

The Newsletter of The Connecticut Fly Fisherman's Association

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May 2022



Connecticut Fly Fisherman's Association - Tribute to Gary Lafontaine.

Saturday May 14, 2022 - 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Salmon River, Gulf Road, Picnic Area

Join us for the 2nd Annual Tribute to Gary Lafontaine

This event is in honor of Connecticut's most famous fly tier, past CFFA member, Gary Lafontaine. Born in 1945, Gary started fly fishing at age 8, and published his first article at age 15. Winner of the Arnold Gingrich Memorial Award for Lifetime Writing Achievement, he published several books, with his "Caddisflies", gaining national attention. As a dedicated member of CFFA he inspired many members to try innovative approaches to tying and fishing for Trout and other species. In 1996, he was awarded Angler of the Year by Fly Rod and Reel Magazine. Gary left this world at the age of 56 due to Lou Gehrig's Disease. We celebrate his legacy.

Schedule for Day

9:00am Fly Tying - This is an informal gathering of fly tyers. Everyone is responsible for their own table and materials. 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 flies can be tied.

11:00am Tribute to Gary Lafontaine – Come and share a few words of your memories of Gary and his influence on fly fishing. Fishing and conversation available all day. Bring your own food and beverages (no alcohol allowed in state parks). Grills are available. All trash must be taken home. Participants responsible for their own food and beverages.***
If raining we will not tie flies, but will still gather and fish.

Contact: Rick Liegl -djemberepair247@gmail.com



I want to thank Carl for sharing his pictures with us from the Salmon River stocking. Other pictures are people out enjoying our spring fishing, something we all benefit from the men and women who work all year for us to have a good time. Think about that all year feeding, cleaning tanks, water testing and culling making sure nothing goes wrong.



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From the vest of the President



This is your final newsletter until the beginning of September. I thank all of you for sticking with us through the last two years. They certainly have been trying but it looks like better times lie ahead.

Our April Zoom meeting featured Brian Eltz, Senior Fisheries Biologist, CT DEEP Fisheries Division. Brian explained what is happening currently with the trout fishing in our state. We are very lucky to have a passionate dedicated individual like Brian working for all of the trout anglers in our state.

Our CFFA BOD has decided that our May meeting is going to be held outside at Salmon River on Saturday May 14. It will be held in conjunction with our tribute to Gary LaFontaine. You will have the opportunity to get together with fellow CFFA members in a safe setting to do whatever you want to do. Details of the event are in this newsletter. We are hoping that this event is well supported and we want to make this an annual CFFA happening that includes our May meeting.

At our April BOD meeting we voted unanimously to become an Affiliate Club of Fly Fishers International and to purchase our CFFA insurance policy through FFI. CFFA member Ed Bowsza was instrumental in helping us make this decision. Ed explained insurance details we needed to know and answered every question put for by our BOD before our vote was taken. When needed we plan to take advantage of the many benefits offered by FFI to affiliate clubs. Many of you might already be a member of FFI and know what they do to promote fly fishing but for those of you that know nothing about them here is a link to their website. <https://www.flyfishersinternational.org>

I am sorry to tell you that our Fly Tying Workshop at UCONN was cancelled due to low enrollment. Pete Naples and I are continuing our talks with UCONN in an effort to make this event happen. The group we are working with at the university are still excited about this and are determined to make it happen.

We had a crew and a plan in place to Float Stock the Cole W Wilde TMA on the Willimantic River scheduled for April 8 but the heavy rain the night before made it unsafe to do so. The river was stocked that day by the hatchery staff. If any of you have any questions about this or would like to assist with float stocking trout on future occasions feel free to contact me.

Here is an opportunity for you to help measure the water quality of a river or stream. It is called Riffle Bio assessment conducted by the Farmington River Watershed Association coordinated by Heather Geist. FRWA conducts macro-invertebrate sampling days in September through November. This is a great chance for you and the next generation to get involved in a conservation project. Here is the link where you can find more information about signing up for the event. <https://frwa.org/what-we-do/research-stewardship/water-quality-monitoring/aquatic-insects/>

I wish all of you a healthy and happy season filled with successful fly fishing excursions to your favorite locations. Feel free to share your experiences with us in our newsletter editor.

Gary



Great Expectations & Angling Misadventures – Vol. #1

By Carl Ochnio

The recipe for a fishing trip starts with mixing three parts of excitement, two parts expectation and don't forget to add a dash of anxiety. Whether it's a day outing to a local river, or an extended out of state adventure, anglers try to confidently plot out every detail of a trip. When the time finally arrives to pack a suitcase or load up the fish mobile, expectations are high. Hopefully the most current fishing report indicates the river flow is perfect, the weather pattern is favorable, and the hatches are happening right on schedule. Everything is lined up, just as planned.

As an angler sets off to their destination, they may envision a massive fish taking a dry fly off the surface. The trophy forcefully takes off downstream. While holding onto the rod tightly, the drag is spinning like a Kansas windmill in a F5 tornado. Yow!

These thoughts are exciting and most anglers have them. They are typically known for their optimism. Just take a look inside a fly box. A non-angler can view it as just a bunch of flies. The angler sees rows of hopeful moments patiently waiting for their day. For the most part, these aspirations will most likely fall short of how things are going to pan out. Just like hidden obstructions on a river bottom, challenges will often emerge to trip you up. There will be more on this matter later.

I certainly hope your next adventure proceeds exactly as planned or even surpasses your expectations. But here is some advice. On any excursion, things can and will undoubtedly go sideways. Often, when least expected.

Through the years, I've had my share of those, "I can't believe that just happened moments." Many could be prominently listed in The Bible of Fishing Trip Mishaps.

There are a wide variety of challenges that can be encountered on a fishing adventure. Hopefully most will be minor and nothing more than simple annoyances. I've had many incidents I can easily look back on and laugh about.

It's said that confession is good for the soul. I am now going to bare mine. This unburdening may assist readers in avoiding similar blunders, or simply provide a laugh or two at my expense.

I have carefully curated some of my numerous angling misadventures. They are loosely placed in chronological order and clearly demonstrate that I have not become any wiser over the years. I envision misadventures such as these being freely shared around a fishing lodge fireplace or a campfire. If you don't have your own misadventures, or are reluctant to divulge them, feel free to share some of the following. Just begin the conversation with, "I once read about this guy who."

My first major mishap occurred when I was sixteen. At that time, the opening day of trout season was a huge deal. Trout season always started on the third Saturday in April. My countdown officially started on the first day of January. I had a calendar posted in my bedroom, and each morning prior to trudging off to school, I would faithfully cross off another day. There were months of anticipation. Now, move forward to just a few days before I could cast my first line into the new season. My trusty 1962 VW Beetle decided to quit running and it appeared my plans for opening day were doomed. Thankfully my Mom came to the rescue and offered the use of her brand new, 1969 Ford LTD. Compared to my Beetle, it was a boat, a regular land yacht. As my cousin Ed and I eagerly traveled down a narrow dirt road at about five a.m. on opening day, a large vehicle approached from the opposite direction. I pulled to the side to let it pass resulting in the car bottoming out on an unseen rock. The passenger side wheels, seemed just a short distance from a drop off to the river below. On a previous trip, I remembered catching sight of a rather dilapidated looking tow truck parked in a backyard only a few miles away. I left Ed

to fish and walked to the main road, put out my thumb and was lucky enough to have someone give me lift. In the early morning light, I walked back to the "tow truck house" and peeked through the window. At the kitchen table, sat an older gent having breakfast. I knocked on the door, explained my dilemma and asked if the tow truck was operable. He said that it had not been used in a while, but responded with a supportive, "Let's give her a try." Thankfully it turned over and within minutes, we were cruising down the road. Once we arrived at the scene of my misfortune, he quickly hooked the Ford up and pulled it off the rock. He saved the day and helped me avoid a very uncomfortable conversation with my Mom. I emptied my pockets of all the cash and coins that I had and thanked him profusely. Other than my cousin, it was years before I shared that tale with anyone. An incident such as this is best kept on the down-low for a very long period of time.

Here's a beauty. The excitement of a trip to the river can lead to some mental lapses. One morning, in my rush to get to the river, I didn't bother to check my packing. Imagine how I felt when I arrived riverside, pulled on my stockingfoot waders, to then realize, I had two left footed wading boots. At that point, a decision had to be made. Does one drive back home to correct the mistake and miss the morning hatch or choose to forge ahead? I'm happy to report it is possible to wade with two left boots. If one has a sense of humor, you can look down at your feet throughout the morning and have a laugh. What you want to avoid is spending time chatting with other anglers. You certainly don't want to provide any confirmation that you are some type of buffoon.

Once, early in the season, I decided to walk a favorite river to test out a new fly rod and scout for rising fish. I was not optimistic about any surface action. At the very least, it would be a pleasant stroll and I would get a chance to see how the high flows of the spring could have impacted some of the pools. I ventured about a mile downstream when to my surprise, I spotted a fish feeding on the surface. I attempted to string up my four piece rod. It was only then that I noticed it was now a three piece. At one point, I recalled the rod tip getting snagged on some brush. Without much thought, I gave it a tug and kept on walking without glancing back. I spent the remainder of that morning retracing my steps and searching for the missing tip. It was complicated by the fact that the color of the missing section was perfectly camouflaged to

blend into the surroundings. It wasn't easy, but I eventually found it. The recommendation is to always string up your rod before you head into the woods.

There was that one time I was sitting on the bank rebuilding my leader. I had my sun hat on and my much needed magnifier attached to its brim. It was a stroke of luck that I just happened to notice the powerful mid-day New Mexico sun was passing through my magnifier and about to burn a hole in my waders. I sidestepped another mishap and considered myself very fortunate.

How about the day I was prospecting for fish on a river in the southern Rockies. I had been on the water since early morning and it was now mid-day and the hatches had petered out. Instead of heading back to the cabin for lunch and a nap, I decided to make it a day and wait till the fish returned to the surface later in the afternoon. As a result of either rushing or laziness, I neglected to pinch the barb on my #14 Parachute Ant. I netted a fish and as I unhooked and released it, I felt a prick. I looked down at the palm of my left hand and there was the fly, embedded, and quite deep. If was my first experience impaling myself. I was amazed on how painlessly the hook penetrated my skin. I stood in the middle of the river and began to review my options. I chose to head back to the bank and then onward to my SUV. During this trek, per usual, a few anglers stopped me to ask how things were going and what was working. As we spoke, I remember deftly closing the palm of my left hand. I was too embarrassed and again, unwilling to supply anyone with visual confirmation that I was some kind of bozo. My choice was to suffer in silence. When I arrived back at the parking area, I found a picnic table and began to review all the hook removal tactics I had read about. None of these options really appealed to me. So, I laid down on a picnic table with my forceps, gave the hook a quick pull and waited for the moment of pain to arrive. Luckily, the hook popped out as painlessly as it went in. Another very fortunate ending. Now, I am firmly committed to taking the time to de-barb all my flies.

If you ever choose to travel to a back country destination, on a single track dirt road, in a rented SUV, plan accordingly. A companion and I were once about thirty miles from an asphalt road. A storm was brewing, and before the road became too muddy, we chose to head back to our cabin and ended up puncturing a tire. Out came the

spare and jack. We loosened the lug nuts, placed the jack stand on the road and then attempted to lift the car. Ideally the jack stand supplied by the manufacturer, is best suited for use on a smooth, hard surface. So as we tried to lift the chassis, the jack stand disappeared into the mud. The scavenger hunt began and it actually took a while to find just the ideal rock to place underneath the jack stand. If you plan to head into a remote location, bring along a thick, square piece of metal plate to serve as a jack stand base. An additional safety tip, check to see if the rental actually has a full sized spare. Many models now come only equipped with a down-sized or donut type spare. While you are at it, consider bringing along a tire plug kit and a compact tire pump. You can thank me next time you see me.

I feel duty bound to bring up a topic that will effect most every angler, sooner or later. Falling in is another fishing trip, "slip up." It's most likely to happen the exact day one fails to pack an emergency "fall in" bag. This bag should have a complete set of dry clothes. Face it, you are going to take a swim. When you do, hopefully it won't be serious. It will start with a stumble, followed by

5-10 feet of slow motion staggering and wind millings of your arms in a vain attempt to regain your balance. This water rumba will reach a point where gravity decisively takes over, the cursing begins, and you slide in. You will then pop back up, curse some more, then check your physical condition. Once that checks out, the next step is to examine your rod. If that looks fine, then you will immediately glance around to see if anyone has watched your baptism. Falling into the water is just bad luck and it's even worse when you have an audience. If you planned ahead, just take a quick break, switch into those nice, dry clothes and get back to it. Didn't pack a "fall in" bag? Well, your bad day, just got worse. To wrap up, consider purchasing a wading staff. Whoever noted that a tripod is much more stable than a bipod, got it spot on.

My latest misfortune occurred on a family vacation to Pagosa Springs, Colorado. We left town early one day, crossed over Wolf Creek Pass, and then made our way up to the historic mining town of Creede. We continued on the famed Silver Thread Highway to the beautiful mountain town of Lake City. It was exciting, but a full day of sightseeing. On the return trip, we chugged up the east



Paul's Fly Box

Tying instructions & a video on how to tie **Doctor's Sweet Meat Caddis** can be found at <http://tightlinesflyfishing.blogspot.com/>



Bead: Slotted Tungsten Gold Bead, 3mm for Size #14.
Hook: Hanak 450 BL in Size #14 & #16.
Thread: Brown 6/0 Danville.
Abdomen: Small Golden Olive UTC Wire.
Collar: UV Brown Ice Dub.
Wing: Natural Dun CDC
Antenna: Natural Mallard Flank Fibers.
Head: Peacock Ice Dub.

side of Wolf Creek Pass. It just so happens the road parallels the beautiful Lake Fork of Rio Grande. It was early evening, and I decided to pull over, take a break and a quick looksee at the water. As I made my way down to the nearest pool, it was absolutely boiling with rising fish. I sprinted back to the SUV, joyfully announced what was happening to my family as I quickly pieced my fly rod together. My utterance may have been something like, "There is an amazing caddis hatch going on, I'll only be a few minutes." I was into fish instantly and had a "once in a lifetime moment" that anglers often dream about. Then the silence of the Lake Fork was rudely interrupted by the repeated blaring of a car horn. At first, I simply ignored it, but due to its increased frequency, it was a clear signal that my time was up. My family had dinner, ice cream and a dip in the famous hot springs on their minds. To this very day, it is the only time I have ever abandoned a pool of rising fish.

Before I close, here are couple of additional suggestions.

For full self-disclosure, I have done the following more than once. Do not forget those "special flies" you whipped up for the trip. Mine are always left on the tying bench at home. I can tell you that a simple, forgetful moment such as this can take up a lot of space in your head. You probably had tremendous confidence in those particular flies and were convinced they were the secret weapon for that day. This goof up can really throw your mojo off.

This leads to the importance of dedicating yourself to practicing a pre-departure check. Before ever driving off or leaving a river bank, scan for equipment you may have casually put down. I am not the only angler guilty of making this mistake. I frequently spot postings in parking lots and trail heads announcing lost fly rods, reels, nets and camera equipment with a phone number and the promise of a generous reward. During a typical season, I usually find items left behind by other anglers and usually end up contributing my own equipment to this cause. A quick assessment of what I have lost compared to what I have found easily suggests that I'm nowhere close to breaking even.

These are just some of the numerous misadventures I

have elected to share. Remember, this is only Volume One. Anglers that fish long enough will most likely build their own library of tales. Every experience will be unique and one will need to find a way to best navigate through them. Having a good sense of humor will help. Hopefully by sharing some of these moments, they just might help others in avoiding similar predicaments. Fly fishing, isn't a pursuit where the participant can expect to achieve a sustained level of perfection. Learning to adapt to challenges such as wind, changing water flows, hatches, and of course, selective fish are just your regular run of the mill obstacles. When you add in the unknown ingredient of misadventures, it's only then the true recipe of the trip is complete.

Remember, *"The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry"* Robert Burns, November, 1785.

Have fun and stay well!



Lines & Leaders

The Newsletter of The Connecticut Fly Fisherman's Association

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of the month AS USUAL!!

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