



January 2003

The Conservationist

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

www.pptu.org

Wednesday, January 15, 2003

Fly Tying Demonstrations

Enlightening and entertaining; those are the adjectives that best describe this highly popular annual event. These fly tying demonstrations enable you to see the patterns and learn the tips and tricks that our experts use in tying some of their favorite flies.

The gathering is very informal and allows you to wander around and pick the brains of our talented panel of fly tyers. This is a presentation for novice tyers as well as those who have been tying for a number of years. Everyone attending this meeting will gain new perspectives on this art form. Except for a few minutes for a quick business meeting and a raffle featuring tying materials and tools, the entire evening will be available to visit the tyers of your choice.

Each of the six demonstrators is an expert in both tying and fishing the flies they will tie. In alphabetical order, we have the following tyers and the patterns they will be demonstrating:

Larry Coburn—Midges

John Colburn—Soft Hackles

Charlie Gelso—Caddis

Jim Greco—Crippled Sulphurs

Grizzly Lambert—Stoneflies

Andy Shaffer—Spinning Deer Hair

As a special bonus for people who do not now tie flies but are thinking about beginning, there will be two tables where they can try their hand at tying a simple pattern. One table is for kids who will receive coaching from Ed McClellan. The other is for novice adults who will be coached by Bob Serrano.

We are truly fortunate in having so many fly tying gurus in our chapter and/or our immediate vicin-

ity. We are deeply grateful for their willingness to demonstrate some of the flies that are among those most effective in this region.

Bring a friend and your notebook to the meeting. You are sure to learn about new techniques and materials, as well as what patterns work in our area. Leave your thanks with each of the demonstrators. Tie some of their patterns and try them the next time you go fishing. The final exam will be given by the fish.
Dave Piske

January 11-12

Fly Fishing Show

You should have received flyers for the Fly Fishing Show to be held at the Reckford Armory, at the Univ. of Maryland on Route 1 in College Park, Saturday and Sunday, January 11 and 12. The hours are 9-6 Saturday and 9-5 Sunday. Admission is \$12 for one day or \$20 for both days for an adult; under 12 is \$2.

We will have a table there. So please stop by and say "hello" and maybe sign up a friend with TROUT UNLIMITED.

Although most of the special classes are undoubtedly full, there are plenty of free seminars, talks, and other demonstrations going on all the time. Those interested in new fly tying techniques or wondering about building rods will see plenty of demonstrations on these arts. MD fishing licenses will be available, along with many dozens of tackle

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Meetings

Time and Day: 7:00 PM, Third Wednesday except December, June, July, and August

Place: Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center, 1000 Forest Glen Road, Silver Spring, Maryland

Directions: From Capitol Beltway: North on Georgia Avenue (Rte. 97). First right onto Forest Glen Road. Pass Holy Cross Hospital and go across Sligo Creek Parkway. The Center is on the right.

The Conservationist

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Contributions in the form of articles, letters, fishing news, tying tips, book reviews, and even poetry about trout fishing should be sent to the Editor as plain MS-DOS (ASCII) text or Microsoft Word attachments to e-mail messages containing brief descriptions of the attachments. Attachments received without a description will be deleted without opening.

The deadline for submissions is the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication

EDITOR: John Colburn

(Phone: 202-545-8776)

(theconservationist@juno.com)

President's Column

The new year brings with it an abundance of activities for PPTU members. Here are some of the events that you can look forward to:

In January and February we will have our major membership recruiting events. On January 11 and 12 the chapter will again have a booth at the Fly Fishing Show at the University of Maryland.

On February 8 and 9 we will recruit at the Bass Pro Shop in Arundel Mills Mall. We look forward to greeting our current and past members at these events as much as signing new TU members. If you are, or were, a TU member, but have been inactive recently, please stop by at either of these events and let's get re-acquainted.

Based on many expressions of interest, we are planning another set of classes to teach basic fly tying skills. The schedule is being formulated as this column is being written, so look for announcements of the details during January.

With prospects looking favorable for more normal flows in our nearby trout streams, we are hopeful that Maryland's Dept. of Natural Resources will be able to provide more trout than were available in 2002 for stocking. If so, we will be needing a small army of volunteers to do the stocking. DNR provides the trout, but it's up to us to provide the labor to get them into the streams. The camaraderie that comes with participation in a stocking crew is always a rewarding experience. So, stay alert for the schedules to be announced and then get your name on one of Jay Sheppard's crew rosters.

During the early months of 2003 our chapter meetings will provide you with many ideas on where to go for good trout fishing, what flies to tie for use on local waters, and solve some of the mysteries of what tactics to employ while on the stream.

Also, on a weekend before the bugs really begin to hatch, we plan to have an on-stream workshop where you can see some of our expert anglers demonstrate some of the techniques you may have read about during past discussions on the ppctu.org list server. The ever present mystery of how to deal with drag in both top-water and sub-surface presentations is due for some revelations at the workshop.

Our April, 2003 chapter meeting will be exclusively dedicated to fundraising in support of chapter activities. With no guest speaker that night, we

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President's Column

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will turn the meeting into a sort of trout fishing carnival (*sans* water). There will be a variety of ways for you to spend your greenbacks on opportunities to win valuable prizes, to offer for sale your under-utilized tackle (with commissions going to the chapter), and to have an all-around good time while doing those things.

In sum, just as the daylight hours will increase from now until June, we can look forward to a growing enjoyment of our favorite pastime and the fellowship of our chapter members.

Dave Piske

Fly Fishing Show

(Continued from page 1)

and book dealers and fishing lodges and guides from around the country. It is just the ticket for a midwinter day when fishing is on the mind but not yet comfortable to do.

Finally, with this and other shows and midwinter activities over the next couple of months, do not forget to check over all your tackle for possible replacement. You should fill your waders, one leg at a time, to find any leaks. Look over your lines for fraying, cracks, etc. Take a careful look at all the flies in your boxes: are they starting to fall apart, need a little more head cement, still have a point, etc.? How old are your tippet spools and leaders? Mono can become very brittle with age; most mono is rarely usable after 3 years under the best of conditions. Are your nippers and gadget retrievers still in good shape? Do not wait until the first warm spell in late February or early March to find that your waders leak or a new line or fly would help catch fish.

Jay Sheppard



And don't forget to get a new fishing license! It costs much less than the fine for fishing with the old one!

It's Show Time!

Coming Sports Shows

After Santa flies off in his sleigh with his eight tiny *female** reindeer, it's time for the tackle and gear makers and sellers to show us their wares in hopes that we'll find those items that we just can't live without.

Here are some of the shows—some sponsored by TU chapters and other worthy organizations—that are coming to the Washington area shortly after the holidays:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Jan. 11-12 | Univ. of Maryland, College Park, MD |
| Feb. 1 | Creekside Anglers Tyathon, Bedington, WV
wwwlewis@intrepid.net |
| Jan. 31-Feb. 2 | Old Virginian Fly Fishing Show, Dulles Expo, Center, Chantilly, VA |
| Feb. 9 | Rapidan TU Annual Fly Fishing Show, Comm. Ctr., Middleburg, VA |
| Mar. 8 | NCC-TU 28th National Capitol Angling Show, Bethesda, MD |
| Mar. 22 | NW Fly Tyers Expo, Eugene, OR
It's a good one. I'll be there. |
| Aug. 6-9 | FFF International Fly Fishing Show and Conclave, Livingston, MT
See www.fedflyfishers.org |

I'm sure that there are other shows throughout the region; however, these are the ones I was aware of at press time.

John Colburn

*[*Editor's Note: Male reindeer lose their antlers after the rut—late October or early November. The females do not lose theirs until after the fawns are born in the Spring. Therefore, the antlered reindeer pulling Santa's sleigh were females! Ruby, the red-nosed reindeer? Ho! Ho! Ho!]*

PPTU Mentor Program Beginners and Beyond

Available to members of PPTU current with their dues, Ken Bowyer or Paul Prevost will conduct one-on-one streamside flyfishing instruction. Interested members must show commitment by having waders or hipsters, a rod and reel outfit, and leader. Discussions will include equipment, knots, casting, flies, dry fly and nymphing techniques, entomology, reading water, conservation, etc. at nearby streams. Instruction will be tailored to individual needs.

Beginners should contact Ken at 301-627-7154 or e-mail: kenbowyer@comcast.net

For advanced instruction contact Paul at 202-244-0168 or e-mail: pprevost@hotmail.com

Patuxent Report

Hunting season will continue through most of February in some sections of the Park, so be careful.

It is unclear if the current state budget problem will allow the state to obtain some brown trout for stocking our local streams next year. Also, we are still in a drought, as our current ground water levels are still far from normal. If we do stock browns next spring, we may again be faced with a very dry summer and dead trout. Stay tuned.

If you have not helped in the past and want to help stock trout this year, call or email me (301-725-5559 or jmsheppar@aol.com) BEFORE the February meeting or sign up at the January or February monthly meetings.

If you have not helped on this activity, you must have chest waders and be able to help on a week-day. Although this is strenuous work, it is very rewarding, as you may get to see 1.5–2.5 miles of stream.

Those already on my E-mail list need not contact me, unless they have a new E-mail address.

Jay Sheppard

Getting Started

Basic Fly Tying Tools

When you see the fly tying demonstrations at the January 15 meeting, you'll have the itch to start tying your own flies. I'll pass along my suggestions for a *starting* fly tying tool outfit—things that I learned from experience in more than a half century of fly tying.

Fly tying vise. I know the old-timers tied wonderful flies without one, but that's because there weren't any available or they were too expensive. You'll probably be a better tyer if you learn to tie on a simple vise. My suggestion is a Thompson Model A, costing about 40 bucks. If that stretches your budget, buy one of the Indian knockoffs for half that, and as soon as you can buy a set of Thompson Model A jaws to replace the Indian ones. That will set you back about \$15.

Scissors. Get the best you can afford. Get a pair with short fine points and large finger loops; I'd suggest the Dr. Slick Arrow Points, which will cost about \$20

Hackle pliers. I like the English type best. Figure about \$5-10 for a pair.

Whip finisher. One of the fly tying writers wrote, "There are two kinds of whip finishers: the

Matarelli and all the others." 'Nuf said. Fifteen to 20 bucks for the real thing; ten for the imitations. Bodkin Don't buy one. I haven't in more than 30 years. Beg, borrow, steal, or buy stout needle with a sharp point. Break off the eye and stick the eye end in a wine bottle cork or a piece of wood about the diameter of a pencil about 3" long. Use a drop of super-glue to secure it.

With these tools you should be able to tie just about any fly that you'd use for trout, bass, and panfish, and you're only out about 60 bucks. Later you can and will buy other and fancier tools, but I can bet that your flies won't be any better or catch more fish.

John Colburn

A Special Area Holmes Run

More than a decade of quiet, behind the scene work will come to fruition in January with the stocking of trout and the establishment of a Delayed Harvest Area on Holmes Run from the Lake Barcroft dam to Alexandria. The Holmes Run special area features a higher gradient than Accotink Creek, the other Delayed Harvest stream in Fairfax County, and open, rocky pools and riffles. Since the stream in this area is buffered by Lake Barcroft, it also has a higher insect and native fish population.

The first stocking on this stream is scheduled on January 7 with January 9 as an alternate bad weather date. We are planning a small "throw out the first trout" ceremony with local state politicians, VDGIF Commissioners, and news reporters for the first stocking. A stream clean up is planned for later in the year.

Glasgow Middle School is situated near the stream valley, and a partnership with teachers and science students at this school is also a possibility.

Contact Burt Weisman (703-255-2579) or Chuck Woods (703-644-4548 or jcwoods@peoplepc.com) if you are interested in working on this stream.

The Special area can be accessed from Columbia Pike, a trail in back of Glasgow Middle School, North Chambliss Street, and from numerous trails in local neighborhoods. Although the region around the watershed is densely populated, parts of the special area are very secluded and require some walk-in. Exercise caution when fishing this area. We have information that some squatters and homeless people have inhabited this area in the past.

Chuck Woods

Tackle and Tactic Tips

More on Strike Indicators

Last month I discussed several aspects of using strike indicators. This is a topic that can consume much space. I will touch on a few other points that may be useful to the average weekend fly fisher.

Multiple indicators are useful in really deep and fast water when using a heavily weighted rig. This works well where a fish may take the nymph at almost any depth. You do not have to use different colors. You need only to watch the indicator closest to the fly until it vanishes down into the depths and then switch to watch the next in line, etc.

These are usually small indicators arranged at 12-20" intervals. Individually, they cannot support the weight of the terminal rig and would be dragged out of sight by that weight. I have seen 4 or 5 indicators lined up on a leader from about the tip of the fly line to at least the upper half of the length of the leader and tippet combo.

The use of strike indicators depends on a very large range of variables as to why they may work well in some situations and not in others. Some of those variables incl. water depth, clarity and velocity(s), how far you are casting, size and weight of the fly and rig, wanting to fish the fly by bouncing it on bottom or just suspended at some intermediate depth, and knowing if a hatch is about to start or not, plus other factors such as tippet and leader diameters (monofilament has resistance to water based upon its diameter).

If using an indicator, then how far to place it above the weight or fly? These and many other variables make detecting strikes easier or more difficult. One technique may not always work in the same piece of water using the same or different nymphs on different days. Fly fishers need to be good scouts and always "be prepared" to adjust!

As a simple starting point for "typical conditions" of moderate flow and depth, I would set the weight (if needed) about 8-12" above the fly and set the indicator above the weight or weighted fly about 1.5 times the depth of the water. I like to see the weight or weighted fly ticking the bottom on most drifts through the pool. This is where most trout pick up the bulk of their food: just a few inches off the bottoms as nymphs become dislodged and drift momentarily.

I may use a dunk-type cast so the weight can go

almost straight down for a few seconds before following the drag of the indicator or leader. Stopping the cast accomplishes this as it is about to straighten out so that the weight is hooked downward at the last moment. This sends it hard into the water column to immediately gain a few extra inches of depth. Unless you are using a cannonball for a weight, the sound of the impact does not seem to bother the trout.

When casting weighted rigs, you must really open your casting loop. A tight loop is not a great way to spend the day—too many hangups and wind knots. Be sure to inspect your weights, if any, from time to time; knots can form *around* them and may cut the tippet with a large fish or snag.

I think that one of the reasons beadheads work so well, besides their color, is that they orient the nymph in a more horizontal position as it drifts along. The weight at the FRONT end of the hook shank counteracts some of the lifting force of the tippet. Unweighted nymphs without any weight on the tippet often ride in an upright orientation (tail down, head up) that is unnatural for most insects.

Again, just *some* of the variables we have with which to contend! To me, that is what makes it so much a challenge.

Jay Sheppard

Getting Started

Getting a Good Start

I am not trying to compete with Marvin Nolte's top 20 fly tying books list (see page 6), but for a beginning tyer his list isn't much help. The beginner isn't interested in designing flies yet. He or she wants to tie flies that have a reasonable chance to tempt fish—established, proven patterns.

But where to start? There must be close to a hundred thousand patterns that have had some measure of success somewhere at some time, and most beginners try to tie them all or as many as humanly possible.

The "tie 'em all" experience makes the beginning tyer stay a beginner who ties a new fly every time he or she sits down at the vise. Tying an Adams, then a Royal Coachman, then a Green Drake, then a ... is not the way to go. Besides, it requires a large assortment of materials, more than the average beginner can afford.

So don't waste your money on someone else's selection of materials. A lot of the time the materials

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Getting Started Getting a Good Start

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in those selections are hardly better than floor sweepings, and like me, you may wind up with materials that you haven't found a good use for in fifty years.

The best way, in my opinion, is to decide on one fly to tie, buy the materials for that fly pattern in one size, and tie a dozen of them—one pattern, one size. Then examine each fly closely. Are they all exactly alike? Probably not. Pick the best example, the one closest to the sample or illustration and cut the rest from the hooks and try again. When you can tie a dozen flies and have nine or ten exactly alike, you're on your way to being a fly tyer. Put those flies in your fly box, clean up the mess, and take a rest.

Next day, tie another dozen and see if they are alike and like the ones you tied the day before. If they are, decide on another pattern of a different type of fly. For example, if your first fly was a Woolly Bugger, try a Montana Stone nymph. Buy the best available materials for the new pattern and repeat the sequence, tying the new pattern.

It sounds boring, doesn't it? But it's the way to become an above average fly tyer. Just like in any other skill, fly tying requires practice. Without practicing tying a single pattern several times, every fly you tie will be an original.

Dave Hughes wrote a good book for beginners a few years ago, *Essential Trout Flies* (Frank Amato Publications, Inc. \$19.95), in which he divides trout flies into 31 different types. He gives good clear instructions with color illustrations of the steps for each type and then gives the pattern recipe and a picture of 4 or 5 flies that can be tied using the same procedures with slightly different materials. He also gives tips on how to fish each type of fly.

If you were to take *Essential Trout Flies*, sit down and tie a dozen identical flies of each of the examples in each type in the suggested sizes, you would have about 1000 dozen flies that would catch trout and most other freshwater fish anywhere in the world—provided you followed Dave's tips on how to fish them. And you'd be a darned good fly tyer.

John Colburn



The Thinking Fly Tyer's Library

Since this month's meeting program is going to get you all fired up about fly tying, I'd like to offer a list of the top twenty fly tying books and a list of the eight "almost" books. The Dec 02/Jan 03 issue of the British magazine *Fly Fishing and Fly Tying* has an article by Marvin Nolte listing the top 20 fly tying books. Since I own or have read nearly all of these books, I have little argument with the cited books or their order in his list.

Caveat: These are books for the "thinking" fly tyer—a liberal education in fly tying—how to tie flies that catch fish, not just copy patterns.

The books on Nolte's list are:

- *1. ***Fly Tying Methods*** by Darrel Martin (1987)
- *2. ***Fly Tier's Benchside Reference*** by Ted Leeson and Jim Schollmeyer (1998)
3. ***Flytyer's Masterclass*** by Oliver Edwards (1994)
- *4. ***Designing Trout Flies*** by Gary Borger (1991)
5. ***Synthetic Flies*** by John Betts (1980)
- *6. ***Dressing Flies for Fresh and Salt Water*** by Poul Jorgensen (1973)
7. ***Flies*** by J. Edson Leonard (1950)
8. ***Fishing Flies and Fly Tying*** by William Blades (1951)
9. ***Professional Fly Tying, Spinning and Tackle Manual and Manufacturer's Guide*** by George Leonard Herter (1941 and many other dates)
- *10. ***Fly Tying*** by Helen Shaw (1963)
11. ***The Master Fly Weaver*** by George Grant (1980)
- *12. ***Mastering the Art of Fly Tying*** by Richard W. Talleur (1979)
13. ***The Trout Fly Dresser's Cabinet of Devices or How to Tie Flies for Trout or Grayling Fishing*** by HG McClelland (1899)
14. ***The Complete Book of Fly Tying*** by Eric Leiser (1977)
15. ***The Complete Fly Tier*** by Reuben Cross (1936)
- *16. ***Wayne Moore's Fly Tying Notes*** by Wayne E. Moore (1984)
17. ***Jack Dennis' Western Fly Tying***; Vol. I (1974), Vol. II (1980) by Jack Dennis
18. ***Practical Fly-Tying*** by TR Henn (1950)
- *19. ***What the Trout Said*** By Datus C. Proper (1982)
20. ***The Art of Fly Making*** by William Blacker (1842)

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The Thinking Fly Tyer's Library

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Nolte's "almost list" includes, in alphabetical order: ***The Art of Tying the Wet Fly** by James E. Leisenenring (1941); **Fly Tying, Adventures in Fur, Feathers and Fun** by John F. McKim (1983); **Fly-Tying** by William Bayard Sturgis (1940); **Fly Dresser's Guide** by John Veniard (1952); **Fly-Tying Problems and Their Answers** by John Veniard and Donald Downs (1970); **Fly-Tying as an Art** by CF Walker (1957); **Modern Trout Fly Dressing** by Roger Wooley (1950); and **Old Flies in New Dresses** by CE Walker (1898).

Since several of the books are British and many of the others are out of print and hard to find and/or extremely expensive, I've designated with an asterisk (*) my choice of the books that are in print or fairly easy to find in used book stores or on-line. Some of those books have been published in later editions than those shown by Nolte.

These books are not pattern-only books or books limited to particular fish species, specific materials or certain types of flies. Also, Nolte did not include books that contained only a chapter or two on fly tying or books that contained more pictures than words. Some of the books, notably Leeson's and Schollmeyer's **Benchside Reference** and Helen Shaw's **Fly Tying**, do not tell how to tie a single fly, but explain the various processes involved in tying almost any fly.

Marvin Nolte of Bar Nunn, Wyoming (find that in your Rand-McNally), is a student of and an instructor in fly-tying and an internationally known tyer of classic Atlantic salmon flies. One of his demonstrations at flyfishing shows is tying a fly in hand, sans vise. His advice is to try it sometime; it will make you appreciate what the old-timers were able to do and to appreciate your fly-tying vise.

John Colburn
AKA Phly_Tyer



The Last Word

Such a deal I got!

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tions to almost any place within a ten mile radius; who would tell you road conditions or where the next motel was; who gave you a friendly smile and a cheery greeting. And every once in a while, the guy was a gal.

Now, with a credit card, you don't have to come face to face with a real person, and if you ask directions or road conditions, you get a dazed look and a "Huh?" If you want a light bulb, wiper blade, or fan belt replaced, you're lucky if you can by paying a hefty "service" charge, even if you furnish the part—and you usually have to. Often you have to get it done at a dealer's garage—and then paying for overhead charge and more.

Well, folks, while I'm not denying that the price of rods, reels, lines, and everything else is too high, it's not the local dealer who sets those prices. When you buy that stuff on eBay or at —Mart, you're denying that profit margin that keeps his shop in business. The minute profit from flies and tippet material and other small items won't pay the rent, light bill, small salaries, insurance, and all the other expenses required to keep a shop open. And you wonder why, when you bring in that line you got at —Mart and want it loaded on the reel you got for 55% of list on eBay, the guy behind the counter makes you pay for the backing that was often free when you bought the reel and line at the shop.

Try finding out what's working on Muddy Creek or when the shad run will start on the river from eBay. Ask the clerk at —Mart, if you can find one, to rig up that rod and reel outfit you got for such a bargain. These and all the other free services you used to get at the local shop aren't available on-line or at —Mart.

As more people do their major item buying on eBay and at —Mart, that friendly guy at the fly shop is going to go the way of the pump-jock of recent history. What are you going to do then?

Such a deal I got!

John Colburn
Editor

REST IN PEACE

ROCKVILLE TRADING POST, ROD RACK,
THE MAYFLY, ON THE FLY, MOSSY CREEK
OUTFITTERS, LAUREL FISHING AND HUNTING,
GENTLEMAN HUNTER, AND MORE
GONE SINCE 1995

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Membership

THE POTOMAC-PATUXENT CHAPTER of Trout Unlimited has two membership categories: **Regular or Family** (\$15/year assessment) or **Student** (free). The Chapter operates on a September-to-September basis. The assessment is totally separate from Trout Unlimited dues. Send correspondence, change of address, or assessment payable to POTOMAC-PATUXENT TROUT UNLIMITED, PO Box 2865, Wheaton, MD 20915.

Chapter and national TU expiration dates are indicated in the mailing label as PP-0903 or NTU-0903.

First time visitors receive two free issues of this publication.

The Last Word

Such a deal I got!

The other night in a rag-chewing session among a bunch of us fly fishers, fly tyers, and hangers-on, the subject of buying fly fishing gear came up and branched into buying on the Internet, particularly on e-Bay. Some were bragging about the lower than list prices available that way, citing some of the deals they made.

An objection was raised that these good deals and the —Mart buys were taking business away from the local fly tackle shops—an objection that was hooted down by those concerned with getting the best price without considering the ultimate price they're going to pay.

Many of the PPTU members have always pumped their own gas and can't remember the days when the pump-jockey washed the windshield and checked the oil and the tires while the gas was pumping—at no extra charge, all for the price of the gas. All of this is history now—gone because of gas shortages, higher overhead, and the “bargain” prices. Gone too are the guys who would change windshield wiper blades and fan belts for the price of the parts; who could give you direc-

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Return Address:



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January 15 Meeting

6 Demo Fly Tyers

FIRST CLASS MAIL