

The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing



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What We Do in the Summers

Timothy Achor-Hoch



The editor on the West Branch of the Ausable sometime early this century.

FISH, OF COURSE. Hike. Swim. Mess about in boats. Apply sunscreen and bug juice. Treat burns and bites.

Seethe with resentment that the two-months-off thing was over by high school graduation.

Play outside. Stay inside and watch professionals play outside.

Last summer at AMFF's fly-fishing festival, inside, I got to listen to former MLB pitchers Jim Kaat and Jim Beattie compare baseball and fly fishing. Several AMFFers enjoyed this talk so much that we collectively twisted Beattie's arm to write down some of his thoughts. (Like we could *ever* twist that guy's arm, individually or collectively. He's on our board of trustees, though, and he generously agreed to do it.) For an entertaining and unusual fly-fishing origin story, as well as some thoughts on the sports' similarities and differences, check out "Casts and Fastballs" on page 2.

We wanted to run Beattie's baseball story with this baseball-adjacent one. Back in 2005, we published a piece by John Feldenzer about the friendship between Ted Williams and Bobby Doerr and their relationship with bamboo fly-rod maker Paul Young. In this issue, Feldenzer is back with more about the Williams-Young friendship, including several Florida Keys bonefishing trips that led to the development of Young's parabolic saltwater rod series. "Paul Young, Ted Williams, and the

Parabolic Bonefish Rods" starts on page 4.

For many years, summer for me meant a week or so in the Adirondacks, during which I would certainly be fishing the West Branch of the Ausable. That fact of my life is among multiple reasons I enjoyed Chris Pibus's "The Sun upon the Highmost Hill" (page 17), a coming-of-age story that doubles as a memorial to a friend. As I read it, I stomped and splashed my way through my old stomping/splashing grounds alongside these two adventurers, and now it's a goal of mine to go back and find that plaque.

The West Branch of the Ausable just happens to be David Bush's favorite river, and he practically lives right next to it. Bush is our guest curator for the exhibit *Louis Rhead: Angler, Artist, Author*, and he'll be on hand for its October opening. In this issue's Gallery, Bush provides a primer on Rhead, beginning on page 21.

By October, we'll be slowly moving inside again, and that's where you'll find new exhibits and much of the action during our Festival and Open House Weekend. Come eat and drink with us on Friday night, and enjoy presentations, workshops, demonstrations, and tours on Saturday. Turn to the inside back cover of this issue for more details. We'd love to see you there.

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The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing

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ON THE COVER: *Paul H. Young contemplating the taper of one of his parabolic trout rods, circa 1956. Photo courtesy of Bob Summers, who received it from Mrs. Martha Marie Young, circa 1992.*

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Casts and Fastballs

by Jim Beattie

Rick Griffith



The author discussing fly fishing and baseball with National Baseball Hall of Famer Jim Kaat (right) at last year's Fly-Fishing Festival.

BEFORE A SMALL AUDIENCE at AMFF's Fly-Fishing Festival last August, Hall-of-Fame pitcher Jim Kaat (my former Yankee teammate) and I were charged with discussing possible similarities between fly fishing and baseball.

Jim is an expert and knowledgeable historian when it comes to baseball (and a terrific golfer who at the age of seventy-five shot his age both right- and left-handed!), but he readily admitted that after a fly-fishing lesson, he didn't quite take to it like his wife, Margie, did. Margie, who joins me on the board of the American Museum of Fly Fishing, is a passionate fly fisher and can be found on Vermont's Battenkill almost every day of the season. The "Trout Lady," as she is known around Manchester, has become a local guide, sharing her enthusiasm with clients who are often new to the sport.

How baseball and fly fishing may be similar was not something to which I had ever given a great deal of thought. For me, its similarity was simple: I love baseball, and I love fly fishing. Baseball can certainly be more stressful and fishing relaxing, but both demand one's total attention. Facing the audience that afternoon, I gave a short answer that I felt reflected some of my ideas, but in retrospect, I know it didn't go far enough.

For both sports, the physical action and the strategy are important. The fundamentals of a repeatable action are essen-

tial. When pitching or casting, power is often an asset in getting the job done. Touch and feel are more crucial in other, more subtle situations. A rookie needs to spend time learning the basics, whether it's the windup and delivery, which began for me before I can remember, or casting a fly, a new challenge I confronted when I was twenty-eight.

"Anyone wanna learn to fly fish?"

In 1983, that question hung over the Seattle Mariners training room as a group of pitchers—including me—were in various stages of pregame treatments: ice packs, heat packs, shoulder stretches, and arm massages. This question was not completely out of the blue as the training room décor, in addition to the usual medical charts and shoulder-socket models, had a collection of taxidermy (trout and ducks) displayed on the walls. It was obvious that Rick, our head trainer, hired just before the season began, loved the outdoors. He was an avid fly fisher who wanted to share his enthusiasm for the sport with his teammates. The five of us all answered, "Yeah!" (or maybe something more coarsely emphatic!).

The next week Rick brought in a couple of fly rods and told us we could start lessons that night after the game on the Kingdome field. The Kingdome had an artificial turf surface

that was likely one of the first turf products made. It was not the field turf of today, which has individual blades of green plastic grass that carry some characteristics of sod. Our turf often demonstrated its uniquely ungrasslike qualities when a fly ball not caught by an outfielder would bounce over his head, then bounce to the wall with the outfielder in chase. It was more like a green parking lot, which was helpful to us that night, as there was nothing on which to snag the fly line or fly.

After the game, the “casting” students changed into street clothes and had a few beers while we waited for Rick to attend to postgame treatments on our teammates. A quiet ballpark after the crowd is gone has a wonderful peace to it. Because it was a turf field, there was very little the grounds crew needed to do, but picking up the popcorn, hot dog, and beer trash took a while for the stadium cleanup, so the lights were left on.

Given the few beers each of us may have had, we were not the easiest students to bring to attention, but eventually we lined up along a foul line. With fly rod in hand, Rick went through some fundamentals of casting, which we professional athletes could understand. As we were all pitchers (I don’t really know why no position players showed up, but they were a different bunch than our pitching staff), we figured casting a fly rod could be compared to the feel of a windup and pitching motion.

As most of us were spinning-rod fishermen growing up, we started casting or “throwing” the sprig of yarn on the end of our lines with the usual poor results. My memory says we improved quickly, but our long day at the ballpark (and the beers) likely affected our progress. Eventually, after a few lessons, we moved on to casting to targets from 20 or 30 feet away: first, second, or third base. It took a while for each of us to get the feel for landing the yarn on the base—we were pitchers who prided ourselves on hitting the low-and-away corner of home plate with a 96-mph fastball from 60 feet away. It was a humbling experience.

After taking our casting lessons to several small streams around Seattle (catching more trees than fish), as well as the Yakima River in eastern Washington, a few of us were invited to fish with Rick in Montana and Idaho after the season ended in October. For me, this proved to be my true initiation into fly fishing, but it was still just a beginning. I had much to learn and experience about my new underwater “opponents.” Luckily Rick was, and still is, a patient teacher.

Readers of this journal understand the lessons we learn from various stream conditions and fish. As with pitching, I needed to develop casting fundamentals, which would lead to the necessary improvement of my mental approach to fishing. Thus armed, I could have more success on the water.

The mental approaches to fly fishing and pitching are very much alike. When engaged in either sport, your mind is totally consumed, putting problems back of mind. I say that with the caveat that you cannot think of anything else when you are pitching if you are in the zone. If you hear the beer vendors or the fans yelling at you on the mound, you are not in the zone. When your focus lets you ignore the noise and be in the moment, you are at your best. This is also true for fly fishing. Who hasn’t let their mind wander, making you a tick late on a strike and losing a fish or getting your fly caught in the trees behind you?

Just as a fly fisher needs to have a plan before he or she hits the water and starts casting, a pitcher has a game plan to manage pitching to a lineup. A pitcher understands which hitters in the lineup are paid to drive in runs and which ones are “table setters,” whose job it is to get on base and let the big bats drive them in. With men on base and in scoring position, I knew which hitters with whom to be aggressive and which to

pitch to carefully. My history of success (or failure) with a hitter also factored into my strategy.

When I played in the 1970s and ’80s, my goal as a starting pitcher was to pitch a complete game, a rare feat in today’s baseball. To accomplish this, I recognized that I would need to face each batter in the opposing lineup four or five times. Therefore, in my back pocket I kept a pitch or location of a pitch in the strike zone for when I really needed it: when men were in scoring position or late in the game.

This strategy was particularly important late in the game because after facing a hitter three or four times and having thrown 100-plus pitches, my arm would be a bit tired and my “stuff” not as sharp. The curve or slider might not have the same quick break compared with earlier innings when I was strong. Starting pitchers of my era often threw more than 100 pitches; my complete game in the 1978 World Series was accomplished with 147 pitches. No problem since I had all winter to rest!

Likewise, a game plan for a fly fisher needs to consider several strategies before wetting a line. As he approaches the river, the trout fisherman will scan the water before getting too close and get an idea what spot in or out of the water will give him the best chance to effectively cast to where a fish may be holding. Then he must consider what type of cast will present the best drift. Unlike baseball, there is no saving a “best” cast for later, because by then the trout may be put down.

As I organized my thoughts around the similarities of these two sports, I discovered for myself that they are quite alike in their emphases on fundamentals and strategy. Similar to the one-on-one battle between a pitcher and a hitter, sometimes we fool the fish and sometimes we don’t, but on the river at least, we get to decide when we leave the game!



Eric Copenhaver



The author and brown trout on the Madison River between the lakes a decade or so ago.

Paul Young, Ted Williams, and the Parabolic Bonefish Rods

by John A. Feldenzer

IT HAS BEEN twenty-one years since I documented the friendship between Boston Red Sox Baseball Hall of Fame greats Ted Williams and Bobby Doerr, and their relationship with the famous Michigan bamboo fly-rod maker and tackle merchant Paul Young.¹ Williams passed away in 2002 and Doerr in 2017.^{2,3} In this article, I describe the Williams-Young friendship and several Florida Keys bonefishing trips (1949–1951) that led to the development of Paul Young’s parabolic saltwater rod series and a particular rod, the Para 19. I also clarify statements and correct errors in my 2005 article.

WHAT IS PARABOLIC?

To more fully appreciate Paul Young and his parabolic rods, one must have a concept of what *parabolic* means. Most bamboo fly-rod aficionados have considered the origin of the bamboo parabolic fly taper and are aware of the Charles Ritz/Paul H. Young controversy outlined below. Robert Golder—creator/sustainer of the Paul H. Young Rod Database (www.phydatabase.com/) and an expert on the company’s history—recently made me aware that this origin story is much more complicated than previously thought and probably occurred much earlier. Genio C. Scott, for example, in his *Fishing in American Waters*, wrote about tapers: “The split bamboo rod is much lighter, and full as desirable. . . . I prefer a single action rod to the one of double action or a ‘kick in the handle,’ though the latter may send a fly farther, and deliver it more gracefully, but it lacks the snap of the single action to strike.”⁴

This “double action” is well defined in an online post titled “1860’s parabolic rod origins?” by Robert Golder, which appeared on the Classic Fly Rod Forum in 2008.⁵ In the ensuing discussion, angling historian and rod maker Jeff Hatton traced “double action” tapers back even earlier, to the 1700s, as seen in the CastleConnell greenheart rods from Ireland. “Parabolic” or “double action” has been known for centuries; it just wasn’t *called* parabolic. It was the wise King Solomon who said, “There is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, ‘See, this is new?’ It has been already, in the ages before us” (Ecclesiastes 1:9–10, *Holy Bible* [Revised Standard Version]).

A brief review of the modern history of parabolic bamboo rod development is helpful. The hotelier and avid fly fisherman Charles Ritz began working with split bamboo in 1917. Ernest Schwiebert, author and bamboo fly-rod aficionado, reports that these new radical tapers were developed empirically by Ritz and describes the famous bicycle accident that resulted in the “half-crippled Pezon et Michel rod,” the ancestor to the semi-parabolic taper.⁶

Ritz—in collaboration with fly-fishing icon and author of the *Solunar Theory* John Alden Knight—later developed the “parabolic” fly-rod taper and coined the term *parabolic* in 1938. Knight asserts that this was the first use of *parabolic* to describe a fly-rod taper, but the two did not attempt to trademark the term. Knight claimed that he and Ritz had been working on the taper independently and said, “We did give all of our data to Jim Payne and authorized him to

make use of both the data and the name . . . and the first series of parabolic fly rods were built by Jim Payne in his factory at Highland Mills, N.Y.”⁷ Knight correctly asserted:

[O]ne distinct disadvantage to true parabolic design—it places far too high a premium on correct timing. . . . After we had tested Jim Payne’s experimental parabolic rod, we concluded that the design should be modified in order to turn out satisfactory commercial models. . . . Accordingly, the semi-parabolic taper was developed. While this embodies the parabolic principle, the taper is modified so that absolute timing is not required of the user. This modification also serves to eliminate the top-heavy feel of a true parabolic. . . . So far as I know, there are three rod makers in America who understand parabolic design and who turn out good parabolic rods—or, to be accurate, semi-parabolic rods.⁸

Knight did not identify these three parabolic rod makers. He did summarize the working relationship he’d had with Charles Ritz since 1936 and credited Jim Payne, the master bamboo rod builder, in the 1951 Payne catalog: “He [Payne] set up the first American rod in the true parabolic action. This rod, like Ritz’s rod, demanded perfect timing, but it was a surprising tool for angling. Soon, however, Mr. Payne modified the original patterns and produced a rod more acceptable for general use and for which, I understand, there is an ever-increasing demand.”⁹ On page 38 of that catalog, Payne described his two parabolic rod offerings and claimed, “These rods have rapidly gained in favor since we made the

first American true parabolic in 1936.” But Hoagy B. Carmichael uncovered an earlier mention of their use of the term. In his book *8 by Carmichael*, he describes the 1932 Payne catalog *fishing?* (a green cover with an illustration of a little boy fishing). Carmichael noted, “This version . . . included the first mention of a ‘parabolic’ rod, announcing one model only in the 7’9” length.”¹⁰ The rod was a two-piece trout model at 4½ ounces (Figure 1).

Knight gave an excellent definition of parabolic action in the 1951 catalog.

Parabolic action means literally this: the working portion of the rod is the lower one-third, next to the grip. The middle one-third acts as a lever to deliver the power created by the lower rod, while the top one-third imparts the power to the line. The upper third and lower third do most of the bending during the cast. The middle third bends very little since it functions as a lever.¹¹

Knight’s 1951 definition of parabolic action has withstood the test of time. Seventy-five years later it is still, in my opinion, the best description.

In 1927, Ritz became a technical advisor to the French tackle manufacturer Pezon et Michel. There he worked in close collaboration with the casting champion of the world, Pierre Creusevaut, to develop

their methods of casting trials and perfect the prototypes.¹² In his autobiography, *A Fly Fisher’s Life*, Ritz reflected on the term *parabolic*.

This is the action which I have called “parabolic,” though the term is only a figure of speech, and the curve of the rod has absolutely nothing to do with a parabola. This name used commercially dates from 1937. Since then, we have been researching into methods of increasing the suppleness still further without diminishing the strength. After many failures we finally succeeded, in 1949, in achieving a series of six different models, called Super Parabolic P. P. P. (Progressive Pendulate Power).¹³

These parabolic rods were reportedly well received.¹⁴

The Ritz-Knight-Payne effort resulted in a more precise definition of parabolic action and the term *parabolic* itself. Young, in the late 1940s, would further advance the concept of parabolic action in his own way.

YOUNG’S “EXPERIMENTAL ACTIONS”

Paul Holden Young (1890–1960), an avid fly fisherman, started as a taxidermist and

then opened his own fishing tackle store, Paul H. Young Co. Fine Fishing Tackle (hereafter referred to as PHY Co.), on Grand River Avenue in Detroit in 1924.

In 1927, PHY Co. offered its first catalog advertising fishing tackle for sale.¹⁵ The catalogs were called *More Fishing Less Fussing* and were issued most years through the 1930s with bound editions taking a pause in 1941. During the war, PHY Co. issued flyers; in 1948, the bound and dated catalogs returned.¹⁶

As early as 1976, bamboo rod dealer Len Codella and Ernest Schwiebert described Paul Young as “a paradox among rod-builders,” claiming that “he possessed an intuitive knowledge of actions and rod tapers, and began his rod building career by modifying the wet fly actions then in fashion. Young was an innovator—a creator. He cared little for how his rods looked and was constantly experimenting with new techniques, glues and finishes. He was constantly seeking to reduce the power to weight ratios in his rods.”¹⁷

During the 1920s, Young had rod blanks made to his specifications by both Heddon and South Bend, and he began assembling rods using other manufacturers’ components.¹⁸ Young wrote, “[F]rom 1938 to 1942 I assembled good numbers of fly rods here of So. Bend,

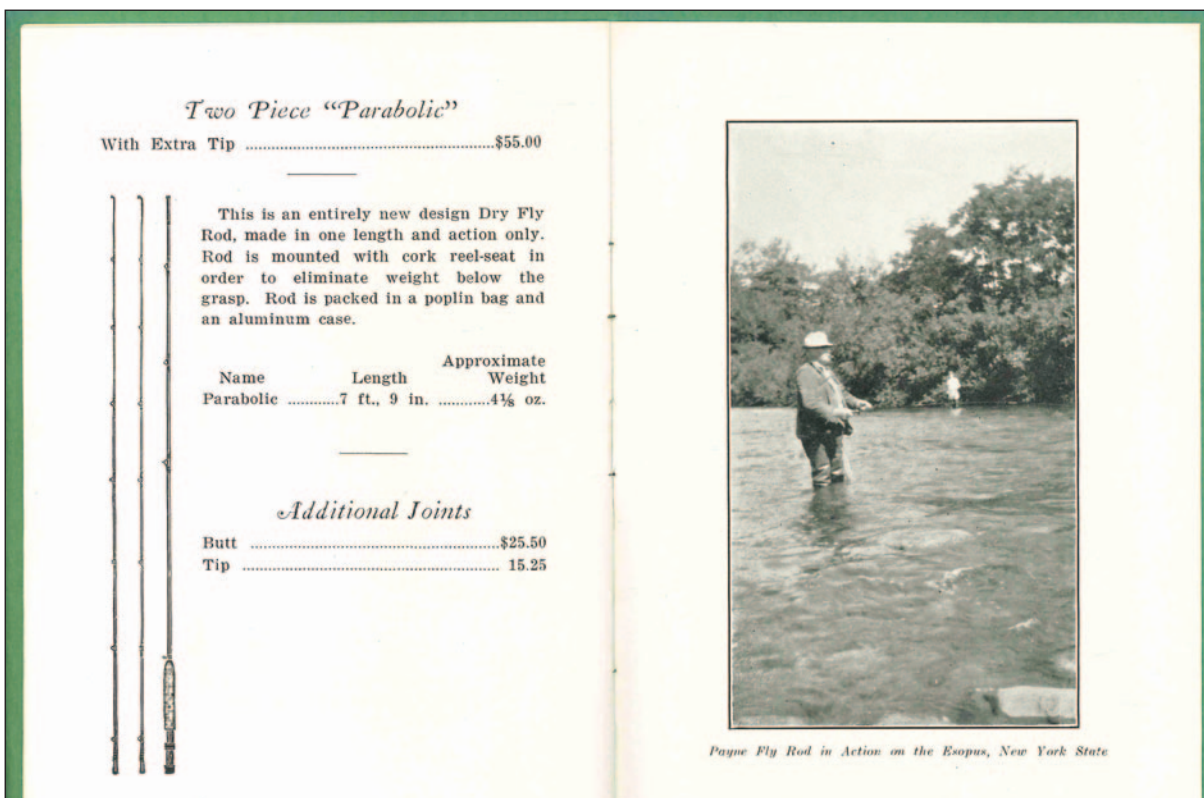


Figure 1. The undated circa 1932 E. F. Payne Rod Co. catalog includes the first mention of a “parabolic” fly rod for sale. This catalog, previously owned by Hoagy B. Carmichael, is now in the Anthony J. Magardino Collection. Photo by Anthony J. Magardino with permission.



Figure 2. The undated More Fishing Less Fussing Paul H. Young Company catalog covers. Left to right: 1951, circa 1952, circa 1955. Photo by Robert Golder with permission.

Edwards, Heddon and other sticks, making my own grips.¹⁹

Young's early assembled PHY Co.-labeled dry-fly rods included Prosperity, Ace, and PHY Co. Dry Fly Special. Not all anglers were happy with these early, preparabolic PHY Co.-assembled rods. Fly-fishing author Harmon Henkin describes his disappointment with an early PHY Co. Dry Fly Special purchased many years after it had been made up from Heddon blanks.²⁰ PHY Co. sold rods by other rod makers as well, including Dickerson, Payne, F. E. Thomas, Granger, and Edwards.²¹ The shop also performed many fly-rod repairs, restorations, and alterations.

In 1934, Young published *Making and Using the Dry Fly*. In a chapter titled "Casting and Tackle," Young's very early thoughts on tapers are expressed; he is clearly experimenting with rod actions. He describes a "slow rod" or "weeping willow"-type taper that:

... is rapidly being replaced by more modern rods ... such a rod may be cut down; a 9-foot rod may be cut to 8½ or 8 foot 3 inches and become a very fine dry fly rod. A rod which has a reputable maker's name on it is usually of excellent material and workmanship, even if of the wrong design, and is worth remodeling (emphasis added).

One of the best casters it has been my pleasure to know uses a rod made up of pieces of three different rods. *My repair shop remodels many whippy rods each season* (emphasis added). . . . Compare two rods of the same length and weight, one of which is "soft" slow action (built with a straight taper throughout its length), the other thickened up in the butt and part of the middle section, but thinned down to a rapid taper throughout its upper one-third.²²

According to PHY Co. rod expert Bob Summers, who learned how to make bamboo rods under Paul's direction in the PHY Co. Detroit shop in the 1950s, Young did not "cut his own cane" until the 1940s.²³ Young confirms this fact: "After procrastinating for near 20 years we have finally kicked the traces and started making rods from scratch."²⁴ Around 1940, PHY Co. began an association with former General Motors engineer August ("Gus") Pernack. Pernack, who owned Applied Industries, set up the PHY Co. milling machine and reel-seat and ferrule-making capability.²⁵ Paul Young's son Jack, who had been learning rod making in the shop in the 1930s, joined in the rod making full time after serving in the Marine Corps during World War II.²⁶

Paul H. Young evolved from an assembler and remodeler to a rod

builder and continued to experiment. Author and bamboo rod devotee Martin Keane describes the era of Young's famous flame finish as "a circle of blue gas-fired flame, concentrated on the fast-moving whole culm under controlled conditions," which resulted in a "skillful tempering that draws the maximum strength-to-weight ratio possible for Tonkin cane."²⁷

The postwar 1940s demonstrated Young's rapid innovation in rod tapers. His early interest in the action and tapers of bamboo fly rods flourished as he experimented with 8- and 8½-foot lengths of his own cane, building his first rods from scratch in 1946. Art Neumann, a cofounding father of Trout Unlimited and the Wanigas Rod Company, reflected on Young's early experimental rods: "Paul didn't know what to call those rods until John Alden Knight wrote about parabolic actions a dozen years later. He called his first parabolics 'experimental actions'—but he was playing with parabolic-type actions years before the famous bicycle accident in Paris that led to the Ritz Parabolics."²⁸

Schwiebert contends that "Paul Young was perhaps the most experimental craftsman in the history of the split-cane rod."²⁹ Keane states, "During these early years, Paul continued honing his

skill, perfecting his own rods. Though production was woefully small, word had gotten out, and there were always more buyers than rods.”³⁰ Although both Schwiebert and fellow author Dick Spurr would later report that Young’s first experimental compound taper appeared in 1927, his early rods were not made from PHY Co.-produced blanks.

Young was an excellent fisherman and fly caster, which enabled him to match the mechanics of a rod with the casting demands of on-stream situations. The first two of what he called his “parabolic” rod tapers arrived in the 1948 catalog. Both were freshwater two-piece, 8½-foot rods that sold for \$65. The Parabolic Trout Fly Rod weighed 4¼ ounces; the Parabolic Light Bass Rod was 5 ounces.³¹ The later term “Para” is short for Parabolic, and the number refers to the ferrule size; a Para 19 is a parabolic rod with a size-19 ferrule. The number of a ferrule, or its size, refers to the internal diameter of the tubing in ¼-inch increments; the Para 19 has a ¾-inch ferrule.

After the war, Young recognized the growing fishing boom and enthusiasm for catching “big fish” in salt water. This affirmation occurred simultaneously with his offering of “Butt Action—Modified American Parabolics” in the 1951 catalog. These included the smaller trout rods (7½- to 9-foot rods weighing

4½ ounces or less) and his famous Parabolic 15, perhaps his best-selling model.³² Parabolic action can be difficult to explain. Here it is, as described by Young himself, in *More Fishing Less Fussing*, under the heading “Young Saltwater Bamboo Rods/‘Parabolic’ or Butt Action (Modified American Parabolics).”

A parabolic butt has an extremely low taper. The tip has two compound tapers and is exceedingly fast in recovery. In making a cast, the butt flexes clear into the hand and can be seen and felt. On delivery of the cast, the lower half of the rod gets in its power impulse while the upper half is still flexed. Then, as the tip straightens, a seemingly second power impulse applies, which straightens a long line or shoots an abundance of line, if desired. These rods are necessarily slower in action than the stiff-butted, light-tipped rods. . . . Just in the past three years these rods have been accepted as standard for Bonefish, Steelhead, Salmon, wet fly and other heavy fish. *We have, with the devoted assistance of many noted fishermen, developed specific models for each type of fishing* (emphasis added).³³

These “devoted” and “noted fishermen” would need to be experienced fly casters to technically evaluate and endorse Young’s new parabolic rod designs. This

extensive trial-and-error process was part of a parabolic rod maker’s task, which Young admits, noting that “the rods we offer are the result of many years of trial and changes, testing constantly by ourselves and many rod fans in all parts of the country.”³⁴

This group of “rod fans” included Ted Williams and Bobby Doerr, who were in their Red Sox prime after winning the American League pennant in 1946. Young was adept at marketing and loved the concept of sponsorship. He was interested in making and selling “Ted Williams” and “Bobby Doerr” model fly rods.³⁵

Young’s *More Fishing Less Fussing* catalogs in 1950 and before were dated on their front covers. The dated PHY Co. 1950 catalog makes no mention of Ted Williams or Bobby Doerr. The next—and first undated—catalog (blue cover featuring Lee Cuddy and a fly-caught 63-pound tarpon) I mistakenly identified to be from 1952 or 1953 (Figure 2).³⁶ Cuddy was a famous saltwater fly-fishing guide in the Florida Keys during the 1940s and 1950s. When I at last obtained my own copy of that catalog and had a chance to examine it, I found PHY Co.’s chart of rod offerings on the inside front cover with the words “Coming by Summer 1951,” confirming early 1951 as the publication date (Figure 3). Further internal confirmation is found in three photos on

BUTT ACTION—MODIFIED AMERICAN PARABOLICS

Two piece except where noted.

Designed to meet American use and conditions

1. P	7½'	14	4½	3.30 oz.	HEH
2. *P	8'	15	5	3.89 oz.	HDH—HDG—The Famous "Parabolic 15"
3. P	8½'	16	5	4.50 oz.	HCH—HCF
4. P	8½'	17	6	4.85 oz.	GBF
5. *P	9'	16	5	4.25 oz.	HDG—The Famous "Nvmph Rod" "Parabolic
6. *P	9'	18	7	6.25 oz.	GAF—Ted Williams Bonefish
7. *P	9½'	18	6	6.09 oz.	GBF—Ted Williams Bass Rod, light Steelhead
8. *P	9½'	18	7	6.40 oz.	GAF—Florida Special Bonefish
9. *P	9'	19	7	6.75 oz.	2A—Tarpon, Bonefish, Salmon
10. P	9'	20	8	7.00 oz.	2A—Lee Cuddy "Powerhouse"
11. *P	9'	20-14	7	6.25 oz.	Three pc. Bass Steelhead, light Salt Water
12. *P	9½'	20-14	6	6.55 oz.	Three pc. Light Salt Water
13. *P	9'	21-15	7	6.65 oz.	Three pc. Bonefish, Fla. model
14. *P	9½'	21-15	6	6.75 oz.	Three pc. Bonefish, Fla. model

Coming by Summer 1951

9'	fer	— 19 — 13	Three pc.
8½'	fer	— 18 — 12	Three pc.
8½'	fer	— 17 — 11	Three pc.
8'	fer	— 17 — 10	Three pc.

Figure 3. The Paul H. Young Company’s Butt Action—Modified American Parabolic rod offerings, 1951. *More Fishing Less Fussing*, 1951, 2.

pages 16, 18, and 19 of Ted Williams (Figure 4), Martha Young, and Paul Young (Figure 5), respectively, with their bonefish catches dated 26 December 1950 and 1 January 1951. No later-dated photos are shown in this 1951 catalog. The dates of the next two undated catalogs can only be estimated as circa 1952 and circa 1955.

The 1951 catalog has a list of regular and dry-fly rods as well as “Butt Action—Modified American Parabolics.” Figure 3 shows a list of PHY rod lengths and weights, as well as ferrule and tip-top sizes in lengths of 64ths of an inch. By this time Young was also offering big-fish parabolic bamboo fly rods for saltwater fishing. These were “modified”—as were the rods Jim Payne offered—to create a less demanding taper with regard to the timing of a cast. Young called them “American” because they were “designed to meet American use and conditions,” but this designation also distinguished them from the French rods of Pezon et Michel.

In the circa 1955 *More Fishing Less Fussing* catalog (Figure 2, red cover with Ned Jewett holding a salmon), Young further clarified his “parabolic action.”

When under stress of casting or playing a fish, the Parabolic forms a parabolic curve, uniformly progressive. The “dry” fly rods form a more abrupt curve, with the tip and upper half of the mid working and the butt hardly showing a bend. To one who has striven for power per weight, this indicates that the butt is loafing. It is not delivering power of flexation (recovery from stress), but merely acting as a lever, in which case the tip is doing most of the work. . . . None of our fly rods are full parabolic action (that action referred to as a buggy whip or Eng. wet fly action) but are all modified parabolic action, which give them considerably more power and versatility while retaining the basic advantages of the true parabolic action.³⁷

In a complex mathematical study, retired physicist and bamboo rod maker Michael McGuire performed a parabolic regression analysis to see how well these parabolic rod tapers fitted to a parabolic curve. He concluded that the tapers of classic parabolic rods like Pezon et Michel and Young are true “sections of a parabola. . . . Ritz and Young must have arrived at their tapers by experiment, trial and error.”³⁸ This trial-and-error process of taper development was a major reason Paul Young solicited the help and opinion of expert fly casters and equipment geeks like Ted Williams. McGuire concludes that “this coincidence that tapers [of Young and Pezon] truly are parabolas



Ted Williams and a 9 lb. bonefish taken on our 9'-18 modified parabolic rod, Dec. 26, 1950, at Key Largo, Florida. Photo by Paul Young.

Figure 4. Ted Williams, 26 December 1950. Legend and credit from the original catalog More Fishing Less Fussing, 1951, 19.



Figure 5. Paul H. Young, 1 January 1951. Legend from the original catalog More Fishing Less Fussing, 1951, 16. The photo appeared again in More Fishing Less Fussing, circa 1955, 25.

Paul Young and one of 12 bonefish he hooked Jan. 1, 1951 on Impalla Fly.

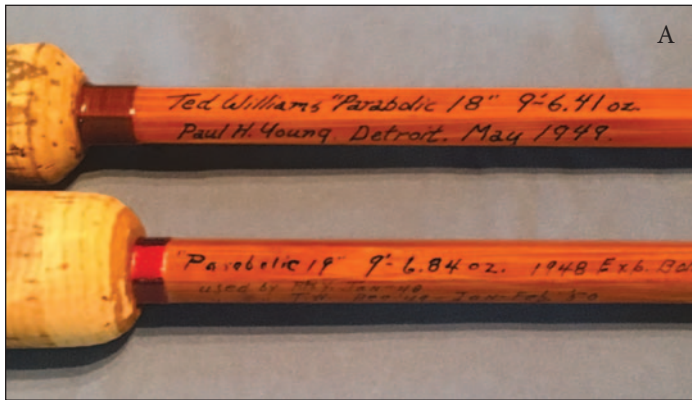


Figure 6. Comparison photos of a restored Ted Williams Bonefish Para 18 (with Bob Summers lettering) and Para 19 Exp bone rod (with Paul Young's original lettering). A: Lettering at winding check. B: Ferrules, guides, and wraps. The Para 18 (left) shows Young's early (1949) use of a stamped Super Z ferrule. C: Upper and lower cork-grip images with thumb rests and hardware. D: Close-up of Para 19 hardware. Photos by John A. Feldenzer.



then is a matter of life imitating art.”³⁹ He claims that “in the late ’40s, Paul Young started selling Pezon et Michel parabolic rods,”⁴⁰ but neither PHY Co. rod experts Bob Summers and Robert Golder nor I could confirm that Young ever sold Pezon rods. He may have come in contact with them during repair or refinishing work. However, given the ten-year gap between Pezon’s initial parabolic marketing in 1938 and Young’s entry into the “parabolic” market in 1948, it is possible that Pezon et Michel parabolic rods did influence Paul Young in some way.

ADVICE FROM THE STARS

As noted, Paul Young sought the endorsement of famous fly fishers for both developmental and marketing purposes. These included professional ath-

letes, icons of the fishing world, and captains of industry. Figure 3 shows Young’s 1951 offering of two endorsed models: the 9-foot, two-piece Para 18 (6.25 ounces with $\frac{3}{4}$ tip top) labeled “Ted Williams Bonefish” for GAF line (9-weight) and the 9½-foot two-piece Para 18 “Ted Williams Bass Rod, light Steelhead” (6.09 ounces with $\frac{3}{4}$ tip top) for GBF line (8-weight).

Williams must have been impressed with the lighter Para 18 tapers as both designated Williams models were Para 18s. The total number of Ted Williams model bamboo rods made for sale has been estimated by Bob Summers at approximately six.⁴¹ Also offered was a Para 19 (6.75 ounces with $\frac{3}{4}$ tip top) for 2A line (10-weight).⁴² The Para 19 was advertised for “Tarpon, Bonefish, Salmon.” Interestingly, this would later

become the subtitle of his 1982 book, *Ted Williams: Fishing “The Big Three”: Tarpon, Bonefish, Atlantic Salmon*.⁴³ These rods sold for \$80 each in 1951.⁴⁴

Comparison images of a Para 18 Ted Williams Bonefish rod and the Para 19 are seen in Figure 6. The Para 18 was owned by Steve Brown, a close friend of Ted Williams, who purchased it from Williams in May 1994. For years, it was on display at the Ted Williams Museum and Hitters Hall of Fame Museum in Hernando, Florida. (The museum no longer exists.) In 2005, I misidentified the lettering on this rod to be that of Paul Young.⁴⁵ Bob Summers recently examined the photo and told me that he did both the lettering (Ted Williams “Parabolic 18” 9’—6.41 oz./Paul H. Young, Detroit, May 1949./Bob Doerr [name on a separate flat]) and the restoration of this Para 18.⁴⁶



Figure 7. Original Ted Williams Bonefish rods. A and B: Paul A. Young's (Paul H. Young's son) personal Ted Williams model Para 18 rod, March 1951. C: "TW" rod (same taper as a Ted Williams model) made for sale by the J. L. Hudson Company, Detroit, Michigan. The lettering on these rods is Paul H. Young's original handwriting. Photos by Bob Summers with permission. Photo retouching by Daaave Summers.

Other examples of Ted Williams Bonefish models (Figure 7) include the personal rod of Young's son, Paul A. Young (taper .375 - .281 - .103), and a labeled "T. W. .375 - .281 - .102" made for sale by the J. L. Hudson Company (Hudson's was a prominent retail department store in Detroit at that time).⁴⁷ Young often placed three three-digit numbers on the butt indicating the micrometer taper measurements for the butt above the grip, butt below the female ferrule, and the tip top above the male ferrule.

Sometime in 1951–1952, Williams asked Young to no longer use his name on PHY Co. rods. Young agreed to this, and in the next undated PHY Co. catalog (green cover, circa 1952, with Ned Jewett Jr. on the cover; see Figure 2), there is no mention of Ted Williams or his models. Williams had begun to finish out several bamboo rods from PHY Co. blanks himself. In a partnership with Sam Snead and others, he eventually developed his own tackle business: Ted Williams, Inc.,

Manufacturers of Custom-Built Fishing Equipment.⁴⁸ After his last year with the Red Sox in 1960, Williams wanted to "devote more time to my fishing tackle business" and even attempted to merge with or purchase the L. L. Bean Company.⁴⁹ Williams subsequently signed a lucrative contract for his endorsement of fishing, hunting, and camping equipment with Sears, Roebuck and Co. in December of that year and became head of the Ted Williams Sears Advisory staff.⁵⁰

My 2005 statement that the "The Ted Williams Bonefish model became the Florida Special Para 18 (9-foot, 6.25 ounces with $\frac{7}{64}$ [GAF] and $\frac{5}{64}$ tip tops [GBG])" needs clarification.⁵¹ There already was a Florida Special Bonefish (9½-foot, 6.40-ounce) rod in the 1951 catalog. This was yet another Para 18 rod that Young had designed for bonefishing that was offered with the two Ted Williams Para 18 models.

In the next catalog (circa 1952), the Florida Special Bonefish rod was eliminated, along with the two Ted Williams

models and the Para 19. PHY Co. renamed the Ted Williams 9-foot Para 18 Bonefish as a "Bonefish, Salmon" rod. A now slightly heavier, second 9½-foot Para 18 (I believe it is the modified Ted Williams bass/steelhead model) was also advertised for "Bonefish, Salmon."⁵² The Lee Cuddy "Powerhouse" Rod, previously a 9-foot, 7-ounce Para 20, was modified to a 9½-foot, 7.25-ounce Para 19, but his name was retained in the 1952 catalog.

In the circa 1955 PHY Co. catalog, Lee Cuddy's name was dropped and his rod, not modified, was simply offered as "The Powerhouse." New rods were offered: the Bobby Doerr model steelhead rod listed at \$75 and the newly reintroduced "Florida Special." The latter was a Para 18 (9-foot, 6.25 ounces, tips: $\frac{7}{64}$ [GAF] and $\frac{5}{64}$ [GBG]). It was, quite simply, a renamed Ted Williams Bonefish model with two different tips, advertised as follows:

This parabolic rod, our leading bonefish model, is also very popular on steelhead, salmon, stripers and bass. It



Figure 8. Para 19 rod photos showing Paul Young's original lettering at the time he restored it (September 1951). Details of their trips and bonefish total are on this rod. Photos by John A. Feldenzer.

is used by some of the country's best tournament men for wet fly accuracy, and as a distance rod has frequently bettered 140 feet. This model was designed to buck the trade winds on the Florida Keys when bonefishing, and is not a rod you can "bug" all day without knowing it. To utilize all its power, one must employ the "left hand cross haul."

The $\frac{3}{4}$ tip will shoot a GAF line [9W] into any wind short of a gale and lay out big bass bugs or tarpon streamers quite a distance. With a $\frac{1}{4}$ tip it becomes a much faster rod suitable for salmon dry fly with a GBG [8W] or for bonefish, snook, bass, etc., with a GBF [8W] when smaller bugs or streamers are needed. As a combination with one tip of each size it will handle all the heavy work, wet or dry, on our larger fish most satisfactorily. Few men can use more rod for steady bugging.⁵³

Paul Young's trial-and-error experimentation and modifications continued, with input from many anglers. Young was a fanatic about bamboo weight and action, and by the early 1950s, his flame-temper-

ing and experimental compound tapers had rapidly evolved into parabolic specialty rods: fishing instruments designed for certain species and conditions.

The Para 19 experimental bonefish rod was heavily fished (eighty bonefish caught!) by Williams and Young on what appear to be several holiday visits to the Keys by the Youngs. A December 1949–January 1950 trip is documented in Paul Young's writing on the butt of the Para 19 bone rod (Figure 8). Another trip—documented by the dated photographs in the 1951 catalog—must have occurred in December 1950–January 1951 (see Figures 4 and 5). Given the limited information I had in 2005, I incorrectly identified the special Para 19 bone rod as a 9½-foot Para 18. However, without question, this Para 19 bone rod is the same rod described to me by collector Ronald S. Swanson as having the inked historical information on the bonefish tally caught by Young and Williams between 1949 and 1951.⁵⁴

The experimental "Bone rod" Para 19 built by Young in 1947 and marked

"used by PHY, January '48" is caramel-colored flamed cane with a 2 x 2 node pattern. There is a down-locking aluminum, all-cork reel seat. The grip is 13 inches and all cork, including the permanent fighting butt. There are three thumb rests in the cork grip to accommodate different hand sizes. There is no winding check or hook keeper. Three stripper guides are noted on the butt section. Maroon wraps show no tipping (some ghosting around the wraps is noted) (see Figure 6). The rod came packaged in the original labeled brown cloth and a labeled Scientific Anglers Champion-style aluminum tube in blue. Paul Young's authentic classic printing can be seen on each flat of the butt (see Figure 8):

"Parabolic 19" 9'- 6.84 oz.
1948 Exp. Bone Rod .395 - .296 - .109
Property of Paul H. Young Co. Detroit
used by P. H.Y. Jan - '48
" " T.W. Dec. '49 - Jan. - Feb. '50
Refinished Sept. '51
80 Bonefish to Sept. '51



Figure 9. Paul H. Young experimental distance rod. A: Butt shows cork grip with multiple thumb rests; no-hardware mid shows Young's heavily flamed cane. B and C: Paul Young's original lettering, July 1951, with "For Ted Williams try out." Photos by Bob Summers with permission. Photo retouching by Daaave Summers.

The Paul Young Para 19 experimental bonefish rod came into rod maker Bob Summers's possession and was later sold to Ronald S. Swanson.⁵⁵ Swanson, the expert duck and fish decoy collector and author of *Record Atlantic Salmon* (2008) and *Fish Models, Plaques & Effigies* (2009), both published by Meadow Run Press, actively fished this rod. He told me that he "caught five bonefish with it at Cotton Bay Club in Eleuthera in the 1980s then sold it."⁵⁶

In 2007, I came into possession of this Para 19 experimental bone rod as well as contemporary PHY Co. catalogs from the early 1950s. This "rare" Paul Young Para 19 fly rod was Lot #132 at Lang's Auction, Inc. on 2 November 2007.⁵⁷ This lot was part of the Carter Center's John J. Moores angling collection. Proceeds from the auction of Moores's treasured angling and book collection went to benefit the Carter Center at Emory University.

John J. Moores is the well-known former owner of the San Diego Padres baseball club, a prolific philanthropist, and previous chair of the board of trustees of the Carter Center. He is an avid fly fisherman who had a close personal relation-

ship with President Jimmy Carter, another famous fly fisherman. Moores established the River Blindness Foundation for the treatment of infectious blindness (onchocerciasis, caused by a parasitic worm) in developing countries. This foundation's efforts later became part of the work of the Carter Center. According to Moores, "Jimmy Carter was the first guy in the river and the last guy out—and he consistently caught the most and largest fish."⁵⁸ While fishing for brown sea trout in Tierra del Fuego, he asked Carter why he was catching more fish than the rest; Carter replied, "I don't false cast."⁵⁹

The provenance of this Paul Young Para 19 bone rod over seventy-nine years is PHY Co. to Bob Summers to Ron Swanson to John Moores to me.

DISTANCE-CASTING (TOURNAMENT) RODS

Paul Young's experimentation with fly-rod tapers was not confined to fishing objectives. The early 1950s also found PHY Co. experimenting with and providing bamboo fly rods to distance-casting competitors. Williams, an excellent

caster, figured into Young's plans for these demanding distance tapers. Becoming the best tournament caster would suit Williams's personality.

In 2008, Bob Summers shared certain correspondence with me (four letters dated 1951–1952) between Paul Young and Louis Simon Jr. of Verdun, Quebec, regarding distance-casting rod tapers. Simon was a member of the Quebec Fly and Bait Casting Association.⁶⁰ In September 1952 at Drummondville, he won the contest with a cast of 155 feet using a Young distance rod.⁶¹ This 9-foot, 9.33-ounce "flag pole," according to Simon, was built in July 1951 and included a 12-inch cork grip with no hardware (Figure 9).

Paul Young's 24 October 1951 letter to Simon states, "Those sticks were made after measuring up the three top rods (distance) in conference with two of Detroit's top casters, and Ted Williams of Boston Red Sox, who aspires to championship. . . . Both our distance men here are convinced this new rod will win, if right line and man are on it."⁶²

Young offered the distance rod to Williams to use in pursuit of a fly-casting championship: "Ted Williams is to



Figure 10. Art Neumann examining the PHY Co. distance rod at his Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum Hall of Fame induction, October 2008. Photo by Robert Golder with permission.

undertake to break the world record with one of the five rods I made like yours, when he gets out of the Marine Corps.”⁶³ I could not confirm a record of Ted Williams competing in a casting tournament. Figure 10 shows Art Neumann examining this distance rod in 2008 while at his own Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum Hall of Fame induction. The rod is labeled:

Experimental Distance by Paul H. Young Co. Detroit, Mich. July, 1951
9' 9.33 oz. For Ted Williams try out

It is evident that Paul Young was driven to build not only the best fly-fishing rods but also, with his unique parabolic tapers, the best long-distance fly-casting rod. Once again, Young turned to Ted Williams because of his skill as a saltwater distance caster, innate competitiveness, and marketability.

YOUNG'S DEVOTEES

Paul Young never forgot those great Red Sox players who were his friends and “rod fans,” and they never forgot him.⁶⁴ Paul and Martha Marie Young were

great friends and fishing buddies with another fan, Chauncy Lively, and his family. The innovative fly tier/author's close relationship with the Youngs was well documented by Hoagy B. Carmichael in 2009.⁶⁵ According to Robert Golder, “Chauncy Lively had a Parabolic 18, built 1951, 9'6", 6.09 oz., which Young said would be good for Lively's saltwater and salmon fishing. Young told Lively that his own personal Para 18 was 9'0", weighed 5.26 oz. with a skeleton reel seat, and it was good for bonefish.”⁶⁶

Young, in a 12 July 1954 letter to “all you fishermen,” meaning Chauncy and the Lively family, wrote in the last paragraph:

Walter told me that Orvis sent a man to look into the 40-off sale. We liked [“licked”] the daylights out of them at the salt water rods, and I am sure, made the first fly rods to stand up and take it, at the Bones fishing. Ted Williams still tells anyone who asks, if they want a bamboo rod, get it here. Bobby Doerr the same, on steelhead. . . . Have some emergency repairs to do before my company comes, Best to you all. Paul⁶⁷

Fiberglass began replacing bamboo in rod production in the 1940s. PHY Co.'s

bamboo rod production continued after Young's death in 1960 under the direction of his wife, Martha Marie, and son Jack. When Martha retired in 1969, Jack moved the shop to Traverse City, where PHY Co. focused more on boating and the marina. Bob Summers, who had been employed by PHY Co. for sixteen years, continued the bamboo work.^{68,69} Robert Golder describes a letter written by Young to a close friend in March 1960, a month before his death, in which he praised “my helper on bamboo.”⁷⁰ Gerald Stein, a bamboo aficionado and author, contends that “the most desirable Young rods may be those designed by Paul H. Young late in his career and built during his lifetime by his then-protégé, Bob Summers.”⁷¹ Summers left PHY Co. in 1972 to form his own successful bamboo rod-making business, which continues today.

Second baseman Bobby Doerr retired from the Red Sox in 1951 and returned to the Rogue River in Oregon, where he and wife Monica spent most of the rest of their lives. At Williams's request, Young created a prototype Bobby Doerr model steelhead rod in late 1951. Doerr loved it. The taper for what would later become the Bobby Doerr model was established in fall 1952. In the circa 1955 *More Fishing Less Fussing* catalog (red cover with Ned Jewett holding a salmon), the Bobby Doerr Para 17 rod (9-foot, 6-ounce) was offered for the first time in deluxe grade only for \$75 (see Figure 2).⁷² Previous study of the original Doerr taper indicated that it was most likely a modification of the 9-foot Para 18 that had already been made for Williams. As previously reported, Doerr did not realize that Young offered a steelhead rod to the public as the “Bobby Doerr” model for more than thirty years!⁷³ When he learned of it in the 1980s, Young had already been dead for twenty-six years. Bobby and Monica Doerr maintained a relationship with Paul's wife, Martha Marie, after Paul's death in April 1960.

In 2005, I documented Ted Williams's intense—actually obsessive—attitude toward sporting equipment. This started with his scientific approach to hitting. The length, shape, weight, grip, and feel of his baseball bat (like a fly rod!) were critical.⁷⁴ It did not stop there.

His approach to fishing tackle was no less intense. He wanted the best equipment available to optimize his performance, whether swinging a baseball bat or casting to a tarpon, bonefish, or Atlantic salmon, his “big three.” Williams had to have the best to be the best. “If there is one thing I am an absolute nut about in fishing, it's ade-

quate tackle—the right rod and reel, the correct strength line, the best tied knots, the sharpest hooks. It is as easy as it is important, because you can be sure of those things no matter how experienced you are.”⁷⁵

And Williams would not hesitate to tell you about it.

I had some guys fishing for tarpon with me at Homosassa Springs one time who deliberately used inadequate tackle, for reasons I did not ask. I let it go for a day, watching them break fish off, hurt fish. The next day, I rigged 'em up with proper lines and leaders—tougher, better—and they got seven out of the eight fish they struck. One of them said “Gee that’s the best fishing I ever had,” and the other one said “This is the most fun I’ve ever had fishing.” They both were guides.⁷⁶

This approach to fishing does not mean that Williams was a bamboo-rod or even fly-fishing purist. He was not. He was happy to convert to spin-fishing or bait-casting equipment if it gave him an advantage on the water. The demands of

saltwater fly fishing, particularly the wind, figured in his choice of tackle. His first bonefish was documented by Young as being caught on the PHY Co. “Oregon Egg” bait caster (Figure 11).⁷⁷ As fiberglass and then graphite entered the fishing world, he embraced them. He was, as always, performance driven and used whatever it took to succeed. Results mattered to Ted Williams.

Joe Brooks’s success with Jimmy Albright catching bonefish on a fly in 1947 first got me interested, and I still think fly fishing for a great game fish is the ultimate in tackle handling. More often than not, though, because of the conditions you encounter and the nature of the fish itself, I recommend spinning gear for bonefish. . . . Even if I intend to use spinning, however, I still take along a fly rod just in case the conditions are right. I use a 9 foot three and three-quarter ounce graphite fly rod. Six-ounce fiberglass would be an alternative.⁷⁸

Like us, Young, Williams, and Doerr loved to fish. For Doerr and Williams, fishing was an escape, a pleasure; for

Young (Figure 12), it was business and pleasure! As I’ve noted before, “Williams was driven in his pursuit of fish and becoming the best. Doerr was quiet, confident, and content in achieving life’s goals and recreational pleasure.”⁷⁹ The period 1947 to 1957 was what Martin Keane described as Paul Young’s golden years, a time when “everything he did was excitingly fresh,” when he continued to search for the perfect parabolic bamboo taper and, of course, someone to test it.⁸⁰

~

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am especially thankful to Bob Summers, that vibrant link to Paul Young, who corrected the draft, confirmed many facts, and debunked several myths. He was always available and eager to talk about the history. I am most grateful to Robert Golder for sharing his wealth of knowledge regarding all things related to the Paul H. Young Company and for the Paul H. Young Rod Database (www.phydatabase.com), which he cre-



Ted Williams first bonefish, caught on Young’s “Oregon Egg” rod. Ted’s note on photograph reads “To the Young Gang, who like to fish as well as me, and who are the nicest I ever fished with. Good luck always.—Ted Williams.” Photo by Paul H. Young.

B

Figure 11. A: Ted Williams with a bonefish caught on a bait-casting rod. Williams’s signed inscription to the Youngs is seen on the photo. B: Legend and credit from the original catalog *More Fishing Less Fussing*, 1951, 10.

ated and maintains. It is a treasure trove that Paul Young would have been proud of. Robert provided essential catalog information, including details and photographs that I did not have, and was kind to review, correct, and critically evaluate the manuscript before submission. And thank you to Hoagy B. Carmichael and Anthony J. Magardino for providing the 1932 Payne catalog information and images confirming the first use of the word “parabolic” to describe a fly rod for sale.

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- Bob Summers, phone conversation with author, 11 March 2025.
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- Spurr, *Classic Bamboo Rodmakers*, 92–93.
- Martin J. Keane, *Classic Rods and Rodmakers* (New York: Winchester Press, 1976), 156.
- Quoted in Schwiebert, *Trout Tackle—Two*, 151–52.
- Ibid., 158.
- Keane, *Classic Rods and Rodmakers*, 154.
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- Gerald S. Stein, MD, “Personal Treasures: The Bamboo Fly Rods and Reels Fishermen Love,” *The American Fly Fisher* (Fall 1991, vol. 17, no. 3), 21.
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- Ibid., 2.
- See Feldenzer, “Of Baseball and Bamboo,” and Feldenzer, “Bobby Doerr, Half-Pounders, the Rogue River, and a Love of Fly Fishing.” In addition to their trips to Florida to fish with Williams, Paul and Martha Marie Young traveled to Oregon to fish with Bobby Doerr on his home water, the Rogue River, in the 1950s.
- Feldenzer, “Of Baseball and Bamboo,” 6, endnote 35.
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- Ted Williams and John Underwood, *Ted Williams: Fishing “The Big Three”: Tarpon, Bonefish, Atlantic Salmon* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982).
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- Feldenzer, “Of Baseball and Bamboo,” 6.
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- Feldenzer, “Of Baseball and Bamboo,” 7, endnote 57.
- Letter from Ted Williams to L. L. Bean, 9 November 1960. Available at <https://wcy.com/red-sox-legend-ted-williams-attempted-to-buy-l-l-bean-in-1960>. Accessed 23 October 2025.

50. Feldenzer, "Of Baseball and Bamboo," 7, endnote 59.
51. Ibid., endnote 58.
52. Paul H. Young, *More Fishing Less Fussing*, circa 1952 catalog, 2, and Robert Golder, 6 March 2025 email to author.
53. Young, *More Fishing Less Fussing*, circa 1955, 28.
54. Feldenzer, "Of Baseball and Bamboo," 6.
55. Emails from Ronald S. Swanson to author, 11 December 2004 and 24 November 2007.
56. Email from Ronald S. Swanson to author, 23 November 2007.
57. Lang's Auction catalog, 2 and 3 November 2007, Lot 132.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. In the 4 November 1952 letter to Louis Simon Jr., Paul Young thanks him for "informing us of your success." Young then reproduced the letter from Simon on page 30 of his circa 1955 catalog: "At the Prov. of Quebec casting championships, I entered the Distance Fly event with a borrowed rod that was made by your firm. Was I surprised when I placed second with a cast of 117 feet (It was my first venture in fly distance casting). My surprising fly casting enabled me to cop All-Round Champion honors."
61. Robert Golder (quashnet) documented these letters nicely in "Paul Young Experimental Distance Rod," *Classic Fly Rod Forum*, 17 November 2008, <http://classicflyrodforum.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=18970>. Accessed 9 March 2025.
62. Letter from Paul H. Young to Louis Simon, 24 October 1951.
63. Letter from Paul H. Young to Louis Simon, 4 November 1952.
64. Walt Masterson, a pitcher and teammate of Doerr's and Williams's on the Red Sox teams of 1949–1952, was another "fan" who fished PHY Co. rods. Robert Golder, email to author, 11 March 2025.
65. Hoagy B. Carmichael, "Chauncy Lively: An Innovative Fly Tier and a Consummate Fly Fisherman," *The American Fly Fisher* (Spring 2009, vol. 35, no. 2), 10–16.
66. Email to the author from Robert Golder, 23 February 2025.
67. Letter from Paul H. Young to Chauncy Lively, 12 July 1954. Copy obtained from Chauncy Lively's papers by his daughter, Anne Lively, who gave it to Robert Golder. Permission of Robert Golder. The letter to "all the fishermen" refers to the Lively family. Chauncy, his wife Marion, and their two daughters, Anne and Claudia, were all fly fishers and used Paul Young bamboo fly rods, some with tapers made specifically for them. Marion and Claudia fished the Driggs models rods, and Anne fished a custom 6-foot, 9-inch Paul Young rod.
68. Spurr, *Classic Bamboo Rodmakers*, 71, 93.
69. Bob Summers, phone conversation with author, 21 March 2025; Robert Golder, email to author, 23 March 2025.
70. Robert Golder, emails to author, 11 March 2025 and 23 March 2025.
71. Stein, "Personal Treasures: The Bamboo Fly Rods and Reels Fishermen Love," 21. In an 11 March 2025 email to the author, Robert Golder opined that "One of the nicest things you can say about a Paul Young rod is that Bob Summers built it." He informed me that he'd used this line many times, but most notably in a speech given at Bob Summers's induction ceremony into the Fly Fishing Hall of Fame at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum on 19 October 2024.
72. Young, *More Fishing Less Fussing*, circa 1955 catalog, 27.
73. Feldenzer, "Of Baseball and Bamboo," 7–9.
74. Ted Williams and John Underwood, *The Science of Hitting* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970), 15–16. Williams's bat was made at the Hillerich and Bradsby factory in Louisville, Kentucky.
75. Williams and Underwood, *Ted Williams: Fishing "The Big Three,"* 38.
76. Ibid., 39.
77. Young, *More Fishing Less Fussing*, 1951 catalog, 10.
78. Williams and Underwood, *Ted Williams: Fishing "The Big Three,"* 77–79.
79. Feldenzer, "Of Baseball and Bamboo," 11.
80. Keane, *Classic Rods and Rodmakers*, 156.



Figure 12. Paul H. Young contemplating the taper of one of his parabolic trout rods, circa 1956. In a 28 February 2026 email, Bob Summers, who kindly provided this image, says, "The photo is how I remember him." The photo was given to him by Mrs. Martha Marie Young, circa 1992.

The Sun upon the Highmost Hill

by Christopher Pibus

*In the state of New York I came of age
Where first I started roaming*

—Kate and Anna McGarrigle
“Talk to Me of Mendocino,” 1976

THE DAY WE CLIMBED Whiteface Mountain, manly and glorious, we stopped at the summit for photographs. A metal sign in the shape of the three-pointed peak proclaimed 4867-FT. ABOVE SEA. We staged the camera shots so it looked like we were hanging on to the sign suspended over the edge, with distant views of Lake Placid far below. Ted’s hand gripped the steel post unconvincingly. “Try to look scared,” I said, “It’s a long way down.” But he couldn’t stop grinning. It’s the best picture I have of him.

It was late June 1970 and the two of us had fished hard for eleven days straight. We were sixteen years old, on a mission to prove we could camp on our own in the Adirondack woods and learn the complicated business of fly fishing for trout on a storied river called the Ausable.

Ted’s family owned a cottage near North Hero on Lake Champlain where we’d started fishing together in our early teens, trolling big Daredevil spoons for pike and casting top-water plugs like Jitterbugs and Hula Poppers for chain pickerel in the weed beds. Our friendship deepened as we spent more time on the water, beyond the reach of other friends and family who must have wondered what possessed us. I can see him still, standing in the stern of the aluminum boat wrestling with the little Evinrude, his long arm yanking the pull cord again and again. He had black hair and a striking black beard by the time we left high school. And he wore square black-framed glasses—even when we were fishing or climbing mountains. He was always intense; the twinned masks of ecstasy and despair were close at hand, sometimes in quick succession. As he said later, he was not really made for this world.

To launch our trip to the West Branch of the Ausable, Ted’s parents drove us from the cottage down Interstate 87 and then up the river valley until we reached Wilmington Notch. We stopped on the side of the road near a white sign tacked to a tree, listing the New York State special fishing area regulations that governed the trophy section. Our campsite was a rare flat spot in an otherwise boulder-strewn pine forest, full of dead-



Ted at the summit of Whiteface Mountain, 1970.

falls and thick brush, bearded here and there with moss. A well-trodden path ran alongside the river, but we rarely saw anyone fishing that stretch. We could always hear and glimpse the moving water down below.

We made regular visits to the Adirondack Sport Shop in Wilmington, owned and operated by Francis Betters, a local legend and the first celebrity angler we had ever encountered. The big sign on the storefront announced HOME OF THE AUSABLE WULFF, which was his signature fly. From behind his

All photos courtesy of the author



Flume Pool.



The author streamside at the Ausable holding two trout caught at Copperas Pond.

fly-tying bench, he gave a running commentary for a group of customers while he worked, pausing to hold up a scrap of fur or feather to illustrate the materials he used to create the Wulff. The store smelled of mothballs, head cement, and the silicone liquid we apparently needed to float our flies.

At the time, we were woefully ignorant of fly tying. Our knowledge of dry flies was based on what we had seen in *Field & Stream*, a few classic patterns tied in the sparse and elegant Catskill style. Evidently things were different in the North Country, as we watched a bushy, heavily hackled fly take shape in the vise. It had two divided upright wings made of white calf tail, and then for balance a long tail of woodchuck guard hairs. Two hackles with multiple turns and then a surprise: a bright orange head formed from the tying thread. We each bought a dozen, two weeks' worth—or so we thought.

Over the next few days on the river, we became hardcore believers in the Wulff pattern as we began to understand how well it matched not the hatch but the character of its home waters. The Ausable—especially in the trophy section from Monument Falls down to the Flume Pool—was primarily pocket water, characterized by ledges, boulders, and cannonball-shaped rocks scattered over the riverbed, creating a multitude of rapids and chutes interspersed with small smooth runs where the catchable fish would lie. The speed and chop-piness of the currents called for high-floating flies, and the Ausable Wulffs worked their magic—even for us.

We began to see rising fish in the holding water, and after two days of neither catch nor release we learned to hook them, sometimes in good numbers. There was much to celebrate:

first fly-caught trout; first brown, rainbow, and lake trout; and first blessed trout of any kind on a dry fly. At the same time, we learned harder lessons, breaking off the only bigger fish we found and losing too many flies in the branches that lay in wait for our ill-configured backcasts. Who knew you needed to constantly check behind yourself as you moved upstream, even at the moment you spotted a feeding fish?

And so by necessity we returned to the fly shop again and again for replacement flies. Everybody wanted the Wulffs, and Betters obliged his customers with multiple sizes and color variations, including the rusty-orange body that I favored. But he excelled at promoting different flies that he had also originated, especially the Haystack. Eventually I bought a couple of his tiny Mini-Muddlers after listening to repeated descriptions of how the fly should be presented.

"Fish it down and across," Betters would say. "Just give it a little twitch as it begins to swing." Then he would pause and raise his head from the vise, allowing us to imagine the brave little streamer swimming its way across the moving water. "Fish out your cast, and then just let it hang in the current, and when you're sure there's no follow and you're about to pick it up . . ."—he'd pause again, stern faced, lowering his voice—"just leave it be and wait some more . . . then BAM! You got yourself a good brown." It was my first master class in fishing "the dangle."

We never caught a big brown that trip, but one day we hiked up to Copperas Pond to check out the rumors of lake trout. We caught two 15-inchers on little Gray Ghost streamers and feasted on the best campfire meal we could imagine. Ted



Shadow Rock.

later sent me some journal excerpts, including our menu. “We sent our compliments to the chef,” he wrote. “Lake trout, Hi-C grape juice, Melba toast, and fruit cups.”

Ted was the one who grasped how decrepit we looked after too many days in the woods. We spent time walking along the shoulders of Highway 86 every day, exploring the farther reaches of the river toward Lake Placid or commuting into Wilmington. Wearing oversized Miner chest waders with visible suspenders and plaid shirts, we looked like backwoods circus clowns. “People go whizzing by us in their cars,” Ted wrote. “Noses pressed to the window, trying to get a glimpse of Whiteface or that funny-looking fellow with a fishing pole. Chris actually had one of those cars stop next to him on the highway. He thought they wanted directions, but the man at the wheel said his kids just wanted to see this guy up close.”

On the morning of our twelfth day, we slept in. The woods were still damp from the rain the night before, and the river was up 3 or 4 inches with some color. We were running out of money and provisions. Ted’s unleavened bannock fried in a pan had lost its novelty for breakfast, and I was sick of mixing Tang with river water smelling of chlorine tablets.

When we took an inventory of our fly boxes, I was down to two Ausable Wulffs: a ragged fly still on the rod and a good one in the box. Ted had none. He had broken off his last fly on a fish, and I could see he wanted one of mine. We looked darkly at each other.

“This is the point in the story when something bad happens in the tent,” he said with his black eyes slipping sideways until we broke out laughing.

“Let’s climb the peak,” I said, “we can go straight up the lift line under the double chair.” And that’s how we came to hike up Whiteface. We’d stock up on flies later.

It was humid and the sun broke through the cloud cover by the time we reached the parking lot at the base of the trails. The day grew hotter as we started the ascent. It was rough going under the chairlift, where the cleared brush had started to grow back. I could see Ted climbing over the top of a boulder with a mantle of black flies surrounding his head, sweat pouring down his face. “Shit for brains,” I muttered, “I should’ve brought the canteen.”

Once we reached the summit, we took photos and waited for the wind to cool us down. A porcupine with mountaineering ambitions shuffled its way among the rocks. We found an easier trail for the descent. Even better, we found a spring about the halfway mark where the water was clear and marvelously cool. I tore out a bunch of bright green moss, heavily laden with water, and squeezed out enough to fill my mouth again and again. We made good time all the way to Wilmington and picked up our new supply of flies.

Cars were nowhere to be seen in the early evening, so we walked back to camp. The sky was full of big mayflies rising and falling in pairs and clusters. Were they the green drakes everyone was talking about at the shop? But we were too tired to fish the evening rise or eat much of anything. So we climbed into our bags and listened to the forest. As the wind came up, we heard twigs bouncing off the canvas, and as usual we tried to tune in a station on the transistor radio.

Reception was terrible in the notch, but that night the frequencies were aligned for us, and we hooked up with Syracuse, or maybe Binghamton, and we caught the last verse and chorus of the Byrds’ cover of Dylan’s “Mr. Tambourine Man.” Ted loved that song, and I could see him haloed in the lantern light, shaking his head and beaming with the conviction that benign gods were smiling down upon us.



Ted and the author at the top of Whiteface.

Shortly after daybreak, I awoke to the sound of Ted groaning and swearing outside the tent. He was bent over the makeshift latrine.

"My guts have turned to liquid," he said. "Maybe it's dysentery or beriberi like in those war movies."

"We're in the Adirondacks," I said. "Not exactly a tropical jungle." But an hour later, I was in the same lamentable condition.

We gathered a few things and hitched a ride into town, resolute and clenching the whole way. At the diner, we nursed mugs of black tea and ate some toast between sorties to a real washroom. The waitress was kind and she directed us to a young doctor who served as the local GP. "You boys look like some new brand of misery," she said.

We made our way to his office, where he greeted us himself—a one-man show—wondering what kind of wretchedness the cat was dragging in. He listened to our story, wanting to know everything we'd eaten over the past two days, and all about the hike up the mountain. He stopped us when we mentioned the spring.

"Let me get this straight. You boys have been in the woods for twelve days carefully chlorinating your water the whole time. Then you forget all that when you find a pretty mountain stream? And you wonder why you're sick?"

The doctor began writing out a scrip when he stopped himself, catching us exchanging glances.

"Is there a problem?"

Shamefaced I replied, "We're almost out of money—we can't pay for medicine."

"So how were you planning to pay me?"

"My parents," said Ted through clenched teeth, admitting our compromised independence. "They're picking us up on Saturday, and they'll pay you. They'll pay you for sure."

The doctor had some antibiotics on hand, enough for two treatments in case the ailment was bacterial.

"Start these right away," he began, before pausing again.

"Collateral," he said brightening at his own idea. "You'll need to give me something as a pledge to back up your promises—like a watch or a driver's license."

We didn't have anything like that, but we had brought a few things just in case. We laid our valuables out on his desk: a compass, my jackknife, the transistor radio.

No reaction.

Then we each pulled out our fly reels. Mine was a brass Pflueger Progress circa 1920 that had belonged to my grandfather, handsome to my eyes but looking every bit its age. Ted handed over a gleaming gunmetal Hardy Viscount—fully loaded with a Scientific Anglers line—that his mother had purchased at Streeter & Quarles in Montreal. Predictably, that sealed the deal.

We spent one last day on the river, sharing my fiberglass rod but feeling much better by sunset. The next day, as promised, we redeemed the reel after Ted's father paid the twenty-dollar medical fees, prescriptions included.

Ted left us almost fifty years ago, and through all that time I have returned to the Ausable to wade the pocket water that's slightly warmer now, although the fishing remains remarkably unchanged. I retrace my steps to that overgrown campsite in the notch, high above the river, and wander the pine woods to find the plaque—honoring my friend—bolted to a towering sugar maple at river's edge. In my fly box is a multitude of Wulff patterns. And in my mind, graven and unfailing, lives the memory of the day we climbed the highest hill.



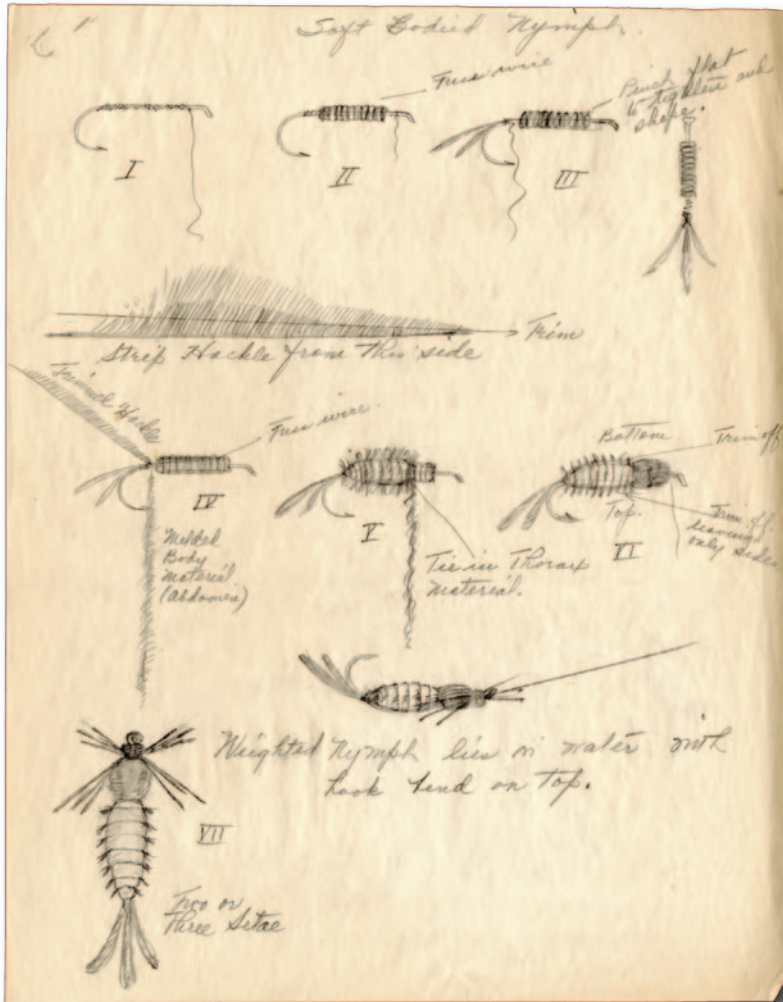
Mileage marker on Route 86 that leads to the campsite and memorial plaque, below.



The plaque by the Ausable honoring Ted.

Louis Rhead: Angler, Artist, Author

by David Bush



This pencil sketch on paper by Louis Rhead details how to tie a soft-bodied nymph. AMFF permanent collection. 2023.006.003.

Louis Rhead was an idealist. He cast a beautiful line, gracefully and without effort. He got a great kick out of the river and all that it stood for.

—William J. Schaldach
Currents & Eddies, 1944

LOUIS JOHN RHEAD WAS BORN in Staffordshire, England, in 1857 into one of the U.K.'s most artistic families. As a youngster, he and all his eleven siblings attended the Fenton School of Art, which was founded by his father, George W. Rhead. The children also worked in the family pottery business, Staffordshire Potteries. The name Rhead was synonymous with the most skilled and talented gilders and ceramic artists of the time. The innovative and creative techniques used by the family remain revered today.¹

At age thirteen, Louis, who was showing great promise, was sent to Paris to study art. Then, in 1879 he received a scholar-

ship to attend the prestigious National Art Training School in London. School records indicate that he was an exceptional student who won many awards and honors.

After completing his studies in 1881, Rhead spent the next two years painting and providing ceramic decoration for Wedgwood Pottery in Staffordshire. In 1883, he packed his bags for the States when he was offered a job as an art director at the New York publishing house D. Appleton. (Coincidentally, 1883 was the same year that brown trout were introduced into American waters!) In 1884, he married Katherine Bogart Yates. The couple and her son settled in Brooklyn, near Prospect Park, where they remained for the next forty years.

The late 1880s and early 1890s saw the rise of the poster-art craze in the United States and Europe. Rhead applied his artistic talents to this new medium and quickly became one of the most sought-after artists of his day. He enjoyed much commercial success, designing nearly one hundred posters for

publications such as *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Scribner's Monthly* (as well as its successor, the *Century Magazine*). He won a gold medal for best American poster design at the International Poster Show in Boston in 1895. When the demand for poster art waned, he began illustrating many noted children's books, including *Robin Hood*, *Heidi*, *Treasure Island*, and *Robinson Crusoe*.²

Rhead began fly fishing in the United States and Canada in the late 1880s. Little did he know that this new interest would set the course for the latter half of his life. With the same inherent enthusiasm and entrepreneurial spirit that characterized all his endeavors, Rhead dove into angling art and literature, the manufacture of flies and lures, and the study of the art of fishing.

Angling art began to dominate Rhead's interests in the late 1890s. His first exhibit of fishing paintings, *The Fighting Ouananiche*, opened at the Frederick Keppel Gallery in New York in 1901.³ Rhead painted fish and fishing-related scenes in gouache, oils, tempera, and watercolors for the rest of his life.

The Speckled Brook Trout, a multiauthored book edited and illustrated by Rhead in 1902, was his first of several on game fish and fishing.⁴ It is celebrated for Rhead's beautiful illustrations and eloquent prose. *The Book of Fish and Fishing* (with its ambitious subtitle, *A Complete Compendium of Practical Advice to Guide Those Who Angle for All Fishes in Fresh and Salt Water*) followed in 1908.⁵ In 1907, Rhead began writing fishing articles and providing cover art and illustrations for the *American Angler*, *Outing*, *Outers' Recreation*, *Field & Stream*, and *Forest and Stream* magazines. This continued through the mid-1920s.

Starting around 1913, he first crafted his line of nature lures. Using wood, cork, raffia grass, wire, foil, feathers, yarn, and (of course) paint, Rhead fashioned minnows, frogs, crawfish, shrimp, eels, and a variety of insects. He wrote of his nature lures:

First: They must be light enough in weight to cast with a fly rod, to float upright and natural in turbulent water, yet strong enough to be chewed and not destroyed.

Second: Soft to the touch without scaring the fish.

Third: Perfection in form and color when floating in the water.⁶

Jim Schottenham



Louis Rhead mayfly, circa 1915. From his American nature flies series, this mayfly features an extended body and soft hackle, with wood duck tail and fan wings, and is likely Rhead's interpretation of a Sulphur Mayfly. AMFF permanent collection. 2007.016.0039.

Rhead also said that his nature lures "exactly imitate the color, form and life movements of natural baits,"⁷ and after giving his lures ample trials and thorough tests, anglers were guaranteed fish of larger size and with greater sport. They must be made to act alive by "careful manipulation of the angler's rod tip."⁸

The nature lures themselves are extraordinary works of art. Rhead's frogs and crawfish are wonderfully constructed and painted and have tremendous eye appeal. His baitfish imitations—especially his Silver Shiners, Gold Chubs, Terrors, and Feather Minnows—are some of the most beautiful minnow lures ever produced.

Rhead authored the comprehensive yet controversial *American Trout-Stream Insects* in 1916, the first angling entomology study of its kind.⁹ The book also introduced his extensive line of American nature flies. It cataloged, illustrated, and presented an artificial to match the insects that Rhead had spent seven years studying on Catskill rivers and other northeastern waters. Theodore Gordon, who frequented the same Catskill waters, is often referred to as the father of American dry-fly fishing for his impressionistic/English-influenced imitations of aquatic insects. Rhead's flies, by contrast, were realistic imitations of insects he observed the trout eating, often featuring extended bodies, antennae, split mayfly tails, and assorted feather wings. His informal names for these insects—such as Sandy, Flat Head, and Green Eyes—bothered many of his contemporaries, but Rhead argued:

European entomologists have divided insects into various orders; each season finds them making new classifications so conflicting as to bewilder the lay mind. For the simple use of plain anglers, who have neither the wish nor the time to enter into the intricacies of entomology, the use of a common name for each insect will, I think, be more acceptable.¹⁰

Rhead was also an early champion of the use of underwater nymph patterns, referring to them as creepers.¹¹ In keeping with his realistic style, his Brook Trout Hellgrammite looks as if it might crawl out of the angler's fly box. He considered a brace of wet flies to be very effective on the average American stream and



This Louis Rhead Brown Drake is a nice example from his American nature flies series. Author's collection.



Louis Rhead, 1896. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LCCN 2009631185.

offered for sale a set of six silver-and-gold-bodied wet flies (Beaverkill, Battenkill, Esopus, Neversink, Mongaup, and Willowemoc) named after “the most famous and beautiful natural trout streams in New York State.”¹²

American Trout-Stream Insects included a chapter on the making of the artificial fly but left out any specific dressings for nature flies. Rhead never enlisted a vise in his tying, preferring to use his left forefinger and thumb. Hackle pliers and bobbins were considered unnecessary.

William Mills and Sons of New York was chosen as the exclusive distributor of Rhead’s American nature flies and lures. Mills arranged for the nature flies to be tied in England. The nature lures were made in America, and it is said that Rhead employed indigenous American women in their manufacture;¹³ still, it is a fair bet that Rhead carved and painted many of the lures himself. He also sold his flies and lures directly from his home in Brooklyn and later in Amityville, Long Island.

Rhead’s *Fisherman’s Lures and Game-fish Food* was published in 1920. It showcased his expanding lineup of nature lures and his concern about the rapidly declining quality of fishing in lakes and streams in America. Rhead felt that the harvest and use of live bait deprived game fish of their natural food and increased the mortality of live-bait-caught fish. Further, he felt that the methods outlined in his book would improve present angling conditions by introducing a new and entirely superior style of fishing with artificial nature lures and flies in place of live bait. Much like *American Trout-Stream Insects*, *Fisherman’s Lures and Game-fish Food* served both as a guide on fishing tackle, methods, and tactics and as an advertisement for Rhead’s line of lures and flies. A pamphlet titled *How to Fish the Dry Fly Floating on the Surface* (1921), Rhead’s last publication, described the latest up-to-date tackle and how to use it.¹⁴

In 1924, Rhead’s oil paintings were shown at the prestigious Anderson Galleries on Park Avenue in an exhibit titled *One Hundred Paintings by Louis Rhead of American Marine and Freshwater Gamefish in Their Native Habitat*. The show was well received.

That same year saw the Rheads moving to Seven Oaks, their country estate in Amityville, Long Island. Seven Oaks provided Rhead with the opportunity to build the trout-rearing ponds that he always longed for. For a good portion of his adult life, he displayed a keen interest in the breeding and rearing of trout, even dedicating a chapter in *The Book of Fish and Fishing* to this pursuit. He also served as a consultant to others interested in breeding game fish.

Rhead continued to paint, fish, and write fishing articles until his death on 29 July 1926. Two weeks before, he battled a 30-pound snapping turtle that had been decimating his beloved trout ponds. The struggle was said to have lasted for more than an hour. Rhead prevailed, but he was left exhausted. Two days later he suffered the first of two heart attacks; the second proved fatal. It was a tragic and unusual end to an extraordinary life. Rhead’s contributions to the angling, art, and literary world continue to reveal him as one of the most innovative and talented artists and writers of his generation. His works continue to delight and inspire to this day.



Guest curator David Bush will be at the American Museum of Fly Fishing on Saturday, October 17, in conjunction with the opening of his exhibit Louis Rhead: Angler, Artist, Author. This exemplary collection showcases Rhead’s talent and artistry through his flies, lures, and original art, which have influenced countless anglers for generations.

ENDNOTES

1. There has been no extensive biography written about Louis Rhead; much of the information in this article has been gleaned from multiple sources repeating facts of his life, such as museum exhibits and collections, auction house catalogs, and his obituary (“Louis Rhead, Author and Angler, Dead,” *New York Times* [30 July 1926], 17). Additional information has been gathered from Lynn Scholz, “Louis Rhead’s First Career,” *The American Fly Fisher* (Winter 1984, vol. 12, no. 1), 20–27 and J. Martin and F. Kibler, “Louis John Rhead,” *The National Lure Collectors Club Magazine* (January 1994), 9–15.

2. Scholz, “Louis Rhead’s First Career,” 23. Beginning in 1902, and until his death, Rhead illustrated many children’s classics for Harper & Brothers.

3. This exhibit is mentioned in Patricia Condon Johnston, “Art & Etc.,” *Sporting Classics* (May/June 1993), 16–18. *Ouananiche* is the First Nations word for Atlantic salmon.

4. Louis Rhead, editor, *The Speckled Brook Trout* (New York: R. H. Russell, 1902). In addition to his illustrations, this multiauthored volume includes a preface by Rhead as well as a chapter, “Some Notes on Cooking Brook Trout.”

5. Louis Rhead, *The Book of Fish and Fishing: A Complete Compendium of Practical Advice to Guide Those Who Angle for All Fishes in Fresh and Salt Water* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908).

6. Louis Rhead, “New Lures That Are True to Life,” *Forest and Stream* (July 1915, vol. 85, no. 7), 396.

7. Martin and Kibler, “Louis John Rhead,” 11.

8. Louis Rhead, *How to Use Nature Lures in the New Advanced Fine Art of Fishing* (Brooklyn, NY: privately printed, 1918).

9. Louis Rhead, *American Trout-Stream Insects: A Guide to Angling Flies and Other Aquatic Insects Alluring to Trout* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1916).

10. *Ibid.*, xvii.

11. *Ibid.*, 7.

12. Louis Rhead, *Fisherman’s Lures and Game-fish Food* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 137.

13. Seth Rosenbaum, “An Extraordinary Angler: The Lou Rhead Story,” *Fishing Collectables Magazine* (Spring 1992), 12.

14. Louis Rhead, *How to Fish the Dry Fly Floating on the Surface* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: privately printed, 1921).

AMFF Honors Charles Gaines with the 2026 Heritage Award

CHARLES GAINES—pioneering outdoorsman, celebrated writer, and true renaissance figure—has received the museum’s 2026 Heritage Award. A sold-out crowd gathered at the New York Yacht Club on the evening of April 23 to celebrate. The Model Room buzzed with energy from the start of cocktail hour, filled with friends, fellow writers, anglers, and admirers who had traveled from across the country and beyond to be part of the night.

Gaines is the author of twenty-five books, including the National Book Award–nominated novel *Stay Hungry* and the highly regarded fly-fishing essay collection *The Next Valley Over*, widely considered one of the finest works ever written about the sport. His literary work has graced the pages of magazines such as *Harper’s*, *Esquire*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Garden & Gun*, *Town & Country*, *Architectural Digest*, and *Audubon*. He has twice received Emmy Awards for his screenwriting, and in 2020, he was awarded the Alabama Truman Capote Prize for Distinguished Work in the Short Story or Literary Non-Fiction.

A founding board member of Fly Fishing Team USA and a former board member of the Atlantic Salmon Federation, Gaines has long championed cold-water conservation and ethical angling. He is the co-editor—with his nephew, author and journalist Monte Burke—of two beloved collections of salmon stories: *Atlantic Salmon Treasury* and *Leaper: The Wonderful World of Atlantic Salmon Fishing*.

Burke was on hand to offer opening remarks, reflecting on Gaines’s singular place in the sporting world. “That unquenchable curiosity; that generosity of spirit; that love of fun, adventure, art, and literature; that ability to age well and gracefully; and that ability to stay hungry—all of it is just like his writing,” Burke said. “It’s worth imitating and emulating, and in the process of that imitation, hopefully finding your own way.”

AMFF President Gardner Grant Jr. served as master of ceremonies, setting the tone for an evening marked by warmth, wit, and genuine admiration. The event’s centerpiece was a wide-ranging and deeply personal conversation between Charles and his daughter, Greta Gaines. Their exchange touched on fishing, writing, aging, travel, and the deeper meaning found in a life spent outdoors. It concluded with audience questions that prompted some of the evening’s most resonant reflections.

“As you get older,” Gaines shared, “your passion for catching a lot of fish—the bigger fish, more fish than the guy you’re fishing with—starts to wane, and you start to appreciate the experience of being there, wherever you are. I’ve had the great good fortune to fish in fabulous places with a lot of interesting people, and that happens to be my focus now . . . though I still do enjoy catching fish!”

Later, reflecting on the spiritual dimensions of angling, he observed, “Every time you cast a fly, you’re throwing a question into something you can’t see. I’ve always seen the metaphor between questioning why we’re here, what we’re supposed to do with our lives, as analogous to fishing in that

Photos by Jack McCoy except where noted



AMFF President Gardner Grant Jr. (left) presents the 2026 Heritage Award to Charles Gaines.

way. Every morning when we wake up, we’re casting a fly into the unknown. I think there’s a profound connection between angling and spiritual life.”

The event’s live auction, led by Letitia Frye, was among the most spirited in recent memory, with more than sixty bidders rising to the occasion in support of the museum’s mission. At its end, the room rose in a standing ovation, and it was clear that everyone present felt the rare privilege of honoring someone whose life’s work has genuinely made the world a better place.

We extend our deepest thanks to the event committee—Tyler Thompson (chair), Topher Browne, Monte Burke, Tracey Clarke, Greta Gaines, Nana Lampton, Galen Mercer, Bill Taylor, and Gabe Tishman—whose dedication and creativity made the evening possible. Our sincere gratitude goes as well to our generous auction donors (Atlantic Salmon Federation, Berkshire Rivers Fly Fishing, BAJÍO, Scott Biron, Alan Bourgault, Jaime Boyle, Monte Burke, Salvatore Campofranco, Cheeky, C. D. Clarke, the Club on the Bonaventure, Mark Comora, Frank Conroy, Derek DeYoung, the Delphi Club, Paul Dixon, Emerald Water Anglers, Rachel Finn, Charles Gaines, Greta Gaines, Justin and Christa Jackson, Eric Kiel, Val Kropiwnicki, Nana Lampton, Jonathan Larrabee, Dan Marini, Walter Matia, Galen Mercer, Montana Rodmakers Guild, John Mundt, Nervous Waters, Smugglers’ Notch, Soul Fly, Poncho Outdoors, Paul Puckett, Mark Rockefeller, Simms, John Swan, Bill Taylor, Tyler Thompson, Travel Creel, Turtlebox, VAER, Jess and Laura Westbrook, Ben Whalley, Emily Whitlock, YETI, and Dan Zazworsky) and to all who bid with such enthusiasm. Every dollar raised goes directly toward the museum’s mission of preserving and sharing the history, traditions, and practices of fly fishing for future generations.





Friends and family celebrating Charles Gaines included (left to right) Jill Selsman, Megan Sheekey, Greta Gaines, Belle Gaines, and Rosie Gaines.

Val Kropiwnicki



This year's Heritage Award was the Gaines Splat Muddler, designed and tied by Val Kropiwnicki.



Monte Burke introduces his uncle.



Letitia Frye leads the live auction.



The gathered attendees raise a glass to Charles Gaines as he gives his acceptance speech.



Greta Gaines joins her father Charles for an intimate and wide-ranging conversation.

2026 Izaak Walton Award to Be Presented to Meredith McCord

The American Museum of Fly Fishing (AMFF) is proud to announce that world-class angler, entrepreneur, humanitarian, educator, travel host, and record chaser Meredith McCord will receive the 2026 Izaak Walton Award. A special celebration honoring McCord will take place on **November 18** at the Briar Club in Houston, Texas, bringing together members of the fly-fishing, conservation, and outdoor communities, along with family and friends, to celebrate her extraordinary contributions to the sport.

Established in 2014, the Izaak Walton Award recognizes individuals who embody the spirit of *The Compleat Angler* through their passion for fly fishing, commitment to conservation, and meaningful engagement within the angling community. Past recipients include Steve Huff, Bob Popovics, Guido Rahr, Nancy Zakon, Paul Bruun, Paul Dixon, Flip Pallot, Tom Rosenbauer, Rachel Finn, Jim Klug, James Prosek, Tom Davidson, and Ed Jaworowski.

Meredith McCord has become one of the most influential voices in modern fly fishing through her pioneering work in global travel angling, particularly for giant trevally and other saltwater species. A longtime advocate for women in the sport, McCord has inspired anglers around the world through her writing, speaking engagements, travel programs, and mentorship. She holds more than 220 International Game Fish Association (IGFA) world records and awards, including IGFA's Top Female Angler of the Year and Grand Champion of the Ladies Tarpon Fly Tournament in Islamorada, Florida.

"Meredith exemplifies the adventurous spirit, leadership, and generosity that define the Izaak Walton Award," said Gardner Grant, board president of the American Museum of Fly Fishing. "Her impact on the sport extends far beyond the water. Through storytelling, mentorship, conservation advocacy, and her passion for connecting people to fisheries around the world, Meredith has inspired a new generation of anglers."

Founded in 1968, the American Museum of Fly Fishing preserves and promotes the history and traditions of fly fishing through exhibitions, education, conservation, and community engagement. Located in Manchester, Vermont, with a satellite gallery at Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium in Springfield, Missouri, AMFF serves as the steward of the world's largest collections of angling artifacts, art, and literature, celebrating centuries of fly-fishing history and culture for anglers across the country and around the world.



Photo courtesy of Collin Huff

Event Committee

Peter Bowden
Connally Burroughs
Dolores Cavatore
Jim Heckman
Devin McCord
Anne McCord Goss



Scan to learn more
or purchase tickets



Museum News

Passings

Pioneering angler and educator **Fanny Krieger**, whose work helped expand opportunities for women in fly fishing around the world, died April 21. Born in France, Krieger immigrated to the United States after World War II and became an outspoken advocate for women in the sport. In 1983, she cofounded the Golden West Women Flyfishers in California. She later helped to launch the International Festival of Women Fly Fishers, inspiring generations of anglers and numerous women's fly-fishing organizations. A certified casting instructor and mentor, she also produced the educational film *Tomorrow's Fly Fishers*. Krieger was featured in the AMFF's 2011 exhibition *A Graceful Rise: Women in Fly Fishing Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, which celebrated the many women who shaped the sport and its history.

And the museum joins the fly-fishing and conservation communities in recognizing the extraordinary legacy of **Ted Turner**, who died May 6. Best known as the founder of CNN and other groundbreaking media ventures, Turner was also a passionate angler, conservationist, and philanthropist whose work supported wildlife habitat protection, clean water initiatives, and environmental health through organizations including the Turner Foundation and the United Nations Foundation. In 2016 Turner was the recipient of the American Museum of Fly Fishing's Heritage Award, which honored him for his lifelong commitment to conservation, environmental stewardship, and the sport of fly fishing.

Recent Donations to the Collection

We were thrilled to receive another selection of artwork from the **Estate of Mike Monier** (New York City), which supplements his Trophy Art Collection received in 2019.

Jan Krieger (San Francisco, California) donated items reflecting the work of his parents, including Fanny Krieger's scrapbook and papers documenting the International Festival of Women Fly Fishers and Mel Krieger's manuscripts, photographs, and notes related to his book, *The Essence of Fly Casting* (Club Pacific, 1987).

Robert Smith (Hamilton, New Jersey) gave us two five-strip bamboo fly rods built by the Robert Smith/Pentalux Rod Co. **John Holland** (Jackson Hole, Wyoming) sent us a Ted Juracik tarpon reel formerly used by 2026 Heritage Award recipient Charles Gaines. An **anonymous donor** collected two West Yellowstone trading coins from 1981 and 1982 for the museum.

Fly tier **Scott Biron** (New London, New Hampshire) donated one of his own Cosseboom ties, as well as two carded streamer flies tied by Ora Smith. **Jack Dennis** (Chapel Hill, North Carolina) tied a Humpy fly for our collection. **Thomas Ames Jr.** (Norwich, Vermont) donated correspondence

between himself and fly tier Al Troth, as well as a set of flies tied by Polly Rosborough. **James D. Heckman** (San Antonio, Texas) gave us fourteen salmon flies tied by William Hrinko.

And for our museum library, **Lance Hidy** (Merrimack, New Hampshire) donated a copy of his self-published limited-edition book, *An Unseen Art: Trout Flies of Vernon S. Hidy* (2025) and **Mark R. Cole** (Leadville, Colorado) shared a copy of his book *Tenkara and the Western Trout Challenge* (Hayden Creek Press, 2026).

Upcoming Events

Events take place on the museum grounds in Manchester, Vermont, eastern time, unless otherwise noted.

July 9, 16, 23, 30
Kids Clinics

July 16
Streamer Fly Tying with Scott Biron
The Chief Needahbeh Streamer Fly
3:00 p.m.

August 1
Book discussion and signing with Arnie Sabatelli,
author of *Two-Thirds Water*
6:00 p.m.

August 21
Battenkill Bamboo Derby
Check in at AMFF

October 16
Annual Members' Meeting
via Zoom
9:00 a.m.

October 16–17
Festival/Open House Weekend
Manchester Dinner
Exhibition Opening and Programming

November 18
Izaak Walton event honoring Meredith McCord
Briar Club
Houston, Texas

Always check our website (www.amff.org) for additions, updates, and more information or contact (802) 362-3300 or amff@amff.org. The museum's email newsletter offers up-to-date news and event information. To subscribe, look for the link on our website or contact the museum.

CONTRIBUTORS

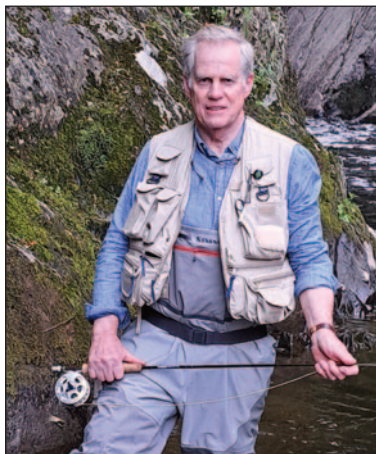
Jim Beattie is a former pitcher with the New York Yankees and Seattle Mariners whose playing career spanned 1975 to 1986. After receiving an MBA at University of Washington, he returned to baseball as the Minor League director of the Seattle Mariners, moved on to the Montreal Expos as general manager, then served as executive vice president/baseball operations for the Baltimore Orioles. After a short stint in wealth management in Boston, Jim returned to baseball as a Major League scout for the Toronto Blue Jays for nine years. He retired in 2018 after almost forty years in professional baseball.

Jim, who serves on the board of trustees of the American Museum of Fly Fishing, lives in Hanover, New Hampshire, with his wife, Martha. These days he explores the small streams of New Hampshire and Vermont, making occasional trips to Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming to fish with his former trainer and fly-fishing mentor, Rick Griffin.

Author photo



Christine Bush



David Bush is an avid collector of antique fishing tackle and a student of angling history. He is a longtime member of the National Fishing Lure Collectors Club. He and his wife, Christine, live on Timberdoodle Farm, their homestead in the High Peaks region of the Adirondacks, very close to his favorite river, the West Branch of the Ausable.

John A. Feldenzer is a retired neurosurgeon, shown here on Colorado's Yampa River with his 21-inch brown trout. He is an angling bibliophile and remains a student of the golden era of bamboo fly-rod makers. He especially enjoys fishing his Paul Young Para 15 and Bob Summers Model 856 parabolic fly rods. His friendship with Baseball Hall of Famer and fly fisherman Bobby Doerr made him a forever fan of the "old" Boston Red Sox. He lives with his wife, Karen, on the Jackson River tailwater in mountainous southwest Virginia, where he continues to pursue wild rainbow and brown trout. This is his fourth contribution to the *American Fly Fisher*.

Calvin Cirrincione



Dee Chatani



Christopher Pibus grew up near the shores of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec, and he has been inspired and sustained by moving waters ever since. He is a writer and retired lawyer now living in Dundas, Ontario.

Pibus studied English and American literature at McGill University, then completed a graduate degree in English and a law degree at the University of Toronto. He practiced intellectual property law for forty years before resurfacing to write fishing stories, including "Finding the Light: Adirondack Art and Angling with John Walsh," which appeared in the Summer 2024 issue of this journal. Recently Pibus was named the recipient of the 2025 Austin Hogan Award for his essay "Lifting the Veil on John Waller Hills: A Summer on the Test Revisited," which ran in the Fall 2025 issue.

In Real Life



*A rendering of the museum's upcoming exhibition
Foundations in Flow: The Four Pillars of Fly Fishing.*

I OCCASIONALLY MENTION my children in the pages of this journal. Time flies—they are now ages seven, nine, and twelve. Raising humans (good and healthy humans!) is important to me, and I'm grateful for the recent book recommendation from my dear friend Val Kropiwnicki. Val is an incredibly talented artist and fly tier who had a solo exhibit at AMFF in 2022 and continues to tie the annual presentation fly for the Heritage Award. I trust and respect him, so when he said to me, "PLEASE read *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt," I did.

The book offers much to consider on the benefits of (unsupervised and even risky) free play and the harms of a phone-based childhood, but I want to draw on its focus on the importance of direct and embodied social activities. Shared real-world experiences are very important not only for children, but also for adults. Lucky for us, fly-fishing culture offers ample opportunity to learn, explore, connect, and remain curious.

With that in mind, I invite you to join us this October for the American Museum of Fly Fishing's Festival and Open House Weekend. We've reimaged our festival event with a new format in a new season, but our purpose remains the same: bring people together around a shared love of our sport.

What could be more fitting than celebrating fly fishing in the very building that proudly preserves its history? Throughout the weekend, the museum will transform into an immersive experience filled with demonstrations, conversations, exhibitions, hands-on activities, and opportunities to connect with fellow anglers, collectors, artists, and friends. Most importantly, it will be a chance to experience the sense of community at the core of fly fishing and our museum.

Friday, October 16

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Join us for cocktails and a first look as we celebrate the opening of *Foundations in Flow: The Four Pillars of Fly Fishing*. This new major exhibition explores the history of fly fishing through four defining pillars—flies, reels, rods, and the arts—revealing how generations of anglers have shaped a living tradition through craftsmanship, innovation, and a deep connection to the natural world.

6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Building on the enthusiasm and camaraderie of the 2025 Manchester Dinner, AMFF is thrilled to host a special evening at the Ekwonok Country Club following the exhibition opening.

Tickets include seasonal buffet dinner, drink ticket, and beautiful mountain views!

Saturday, October 17

10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Throughout the day, guests are invited to enjoy free admission to the museum and access to all exhibitions, including the grand opening of *Foundations in Flow: The Four Pillars of Fly Fishing*. Dave Bush will be on hand to talk about his guest exhibit *Louis Rhead: Angler, Artist, Author*; Steve Woit will explore the influence of Mary Orvis Marbury and the broader history of the Orvis Company through stories and objects from the museum's collection; and Curator Jim Schottenham will provide a guided tour of the new exhibition. In addition, Matt Smythe will conduct a creative writing workshop; contemporary rod makers will participate in a panel discussion about craftsmanship, tradition, innovation, and the enduring appeal of bamboo and handcrafted tackle; Sam Aronson will host an all-ages interactive art workshop inspired by fly fishing and nature; and fly-tying demonstrations and instruction will take place continuously from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Local wood-fired pizza from Cut the Pie Pizza Co. can be purchased on site, and guests are encouraged to explore Manchester using a special shopping map and coupon pack highlighting participating local businesses. Visit our event page at <https://amff.org/festival-2026/> for the full schedule.

The day will extend beyond the museum walls with a variety of experiences celebrating the broader fly-fishing community. Visitors can spend time on the water with DIY or guided fishing opportunities on the Battenkill and nearby streams. In partnership with Southwestern Vermont Trout Unlimited and the Batten Kill Watershed Alliance, guests will also have the opportunity to participate in a group tree planting—an invitation to give back to the waters that sustain the sport and its traditions.

As always, thank you for being part of this community. No matter our age, there is still so much to learn, so much to discover, and so many opportunities to grow. The best part is that we get to do it together.

SARAH FOSTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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