

The Newsletter of The Connecticut Fly Fisherman's Association

WWW.CTFLYFISH.ORG



May meeting is on Salmon River

From the vest of the President



As we wrap up another season of CFFA activities I want to thank all of you that have supported our events. Our schools, membership meetings, Expo and Banquet all went very well. On Saturday April 19 we held our casting instructions at the P&F pond in East Hartford. Once again certified FFI Casting Instructor Ray Ramos taught the fundamentals of fly casting to the students enrolled in our beginning fly fishing school. When the class was over most everyone was casting a nice tight loop. At our April meeting we had over a dozen expert fly tiers demonstrating their favorite patterns. This year we invited the public to bring along their vices to sit down and tie side by side with our featured tiers and I am happy to say we had a good number of people participate. Our final meeting before our summer break is outside on the banks of Salmon River on Saturday May 10th rain or shine. Details can be found at www.ctflyfish.org
Have a great summer everyone
Gary

After about 11 years we are looking for someone to take over this newsletter starting in September. I will be happy to help you get started with it I have the layout pretty well done as you can see. We have several people that write stories for us to enjoy. Also pictures are very important and we have that. Several clubs I am in don't have newsletters and so it would be important for someone to step forward to take this on.

John Springer

Our April meeting was fly tyers round table, it was a fun night and everyone learned something for sure.





Do remember that these people and the folks that buy tables are our annual day each year support CFFA. None of the big box stores do.

Editor



Rick wants to remind everyone to join us for the 5th Annual Tribute to Gary Lafontaine on May 10th we will have our 5th annual Gary Lafontaine day at 9:00am to 3:00pm Salmon River, Colchester Connecticut, Gulf Road, Picnic Area

This event is in honor of Connecticut's most influential fly tier, long time CFFA member, Gary Lafontaine. Gary's books revolutionized sub surface Fly fishing. Sadly, Gary's life was cut short due to A.L.S. Fly tiers are welcome to bring a chair, folding table, vice and materials to tie flies. The theme of the day is Caddis patterns but any and all fly's can be tied.

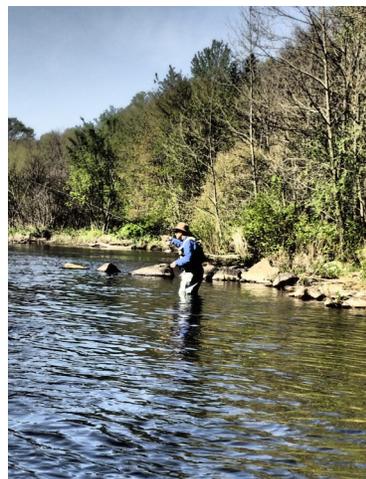
9:00am Fly Tying - This is an informal gathering of fly tiers. Everyone is responsible for their own table and materials.

11:00am We will give Gary's friends time to say a few words about Gary's influence on fly fishing. Fishing is available on the river all day.

Everyone is responsible for their own food and beverages. Grills are available. ***If raining we will not tie flies, but will still gather and fish.

Thanks!! See you then.

On the left you see Carl Ochnio first fish of 2025 on the right you see my first fish how about your picture of yours?



A Mother's Day Catch

By Carl Ochnio



My current Fish-Mobile is a twenty-two-year-old SUV affectionately known as the White Whale Version 2.0. It has been a part of my life for the last four years.

My mother, the original owner, bought this SUV after my father passed away. She moved to a retirement community in central Florida to escape the harsh New England winters, soak up the sunshine, and enjoy the good life. My brother and his wife had already relocated to Florida, and my mother had long-time family friends nearby. She loved her new home and her brand-new SUV.

Connie was among the first casualties of the COVID-19 pandemic. Looking back, I admire her "bold" late-life adventure, which led to some amazing experiences in her final years. Her significant move turned out well, and she treasured every moment.

After my brother and I cleared her estate, her SUV was one of the remaining assets. My brother checked the mileage, and after 18 years of use, the car had about 40,000 miles on the odometer. Stan is quite knowledgeable about cars and felt that the vehicle was mechanically sound. However, after years of baking in the Florida sun, the exterior and interior showed signs of wear. He believed it could be restored with a bit of tender loving care (TLC).

My brother crossed his fingers and held his breath as he drove it to his home on Florida's east coast. He arranged for it to be shipped back to Connecticut, where it arrived on a flatbed truck. After paying the driver, I took it home and began the process of making it roadworthy. The vehicle needed painting, engine and drivetrain maintenance, brake repairs, suspension work, and air conditioning repairs. My sons contributed to the effort by upgrading the sound system, enabling me to enjoy music and listen to my favorite podcasts during fishing trips. It even

has a rear backup camera now. I've invested quite a bit into the restoration. Dave, our family mechanic, initially thought I might have lost my mind, but he is starting to appreciate my efforts to keep the SUV running.



My mom encouraged and supported my early "on the road" lifestyle. I grew up in an industrial town in central Connecticut. In

my late teens, I was uncertain about the direction of my life, but I felt confident that what I was seeking wasn't there. While many of my friends were buying muscle cars as teenagers, I chose a different path. I purchased a white 1966 VW Westfalia camper, and my Mom co-signed the loan. I'm still unsure how I convinced her to do so. Although I didn't realize it then, the White Whale Version 1.0 marked the beginning of my journey, set me on my path, and helped facilitate a life filled with travel and adventure.

This Mother's Day story revolves around nostalgia and reminiscence, which can help soften the rough edges of the past. The original White Whale certainly had its share of rough spots. That 1966 camper was "powered" by a modest 40-horsepower air-cooled engine, a one-barrel carburetor, and what we jokingly referred to as "2-40 air conditioning"—two open window vents aimed directly at you while cruising at forty miles per hour.

During my college years, I embarked on several thrilling summer adventures to the southwest, working at an adventure camp near Durango, Colorado. Despite pushing the camper to its limits in challenging backcountry situations, it never let me down. I would remove the engine each winter in preparation for the upcoming summer trip. My good friend Gary was always there to help with maintenance. My neighbor once joked that I should 'put a zipper' on the camper since I was dropping the engine out so often.

My brother repainted it to keep it looking sharp, Mom made new curtains, and I replaced the carpeting. It was, indeed, a sweet ride.

It wasn't exactly a speed demon, especially on the mountain passes of the Rockies. I remember crawling up the east side of Wolf Creek Pass on my way to Durango when a colossal station wagon full of young women zoomed past me. After they passed, they slowed down and drifted back, like an Air Force tanker refueling a jet fighter. My front windshield was almost level with their rear bumper. The station wagon had third-row, rear-facing seats occupied by three young women. Suddenly, the automatic rear window lowered; they waved, giggled, and smiled. Then, they flashed me and gestured for me to follow them.

After replacing the eyeballs that popped out of my head, I slammed the gas pedal to the floor. Still, the White Whale sputtered along at a brisk 40 mph. They waved and blew kisses at me as their car accelerated up the pass and quickly vanished from view. Moments like this made those summer journeys memorable, and they are still something I can laugh about today.

I was driving west on I-70, just outside Salina, Kansas, one night. I remember having the eight-track stereo turned up loud while listening to the Allman Brothers Live at the Fillmore East. (I recall that, but somehow, I forgot to bring home milk and eggs yesterday.) Suddenly, the camper slowed down, stalled, and came to a complete stop on the interstate. It was like I had hit a force field or an invisible wall. I had no idea what was happening.

I tried to open the door to see what was happening outside and found it oddly stuck. However, after a few seconds, it gave way. I felt the wind and heard a roar, and it was pitch black. Everything seemed normal, so I turned the key in the ignition, and the Whale started. I took the next exit and pulled into a gas station, unsure of what I had just experienced.

In the station's light, I noticed that the camper's front end was covered with embedded particles of sand and debris. My brother had recently repainted it, and alt-

hough the outer layer of enamel had dried, the paint underneath remained tacky. I entered the station and asked the attendant what had just happened. He told me I was fortunate because a tornado had just tracked east along I-70, which was too close for comfort.

This classic VW Camper had several notable oddities. In terms of safety, it lacked seatbelts and ABS brakes. Driving it on a windy day across the Great Plains felt like steering a billboard down the highway. Due to its rear-engine design, the driver essentially served as the front seat airbag. The air-cooled engine provided cutting-edge forced air heating without a fan. This unique feature significantly impacted my social life, as my dating opportunities were severely limited from December to March. If I were on a date during the winter and was asked, "When does the heat come on?" my usual reply was, "Sometime around May."

So many great memories. What was that earlier statement about nostalgia, rough edges, and files?

Fifty years later, Mom has again set me on the road with a new ride: the White Whale Version 2. While many would choose to retire a 23-year-old SUV and upgrade to something newer, I appreciate my current fish mobile, as it fits my lifestyle perfectly. When I leave it in remote places and at trailheads, others will likely feel sorry for the owner, overlook it, and assume the SUV is too worn out to have any value.

This ride is a significant upgrade from my original adventure vehicle. It includes four-wheel drive, ABS brakes, air conditioning, cruise control, leather seats, and alloy wheels. It can hold seven passengers. Over the past two years, it has joined me on countless fishing trips and has never let me down.



As I drive down the road, I often think about the steering wheel my Mom held when she began her "big adventure" of moving to Florida. Sometimes, I like to believe that a part of her is with me on every new journey I

take, guiding me along the highway.

In the early 1970s, I journeyed west in the original White Whale. Those experiences significantly shaped my path in life. I faced challenges, took risks, met terrific people, learned about myself, and felt incredibly fortunate. The White Whale Version 2 now has nearly 90,000 miles on it



and continues to take me on countless adventures during this later chapter of my life.



Foam Spider
Tied by Paul Dinice
[Tightlinesflyfishing.blogspot.com](http://tightlinesflyfishing.blogspot.com)



Kierkegaard said, "Life can only be understood backward, but must be lived forward." I hope having two versions of the White Whale, spaced fifty years apart, will enable me to accomplish both.

Thanks, Mom, and Happy Mother's Day!



FLY OF THE MONTH

Foam Spider

Hook: Risen 9231 in Size #14.

Thread: Yellow 6/0.

Dubbing: UV2 Fine and Dry Pale Evening Dun.

Body: 2mm Fly Foam in Yellow.

Legs: Round Rubber Legs in Yellow.

Finish: UV Resin.

Tying instructions and a video on how to tie this fly can also be found at <http://tightlinesflyfishing.blogspot.com/> . If you have any questions about this fly or would like to submit a Fly of The Month I can be reached at pdinice@frontier.com .

Yosemite 1999

became an expert in wind knots. They weren't the run of the mill wind knot that you could undue in 5 minutes with a little patience, no I am talking about wind knots the size of a Robin's nest. I think I



and a roll of tippet in about 2 could be putting a line in on 100 ft or even the first thing (hatch). Needless to say, no

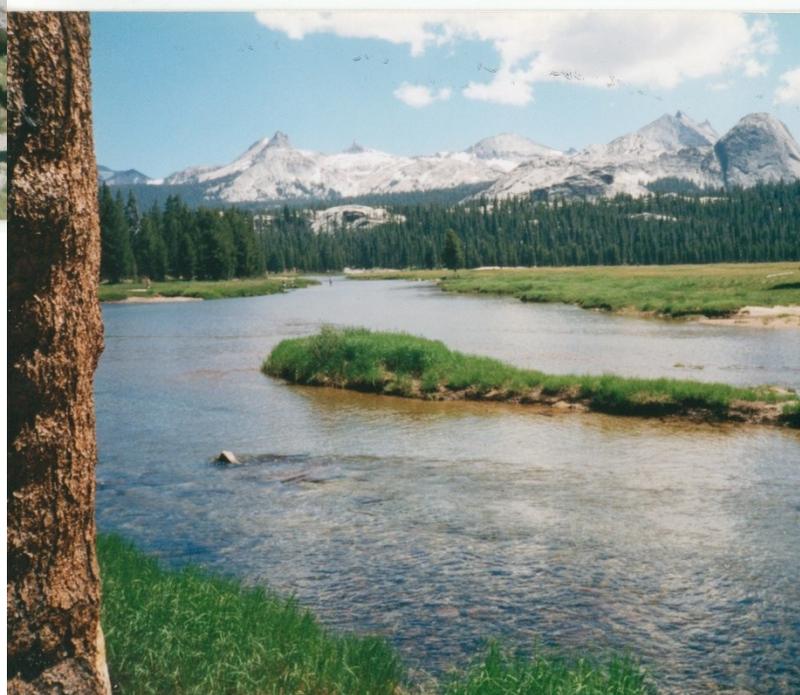
just spent 3 days on the trail lay at a campsite on the banks of the Merced. The two adults were spending the day at a campsite on the banks of the Merced. The smooth polished rock that they had rolled into a large pool about five

It was July of 1999; I was in the process of planning and organizing a 2 week backpacking trip to Yosemite for eight of my scouts and three other adult leaders. The plan was for the twelve of us to break into two smaller six man patrols and cover the fifty-four mile High Sierra Loop through Yosemite's backcountry. We had planned this trek to be completed in 7 days, 6 nights including a one day, one night layover at the end of the third day on a backcountry established campsite right on the Merced River.

Two weeks before the trip, my buddy called me up and said, "You know, with all this time out there at Yosemite, we are going to need to find something to do on our down day, what do you think about taking up fly fishing, it can't be that hard?" We agreed, so that Saturday, Dennis and I took a ride to Upcountry and met Grady for the first time. He set us up with four piece 4/5 weight Cortland rods, a couple of used reels and cheap fly lines. What followed next was a walk behind the shop where we learned to cast. In a matter of minutes, Grady had us casting rods like pros, at least in our opinion. After our 15 minute's instruction and for about \$125 per man we were set, or so we thought.

The two of us headed back inside and found out about those must have extras. We picked up vests, waders, boots, nets, leaders, tippet, forceps, nippers, zingers, flies, Floatant, fly boxes..... I can't even tell you how much more that came that added to the bill.

The next day, Sunday, outfitted with all my new gear, I headed to the Farmington on my own to bring the river to its knees by catching an obscene number of fish. In reality, what happened was I



Dennis and I headed upstream. We each staked out a claim to our own private section of the river and were going to meet up every hour or so to compare notes. Our plan was to enjoy the solitude, communing with nature while catching enough fish to feed the troop for dinner.

The section I had picked was about twenty feet wide heavily canopied pocket water. At that moment, all I heard was the wind in those low hanging trees and all I saw was water passing through the maze of rocks right in front of me. I had read an article on the plane in a fly fishing magazine which I bought at the airport and learned that fish are not fond of direct sunlight, instead they preferred the shade. Well, with the canopy of trees and bushes on the section I had chosen, I had that covered. The article also went on to say, trout like to use rocks and other types of structure as a place to hold so they wouldn't burn too much energy when feed-

ing. Hey, with all the boulders in the stream, I was sure this was the place.

Now I was starting to get ready. Match the hatch, piece of cake, the bugs looked brown, and so did one of the flies I bought from Grady. I tied on tippet and a fly and was good to go. At that moment, all I could see was the water holding fish with my name on them, I no longer saw the bushes or branches. To this day, I will not understand how, but I was able to throw a good single first cast about twenty feet upstream right behind a rock on the edge of a seam without getting caught up in the bramble around the water's edge. I could tell you I was watching my back cast and aimed for it but, that would be a lie. A fish exploded out of the water taking the fly. My memory says it was a 10 minute fight, but in actuality it probably took about 30 seconds to land this monster, an 8" Brookie. I had caught my first fish, on my first cast and a keeper at that. The rest of the day I caught more branches and rocks than anything else. I did manage to eke out another 8" brookie and a couple of smaller 4 to 5" fish, mostly by accident, but turned all but the two eight inchers back to the river to be caught again when they got larger.



Dennis landed three that day as well with his largest running a whopping 7 inches. Being true backwoodsmen we each kept the largest for dinner. After each of the scouts tried a small taste, I think Dennis and I had two bites each; thank goodness for the freeze-dried food we had packed in.

So began my fly-fishing odyssey, 25 years later, I have built an arsenal of rods and reels

and have accumulated more accessories than I will ever use in a lifetime, but still

continue to tell my wife I need just one more fly rod.

The trips continue every year to a different location. Our group has evolved over time,

no more scouts, only fishing buddies or vets from PHW group.

This year, as I start my next quarter century with a fly rod in hand, six of us are heading to

Alberta for a multiday float trip on the Bow River. More on that trip, this fall.

Don LaChance

I want to thank Don and Carl for taking the time to write and send me stories as well as pictures. I am always looking for these for our newsletter. As I have said before you all have cell phones and take pictures and it would be great to share them. Spring and summer is here and it would be great to have more for next season.

Editor

Lines & Leaders

The Newsletter of The Connecticut Fly Fisherman's Association

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