Hairy Mary. I will never know whether I would have done better or worse had I used a Blue Charm or some other pattern, because I did not try one. And, had I used the Blue Charm would it have attracted the same fish or different ones?

The question with salmon fishing which has never been resolved it, does colour matter a damn, provided the fish can see the fly — hence I believe the effectiveness of a dark one under all light conditions, or is the fact that the fish was in a taking mood when the fly passed over it the one thing that mattered?

Maybe at the end of his book "Letters to a Salmon Fishers' Son" he finishes by saying "Now, my boy, let us go and find a taking fish." He could have been so right.

What fun it is to have a member like Adams who can make us think!
Esmond Drury.

ment of two and a half brace in one hour and fifteen minutes. I did not cover more than sixty square feet.

Who can explain it? Who can tell me why I was chosen to have such a lovely, beautiful, unbelievable experience on such an unpromising abominable day.

I am well acquainted with many knowledgeable anglers around the world. None of them with whom I have talked, to date, have ever had a similar experience and are hard put to believe my story. One of them however has suggested that, when I reach the "Big Pool in the Sky", Messrs. Halford, Skues and Walton will have all the answers. Until then, and I hope that will not be too soon, I shall be forever grateful to Cecil for insisting I use a dry fly.

Letter from America

Dear Editor,

Already I look forward to the time when I shall pack the rod cases and the waders in the back of the station wagon. Our ice age like winter now seems to have reached its zenith. Although, March can be raw enough with its penetrating winds and its sudden, over night soggy type of snow fall. As the days get longer so the knotting on of the first fly of the season will not be too far distant.

Much time is lost from more practical endeavours by day dreaming over the approaching season opener, and I envisage starting out where I left off at the close of last October when the final cast ended with the Greenwell's Glory. Because our method is to explore the water when there is no hatch in evidence I am sure the choice of this fly can prove as fruitful as any. At least I am determined to test its reputation. I do not see the Greenwell's mentioned often in this country. The emphasis is more on scouring the bottom with nymphs. But being rather Victorian in my tastes I intend to ignore the preaching of the current elite and instead keep company with the more traditional wet fly patterns. Last year I roamed with the Leadwing Coachman, the Cow Dung, and the Gold Ribbed Hares Ear; all tried and trusted patterns whose reputation did not suffer, even at my hands. The Mallard and Claret intrigues me, I tied a few of these and will have them on hand purely for speculation. Of course the dry fly is my first love but if one is to accomplish much in the way of fishing, both wet and dry has to be practiced on our rivers.

I seem to be in the minority in more ways than being a fly fisher, for I am also an early riser. By 11 p.m. at a social function my chin is bobbing on the knot of my tie and my eyes are like slits. While in the north country I can bound from bed at dawn alarmed for having over slept. A friend has a small cabin on the North Branch of the Au Sable. Due to its size he never invites more than two for the week-end. For comforts sake this is sound thinking. In the evening while the other two chaps are still swishing their ice cubes and whisky I tip-toe to bed. Come morning though, and I am up with a spring in my gait. The others accuse me of clicking my reel too loudly, dropping the coffee pot in the stove, and over-taxing the plumbing. As soon as there is light in the sky I pull on the waders and enter the stream. A streamer such as a Cusseboom Salmon pattern can usually account for a brace of browns before the mists have evaporated and this provides a stirring tonic to greet the day. Before the sun has topped the trees I have learned from experience that the two chaps within are stirring about and have managed with early morning clumsiness to have the bacon in the pan. When I turn in at the rear door in dripping waders anxious to relate my adventure I am greeted not only by that marvellous aroma of sizzling bacon, but I am also soundly abused by such rejoinders as "That poacher is back from his dawn patrol". The ritual of shaving having been dispatched earlier as well as a graying moustache trimmed, for we never go astream unshaven. I am ravenous and ready to share a hearty breakfast. Bacon and eggs, toast and marmalade, and cups of hot coffee are consumed while we joke about how hard it is roughing it in the north woods. We laugh over how deprived we are being encamped amidst leather rod cases, cane rods, Hardy reels, and Wheatley fly boxes; the Scotch, ginger beer, Canadian ale; the steaks in the fridge waiting for the evening charcoal grilling, and the Claret waiting to be sipped with the steaks, and the Port for later in with the Stilton when we rehash the days adventure. The lot of the fly fisher is indeed a harsh one.

The cabin itself is quite comfortable and is constructed of half logs with panelled walls in the inside. There are two small bedrooms, a living room and an adjacent kitchen area. A large picture window looks out on the river. The owner has furnished his cabin rather stylishly with a large sofa and matching easy chair done in a scened fabric of grouse and pheasant. An old fashioned ice chest with brass hardware serves as the official whisky cabinet. A rod rack is in one corner and on the walls are brass hooks for hanging vests, nets and jackets. A fly tying table remains set up with vise and materials for instant use. The back porch has other racks for drying waders and pegs for hanging rods as well as a knee high railing which acts as a serving tray for the noon time cheese and crackers quaffed with ginger beer.

Both upstream and down several cabins line the river. The third cabin downstream is an attractive log dwelling called Rod and Brush, here a poet once wrote glowing phrases about the Au Sable. Beyond him another half a mile a retired doctor lives who wrote a history of the area called "The Old Au Sable". Roughly halfway between these two places a wooden foot bridge spans the river. This was built many years ago by another doctor in retirement who would sit for hours in his front window with drink in hand waiting for Canoeists to float by. When one did approach he would ambush them with startling bugle calls and erratic noises piped through loud speakers attached to the bridge. He enjoyed his amusement until one day his liver sounded taps and he rounded the last bend. His offspring resumed the tradition and I have been in the river early and have been startled by the whistle and roar of a steam locomotive about to rise out of the mists.

On the upstream side two cabins recently changed hands. The two owners had been inseparable fishing companions for twelve years until one died. The loss for the remaining one was too unbearable so he sold and moved away.

Directly in front of my friends cabin it is impossible to fish during the early spring. The water is heavy and much too deep for safe wading. A twenty minute walk upstream through the woods brings us to a shallower section that has a good gravel bottom, is wide, and contains a good population of brook trout. It is June before we can fish down the entire stretch back to the cabin in water that is not lapping over the wader tops.

The entire walk back usually consumes three hours and a challenging variety of water and conditions are passed through on the way.

Two fellow fly fishermen and myself are trying to arrange a weeks fishing in the Catskill Mountains of New York this June. Even though I do not believe I'll be able to pull it off this year I have been writing to the area for information on lodging and maps. The Catskill was the spawning ground of our American fly fishing tradition and techniques. Here is where the literature of the sport was created and American style of fly patterns perfected. Such personalities as Gordon, Hewit and Jennings are only a few who have contributed their experience in in writing of the Catskill. Our intent is to canvas the area and sample the rivers that we have read so much about.

Yours sincerely,

FRANK M. HURSLEY,

Birmingham, Michigan.

Poets Corner

CONTRARY CANTOS

Great-grandfather had reels of brass — I think he called them "winches".
His trout were reckoned-up in pounds. His rods in feet and inches.
His son, another greenheart man, used "gut" in "casts" dyed palish blue
And Father used *his* father's rod and net and creel and never knew
The joy of using graphite rods or fibreglass or even cane.
But his misfortunes seem to pale when matched against his greatest gain
He reckoned-up his fish in pounds, his rods in feet, nor gave a dam
For "metres" or their smaller parts nor used the blasted "kilogram".
So I, the fourth, if not the last in this the family line,
With "graphite" rod and fishing "vest" and even "leaders" still decline
To be a Eurofisherman though some such things, I must agree,
May well be good for some of us as certainly they are for me.
But somewhere I must draw the line, reactionary though it sounds.
My rods I'll reckon-up in feet. My trout, by Gad, in pounds.

MacIasgair.

If I was asked to emphasise one particular point, I would pick on the Panel's plea that education and the research to back it, should play a dominant part in future developments."

R.S.P.C.A. RELEASE.

A Letter from America

DEAR EDITOR,

Two years back I changed jobs and thought that as one advances in years the work load diminished. Such has not been the case and fishing has suffered somewhat. To reach trout water it requires a 200 mile drive north and there have not been that many weekends available. I don't know if you are acquainted with *Trout Unlimited* but it is a national organisation devoted to keeping clear trout waters and conservation. It was originated twenty years ago here in Michigan and has expanded with many regional chapters. Our local chapter is called the Paul H. Young Chapter after the rod maker who once had his shop in the area. For the past year and a half I have been on the board of directors of this chapter. My official duty is as the editor of a newsletter called *Tight Lines* which is printed four or five times a year. It is dry stuff but I'll send a copy.

Several weeks back I received my first issue of the new format of the *Flyfishers' Journal*. You have done an excellent job in revamping it and I enjoyed it immensely. Your researching for the 100th anniversary of the club must be a fascinating undertaking. I would like to hear more about it.

We are in the midst of organising the yearly banquet for our Chapter of Trout Unlimited. This will be coming-up in April just before the opening of trout season. Last year it was quite a success and raised a good sum of money which will be used in promoting a research project here in Michigan.

A few of the rivers have been selected for a study of trout habitat, feeding habits, growth characteristics, etc., and will extend over a period of several years. The information gathered will be turned over to our Department of Natural Resources and it is hoped they will use the data in wise river management programmes. Our first step is to raise funds through our chapter banquets and use this to have a professional proposal written. The proposal will then be presented to a foundation in the hope of inspiring a grant for the research project itself.

Who has not seen those delightful pencil sketches illustrating fly fishing books without reflection on the images they evoke? A turn of a page might bring a sketch of a leather fly book — worn at the edges but healthy enough for loyal service. Another few pages and a vest with bulging pockets, a classic reel trailing a line or perhaps a grouping of finely detailed salmon flies may complement the fishing tales related within.

If I had the expertise to wield a pencil in that fashion I would depict a small log cabin set among a stand of pine and poplar trees. In the background a swift flowing river would wind from sight around a far bend. I would sketch the poplar rees, sparse with an occasional leaf midair on its way to join those already carpeting the path to the river. The scene would suggest October, a favourate month, with a curl of smoke eddying from the chimney. Further occupancy would be suggested by three pairs of waders hanging on drying racks at the rear wall. Knee high water marks would indicate recent usage. On an adjacent wall joined rods would be cradled in protective holders. Nearby a cord of split logs await their turn in the fireplace within. A spit for charcoal broiling steaks would complete the scene.

This is how I would sketch the little cabin by the Au Sable whose owner Don Paddon has named it "The Happy Fisherman". Although, the cabin is not so little anymore because the Paddon's have expanded the main room outward toward the river. Windows were added along the river side and an early morning riser can linger over fresh coffee, while sorting his gear with one eye scanning the river for the first dimple.

Brass hooks jutt from one panelled wall and fishing vests topped by their owners tweed hats are assigned here in an organised row. An antique compositors' type-box with its ingenious maze of odd sized compartments acts as a display case for trout flies that have served with distinction. Each fly in the collection has conquered a trout of at least 14 inch stature. It has been set down in the by-laws of "The Happy Fisherman" that nothing less than a 14 inch. rascal will qualify even the most imaginative fly for retirement with full honours.

It is only fitting that the position of honour is held by the host himself. One afternoon a lovely 18 inch brown took Don's size 18 Adams directly in front of his cabin. After a stout skirmish he landed the brown and held it up for all to admire. We then patted it fondly before returning it to the river.

Receiving somewhat more usage than the display case is an ancient, oak ice chest with solid brass hinges and a massive latch. This has been corrupted into a liquor cabinet. As soon as a guest arrives his first act is to deposit his bottle of whisky within the chest with the full confidence that it will not be violated by hands other than his own. Flanking the bottles of whisky like a squad of protective Hussars in bright uniforms are various fruit flavoured brandies. Experience has taught that a fruit brandy is most effective on frozen circulations after a long day astream in bone chilling weather. Ginger Beers in drabber uniforms are the great thirst quencher for those sultry days of mid-season.

In addition to these latter essentials a small table staffed with vice, tying tools plus an assortment of materials stands in readiness for an experimental pattern or just for restocking a diminished fly box.

It is difficult to judge which activity is pursued with more gusto — the fishing or the meals. Whether the meals are interrupted by the fishing or the fishing is delayed by the meals is sometimes hard to determine. Nevertheless, the day is officially set in motion when Dr. Masty, draped in an apron to keep his fishing togs unsullied, breaks into his skillet wielding a pronounced degree of body that English good chefs build their reputation on. The results of his thrust and parry at the burner soon brings the bacon and eggs to perfection while the cabin is enveloped in layers of smoke. As always, performance singles out those most qualified for a particularly demanding task. After several week-ends north we have found that Dr. Masty's destiny with a dentist drill and probe has also developed his wrist for cracking eggs. I must say I had my one moment at the cooking stove. I have dropped hints so often about how delicious an old treasured recipe for pancakes was that I was invited to submit proof. My horrors increased when a sticking griddle would not release its charge without much scrapping and sawing. We sat down to a mound of mangled pancakes. Their reception was accompanied with silence which is sometimes kinder.

Lunch begins with appetisers, Salami, cheese and crackers are the norm but are sometimes embellished with little extras that someones wife may pack along with the underwear. Hamburgers or knackwursts are usually grilled over charcoal and then served dowsed with ketchup and a thick slice of onion. The combination does not always marry well with the whisky but there are few complaints. In order to get the operation underway each of us volunteers, or we are assigned, a particular duty in the preparations. Don opts for working his grill and displays controlled restraint in trying to ignite charcoal that always manages to be damp. Dr. Masty's nimble fingers are employed in slicing the cheese, salami, tomatoes and onions. I am the delegate in charge of the ice cubes.

Dinner is preceded by the days second cocktail hour when we relax on the back porch trying to relieve taut back muscles after an afternoon of wading strong currents. Don repeats his ritual of trying to ignite those stubborn coals and this requires several attempts and a pint of lighter fluid. In time he has alleviated his frustrations by acquiring a handy electric starter that is shaped like a horseshoe with a handle. This he plugs into an outdoor socket, places the horseshoe end under the charcoal and stands aside awaiting results. However, the process demands precise timing and close attention, for if the tool is charged longer than eight minutes, the length of a short whisky, such is the intensity of the heat, it will destroy itself.

Once the coals show signs of co-operating, whole potatoes are buried in their midst along with wrapped ears of corn. Up to an hour is allotted their transformation into suitable companions for the steaks which are next on the grill. During this interlude the whisky is attended to, the salad composed and the Claret uncorked for its breathing spell.

When north we pack as much into the day as possible and usually long before the steaks have reached their perfection the sun has declined, levelling that pitch blackness unique to the north woods. Any breeze the day has mustered will retire elsewhere, at this hour. The leaves will be stilled and all will be silent except for the heart-beat of the river. Overhead a myriad of stars begin their nocturnal march. Their magnitude and depth is startling. Back in the city we have forgotten their existence as only the most determined are hazily visible.

Needless to say the flashlight determines the rarity of the steaks and there is much last minute scrambling the darkness before the table is finally garnished with our evening feast. Before a fork is

lifted, however, we hoist a bumper to the days successes and we then charge our plates with gusto.

I fear I have created the impression that the sole activity at "The Happy Fisherman" consists of a day long eating derby. I insist however, that we do wet a line between the laying on and taking off of the dinner plates. Nevertheless, with the cabin tidied up after breakfast and with the dishes washed and stacked for drying we gather our tackle in preparation for the days adventure. After numerous false starts waiting for Don we exit single file from the rear door much in the fashion of the dwarfs in "Snow White". Invariably, Don has overlooked some needed item due to his preoccupation with checking the orderliness of the cabin and we are left on tenterhooks while he returns to search it out.

Once astream and, with an eye toward tipping the odds in our favour each of us ties on a different pattern. The first of our triumvirate to entice a willing trout passes the word up and down stream indicating the successful pattern. The other two execute a quick fly change to the same as to a similar pattern. This method has proved productive, but if not, in short order our impatience has us experimenting in other directions.

As it is we probably do all the wrong things anyway. We wear bright clothing, carry more sparkling implements dangling from our vests than a telephone linesman and wade through holding water while casting to barren pockets. But we do deceive an occasional tiddler. Although, such is the variety of situations encountered when searching the water without that give away rise, that any particudar success is not always owing to anything more noble haphazard luck. We would like to attribute our prowess to technique grounded in current and past theories as laid down in the vast literature of our sport. This would have a nice ring to it at the next fly tying season. As it is when we do try to rationalise the why and how of deceiving any particular trout with the intent of repeating a conquest the circumstances have completely changed as we gain the next bend in the river. It seems there is always a set of missing dimensions. But then we would order the sport any other way. It is the unpredictable that keeps luring us back primed with anticipation.

One such situation occurred one afternoon shortly after the midday repast. It was late season with little fly activity other than a random Olive or Gray Caddis. Not a rise was in sight. Don decided on using something large and chunky looking. He tied on an overstuffed grasshopper pattern that looped through the air like a bass bug when he cast. My choice was miniscule in comparison I tied on a Henryville Special, size 18. This is a caddis imitation whose popularity is fast achieving modern classic status due to its productivity throughout the season with or without surface activity.

I was following Don about 30 yards behind and exploring the same bank side that he was. Within minutes of entering the river directly in front of "The Happy Fisherman" Don gave a shout and he was into a good sized trout. At the same moment I had dropped my Henryville Special dead against the bank where it just sort of lay motionless in the slack water. The straightening line slowly pulled it away imparting a life-like touch to the fly. At that instant the water errupted and I had a fish on. Both of us were into stout hearted trout at the same time and both fish were attracted by two drastically different patterns and hook sizes. I could see by the throbbing of Don's arched rod that he was into a strong fish. Mine also had some heft to it and made two lovely runs stripping line to the accompaniment of a singing reel. While playing my fish I tried to keep one eye on Don's progress when suddenly I saw his line go slack. His fish was gone. This had no sooner happened when my fish bolted out of the water in one furious lunge that decided the issue then and there. For a moment when the fish was sky-borne I had a glimpse of what promised to be a hefty 18 inch brown trout in all its colourful glory. That brief glimpse was ordained to be my only reward, for the force of his lunge parted the leader and he was gone. No fly was to be retired with full honours in the display case that day but the back porch did share in the tales that evening as the charcoal finally co-operated.

Yours sincerely,

FRANK M. HURSLEY.

Letter from America

by FRANK HURSLEY

I HOLD the impression that your lovely island is abundantly laced with charming fishing hotels that are set down like welcome harbours along the banks of your famous rivers. A romantic vision, perhaps, but one that stems from reading your fine works of fly fishing literature as so many are closely related to hotel waters. In "Rod in Hand", C. V. Hancock introduces his fellow Greenwells and then paces them through accounts of their fishing conquests, which often results in amusing mishaps. Comfortable inns and hotels are featured in the Greenwells' varied voyages astream. On the other hand, C. F. Walker in his "Riverside Reflections" discourses on the ideal fishing hotel, one that he finds in reality always seems to be just out of reach. Regardless of opinion, however, it is evident that fishing hotels are a firmly entrenched tradition and there is little doubt that, for many, they do represent the only means of access to angling waters.

Being an arch Anglophile I would welcome the opportunity to week-end in one of your angling hotels. Even if the weather was foul and tapping the barometer did not entice a reprieve, I would be surfeited in good feeling simply from the atmosphere of my Victorian chambers.

Over here, on this side of the bank, we are fortunate in having a few angling hotels that have contributed measureably to the American legend of trout fishing and enriched our transplanted traditions. A few have become legendary and are closely identified with the fly fishing fraternity. Perhaps falling short of the vintage mark your hotels are blessed with, a few of ours can boast of more than an upstart lineage on our abbreviated scale.

We tend to consider the main thrust of American fly fishing originating in the Catskill Mountain area of central New York. In particular, in and around Roscoe, New York, where the Willowemoc and the Beaverkill meet at the famous Junction Pool. The stories these two rivers have inspired are beyond reckoning, and it was here that the Catskill School of fly tying became codified. Our tradition stems from the contributions of such personalities as Theodore Gordon, Reuben Cross and Ray Bergman, with George La Branche, Edward Ringwood, Hewitt and Preston Jennings continuing the line of descent to the present Harry Darbee, who was to add his "Catskill Flytier" to a shelf-long collection of angling literature.

The hotels in the area housed the anglers who slipped away from nearby, raucous New York city for a few peaceful moments devoted to casting their flies over the ripples and pools of the cobble-lined rivers of the majestic Catskills. Hotels like the Hearthstone and Ward's De Bruce Club were at ease with the jargon of the fly fisher. Indeed, one may wonder if any other was tolerated.

Without question, the Catskills with their host of rambling, clapboard lodges and hotels have contributed heavily to the mainstream of our trout fishing heritage. However, in recent years Ernest Schwiebert has compiled considerable evidence placing the Poconos Mountain area of Pennsylvania as a rival to the claims prescribed for the Catskills. In his "Homage to Henryville", an historical examination of trout fishing on the Brodheads, he links the Henryville House with our major fly fishing literati and with the innovation stirrings of the entire past century. As the hotel's origin dates to 1835 he suggests that the Henryville House is the oldest fishing hotel in the country. He confirms its stature in the annals of American fly fishing by citing an extensive list of our classic authors and prominent personalities who were closely associated with the hotel. The Anglers' Club of New York was to be founded by some of the venerable, late nineteenth century guests. It is questionable just what Buffalo Bill and Annie Oakley contributed to fly fishing, but their presence at the Henryville must have added to the atmosphere.

To sophisticated Easterners, we in Michigan are still on the fringe of the frontier, barely out of the tomahawk era, and in the realms of angling lore this is largely true. Notwithstanding this slight, the grayling was our native fish and its popularity did entice anglers from several surrounding states to make an almost wilderness journey to its habitat. By the turn of the century the grayling was extinct and the brown trout and the lovely brook trout became the hunted as anglers were attracted northward, travelling by railroad and by horse-drawn wagon over mere dirt trails.

In 1900 the Douglas Hotel was constructed on the bank of the North Branch of the Au Sable at the old lumbering village of Lovells. Little is known about the hotel other than that it was a comfortable haven for anglers who penetrated north to sample the trout of the Au Sable system. It was not until

1913 that the automobile survived the journey to the Douglas. Anglers' enormous catches of brook trout were provided space in huge ice boxes.

At one time the Douglas hosted Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone and Thomas Edison. A pavilion was constructed bankside and it was here that Henry Ford satisfied his penchant for square dancing.

The Douglas has been closed for several years now, but the last time I peered in through the windows of the brown, clapboard structure, the dining room tables were formally set as if awaiting tweed clad angling gentlemen to descend from the upper chambers for their evening dinner. The hotel now stands in silent testimony to a less hurried age when hours were required to complete the journey over dusty, uncertain roads and through dense forest before reaching the comfort of its parlour. The hotel's register would be a treasure of untold stories long buried within the deteriorating walls of this silent symbol of Michigan angling.

The present generation of fly fishermen does have an inn of sorts which is located right on the Main Stream of the Au Sable at Stephens Bridge, named after an early French Canadian settler. Gates Au Sable Lodge does not follow the clapboard architecture of its predecessors, nor it is in the stone cottage vintage of your own bankside retreats. In fact, it could be transplanted onto any of our super highways and would blend in unnoticed among all the other motel style complexes lining them. However, there the comparison ends. The Au Sable Lodge is the mecca for fly fishermen within the state of Michigan, and draws anglers from surrounding states.

It can be said that to stay at the lodge is to sever all connections with the commonplace world. Fly fishing becomes the common denominator and the everyday language assumes an esoteric verbiage compounded from rod lengths and line weights. All peculiarities associated with the work-a-day world remain behind within the confines of the city limits. The polished motor car tethered outside each room is temporarily relieved of its status symbolism and becomes a mere conveyance, laden with waders, tackle bags and rod cases for transplanting to nearby rivers.

Cal Gates is the congenial proprietor of the lodge. He is an affable, unpretentious host with that rare gift of greeting his lodgers on a first name basis. Cal is tall, usually topped by a wide-brimmed cowboy hat — not very English, this — and easily erupts into a beaming smile that melts barriers. If he is not the centre attraction of a group debating fly patterns and rod characteristics, he can be found on the casting dock laying out long lines with delicate precision. His masterly delivery is the envy of us less gifted mortals. Cal is an accomplished fly fisherman and it is his understanding of the fly fisher's world that sets the tone of his establishment. A guest can tap his knowledge of the river and of the hatches that are due throughout the season.

It is unnecessary to seek one's trout elsewhere as Gates is situated bankside and, if you are dextrous enough to snake your rod tip past the threshold of your room, it is a mere few feet to the river. In as much as anglers are also subject to the "grass is greener" syndrome, the mere communication of a pending hatch coming off further downstream will send a starry eyed contingent in pursuit. Or some may have their cherished secret pools, the whereabouts of which they jealously guard against detection as they nonchalantly motor off as if on their way to the barber's shop, back seats criss-crossed with rods.

The rooms at the lodge are ample and each is endowed with a large picture window looking out onto the river. To roll from beneath the sheets on an invigorating morn, and to see the sun playing across the rippled surface of the river can be a rich experience; unless, that is, you happen to be facing the other way, and waken to the sight of a baggy eyed companion snoring in the adjacent bed. Invariably, an angler will be fishing in front of the lodge and, by keeping a jealous eye on his success, one can rush out and sidle into his productive pool — once he has vacated it, of course.

Directly in front of the lodge is a deep pool that swirls away from the bank at a slight bend in the river. It has been labled the Bread Hole. Every day, bread is tossed into the pool, and the violence of the trout in pursuit of a crusty morsel nearly throws the water up onto the banks. Between feedings, all is quiet and evidence of trout in residence is non-existant. To my knowledge no one has enticed a trout from the hole, 'though one of the habitues did hook and land a discarded telephone after much cranking in of line.

At one time the lodge boasted a club room equipped with a fireplace and an ice cube machine. The room was located midway in the elongated row of room units and served as a meeting place for the evenings' tall tale sessions, which were inspired by bumpers of whisky. Unfortunately, the room has been pressed into service as another lodge unit and

now the camraderie is carried on while perched unsteadily on the edge of one's host's bed.

Connected to the lodge is a comfortable dining room where the meals are generous and hearty and served by cheerful waitresses entirely unembarassed by the anglers' jargon. One nicety is the white table cloths — one of the remaining marks at a first class establishment. Home made bread and pies, a house speciality, come hot from the oven. My own favourite meal of the day is breakfast. To arrive at the river with one's cherished rod, having been fortified with a platter of bacon and eggs or with a stack of firm pancakes, is to have gained the favour of Izaak, our patron saint; a little extra softness in the delivery of the fly is guaranteed.

During sultry summer week-ends, lunch can be spiced by watching the canoe parade. The lead canoes, if launched in Grayling, take at least four hours to reach the lodge water. Until noon the fishing is peaceful and there is little fear of being run down by a novice at the end of a paddle. Thereafter, the safer course is to be ensconced at a window table munching a club sandwich, waiting for the first canoes to come twisting and turning under Stephen's Bridge. Sometimes, gregariousness can be stretched beyond reasonable limits when a flotilla of three or four canoes lashed together, their occupants tilting beer cans, drift by like a floating Octoberfest. If the weather is really warm an occasional topless lass will fog the spectacles as she floats by like a modern day Lady Godiva, sans horse.

Adjacent to the dining room is a well stocked tackle shop offering everything the angler needs to be appointed full fig. Compartmented cases display tons of flies in assorted patterns and sizes. There are reels under glass, all types, but those from that famous English "House" receive the fondest handling. Rods there are, too, in styles, lengths and weights to satisfy the most demanding of stream problems. There are cases of accessories like hook disgorgers, tweezers, folding scissors and clippers, all designed to dangle from one's vest. And, of course, there are vests — assorted of style and color. With today's philosophy of returning trout, the willow creels are left to mellow on the shelf. An array of Wheatley boxes is aligned in size order and by number of compartments. Vials of oil and silicone sprays to float flies are there for inspection. And nets range from the inexpensive metal-framed to those hand constructed in select and varnished woods.

The shop is all too accommodating and compulsive tendencies have to be guarded against. I have watched more than one lad being charmed out of his grocery money by the mere wiggle of a cane rod.

Although a relative newcomer, the lodge has already assured itself of a niche in the saga of Michigan trouting. There have been no literary spokesmen comparable with those who frequented the Antrim and Henryville House, but Gate's hospitality has been broadcast by word of mouth and its popularity increases yearly.

Opening week-end at the end of April illustrates the lodge's unique prominence in the affection of the fly fishing fraternity. Bookings for rooms have anglers with cabins of their own on the Au Sable to be made a year in advance, and even some forgo their own roofs to share in the camraderie at Gates.

On that one special week-end, the river will be dotted with anglers every thirty yards. Others, as if awaiting a turn in the chain, will gather in groups to share a few words with acquaintances perhaps not seen since the previous year's opener. It is the total experience that brings them forth each year, and to catch a trout or two is no more than an agreeable bonus.

The enchantment lingers on that evening as the river is left to its own devices and the day's adventures are re-enacted over the dinner table. The lodge makes a major contribution to the whole place, a place where legends are born.

Letter from America

by FRANK M. HURSLEY

NO doubt for most people, Friday, October 9th, 1981, will have gone down as just another one of those insignificant, last day of the week sort of days that are always spent office bound. Not so for a small contingent of the "Order of the Whangdoodles". On that Friday, accompanied by their Whangdoodlettes, they convened for what was to become a week-end, semi-official meeting held at Windswept Cottage, on Black Lake in northern Michigan. The official seal of the society bears the initials, Y.C.M.L.O.G.S. Let me dispel at the outset any notion that they represent the call letters of any subversive or political activist society by rendering the official translation: "You Can't Make Love On Ginger Snaps".

The initials, topped by an heraldic design of crossed fly rods, are also emblazoned on a colorful patch that is proudly displayed on each member's fishing vest. A primary duty of a fledgling Whangdoodler is to commission his Whangdoodlette to weild needle and thread and ensconce his emblem on a prominent part of his vest.

Hollis Halladay, the master fly tier of Birmingham, Michigan, is the founding father and also the chairman eternal of this august group. Standing at his side, as she has for over fifty years, is Adele, his petite Whangdoodlette and official leader of the ladies' auxiliary. The combined age of the two Halladays computes at one hundred and sixty with only four months separating their dates of birth. It was at the Halladays' Windswept Cottage that the fall meeting convened. However, authorised recording in the Journal had to be dispensed with due to the lack of a full quorum taking up residence.

Hollis's long association with Black Lake stems from the time when, as a mere lad in 1914, his father migrated the family from Vermont to northern Michigan. The senior Halladay, an avid fly fisherman himself, was employed by the American Wood Rim Co. in Onaway. The company manufactured wooden steering wheels for the early motor cars until the factory burned down in 1926, causing irreparable damage to the growth of Onaway, it being rebuilt in another locale within the State.

For many years, Hollis has taught fly tying at the high school in Birmingham, and it is through these Monday night conclaves that many of our angling associations have been formed. In a sense, Hollis has been the nucleus of a web of close friendships which have developed amongst people who have first come together in his class. Without hesitation, one and all look to Hollis as the acknowledged master in matters piscatorial and rely faithfully on his broad experience. Having angled in the major rivers across the country, he is sceptical about the claims of the "tiny fly" school of imitation, and will bluntly dismiss them as humbug, professing loudly that if you want to catch a large fish you must show it something big. He served his trouting apprenticeship under his father's tutelage during the era when three wet flies on droppers was the unquestioned norm.

Today, Hollis's favoured dry fly is the Adams which was developed here in Michigan by another Halladay, a distant relative. For an attractor pattern, he lauds the Coachman Streamer as one of the prime producers when he fishes some of his favorite rivers such as the Rainy, Canada Creek or the Black, all of which he easily reaches from his northern retreat, Windswept Cottage.

As for his method of teaching fly tying, it is largely by demonstration; we gather in a circle round his vise while he nimbly fashions the evening's pattern. His trade mark is an unlit cigar tucked in one corner of his mouth. During the progress of the evening and as each of us fumbles with the evening's tie, Hollis will circulate around the room, offering advice or correcting a wayward feather. Before the session ends, that unlit cigar will

mysteriously shrink to a mere stub of its former self. Also, as part of the evening's informal program, he will deliver a few north woods tales peppered with salty phrases that would require censoring before I could repeat them here.

That Friday, as Lois and I motored the 230 miles north, we travelled through parts of Michigan we had never seen before. Half way there, after leaving the throughway, we travelled cross country through towns and villages that offered a refreshing contrast to the uninspiring, modern express lanes of non-stop traffic. Adding greatly to the journey, the Autumn colors were at their peak, displayed brilliantly as the clouds parted to discharge the sun across the surrounding, rolling hillsides. It is rare indeed to have a northern visit coincide exactly with the fall colors at the height of their brilliance. One week later can find the trees half denuded of their leaves.

We passed over the Au Sable River, although at a point much further east than our usual fishing haunts. Here, the river is dammed, forming a large, lake-like body of water. At a certain hour each day, water is released from the dam and, as a warning to wading fishermen, a siren is sounded to indicate that the water level below the dam is about to rise. More than one unwary fisherman has been trapped on the wrong side of the river by the rising water.

Lunch time found us at Windswept Cottage just in time to share in a hearty kettle of soup which quickly dispelled the chill of the mid-40° temperature outside.

The cottage is flanked by several of the pine trees that are so symbolic of the northern half of the State. Windswept is extremely comfortable. It has three bedrooms, a kitchen and a living room containing a large fire place in which a log fire burned continuously throughout our stay. Throughout, there are numerous photographs and assorted mementoes which suggest that decades of memories have been nourished within. A screened porch across the front allows an uninterrupted view of Black Lake, and I am sure it must afford a cool haven during the sultry days of summer. Outback, another charming building complete with kitchen range and sleeping bunks serves to house the overflow from the main cottage.

After lunch, another contingent of Whangdoodlers, Don and Elaine Paddon, proprietors of "The Happy Fisherman" down on the north branch of the Au Sable, arrived to claim the third bedroom.

Hollis was impatient to have his two Whangdoodlers sample the Coho salmon fishing on the Ocqueoc River, and Don and I were soon into knickerbockers and wool shirts with all the gear stowed in Hollis's station wagon. A flask of Blackberry Brandy completed our equipment. We left the ladies to challenge the lunch dishes and, as a parting suggestion, in case the cabin became tedious, put it to them that an afternoon swim in the lake might perk things up.

Although I was no stranger to the river's reputation, this was my first introduction to the river itself.

My initial acquaintance with the Ocqueoc came from hearing about the section of waterfalls over which the salmon work their ways during their fall spawning run. On our way to the river, Hollis took us through the city of Ocqueoc. Strangely, the city is awarded a dot on Michigan maps but, in reality, it consists of two buildings, one of which is a saloon.

Upon our arrival at the river, the falls presented a very alluring scene and proved that waterfalls do not have to plunge great distances in order to qualify for a place amongst nature's works of art. As it is, they are like wide, shallow steps, extending for a hundred yards or more, the water cascading over them with melodic intensity. That particular week-end, the salmon had not yet reached the falls in their upstream migration.

Hollis was as good as his word. He said he was going to take us far into the woods, ". . . back where the geese walk backwards". We drove down a rutted trail which was quite spongy where it crossed low-lying ground. But even these bogs did not temper his courage as he charged the station wagon along at a fair clip, and we kind of danced through the soft patches. At a few particularly trying dips in the trail, Hollis simply gripped his cigar a little more firmly, and we practically floated along, almost skimming bark from the flanking trees. Adele was to comment later, when she heard what the station wagon had been subjected to, "He simply has no common sense at all when it comes to fishing."

From a high bank at our destination we could look down upon a bend in the river and see the salmon lying as dark forms in the deeper pools. Further upstream, some were porpoising out of the water, charging skyward only to fall back in showers of water, and sounding much as if Jack Pines had crashed. Just the sight of these monstrous fish lying below us was enough to send the nerve endings into spasms.

In preparation for the week-end, Hollis had kept us busy tying streamers in bright oranges, blues and reds on heavy salmon irons, and these we had in plenteous supply. The rod I had brought along was an 8½ foot fibreglass one that I had put together as part of a winter project. Having seen the sizes of the fish, I began to wonder whether I should not have whipped the rings on with baling wire.

Much has been written about the taking of Pacific salmon on fly in recent years, countering the old belief that, because the fish do not feed when they return to the rivers to spawn, they could not be induced to take a fly. Through much experimentation on the part of avid fly fishermen, systems have evolved, mainly based on provocation. Fast sinking lines, or floating lines mounted with split shot, are now the recognised means of getting the fly to fish level. Some anglers even carry spare spools of line of different densities in order to match varying water conditions.

The coho themselves are not native to Michigan, but are the result of a long-term program of plantings in several of the rivers that flank both sides of the State. Michigan is a peninsula with Lake Michigan on the west and Lake Huron on the east. These lakes are huge bodies of water in which the young coho mature before returning to spawn in the rivers of their origin. Unlike the Atlantic salmon, coho die upon completion of their spawning ritual, and this has prompted hords of snaggers to converge on the rivers during the runs. The rationale behind the snagging is that, since the fish die anyway, there can be no harm in harvesting them by any means possible. Gradually, following pressure by sporting clubs, state officials are phasing out the snagging practices, although they are short of manpower to enforce new regulations. One unsavoury activity that has evolved as a result of the snagging is the stripping of hen fish and the sale of their spawn to other fishermen, the carcasses usually being discarded to rot on the banks. But back to the river.

We found the Ocqueoc not overly wide but with many twisting turns as it flowed towards Lake Huron. Between the many bends are straight, shallow runs through which an occasional salmon would shoulder its way upstream with much tail flapping, sounding like the passing of a paddle steamer. While I was surveying the river from the bank, one salmon shot out of a deep hole, came tail-flapping at top speed across a shallow riffle, and smacked head first into a projecting log. Stunned by the abrupt impediment to its progress, it about faced and showed its hind quarters as it staggered back to its original lair. Having witnessed this display, I began to ask myself whether a fish that seemed unable to see an eight inch log could possibly be expected to see my fly.

Anxious to join in the commotion, Don and I suited up while Hollis retrieved a folding camp stool from his station wagon and set it up on a high bank overlooking our pool. Due to the narrowness of the river, it was not difficult to locate the salmon, most of which were collecting in the deeper halts that lined one bankside or the other. As one moved in, he seemed to alarm the one already in residence which would then move on to the next hole upstream.

At times, their movement upstream became hair raising. Standing in the shallows in order to cast into the deeper pockets I was nearly scuttled more than once by those 20lb. missiles charging in my direction. One actually passed between my legs. As I saw him, dead on course, only my suspenders restrained me from catapulting right out of my waders.

Don and I alternated turns casting into the pool. We changed the colorful streamers we had tied, but were able to stimulate no interest at all. Although we wished to prove our mettle in front of our master, we decided that the morrow would be the day and excused our empty baskets by reminding ourselves that we were, after all, really greenhorns at the sport. A pull on the Blackberry pledged our determination for the next day, and we decamped with an eye on the comforts of the cottage.

The following morning, Hollis officiated in the kitchen and quickly brought forth a substantial breakfast of his own special pancakes with sausages and mugs of coffee. Even though Hollis did not intend to fish himself, such is his hospitality that he had Don and I back at the same pool on the Ocqueoc in short order.

Being a Saturday, the river was more heavily attended than it had been on the previous day. Word spreads quickly when the salmon run begins, and there is a mass exodus from the cities to the rivers. Unfortunately, the vulnerability of the fish and ease of access to the rivers brings forth an army of undesirables. Snaggers turn out by the gross. Snagging is outlawed on the Ocqueoc, but both law and sporting ethic are ignored. That Saturday, the river was overrun. Not many yards separated the weilders of great casting machines which derricked huge lead weighted treble hooks at whatever fish dared to expose itself. The harvest was heavy as

fish after fish was yanked broadside from the river. Some "sports" came armed with more efficient weapons and sent multiple pronged spears into the soft bellies of their quarry. A few stood ready with bows, their arrows attached to long ropes.

The menageries that partook in this one-sided slaughter did so with such nonchelance that one might have thought it the most commonplace activity for a Saturday morning. Some had their female companions along to witness their prowess, companions who cooed with approval whenever a writhing salmon was yanked onto the bank.

It was difficult to find an unsullied pool, but Don and I eventually located one that had been overlooked. Hollis set up his camp stool to oversee our efforts, and his commanding position was to prove invaluable in warding off occasional snaggers wandering by. They could not understand why they should not unload their hardware into the pool that contained our lines but, with much arm waving and a few verbal dressings down, Hollis soon had them slinking off elsewhere. I am not particularly courageous, and was fearful that a mid-stream dual might errupt.

Suddenly, between the laying on of line and the warding off of intruders, I found myself joined to a salmon. Our method had been to repeatedly show the fly on a slow retrieve or just to let it throb in the current. Whereas I had expected to have the rod jerked from my hand if a take did come, I was completely surprised to find such a gentle tug. However, when I set the hook, brute force took command of the situation immediately. Out of the water he came. Hollis's cigar froze. After a great flop, the fish's next gambit was to reconnoitre from bank to bank in one great furious circle. I was too numb to do anything but stare in disbelief. Back into the pool he ran, and then sank from sight, still clutching my yellow and blue offering. There he sulked while I just hung on helplessly.

On the bank, Hollis was up off his stool waving encouragement and shouting directions, none of which I could hear over the din of the water. Don stood in readiness with the net. After what seemed an eternity, "iron jaw" came up again for a swift tour de force around the pool. I was still rivetted to the same spot, although I was confident that we had him surrounded. Thirty minutes of this stalemate went by before he decided on retreat as his only option. With line pouring from the reel, he sprinted off downstream, across a shallow riffle, round a bend, and then disappeared from sight as he headed back towards Lake Huron. As he started to run, I darted after him, reeling in slack line, until I came to a submerged log where the line was firmly snagged. Beyond, waving blithly in the current, I could see the end of a snapped cast.

Don, Hollis and I regrouped for a pull on the Blackberry and as I lit my pipe I had trouble finding the bowl with the match. It would have been jolly to report the netting of my first salmon. As it was, the experience had been electrifying. Even had he been landed, he would have been slipped back into the current to continue his ordained journey. Anyway, the thrill is still with me and will remain until another year and another river reward another opportunity.

Windswept Cottage assumed an even greater dimension that evening. Glasses in hands, we relaxed in front of the fire and, with just a few verbal embellishments, recounted the day's adventure to our patient Whangdoodlettes. Hollis capped the evening by playing selections from his recorded collection of 1918-1922 popular music.

Letter from America

by FRANK M. HURSLEY

NOW that I have attained my majority, I have developed a wholesome appreciation of the civilized comforts. This mellowing attitude has matured slowly and really touches upon many areas, but none more so than being afield. To elaborate, not many years ago I embraced the noble concept of the outdoorsman, which meant attuning oneself with nature and the great out of doors in the most primitive way possible. The ideal still persists, but experience has tempered it considerably. At one time, the most unadulterated camp site received the highest priority. Some compromise was allowed for running water, provided that it was dispensed from a hand-pump, and a practical indulgence was granted for a privvy, but hot showers and a cook stove — no! Otherwise, how could the purest joys of nature become revealed to the fullest? Little did it matter if a tedious hour or more was spent over an open fire trying to persuade the coffee to percolate, while the eggs became welded to the skillet and the searing smoke unleashed parallel rivulets to run down through my bearded stubble. Nature was my stalwart companion, and we ruled arm-in-arm over our cozy camp site.

Thank heaven for pendulums, for now that great mechanism has reversed direction. On today's jaunt afield I prefer logs that are notched, varnished and stacked into neat walls that support a roof which, in turn, directs the rain drops elsewhere than down the back of my neck. As a throwback to that Spartan period, I still squirm into a sleeping bag, but it is unrolled atop a comfortable bed and alleviates the necessity of re-making the bed each day. Another practicality I now embrace is the indoor cooking stove, a convenience that does not require squatting on aching haunches trying to aim the skillet at the most productive flames. And, an apology for indoor plumbing is no longer offered.

Recording my rejuvenated view point conjures up an ill-fated camping sortie with my son, Micky, a number of seasons back, a sortie which may well have put something of a strain on the cogs of that pendulum. It was Micky's first trouting expedition with me and I had instructed him that while I was at the office he should gather our camping gear and have it in readiness at day's end, for I would brook no delay in heading north.

Our destination was the banks of the Boardman River, not far from the village of Mayfield where the famed Adams dry fly was originated. Although darkness was upon us by the time we reached the Boardman, our setting of camp was completed without a hitch. We lingered over the camp fire anticipating great sport on the morrow. It was not until we were about to turn in that we discovered that my sleeping bag was still 200 miles south, at home. June weather in Michigan can be quite impartial, often delivering a devil-may-care mixture of hot and cold before succeeding months become totally programmed into sultry summer. Micky's chuckle on discovering the omission was a little strained, but he did produce one blanket for me before zipping himself into his own sleeping bag. That first night, the sole blanket proved adequate, although only just so; it was a mite chilly in our two-man tent.

The next day, after a prolonged bout preparing breakfast over the camp fire, we spent several hours in the stream. Although our expectation had been high, nothing of note came our way. The Boardman proved to be a lovely stream, gin clear water running over a pebble bottom, and its sheer beauty acted as a tonic for one too long desk bound between fishing trips.

That afternoon there was a shift in the wind direction. Out of the north it blew, and sent the temperature dropping faster than the setting sun. By nightfall, we had been plunged into knee-knocking cold. Micky had his sleeping bag for protection, but I was skeptical as to how much warmth a single thin blanket would provide. Being stout of heart, we decided to hazard the night anyway and, before turning in, each of us put on a second wool shirt and slipped our spare undershorts over our heads like bonnets. We then wrapped our undershirts round and round our heads like turbans. Huddling back-to-back for warmth, I must have finally dozed off. During the night, I suddenly bolted awake, feeling as though I had received a sudden injection of iced water. Lying awake in the darkness my upper lip felt strange. It was stiff and immobile. The bizarre sensation was caused by my moustache being caked solid with frost.

Everything has its limit, and I had reached mine for being outdoorsy. I nudged Micky awake and announced that we were decamping to the nearest hotel. I never did learn how far the temperature actually dropped that night but, in breaking camp, I found a half-filled coffee cup frozen solid. By 3.00 a.m., we had rousted a motel owner in Mayfield and quickly occupied his remaining unit.

Induced by a fatherly duty to expose the family to the wonders of nature, there were other camping occasions afield. Days of camp life and fishing were followed by nights of crawling into a tent too weary to notice the knobs that Dame Nature had arranged for my couch.

One final outing prompted a complete renouncing of the tenting life and caused me to pledge that if I ever lifted another tent peg it would be to transfer it to the fireplace. My sons and I had driven for seven hours to beyond the Canadian Sault Ste. Marie for an extended week-end of camping. All was fine when we arrived. We bustled about setting camp and rented a canoe from a nearby lodge in preparation for two days of fishing on Ranger Lake and on the Gardener River, which ran past our campsite. That afternoon, I sat in a tent and tied trolling flies on monstrous irons as intended offerings to the lake trout. However, the following morning after breakfast was over, extremely nervous clouds began tumbling over one another as if trying to wring themselves dry. Their melee was fruitful. A deluge was soon unleashed and continued, showing no signs of deminishing even by evening. All day, white caps criss-crossed the lake and ruled out any possibility of venturing forth with the canoe. At sundown, I sat in the car and tuned in to a weather report. No relief was predicted, even for the following day. We had already used up one day, standing about in our parkas, watching the widening puddles threaten to engulf our two tents, and it seemed absolutely fruitless to pursue the expedition any further. A family council produced a unanimous decision to pack up and drive back to Gaylord for the remainder of the night.

Returning over Mackinoc Bridge at about 2.00 a.m., we drove out of the clouds and the sky was suddenly dotted with bright stars. I later read that the Canadian Sault Ste. Marie registered a seven inch rainfall that week-end.

I haven't entered a tent since.

Nowadays, I leave that style of raw communing to the younger, sturdier set. My current preference is for a cozy billet in a comfortable cabin, and I voice no objection if it is "corrupted" by modern appliances. On occasion, I have even overlooked the taint of an electric blanket. Any former purist attitude has now largely been reduced to that lovely marriage of fur and feather dangling from the end of my tippet.

Representing the degree of comfort I now prefer is the Pere Marquette Rod and Gun Club situated on the Pere Marquette River which flows into Lake Michigan on the western side of the state. It is here that our Paul H. Young Chapter of Trout Unlimited holds its full Board of Directors Meetings. The meeting provides an excuse to experience some exciting trout fishing — with time enough for a little business, too.

The Club itself, which dates from the First World War, is comprised of various privately owned cottages interspersed amongst several hundred wooded acres adjacent to the river. A main lodge is situated in the center of an open expanse, and it is club rules that all members must take their meals at the lodge. No cooking is allowed in the individual cottages. The fare at the lodge is plain but substantial and, if it does not rank a full asterisk in the guides de cuisine, at least it will counterbalance any equilibrium problems while wading stiff currents.

All rivers bearing trout are lovely and the Pere Marquette is no exception. It is somewhat tawny in color, and its many twists and turns bend back on one another; an approaching canoe load is announced by its throbbing gunwales long before it comes into sight. The P.M., as the knowledgeable refer to the river, is currently the subject of a river use study in an effort to determine the effect of the Coho salmon on the native trout population. Fishing pressure and canoe traffic are also being surveyed. Eventually, when all the data is tallied and interpreted, it is hoped that some form of regulatory guide lines will be formulated to prevent further decline of the river.

As it was the end of October during my stay last year, it was also the peak of the salmon run. The fishes' dark forms were to be seen everywhere, and the slightest disturbance would send them off on a jittery up-stream dart.

Unfortunately, many rotting carcasses of spawned salmon lay on the river bottom and lent an unsavory stench. Some of the other Board members chose to fish for the salmon and, after much effort, a few were enticed to the fly.

Notwithstanding the thrill of being joined to a powerhouse of brute size, I decided that the delicate little trout would more suit my temper that day. To that end, I had packed my Constable 7½ foot cane

rod which, over the years, has earned the distinction of being the work horse of my modest rod collection.

Last year, October went out milder than it came in. All that was needed was a light, wool shirt to guard against the chill brought on by the sudden parade of any stray clouds. Only the autumn colors were absent from what would otherwise have been a serene setting, but they had reached their prime and fallen, as they must. The bright and varied colors of my Cosseboom Streamer provided just the proper spirit, and accounted for the undoing of eleven rainbow trout that day. They ranged in size from a modest nine inches to a stout one of twice that length. The tally required passage along 150 yards of well thrashed water and, as I moved along, landing and releasing each trout, marvelling at their aerial acrobatics, I decided that the day had been well turned. I retired the Cosseboom to the brim of my tweed hat as an act of remembrance.

That evening, after dinner in the main lodge, we assembled to conduct our business meeting. What with the combination of a day astream in the October air and a platter of cutlets, a few neighbourly nudges were required to arouse drowsy responses of Aye or Naw in response to the various piscatorial matters on the agenda.

My stay at the P.M. Club was brief but most comfortable. I was the sole occupant of a room where I could surround myself with my gear, reels and fly boxes and have my Constable joined in readiness. And where I could retire to a real bed and turn the pages of "The Flyfishers' Journal" secure in the knowledge that I would not have to skamper off in search of shelter.

Lady Cobham's Fly

by ALLEN C. DuBOIS

MARG, my wife, was having a ball with one strike after another, while neither Bob Warner, a friend, nor I, standing on either side of her, were having the slightest bit of luck. After she beached her third four pound trout, Bob said:

"What fly are you fishing, Marg?"

"A Lady Cobham."

"A what?"

"Never heard of it, let's see it."

Marg finished knitting her line in and swung it around to Bob.

"It's a beautiful azure blue, looks more like a ladies hat decoration than a fly that could possibly fool a fish."

"I didn't think it would either, Marg said, but it works. Want to try one?"

"No. No thanks, said Bob. I'll stick with my pancora."

And so he did and so did I. At the end of four hours, of fishing in the same spot, Marg had beached eight beautiful brook trout with a total weight of over thirty-five pounds. Bob had one three pounder. Luckily I had moved away from the two of them and produced three reasonably good fish.

We were fishing the boca, of a small stream, that enters Lake Lolog near San Martin de los Andes in Argentina. While we lunched and rested in the shade of a tree near the boca, Bob said:

"I never heard of a Lady Cobham. Where did you get it?"

Marg said "That's Pete's story, you tell him Pete."

Here is the story. Because it begins with golf don't think I won't get back to the Lady Cobham flies.

On our second visit to fish with O.S. "Budge" Hintz, in New Zealand in February 1962, I took along a putter that had arrived, at my home, near New York City the day before our departure.

It was a most unusual type. The shaft was attached to the front end of the putter blade rather than the back or the centre. Despite it's peculiar look, I put ball after ball with it into an overturned cup on my living room rug. I couldn't bear to wait until spring to see if it would work as well on grass as on the rug. It worked splendidly on two putting greens in Sydney, Australia, before we went to Auckland, New Zealand.

At the time, Budge Hintz, was editor and publisher of the New Zealand Herald in Auckland; a leading citizen of the country, an expert fisherman, and an author of note. He was also friend and confidant of Viscount Charles Cobham, Governor General of New Zealand, from 1957 to 1962.

The day following our arrival in Auckland, Budge took us to tea with Lord and Lady Cobham

Letter from America

by FRANK M. HURSLEY

AFTER six marvellous, memory filled years, the once jovial facade of "The Happy Fisherman" is at risk of losing its sparkle. Weighty matters are afoot at Flashlight Bend. A late-summer's visit to the Paddons' cabin on that particular sweep of the Au Sable river has revealed that the cabin's nom de plume of "The Happy Fisherman" is wearing rather thin, and that the smiling timbers may be in need of a face lift. I sense that all is not well and note rumblings of discontent reverberating along the length of the bend.

Happy associations tend to advance the clock faster than one might wish, for this marks the Paddons' sixth year in residence. During that memorable period I have seen the little cabin blossom with a splendid addition, one which not only provided more living space but which also afforded a grander view of the river. As a reminder that this is an angler's sanctuary, racks for hanging waders were added as well as special pegs for cradling joined rods like stacked arms in readiness for instant use. Internal furnishings appeared — installed with an eye for comfort and arranged for conviviality.

Many an hour has been spent relaxing at the round table after the dinner plates have been removed, lingering over a whisky with minds attuned to the day's trouting exploits. Recounted days of army life during the second of the great debacles has never dulled an evening. At day's end, too, we have shared the unique tiredness — really a mellowing of the body which sets in after a full day on the stream with rod in hand. On occasion, neighbour would wander in with a glass or a bottle of claret and the conversation would turn to the fly that had staved off defeat that day. And, before parting, plans for the morn would be discussed and a particular pool agreed upon as a rendezvous. At all times, the gathering was permeated with that special bonhomie that seems to be unique to the fly fishing brotherhood.

The community spirit was evidenced by a path that had been worn parallel to the river bank over the years, traversing each adjoining property. Never had there been any mention of trespass. Anglers in cumbersome waders and with tangled accessories dangling from multi-pocketted vests exercised an unwritten code of free river access without fear of being either verbally abused or halted by shotguns. As we all know, trespassing on private property can excite emotional palpitations among country dwellers; city people seem to be more relaxed about it, no doubt because of their

more congested life style. Most of the natives of the bend are from the city and, when "up" for the week-end, bring with them a large measure of sociability. A passing angler may be treated to anything from a friendly salute to the sharing of a gin and tonic, and after a few neighbourly gestures of the latter sort he is usually better equipped to negotiate the zig-zag of the path.

Notwithstanding the years that have nurtured the traditions of Flashlight Bend, I detected a changing mood during my last visit. I heard stories about a new family that had taken up residence, and the stories were anything but flattering. Early reports indicated that they were non-fishers from a rural community; to be precise, the term "non-fishers" implied that they were not of the long rod persuasion. Unwittingly, they had landed in a sticky situation because by state regulation the Bend is included in a fly only area — worms and hardware are disallowed.

Shortly after establishing themselves in residence, and after they had innocently weilded a few spinners, the regulations were explained in detail. And, to be fair, the family acquiesced and were soon abroad with the appropriate gear. However, word has it that the madam of the household was observed in mid-stream with a fly rod in various cantilevered attitudes, propelling the line in some very original configurations — from figures of eight to piles of spaghetti. Her brave attempts soon dissolved into a seething disavowal of fly fishing, loudly delivered in four-letter Chaucerian verse. This appraisal of our cherished sport sent more ripples up and down the bank than are to be found on the river.

Two exuberant young chaps add to the charged atmosphere. Clad in swim trunks, they occasionally burst from the cabin and leap into the river for a rousing splash. Friendly sorts, they are always delighted when an angler appears around the Bend, galloping excitedly through fifty yards of prime water — and often entangling his line — solely to ask whether he has caught anything. No one likes to dampen enthusiasm, but you would think that the lads would eventually realise that wild, explosive arm waving has little to do with casting!

Along the entire Au Sable system, there is a regulation imposed on property owners with which they are all in total agreement. This is the green belt rule, which states that the vegetation must be allowed to grow entirely naturally for a certain minimum number of feet in from the bank. In most areas the belt consists of tall grass, near waist high, interspersed with occasional trees. The combination helps prevent soil erosion and also affords shade to cool the water. No doubt the regulation came in the aftermath of the lumbering era of the last half of the 1800's when banks were stripped of their protective timber. Trouting families along the Bend take their

little green belts to heart and each morning find comfort in seeing the tall grass undulating with the gentle breezes that waft down through the valley. All believe that they are doing their duty in protecting the river they love.

One unforgettable morning we awoke to the sound of a power mower. No one paid much attention, for it was not a sound unfamiliar to the community. But, by the time it had died away, a new sound was reverberating along the length of the Bend. Over the coffee cups, word passed from cabin to cabin that the green belt had disappeared from in front of the new neighbours' bank and that, worse still, a deep swath had also been mown well into the Paddons' domain. That day, the Bend was fraught with palpitations and another black mark was entered in the ledger.

Hardly had the ink dried before another calamity, far blacker than all the previous ones, crowded onto the page. The new neighbours displayed a fondness for dogs — four of them; and they too, in the eyes of their owners at least, were accorded the equal privilege of being unrestricted by boundaries; they roamed at will. This added another dimension, here and there, around the neighbourhood. No longer could one saunter dreamily along the path with an eye to the beauty of the river, one had to tread warily now, as though skirting land mines. But, the matter did not rest there.

One of the dogs had been trained as an attack dog, and was assigned as personal bodyguard to the ageing grandfather of the family. It was not long before the menacing mastiff decided to put his training to the test. One of the Bend's anglers, fully suited, was ambling along the path towards a pool of likely trout, when he found his arm firmly gripped in the jaws of the belligerent cur. A mere split second had elapsed — although in the mind of the victim it seemed an eternity — before it could be shown that he was still in possession of the arm in dispute. Inspection showed eight distinct punctures, and an afternoon abroad on his favourite pool was replaced by a trip to the hospital sixteen miles away. When the grandfather was interviewed about the incident, he excused it as being the result of trespass.

The atmosphere that hung over the valley during that last weekend of my stay was unpleasant, and we decided to test our trouting prowess on other than local waters. We drove downstream about three miles to a friend's place and put in there. I chanced upon a lovely 11 inch brook trout and a few of lesser stature, and came away feeling contented.

Stopping to chat with my friend, we discovered that all was far from well at that end of the North Branch, too. *Their* new neighbour, a bachelor in middle age, had not had a sober moment since he arrived, and took great pleasure in roaring about in an open

cockpit dune buggy. Their alarm was chiefly prompted by the fact that the bank in front of their cabin rises steeply from the river, and it is here that their neighbour holds his personal Grand Prix, criss-crossing up and down in a perilous disregard for his safety. One day, they expressed their concern that he could easily tumble into the river, with which he braked to a stop, dismounted, and with a round house swing bashed their son on the nose.

It is hard to fathom just what gripped the North Branch last summer — suffice is to say, a non-curable virus is the usual explanation.

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ANGLERS AND CANOEISTS AGREE RIVER ACCESS GUIDELINES

Guidelines for river access agreements between canoeists, angling clubs and riparian owners have been approved by the national angling, landowning and canoeing bodies.

For some years there have been problems of access to fishing waters by canoeists on waters where there is no public right of navigation. A special Access Committee, run by the National Anglers' Council and including riparian and canoeing interests, has now agreed on a Statement of Intent.

The Statement defines the situation and recommends that access agreements should be based on consultation and co-operation between anglers, canoeists and landowners. It also recommends that local groups — perhaps under the auspices of the regional offices of the Sports Coucil — be formed to liaise on access problems. The Statement makes it clear that it is intended only as a guide and is not a commitment by any of the parties involved.

Whilst the National Anglers' Council has convened regular Access Committee meetings for several years it has been greatly assisted by the Sports Council and the Water Space Amenity Commission. Canoeists have been represented by the British Canoe Union, and riparian owners by the Country Landowners' Association. Within angling the National Federation of Anglers and the Salmon and Trout Association have been party to the discussions and other bodies involved are the National Farmers' Union, and the Sports Council for Wales.

The Statement is to be formally signed and will then be printed and widely distributed. The National Access Committee will meet from time to time to monitor progress.

Letter from America

by FRANK M. HURSLEY

THE ritual of preparing for Opening Day of trout fishing receives my earliest attention. Once New Years Day is rounded, thoughts and visions of rising trout begin to vie for attention even amidst the most engrossing conversations. Invariably, the new calendar pinned on the office wall receives an occasional flip just to make sure there really is a last Saturday in April, which is our official Opening Day. And, if it were not for the frown of the boss I might even dare afixing the vise to the desk top just for the rendering of a few Hare's Ears. On Tuesday evenings, which is bingo night for the lady of the household. I might uncase a cane rod for a sample waggle. Just for that extra measure of insurance the reels are brought out for a fresh drop of oil, and lines are unrolled for a brisk cleaning.

As the weeks advance that unique feeling of being astream, while really being anchored well down in a leather chair, is reinforced by pulling down a few volumes from the book shelves. Howard Marshall's *"Reflections on a River"* is a yearly must followed by Lord Grey's *"Fly Fishing"* or *"A Summer on the Test"* by Hills. I also like to enlarge my interest in a traditional approach to fly angling by reading the first chapter, "Art or Craft" found in C. F. Walker's, *"The Art of Chalk Stream Fishing."* It helps to buoy up a feeling of permanence in a world of diminishing values. And now, even though Jack Chance's slim volume, *"Salmon Stories"*, arrived well into the season, it's unique cast of personalities will bear repeated perusal.

This (to some) incomprehensible folderol of tackle fondling, was, in fact, the prelude to one of the finest openers in recent years. Three of us, all stout of heart and over laden with rods and accessories, travelled north on Friday afternoon, pre-opening day, and settled into Gates Au Sable Lodge on the bank of the Main Stream.

Michigan weather is not always kind to trout fishers on their one supreme day of the year, however, this year we were blessed with an exceptional day. Cool but comfortable temperatures prevailed with radiant touches of sunshine as if broadcast in tribute.

What made that Saturday so exceptional was that an afternoon hatch of Hendriksons blanketted the water. In former years, weather fluctuations often bracketted Opening Day with the first of the season Mayflies, but they seldom appeared on *the* Saturday. In 1983. the wheel-of-fortune halted on just the right combination.

Early on, I had been exploring the water with a Gold Ribbed Hares' Ear and was having moderate success. Once the hatch was under way, the trout switched to surface feeding and dimpled rings appeared everywhere. I changed to a Borcher Special, a floater perfected on the Au Sable system and in short order joined in the activity. Walker's dictum of casting to visible, feeding trout with an imitation of the naturals being selected is without question the epitome of our sport. Several hungry Brook Trout were netted and then safely returned for the next time or for the next angler.

In the interim between Opening Day and my next journey north, the rains settled in on what, at the time, appeared to be a permanent basis. The result was high murky water with rivers swelling over their banks in some areas. Wading became treacherous if not down right impossible. We were forced to search out sections that were normally wide with low water. As a result, our precious fishing time was sadly limited by time consumed in manoeuvering slick currents, trying to find sure footing even before a cast could be made. More rain came the following day without a sign of let up. Surrendering to overwhelming odds we decamped early, somewhat piqued at the weatherman.

After that amphibious weekend not another fly was cast until a holiday in Oregon at the end of July. But, before winging off to Portland, our rainy session moved on and an extensive drought with endless days in the 90's (F.) moved in. After being par-boiled alive for numberless days, Oregon proved a delightful relief with cool days and nights.

The occasion for the trip was to visit our son Mickey, his wife Amy and their new son, Patrick — three months old. Whereas Lois was packing baby outfits, I was sorting our trouting gear, trying to decide which rods and how many would best serve the rivers of Oregon. In preparation I read various articles, all of which strongly stressed the necessity of steel wading cleats in order to cope with the moss covered rocks and lava formations that comprises the river bottoms. Being stubborn or frugal, whichever the case, I decided to try out my felt soled waders before going to the expense of buying new wading irons.

Oregon, which is sandwiched between Washington and California on the Pacific coast, is dramatically different from Michigan. Our home state does boast the Great Lakes shoreline, but offers no mountains. Most of the state is relatively flat, only being interrupted by rolling, but generous to a degree, hills. Oregon is blessed with several snow capped mountains. Mt. Hood, the highest rises to 11,235 ft., Mt. Jefferson 10,495 ft., three peaks comprising the

Three Sisters average 10,000 ft., and Three Fingered Jack rises to 7,848 ft. On a sunny day the view of those virgin-white peaks is awesome.

Motoring through the mountain area a bend in the road will reveal a thundering waterfall or a gushing white water river within a backcast of the roadway. Stately pines tower vertically and such is their dense proximity that semi darkness is rendered within. Signs along the highway warn of falling rocks. Occasionally we came upon a road crew blasting solid rock, apparently to widen the roadway, and the activity imposed a traffic build-up. Lumber trucks sagged under the weight of massive Ponderosa Pine logs headed for the mills. Passing a team of horses dragging logs from a clearing caused a 20th century double take.

Our first night out of Portland we stayed at the Columbia River Gorge Hotel which is perched on the edge of a 200 ft. bluff overlooking the Columbia River. Our window viewed the river and an adjacent waterfall that cascaded down to it. Upon rising in the morning I discovered a Mayfly, possibly a Green Drake, perched on the window sill and I conjured this as a good omen as we were motoring on to a lodge near the Metolius River.

Lake Creek Lodge consists of a collection of wood framed cabins, ringing a trout pond. Unfortunately the pond was off-limits to anglers over 12 years old. Our cabin boasted two bedrooms, a kitchen, a living room, a front porch facing the pond and a rear porch overlooking a narrow burn running out of the pond. A most comfortable and charming setting. Breakfast and dinner were served in the main lodge. We soon learned however, that this was not an establishment catering to the whims of trout fishers. Upon arrival, Micky and I thought we would sample the evening rise on the Metolius, however, when checking in, a stern spinster informed us in terse drill sergeant tones that dinner was served exactly at 7 p.m., no leeway or allowances for anglers' excentricities.

A brief hour on the Metopius was our only allotment that evening. We found the river not overly wide, with an extremely brisk current and of a clarity suggestive of looking into lead crystal. Its origin is Black Butte, a pine tree covered mountain of lesser stature than the nearby snow capped peaks. Several miles downstream the river forms the border of Warm Springs Indian Reservation and that bankside is off limits.

That evening Micky and I found a comfortable pool even though the bottom was of a canon ball consistency. Time was limited and being famished we kept one eye on the watch so as to be back at the lodge at the stroke of 7.00. The thought of forfeiting our dinner, as the drill sergeant implied, would be a catastrophy. Surface

activity was nil so following my custom I began a few quartering casts with a Hare's Ear. One hyperactive rainbow found it to his liking and clutching his prize, displayed a couple of cartwheels in appreciation.

Oregon fishing regulations are much more advanced than those of Michigan. When I purchased a ten-day non-resident anglers licence in Portland, I received a booklet stating the regulations on the various rivers and lakes, all of which were separated into zones by geographical boundaries. It was interesting to note that the Metolius regulations prescribed flies only, barbless hooks only and wild trout could not be kept. The identifying distinction between wild and hatchery trout is that the latter have the adipose fin clipped. Since I don't creel any fish anyway it became an interesting exercise in comparing the fighting characteristics between the two. The wild trout, although fewer were netted, received the gold medal.

The next day we celebrated the morn with a lumberjack style breakfast of eggs, ham, sausage, hash browns and a stack of browned pancakes laced with butter and floating like rafts in a sea of maple syrup. Our repast was nicely balanced with pots of steaming coffee. Now we had charged our way through our second gargantuan meal, the drill sergeant was positively mellowing into a pink cheeked house mother.

Biding adieu to the ladies, Micky and I departed for a further romp in the Metolius. At one delightful straight run we could look downstream and have a magnificient sighting of Mt. Jefferson framed by the bank side pines. Farther on we came upon a veritable froth of white water running down a chute in the centre of the river. The tumbling cauldron sang a deafening chorus. Safe wading was questionable, but I did find one slack water pool at bankside that ran a few feet over a flat shelf of lava.

By standing flat footed and braced sideways on the shelf, I could drop a cast at the edge of the centering cauldron and let my Hare's Ear swing down for a slow retrieve. A few such casts into the dwarfish pool and I was into a lovely rainbow. Farther downstream I could see Mickey's rod throbbing in unison.

The Metolius is one of the cleanest rivers I have ever waded into. It's completely free of silt, which lines so many of our Michigan rivers. Most Michigan rivers are bank lined with a wide belt of black ooze that nearly sucks your boots off as you struggle your way through. The Metolius, however does have those lava shelves that are remindful of the kitchen floor after a fresh waxing.

I tried two other rivers during our stay in Oregon. One was the Clackamas near Portland, the other the Newhalem on the Pacific

Ocean. The Clackamas is well documented in Rudyard Kipling's *"American Notes"* in a chapter titled, "American Salmon." Kipling travelled by wagon team along primitive roads; we travelled by auto along highways chock-a-block with noisy, fume belching vehicles. Kipling and his companion placed several pounds of salmon on the bank; Micky and I landed and returned rainbows measured in ounces before being drenched and forced to leave by a chilling shower.

The Clackamas is a wide river at this point and bottomed with those familiar cobblestones which restricted my reaching a deep flow at midstream. I had visions of encountering summer run steelhead, however I received not the slightest nod.

The Newhalem, flowing into the Pacific Ocean, is also a wide river, but with a slow current in the area I put into. It also is noted for its salmon and steelhead. From the bank the water appeared dark and deep at midstream and, thinking I just might encounter a salmon, I put up my 8½ft. Sceptre with a sink-tip line, and tied on a yellow and blue pattern on a heavy hook. However, when I waded out I found the water barely knee deep all the way across. I consumed a half hour banging my salmon iron across the pebbly bottom before backing off and re-outfitting with a floating line and the old reliable Hare's Ear. At least the shift in tackle brought instant action with a number of waiting rainbows.

Surfcasting has always seemed a fascinating sport and as long as we were on the Pacific Coast the opportunity was there. The experience was rather short lived however. I donned my waders and set-off across a hundred yards of beach, rod in hand. I had only advanced a brief distance, until the water was knee deep, when I decided this was quite far enough. As I stood there wondering if I really did want to join the ranks of the surfcasters, the sand kept washing out from beneath me, the breakers nearly rolled me over and the undertown had a remarkable drag in the direction of China. This combination was definitely not my forte and I backed off deciding to reserve my surfcasting to the comfort of the arm chair and a daring author.

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Letter from America

by FRANK M. HURSLEY jnr.

A SMALL but enthusiastic contingent of Whangdoodlers motored north early last October for the annual three-day conclave in the northern woods. Hosting the event was the Master Whangdoodle, Hollis Halladay, and his Whangdoodlette, Adele. Honoring tradition, the Halladays provided lodging at their Windswept Cottage on Black Lake; belying its name, the cottage is an snug and comfortable a haven for chilled and weary fishermen as could be found. This year, the guest of honor was Dr. Homer Smathers, a fellow member of The Flyfishers' Club. Unfortunately, his Whangdoodlette was unable to join us in toasting the good doctor's health due to press of domestic duties in the city. Lois, my own ever-patient Whangdoodlette, accompanied me even 'though the forecast promised dismal weather which was likely to confine her indoors.

As Lois and I drove northwards, all seemed well on the weather front and the sun highlighted the October hues. This time, we discovered a new sight, unnoticed on previous jaunts. In an area just north of the small town of Mio, where a dam saps the flow of the mighty Au Sable for local power, several horse-drawn buggies were plodding along the shoulder of the road. They were enclosed four-wheelers, constructed in a manner designed to afford protection against northern winters. They were out in force, and it was probably their sheer numbers this time which explained why we had not noticed the Monnonite settlement from which they came on previous trips to Black Lake. The sombre, grey appearonce of the occupants, devoid of any decorative embelishment, suggested a detached way of life, one with which they self-impose a strong-willed halt on runaway progress. In a way, I envied their unhurried existences, but wondered whether their transport might not be enhanced by the addition of rod racks.

As we neared Black Lake, puddles of water dotting the highway indicated recent rainfall, and this was confirmed when we arrived. On the previous day a steady downpour had kept our hosts cabin-bound. Although we had driven most of the way beneath clear skies, our approach to the north country had been greeted by low clouds layed across the horizon.

That first afternon, having been refreshed with a healthy ladling of rich vegetable soup, Hollis was impatient for his two Whangdoodlers to try their prowess on the Ocqueoc salmon. We refrained from entering the public area of the river, preferring to avoid the crowds and the snaggers-up for salmon. Instead, we travelled further north until the highway bisected the Ocqueoc. Hollis parked

the station wagon adjacent to the bridge — which signifies an access point over here — and Homer and I suited up. We had barely shimmied into our waders when a flight of low-lying clouds began to unload a chilly mist onto us.

Before us lay a lush, undulating meadow through which the river coursed in a curving horseshoe before disappearing into a stand of trees. On a far crest, a settlement of ancient farm buildings completed the pastoral setting. A barbed wire fence with an electric cattle-wire sealed off the meadow from the highway, but we gained entry and avoided being grilled by lying flat and rolling underneath it. The river was high — too high to wade — and colored by the previous day's rain. Homer and I walked the bank, English style, casting our feathered irons into the murkey depths and drawing them back in a slow rythm. Such discomfort as the enveloping mist imposed was more than counteracted by the sheer joy of being there.

But, our stay proved to be of short duration. While we had been putting up our rods, a herd of brown cows had begun discharging through a portcullis up at the farm buildings. At the time, they had appeared to be far enough away, but their steady, lowly gait soon brought them within speaking distance and we found that we were sharing the same bank with them. Dismayed by our invasion of their private munching grounds, they arranged themselves into an advancing wedge which Homer and I interpreted as being anything but an admiring gallery. An extra dimension was added to the situation by Homer's noticing — with the practised eye of a surgeon — that the leader's accessories disqualified him from the title "cow". This discovery quickly decided the future of our meadow fishing, English style, and we made a guarded retreat back under the fence to join Hollis, who had been watching our progress with some amusement.

That evening, over whiskey in front of the fireplace, we decided to take our places on the public section of the river at dawn the following day, regardless of the potential crowds. Accordingly, Hollis sounded the call at 6 a.m., and we rolled sleepily from between the sheets while the great out-of-doors was still enveloped in silent darkness. As I addressed the shaving bowl, I could hear our Master Whangdoodler in action in the kitchen, and we were soon attacking coffee, toast and marmalade as a bracer against the morning chill. A hint of light was just touching the tree-tops as we finished loading the station wagon.

Even at that hour we found that we were not the first on the river. Several motor-campers had apparently been there overnight, but we soon found a lovely pool to ourselves. By then the sun had begun

playing across the mist that bulged up from the river; it was a welcome sight, promising warmth to muffle our shivers and knee-knocking. At first I thought the early hour was the cause of my labored casting, but then I discovered that the sparkle emanating from the guides was caused by their being choked with ice.

Our pool emptied out over a series of tiered falls each of which dropped about two feet over foam-covered rocks. The result was a strong current which orchestrated a watery melody and projected it deep into the woods. Against the right bank, a deep run looked promising as a holding lie, and I concentrated on it. Hollis, who was acting as guide, set up a folding stool overlooking the run but, seeing that I was having trouble maintaining my balance in the fast current, he set about carving a wading staff from a tree limb. For a lanyard, he snipped off a length from his leather boot laces, and then he took up residence on the stool, clutching a giant net in readiness.

The fly I chose was a very colorful orange and black bodied creation I had learnt about in Oregon, called the Max Canyon. To my surprise, it was good for a brisk take. A salmon exploded from the water and Hollis shot from his stool.

Circling the pool, the salmon set up a great thrashing until he found he had almost beached himself in the shallows against the opposite bank. Then he rolled over the first layer of the falls on his way downstream, paying little attention to by feeble efforts to turn him. By this time, Hollis was bellowing encouragement interspersed with pearls of wisdom as to what I should do next. With the roar of the current over the falls, only he could hear them. It seemed that nothing could slacken the determination of my adversary. In short order, my backing was exposed and shooting between the rocks of that first fall. The next moment, all went slack. The backing had wedged in a rock, and away went the salmon with the line and half my backing.

Two weeks later, Lois and I, along with Joyce and Dave Fox, spent three days at the Pere Marquette Club on the western side of the state. Once a year, the Club hosts a Board of Directors' meeting of the Paul H. Young Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and this allows a fine opportunity to discuss progress in the enhancement of our cold water resources. It also provides an excuse to fish together. It was a fine, sunny day as we motored over there, and the weather complemented our lunch at an old hotel in Clare, a pleasant interlude half-way on the four hour drive.

That Friday afternoon, I joined my Constable and went for a brief walk along the river. The wind shifted, sending gusts that rippled the flats and suggested a change in the weather. It came during the

night, and we arose to steady rain which continued throughout the day, and went on until Sunday morning. Despite the foul weather, we were quite comfortable in our quarters which were situated on a high bank overlooking the river. We could look down and see the dark forms of the salmon in the shallows. Rather than forfeit good fishing time, Dave and I fished on throughout the day, only coming in for lunch and pulling out in time for the evening cocktail hour. We literally fished "wet", both in and out of the water, and we did manage to land a few rainbows although our bag was not the sort that would have won us distinction at the social hour.

So as not to interfere with the fishing, Saturday evening is reserved for the Board Meeting. Before dinner in the main lodge, one of the club members hosts a cocktail party where we lounge about in our tweeds, sipping whiskey, nibbling stilton and smoked salmon, and recounting — with much enbellishment — the day's successes. One fellow angler told of an encounter with a salmon which, to his astonishment, had ended with the gears in his reel stripped.

After dinner, the Board members assemble in one of the cabins to debate weighty propositions dealing with the management of our trout rivers. What with the day's exertion, the whiskey and a platter of chops consumed, there is a great struggle to prevent the eyelids from slamming shut. The door has to be unlatched from time to time to admit a rejuvenating blast before we move on to another topic on the agenda. It would not sit well with the Chapter if their Board were to be found at dawn, like an enbalmed assembly amidst a confusion of notes.

The next morning we awoke to find the sky dark and overcast. The rain had ceased, but the trees still showered down heavy droplets from waterlogged limbs. Seen from the cabin, the river still looked clear and unsullied. We braced ourselves with a stout breakfast, and then Dave and I excused ourselves from the ladies once more and suited up. Luckily, the waders had dried overnight in the warmth of the cabin. Can there be anything more repulsive then squirming into wet waders on a cold, damp day?

Rods in hand, we trudged down the muddy path through the trees which had largely lost their October-tinged leaves. As we approached the river we could see an occasional salmon silhouetted against the pebbly bottom. Even 'though they appeared awesome and extremely inviting, we chose to engage trout because we both knew that the season was about to close and that this would be our last opportunity to keep them company. On the previous day, while casting between the raindrops, the Max Canyon had enticed a few rainbows and, rather than argue with success, I decided to allow the Oregon streamer another opportunity to enhance its reputation.

I was soon pleasantly surprised. For some reason, and through no particular skill on my part, I found myself attached to a sprightly salmon. The Pere Marquette is much wider than the Ocqueoc and this brute had generous room to circle the pool we shared, leaping once in an outstanding display. He stayed on for some time; it seemed an eternity. He fought well and I even had flashing visions of seeing my first salmon in the net. The dream was shattered by a mad, down-stream run that soon exposed my backing. My only option was to follow. The pool we left was knee deep and interspersed with rocks and sudden undulations through which I was dragged, although I managed to avoid being up-ended. The salmon moved faster than I could, but I did recover some backing and, in the process, he put on a magnificent display by exploding skyward four more times. We moved on together for 60 yards more, until I was approaching deep water and could go no further. Even then, I was still optimistic that the battle would be decided in my favour. But, he chose the wrong side of a large tree jutting from the water close in against the right bank. In a moment, Brutus had the line taught against a trunk stout enough to moor a frieghter. With the continuing consistency of all my other encounters with salmon, all went slack when the leader snapped.

* * *

Letter from America
A Trans-Atlantic Celebration

by FRANK M. HURSLEY

SEVERAL unique events have coincided to make 1984 an exceptional year for celebrations, amongst the angling fraternity at least. Heading the list, The Flyfishers' Club achieved its first one hundred years. For us over here, this year also marks a hundredth anniversary, that of the introduction of brown trout into an American river, an event that was to have a monumental influence on American fishing. This historic event took place here in Michigan when tiny brown were planted in the Pere Marquette River in April, 1884. By way of celebration, a re-enactment ceremony took place last April with fingerling browns once more being planted in the Pere Marquette from milk cans, as they had been a century before. Adding to the year's festivities, Trout Unlimited, with a lot of catching up on The Flyfishers' to do, celebrated its 25th birthday with dignitaries returning to Michigan to commemorate its origins.

Trout Unlimited was founded in 1959 when George Griffith hosted an assembly of fifteen concerned trout fishers at his cabin, The Barbless Hook, on the banks of the Main Stream of the Au Sable. If one wades down past the cabin, a plaque on the bank commemorates the location and the formation of Trout Unlimited. Those original fifeen anglers came together through a common concern over the fate of the wild trout population within the State at a time when great efforts and funds were being expended on hatchery trout while little was being done towards the preservation of wild trout stocks. The new organisation was determined to be heard.

Through their united efforts, the founders of Trout Unlimited created a movement that was, and still is, dedicated to the preservation of our State cold water resources. In a sense, Trout Unlimited became a watchdog whose aim was to single out any influence detrimental to the health of our river systems and, thus, to the well being of the trout they sustain. In time, with the broadcasting of their ideals and a tremendous amount of organizational work, membership expanded beyond State boundaries until, today, Trout Unlimited can boast of being a respected institution enjoying national prominence with a roster in excess of 40,000.

As an example of individual dedication, Art Neumann, one of the original fifteen, obtained a two-year leave of absence from his employment in order to devote himself full-time to the development

work needed in those early years. Even a quarter of a century later, both Neumann and Griffith are still actively engaged in Trout Unlimited's activities.

To put things in perspective, however, and in order to reconstruct the source of the original idea, we have to look back beyond the 1959 meeting on the banks of the Au Sable. It was George Mason, one-time President of the Nash-Kelvinator Corporation and an avid fly fisherman, who conceived the idea of Trout Unlimited and who was to spend numerous hours elaborating on its potential with George Griffith. Sadly, Mason passed on five years before the Au Sable meeting, and Griffith was left to take up the challenge.

As an aside, it was George Mason, who had purchased property along both banks of the Au Sable, intending to manage the area as a natural, pristine wilderness, who, in his will, left the entire parcel — some fourteen miles of river — to the State for all to enjoy; appropriately, the stretch has become known as the Mason Tract. It is as lovely a stretch of wild river as could be found anywhere, and a portion of it is currently undergoing an experimental catch-and-release program promoted by Trout Unlimited.

At a point overlooking the river, Mason constructed a chapel wherein anyone seeking spiritual refreshment could pause for a moment. It is a sad commentary on the public at large that the chapel has been vandalized and that someone has even built a fire on the chapel floor.

Trout Unlimited derives its effectiveness from a grass-roots level of organisation consisting of local, regional Chapters identifying and reporting on or working to correct problems or abuses within their areas. At the next level up are the State Councils which oversee the Chapters within their respective States.

Adding unity and cohesion to the entire structure, and topping the pyramid, is the National Office in Washington D.C. Robert Herbert is the Executive Director, and the National Board is made up of Regional Directors who channel information and have a voice in policy setting at National level. The National Office is directly involved in such widespread problems as acid rain and with helping the funding of Chapter-level stream enhancement projects.

To put typical Chapter activities in perspective, I draw on my experience with the Paul H. Young Chapter, named in honor of the famous Michigan rod maker. The Chapter is headed by a twelve member Board of Directors, serving a maximum of two consecutive three-year terms. The Board meets once a month. Currently, the Chapter membership stands at 525 which makes it one of the largest in the Nation. To raise funds for projects, a Chapter banquet

is held once a year, with a prominent trouter as the speaker and with a raffle and an auction as part of the program.

Project wise, the Chapter is currently waiting for approval from the Department of Natural Resources for a stream enhancement undertaking at a canoe landing site on the Mason Tract. There is considerable bank erosion at the site as well as loss of vegetation through over-use. The plan calls for an extensive fill-in of the landing area and tree planting with a view to returning the site to its natural state. Once approved, volunteers will staff a labor crew to do the pick and shovel work, funds being furnished by the Chapter. This project is only the initial phase of an extensive plan for the restoration and enhancement of the Mason Tract, slated over the next ten years. Trout fishers have a special affection for the Mason Tract which is one of Michigan's prime trout waters, and are saddened by the considerable abuse it has received, especially at the hands of the canoeing public.

In 1976, the Chapter undertook another project on the South Branch, also within the Mason Tract. Under the supervision of the Department of Natural Resources, we constructed a cedar log stairway on a high bank that had badly eroded into the river. At a site known as Downeys, there had at one time been a deep, trout holding pool. So extreme was the erosion that it had become a shallow run.

The stairway took four beastly hot days, over two week-ends, to build. The work was physically hard, especially for a volunteer crew, normally found behind office desks and then, overnight, finding themselves wheelbarrowing sand and gravel, sawing logs and swinging picks and shovels.

The stairway was started at the bottom of the bank and progressed upwards, one box stair level being added at a time. What with the day-long turmoil of our team effort, the din of the chain saws, the unsynchronised hammer blows and even the barking of commands, it seemed a little bizarre when, on the last day, with the final nail driven, all fell supremely silent. There stood the stairway, complete with cedar handrails and a sign proclaiming its construction by the Chapter, in what seemed the middle of nowhere. The surrounding woods returned to their calm serenity, the breeze rustled through the tree tops and the river sounded sweetly below, as if nothing had happened.

Two weeks later, we fished down past the Downey Stairway, just to be sure that all the turmoil had not just been a dream. Sure enough, there it was, seemingly rising into the clouds. The sight was kind of throat catching.

The 25th anniversary was a truly inspiring occasion. The National Officers came to Michigan last June, to hold their annual convention and to mark the 25th birthday of Trout Unlimited in the State where it had been founded. The Park Place Hotel, a charming and typically stylish product of the 1920s, located overlooking the bay in Traverse City, was used as Headquarters during the four-day proceedings. Angling celebrities from around the country came to hold seminars, to show angling films and to conduct related demonstrations. And, it became a daily experience, and one long to be remembered, to see Ernie Schwiebert toting his slide boxes through the lobby, to travel down in the elevator with Lefty Kreh, to spot Vince Marinaro at a corner breakfast table or to pass Ed Zern signing autographs.

Some of the original fifteen who had met at The Barbless Hook in 1959 were also there, and just as enthused by the brainchild, now grown up. The National Directors were there, as well as a host of Trout Unlimited members from all over the country. We were all under the same roof for four days of enchantment, inspired by a common love of trout fishing and the wish to preserve what we have.

Contributing to the conviviality, our Chapter hosted a hospitality suite for those requiring a friendly bumper or two. Such was its success that a trio of trout fishers from New Zealand, on a cross-country fishing jaunt, appeared and rendered a fitting finale of native songs in their best down-under voices.

The spirit of camraderie and good fellowship permeated the hotel and we came away with a deep sense of contentment at having been counted among the trout fishing fraternity.

Trout Unlimited's philosophy is well summed up by its motto: limit your kill, don't kill your limit.

* * *

Letter from America
"Adirondack Potpourri"

by FRANK M. HURSLEY

MY affection for the Adirondack Mountains was instantoneous. My first exposure to their enchantment derived from a business trip to Utica, New York. I had opted to drive the 500 miles plus from Michigan, and for companionship I had brought along two of the midteens who had been weaned on the outdoors. It proved a departure from the routine business trip. Rather than succumb to the comfort of a motel room nestled among the neon clutter of a thoroughfare, we elected to camp out amidst the hemlocks and the fresh mountain air. We settled into a lakeside campsite not far from Old Forge, the gateway to the southern entrance to the Adirondacsks, north of Utica. At 5.00 a.m., jolted by the shattering wail of a loon, I struggled into my gray business suit, slightly hampered by the confines of a small tent and the uncertain light of a candle stub. Before motoring back to Utica I instructed the boys to strike the tent and have the gear packed so as to avoid losing valuable time upon my return.

During my appointment in Utica it was difficult concentrating on the business at hand and my thoughts drifted to what awaited us further on in the Adirondacks. My appointee must have sensed my detachment for he spared me from furnishing a martini lunch until a future date and I bolted back to the camp. We loaded the station wagon and pushed on, snaking out way past stubby mountains and past an endless variety of lakes and rivers. We stopped to climb Blue Mountain. Although, far from being one of the major peaks, from its plateaued top it did present a magnificent, pastel view of the surrounding mountains with ribbons of rivers vanishing through distant valleys. Attuned to the chorus of the wind, we three stood silent atop Blue Mountain that one afternoon, and I vowed a return when time would allow the opportunity to absorb and to be as one with the spectacle before us.

Two summers slipped by before we vacationed there as a full family. We engaged a lodge on Fourth Lake, which is one of a series of connecting lakes that comprise the Fulton Chain. The Lake Complex was named after Robert Fulton of steam boat fame who had surveyed the area in 1812 during his search for a water route to Canada.

I am an early riser and that first morning at the lodge I was up just as light was breaking across the horizon. While the coffee

perked in the kitchen, I walked out on the T-shaped dock that jutts 50 feet out into the lake. The surface of the lake dozed in a satin calm, veneered by a dense mist. An earthly silence presented a startling contrast for one bred amidst the frenzy of a restless city. A series of small, hump backed islands rose far out on the lake and were barely visible through the mist, except for the tree tops which rose like foreign flags on distant battlements. But on a more immediate and startling note the rising sun had peeled back the mist enough to reveal a series of dimples breaking the surface and multiplying far to the right and to the left.

I was astounded to see a narrow band of concentric rings 50 to 60 feet beyond the dock and paralling the shoreline for as far as I could see. Feeding fish, without a doubt, and the number was incredible.

Being less than comfortable when called upon to deliver long casts, the distance from the dock to the fringe of the activity seemed imposing and would require strenuous efforts. Out of the menagerie of rods stowed to meet any contingency there was one, an $8\frac{1}{2}$ foot glass, recently conceived in my rod building corner, that possessed the backbone to narrow the gap. This latest addition had been untried, for anticipating the opportunity for lake fishing I had barely wrapped the final guide in place before loading the station wagon for the trek east. Not every rod's career can be launched with an Adirondack baptism such as awaited this one. On less are affectionate associations founded.

Within the span required to assemble my gear, tie on a small, Adams floater, don my vest to inspire a touch of confidence, pour a mug of much needed coffee and return to the dock, a slight breeze had rolled over the top of the surrounding mountains. The previous calm slowly gave way to slight ripples converging on the short line. Those mysterious rises were still in progress, but their frequency appeared to have diminished. There were a few airborne flies but they passed on without identifying themselves. I began casting, letting the fly settle softly as possible and at the same time brought in the slack line without dragging the fly below the surface. After a number of fruitless casts it was apparent that this was not going to be a one sided slaughter. My efforts aroused not the slightest interest.

Shortly, the wind stiffened. At first it had come swirling across the lake pushing up matching swills until order set in and pronounced waves rapidly carried my line and fly away from the zone of assault. Coupled with the intensity of wind and waves, the rises diminished in proportion, until they stopped completely. By then, the sun sat on the horizon and the mist dissapated exposing the islands and reducing my battlemented towers to the reality of hard

rock formations. There were no fish to exhibit to the waking family that first morning, but I did briefly penetrate the threshold of the Adirondack mystique.

Sundown that evening saw a repeat of the morning performance, but the sequence of events was scheduled in reverse order. The wind had blown steadily through out the day making it almost too chilly for the bathers to take a dip. However, with the sun horizon-bound the wind gradually diminished, and as it did so, the lake calmed in proportion. One phenomonom relied on the other, for with the briefest announcement random dimples began showing until they gradually multiplied into that wide band that had orchestrated the morning performance. The invitation to join nature's rondo was too tempting to ignore, although as yet I was still the intruder in need of proving himself.

I made numerous casts that evening, letting the line roll out and easing the fly gently next to random rises. With such repeated practice I became more proficient with the new rod and the distance required became easier to attain. Nevertheless, I performed an empty ballet that only ended as darkness brought down the curtain on another fishless performance. Nevertheless, this second humility sealed my determination to be on the dock at dawn as I was still no closer to solving the riddle of the mysterious rises.

Staring at the formless, impartial flames of a roaring fire stoked against the chill of a June evening did not inspire any quick solution. Small flies and long, fine leaders are oft touted techniques and have become established problem solvers. Applied on the morrow, such a revision would at least offer a point from which to make additional corrections, and the benefit of a long leader would allow a measure of added distance, a feat which had already strained my casting capacity. Rather than waste precious time in the morn I made these refinements and knotted on a size 18 blue wing olive.

With the rod armed and ready for the morn it was an opportune time to study the typographical maps purchased at a hardware store in Old Forge. The Adirondacks teems with rivers waiting to be sampled and many flow close by the lodge. To sample the legends of the famed west Branch of the Au Sable, near Lake Placid, would require a two hour round about drive through the mountains from the lodge, but its grandeur could not be ignored. A few miles before Old Forge, on the way north from Utica, we had passed over the South Branch of the Big Moose River. It looked wide and challenging and one bank was flanked by a massive, concrete mill lying in decayed ruin suggestive of a Scottish castle. The massive structure of the mill presented a lordly figure indicative of a long abandoned struggle by the clans of industry.

In preparation for the vacation I had ordered a booklet. *"The Trout Streams of the Adirondacks"*, and this proved an invaluable time saver, for it listed dozens of trouting rivers, indicating their access areas as well as the types of available fishing. Between the booklet and the maps these were to be my main guide for some of the most rewarding and varied trout fishing I have experienced.

At dawn on the second morning I braced myself against the chill of the June air by sipping soffee as I took up sentinel duty on the dock awaiting signs of the morning rise. Conditions were much the same, the lake calm and mounted by that solemn, hovering mist. Light gradually breached the horizon and played across a medly of silent dimples. This time I was ready, but I steeled myself against the previous days impatience. Previously I had aimed my casts randomly in whichever direction a rise was presented, trying to land a fly as close as possible. I told myself today would be different, for there had to be a clue to unravelling nature's partially disclosed riddle.

Mulling over the multiple rises unfolding, the notion suddenly struck me that they could represent a pattern after all. So often events do occur in groups of three and perhaps this charade could be unlocked by a simple reckoning in threes. Watching closely I observed that a second rise usually developed in quick succession and was followed by a third with a few feet separating them and most often not varying greatly from a straight line. What I had thought to be single rises of individual fish, now appeared as triple or more rise patterns of one cruising fish revealing the direction he travelled in. It was much like pencilling in the lines between the dots of a cartoon figure.

By way of proving my theory of threes I proposed to keep my line airborne while waiting for two dimples to appear and then cast to a calculated point of intersection. It worked! A rise showed, I false cast keeping the line in the air until the second dimple appeared then aimed the cast ahead a few feet and waited. The fly was sucked silently below the surface and I was into my first Adirondack fish. The moment I tightened he shot skyward — dropped — came out again, fought bravely and then surrendered to the net. The riddle of the rises had been solved and I was overjoyed to find a lovely 10 inch rainbow thrashing in the net.

Success was varied. I was not rewarded with a trout on every cast, but there was enough excitement right at the front door to assure any vacation a memorable feast. Morning and evening those lovely rainbows were faithful in their appearance. The only exception came after a thunderstorm when they habitually sulked on the bottom for at least two days.

Every mid-day the family headquartered on the dock and doused themselves with suntan lotion while the more hardy braved a frantic swim in the frigid water. But early morning and late evening the dock was respected as my special domain.

Even amidst all the beauty, the Adirondacks possess an eerie element that lies deep rooted and defies definition. It is almost as if a message lies carved in those ageless, granite formations that suggests "enjoy what I have to offer while you can, but defile me not". Whoever or whatever enters the area has a temporary lease; nothing seems permanent except the mountains themselves. The history of the Adirondacks reads like a tabloid of futile struggles. At Blue Mountain Museum there are hundreds of photographs depicting the elaborate lodges and camps built by the rich and the adventurous, as well as the numerous hotels that catered to thousands who yearly decamped from the cities in search of the healing powers of the mountain air. An entire generation of the late 19th century has come and gone and much that was built for them and by them has vanished. Except for an occasional tell-tale foundation, little remains to mark their presence, as so much has succumbed to fire or to the severity of the Adirondack elements.

Even Old Forge came by its name through personal tragedy. In the early 1800's Frederick Herreshoff attempted to carry on a mining and iron forge operation, however despite his persistence the mountains rejected his presumptuous invasion and final defeat prompted him to take his own life in 1819. His long abandoned forge lent its name to the village.

Big Moose Lake, a few miles from the lodge, provided the setting for another tragedy. Chester Gillette escorted his expectant lady friend to Hotel Glenmore on Big Moose, and amidst the blissful setting they appeared to be just one more romantic couple out for a leisurely afternoon row on the lake. Rounding a cove he left her on the lake bottom and then rowed off for an evening revelry at a nearby tavern. In 1908 the electric chair curtailed his amorous adventures. Thedore Dreiser immortalized the episode in his, *"An American Tragedy"* while more recently the murder was the subject of the film, *"A Place in the Sun"*, starring Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift. The Glenmore Hotel burned to the ground in 1950 thus turning another page on Adirondack lore.

Knowing Big Moose Lake as the scene of the drama lends an added measure of fantasy and awe. The road to the lake runs through heavy forest and as you approach, the lake is visible through the trees. Big Moose Inn stands in a clearing off the road. This is a lovely, red painted Victorian structure that sits perched up from the lake itself. As a family we dined there one evening and found the steaks generous, a commendable wine list and the service

attentive. After dinner we savored the Victorian charm of relaxing on the rambling veranda that overlooks the lake. The lake is ringed with high wooded hills and on a cloudy day they are bathed in a dismal grayness and the lake assumes the blankness of a bottomless pit.

A day trip to the famed West Branch of the Au Sable near Lake Placid etched another entry in my journal of Adirondack Potpourri. The beauty here is unparalleled. In a long gentle glide that wraps itself around the base of Whiteface Mountain one can watch the river erupt into a trough of white, rushing water as it gushes down a chute choked with time worn boulders. Toward the tail of this lovely pool the water is so clear that I spotted at least a dozen feeding fish silhouetted against the backdrop of the stone-lined bottom. There is no greater thrill than being able to see the fish one casts to.

Time simply melted away on that morning below White Face Mountain. The swish of the long rod, a lovely accompoiment in any setting, was barely audible, what with the reverberations sounding from the descending cataract farther downstream. I felt gratified for being allowed to entice various members of that congregation of browns gently sipping spinners. Especially so, because the entire performance from the initial interest to the final take was so clearly visible. During the drive back, skirting the velvet blue lakes and the mountains silent in their regale bearing, I felt the Adirondacks had parted their veil for one brief moment to allow an outsider to sample a small measure of their mystique. My return to the lodge coincided with the mighty overture about to be orchestrated out beyond the T-shaped dock, and I quickly assumed my reserved station front row center.

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Letter from America

by Frank M. Hursley

A FORTNIGHT'S holiday can dissipate as swiftly as an echo in a blind valley. Our fortnight that withered away unmercifully was spent in England in May '85. It was a smidgen of time in which to absorb the enchanting delights your lovely isle, although we did cram as much as was humanly possible into our brief stay.

It all started when Peter Lapsley kindly arranged dinner at The Flyfishers' for ourselves and our travelling companions, the Husteds. It was an extraordinary evening in the company of Sir Edwin Arrowsmith, Mr and Mrs Paul Windle-Taylor, Peter Vlaitin and Peter Lapsley. The fellowship of anglers is always remarkable, but never more so than the degree that prevailed that evening.

The day before the four of us had explored the regal streets of London. Having sauntered through Burlington Arcade, we thought it might be beneficial to locate the club. This we did in short order. Descending the stair-well, I stood staring at the entrance for some moments before casually nudging the door to see if it was bolted. It wasn't. Curiosity tinged with pride of membership dulled any thoughts as to the propriety of my next action, for I coaxed our little band to follow.

Gravely we spiralled upward until at last we commanded a narrow hallway. Hearing cheery voices, I deduced that the club-room was to the right. Some measure of propriety must have surfaced at this point, for instead of bursting in, we passed on in single file until we bumbled into Norman Fuller's sanctuary.

Although Norman found himself suddenly circled by a quartet of audacious foreigners, he was supremely gracious and thoughtfully suggested that we might lunch in Bucks Annex. I dallied over my first port on English soil hopeful that the Queen Mother might pop in as Norman had related she does on occasion.

On the Friday of the same week Peter Lapsley had thoughtfully arranged a day on the River Itchen under the tutelage of Ron Holloway, the river-keeper. The appointed hour was 10.30 at The Royal Hotel, our lodging in Winchester, but first I had a rendezvous with Izaak Walton in the cathedral. The turmoil of the narrow streets, full of people on their way to work, changed to serenity as I approached the cathedral. At the tomb in the south transept I stood hatless,

observing the detail of the famous window. On the way out I chanced upon an ornately embellished memorial to Francis Francis.

At The Royal I assumed station in the lobby. I knew instinctively that the gentleman who entered at 10.30 sharp was my man. He was shod in rubber wellingtons, topped by a tweed fishing hat bedecked with flies, and he sported the finest set of mutton-chop whiskers I have seen outside of a Victorian album.

Within a few minutes I had my first sight of a true English chalk-stream, and the famed Itchen at that. At first sight it seemed to lack the vitality of our rushing streams. It drifted peacefully along, seeming to savour the journey in anticipation of rounding the corner to where Lord Grey once cast his fly.

From a rack on his auto, Ron took down a lovely cane rod mounted with a tiny Blue Upright. No trout showed as we strolled along the bank, but he pointed out how he had shored up the bank here and there and how at one point he had pinched-in the banks to create a flow below.

Ron's experienced eye noted an occasional trout aiming its neb at a floating natural. He stationed me at a particular point, and after a few casts I was astonished to find myself attached to an Itchen trout. He was a tiddler by Itchen standards, but I was overjoyed to have made his acquaintance. Unfortunately, he was the only trout to taste the bank that day.

This style of fishing, dry-fly upstream from the bank, and only to rising fish, is so civilised compared with our seek-and-search method. Our waters tumble through densely-wooded areas, and we are forced to enter the water to be buffeted by rushing currents over uncertain bottoms.

The following week and it was by train to the poets' corner of England for a brief visit with Sheona Lodge and her husband, Oliver. We detrained at Windermere station to be transported by the proprietor of the Rothay Garth Hotel to his establishment in Ambleside. We had just 15 minutes to pitch our luggage into our room and descend to the lounge to meet our dinner guests, the Lodges.

Sheona had repeated rather apologetically in her letters that she is 84 and that Oliver is 90. Within five minutes it was apparent that age was not a matter of substance. Of course, the years have been earned, but in a kind way. Sheona has a sparkle in her eye that will never dim, and an enthusiasm and vitality that would be enviable at half her age.

Oliver, too, is a delight. He is uncanny, his great learning an inspiration. He can quote freely from the poets, often fitting a passage into the situation of the moment. His speech is without a wasted syllable and he has a great flare for the waggish comment. I found myself not wanting to miss a single gem.

We were no strangers at table that evening. It was as if we were friends of long standing home for a holiday. Oliver's choice of claret may have contributed, but I prefer to believe that the delightful harmony that prevailed really stemmed from the exceptional fellowship inherent in all anglers.

After dinner we walked the darkened streets of Ambleside to the Lodges' home, Wraysholme. Two bow-windows view the garden and the fells beyond. The atmosphere of the comfortable lounge is bookish. Books are on every table — Wordsworth, Jane Austen, Arthur Ransome, and many more to lend pleasure for a moment's escape.

Oliver appeared with a vintage port and promised there would not be a headache in the whole bottle. Sheona was eager for details about our dinner at the club and about anything else pertaining to The Flyfishers'. She showed me a tall, standing desk topped by enclosed bookshelves. Angling treasures were stored within. Drawers were crammed with angling momentoes: letters to her father, Dr Baigent, and to herself from the greats of the fraternity; flies tied by her father — the Baigent series offered by Hardy's in the 1920s; with first editions of angling books ranged across the shelves above.

Oliver described a butterfly for which the Windermere trout have an appetite, and how he felt certain that he knew a pattern that might appeal to them. He brought some materials and invited me to dress the fly *sans* vice. I begged off, explaining that I would be quite lost using bare thumbs. Undaunted, he knelt by a lamp and tied on the body material. Then he clamped the fly in forceps and handed it to me to mount the wings. After many false starts, I did manage the task. Oliver named our joint effort The Hursley Harrier, and now it has a proud position in my tying corner. The trout of Windermere will have to be patient.

I felt privileged to share this evening with Sheona and Oliver. To me it signified a bridge between the present and the sacred days of the silk line and the great builders of cane rods.

Next day Sheona uncased her vintage three-piece Hardy rod that needed a touch of oil and much labour to thread one section to another. She attached a Hardy Perfect, shorn of paint, and we adjourned to the lawn for a few casts. The rod's action was slower than that of any other rod I have experienced. I now understand the references in print of being able to light one's pipe between the lifting-off and the laying-on.

Oliver uncased his rod and reel and suggested I have a 'throw-in' on nearby Rothay Beck. I donned a pair of Sheona's hip-waders and off we went. At Oliver's favourite pool I entered the water and prepared to strip line from the the reel — but there was no fly-line to strip. The leader was knotted to mere weightless backing. I tried a few feeble throws upstream. The wind blew downstream and deposited the line gently at my feet. My only recourse was to pivot downstream and heave up into the wind. This worked of sorts and I managed a decent float in various pools while listening to the ballad of the sprightly beck and stealing glances at the lovely fells, with their lush green slopes, stone walls and head-lowered sheep. This, I thought, is truly the poets' corner of England.

No trout interrupted my reverie, but it was brought abruptly to an end when the lone fly with which we were armed wedged behind a rock and parted company.

Back at the house, Sheona was ready with the whisky tray and we toasted our afternoon's 'throw-in'. For my small success in working his rod, Oliver referred to me as 'maestro'. I was pleased.

At the evening hour we assembled in the dining-room of the Rothay Garth Hotel. Oliver ordered the claret and we shared a final but lovely meal. The finale came, as it had to, in the shape of a taxi to whisk Sheona and Oliver back to Wraysholme. We embraced and parted on a note of sadness, although such firm friends. And our companions, the Husteds, had learned that 'It is not all of fishing to fish'.

Letter From America

by Frank M. Hursley

LAST fall hardly a week passed without drenching rain. Rivers groaned from their extra cargo. Our own complaints were loud, but no one listened, and the deplorable weather continued until one uncommonly glorious week toward the end of October. Then the soggy clouds moved out, and dry, cottony ones moved in.

The awaited phenomenon coincided with a marvellous weekend spent at Camp Ginger Quill on the banks of the main stream of the Au Sable. The camp, not to be construed as a tent and outdoor cooking fires, is really a rambling lodge of endless bedrooms and a fully-equipped kitchen with the latest cooking machines. At one end, away from the sleeping quarters, is a games-room with a well-stocked bar and a mechanism whose uncanny function is to maintain an inventory of ice-cubes. Two outer buildings provide additional bedroom suites and storage for gear.

Each year on the opening day of the trout season, the present owners host a lively cocktail party for what seems to be every trout-fisher north that day. Much traffic comes and goes and there is much toasting to everyone's success. The valiant ice-maker sighs with relief when the last guest departs.

On that October weekend that brought the reprieve in the dour weather, five couples motored north to Camp Ginger Quill. We had graciously included our wives, and during a modest ceremony before we decamped on the Sunday evening, each of the ladies received the highest honour awarded by the Ginger Quill. Not a blackball surfaced on their nomination as Daisy Quills. This elevation included their being pinned with badges embossed with the Camp Ginger Quill logo, and they respectively swore to wear them at all future functions. This distinction was earned by their joint effort in roasting to perfection the Saturday evening's turkey, having cheerfully taken their rotation at basting.

On Saturday morn, with breakfast at the long table concluded, Dave Fox and I opted for a downstream wade to Wakely Bridge, a good four-hour endeavour. Before departing we stowed sandwiches and a canned refreshment in the back pouches of our fishing vests. Then we waddled off looking much like Richard III. The trees were largely barren, the fall colours well past their prime, and the air had a delightful crispness. In the straight runs sudden gusts of wind chilled the face and sent lines in unwanted directions. Even though

we probably violated trout holts, it felt good to manoeuvre into areas where the trees parted enough to allow a sunny umbrella of warmth to reach us. Even the trout seemed influenced by the low temperatures, for when a brace came to my Hare's Ear, after an initial protest at finding themselves attached to a foreign persuasion, their surrender was rather meek. Dave noted the same reaction.

On reaching George Griffiths' cabin, The Barbless Hook, we paused for a rest. Here on a summer day in 1959 George hosted an assembly of 15 trout fishermen who were concerned about the welfare of our coldwater resources. From that historic meeting came the founding of Trout Unlimited. The cabin itself sits like a watchful sentinel, high on a rise leading up from the river.

Downstream we could see a lone angler patiently working his way up. We could see his line unroll into the quiet water next to the jutting sweepers. When he came abreast we gathered in a circle, as strangers will, and learned that he had driven for seven hours from Chicago to have a final throw on his favourite river. Wisconsin rivers were much closer, he said, but they were not the Au Sable. As anglers are prone to do, we compared our equipment and found that each carried quite different rods and reels and we were using three different fly patterns. We did agree on the pleasures of cane rods and on what a magnificent October day we shared, and the fact that we were not wasting it on trivial concerns.

Dave and I fished on down while our new acquaintance continued upstream, round a bend and out of sight. We waded through a variety of water, on occasion too deep for safe passage. Then we were forced to portage bankside along well-trodden paths through the trees.

In time we gained the trunk of a downed tree extending out from the bank and agreed it would provide an excellent harbour on which to uncase our lunches. Sandwiches of thick ham laced with a biting mustard were unrolled and a canned beer that had not lost its chill sufficed in lieu of claret. Propped against the trunk, our feet in the water, we concluded that our outdoor cafe could not be improved upon by the finest-appointed dining-room. I recalled a similar pose on another river, when a passing canoeist suggested that I would catch more fish if I did not spend so much time eating.

Wakely Bridge, our destination, was named after Tom Wakely, an early settler who came to the river from Ottawa in 1879. A descendant, Jim Wakely, was a respected guide on the river until he choked to death while simultaneously eating a sandwich and setting an animal trap. The trap suddenly tripped, causing him to gasp. A tablet upstream now marks the site of the tragedy. His family still operate float-trip guide services on the river.

By the time we had driven back to camp, the Daisy Quills had completed their first assignment and the turkey was a lovely golden-brown. The crew was busily fussing over the long table, buttering the roast squash and generally turning the well-ordered kitchen into a zoo. All was to good effect, however. The Daisy Quills could stand their ground in any kitchen. We complimented them by leaving a denuded carcase and a mound of plates to be scoured.

Next day, Dave and I stowed our gear in the auto and drove north a few miles to the old lumber town of Lovells.

During the early 1900s, the Au Sable was famous for its native grayling and brook trout, and sportsmen would suffer primitive train travel to the towns of Grayling or Lovells in their pursuit. From these rail centres the real adventure began as the fishers were transported by teams of horses to the fishing camps along the river.

In 1900, Tom Douglas built his hotel on the banks of the river at Lovells and it became popular with the Au Sable fishermen. Mrs Douglas cooked their catches of brook trout, serving as many as 500 or 600 at a single meal. The seeds of conservation were soon to be sown, but only after the grayling had become extinct. Not many years ago the hotel was closed, and now the gabled, clap-boarded structure sits silent and brooding over its lost glory. Once I ventured past the no trespassing sign and peered in the dining-room window. The tables were formally set as if, momentarily, tweed-coated anglers would descend from the upper storey after refreshing themselves from the rigours of a day spent on the river.

The North Branch is generously wide and comfortably shallow, and the trout lie amidst the rocks or in the channels between long weed-beds. Wading poses no surprise challenges and there is ample room for casters to march two abreast. Private property, with an occasional cabin, flanks both banks. Thus access is only at the bridge, and a return in the water is necessary to avoid trespass.

The weather was a match of the previous day, with a brisk wind and an invigorating temperature, the sun visiting between the clouds, and the air so clear you could see forever. As we explored our way downstream, the gables of the Douglas Hotel were visible through the denuded trees. In front of the hotel we passed the bankside concrete foundations that are the only remnant of the pavilion that once housed square dances. And it was there on the busy weekends that the overflow from the hotel was housed on folding cots.

Dave and I shared the river between us. Not another soul was in sight apart from the occasional passer-by pausing on the bridge to survey our successes. Friendly olives rode the surface at random, only to disappear in splashy rises, revealing the locations of brook trout in their resplendent fall colours. More than once I walked up on a lethargic trout lying close in to a weed-bed, as if it sought warmth from the undulating blanket. Only at the last moment would it dash off elsewhere.

All seemed in harmony that day. For us it was the final outing of the season, and after a full season's drill, our casts seemed effortless. The varnished cane flexed smoothly at our commands, glistening in the sunlight. We both took trout; how and how many does not matter. It was that breed of day when you could go on forever. Time dictated otherwise, and we grudgingly began our march back to the bridge and the auto parked at the roadside. The silent ceremony of recasing our rods until another season was completed, and we regained the Ginger Quill in time for a late lunch.

The four-hour drive home awaited us, but before we decamped the Daisy Quills were pinned with their badges and then settled into the autos crammed with rod-cases and canvas bags in turn crammed with fly-boxes. The rains could return at their leisure. It no longer mattered. We had had our respite, and we had learned what October is all about.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley

FOR THIS SUMMER'S holiday, it was to Oregon the lush green state that shares the Columbia River with its neighbour, Washington, to the north. If it were not for our son, Mickey, and his family forsaking the home state of Michigan, we would probably never have learned of the delights that Oregon offers.

The Deschutes River, with its lusty rainbows, is one. As is the case with tackle-shops and pipe-purveyors, visiting rivers never dulls, and the myopic adage, "If you've seen one, you've seen them all", simply does not register.

I had first read of the Deschutes and of its red-sided rainbows in an old issue of *The Creel*, the matchless publication of The Flyfisher's Club of Oregon. Then the river was pigeon-holed for future acquaintance, just as the lovely Itchen had lain dormant until my inspiring day there in May of '85.

On our fated day, Mickey and I got an early-morning start out of Portland for the two-hour drive through the Cascade Mountains. We skirted Mt Hood, the snow-capped peak where several climbers perished early in the year, and then wound down the eastern slope to Maupin, a sun-baked village on the Deschutes. On our way we canvassed The Fly Shop in Welches for needed advice and local flies. The proprietor, an exuberant sort, considered that the salmon fly hatch had recently ended, but he deduced their imitation could still prove productive as the trout would not have erased them from memory, since the fly is so enormous. We succumbed to his logic and came away with a stock.

The contrast in terrain between the eastern and western side of the Cascades is uncanny. The western side, which includes Portland, is a lush green, painted in a depth noted in your Cumbrian valleys. The eastern side is arid, looking like a sandy moonscape done in pastels. Habitation is scarce and consists largely of clusters of abandoned, weather-stained farm buildings with sagging roofs.

Breakfast was had at an equally weather-beaten restaurant in Maupin, suitably named the Oasis. It is here that members of the Flyfisher's Club of Oregon, by tradition, take their afternoon milkshakes. An ancient cane rod, reel and fly-box are mounted in the ceiling like a display of saintly relics.

Leaving Maupin — which we found not hard to do — we took a black-top road running parallel to the river. Roadside plaques announced the boundaries between public and private land — there was no excuse for trespassing. Numerous turn-offs offered generous access, and these were easily spotted because there was so little vegetation. Ranging both sides of the river, canyon walls sloped upward, trapping the heat, which that day reached 100 deg Fahr.

The river is wide and has a furious flow at centre. In some areas, what with the maddening current at midstream, slack water is left behind at bankside and forms deep, lake-like pools, complete with wavelets rolling shoreward. In other areas the change is dramatically different as large boulders form pockets wherein only a brief float is possible over shallow water at bankside. From what we saw that day, the Deschutes is a monster of a river, brawling its way to the Columbia farther north.

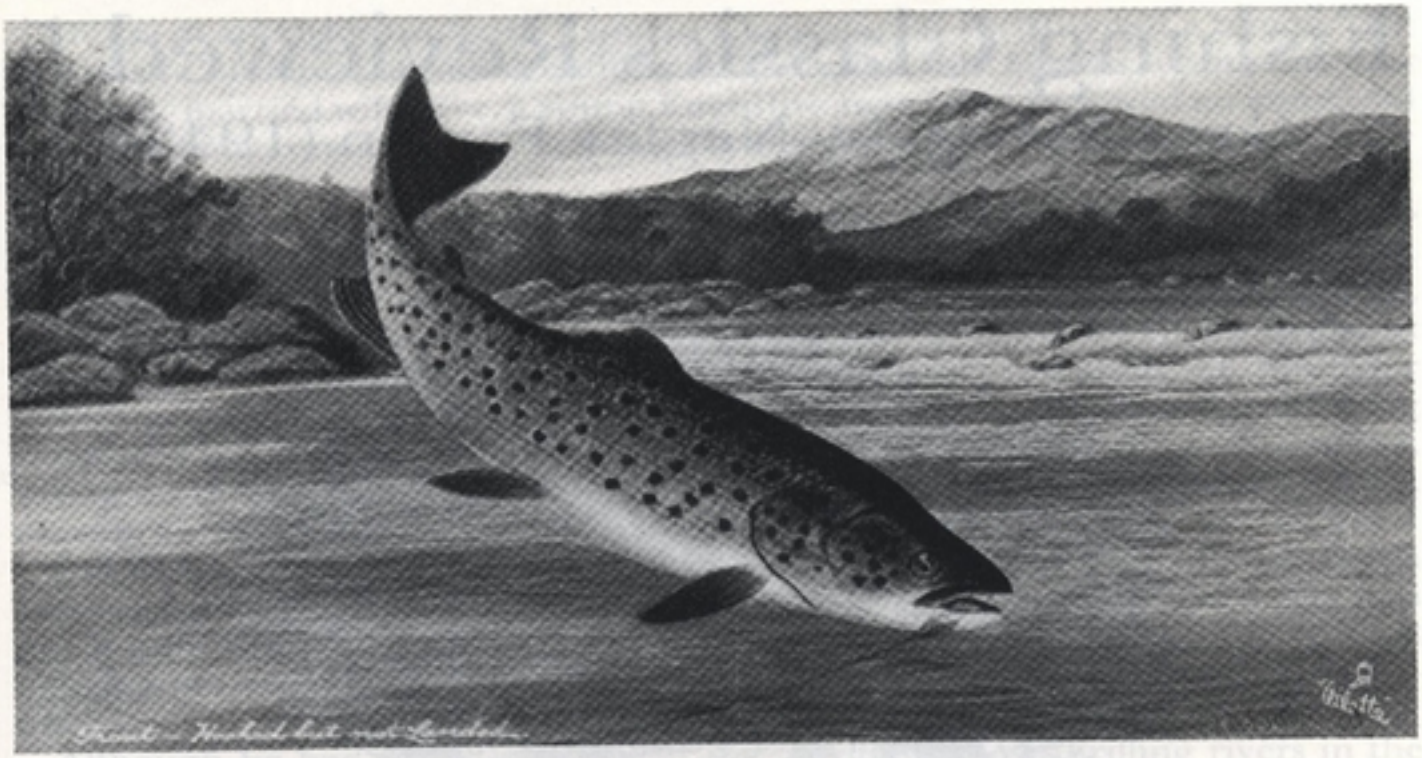
We chose one of the turn-offs and left the van to bake in the searing sun. Acknowledging the advice of the chap in the fly-shop, I knotted on one of those gigantic salmon flies. In size it was not far removed from a bass bug, and on a light trout rod, to coax it airborne was a challenge. The fly looped through a series of figures-of-eight and then went *splat* on the surface. Surprisingly, a pronounced swat at the fly followed, but without any join. But I'll never know if one of those legendary leviathans was merely picking its teeth or a lesser brethren was too small to embrace the steel. On my next cast, the fly parted in the grass behind. Turning, I saw the multi-coloured back of a snake parting the grass 4 ft behind. Needless to say, I didn't remain to learn if its nether end tapered into a rattle. As nothing is perfect, even the storied Deschutes shares its reputation between its notable trout and its rattlesnake population.

We leap-frogged to another access downstream. However, this produced only a visit by an officer of the Fish and Wildlife Division to inspect our fishing licences. What with the lack of vegetation and the nearness of the road, there is nowhere to hide if one has arrived without a non-resident licence.

The officer advised fishing the other side of the river at a fish-hatchery, where a few trees offered shade to the trout. We reeled in and drove back to Maupin and then, far out of town, found the hatchery road. At the edge of the canyon we faced a steep descent down a one-lane, zig-zagging, gravel road. Once committed, there was no turning back and when we levelled off at the bottom, which I was certain we would in one form or another, the pungent odour of over-taxed brakes permeated the heat waves.

There was the hatchery, and there were the trees with such lovely shade. There also was the river roaring down at midstream, tumbling over submerged boulders that split off a side channel into a miniature whirlpool. Wading was possible for a short distance out over a level bed of small rocks. Olives came off steadily in the quieter water and a few trout were on the rise. Half-a-dozen rainbows in the 10-inch class came to a Greenwell's Glory. We thought we had struck it rich. The Greenwell's does not receive any local endorsement, but when olives are afoot, the fly can be productive even over here.

The real prize awaited us in the whirlpool and its tailing eddy. Briefly, I saw the dorsal fin of a heavy trout breach the surface. A fish of that size deserved a fresh fly and I knotted on a Gold-ribbed Hare's Ear and dropped it into the heaving caul-



Trout — hooked but not landed.

dron. The fly whisked about as if it were in a clothes-washer and then was ejected into the eddy. A large fish intercepted the fly, but the join was feeble and the fly came away. Another fin was sighted. This throw produced a solid take. The trout charged out of the eddy and into the riffles below, taking line, and we squared off. A moment of weakness on his part and I was able to coax him back and into some slack water. He was a lovely red-sided rainbow, heavily girthed and touching 16 inches.

Mickey had come over to watch the commotion and I gave him a Hare's Ear to try the same pool. He produced a 14-inch rainbow.

After a few hours under that scorching sun, my lips were so parched they felt like dried figs. In the van we found relief in a still-cool slice of watermelon and a tepid soft drink.

The next chore was to coax the van up the canyon wall without dancing off the loose gravel. Mickey accomplished the task and we were on our way to the cool green of Portland.

For a few brief hours the river acknowledged its reputation, giving freely of its splendid trout, as long as they were borrowed for only a moment. The ageless, sloping canyon walls confining the turbulent river suggested they had existed for an eternity. To a father and his son, alone in that majestic panorama, time did not exist. And although startled at first sight by its nakedness, before reeling in we understood how the Deschutes could grow on one and how one could learn to love its unusual character.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley

SHAKESPEARE and trouting be not a strange mix after all. This was borne out during a crisp September week-end when a contingent of eight students of the theatre and of the sport, along with their ladies, congregated in Kitchener, Ontario, to continue their studies. They came with rods and reels to divide a moment between the Bard and trouting and to rendezvous with various members of the K-W Flyfisher's Club, which is based in Kitchener. The assembly not only demonstrated a hands-across-the-border affection for their Canadian brethren, but exemplified also the bonhomie that exists among flyfishermen everywhere, regardless of international boundaries. They came to have some sport and to cap the day with a seat for *Twelfth Night* at Stratford.

The K-W Flyfisher's Club (the K-W stands for Kitchener-Waterloo) is a group of dedicated Canadian trout fishermen passionately involved in the sport and actively engaged in local conservation. The club meets monthly, produces a publication called *Patterns*, conducts fly-tying classes and casting clinics, and organises several outings, sometimes to Michigan waters.

Kitchener was founded by Mennonites migrating from Pennsylvania during the early 1800s, and was known as Berlin until the name caused palpitations among the patriots during the first of the Great Wars, whereupon the name was revised to what it is today. Our own brown trout received similar attention. After their original planting in Michigan in 1884, they were referred to as German browns because of their country of origin. The debacle of 1914-18 inspired renaming them American brown or Liberty brown and was eventually economised into simply brown trout.

To Michiganders, southern Ontario is not associated with trout fishing. The environ out of Windsor is noted for its pleasant, unhurried hamlets of yellow-bricked homes, whose main street is always known as King Street, and along which are found inviting bake-shops, antiques, woollens, and china shops displaying wares bearing the Queen's portrait. Dominating the centre of many towns, a red

or yellow-bricked hotel becomes a prominent feature and can be relied on to dispense mellow Canadian ale on tap.

Ranging out of Windsor, the countryside remains flat and uninteresting, consisting largely of patchwork fields of grain far to the horizon. An occasional, meandering earth-coloured stream, hardly distinguishable from a drainage ditch, suggests a haven more inviting to carp than to the noble trout. There is a pleasant change as one motors on toward Kitchener, Paris, and Cambridge. The terrain becames gently rolling, dotted with stands of trees, and the rivers hurry along a little faster and become noticeably clearer. According to the K-W chaps, the rivers of this area hold healthy trout populations, with an occasional brown reaching the several-pound class. Some rivers flowing into Lake Huron and Lake Ontario have steelhead runs, and pink salmon are making themselves known in great numbers.

Our motor convoy rendezvoused in the Walper Terrace Hotel on Friday afternoon and met for dinner in the hotel's main dining-room. The Walper had been an old family establishment until it fell from grace, and former years had found us dining on an excellent German menu before the evening performance at the Shakepeare Festival in Stratford. However, a revised management must have anticipated the arrival of us trouters, because they had recently completed a multi-million dollar renovation and the old dame looked quite regal in her new fall wardrobe. As for the accommodation, only one negative mark was registered that week end. One couple found themselves housed in a rather small room and the lad's wife found it necessary to leave the door open while wrenching up her panty-hose in order to avoid being impaled on the door-knob.

After dinner that evening a dozen or so members of the K-W Flyfisher's Club joined us in the lounge. As we were members of Trout Unlimited, it was revealing to learn about the remarkable degree of co-operation their club receives from the Canadian Ministry of Resources. On home shores, in order for our local TU chapter to undertake stream-enhancement projects, it is necessary to penetrate a maze of official bureaucracy enveloping our own Department of Natural Resources. We learned that the Canadian Ministry not only furnishes costly materials, but also funds for a particular project, and the country's economy is not exactly galloping off the charts.

Early Saturday morn we decamped our rooms, leaving the ladies still slumbering. To ease their pain at losing our company for the day, credit cards were deposited on the bureau, allowing them licence to ravage Kitchener's shops. Two of the K-W members joined us at breakfast to act as our day's hosts and guides. First off was a visit to Galt Creek where the club was involved in an ongoing project. The bridge over the Galt allowed a view of crystal-clear, fast-moving shallow water flowing over a bed of gravel. The chaps explained how this one stretch had been badly silted until the club corrected the problem with the aid of the Ministry. They achieved a pretty little stretch that sang its appreciation as it rounded a bend before disappearing into a stand of trees. I understand a fair population of browns have taken residence, and even more fruitful results are anticipated in time. Farther downstream, club members were busily clearing another section, and I saw teams of two shouldering out logs.

Whiteman's Creek, our final destination, proved a full hour's drive which took us through some splendid, rolling countryside and immaculate towns whose main streets were picturesquely adorned with hanging baskets crammed with flowers.

Upon arrival, we were divided into two groups, one party for each club member, and deposited at two bridges providing access. The Whiteman proved to be a rather pleasant surprise — not overly wide, although it does broaden to provide shallow runs over a good solid base of gravel, and it does have a gentleness that is quite acceptable. And high wooded banks allowed a sense of isolation from the not-far-distant cluttered highways. There was just one detriment: the deeper runs were rather murky from recent rain, and hid our offerings unmercifully. As it was September, wet flies and streamers were the recommended drill, with a special nod to the ever-faithful Gold-ribbed Hare's Ear.

Because we assaulted the river in near-squad strength, one would believe the Whiteman would have surrendered her citizens freely. How woefully untrue. We prodded our feathered steel in the usual dug-outs and undermined banks to no avail. The alarm must have been relayed from riffle to riffle, for the day's tally ended at four browns netted, and these came to only one of our eight lads. Even he had whistled through a considerable inventory of flies before resorting to a small streamer embellished with Flashabou. Needless to say, the Whiteman was left unravished and our reputation as anglers remains embarrassingly tarnished in the eyes of our international hosts.

The only appropriate action remaining was to search out the nearest hotel for a pint of whatever was on draft, and this we did with the greatest dispatch. Regardless, even if our expertise miscarried, we did agree that it was a joy to be afield on such a lovely September day which was barely on the threshold of receiving its autumn mantle. Even of greater note was the degree of friendship we established with our Canadian neighbours, and this will be sustained, I am sure, on future visits.

As evening fell, our rods were cased, vests replaced by ties and jackets, and we escorted our ladies to a German *rathskeller* for Wiener Schnitzel accompanied with Piesporter served properly in green-stemmed goblets.

Stratford and the theatre was 30 miles away, so we disbanded to make the dash for the eight o'clock curtain. Unfortunately, I was at the helm of our auto and I soon had us perched behind a creeping lorry enjoying a leisurely outing along the curving highway. Our arrival at the theatre coincided with the booming of the warning cannon. By the time the auto was parked, which under hurried circumstances is always the farthest away, the curtain was up and we were barred from our seats until the first scene change. The usher herded us at the ready and when we were released we tip-toed to our seats just in time to hear Viola intone, "What country, friends, is this?" That was the last I recall of scene two. Later, in the hotel lounge, our ladies chided us about the spectacle of eight exhausted trouters in a row, sound asleep.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley

THIS past summer our imperfect globe apparently tilted on its side, redrawing the equator smack through Michigan, for we suffered one of the most depressingly hot summers in memory. There were periods when I thought I had been poached, boiled and roasted, and since the only instrument missing was a skewer, I am certain I would have been barbecued as well. We experienced 22 intermittent days when the thermometer registered 90 degs Fahr or more. Thankfully, these were not consecutive days, although enough were in the high 80s to fill in the gaps and make it seem as if they were.

Opinion has it that the oppressive heat had its equally numbing effect on the trout. By the end of summer, most of the lads complained about the poor fishing and concluded that the larger trout must have decamped to cooler waters, leaving behind the pimply youngsters to provide only a partial resemblance to sport.

Even last winter and the ensuing spring had been extremely mild, with many balmy, humid days and the rivers lowered to mid-season levels and clarity. The last productive period of note coincided with the season's opening at the close of April, for with the advent of steamy temperatures, that was the last outing that inspired any relish for the chase.

Just as we have for the past several years, Steve Masty, Hal Dombrowski, and myself honoured the tradition of the opening by booking into Gates AuSable Lodge on the banks of the AuSable for a three-day rally with the resident trout. The lodge comprises a series of comfortable units similar to a motel complex, although, as it is situated along the river, it has become a popular gathering place for Michigan fly-fishermen as well as those from neighbouring states. For this one prime weekend, reservations are made a year in advance. The lodge offers a comfortable dining-room with a splendid view of Stephan's Bridge and the tea-coloured AuSable as it hurries to mingle its soul-healing waters with Lake Huron.

The Journal's correspondent for America, Frank Hursley.

The only disturbing sight is of the all-too-frequent flotillas of canoes pirouetting wildly, with some rafted together to satisfy some appalling notion of adding to the fun, while the uninitiated occupants noisely drum the gunwhales with each furious stroke. The traffic becomes fiercer as summer progresses.

Usually, after checking into our rooms, previous years found us driving elsewhere to explore a picturesque stretch of the river. Normally we ignored the lodge water and returned only for well-earned meals before bustling off to another distant pool. Perhaps the accumulated years have levelled a rationing of energy or, as we would rather believe, inspired a touch of maturity, for this year we never left the lodge water. It seemed that not long ago we were the impatient ones who loaded the station-wagon and roared away like a trio of crusaders on a mission, bestowing a parting wave to the white-haired fishermen settled on the bank-side benches, who gazed expectantly at the river. This year there were vacancies on the benches, and we made ourselves comfortable.

I revere the days when the dining-room reflected an unspoken pecking order that assigned the senior anglers to the window tables which allowed the choicest view. I envied not their position, but the immense and mysterious knowledge of fly-fishing that they represented when I had so much to learn. In those days we emulated them by wearing the same canary-shaded, chamois-cloth shirts. However, ours looked terribly new and directly out of the box, and required passage through the washer a few times before taking on the patina of belonging.

The '87 opening also brought a change in the dining-room. Once-filled tables along the favoured side had notable vacancies, and the three of us found a corner table and adapted beautifully to it, as if it had been tailored to our specifications. We seemed to melt in with the other white-haired, ancient ones.

The weather was comfortably cool when we arrived at Gates, sunny between a

lovely patchwork of white, puffy clouds. We suited up and opted to try the water opposite the Lodge. Every opening brings a degree of anxiety about taking the first step from the bank. One does not know if the 1986 patches applied over '85's are going to be sufficient for '87. Thankfully, there was no stabbing sensation indicative of a slowly-filling boot, but then there were many bends to round before the season's finale.

The first major and highly-prized fly-hatch of the season is the Hendrickson, which, depending on weather conditions, can come off early or late, even missing completely our special week-end. Inasmuch as we did have a mild winter and a timid spring, we could not have timed our arrival better, for a fine hatch began shortly after we entered the river. Pound-sized browns shouldered the tiddlers out of the way in their impatience to be front-row at the feast, and some even "exploded" from the bottom as a whitish flash to snare a natural and then abruptly swirl aside to grab another. We were engulfed in Hendricksons dancing and glistening in the sunlight, although I noticed the phenomenon occurred only in a 50-yard stretch, and by chance we were dead-centre. Our trio took full advantage of this rare opportunity, and for three-quarters-of-an-hour we attempted to make history.

An overnight shift in the weather caused Saturday to remain cold and cloudy, and the fishing suffered. A large portion of the day was devoted to relaxing and renewing old acquaintances not seen since the previous year, which in itself is also a satisfying ritual of the opening. The leisure also allowed another opportunity for me to reinforce my affection for H.H. Bashford's lovely tales set forth in his *Fisherman's Progress*, which Graham Swanson so kindly sent over. Being such a slim volume, the book travels nicely in the tackle-bag and is always at the ready to dispense Bashford's splendid account of hamlets, inns, steam-trains, and motor-cars that are included in his praise of the angling experience.

Sunday morn saw another weather shift, bringing a cloudless sky with climbing temperatures. Braced with a tower of hot cakes, thick ham and flagons of coffee, we had time to make one final assault before stowing the rods for the 200-mile journey home. It was still early, and the only airborne activity consisted of a pesky cloud of no-see-ums that drew blood until I could fire the pipe as a buffer to repel

'Pound-sized browns shouldered the tiddlers out.'

the little devils. Early though it was, the river soon became crowded with new arrivals and one had to wedge into the parade of anglers coming down without disturbing or interfering with their progress. Congestion such as this occurs only this one weekend of the season, for anyone who can possibly get away does so in honour of the opening.

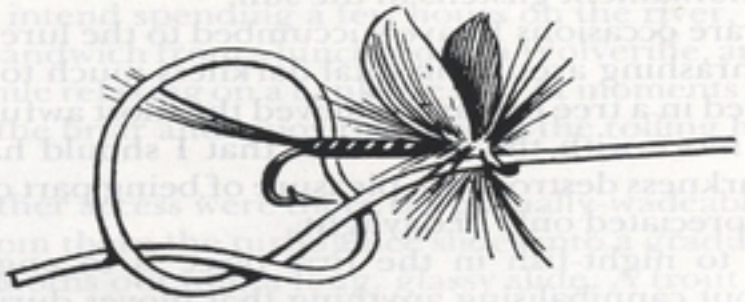
This time I went underwater with an old reliable Lead-wing Coachman, sending it tumbling through the deeper channels that had been productive the first day. The trout did not seem to mind the intrusion of so many booted feet shuffling through their holts, and they began to warm to that Coachman. As a result, a tally of browns were landed and released, but the strangest thing was that no one on either side had so much as a nod to their offerings. I became a centre-ring performer, and the poor lads scratching their heads reminded me of a similar episode many years ago.

With a rented cane pole of immense length and a bucket of minnows, I was on the pier that juts into Lake Michigan at Grand Haven, my mission to entice enough perch for a family fish-fry to be held at our vacation cottage. Intentions were forthright and filled with confidence. Nevertheless, the result was nil. I sat on that pier within two yards of a grizzly old fisherman similarly equipped and watched him pull in one perch after another, filling his bucket, while I received not a nibble and returned to the cottage dismayed.

I cannot fathom the reason for that singular performance through that congested pool when one brown after another was seized with a passion for that Coachman. I give credit to the fly itself, one that has long proven its mettle, and not to any quirks of ability which I possess. It was just one more of those uncanny episodes that make fly-fishing the fascinating sport it is. But I must admit that I was all puffed-up by the time I reeled in, and feeling very pleased with myself as I made the walk back to the lodge, receiving nods from the youthful anglers I passed.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley



I DO NOT BELIEVE I have mentioned the unruly Sturgeon River in these many asides across the broad waters. As a rule the river is not overly popular with the fly-fishing minority, and is more often attacked at night by spin fishermen. But on occasion I have favoured the Sturgeon, primarily because it does allow periods of solitary angling with not a soul in sight, and it does present a few individual characteristics as well as challenges not offered by other local rivers. I would not rank the Sturgeon as one of our very compelling or inviting rivers, but it does hold trout and even a Fall run of steel-head, and for the sake of these it is easy to overlook its frigid, impersonal quality.

The Sturgeon originates as a tiny rivulet, easily broadjumped, just east of Gaylord, the northern city which boasts of having the highest elevation in Michigan's lower peninsula. When Gaylord is favoured with rain, the Sturgeon receives a freshening run-off shortly after. When one considers the 250-odd miles of the Au Sable system, the Sturgeon ranks as a short-lived river by comparison as it wends its way northward only some 30 miles to the village of Indian River before being absorbed by Burt Lake, although it does meander through numerous bends and oxbows before arriving out of breath.

Despite its brief sojourn, it is a treacherous river and demands a great deal of respect. The rate of its current is frightening, and this is the main reason most fly-fisherman ignore its potential, prefering instead more comfortable rivers to wade, of which there are many to choose from. Anyone who does wade the Sturgeon, including myself, does so wearing hip-waders, and during these vintage years I have adopted a wading staff also.

The hippers serve as a high-water gauge and prevent me stepping in too deep and being swept off my feet. Even so, I find it best to anchor sideways in the current so as to present the least resistance. Wading can be accomplished usually only for relatively short distances before the river snakes off into one of its respected bends, where the bottom disappears into black depths while simultaneously gouging deep undercuts into the interfering bank. It is also rather narrow along its straight, riffled runs, and by way of adding its nuisance value, the banks here are choked with heavy growths of tag alders. This combination makes for difficult casting, because it does not allow much of an across-the-stream cast. A degree of comfort is allowed where the river runs through meadowland, and here bank-fishing can

be enjoyed. But even here one has to be on guard against muskrat holes that can send you headlong into the river.

It is from these open banks that the natives fish at night with their spining gear. Invariably, there is indication of their activity, for on the day following, fresh boot-tracks and the usual abandoned beer-cans are in evidence, or even a trailing length of tree-snagged monofilament glistens in the sun.

Even though on rare occasions I have succumbed to the lure of night-fishing, I have never found thrashing around in total darkness much to my liking. Within moments I am snarled in a tree or have achieved the most awful tangle, and I give up in disgust once more with the conviction that I should have known better. Besides, the utter darkness destroys the pleasure of being part of a lovely environment that can be appreciated only in daylight.

The only reason to night-fish in the first place is to engage one of those leviathans that are out cannibalising anything that moves during the bewitching hours. Long before that period of day I prefer to have been contented by the memory of several brace of daytime tiddlers, and would rather find solace in a pipe-bowl of Dunhill's.

When headquartered in Gaylord, it is a mere 20 minutes drive north to the village of Wolverine, and then a brief jaunt beyond to reach the first access point on the Sturgeon. The drive is through lovely, hilly countryside that enhances the mood of anticipation the closer one approaches the river. At one time an ancient fly-tyer had a tiny, one-room frame-shack where he sold his winter's output of flies, but I believe he has rounded the final bend. The shack now stands as a silent monument to local lore.

After parking the car off the highway and suiting-up, it is a brisk quarter-mile walk through tall gorse to reach the river. On one trip in I sacrificed a favourite landing-net to this same gorse. The net's stretch lanyard had been fastened to the metal ring at the top of my vest and the net hung loose on my back. Unknown to me, the wooden hoop was seized by the gorse as I advanced, stretching the lanyard until the hoop snapped, catapulting the remains to the back of my head with a stunning thump. I nearly sagged to my knees.

While walking through the field on the way to the river, I have come upon circular patches of trampled grass as if deer had bedded down for the night. At least I assume the grass was flattened by some wild animals, and not a brace of natives from nearby Wolverine.

Usually, I'll start fishing a straight, riffled run that affords shallow, safe wading, working downstream with an hairwing streamer. The Sturgeon is not noted for its strong fly-hatches, and perhaps the swift current has a detrimental effect on naturals taking up residence in any numbers. The narrow width and the thick-set tag alders prevent any decent casting, and a quartering cast is nearly impossible. As a result, I try to whistle a cast close up under the branches to gain some sort of cross-drift, and then bring the streamer in with a very slow retrieve. I have found this to be the most productive method, and the relentless current plies the hairwing into life-like undulations. The system produces some scrappy browns, and the brook trout react as it they were starved.

You can plod along only for a brief distance before the river tacks into one of its endless bends and the disappearing bottom forces a retreat through the hat-grabbing alders. Farther on, the river reverses direction and relaxes somewhat to pro-

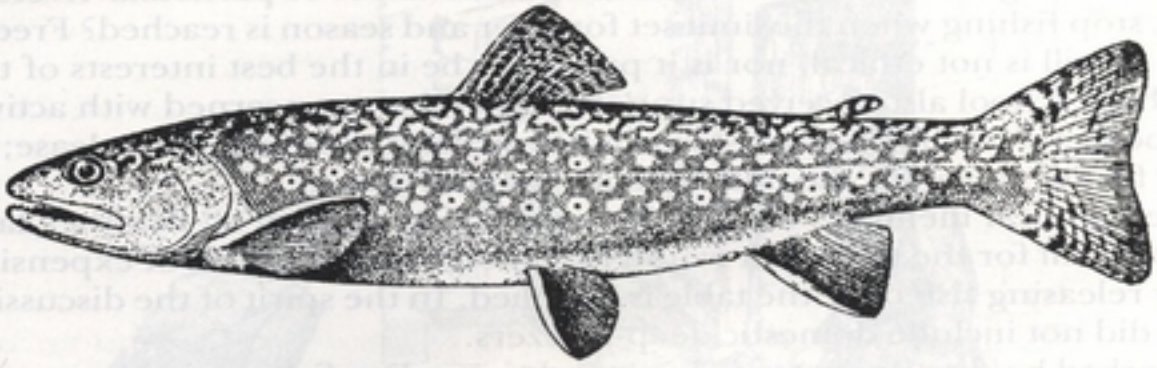
vide a deep pool and a stint of comfortable bank-fishing, although, for me, there is something disturbing about walking along and staring into what appears as a bottomless depth, and I don't like to stride too close to the edge. But at least some line can be let out here for quartering to the far bank, and a looping mend allows the streamer to sink for a longer display.

On occasion, if I intend spending a few hours on the river, I will have ordered an egg-and-bacon sandwich from a lunchroom in Wolverine, and this will serve for a leisurely lunch while relaxing on a bankside log. At moments such as this it is also rewarding to light the briar and enjoy the view of the rolling hills that form a distant backdrop.

I discovered another access were there is a partially-wadeable, tumbling stretch of riffled water. From there the turbulence slides into a gradually deepening run that completely smooths out into a long, glassy slide. A trout surface-feeding on this river is a rare sight. On this occasion, however, no fewer than three feeding fish were drawn up in a straight line, and each one was intent on intercepting whatever was coming down.

I quickly exchanged the streamer for an Adams floater and, applying Serjeant York's technique he used on the Boche, I aimed my casts at the closest in the formation so as not to inform its companions what was in store for them. It worked beautifully and I was soon shaking off number one while the other two remained oblivious to their colleague having been removed from the formation. Number two fell, and, shortly, number three. As I say, the opportunity to cast to rising fish on this river, and especially to encounter three drawn up the way they were, is indeed unusual.

That manoeuvre completed the drill for that day. I still recall motoring back to Gaylord, the window down for a full ration of that crisp, northern air, and the radio blaring a fox-trot extra loud. Of course, the family questioned my unusually good spirits, especially since I had not a single trout to show them.



Letter from America

by Frank Hursley

I HAVE come to learn that even associated with the sport of trout there are certain niceties we take for granted. I have long considered fly fishing to be a peaceful sort of occupation, meditative even, in a way allowing a large measure of spiritual refurbishing, as it were. This soothing of the soul is largely sponsored by the lovely setting in which one pursues the noble trout. Even so, after the experience of this past summer my faith is wavering.

For years I had been accustomed to a relatively stable and unchanging riverscape wherein I found the melodic tumbling of the rushing water a soothing balm that solaced the fractured nerve-endings of a city dweller. Of course there was and still is the incessant gunwhale drumming of the typical canoe horde, but even this annoyance is over-shadowed by the pure joy of being part of the river scene.

Coupled to the setting is the addictive rythm of the line as it swishes through the guides propelling its feathered missile toward a spreading ring. I treasure the sound of a northwest wind filtering its way through the bankside pines and the way it sends eddying rivulets across a smooth glide.

And now a new element has been introduced along the Au Sable System. This was borne out upon our arrival for the start of the season. The weather as hoped for was delightfully invigorating, cool and crisp, dictating the donning of the chamois cloth shirt. Early morning and late afternoon required the collar buttoned high, although the intermittent sun did offset any excessive chill by aiming warning shafts between great puffy clouds. The main stream of the Au Sable was well populated with eager anglers. Regardless, the heavy traffic is expected and overlooked on this one special weekend when many travel north just to be there. Everything seemed in order. Even the waders bore up valiantly even though they bear more patches than a bass man. The prized Hendricksons, the season's first major fly hatch, made their welcome appearance much to the joy of both fishermen and winter-starved trout. One might say the stage was set for an exceptional stay.

After surmounting one of those gargantuan, platter-sized breakfasts, we had assumed our customary positions in the river just opposite to Gate's Lodge. At this point all hell broke loose. Apparently some beribboned military official must have mistaken the wandering main stream for some Vietnamese trail. Camp Grayling, a many-acred play ground for the Michigan National Guard, is not many miles distant from the river. Coinciding with our stepping into the river, a series

of loud booms suddenly sounded from the camp as if every cannon and field piece capable of being fired was employed on the camp's version of Pork Chop Hill.

Incessant machine gun fire accompanied the imaginary assault. Mortar shells crumped away. As if that were not enough flights of helicopters appeared from nowhere, and passed and repassed close overhead sounding that irritating thudding as if at any moment their whirligigs might skip a beat and spiral into our favorite pool.

The sky was further tortured, including our ear drums, by flights of jet fighters presumably on a low flying mission to demolish some command post located in the lobby of the Holiday Inn in the nearby town of Grayling. All told, the resulting din was unbearable to a lowly trouter whose only battle plan concerned a few noble trout. The noise was such that I wanted to duck down within my shirt collar.

That exercise did not end with that weekend. They have persisted throughout the summer as part of an expanded program on the part of the military using the National Guard preserve. The original site of Camp Grayling was deeded over by an individual with the stipulation that the area was to be used only by the State of Michigan National Guard. Of late, this proviso has been ignored. As an example of the increased usage it has been estimated that 5000 personnel received training in 1960 and this was confined to a two-week period.

In 1977 approximately 20,000 civilian troops came from two or three surrounding states, and here again for only a two-week period. This we could live with. However, by 1987, 40,000 personnel from several states received training, but that year saw them in camp from early spring on into late fall.

Now, current plans call for an expansion of the facility into a full blown fort — whatever that designation means. At the present rate of growth one projection foresees 150,000 troops slugging it out by the year 2000 and this on a full year basis. There is also an airfield scheduled adjacent to the Manistee River, another prime trout stream.

Even with the scale of current activities there have been numerous reports of environmental damage including tanks gouging the Au Sable bottom on their passage across stream. A number of forest fires have been reported as a result of exploding shells.

As a result of the proposed impact on the surrounding area, and not only on the potential damage to the river itself, sporting organisations are banding together with property owner associations in an effort to forestall such a calamity. Even with the present scale of military operations some disgruntled area people have sold their homes and moved elsewhere.

There is also a growing concern for the town of Grayling when hordes of off duty play soldiers invade the bars for a good time. One acquaintance of mine has embarked on a personal vendetta. His lifelong dream was to retire to the banks of the Au Sable, which he managed a few years ago. Whenever he is aroused from bed at 2 am by the noise of the shelling at the camp he will phone the general at that hour to inquire if he is enjoying a peaceful sleep.

Perhaps we have taken too much for granted over the years. The Au Sable is Michigan's premier trout river and a great deal of love on the part of past generations of trout fishermen, and guides, and people who have just wanted to be there, has been associated with the river, each in his own way. It would be a sad commentary if it should become a mere memory.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley

OUR yearly October weekend at the snug Camp Ginger Quill once sealed the finale of the trout season, an event which by now has withstood a few years' duration and as a result the gathering has assumed the niceties of a standing tradition.

Without question, the traditions associated with fly fishing for trout are many

and I, for one, would not want it any other way, for this is the garnish that guarantees the sport to be a noble one. In keeping with this notion, the Ginger Quill offers an abundance of good water, good lodging, fellowship and exceptional meals.

It seems each year our dauntless Daisy Quills engage every pot and pan the kitchen harbours to provide an epicurean advance on the previous year's feast. This past stay proved to be no exception, and a coined menu posted early drew attention to what was promised for the Saturday evening repast. Breakfast was barely concluded when the bulletin board announced such ambitious delights as:—

La Carte

Aperitifs:	Booze Americain
Hors d' oeuvres:	Paté de fat grouse
	Gouda fromage
	Peppers Italiene
Entrée:	Porque roti avec stuffing
	Turnips de terre en casserole
	Barley mystérieuse
Dessert:	les petits cakes de fromage
	Brownies chocolat
Vins:	Chateau Champayne
	Café liqueurs et Selzes de Alea

With such rewards, a full day's slipping and stumbling over the greased rocks of the Au Sable is a must in order to acquire an appetite worthy our ladies' culinary accomplishments. Rarely have we failed. And with the light fading into dusk, chairs at the long table are assumed ready to gnaw like a family of beavers attacking a stand of stately popples.

Not even the most lofty of settings is free of adversity, as this past sojourn proved when a discomfiting element was introduced on my day astream. My threadbare waders, which have been a commendable and reliable companion in the varied rivers of Michigan, in New York's Adirondacks and the treacherous rivers of Oregon, without notice suddenly opted for retirement by opening a sluice gate of flooding waters in both legs.

Admittedly, I had over-extended their use several seasons by patiently applying endless patches and layers of sealing gook wherever there was room for another dab. Even last year's gaping rip in one heel sponsored by a pointed spur jutting from a submerged log I was attempting to negotiate, was successfully patched, and I recorded a few more miles. But this time I was keenly aware they had reached the point of no return and were headed for the scrap heap.

As it was, that particular Saturday morn when Dave Fox and I set out rod in hand, I had not proceeded far from the bank when both legs registered an icy draught of the Au Sable percolating inwards. Regardless of the discomfort, if I were to achieve any trouting at all that weekend, the only option was to crunch up my toes and push on.

We had survived another record breaking, torrid summer, therefore the crisp October air, endowed with piquant odour of autumn leaves, was a refreshing and long-awaited tonic. Although, if the sun had preferred to penetrate the lowered

clouds, which it did not, it would have been a welcome buffer against the bite of mid-40s temperature.

While the other chaps had shouldered their muskets for a stint of grouse hunting through some distant wood, Dave and I, as we are not of that persuasion, opted for the river, for this was the final salute of the season. Since I do not like to set the pace, Dave kindly takes the point so I can dawdle along, zig-zagging from bank to bank to deliberate over various runs and pools on our downstream walk.

I have fished with many who seem motivated more so by the clock or a speedy return to the whisky cabinet, for they clip along at a goodly pace largely heedless of their majestic surroundings.

Personally, I can steep myself in 200 yards of water and feel contented even if it proves barren of trout. After all I have my Constable, a vest full of fly boxes for any contingency, and a mellowed briar pipe for companion and perhaps a sandwich tucked away to be enjoyed while propped on a bankside log further on. Incidently, when a screen door severed an inch from the tip of the Constable last year it nearly brought forth tears, however the alteration did not faze the talent of this lovely rod.

I am grateful that our bookseller has the courage to provide a well stocked angling shelf for, without his daring, I doubt if I would have been introduced to John Inglis Hall and his delightful *Fishing A Highland Stream*. It is another volume slim enough for the tackle bag, and its charm assures pleasure in repeated readings whether along the bank or beneath the sheets.

Upstream from the Ginger Quill, the Au Sable provides a long, straight run of riffled water before it widens into a shallow stretch that is interrupted by miniature grass islands splitting the current. From there on the river rounds into a sharp bend with a characteristic deepened far bank before straightening once more as it graces the lodge property. Along this portion the river offers a wilderness setting with wooded stands down to both banks.

The lodge has a wooden dock built into the bank, and it is marvellous sport to draw up chairs and watch the alarm spread across the faces of passing canoeists when we warn them about a non-existent waterfall just past the next bend. In midsummer the canoe parade is a constant nuisance on weekends, but with the approach of October's chill, one is only plagued occasionally by the heartiest, which are normally the most acquainted with canoeing manners. Dave and I prefer to ramble along the deer path through the woods in order to intersect the river at the upstream riffles and then explore our way down to the lodge.

My readings have extolled the virtues of the soft hackled fly, especially in the fast water rivers of Scotland, but I have been one of little faith for local use. Unconvinced that such a simple tie composed of only two materials could prove effective, I barely gave them an honest trial until the past couple of years. It was in 1985 that I discovered the fascinating shop of John Dickson & Son in Edinburgh and I came away with an assortment of Orange and Partridge.

Needless to say, I also was smitten with a few other items the shop offered which became stuffed into a shopping bag. Regardless, those flies, lay neatly aligned in a Wheatley largely ignored until one day, out of desperation, I tied one on and proceeded to salvage the day with a small tally of trout. That was my conversion, and since then I have shifted the flies to an honoured position in the

Wheatley as well as singing their praise to others when I should have selfishly kept them secret.

It was one of those Orange and Partridges that resolutely met the challenge on that Saturday in October. At that time of year the major fly hatches are long exhausted except for an occasional olive which will still rise a trout on a calm, warm day. Nevertheless, we invariably explore the water with wet flies in a downstream direction. As it was, I had travelled through the riffles without a nod and had entered the shallower flow where one of the grass islands lay like a sunken barge.

By then both legs were saturated and heavy with water and felt as if they were planted in ice buckets. The currents that sweep across the islands have scooped deep undercuts along their flanks, and it is here that I like to dawdle a moment in order to swim a fly parallel, barely touching the long shafts of grass arched into the water . Positioned at the island head, a quartering cast across stream will skid the fly back to the island. Then with a very slow retrieve and an occasional twitch of the rod tip I'll swim the fly in close along the undercut shelf barely brushing the grass, a method that can prove irresistible to a dozing trout. And thus it was on that day when a brace of half-pounders nabbed the Orange and Partridge as it fluffed its hackles in the current.

When fishing with a floater and in similar situations where a grass bank presents itself, it has proven effective to settle the fly high on the long blades then let it slither down the strands as on a banister to the water. In this way, a momentary free float can be purchased, sometimes just long enough to arouse a resident trout.

Perhaps further on the tiny Scottish fly could have enlarged the tally, but by then I had shipped enough frigid water to set my knees to trembling beyond control and I signalled Dave I was returning to the hearth.

Ten of us ringed the long table that evening staring at and toasting the Crown of Pork ensconced in a regal position amid the bowls and platters of the accompanying comestibles. The soft amber glow of tall candles played across the Ginger Quill emblem emblazoned on the goblets and dinner plates. The meeting came to order and the master carver flayed away, accompanied by a Mozart concerto as the melody mingled with the audible Au Sable nearby. A season must end somehow.

Letter From America

by Frank Hursley

THE effort of motoring 200 miles north to reach a trout stream can be a tedious, rather fatiguing experience, especially so along a bland super highway nearly chocked solid with all types of speeding vehicles.

It is puzzling just how northern Michigan possibly absorbs all of the mobile horde bent on an endless variety of weekend pursuits and jollities. In addition to the autos, every sort of recreational conveyance from motor-cycles to elongated motor-homes converge on the primary north-bound route as they exit the city on what seems the identical hour. Whatever the destination, I am thankful not all are hell bent for the Au Sable.

It was on one such typical Friday night early last fall when Dave Fox and I wedged into a slot in the north-bound lane. Normally four hours are required to cover the distance, provided stops are restricted to those of nature's choosing, but on Friday evenings of late we have inaugurated the agreeable tradition of exiting

at Sterling, a cross-road village nearly half way, in order to indulge in a chicken dinner at a delightful home-based restaurant known simply as Iva's.

Iva is an enterprising lady who began specialising in chicken dinners served in her parlour nearly half a century ago, and they became so celebrated she expanded into additional rooms. In as much as the establishment does not serve anything stronger than noodle soup, Dave graciously concocts a martini for a pre-prandial nod while still in the car park prior to entering for our table.

On this particular occasion we were motoring to the Oxbow Club, of which Dave is a member, and I was tagging along as his guest. By our standards, the Oxbow is an old club that dates from the first world war and is situated on a lovely bit of acreage along the banks of the south branch of the Au Sable. The club derives its name from the double twist of the river in the shape of an oxbow, as viewed by an overhead warbler.

Three structures comprise the club proper. The main clubhouse is a sprawling, log framework parallel to the river bank, and has a full length screened porch from which members are able to scan the river while awaiting fly hatches. The porch also serves as a disrobing area as waders are not allowed to sully the clubroom floor.

The clubroom is on the first floor and contains a scattering of frayed, stuffed furniture. There is a large fireplace over which hang a few ragged, mounted trout testifying to some angler's valour, and at the opposite wall a cigarette-burned, wooden bar provides a gathering place for bending elbows and tall tales. Behind the bar there is a cluster of name-plated cabinets which house the members' whisky assortment.

Upstairs, there is an extremely spartan dormitory style sleeping quarters with 16 parallel cots and an arrangement of storage cabinets. Considering the compact nature of the grouping, we were advised to slip off early so as to be included in the first contingent of snorers if we hoped to avoid a fretful night's repose.

On high ground rising from the clubhouse sits the dining hall, another log structure, which also serves as the caretaker's suite and, in addition, contains more privately conceived second floor bedrooms. Meals are served at long, banquet-style tables with benches, and diners are summoned by the ringing of a huge, cast iron bell mounted outside. The third building, also of logs, sits on the river bank adjacent to the clubhouse and, being the most comfortable, what with its sitting room, fireplace and three private bedrooms is usually reserved for members who travel with their wives.

In the early days of the club's existence, I cannot fathom what it must have been like to travel over nondescript roads to get there. Hours over sandy trails and dusty washboard roads would have been the norm, and certainly would have ruled out merely a weekend round trip with the intent of arriving at the office on Monday morn before the boss.

My first association with the club occurred 12 years ago when I was newly elected to the board of directors of our local chapter of Trout Unlimited. A weekend business meeting with time off for fishing was held at the club. Feeling honoured and all puffed up over being included I was rather naive about the entire affair, thinking we would be delving into some high calibre stuff relative to trout welfare.

Actually we did. But then when we began to assemble for the afternoon session

I was a mite shaken when one of the board members whose zeal over trout habitat was matched by his verve for the whisky supply, loudly swayed into the meeting. He headed for a sofa, missed, and wedged himself against a coffee table and required delicate extraction and belaboured hoisting before he could be propped on the sofa. To be honest, this was the only occurrence of this nature during subsequent meetings, but at the time it did temporarily blunt my idealistic enthusiasm.

Twenty-six members and guests were quartered at the club that same weekend Dave and I arrived, making it a full house. What with trying to avoid careering into one another, the competition over an empty chair when one did surface, and establishing squatter's rights if one did, the experience did not completely match my notion of a solitary escape to the north woods. Thankfully, the majority were there for the bird hunting season, and during the day disappeared by groups into various reaches of the woods leaving Dave and I near sole possession of the river.

One of the chaps checked in with a yellow labrador, and in the evenings the dog sat quietly next to his master gazing up at him with those great sorrowful, adoring eyes. To everyone's amazement, his master commanded him to fetch a can of Strohs beer from the refrigerator. Immediately, the dog jaunted to the fridge, opened the door by pulling on a towel which had been affixed to the handle, searched amid a variety of cans, selected the correct brand, and then trotted proudly to his master. This remarkable feat, we were told, required two years of patient training and an untold number of Strohs.

Downstream from the club property there is a towering lodge which partly juts over the river. It was here until his death in 1954 that George Mason, one-time president of Nash-Kelvinator (which later became American Motors) maintained river guides on a 24-hour basis. Mason was an avid fly fisherman. However his 300 lb plus bulk did not equip him for the rigours of wading. Instead, he floated his beloved south branch in a flat-bottomed, shallow draft river boat, a style developed years ago on the Au Sable system.

Upon Mason's death he deeded 14 miles of both banks of a stretch of the south branch that he owned over to the state of Michigan. The deed carried the stipulation that the land was to remain completely wild and free of development. Thanks to Mason, we can enjoy a lovely stretch of fly-only water on a setting just as pristine as nature intended, completely void of any habitation. Known as the Mason Tract, a portion of this is undergoing an experimental programme carrying out no-kill regulations, whereby all trout must be returned, and reports indicate there is considerable success in restoring a healthy trout population.

What with the oxbow configuration of the river — when Dave and I fished that weekend, we were never far from the club property and always within hearing of the dinner bell. Mostly we fished downstream. During that time of year floaters are ruled out. Therefore, we cast bucktail streamers through the deeper runs.

We fished down, passing Mason's lodge, and could see the slip where he maintained his river boat. Farther down, we passed the base of a high bank rising steeply from the river. Along its crest a tall stand of pines sheltered the hushed passing of an occasional deer. We both took a few trout, nothing spectacular, mostly lovely little brook trout splendidly garnished in their fall colours. They were a fitting tribute to being out with the long rod during my favourite month of the year, October.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley

ONE day, mid-week last May, another calamity befell the Au Sable country. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources controls all burning of trash and refuse by local residents, and only issues burning permits when they consider conditions safe enough to guard against forest fire.

What with an extremely dry spring the woods were tinder dry, just waiting for some dimwitted party on the other end of a careless match. Sure enough, someone along the Main Stream did oblige. Without the DNR's permission, he torched his refuse and soon had a roaring fire racing out of control downstream along the river bank levelling cabins and anything in its path.

Whipped along by a strong wind, the fire leaped across the river and roared off on a north east direction, eventually straddling both sides of Gates Au Sable Lodge. The lodge is Michigan's premier fly fishermen's haven and draws anglers from several surrounding states. As the flames passed on both sides of Gates it dangerously came within 50 ft of the property, but thankfully, due to Rusty Gates maintaining a mowed grass enclosed belt, the lodge was spared.

Touring the area a week later was the most depressing experience since the days and nights of WW II. Over 100 buildings, the majority of which were private homes, were completely destroyed within a swath two miles wide by eight miles long. Most of the homes viewed were reduced to a pile of rubble, each with

a lone chimney standing as a blackened memorial.

Strangely, there would be an untouched house standing between two completely burned out buildings and it was apparent that the saving grace was a green belt which acted as a buffer, whereas those set in a stand of trees were lost.

The scorched, stark metal skeletons of automobiles and vans void of paint appeared to have expired where they stood. The somber sight of acres of black limbless trees and burned over ground cover as well as the odor of burnt wood seemed so unreal.

At least we were only momentary witnesses to the devastation and could return to our comfortable homes, but we felt for those people who were still sifting through the blackened rubble for whatever possessions they could salvage. Many owned cabins which were only used partly during the fair weather season and lived elsewhere, but the majority had opted to be part of the serene atmosphere of the north country, and as a result they lost everything. Small consolation, but we did learn that the violator was behind bars, although not so much for his misdeed but to protect him from irate victims.

Incidentally, a few years ago, in an effort to improve the habitat for the Kirkland Warbler, a local bird in decline, the DNR conducted a controlled burning of congested brush. Much to their embarrassment the fire got out of control and three homes were destroyed before the fire was stopped.

While north for some trouting, whenever we are in the vicinity of the old lumbering town of Grayling, lunch at Spike's Keg Of Nails is honored as an institution. Spike's is not exactly Grayling's proudest establishment, but it does live up to its reputation of concocting the smartest hamburgers in town. This cramped, log, saloon type restaurant is a mite dingy even at midday and deceptively tame. But that hour is the most tranquil time to sample their menu, for later in the evening it can endorse its reputation of being rather rowdy once uncorked beer bottles have loosened inhibitions.

Adding flavor, the regulars have circulated tales about a singular Mattress Mary. However, these are better transmitted as an oral tradition! As for the hamburgers, they are a handsome sight — served centered in a plastic, straw basket crowded with chips and pickles and the bun top still glistening with grease from the grill. Not necessarily a healthy repast, but decidedly savory when ingested after a few hours in the current.

The road into the Ox Bow Club is a sandy tract leading off the main highway which is a connecting link servicing both Lake Michigan and Lake Huron on an east-west course. Appropriately, a miniature ox bow harness is mounted as an identifying sign at the road entrance. Otherwise there is little to distinguish the numerous roads leading into various cabins along the South Branch.

As it is, the tract twists and turns impartially through heavy stands of popple and pine trees, and even skirts an old landing strip that once saw anxious fishermen flying in for a weekend of trouting. Largely, the driver is too occupied trying to avoid scraping the bark off tree trunks or from losing a wheel in a sandy chuck hole to enjoy the serenity of the surrounding scene which might include an occasional white tail deer rolling his eyes with an expression declaring, "Good Lord, they are here again!"

After a four-hour drive, turning off the highway always inspires a marvellous inner feeling of having at last arrived in trout country, and knowing that in a

moment the trunk lid will spring open on a menagerie of duffle bags, waders, fly boxes, vests, hats and rod cases.

Such was the scene upon another visit to the Ox Bow Club as guests of Dave Fox. There were four of us in Dave's party with one of the chaps initiating his teenage son in the joys of fly fishing for the first time. We had barely arrived when John Wineman and his son put up their rods, donned their waders, and stepped off the bank. Within five minutes in a display that might be expected more so from John Junior, the senior John erupted into a series of chorus line maneuvers that climaxed with his going splat in the water. Drenched, he had to retreat to the club house for brisk towelling and a dry change to quiet his chattering teeth.

Over the years we have become quite proficient at drying soaked waders. Pages of newspaper crumpled and stuffed into the boots are an excellent medium for absorbing the excess moisture. In particular, the Washington page is most effective.

Incidentally, during our three-day stay, John's misfortune began only with his tumble. I did not notice any peculiar burps in his casting style; it was normally fluid and on the mark, regardless yet on two separate occasions he broke two graphite rods while in the midst of a cast. Each occurrence happened when we were some distance from the club house and not carrying any backup weapon, and John was forced to trudge back toting his wreckage, muttering homilies to himself. Since then I have not heard whether any post mortem has revealed the cause of the fractures, but I am sure the guilt lies in some original defect in the rods and not in the strain imposed by John's tight loops.

In front of the club house there is a wood and cable footbridge suspended across the river that allows passage to the far bank where trails through the woods take one to farther pools. When I know our trouting plans include crossing the bridge, I begin fretting in advance. The club bridge is certainly not in a class as seen in an old Tarzan movie where a frayed rope structure hangs suspended hundreds of feet high over a boiling cataract with only the clouds to hang on to, but this one behaves in miniature what the legendary version does full out. And that is twist and sway, ripple up and down with each cautious step while you are endeavoring not to notice that this thing is really trying to buck you off. Although the bridge is not really far above the river nor far across, it is a sweet feeling to traverse it.

The river, normally tea colored, had now a decidedly somber cast, perhaps sullied by the recent fire, and coupled with its high water condition made wading rather trying, especially so for those of us who no longer belong to the fleet of foot. Fishing was arduous with only an occasional trout showing any interest, and these only came to wet flies or nymphs fished deep. The cold weather that had settled in, bringing gusting winds and racing clouds, always to me an exciting scene to be part of, simply did not inspire the trout in a similar fashion.

On Sunday, the day when all the gear minus a few miscast flies return to the car trunk, George Tazio had to satisfy one final urge to tempt the trout before decamping south. It was a stout effort and George was positive he could deploy the right fly. Nevertheless, in no time at all, he was back on the club porch thoroughly drenched. He encountered a large rock mid-stream that normally peaks above the water, much like an iceberg, but was this day completely submerged and George did not awake to its presence until he felt himself nose-diving over it.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley

PLEASANT images of the Adirondacks return often and in doing so reinforce the memory of many fine days enjoyed amid the cloud-grazed stubby mountains of upper New York. Over the years, as the family matured, we vacationed often at the same roomy lodge situated on the shore of Fourth Lake, one of a series of numerically labelled lakes comprising the Fulton Chain.

Now, our last sojourn there reaches back several years and, as in those prior years, occurred in June just barely after ice out, a lingering condition of a typical Adirondack winter when snow is levelled yards high. It was just this variety of winter severity that the Indians customarily avoided by removing from their mountain hunting lands well in advance of paralyzing snow storms — no doubt a strategy learned the hard way.

The promise of a crisp draught of pure air, the silhouette of hemlocks etched against a rising dawn, the echoing cry of a distant loon became a daily inspiration to rise early and tackle a gargantuan breakfast guaranteed to keep both feet anchored firmly in the strongest current.

Although there were escapes to other rivers, most of my trouting centred on the Big Moose River and this largely due to its proximity. The river crosses the

highway one takes north out of Utica, a highway that gradually introduces one of the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains and to the majesty of the stunning views farther on.

After several outings to the Big Moose — someday I'll have to research the origin of its name — I came to be entranced by its offerings although it can be, as typical of Eastern rivers, a harrowing wading experience. Unlike Michigan waters where the stream bed is primarily sand or gravel, the Big Moose is laden with moss-covered, cannon-ball sized rocks which defy a solid purchase and at any moment can produce an upending.

Forceful, rapid wading into position is out of the question, for a rather fanciful ballet is required, whereby one foot at a time is advanced in search of a solid anchor. At times, this results in a spreadeagle pose which induces pressing the rod into service as a balancing tool while teetering precariously in the current.

To my way of thinking, this type of stream bottom dictates which rod is joined. My Constables are left safely in their cases for fear a sudden lurch will result in a splintered tip; a glass rod tempers any apprehension.

At water's edge a cluster of large boulders afforded a platform from which to survey the river and as it was my first introduction to the Big Moose, I did not know which way, up or down stream to set off upon. If I possessed the slightest ability to organize musical notes, my perch could have officiated as a podium from which to orchestrate the melody of the rushing water substituting my pipe for a baton. As it was, such notions faded for I was startled as I noted a definite rise that glistened in the sunlight tucked in against the near bank just upstream.

From atop the boulder, which was the size of a streamer trunk, I watched as other rises followed in what appeared to be a colony of feeding fish, engaged in a quiet pool of clear water which enjoyed a softer flow than that which arched through the river's midstream.

Uncertain what fly was coming down, I tied on an Adams floater, size 14, always an acceptable fly on home waters for numerous situations. It was a desperate workout over those cannon balls in trying to manoeuvre into position and should have been accompanied by tango music. By then, several dimples were showing simultaneously all within a dozen yards or more, and hugging the bank with some rising under overhanging tag alders.

A cast ahead of the closest working fish produced a splashy miss, and assured renewed confidence in approval of the Adams. After a rest, another cast resulted in a solid take and a scrappy little brook trout in the basket. I was carrying my willow creel lined with a bed of fern gathered at the bank site, and my intent was to manfully provide a fish dinner for the family. As I moved along, targetting each rise, more brook trout went into the basket and it was getting increasingly heavy.

Upon reaching the far end of the pool, what had been a period of brisk, sporty engagements suddenly ceased. As I paused, braced against the brawling current, I glanced back. The current still flowed stately on, that would not change; its surface was still embossed with a family of miniature, swirling ringlets, the tag alders still arched over the bank with some trailing branches pushing up cones of white water.

Regardless of the appearance that all was well, one vital feature was significantly absent. Shortly before, the setting included a bevy of blissfully

dimpling brook trout; a lively scene it was and such a lovely sight. All was now quiet. A sudden, inward feeling of remorse rose up. I felt I was an intruder and wondered if I had selfishly removed every brook trout from that happy little pool. My elation, sponsored from enticing one trout after another, dissipated upon this reflection and my basket felt even heavier.

Later that same week, which was our first exposure to the magnificent grandeur of the Adirondacks and inspired a love for the surrounding mountains and their lakes and streams, I returned to the Big Moose. As I studied the pool from atop that same boulder, I was greatly relieved to witness the start of some feeding activity much as had occurred on my previous encounter. It was a welcome sight and I then realized that I had not exhausted the pool after all. Once more I hobbled into position, and once more the Adams reaffirmed its noble reputation, only this time my creel remained back at the lodge.

Actually, the Big Moose does not offer some of the scenic beauty comparable to many of the more renowned Adirondack rivers, such as the West branch of the Au Sable near Lake Placid, but for me there was some fascinating element that brought me back a number of times. Perhaps it was the intriguing name, and I half expected to come face to face with an over-stuffed moose. Even so, I have never seen its name in print, nor have I ever encountered any other anglers, and have enjoyed the river as a sole sojourner with the realization that, such is nature's way in the Adirondacks, one only exercises a temporary lease. The elements are always in command.

I found that a heavy downpour can absolutely ruin any notion of fishing the Big Moose. During a subsequent vacation at Fourth Lake, we were confined by a two-day soaker and when the clouds finally parted I drove to the river, but was disappointed to find it at a treacherous height and it was impossible to enter even at bank side.

I did stumble upon an added bonus that the river offered. After travelling upstream through my favourite pool, I discovered I could reverse direction and cast a wet fly, usually a Lead Wing Coachman, downstream into the centre and be rewarded by rainbow trout lying in the faster water directly adjacent to the pool wherein lay the brook trout.

After that first week-long initiation into the storied lore of the Adirondacks and my formal introduction to the Big Moose, other years followed when we overloaded the station wagon and journeyed east. June became our adopted month to make the trip and it found us there largely at a pre-season period; the Fourth of July weekend when hoards of autos choke the roads, by all appearances marks the start of the season.

Unfortunately, June is accompanied by those obscene, pesky black flies whose sole purpose is to gnaw on exposed flesh. I found that shirt sleeves are best rolled down and buttoned, but even then my wrists became a conspiracy of welts and itchy bumps.

Several years have paraded by since our last trek to Fourth Lake, and since then I have read how untold lakes have fallen victim to acid rain and have been critically contaminated, resulting in the loss of fish and foliage what with such negative reports painting such gloomy predictions as to the health of the area, I am thankful I can recall with relish the many cherished moments spent amid those remarkable mountains.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley

MANY of us who are smitten by the trouting way have found inspiration, even enlargement, in the extensive literary legacy ennobling fly angling. Perhaps, in addition, we have been also fortunate to have drawn inspiration from a lone, heroic-sized mentor, as it were, whom by deed and example has instilled an inner reverence for the sport and all that it embraces.

My own initial conversion, advancement from the worm to the fly followed my introduction to an elder, sporting statesman, Hollis Halladay, who one night a week was enthroned behind a fly-tying vice teaching the elements of tying at a local high school. Sadly, Hollis rounded the final bend two years ago.

At the outset, Hollis was not overly adept at the teaching trade, but such was his charm most of us returned year after year, and he became the nub of a company of chaps who in turn became firm friends and fished together often. After my own six years in the class, one would assume I had gained professional stature as a tier, but it was never the case and there are many trout in agreement.

On the first evening I entered the class, I toted a Hardy bag containing a new

vice, tools, and an assortment of hooks and feathers, none of which I could identify. The class met in the school's biology lab whose walls were hung with various charts and diagrams depicting human body parts in such vivid and detailed colours that the mood generated was anything but clubby. A glass case housed a live, hairy tarantula that I preferred to have seen escorted elsewhere. At various tables, a dozen or so lads were busy clamping their vices and setting out their furs and feathers. At the front of the room sat Hollis, white haired, barely into his 80s, and with a black, unlit cigar clamped in one corner of his mouth which he removed occasionally to inject fragments into a waste basket. He wore a canary coloured chamois cloth shirt, same as his pupils, and a pair of wide braces prevented the loss of his trousers below a modest paunch.

In a husky voice, Hollis invited the new members to his table, and without further ado selected a streamer hook and began tying a Coachman Streamer. The only comment he uttered, other than a melodious oath when the thread broke, was his praising the fly as an excellent attractor for brook trout. Such was Hollis's teaching method. One learned by watching and then duplicating the pattern at one's own vice. Of course, this led to some interesting creations. Somehow, that first evening, I fumbled along until the hook was smothered, proudly viewing the result from all angles as if it were the smartest creation imaginable, whereas in reality it would send a carp into hysterics.

Each session followed the same procedure. A new pattern would be introduced, and we gradually tied our way through nymphs, wets, and eventually advanced into an assortment of classical dries. Hollis circulated round the room appraising our triumphs, perhaps tugging a wayward feather back on line, or relating a fishing tale accompanied by pumping his casting arm at an imaginary target for greater emphasis. At the close of a meeting, the pattern for the next session would be announced, and this occasioned another run to the material supplier for another bag of feathers. Eventually, there were so many bags the accumulation would be sufficient to clothe an ostrich.

Around the period of the Great War, the senior Halladay migrated his family from Vermont and settled in Onaway, a small town in northern Michigan. Canada Creek, Rainy River, and the Black Lake served Hollis at an early age during a time when trout were plentiful and a limit could be creeled in short order. However, as the decades accumulated, Hollis witnessed a severe decline in the trout population, and he drilled us in the need for conservation and to view flyfishing primarily as a sport, stressing that satisfaction derives from the challenge associated rather than from compiling a tally of trout in sheer numbers.

Back in the late 70s when tiny dries were being touted, Hollis seemed to be headed upstream against opinion. He challenged their effectiveness by maintaining that if you want to catch big fish show them something big. He was the master and we never disputed his word.

For a break in the routine one evening Hollis had us assemble at Quarton Lake, a small dammed pond noted for its mud turtles and smiling carp. We assembled our rods without a fly on and began casting practice while Hollis circulated offering tips. Each of us brought a favorite rod and I do not believe there were two alike. The bizarre sight of a dozen lines whisking back and forth for no apparent reason brought neighbours to their front doors, pointing at this strange

menagerie that had surfaced in their quiet neighbourhood.

The years rolled on; the same chaps returned to the class; Hollis, pleased that we did, called us "retreads." Newcomers were always baptized on the Coachman Streamer, whereas we retreads tied whatever we fancied.

I envied the fellows Hollis singled out to form a sort of informal offshoot club that he coined as the Whangdoodlers. They talked about the popover breakfast Hollis hosted during the Christmas holidays. Then, one season, Lois and I received an invitation. Upon arrival, Hollis handed me a tumbler of whiskey the size of a vase. That early in the morning I was nearly brought to my knees. Luckily it was followed by a tray of popovers hot from the oven, the master's own recipe, and there were platters of scrambled eggs with plump sausages. Thus saved, I did not disgrace myself. Since I did not pass from sight below the table, I must have passed the initiation into the Whangdoodlers for I was awarded a membership card with a row of silver stars on it and a round patch for my fishing vest. The patch was emblazoned with crossed fly rods over the initials: Y.C.M.L.O.G. which translates as "You Can't Make Love On Gingersnaps."

Only once did I have the good fortune to fish with Hollis. Buck Konen, also a class member, had a lovely cabin on the North Branch of the Au Sable, and he hosted Don Padden, Hollis and me for an October weekend. The first morning, Hollis opted to sample the bird hunting while the rest of us headed for the river. He set off down the trail through the woods behind the cabin wearing jodhpurs, leather boots and an old campaign hat from his army days. We heard a few blasts from his direction and later, upon returning, he handed me a furry foot from a rabbit that had little use for it anymore.

After lunch, Hollis decided to join us for some trouting, but disappeared to change into his fishing togs. I happened to pass his bedroom door, and was startled to see him stark naked, except for his cigar, prior to pulling on his itchy-scratchies to ward off the water's chill.

Considering his advanced age, we were apprehensive about his wading the stiff current. We put him in upstream and hovered around him as he worked his way down. He toddled slowly along trailing a nymph from his Paul Young rod, and every few yards would lift for a single, quartering cast. By the time we reached the cabin he had encountered a brace of browns, and was quite pleased he had distinguished himself in front of his pupils.

The evening we were famished. Don volunteered a spaghetti dinner and busied himself in the kitchen. He is a frugal sort, and preparations were proceeding smartly until we spotted him counting the noodles prior to placing them in the boiling water. Such economy produced a concerted howl, and he reluctantly emptied the box. We never did learn just how many noodles were going to be allotted.

One fall, Hollis invited a contingent of Whangdoodlers to his cottage at Black Lake during the salmon run on the Ocqueoc River. The fall colours were striking and greatly enhanced by the sun let loose between the October clouds. Hollis did not fish himself, but sat on a camp stool overlooking the pool wherein we claimed residence. Most of the pools were being hammered by snaggers raking weighted grappling hooks across the stream bottom, and it was challenging even to locate an unsullied pool.

Even though we did stake a claim, at one moment when I was retrieving a cast I was appalled to see an approaching snagger holding his gear at port arms come splashing along, and stop to peer into the same pool as if he were about to fire at will. It was too much for Hollis. He leaped from his stool waving his arms and shouting pertinent injunctions questioning the fellow's sanity. The intruder responded with a blank stare at Hollis and then at me. Perhaps out of some dawning respect for Hollis's age or mine, he slowly withdrew and passed on without a word. My palpitation over a possible mid-stream nose bleed faded.

Since I was at the Ocqueoc I also wanted to sample the trout fishing and had joined two rods, one for salmon and the other for trout; the latter was left with Hollis at his stool. The opportunity for trouting came rather soon. A salmon noticed my fly, got himself hooked, and then sat on the bottom refusing to budge.

Once more Hollis sprang from his stool waving his arms, only this time he shouted that I should hammer on the bend rod with my hand. The sulking brute did not like that at all. Off he went downstream, slithered through a shallow run, and rounded a bend out of sight. I stood paralyzed, watching the backing peel off when suddenly the rod straightened. The backing frayed on a protruding rock and snapped, setting the salmon free to tow my entire line all the way to Lake Huron. I noticed Hollis's cigar had considerably shortened.

At this point, I traded rods and wandered the bank upstream to locate trout water, and Hollis returned to the station wagon. One rainbow proved there were trout to be had and, thus satisfied, I rejoined Hollis. He appeared so crestfallen, I wondered if he were out of cigars. Nearly in tears, he handed me the remains of my salmon rod. The butt section was in splinters. Apologizing, he revealed he had moved the station wagon but had forgotten he had propped the rod at the tail gate. I soothed his feelings the best I could, explaining it was just a glass rod I had put together and would be able to replace the squashed section. It is always jolly to have an excuse for a new rod anyway, and I was pleased he accepted the notion he had done me a favour.

For us, Hollis was an end of an era. The class does not meet anymore. Some of us still cast a line together; some have retired to other locales and are heard from occasionally. But it was Hollis and his tying class that left a mark on all of us. I do not believe anyone could replace the especial affection and respect we had for him. He would never admit it, but he was just that sort of unique individual that crosses one's path once in a lifetime and one becomes touched in a special way.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley

IT was early morning when we stood on the dock staring sullenly at the river. The water appeared dour, too dark to be inviting and deucedly swollen above its normal height. Restless, heavy clouds drooped low and seemed barely able to surmount the high bank on the far side. Dave Fox and I both shivered as a penetrating wind gust rippled the water and pushed a squall of snow in our faces. The tall pines leaned toward us in unison and moaned in protest. Staring at the river was a close as we came to any trouting that weekend.

Even though a drop in temperature had been threatened, we had been eager and even optimistic during our drive to the Ginger Quill the evening before and, being stout fellows, we naturally assumed we could handle a spot of cool weather even if it was the first weekend in November. After all, we had been abroad before when the elements proved a bit frosty, and had taken whatever was served in our stride. Nevertheless, we did not forsee what was ingenuously levelled upon us between dusk and dawn. Straight out of the north the wind howled all night, whistling through the window casings, dropping the temperature to an

unseasonable, premature level and forcing giving into the necessity of a second blanket. We arose in the morning to a layer of snow and the thermometer on the screened porch was embarrassed to report 16°F. No matter how much we frowned at the instrument we had little hope of seing it rise in answer. I had read how chaps tapping on a barometer produced wondrous results, but I concluded a like procedure would have proved fruitless in this arctic turn of events. My waders had hung all night on an outer wall rack, and were likely to remain there the entire weekend which prompted the thought that they become so stiff as to resist folding into the trunk and would require transport spreadeagled across the roof of the motor car.

Indeed, fishing was out of the question and, if attempted, would only result in fighting ice jams in the guides and, needless to say, our joints becoming as limber as a pair of stilts. The only recourse was a snug retreat indoors, and the comfortable Ginger Quill qualified admirably. We took up residence in the main room which is long and rectangular with a massive fire place at one end and mullioned windows looking out on the wood at the opposite. The walls are heavily stuccoed plaster in a warm earth tone, creating a sense of an earlier age reminiscent of a wayside inn. Facing the river, two double, Dutch doors are swung on ponderous strap hinges. The ceiling carries enormous square beams running full length, and the suspension of a few hams or sides of bacon would not appear out of place. The chimney is formed of a pile-like arrangement of natural, rounded boulders mysteriously kept in place from their spilling across the floor like so many bowling balls. And considering the massive size of the andirons they would fit well in a Scottish laird's baronial fishing retreat.

All day the wind gusted, sending sheets of snow and sleet cascading from atop the roof; indoors the fire roared in response and all was cheery and snug resulting in a multiple pipe day accompanied by a good book.

The last time Dave and I had been together was midsummer when the weather was kinder but opposite in extreme, which meant it was sweltering. At that time, it was midweek, and we enjoyed the entire Ox Bow Club to ourselves except for the presence of the caretaker and the cook; both a necessity. It was awfully nice having the pick of the clubroom's stuffed chairs, a luxury not afforded on a weekend when the premises are likely to be capacity level with club members in chambers. Such occasions necessitate snagging a chair and postponing visiting the loo until the very last hint of pending embarrassment.

Dave suggested we canoe and fish the waters from Smith Bridge over the South Branch on down to the club itself. Bobbing about in a tippy canoe is not my favorite pastime, but since I was Dave's guest I did not want to disappoint him. Normally, I can do enough damage in 100 yards of water without stretching my influence over four or five miles. The cook obliged with a box lunch and the caretaker installed us ready suited, alongside the canoe, cushions, paddles, and rods in the rear of his pick up truck and we bounced our way to the bridge. Since it was not a weekend, we did not fret about being swept along in a flotilla of canoeing, Sunday school parties or other outdoor types bent on having the time of their lives en masse.

We were noisily unloaded at the bridge and quickly gauged which way the river flowed. A mistake here and we could easily have forced our way upstream

and in a few days have sighted Lake Huron, whereas pushing off downstream we could enjoy a pleasant, uneventful drift to home waters. Hopefully!

Dave held the craft while I struggled abroad, which in itself is not the smoothest operation wearing waders. My legs would only bend so far before the suspenders were want to pull my upper region to meet my lower. And, of course, the canoe cooperates about as much as a skittish horse with one eye on returning to the barn.

We launched beautifully, and with much heaving and hoeing got us pointed in the right direction. I must admit the river was magnificent. We drifted past tall pines sweeping up from the banks, almost meeting overhead as a tunnel to pass though. The river varied from wide, shallow runs rippling over rocks or stones, and then changing to narrow, deep pools where the bottom was viewed darkly. We manoeuvered around bends twisting in one direction then turning back in the other. At times, we spotted a lonely cabin perched high, allowing its owner a stunning view down the river.

It was all very nice; however, something was dreadfully wrong. We had not progressed far when it became apparent I was mounted in the wrong end of the craft. Back at the bridge, Dave had gallantly steadied the rear while I naturally clambered aboard in the bow seat. Much to my growing consternation, what with a mere wisp of pommel to the front, it appeared I was rather precariously perched, which in turn greatly reduced my sense of security somewhat akin to sitting in the steep-pitched balcony at the theatre. It did not help matters when I began reacting to Dave's every twitch. Rather quick movements are merely his nature and every time he shifted, or whatever he was doing back there, (the waders did not allow turning to see) the canoe gave a decided lurch as if rolling over. And every time the canoe tipped in one direction I reacted in the opposite, thinking this is it — my box lunch was about to be drenched. Definitely, I was not having a good time, stunning scenery or not.

Several bends farther on we glided into a pool which we both agreed would be a lovely place to get out at and do some serious trouting. We shifted into a mode of determined back paddling, trying to apply the brakes, but only succeeded in getting crossways in the current and sailed right on through. Well, we agreed there would be other opportunities. After that exertion, with less than satisfactory results, we concluded that in order to beach this juggernaut it would require a concentrated strategy and, if successful, would afford some valuable practice before reaching home port, otherwise we could be in danger of sailing on out of hearing of the dinner bell.

We determined that in order to offset the persuasive obstinence of the current, we would have to ram the canoe bankside and, especially, not dilly-dally until we were half way through a pool before making up our mind. Approaching a particularly nice, wide shallow run we paddled furiously, driving the bow into the bank with a thump nearly pitching me head first into the pines. How good it felt to be back on my feet once more whisking the line back and forth.

I had tried fishing from the canoe, that had been our original intent. However, I only succeeded in getting more frustrated. No sooner had I laid the paddle down and lifted my rod than the current aimed us toward some potential disaster, and I would have to reach for the paddle once more. What little muscle tone

remaining did not allow exercising the paddle with one hand and punching out a fly with the other, all the while trying to counterbalance Dave's twitching at the rear.

We dawdled in the pool for a while and accounted for a few scrappy browns. Mine came to an Orange and Partridge, a fly that has gained my respect during the past few years, and is now favored almost exclusively when fishing wet.

A streamside lunch is always a delight and suitable accommodations in the form of a fallen tree trunk on which to perch while devouring a brace of sandwiches is never far off. Thinking back, if I had carved my initials and date on all the assorted tree trunks I have shared at mid-day, the inventory could populate a forest.

Poised in such a manner, Dave and I devoured our ham sandwiches enjoying the solitude of the surrounding scene of woods and waters, and the melodious rippling of the river provided as suitable background music as anyone could desire. Before reboarding the canoe, I gained Dave's permission to mount the rear seat. This position I found much more to my liking, and soon became relaxed enough to enjoy the remainder of the trip. We managed other stops along the way, beaching the canoe so as to wade some engaging pools, and even a few trout favored us with their company.

It turned out to be a rewarding experience after all, a bit touchy at first, but our float took us through some portions of the river we would not have viewed otherwise. We arrived back at the club, and gracefully beached the canoe as if we knew what we were doing. The kinks in the back earned while confined to my modest perch soon subsided and, more importantly, we were in time to be summoned to the dining room by the peels of the old farm bell.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley

Largely due to the weather the old Au Sable was in a deplorable state. This year there appeared to be a conspiracy afoot to assume the trout opener was one of the more exasperating of recent memory. The water was high, too high for safe wading of the traditional pools, and its tint was suggestive of a man-made storm, drain-dark and dismal looking. Of past several years it had been rather nice to be spoiled by a series of exceptional openers that were graced with moderate temperatures that in turn tickled both trout and fly, and expressly brought gleeful smiles to visiting trouters. Then this year, a time when a succession of such niceties had become the anticipated norm, over the horizon there pushed a cold front complete with rain and tumbling temperatures, barely days before packing the old Constable for the yearly observance.

Several years had elapsed since I last saw the "little cabin" on the North Branch at Flash Light Bend. In as much as the weather would not abate before late afternoon, it was an opportune time to drive the few miles for a brief look at the cabin just for old time sake, even though I was unacquainted with the present owner. After Don sold the cabin, he retired far south and took to wearing tennis shorts and soon became a silver-haired fixture on the courts, forsaking the long rod completely including everything the sport embraced. Before he left the state, he awarded me his Hardy Wader Clasps and his stream nite light, either one a solid indicator of the seriousness of his resolve to decamp for good. Perhaps the sudden break was a reaction resulting from his abrupt awakening to an unexpected, early retirement at a period when he was saddled with an abundance of costly real estate. Sacrifices were demanded, and since his wife was a mite touchy about the north country anyway, the cabin became a logical victim. Understandably it was not a popular decision on Don's part.

I recall it was in January of the year I was first introduced to the cabin. Don recruited me for a one day trip up and back in order to install newly purchased bedding. As we travelled north the rear of his station wagon was layered with springs and mattresses. When we arrived at the track leading into the cabin we discovered the snow was too deep for the auto to safely manoeuvre through the 600 yard approach and as a result we were forced to leave the wagon parked at

the highway. From there the mattresses had to be lugged overland through knee deep snow. It is one thing to wrestle a mattress under normal indoors conditions, but we invented quite a new set of difficulties trying to clutch such an ungovernable object while at the same time crunching through knee deep snow in a temperature not even attempting to exceed the 20s.

To compensate for the bitter cold we wrapped ourselves in blankets and then set off at a snail's pace, stumbling, sliding, cranking our knees high with each step. The absurdity of the situation sent us into paroxysms of laughter, when we could gain a little breath that is. We agreed we must have resembled a pair of Bolsheviks fleeing a battle zone. Years later we were still toasting the experience.

As we rounded a bend in the track and descended the hollow toward the river, the first feature visible was a tall, metal stove pipe extending well above the roof line. The cabin was tiny by comparison to the almost palatial structures neighbouring along the river bank. The outer walls were constructed of varnished, half logs and inside there was a narrow kitchen, a modest living room, and two closet-sized bedrooms. Upon entering that day it seemed colder inside than it was outside. In the centre of the living room a lodge pole was wedged vertically supporting the ceiling as assurance against the weight of the snow buckling the roof.

During the six years Don was in residence he converted the cabin into a snug haven complete with an atmosphere no mistaking it for other than a fly fisherman's gentle abode. The walls were hung with framed fishing prints and other outdoor scenes, a corner for tying flies became equipped with all the necessary paraphernalia, a fishing library was installed, and a pair of racks, one for hanging waders and the other for holding joined rods were gradually added. It was not long before a whisky cabinet received maximum priority and space was found for it. And then a smart, new sofa was transported north, although it became such a splendid show piece, what with its stunning fabric done in grouse hunting scenes, that no one dare sully it by sitting on it. As a result, the sofa remained in the very same immaculate state until the day the keys were reluctantly turned over to the new owner.

Don had an above-average, almost strange compulsion for cleanliness and orderliness. All of the food stuffs stored in the kitchen cabinets, items particularly admired by ants, rodents or other critters, were enveloped and sealed in plastic wrappers tightly secured by untold turns of rubber bands. Invariably, by the time one penetrated the defences of the sugar bowl the once steaming coffee was barely tepid. Within a moment of retiring the knife and fork after engaging the final morsel on the dinner plate, they were whisked off to the waiting dish pan like a pair of tainted truants, followed by the plate itself, and then a soapy dish cloth was swished around the contaminated area on the table. With all this attention to purification, one had to guard against one's pipe and pouch receiving the same attention.

The great outdoors received attention also. With the many trees adjacent to the cabin there was a continual shower of twigs and dry leaves cascading from above and in Don's eyes sullying the yard. In my opinion, it was rather a fruitless contest to retrieve even a portion of them, after all we were in the great north woods. Many a time we would be suited up and setting off on our way to a pool, when

the sight of some innocent twigs sent him on a zig zag journey of retrieval. Following behind, I learned to be wary of his sudden stooping or popping up and down otherwise he risked finding himself skewered on my Constable.

Included in Don's library was a rounded selection of tackle catalogues representative of all the major houses. After the day's wade and while pacifying the distress imposed from devouring an oversized steak, the evening entertainment consisted of deliberately poring through glossy pages of endless delights. The resultant extensive discussions invariably examined how our performance would certainly be enhanced by the acquisition of a rod or rods whose calibrations in inches and ounces dovetailed within the odd gaps existing between the outlandish number of rods currently included in our stable. And, of course, such romanticizing extended to include reels and lines.

Don was such a sociable sort that it took an eternity to reach our usual upstream pool. Something compelled him to halt at every cabin along our way for a neighbourly chat even when it appeared no one was home, to peer through the windows to make certain. As for myself, when my rod is joined and a river on the horizon, I yearn to not waste a moment in order to introduce myself to the first available trout. Don's priorities seemed to lie in other directions, and he became quite disappointed if he found no one to receive his morning homilies.

During the six years Don possessed the little cabin at Flash Light Bend, it was a period of numerous days astream and will never be forgotten. Often we walked the bank upstream, down past the final cabin and then off through the woods eventually reaching areas no one else fished. It was an enchanting stretch of water completely untainted by the affairs of the outer world and we, as sojourners, became mended, as it were, by its pristine character. The trout were playful and we would tick away the hours; that is until Don's biological clock slipped its clutch and he hankered for the tinkle of ice cubes in his tumbler. At that moment, he became touched by acute tunnel vision accompanied by the singular mission to repair to the whisky cabinet with the greatest dispatch. A trout could show its neb directly in his path; it could roll over on its back to catch a little sun for all Don cared, he was in full throttle down river bellowing to me, "It's time to raise a toast to Halford and we won't forget Skues this time."

Once more I entered the two wheeled track leading to the river, and slowly descended the incline reaching down to the cabin and the river beyond. Through the trees I could see the cylindrical, stove pipe chimney and a curl of smoke indicated the cabin was occupied, and since I did not want to be accused of trespassing, which I was, I hesitated as if I had mistaken my way. I then slowly rolled down the slope to turn around, the only way out. At least this manoeuvre afforded a brief view of the cabin which I could now see could no longer be labelled little. Considerable changes had taken place, new rooms extended outward, apparently to serve the need of the present owner, and to the rear a wooden storage shed now stands, all very handsomely done. Even so, as splendid as it all appeared, even with the greater comfort, I knew it would not inspire any happier moments and memories as did the original, modest cabin, now a closed chapter.

That afternoon, after lunch, the weather tempered ever so slightly and the river was still high and roiled, but we were there to fish and this we did. That's what openers are for.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley

I believe by now that within these missives I have established October as my darling of the months. In fact, if there was one month out of the twelve I was allowed to transport to the old deserted island it would certainly be number ten. With this in mind, last October we motored through our New England states at a time coinciding when the foliage was at its most magnificent in colour, and when the crisp tang of the air brought an earthy tint to the cheek.

I could not travel East without a pause in Manchester, Vermont where, largely inspired by the Orvis Company, so many associations concern fly fishing. For our stay we booked into The Equinox, a charming, white clapboard hotel which must have originally inspired the term 'rambling'. That is what it certainly does for what seems the length of a city block. The original portion of the hotel, known as the Marsh Tavern, dates from 1769, but has been expanded and renovated numerous times since then including a period when it was associated with the Orvis family. In 1853, Franklin Orvis, brother of Charles F., opened what became known as the Equinox House which in turn by today evolved into simply The Equinox.

The hotel proved to be a grand stay and I was even served Shepherd's Pie in the tavern where its dark paneling, Windsor chairs and a roaring fireplace created an atmosphere reminiscent of our Colonial period.

In 1856, Charles formed the Charles F. Orvis Company in a small, brick building directly next door to the hotel and it was from here that he sold the solid wood rods he was noted for. Today the quaint building houses the Johnny Appleseed Bookshop.

In 1870, catering to increased interest in sport fishing, Charles F. expanded into much larger quarters on Union Street just down from the village square opposite to the hotel. Today, this two storey white frame building sits as a testimonial to

the historical significance of the Orvis Company and to Manchester itself. The building officiates today as the retail store for the Orvis line of outdoor clothing.

Manchester is also the home of the American Museum of Fly Fishing which is located just down the street from The Equinox. I saved my visit here until the morning after our arrival in Manchester. Breakfast was served in the main dining room with endless selections spread the length of a banquet table. And if all this did not suffice, a chef produced enormous omelettes to order. After making a major reduction of the offerings, I left the hotel for a brisk walk circling around the village square before turning toward the museum. A light mist filled the air and enhanced the earthy aroma of the fallen leaves. Across the way, a tall, white church tower showed between the reds and yellows of the surrounding trees.

As I neared the museum, I thought of its role in my initial acquaintance with Sheona Lodge in far away Ambleside. Our sharing of the pages of the *Journal* led to her sending a letter addressed to me but forwarded through the museum. This initial contact led to many years of correspondence with Sheona and, eventually, our travel to Ambleside to meet her and her husband Oliver in 1985. In that same year Oliver had reached 90, then he sadly passed away a few years later.

We had a lovely time in their company. Sheona proudly brought forth some of the Baigent series of flies created by her father and also showed me his extensive collection of fly fishing memorabilia. It was all rather fascinating and represented a keystone of angling history.

Sheona served a delightful lunch outside in the yard at their home, Wraysholme. Then Oliver suggested I have a 'throw in'. I had not the slightest notion as to what a 'throw in' could be, but as long as I was in Oliver's hands I was game. I soon learned this meant having a go in the tumbling beck not far from the rear of their yard. Even though Oliver believed it too early for any trout to have taken residence, it would be a fitting excursion on such a glorious day filled with sunshine which was explained as a rarity hereabout.

I donned Sheona's ancient hip waders and accepted the use of Oliver's equally ancient cane rod affixed with a dry fly. Completely outfitted, I set off trailing Oliver. A tall, stone wall at the rear required scaling which we not too gingerly accomplished, then it was through a sheep meadow stepping warily, followed by mounting a rickety gate which defied opening, and briefly we reached the beck. The setting was stunning; I shan't forget how the distant fells rose in the lushest green I have ever seen. I presented the fly to the front and to the rear, nothing came, and then my 'throw in' ended when a jagged rock accepted the fly and I was reduced to a naked cast. Since then I have adopted Oliver's phrase and feel quite smart using it among my circle of anglers, besides 'throw in' reinforcing my memory of that lovely sojourn with Sheona and Oliver.

I spent an enchanting hour rambling through the various rooms of the museum with its many exhibits representing angling history as well as the personal tackle of renowned personages associated with the fly fishing fraternity. Of special historic interest is the hinged, wall panels that Mary Orvis Marbury (1856–1914) had constructed for exhibit at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The panels contain representative flies of the period as well as photographs depicting the era. Beginning in 1876, Mary, who was Charles F's daughter, headed a fly tying team of women on the second floor of the Union

Street factory, and in 1892 she published her historic, "Favourite Flies and their Histories".

Vincent Marinaro (1911–1986), noted for his *A Modern Dry Fly Code* and *In the Ring of the Rise* was well represented with a large display that included four cane rods he had built himself, his fishing vest, tying tools, and a selection of reels: Hardy St George, Hardy Perfect, and a Bogdan Salmon reel.

Joseph D. Bates, Jr (1903–1988), a prolific author and historian on the evolution and use of the salmon fly was also represented. Thinking back I recalled when Colonel Bates had an influence on my own angling effort. One year I was deeply engrossed in his *Atlantic Salmon Flies and Fishing*, and the book sparked the notion of trying an Atlantic Salmon fly on Michigan trout provided the pattern did not exceed my amateurish abilities. After considering several choices, I settled on the Cosseboom which I learned was developed on the Margaree River in 1923 by John Cosseboom. With slight modification to suit my inventory of materials, I tied a few on No. 12 streamer hooks. The combination of red head, orange floss and silver tinsel body, wing of gray squirrel tail, and a yellow collar produced striking colours and I imagined it would be an excellent, autumn attractor. Eventually, it did become my October favourite, a time when most naturals ceased and when random exploration was the norm.

The first October I launched a Cosseboom resulted in a plump brook trout endowed in fall regalia and I felt encouraged. The following October I closed the season in style while on the Pere Marquette River on the western side of the state. It was my first experience on the river, and while the other chaps collected farther upstream in order to intercept the salmon run, I opted to wander off on my own in search of trout. There are more graceful methods of entering a river but, in my haste, I slid down the steep bank directly behind the cabin, and luckily, landed feet first in water depth topping at waist high and this without stabbing the Constable in the gravel bottom, nor unraveling the Cosseboom.

Much to my surprise and pleasure, working along the bank side pool resulted in seven rainbow trout with the smallest starting at ten inches and graduating upwards until an eighteen inch fellow finalized the encounter. I am uncertain whether this frenzy was inspired by the Cosseboom or if these trout had felt snubbed by the other lads' preference for salmon and wished to display their cordiality.

In any case that Cosseboom now resides attached to my tweed hat, having been retired with full honours and, whenever possible, it receives mention in dispatches, such as this.

Leaving Manchester, we found the famed Battenkill River rushing beneath a red painted, covered bridge and just up the road sits a 200 year old farm house. Norman Rockwell once lived here, and now it is a bed and breakfast called The Inn on the Covered Bridge Green. The combination could not present a more typical New England setting, and it came completely dappled in October's canvas.

We motored on to Boston, to Newburyport where clipper ships were once launched, and then circled back to Lenox in the Massachusetts Berkshires. Here we paid homage to the largest fish story by visiting Arrowhead, a rambling farm house where Herman Melville once worked on the manuscript of *Moby Dick*.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley

WEEKS in advance, I invariably prepare for the opening of trout fishing, which for us in Michigan is circled on the calendar as the final Saturday in April. The fly boxes are brought forth from the canvas bag and surveyed for shortages. There never really is any since the compartments seem to remain overstuffed with a mere handful of individual patterns I have come to rely upon anyway, but then, who can resist a few more sessions at the vice? And then too I like to rub a coat of wax on the old Constable just to rejuvenate its mellow patina of split cane. It would be nice if the rod still retained its original, pungent odor of fresh varnish. Reduced tippets demand restoration and the cogs and mechanism of the Hardy reels receive a restorative droplet of lubricant. These preparations are designed to enhance what is to follow at the end of April and in the interim intensify the ingredients of anticipation.

The weather at this time is never predictable and can deliver the full gamut from a torrid heat wave to snow squalls and, naturally, the appropriate clothing is in the closet at home. If I pack the short sleeve shirts with epaulettes the thermometer will surely plunge. If I include the long sleeve shirts with epaulettes a south-west wind gathers momentum, leaves the Gulf of Mexico and arrives bellowing the breath of a blow torch.

Of course, there are capital days of pure gold when all is in harmony and enlivens an extra spring in one's step. Then, too, there have been days when nearby forest fires have forced the hasty evacuation of Gates Au Sable Lodge. This year nothing quite that dramatic occurred.

Steve Masty and I arrived at Gates in time for lunch in the dining room; we firmly believe the proper meal is just as important as the proper fly and should not be neglected. This was on Friday although the state-wide season did not officially open until the next day. Gates is located within a seven mile stretch of river that remains open year round for anyone hardy enough or foolish enough to

cast a fly during the winter months. The first year of these regulations, I was one of the foolish ones to experience the joys of trouting in January. This adventure was brief and proved another example of arriving without proper accoutrements which in this case necessitated an ice pick to free the guide rings.

After lunch Steve and I suited up. Steve is a dentist and it is always jolly to have your dentist just down stream in case of a molar flare up.

It was a lovely afternoon: sunny between powder puff clouds and there was just the right margin of chill maintained by a light breeze sounding through the still denuded trees. Not a natural was in sight as we were probably still a week early for the Hendricksons, our first major hatch, and which trout nab as if they had not a morsel all spring. I tied on a Lead Wing Coachman preparatory to some determined exploration in hopes it would register advance notice that the Hendricksons were stirring.

There is a grassy island in front of the lodge that splits the current sending it across to the far bank and with the aid of a slight bend tends to scoop a deeper channel where some lovely trout hug the bottom. Somewhere in the middle of the channel a greedy, foreign instrument lies in wait for any wet fly drifted well below the surface and from past encounters it has the uncanny ability to expand its reach enough to snare a passing fly including mine especially as from year to year I never seem to remember its exact location.

If the traffic will permit I like to dawdle in this one run, slowly working along with quartering casts back upstream in order to let the fly sink in the current. Reaching the tail, I will reverse and wade back upstream for a repeat pass. This method allows the head of the pool a rest before I return, and the process also keeps me not far distant from the dining room.

This particular day, only one brown trout of a pound or more was apparently disgusted with seeing this lone Coachman jogging repeatedly past, and he nailed it. However, he must have considered this intrusion a deucedly yawning experience for he barely wiggled his toes in resisting being towed upstream, before quietly surrendering. I concluded perhaps the water temperature was still a mite chilly to allow a decent tumble in the riffles.

During my stay in the pool, three anglers fished their way down one after the other. Each one paused for a friendly chat and then each one asked permission to pass behind me since they were continuing farther down stream. A fourth chap took me by surprise. I was intent on my line straightening, and was just lifting for another quartering cast when, turning, there was this fellow wading along non stop directly through the spot I was about to drop the fly into. He too was friendly and effortlessly exposed all his teeth in a broad smile of fellowship as he continued on splashing through the channel I was engaged in. I visualized trout stumbling over each other in their panic to avoid being crushed into the gravel. Astounded, I just stood there staring at his back as he approached the horizon. What with the din of the river I was not aware of his approach, and in a matter of a few more seconds he would have been draped in my line. Perhaps some one else farther down executed better timing than I.

After enjoying Friday's modest successes I thought perhaps we would squeak by unblest with any major reversals. We almost did. However, a stout wind rushed the sun out of its way, imposing an alarming darkness. Rain came down in buckets causing the river to appear as if a thousand rises were occurring. Nuggets

of hail blanketed the grass with the whiteness of snow. The next moment the power went off. Thankfully we were engaged in our final morsel of beef for, without power, the kitchen was completely out of commission with the staff in a near panic. This also meant the entire lodge was in darkness and the benefit of plumbing had ceased.

Realizing a power outage in the north country can persist for hours, even days, we debated the merit of sitting in our pitch dark quarters or whether to pack up and head home a day early. Before I could finish my pipe and aided by a flashlight we began searching for our scattered belongings. At 9.00 we closed the door and headed for the highway, unable to even settle our account with the embarrassed proprietor as there was no way to construct a tally of charges. Later, we learned a tornado had struck a few miles away and that the power had not been restored until late the following day. Here was another eventful opener to reminisce over in future years and often it is these broad events that linger in the memory more vividly than the actual angling.

In June, Lois and I vacationed along the northwestern side of Michigan enjoying stays at Frankfort, Traverse City, and Bay View just adjacent to Petoskey. I only mention this because the triangle of Petoskey, Horton Bay, and Walloon Lake is personally associated with Ernest Hemingway. Although the family homestead was in Oak Park, Illinois, where Ernest was born in 1899, he was repeatedly drawn to Northern Michigan. And, significantly, it was here in 1919 that he came to heal his extensive war wounds. The people, places and rivers fished are recorded in his early stories and they could be read as an atlas to identify their locale even today.

Each summer prior to World War I, Ernest fished a number of rivers and small streams often hiking to and camping along their banks. Horton Creek at Horton Bay on Lake Charlevoix was favored and provided the setting of many stories, but he also fished the Sturgeon, Pidgeon, Black, and the Boardman near Mayfield where the Adams fly was developed years later.

Also demonstrating his attachment to the area, at the age of 22 Ernest married Hadley, his first wife, at the old Methodist Church in Horton Bay. Following the reception they honeymooned at the Hemingway cottage on Walloon Lake a few miles away.

Talking to a curator in a Petoskey museum, I learned Windermere, the Hemingway cottage, is still used by the family and I was advised little of it can be seen from the road. Understandably, intrusion is resisted.

Ernest boarded in a rooming house in Petoskey during the winter of 1919 and here we did drive past. It is a simple, white frame house little changed from when he occupied a second floor room in which he did some of his early writing. We drove on to Horton Bay and noted a white, clapboard church but learned this was not the scene of the marriage since the old church has been torn down. The Red Fox Inn down the street displayed a sign boasting of Hemingway books within. However, circling the old frame building and pounding on every available door produced no one.

This side trip was a mere sampling, but I saw enough to inspire a return visit in order to learn further about this period in Hemingway's colorful life that seems to be overshadowed by more dramatic later episodes which receive greater attention.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley

PROMPTLY at 6 am, Jeff Johnson was on schedule as he turned into the front drive. By uncertain light from the post lantern, we loaded my gear into the trunk of his motor car filling every remaining space, not so much because the area was limited, but because of the surfeit of items demanded for a day's trouting. Also on schedule, three hours later, we reached the mid-town intersection of the northern outpost of Roscommon. We found the town bustling with activity as shopkeepers were in the process of heaping their wares atop tables set up on the side walks. Apparently our arrival coincided with the launch of a grand, side walk extravaganza which promised more commotion in this little town than I have ever witnessed in all the years of driving through on the way to the South Branch of the Au Sable River.

The river courses gently through one end of town, but where we fish is several miles farther on. However we never fail to experience breakfast at a restaurant that is distinguished with a more unique atmosphere than any other in the upper half of the state. Even so, my wife would cringe at the unpolished appearance of the establishment and with stern jaw refuse to budge within. I must admit that viewed from without it is quite an unwholesome sight and one not a bit associated with serving a savoury breakfast within. Indeed, it is a mere weathered, wood frame of a place sitting at one corner of the intersection of the two main roads. I said sitting, whereas I should say sagging, for one corner has sunken remarkably out of plumb with the rest of the world. Locally it has earned the description as the 'Tiltin' Hilton.' If one draws a table in the offending corner it is best to forego pancakes for otherwise, what with gravity acting the way it does, the syrup has been known to flow over the lip of the plate and onto one's finest Orvis trousers.

Having been well fortified against the forthcoming wade, we left Roscommon, passing over the South Branch at the edge of town and from the number of overturned canoes remaining at the livery it was apparent we would enjoy a few uninterrupted hours before any invading canoeists could breach our tranquility. We drove to near Chase Bridge then turned onto a dirt road and continued for a mile through scraggly pine trees before parking in a clearing high up from the river. The September morn remained cool, as it should, and there was a fine mist,

a remnant of the showers we had encountered farther back on the throughway. The delay required by suiting up and by joining the rod always magnifies the anxiety of gaining the river once it is within reach, but there is no short cut to the process.

We descended down a soft, sandy trail and then turned off to follow a path through heavy woods. The poplars were already tinged with yellow in celebration of approaching autumn. As I led the way along the path, a sudden raucous sound of flapping wings and a blurr of feathers, as a partridge shot skyward, startled me to such an extent I nearly pitched the Constable into the branches. The bird flapped his way elsewhere probably as embarrassed as I.

The path ended in a clearing next to the river and we passed a circle of blackened stones evidently used for a campfire site. Considering the number of forest fires hereabout the past few years this seemed a rather foolhardy and dangerous activity.

The South Branch is drastically influenced by rainfall, more so than the other branches. During early spring the river can reach treacherous depths after a combination snow and rain runoff. I recall one particular opening weekend when heavy rain had swollen the river and the excess runoff appeared to have gathered every unattached worm and deposited them into the river. That was a time when I came across two agonized anglers sitting on the bank staring mournfully at numberless worms wriggling in the current, offering too much competition to a cast fly.

Here the river is generously wide and at normal levels is mostly knee deep over a gravel and stone bottom. Laced with deeper channels that are revealed like fingers of dark pathways, they provide suitable holts for brown and brook trout. This area is within the Mason Tract and as such is regulated as flies only and no kill, all trout must be returned.

The fine mist persisted as we entered the river. We separated with Jeff moving on ahead farther downstream and this left me to dawdle along, which I prefer. The great width of the river allows a zig zag course from bank to bank dropping a Hare's Ear in those darkened channels. All told this is a lovely stretch to turn one's back on civilisation, even though it encroaches not many miles distant. Both banks are heavily lined with trees, some sweeping outward toward the opposite bank thus creating a marvellous, wilderness effect.

Jeff worked his way downstream and he became an impressionist figure in the canvas of grey mist and falling drizzle. I halted my own casting as there is something fascinating in watching a methodical angler at work. Masterful was the flex of his long rod as he sent the line rolling outward with the fly in unison gracefully seeking a nearby eddy.

A few years back, our Trout Unlimited chapter adopted certain areas of the South Branch for an ongoing project of bank stabilisation. Several locations had suffered extreme erosion resulting in sand build up in the river. These areas were farther downstream where the banks rise to greater heights producing prime conditions for washouts during heavy rains. Rocks and logs were brought in and secured along the problem banks, and barren slopes received plantings of trees and shrubs. Funding for the projects was raised by means of a banquet held once a year for just such a purpose.

Jeff and I accounted for a few trout that morning, mostly brook trout. Even though we did not distinguish ourselves the tally was such that our reputation remained untarnished. After a streamside lunch, we returned to the car and, keeping our waders on, we drove to the North Branch near the old lumbering town of Lovels. The river flows through the outskirts of town, past the crumbling Douglas Hotel which used to accommodate Ford, Firestone, and Edison, and the bridge provides public access. This stretch of river is extremely wide and results in water barely exceeding the ankle. Of late, mostly small trout are encountered here and they are not overly selective as to what is offered. I am certain a bare hook would prove just as effective, although hardly as much fun nor sporting.

Late in the afternoon the clouds pushed on elsewhere, and the sun joined the scene to provide a lovely setting with long shadows across the riffles. After bullying a few tiddlers our way we decided it was rather late to try elsewhere so, declaring it day's end, we drove back to Grayling and booked into a stripe motel on the highway. Although comfortable, it did not uphold the sort of rustic retreat associated with the north country where it is preferred to have a stream rushing noisily past the front portal. In view of such a pastoral setting we did experience a night long marching by provided by endless campers, pickup trucks, and vans the same variety that perpetually clog the roads hereabout.

In as much as the TV could not conjure anything more worthwhile than a collage of zig zags, I settled into an armchair with my pipe and turned to *J. R. Hartley Casts Again*, a sure guarantee to incite a few chuckles and to set the ribs vibrating. Peter Lapsley kindly sent me the first volume of J.R.'s amusing escapades and they proved such a joyous experience, I was compelled to obtain the sequel.

The night passed quickly, even though my mattress felt as if it was, as Rumpole says, "stuffed with firewood." A woodsy looking restaurant which managed to maintain its kitchen haze indoors served us a gargantuan breakfast suitable to sustain a pair of lumberjacks scheduled to dismantle a forest. We then drove back to the South Branch for a repeat run at the same area as the previous morning. It was a gentler day, broadly doused with warming sunshine and a modest breeze entered from the north. A few olives chanced a risky drift; however their presence remained unchallenged. Once more we did not have to share our stretch of water with any other angler. No doubt their absence was influenced by the arrival of another football season

We were startled by a canoe that came up quietly from behind us and by way of revenge I warned the occupants to beware of a waterfall (non existent) just past the second bend. It was warming to see their faces erupt in the most startled expression.

Jeff and I whiled away a couple hours over a few agreeable trout. Neither of us wanted to admit this would be our season finale, for it was unlikely either of us would have the opportunity to return until the following year. Such a disheartening prospect could only be soothed by having a chicken dinner at Iva's in Sterling on the drive home. After we devoured one of Iva's family styled platters of chicken, which she has served for over 40 years, we staggered away in splendid fettle for the remainder of the tiresome drive home.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley

I had always believed some fishing, even if not graced with an encounter with a trout, was supremely better than no fishing at all. Nevertheless, recently I learned much to my regret that this model notion can be wrought with exceptions. Late last August, a period in late summer not noted for being overly generous with giving up its trout, largely due to the hellish heat as well as the scarcity of fly, I experienced a river bound excursion that proved anything but pleasurable.

I was in the north country around Gaylord for an extended weekend of golf, which in my case guarantees being humbled amidst the bunkers and gorse of the local courses. The occasion once more honoured a once a year journey northward for the object of pitting myself and my sons against my two brothers-in-law and their sons, and this madness had now surpassed a twelve year tradition. However, as a means of tempering the frustration as well as the blood pressure, for the past few years I have reserved one day in which to trade the golf clubs for a fly rod and simply steal away for a rousing good time on a trout stream. On that particular day in August I chose to flirt with the Sturgeon River for my day of anticipated relaxation.

The river is reached after a pleasant twenty mile drive north of Gaylord to the modest town of Wolverine. Stunted, rounded hills and shallow valleys shadowed by stands of straight rising pines are viewed along the roadway which in itself is forced to wander much as does the nearby river. Approaching Wolverine the surrounding scenery becomes even more dramatic in character and generates the pleasing, calming effect usually associated with a broad undulating landscape.

The Sturgeon is extremely fast flowing and is well endowed with unsuspecting areas that present hazardous wading conditions, and even seems to voice an extra gurgle of pleasure when someone becomes upended. As a safety measure, some

trouters will not wear anything higher than hip waders for then, if a stab of cold water sounds the alarm, it is time to start backpaddling.

Upon reaching Wolverine, I drove on through, which in itself is not a great endeavour, for a double sneeze and one would have missed the highlights. A half mile further on there is a dirt, two track turn off which ends at a railroad track barely off the highway. From here a brisk 400 yard trek through an open field and the river is reached.

Always conscious of how devilish this river can be, as a measure of insurance I had left the old Constable at home, and had packed a glass rod instead, just in case an overwhelming current should become master of the situation. It is well I did. Although my prime consideration concerned how congenial the river would be, this day however, an unseemly jaunt across the field is what provided the day's high adventure. I have fished here many times, and the only anxiety generated has been my impatience to reach the river and start fishing. Passage through knee high grass poses no obstacle.

This day however, that knee high grass, after a summer of torrential rains, had grown incredibly high, rivalling Jack's bean stalk and in some areas reached the top of my chest waders. To my knowledge, the use of a machete in northern Michigan is unheard of, but such a handy tool would not have been out of place here. In order to present the least dimension, I had to push my way through, turned sideways, and take one step at a time while holding my rod aloft. And, of course, the restraint imposed by waders disallowed very high stepping and this only worsened the situation. Progress was so slow that I excited hoards of mosquitoes lying in ambush. In as much as I could not outstrip their devilish buzzing, they promptly marshalled forces and joyfully engaged in a festive banquet at my expense. Adding to my misery, I chanced upon an unseen hole that swallowed one leg up to the knee, and I tipped head foremost into this cursed bracken. As I tilted forward, my first thoughts centred on the lucky Constable safe in the closet, and then I sifted through a selection of oaths suitable to the occasion. I am uncertain how much time was consumed during my passage to the river, but when I finally did break through I was sopping wet from perspiration and in a foul mood that questioned the sanity of punishing myself this way.

The next challenge consisted of locating an opening between the tag alders guarding the river bank, and to squeeze through without having my hat snared in the process. Then it was one sinking foot at a time through the band of muck and silt while having faith in my suspenders preventing my waders from being tugged off. Upon gaining solid footing I lit the briar and proceeded to neutralise the remainder of the marauding mosquitoes.

The river runs straight at this point and, what with the strength of the current, I always hug the near bank and, coinciding with my march downstream, I'll search for openings between the tag alders in case an exit should prove beneficial.

Repeatedly presenting a Hare's Ear across and down eventually produced two browns in quick succession and then the activity just as suddenly ceased. I continued downstream with quartering casts when a sudden, unnatural splash of water to the rear caught my attention. A runaway rail road beam came bobbing through at mid-stream, sending up splashes of spray as it rapidly approached. This startling sight nearly overstretched my wader suspenders. I was thankful I

was not directly in its path. If I had been, without question I would have been felled instantly, and this massive intruder would have gained a companion on its downstream journey. From then on I spent as much time eyeing upstream as I did down.

From this point, the river continues on straight, enters deeper water, then turns in a sharp bend towards my bank. The inside radius of the bend shallows enough to provide a modest casting area from which to entice browns holding in the deeper run. Unfortunately, to reach the bend required another frolic through the tall grasses.

After much heaving and shuffling, taking short steps, I reached the bend only to see how hopeless it was to even consider trying to maintain a line airborne. The grass extended directly to the edge of the bank where I normally stood. The prospect of having to continually send a line over the top of the grass would strain my ability to do so in short order and my enthusiasm to even try quickly evaporated. It was lunch time anyway.

Once more it was back through the grass cursing mosquitoes, dripping perspiration, disrobing, and finally dropping exhausted into the auto much relieved. My next plan was to find a sandwich in Wolverine then drive further north to another familiar site for one more try.

Whether warranted or not, Wolverine is graced with two restaurants and each sits on the main road directly opposite the other. One announces, "Fine Food" on its bubbling neon sign and so as not to be an echo, the other establishment proclaims, "Good Food" on its sign. I chose the latter, mainly because from the amount of paint peeled from the building it appeared they could use a touch of assistance. Upon entering, I chose a stool at the vacant counter and ordered a bacon and egg sandwich. While waiting I surveyed the interior decor which consisted of an assortment of plastic, Indian maiden heads tacked on the far wall along with half a deer antler, and an enormous circular saw blade.

My sandwich arrived in a plastic container and before leaving I described my morning adventure to the cook and he did confirm that unusually heavy rains accounted for the growth of the grass.

My spirits were much uplifted as I drove on north knowing I would not have a repeat of the morning's escapade because access to the Sturgeon this time only required a mere drive down a dirt road, across the river on a steel bridge, then a sharp turn into a well maintained parking area. After suiting up, there would be an unhindered walk into the river with the usual greater attention paid to the heavy rocks in this stretch. There was one other item; I was not sure if that rail road beam would have passed through ahead of me or not.

Considering the events so far this day, as I turned onto the access road I should have known my allotment of scheduled upsets had not been used up. Not far down the road I discovered I would not be fishing here this day. I pulled to the side of the road and sat eating my sandwich with one hand, scratching mosquito bites with the other, and staring at a broad sign that read: "Bridge Out For Repairs."

Letter From America

by Frank Hursley

THIS past summer, I finally accomplished one leg of a dual notion that I would dearly like to fish the Maple River and follow with a quiet lunch at the Dam Site Inn. On rare occasions I had brief views of the Maple but only by stopping the car for a momentary survey by hanging over the side of the bridge on the highway that runs south from Mackinaw City, which sits at the tip of the Lower Peninsula. The Inn itself sits not far distant from here and appears much like a rambling, frame road house left over from our speakeasy phenomenon in answer to Prohibition. To fish the river for a few hours then to relax over lunch at the Inn while reconstructing the morning's successes seemed such an ideal combination. As it turned out, I was at least able to accumulate a couple of hours of solitude in marvellous harmony with the Maple. However, the locked door of the Dam Site suggested that lunch was not a speciality with them and that they only opened for the steak and chop crowd during the evening.

We were vacationing at the same cottage on Walloon Lake that we had rented the previous year, and as I wanted to reach the Maple well before the sun rounded the tree tops, I left just as light began to reveal a calm surface on the lake. There is nothing more boring than a calm lake and a cloudless sky.

Approaching Petoskey on Lake Michigan, I was delighted to see the bay was not shrouded in the heavy mist that had persisted over the entire area for the past several days. The wind had shifted, sending a cool, refreshing breeze that cleared the air and allowed a picturesque view across the blue water of the bay. The road leaves Petoskey on the north side and hugs the shore of the bay as it passes through a unique community of over 400 frame cottages, each one completely different from the other, that originated as a Methodist camp in the late 1880's. Further on, the road curves east away from the bay and then hugs the shoreline of Crooked Lake, one of numerous inland lakes.

Crooked Lake contributed its waters to an extensive and complicated water way system popular with travellers who sought to experience a natural, pristine setting amidst woods and waters. A fleet of wood or coal burning steam

launches conveyed excursionists from an embarkation point in Cheboygan, down through the Cheboygan River into Mullett Lake, then through the Indian River into Burt Lake. Crossing Burt, the steam launches made a precarious passage through the narrow and sharp turns of Crooked River, requiring polling at certain bends, before reaching the docks at the town of Oden on Crooked Lake. From Oden steam locomotives delivered their passengers by rail to Petoskey. Wood constructed hotels and inns along the route allowed guests overnight accommodation and passage through the system could be accomplished in either direction. Such excursions were very popular from the 1880's on into the 1920's when the automobile levered its impact thus allowing means of access for summer people to reach lakeside cottages that had become increasingly popular at the various inland lakes.

A few miles beyond Crooked Lake I found a road that ran down to the Maple River and parked on the shoulder just ahead of the bridge over the river. Here in Michigan, access to a river is allowed at a bridge crossing and I hoped this held true here. From atop the bridge I surveyed the river, but did not discover any fly activity taking place and the water looked marvellously clear and promising. There was not a soul in sight and I was assured a couple of hours of undisturbed fishing. Suiting up, rather than expose the Constable to the uncertainty of a strange river, I pulled a 7½ foot glass rod from the rod case, tied on a Leadwing Coachman, a proven favourite of dozing trout and a fly high on my list as well, for fishing wet.

Extending down the bank to the river, a series of wide, box-like steps filled with pea gravel invited a comfortable descent in lieu of forcing one's way through thick vegetation. Nonetheless, what appeared as a convenience soon proved otherwise. The pea gravel had spilled over onto the top of the broad beamed framework, producing an effect similar to a dance floor covered with ball bearings and I was instantly activated into a tango-like descent. With complete loss of dignity I slid off one step, plummeted onto the next, pitched forward, and landed head foremost in the direction of the river. I lay there for a moment trying to assess the damage and hoping no one witnessed my ungraceful swan dive. I discovered I still clenched my rod. Thankfully, I had not risked the Constable, my pipe was still firm in the jaw and had not bitten through the stem, and there were no rips or tears in the waders or even my personal appendages. There was however, one slowly dampening abrasion on my free hand, but I soon had that washed clean in the river, and considered myself lucky. No doubt the waders prevented any major loss of skin. Once more the club motto, "It is not all of fishing to fish," was demonstrated.

Fishing a newly found river can be as delightful as turning the pages of a newly discovered book. Even the river's name, Maple, has a lovely ring to it and I believe provided the chief impetus to come here. Glancing upstream and down I could see the Maple offered a delightful stretch of water. It was generously wide enough to allow unheaded casting, and had a bottom a mite overly endowed with sand, but nevertheless was graced with enough patches of gravel to guarantee firm footing. An occasional submerged log would have to be guarded against, although these suggested good holts for trout. Both banks

were well staffed with towering trees that not only presented a majestic, natural setting, but also assured cooling shade as a guard against a warming of the river.

I had not paid much attention to the bridge itself from up above but now that I was below I found it rather interesting. It was definitely not in the style of your lovely, arched stone bridges that complement your country settings. The bridge I faced seemed to perch all too nonchalantly on nothing sturdier than a collection of round, wooden telephone poles sunk into the river bed. I would not hazard the age of the bridge, but from the alarming number of cracks and degree of crumbling suffered by the concrete anchoring each end I would suggest it had stood one generation too many. As I waded beneath I was thankful one of those practical, oxen drawn, fertilizer wagons with its giant wooden cask filled with urine, such as I saw in France 50 years ago, did not pass overhead.

As I mentioned, not a fly appeared on the water. However back at the cottage on Walloon Lake, we experienced an extraordinary Hexigenia hatch during the two previous evenings. It was an uncanny sight. Set against the background of diminishing light the sky was simply filled with dancing clouds of our largest fly of the season. Dozens were drawn sizzling into the night time beach fire. Each morning, the entire front of the cottage was covered with hundreds of fly with each one of them perched aligned with their head facing upward. And the surface of the lake became choked with an unsightly layer of dead fly floating like a broad endless scum.

On certain sections of the Au Sable, as well as some of the other rivers where bottom conditions are conducive, when a Hex hatch begins word rapidly spreads south. It is then that anglers cease whatever activity they are engaged in and stampede north with visions of landing leviathan trout who lose all sense of propriety and happily gorge themselves senseless. Unfortunately, these blanket hatches occur after nightfall, so this means night fishing in complete darkness. I made the attempt once or twice just for the experience; however, this form of sport is not in my favour. Of late, I seem to be experiencing enough difficulty with daytime hours and never did relish stumbling about in the dark wondering where I am or where my fly is. And the only thing I ever did accomplish was the most horrendous tangle of line and nerves. If these Hexigenia cannot present themselves during civilized hours I'll simply forego the experience.

I passed rather quickly under the bridge, only pausing long enough to let the Leadwing Coachman present itself in a shaded channel, but to no effect. Farther downstream I brought in the first trout of the day. A scrappy little brown reluctantly surrendered and I felt very pleased with what the Maple had to offer. As I waded on, a few tugs spelled missed opportunities, before two more browns were brought in. By then the sun was rising over the tree tops and shadows were shortening and I decided my sojourn on the noble Maple should end on a high note. I waded back upstream, hesitated, then quickly passed beneath the bridge, and climbed cautiously up the stairway with studied footfalls.

Letter From America

by Frank Hursley

SPRINGTIME astream is often accompanied by dampened odors largely associated with remaining pockets of melting snow found tucked into shaded hollows along the bankside. It has become not uncommon recently to detect faint whiffs of White Shoulders or perhaps one of those numerical designations signifying a Chanel fragrance wafted along on a downstream breeze. Rounding a bend can reveal an angler obscured behind wraparound sunglasses, encased in a multi-pocketed vest, and wielding the latest model graphite rod. There is nothing new or startling with such an image until, focusing upon a ribboned ponytail escaping from a duck bill cap, there emerges a strong suspicion that a female is encamped in your favorite riffle.

Of course, there is nothing new about their presence. What is startling is the remarkable number who have recently succumbed to the charm of the sport in the United States.

At a trout banquet several years ago Lee Wulff was the principal speaker and, following his always engaging talk, his wife Joan presented a remarkable casting demonstration. She used nothing more than a length of weightless yarn.

For several years a good friend has been accompanied north by his fly fishing wife. Her fanaticism for casting the fly is such that even long after fatigue has sent him indoors to recover in an armchair, she cannot be persuaded to reel in even when the farm bell sounds dinner. And like a seasoned trouper of the riffles she is delighted if anyone will listen to her stories about fierce encounters of which she has a well *flavored* inventory at hand.

Largely, over the years such occasions of women involved in fly fishing did not appear to be on any particularly grand scale and if acknowledged at all by the male fraternity, it was mainly relegated to being a haphazard fringe type of activity not to be taken seriously. Nevertheless the scene has changed dramatically and noticeable numbers of women are now found not only pursuing trout but have also become keenly engaged in the other activities related to the sport.

Here in Michigan, Trout Unlimited is the premier, grass roots organization directly involved in protecting and restoring trout habitation, and in doing so works closely in league with the state agencies which oversee the resource. The

governing body of our local chapter had been traditionally staffed with males. Today the chapter's Board of Directors has at least two enthusiastic females actively committed to upholding T. U. goals. And just recently a female with exceptional credentials was elected to head the Michigan Council of T. U. which in itself is the governing body which coordinates and oversees the various state chapters and their activities. The position is a demanding one and requires considerable savvy to work with the state's political officials.

At one time, the leading fly fishing magazines were largely the private domain of male angling writers and photographers. One now finds feature articles written by women on a variety of topics dealing knowledgeably with all areas of the sport. Included, one finds photos of comely lasses splendidly attired in waders, vests, and duck billed caps and buckling under the weight of a leviathan trout which they proudly clutch.

In addition, women have also found their niche officiating as personal guides on some of our Western rivers. Dial in a fishing segment on T.V. and you are likely to discover a prominent actress or model laughing joyously as she plays a thrashing trout.

Until recently, the ladies have been forced to struggle into waders originally designed to accommodate the male frame. Recognizing the market potential, outfitters now provide neoprene waders in revamped models in accordance with female attributes. The same is also true with other apparel and the ladies can now choose from an assortment of fishing vests, as well as a line of other garb that will assure confidence in appearing rather smart while stepping off the bank.

The advent of ladies embracing fly fishing may call for the resurrection of some degree of old fashioned chivalry. For a delightful rendering about the stress in trying to maintain such a relationship turn to Arnold Gingrich's, *The Well Tempered Angler.* He amusingly deliberates upon the vagaries of fishing with an overzealous and competitive wife, whom several comic situations arise as to how Gingrich can possibly arrange that his wife catches the first fish, catches the largest fish, and at the same time assure that it is a brown trout rather than a rainbow which is the less desirable in his wife's opinion.

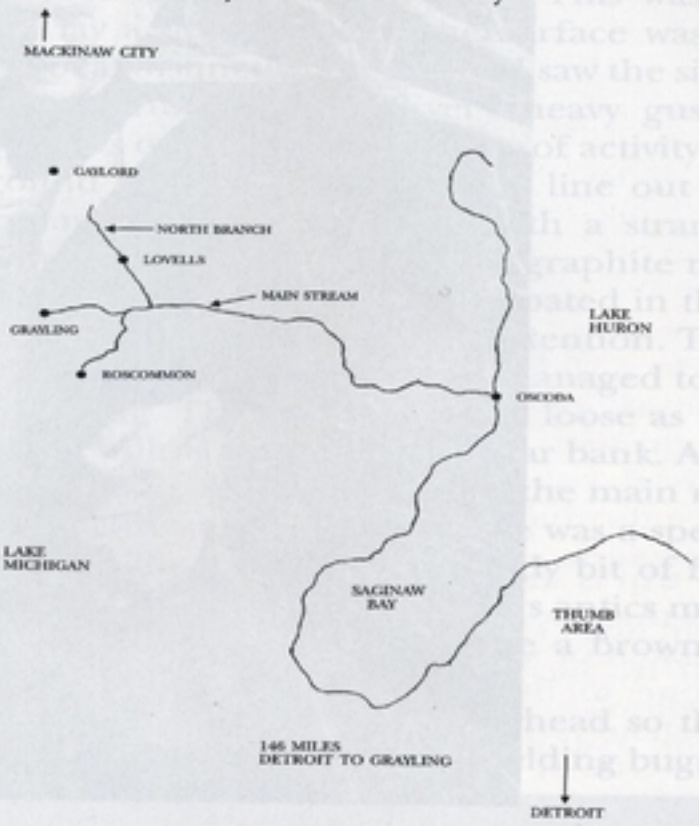
Thinking ahead, there is one possible problem that may surface given time if the influx of women anglers continues to increase, and that concerns the necessity to honor nature's call. Given the wilderness setting of many of our rivers, it has been a simple expedient to survey the river bank in order to locate a comfortable area from which to exit into the woods. How anguishing, not to say embarrassing, it would be if accidentally discovered in the process by the other sex bent on a similar mission.

I can visualize at least one pragmatic solution whereby an unwritten code suggesting the ladies discover accommodation by exiting to the starboard bank when fishing downstream, and to the port bank when fishing upstream. Gentlemen would similarly exercise the reverse.

All whimsy aside, the sport is gracious enough to embrace all who come to it as long as they recognize what a splendid pursuit fly fishing is and continue to promote and honor its grand traditions.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley



The Au Sable River System

I learned recently that our prized Au Sable River suffers from a remarkable malady, a unique condition that I have yet to see reported as describing any other local river system. It is said by those who make it their business to know that the Au Sable is too clean. I have always assumed this state of fitness ranked as an enviable attainment, not only for tap water, but especially so for any body of water housing the noble trout. In general my notion of a clean river would not include many of the silt laden rivers of today, but would it seems, be more appropriate in calling to mind the trout laden rivers of yesteryear when a cool draught scooped in a tin cup could be raised to the lips without fear. However, it appears the pendulum has swung too far and we now hear with amusing disbelief the old Au Sable has been rendered too clean. This condition has been pinpointed as the major cause of the decline in the larger sized trout population, but before presenting the authorities' conclusions, I'll present an overview of the Au Sable system.

In Michigan the Au Sable is the state's premier trout river and all told its three branches course through 250 river miles. Considering its natural beauty and majestic scenery, I like to think of the Au Sable as the country club of Michigan's rivers.

The Main Stream flows east out of Grayling, an old lumbering town named after the long extinct fish, and joins its waters to Lake Huron at Oscoda. The North Branch flows south from its headwaters in rather barren, flat lands and tamarack swamps and connects with the Main. The South Branch flows north out of Roscommon, also an old lumbering town, and surrenders its waters to the Main not distant from the North Branch.

Each branch is endowed with somewhat of an individual character of its own, thereby presenting degrees of variation from grand trees sweeping outward from shorelines to majestic, high steep banks guaranteed to enchant the visiting angler. The Main Stream receives the highest fishing pressure as it is not only more accessible but it is also generously wide and offers comfortable wading depths for several miles east of Grayling. Farther on there are deep stretches that are largely only available to the angler by floating the river. The traditional method for this is from the classic Au Sable River Boat, a long, narrow, flat bottomed craft whose drift is controlled by dragging a heavy chain and is poled by a guide at the rear. There is a seven mile stretch coined the 'Holy Water', where fly only with catch and release applies.

The Main Stream is heavily lined with cabins of every description and size ranging from the briefest one room log cabin on up to palatial homes more suited to an urban setting than rising amidst the north woods. Much to the consternation of anglers, the Main is saturated with hoards of weekend, inexperienced canoeists unleashed from liveries in Grayling. But then, they too enjoy the very same rights, to river recreation as do the anglers.

The North Branch has extensive areas of wilderness forest, more so than what is found along the Main and these are only interrupted by limited clusters of cabins. Wide shallow runs are plentiful and many deep bends sometimes require passage bankside rather than risk wading through. On this branch out-of-control canoeists are not a menace as there are no liveries.

A large portion of the South Branch affords pristine wilderness fishing as there is much state owned land, particularly within a 14 mile stretch known as the Mason Tract regulated by fly only restrictions. The lack of roads makes accessibility somewhat difficult and results in less fishing pressure, although the liveries in Roscommon dispense numberless convoys of canoes. Of the three branches, the South is most affected by spring runoff, as well as heavy rain showers when levels can rise dramatically. This branch also presents some wide areas where an angler can tack back and forth searching deeper channels.

How has the Au Sable become too clean? It appears a combination of factors, but mostly inspired by the over zealous tampering by environmentalists over the years. In the eyes of the fisherman this has resulted in the decline of the availability of the most prized, large sized brown trout. The sheer trout population itself has remained plentiful; however the range of browns in the eight to twelve inch class and, most noticeably, larger trout has tapered off considerably in the last 30 years.

Strange as it may seem, over zealous environmental cleansing is now looked upon as the major culprit in disrupting a vital link, in this instance aquatic vegetation, within the food chain that supports insect life. The resulting

reduction in insect population in turn means less aquatic food required to promote and sustain the growth of larger trout. In the overall effort to create a clean river system sewage and other contaminants were gradually curtailed on the Au Sable, and it is now believed the loss of nutrients inherent in sewage has led to a stunting of vegetation vital to a healthy insect population.

25 years ago saw the enactment of the federal Clean Water Act, and this legislation is what set in motion the goal to reduce or eliminate such sewage and other contaminants in our water systems. At that time the act was hailed as a step forward in the protection and enhancement of our cold water resources. Now it is being regarded as a step too far. Also, it is considered as being applied too stringently and universally without adjustment for regional variations. Prior to the enactment, sewage from Grayling, Roscommon, as well as seepage from the numerous septic tanks adjoining the private cabins entered the Au Sable system. During the years leading up to this period is when the river earned its reputation as an angler's paradise for leviathan trout. With a touch of hindsight it is now entertained that perhaps the cleansing fervour was implemented too vigorously and over succeeding years resulted in the loss of beneficial nutrients contained in the original contaminants. Typically, a parade of years has to wither on the vine before a spark of light focuses on a problem.

Also cited as a contributing factor in the decline of large trout is the on going practice of cutting and clearing away of fallen trees in order to remove obstacles to uninterrupted canoeing. With the working of the current, stream bed depressions scooped adjacent to a fallen tree provides excellent holding cover for trout, but is lost when a tree is removed.

In the same vein, over the years many trees have been cut down by property owners, seeking to enhance their river view. This action not only allows increased sunlight to impose a warming effect, but also eliminates nature's way of adding nutrients in the form of leaves falling into the river.

In the past, log structures have been placed in the river for added trout cover. With the passage of time many of these have become silted over losing their effectiveness. Others have been damaged or wood members dislodged by the continual canoe parade. In addition to their loss of value as trout cover their role as a catch basin for drifting leaves and insect larvae has been lost.

Having pinpointed the causes it now appears the authorities are going to embark on an extensive effort over the next few years to restore the Au Sable system to its former glory. Certain stretches of the three branches have been singled out for the reintroduction in a systematic manner of the very elements considered vital for trout growth. In a controlled fashion, trees and structures will be put into specially chosen areas for increased trout cover. Leaves will also be introduced, although understandably, not in amounts to rival nature. In a turnabout in thinking, fertilizers are under consideration and may be introduced in a controlled method at some point in the future. All told there is a rethinking in the direction that perhaps treating various areas in accordance with their individual needs is the better way rather than apply one rigid yardstick for all conditions.

Letter from America

by Frank Hursley

After various journeys to the environs of Portland, Oregon, which included fly fishing several of the fabled rivers, and upon exchanging opinions with members of the Flyfishers' Club of Oregon during their weekly luncheon in the Mallory Hotel, I came away feeling that we in Michigan experience fishing that is comparable to or perhaps a margin superior to that enjoyed by the Oregonians. This surprised me. After all, from reading the classic angling authors I had totally absorbed a rather romantic vision of Oregon rivers as being some of the finest found in the States. Unquestionably this is true. But then Michigan waters were unmentioned. My greater acquaintance with Michigan waters led me to take for granted just what we do enjoy here especially concerning our salmon, steelhead, and lake trout fishery. I realize now that some exciting and challenging fishing exists here on the local scene that could rival that found most anywhere.

Without question Oregon's natural beauty is magnificent and Michigan's pales by contrast. Rounding a bend of an Oregon river one's concentration on a drifting fly can be absolutely shattered by the imposing sight of a snow-capped mountain dominating the landscape. Rivers there are numerous and provide a variety of conditions. Roaring water charging over boulders or cascading down a gorge is an inspiring sight but also sounds loud warnings against wading too close. Even apparently quiet water must be suspect for it can mask a river bottom choked with highly slippery melon-sized rocks that defy over-zealous progress while manoeuvring to a choice position. I have also danced ungracefully across a flat bed of slick lava that I was attempting to use as a casting platform. Trekking along a bankside in search of an access point it is not unusual to encounter a fallen tree blocking the path. In Michigan this only poses a momentary halt and a high step over will gain the other side. In Oregon the girth of a prone tree trunk can exceed one's wader tops and require a jaunt completely around the length of the tree before being able to continue.

Oregon rivers are legendary and are noted for exceptional fishing, having become immortalized by writers from Kipling to Schwiebert. Various trout

species, Pacific salmon, steelhead, even a strain of summer run steelhead are there for anyone willing to endure the vigorous challenge that awaits them.

Michigan on the other hand cannot boast of a dramatic scene that would rival Oregon's and to date no snow capped mountain has risen on the horizon. Our northern terrain where trout are found is laced with gentle, rolling hills that give way to meandering valleys that are relaxing to be part of. And most rivers offer comfortable wading on gravel or sandy bottoms.

At one time brook trout and grayling were the only species native to northern streams. However, by the turn of the century grayling has become extinct due to the disastrous effect of lumbering when the rivers were used to float logs downstream resulting in the destruction of spawning beds. Also it was a period of unrestricted fishing and enormous amounts of grayling were shipped by barrel loads to grace hotel tables farther south.

Both brown and rainbow trout were introduced to Michigan waters. Even the prized steelhead was not a native here. They were introduced in the 1870's when biologists imported eggs from Oregon and planted them on an experimental basis. At that time it was not known if the fish would adapt to a freshwater environment. The effort was a great success, and it was found they followed the same cycle of reproduction as did their Western forefathers.

Over the years, along with the Pacific salmon and lake trout, the steelhead have provided exceptional fishing, whether offshore or inland within the rivers in which they spawn. I understand steelhead returning to spawn in Western waters do so at a more rapid rate, lessening the time spent in collecting offshore in open water as compared to the Great Lakes variety. In the Great Lakes, they tend to school up off shore for a period of time before entering the rivers and their accessibility has led to great flotillas of boats collecting each season in order to pursue these schooled fish by trolling large treble hook lures. These boaters form into a large circle around their prey like so many Hollywood Indians.

One fall season I fished the Platte River with my son Mickey and, upon being rewarded with a few trout, we reeled in and drove to the river's mouth and witnessed the most freakish scene associated with fishing that we have ever encountered. The shore line was crowded with people either watching the spectacle offshore or clustered in groups picnicking and admiring one another's catches. Debris was littered everywhere including beer cans. There were several rough hewn tables scattered about at which fish were skillfully cleaned for a price. Far out, the traditional circle of boats was bobbing in breaking waves. Dark silhouettes of the occupants huddled behind clusters of stout rods pointed obliquely from the stern of the boats. Mickey and I stared in amazement as two fellows, pushed from shore in a shallow draft row boat powered with an outboard motor. Not far from shore the waves were heavy and we could see them breaking over the bow showering the adventurers as the small boat struggled for headway. A spark of common sense must have surfaced for they came about gaining the beach drenched, but still in the land of the living.

My own experience with this style of fishing is limited, for only once was I exposed to boat fishing, and even then it was to oblige a cousin. This occurred at the bay off Petoskey on Lake Michigan. My cousin came fully equipped with boat and motor and he handed me a stout, glass rod mounted with a huge reel holding endless yards of a large diameter, steel line. The business end of the line held about a yard of steel spinners ending with a set of treble hooks. Once in position out in the bay all this shiny apparatus was slowly let out until it touched bottom and then was drawn back slightly to allow the hardware to flutter freely.

We took several circular passes around the bay before I actually did receive a deliberate thump that aroused my interest. I cranked feverishly, receiving little for this exhausting effort in the way of let's say, action, but from the heft I knew something enormous, dead or alive, was on the tether end. Eventually, the fish made its appearance surfacing in its grand silvery colour and I was ecstatic. Nonetheless after cranking in this endless, steel line my arms were too numb to render a proper salute.

For me, from then on only fly fishing the rivers for steelhead or salmon became the style. Unfortunately, by the time these fish decide to enter the rivers, their runs can coincide with some of the bitterest cold weather imaginable but even so, it is not necessarily the water temperature that seems so frigid, it is the air temperature operating on that portion of the body exposed above the water.

It was late November one year when another chap and I motored north to chase the salmon up and down the Ocqueoc River which flows into Lake Huron near the tip of the Lower Peninsula. The day was bitterly cold when we arrived and a constant roar of wind and the sound of breakers came from the not far distant big lake. Adding to the misery, we were not at the river more than five minutes when the other chap tumbled in head first off the bank. Drenched and quivering like a jello mold he dashed back to the motel at all speed to unfreeze his stalled circulation. What with more time spent amidst the warmth of our room we never did see a salmon that weekend.

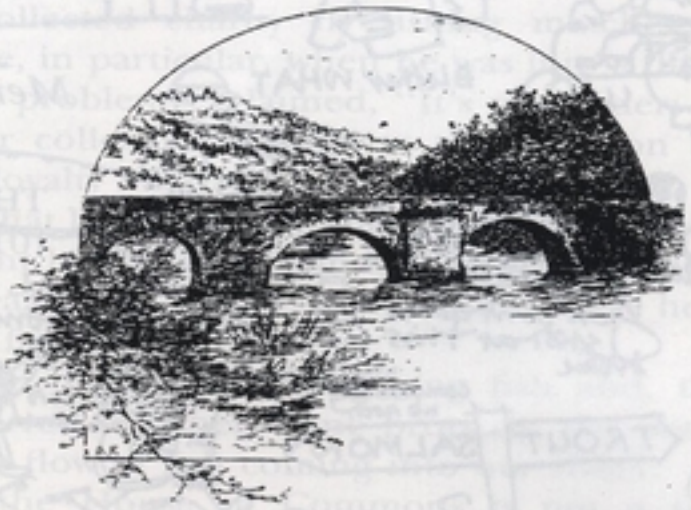
I am uncertain if that experience exceeds the norm for salmon or steelhead fishing in our locale, but one March seven of us drove to the Pere Marquette River on the Lake Michigan side of the state to confront the steelhead rumoured to be collecting there. Of the seven, three fell in while fighting a fish and had to be escorted back to the cabin for thawing. I felt fortunate to have placed a six pounder on the bank without having upended myself.

As for salmon, after a number of encounters I have as yet to land my first. There was one hefty salmon that aroused hope of seeing him on the bank when he decided the issue on his terms. In a sudden burst he dashed off taking line into the backing and charged round a bend. With the twang of a snapped guitar string the backing parted and that was the last of an entire line and fish.

Considering the variety of fish available, whether trout, salmon, or steelhead and the congenial surroundings, I believe enough exciting sport can be had right here within the old, home State.

Letter From America

by Frank Hursley



I like to persuade myself that the lopsided dry flies that I concoct are largely a result of the unconventional shape of the tying room in which they are conceived. I presume most tiers create their neatly tooled feather and wool creations within a room that is either square or rectangular, both geometric configurations conducive to symmetrical achievement. Sufficient room for manoeuvrability and final tweaking is a must. On the other hand my tying room is triangular in shape almost resembling, if you will, an oversized wedge of mince pie...Movement is a mite snug as the crowding in of the wall on my right elbow dictates some tricky hand manipulation. After much thought I have concluded this accounts for my dries listing to starboard during that crucial moment of free drift on a quiet surface. Even so, I hasten to report that not all trout have turned away in dismay after a quizzical inspection for I have found that some few cannot resist toying with something out of the ordinary.

As for my wet flies, of late, I have foresworn wrestling with matched duck quill wings trying to achieve that elusive degree of symmetry. Instead, I now short cut the winging operation and at the same time have reduced frustration by resorting to tying downwing, modest clumps of lemon wood duck resulting in a wing that is soft, pliable, and suggests lifelike motion. The patterns that I bastardize most often are two old favourites, both classics: the Lead Wing Coachman and the Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear. I do not claim originality for this method as my only intent has been to relieve the tension of clumsy fingers. This is similar to adopting the over-40 grip on the old putter.

My triangular tying room by the way was installed long before we moved into this house over 30 years ago. I learned the previous owner had it constructed by running an outside wall between two jutting corners. The result was a singular room that allowed his wife happy moments while beaming at African violets as they unfolded in bloom from special growing trays lighted

by ultra violet lights. I am uncertain if that housewife got as emotional over her African violets as I over my fur and feathers.

Another opportunity to test one of these home breed of wet flies came when the family rented sight unseen, a former one room, clapboard 1880's schoolhouse located on Lake Michigan near Harbor Springs. Upon our arrival I felt a measure of misgiving that we made our booking without a prior visit, but that would have required a 240 mile jaunt north. In the yard a lawn mower had been guided along the easiest path leaving knee high grass hugging the building and a pair of shiny garbage cans next the stoop hardly contributed a pleasing scene. The agreeable sound of breaking waves on the beach could be heard however. Any hope of seeing the lake was blocked by a stand of pine trees.

Indoors a bedroom had been added on the ground floor, and a loft above provided an additional sleeping area. A profusion of spider webs helped hold the walls in place and an extraordinarily thin rug betrayed lumps of sand collected beneath indicating a Hoover seldom crossed the threshold.

The next morning I arose early while the others were still abed and, from experience, I knew they would continue to be so for several hours more. As I was anxious to fish the Maple River once more and to allow my altered flies another opportunity to prove their mettle, I had my gear in the car in short order. Following the shore road along Lake Michigan for a few miles allowed an early morning view of almost calm like, gentle rollers as they carved broad scallops in the sand. Turning inland not many miles brought me to the bridge over the Maple. Access to Michigan rivers is relatively easy and uncomplicated and in most cases can be had where a bridge crosses a river. As yet there was no fly activity other than that represented by the mosquitoes which had outflanked me on the bridge.

With no surface activity it was an opportune time to make an offering of a Hare's Ear with the lemon wood duck wing. I worked my way upstream along the near bank then reversed to cast along the opposite side.

The water was considerably higher than it had been the previous time here and made wading a rather tricky affair, especially due to an occasional tangle of logs that required more deft footwork than a dance floor. The darker areas I could not see into I skirted completely, hugging the shallows next the bank. So far I had not received a single welcoming nod from any trout.

Regardless, it was a lovely morning to be astream for the air still held that typical early morning freshness and the sun had not topped the trees on my bank. Across, the opposite bank gave way to a far rising clearing reaching high up to an old, white farmhouse of noble proportions, sitting atop the hill and defended by a weathered, beamed fence. Extending along the bank itself tall, waving grass leaned over toward the water and I thought how August would be a fine time to cast a Michigan hopper fly letting it drift close in like a fallen natural.

I gradually approached a long, dark stretch of placid water that not only signalled greater depth but also suggested a likely hold for trout. As yet my plodding casts had produced not the slightest interest, but this run appeared

deeper than the others and called for a sunken fly. Normally I detest casting with split shot, but time was running on and a compromise became the order of the day. I pinched on a small piece of shot about 18 inches up next to a leader knot and began casting, watching embarrassed as the shot splat noisily into the dark surface. I held the rod tip high in order to keep most of the line off the water, allowing the shot full sway in sinking the leader and fly. At first there was nothing, but when a couple of strong tugs announced there was life in these waters, I knew that lemon wood duck was committed to its assignment and demonstrated potential. At that moment I thought it best to back away in order to rest the pool before making any more splashy casts.

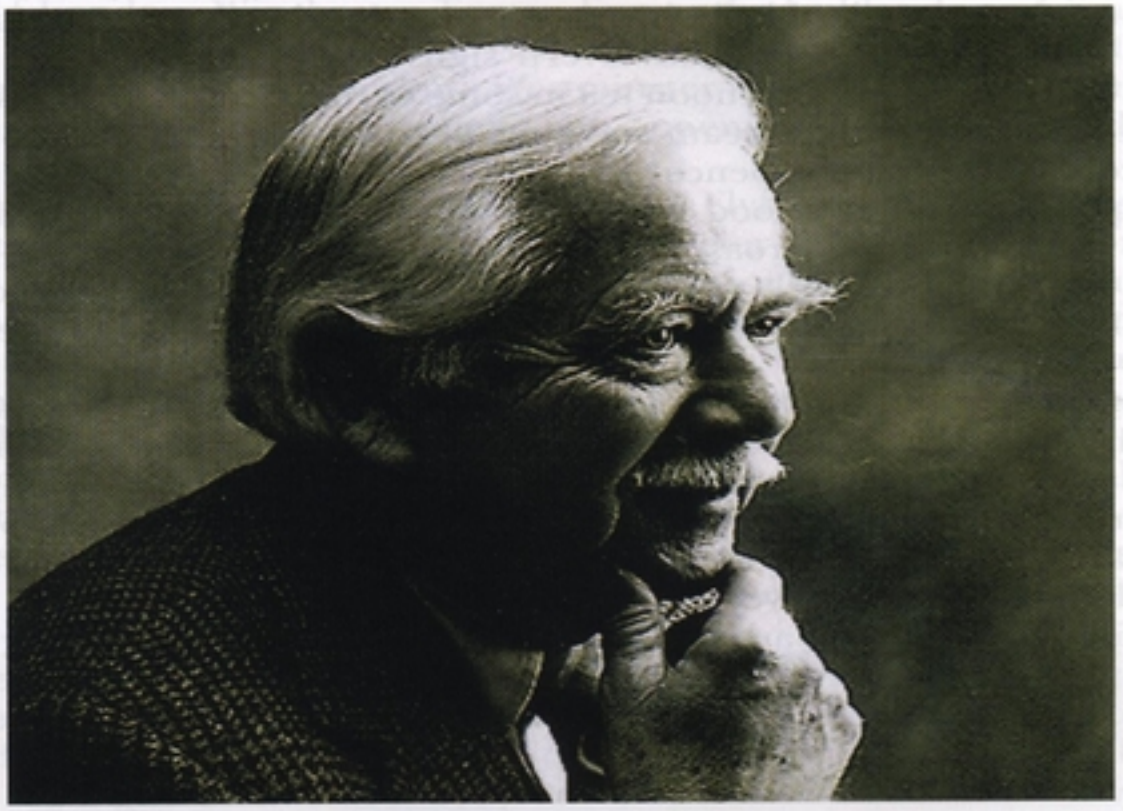
I concentrated on one area of my pool, and laid in several casts before two quizzical browns came in quick succession; then, as usual, all went quiet. Due to the deeper water ahead I could not proceed further. Nevertheless, my brace of browns suggested perhaps I will not have to squirm at the prospect of having to wing with duck quills henceforth.

My mind was now on lunch and I hastened back to the schoolhouse. When I arrived, however, I wondered if I was in the right place for everyone was in a frenzied state of utter confusion. Luggage was being hastily packed and stacked at the door. I overheard one daughter having an emotional phone conversation pleading with someone about arranging lodging elsewhere for the balance of the week.

Amidst the ongoing turmoil, a passing family member paused long enough to kindly inform me as to what on earth was taking place. It appears that the upper storey not only housed half my family but also a swarm of bats that had become quite agitated during the dark hours of night, and proceeded to swoop through the bedrooms. Looking back, I am uncertain as to which occupants, them or us, made the speediest withdrawal.

Letter From America

by Franklin McColl Hursley, Jr.



Franklin McColl Hursley, Jr (1925-2008)

Frank Hursley died in March 2008. For many years through the late-1970s and the 1980s, and with wit, wisdom and perception, he wrote the *Journal's* 'Letter from America'. He took great pride in his membership of The Flyfishers' but only visited the UK once, in the early summer of 1985, with his wife, Lois. That visit was a 60th birthday present from their children. On returning to the United States, Frank wrote to thank them. Robert Berles, Frank's letter-writing successor, has most graciously offered to stand aside for this one issue so that we may publish an edited version of that letter – Frank's final 'Letter from America'.

Dear Duncan,

Mom and I cannot thank you enough for helping to make a lifetime dream come true. I never thought we would reach England, but we did.

We found there all that we expected. A magic isle that allowed a step back in time. London is magnificent, a masculine city with entire blocks of marvellous buildings. Everywhere there are statues of former statesmen and

military figures, crowds of rushing people, double-decker buses and an endless parade of taxi cabs. Wherever you look there is something to delight the eye.

The countryside contrasted strongly with the bustle of London. In Devon there are tiny villages of thatch-roofed cottages surrounded by miles of lush green meadows laced with hedgerows separating herds of grazing sheep. Quaint inns hung with painted tavern signs are the focal points of each village. We stopped for afternoon tea in some of them, a ritual English to the core. Scones, thick butter, cream and jams were served along with pots of hot tea or coffee, all for a few pence.

The quality of English food runs counter to its reputation. Wherever we settled, we were offered roast beef with Yorkshire pudding, roast lamb, a variety of fish and thick slices of Cumberland ham. Dollops of thick Devonshire cream were served on desserts ranging from strawberries to wedges of apple pie.

For weeks before our departure I prepared by making a list of specialty shops the pedigrees of which exceeded 150 years and which bore the Royal Warrant. Amongst them were The House of Hardy, a fly fishing shop; Hatchards, the oldest bookseller in London; Locks the hatters who provided headgear for the Duke of Wellington; and Swaine, Adeney, Brigg & Sons, umbrella makers and purveyors of all manner of leather goods.

The first day after our arrival found me at Swaine, Adeney, Brigg & Sons to be fitted for my very English umbrella. Show cases of lovely items just beckoned to be fondled, but I passed directly to the umbrellas. There they were all neatly racked in a lengthy display with an untold variety of handles. A nattily dressed shop assistant stood nearby without intruding. Such was the variety offered that he soon senses my perplexity and came to my rescue.

"Will your choice be for town or country?" he asked.

"Town", I said

That ruled out various knobbly, cherrywood handles as well as others of a distinctly rough texture.

"Perhaps this would interest you", he said withdrawing a leather handled model. I tried its balance and struck a 'town pose' before handing it back. "I think plain wood is really what I had in mind," I said.

He reached for another, explaining that it was made of Malacca. I did not know what Malacca was or where it came from, but the name had a nice ring to it, a reminder of Empire. I decided this was the one for me. I assumed we had completed our little ritual of trial and error. Not so. We then entered upon the next phase, to be fitted for length.

That requirement settled, he said "Will it be nylon or silk? Silk does run at twice the price." "Nylon," I replied quickly. "Single piece shaft or two pieces?" I settled on two piece construction. "Silver band or gold plated?" he asked. "Gold," I said without hesitation, considering gold a good match for any forthcoming gold fillings.

With that, the selection was completed I started for my wallet. I was premature. He proceeded to unfurl the umbrella, shaking the folds loose,

and led me through the step by step procedure for the proper rolling of an umbrella after use.

After that finale we had reached the moment for bringing forth the wallet. The transaction completed, I left, feeling very smart.

From that day on I proceeded to tap and swagger my way through the streets of London, Winchester, Exeter, Exmouth, Ambleside and Edinburgh without a care in the world. I carried the brolly on a boat up the Thames, through the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, pubs, fish and chip shops, ruined abbeys and trains, only opening it when forced to by circumstances.

A simply smashing evening was had at The Flyfishers' Club on Tuesday of the first week. Dinner was prearranged by Peter Lapsley, the editor of the *Journal*, who thoughtfully included the Husteds. We met in the club room which has a fireplace at each end wall and is well furnished with comfortable leather armchairs. Artifacts associated with fly fishing adorn the walls, and the club has the largest angling library in the British Isles, many of the books having been written by members.

After cocktails in the club room, we moved to the dining room. At the table each setting had name cards arranging the seating. Sir Edwin Arrowsmith, the President, sat at the head of the table. In the course of the evening we learned that he had been a former governor of the Falkland Islands for eight

On the Itchen at Martyr Worthy. Just being there and having a moment on this legendary river meant so much.

years and that he is an emissary for the Queen Mother. When she is engaged, Sir Edwin meets arriving dignitaries in her name. Mom sat on his right. Paul Windle-Taylor, the club librarian and his wife were there, as well as Peter and a chap who lived in a chateau in France. It was a sparking evening no doubt helped along by the fact that the wine glasses were never allowed to empty, and it melted away much too quickly.

Peter Lapsley very kindly arranged a day's fishing for me at Martyr Worthy on the River Itchen near Winchester - the river where many of the traditions of fly fishing originated. At the appointed hour I was picked up from the Royal Hotel by Ron Holloway, the river keeper. In Wellingtons, and with a tweed fishing hat and great, curly mutton-chop whiskers, I knew he was my man the moment he crossed the threshold. By the river, I was furnished with similar boots and a cane rod of Ron's own making. To honour tradition, I wore my new tweed hat from Locks, my tweed sportcoat and my Club tie.

The style of fishing was also prescribed by tradition. I fished from the bank, no wading, only cast upstream, dry fly only and only cast to a rising fish. If there are no fish rising you wait until they do. With great good fortune, I brought one trout to the bank and had rises from several others which I failed to hook. Ron stayed with me the entire time to change flies and offer advice. After a few hours, he drove me to the station to meet Mom and Husteds as we were going on to Exeter. The opportunity to fish the Itchen at Martyr Worthy was a treasured experience, a rare privilege, and will long be remembered. Whether I landed a fish or not really did not matter. It was just being there and having a moment on this legendary river that meant so much.

You cannot imagine how much we enjoyed England and Scotland. Now at home, we constantly think back to a wonderful experience. My umbrella rests in a corner of the parlor just waiting to tap the streets of London once more.

We thank you so much for turning our dream into reality.

Lots of love,
Mom & Dad