

The Newsletter of The Connecticut Fly Fisherman's Association

WWW.CTFLYFISH.ORG

Meeting is May 11

From the vest of the President



This May newsletter is the last issue you will receive until our September issue is distributed. We have completed another successful year of promoting the pleasures and traditions of fly fishing. Our final events this spring 5/4 and 5/11 feature our Freshwater Beginner Fly Fishing class where we teach students fundamental river instruction and our final membership meeting. Details can be found on www.ctflyfish.org CFFA thanks all of you that have volunteered throughout the year. Without your participation none of this could happen.

Most all of you are aware that CFFA recently lost our past treasurer Chuck Koteen. Chuck volunteered for this position when asked to by past president Bruce Rich in January of 2013 and served until January 2024. Throughout his 11 years in this position Chuck performed his financial responsibilities and so much more. He was a kind, quiet, generous and thoughtful individual that was gracious with his efforts to assist CFFA. Chuck was our photographer at our annual expo and banquet, fly tiers roundtable and many other events CFFA hosted or participated in. He also hosted our BOD meetings prior to Covid at his East Hartford Studio and when Covid hit he set up our

CFFA Zoom account so we could continue conducting our monthly membership meetings and BOD meetings. I previously sent out a link for his Obituary and the link can also be found on our CFFA Facebook Page. I can't guarantee this following link to Chuck's funeral service will still work when you receive this newsletter but I am providing it just in case it does for those of you that wished to be present but could not attend that day. <https://tinyurl.com/BETSanctuary>
Gary

We also received this message from his wife Lois a few days after the funeral. "If anyone from CFFA wants to make a donation in his memory, please have them make it to the CFFA! It was a very important organization to him."
Lois Koteen

Ricks announcement for Lafontaine day Saturday May 11, 2024 - 9:00am to 3:00pm Salmon River, Colchester Connecticut, Gulf Road, Picnic Area

Join us for the 4th Annual Tribute to Gary Lafontaine

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 flies 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.

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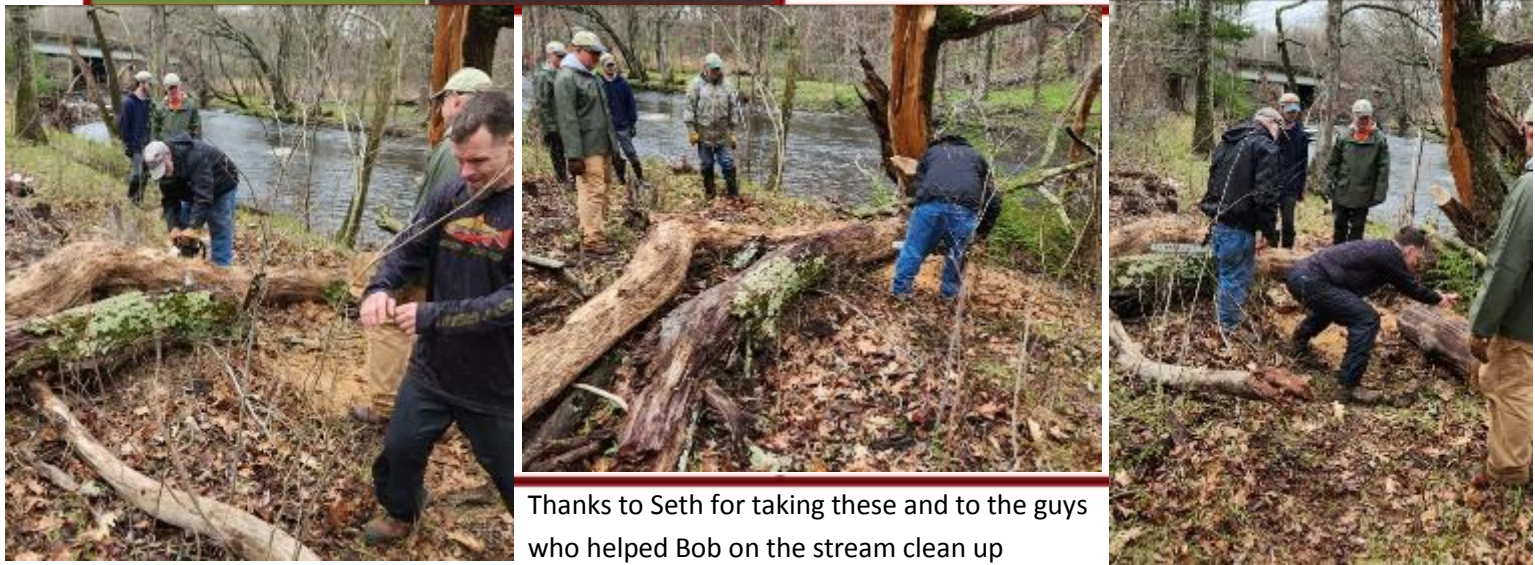
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Thanks to Seth for taking these and to the guys who helped Bob on the stream clean up

Past Club President and long time member Ken Parkany has written us a great story about his long time friendship with Gary La Fontaine here is part 2. This is to coincide with our now annual May meeting on the Salmon River.

My Life and Times with Gary LaFontaine

By Ken Parkany

Second in a Series

A Parody of "Salvation on the Yellowstone"

(FFM Vol. 5 Mid-Season 1974 Article by Gary J. LaFontaine)

As I recall, it was in 1970 that Gary, a Windsor, Connecticut native, returned to Connecticut and joined the CFFA. I was CFFA Membership Chairman at the time. Gary informed me that he, along with his wife Ardyce, came to work as Behavior Psychologists, a pilot or trial program at the State hospital in Southbury, Connecticut. Their decision was driven by Gary's desire to be nearer his mother in Windsor, who was diagnosed with terminally ill cancer and was then married to his Step-Father John Gaudreau.

Over the next year plus, our friendship blossomed at CFFA meetings. In late 1972, while we were together at a CFFA Outing at the Blast & Cast Club in South Windsor, Gary informed me that his mom had passed and he and Ardyce were headed back to Montana. To Gary, Montana was a trout angler's paradise, discovered in his teens by his constant perusal of outdoor magazines like *Fur, Fin and Feather*, *Outdoor Life* and *Sports Afield*. That's why he chose to attend the University of Montana in Missoula, where the Clark Fork of the Columbia River flows through the campus and the city.

Before parting ways at Blast & Cast, Gary said to me, *"I want you to come to Montana next summer and spend a week fishing with me."* My reaction was one of shock and awe. He didn't say it as a question, but more like an authoritative, yet sincere directive. I thought to myself: *this is a very kind and thoughtful guy.* After all, we hadn't

even fished together Connecticut. But I suspect this fact was due primarily to his spending as much time as possible with his mother and other family when he wasn't working. Yet we both knew there was a growing chemistry of friendship between us. Our threads of commonality were CFFA, a passion for fly tying and fishing and the mystery of camaraderie. He had obviously discovered the trout paradise in Montana he'd read about and later experienced, and wanted to share it with me. So, I quickly thanked him and said *"I'd love to do that,"* although I had no assurance at the time that it would even be possible to accept his invitation.

It's one thing for an avid fly-fisher to read and dream about Big Sky Country trout rivers. It's quite another to be invited by someone who can guide you on those fabulous western trout waters. To say I was excited would be a gross understatement. I began ripping out every article I could find on trout fishing in Montana. I spent a small fortune on Sporting magazines and fly-tying materials over the winter and spring months. Gary even sent me many western fly-pattern suggestions. My time as a husband and father took a back seat, bittersweetly, to my time at the tying vise.

Sometime in the winter '72-'73, I recall telling Gary in a phone call that I would definitely accept, and asked if I could bring my uncle, Steve Parkany, with me to Montana, and he readily agreed. I have to tell the reader that there's an incredible longer story for another day about my Uncle Steve Parkany, my dad's youngest brother who was more like an older brother to me, how we became inseparable fishing buddies and novice fly fishers plus how he got to be called a *"Professional Fisherman"*. Thanks to his wife, my Aunt Phyllis, his new title was prominently displayed on a blue sweatshirt, a surprise Christmas gift from her. He was so enamored by it that he wore it for seven days and nights straight. Well, his surprise Christmas present prompted me to surprise him with my own copycat sweatshirt on New Year's Day, that read *"Nephew of the Professional Fisherman"*. For the next several months we attended family events and local sportsman's shows proudly wearing these sweatshirts. Needless to say, we provoked much laughter from family

and turned many heads at Sportsman's shows.

Just before we departed for Missoula Montana in early August, Gary agreed to meet us at the airport with his cab-over RV. He said that Ardyce and baby Heather – yes, that's how I learned of the birth of his daughter – would stay in Wyoming with friends for a week while we fished. Strange, but I don't recall Gary sharing with me when he left Connecticut for Montana that Ardyce was a few months pregnant. How gracious of her, I thought, to let her husband trapeze around Montana fishing with two strange dudes, one from Connecticut and one from western Pennsylvania.

But arriving in Missoula on August 9th, wearing those sweatshirts was a different matter. It was my uncle's idea, and we donned them just before exiting the airplane. We got to the terminal, through baggage claim, and were surprised that Gary was nowhere to be seen. We spent the next fifteen minutes or so meandering around the airport. Gary was apparently a no-show. Now what do we do?

We were beginning to think the worst: Gary had an accident; Steve and I were now stranded in Montana for a week without a clue of what to do; our return flight east was not from Missoula, but Helena, about a hundred miles east, at Gary's suggestion. After discussing ideas, including renting a car and making our own week-long adventure, we finally settled on an optimistic view that Gary would eventually show. Cell or mobile phones weren't even thought of in 1973. So, we headed outside and sat on a bench and waited, and waited some more.

Eventually, my eyes got a glimpse of a dog walking around a cab-over RV at the far end of the parking lot,



about two-hundred yards away. And someone was leaning up against the side of the RV. Could that be Gary? I couldn't tell for sure. I said to Steve, *"That might be Gary way up there at the corner of the lot. Let's head up there and see."* So, carrying rod cases and heavy suitcases, we trudged our way towards the distant RV.

Well, as we got closer, our stress level dropped. It was Gary. Whew!! But, upon greeting us, he said, *"I know you were wondering where I was. Initially I was waiting for you by the baggage claim. Before you saw me, I saw those crazy "Professional Fishermen" sweatshirts you were both wearing and I wasn't about to be seen anywhere near you. I figured you'd eventually find me out here, far away from any local witnesses. I have a local reputation to uphold"*. Then he smiled and began chuckling! And Steve and I still somewhat reluctantly, joined in the laughter. This ended the stunned confusion of two recent arrivals to Montana and dramatically changed into a week of long-lasting fun-filled memories for the three of us.

These memories that were recorded by me on my 8mm movie camera, slide photos taken by Steve and later, to our surprise, by Gary in his FFM article, *Salvation on the Yellowstone*". His article chronicled the highlights of seven days of fishing watersheds that climaxed on the Yellowstone River at Buffalo Ford. And Gary used Steve's slides to illustrate the article.

We were fortunate to arrive in Montana in early August, during one of the worst droughts in Montana history. In the article Gary wrote: *"For most of a winter I teased Ken and Steve with accounts of Montana angling, promising great fishing for their first visit to the west. I wrote, 'The snow melt runs mud in the rivers during a normal year until mid-July, August 9 is nearly perfect for arrival – and on that date last year we fished the Clark's Fork during the tizzy of the Spruce Moth fall, with trout of 10 pounds swirling the surface for the drifting moths.'* But now no trout were swirling...and much of the mountain region was in the midst of the lowest stream levels in recorded history...to make me as the self-appointed guide slightly desperate."

Environmental conditions were so bad, that the Sunday we departed Montana, the State and the Federal government issued restrictions to access and no overnight camping in many recreational fishing areas of Montana. Our luck was bittersweet. Unluckily we arrived in less than optimum stream conditions, yet luckily, we were able to fish streams that the following week were inaccessible. Under the circumstances, Gary's timing was perfect.



With the exception of Odell Creek, a private spring creek, that Gary got permission for us to fish, the rivers and streams like the Gallatin, Madison and Clark's Fork of the Columbia River, were very low. The Big Hole River was flowing at one-fourth its

normal flow primarily due to agricultural withdrawals coincident with the lack of normal rainfall. Trout fishing was not typical of the classic Montana trout fishing I'd read about in the sporting magazines. However, those conditions did not stop us from our pursuit of trout. And our pursuit did provide some amazing success.

After getting our license, we passed up the Clark's Fork due to very low water and drove a dirt road access to a tributary upstream called Rock Creek. I looked at Gary, who was feeling as low as the Montana rivers, and said: *"Gary, Steve and I will be grateful that we got to fish anywhere in Montana, even if the fishing is terrible."* As we parked at the Valley of the Moons bridge on Rock Creek, it appeared to Steve and I very fishable. And it was. All three of us fished different patterns and caught and released several rainbows and a few whitefish until darkness and jet lag caught up with Steve and me. A royal Trude pattern worked best. As we later sat on the bridge watching the moon cast its light on the stream, I quipped: *"What do you mean, this isn't good fishing?"*

"Maybe I'm spoiled", Gary admitted. He later wrote in his article: *"Rock Creek was in mediocre condition, but they were honed on the challenges of eastern fishing, Ken on fine streams like the Natchaug and the Jeremy's*

in Connecticut and Steve on fine streams like the Kettle and the Neshannock in Pennsylvania. They were not going to believe that this was poor fishing. Angling expectations were based on a more demanding set of experiences."

We headed upstream to park and sleep for the night. The next morning Steve and I were, as usual, up at the crack of dawn. Gary admitted in his article, *"while I stayed under the covers to preserve the western tradition of never lifting a fly rod before full sun."*



Steve and I rigged up, left Gary to his "western tradition" and fished for two to

three hours before we saw Gary with his fly rod. Meantime, Steve and I began our first morning using large dry-flies like the Humpy and the Trude. After catching and releasing several trout, some approaching 18 inches or more, I hooked into a monster, that ran upstream towards the Continental Divide faster than I could wade, all the while taking out line and making the drag on my reel buzz like a bee in my ear. When I initially set the hook and the fish took off like a bullet, I yelled loudly for Steve and Gary to hear: *"Yubba – Dubba – Doooo!"*

Reflecting on this moment in his article, Gary wrote: *"It was difficult to reconcile the aesthetics of angling with a whoop (by me) that sent ducks honking south, moose crashing through the underbrush, and grizzlies scampering up pine trees, but as I laughed, I complimented the upstream technique, "Nice, real nice."*

I finally played out the large fish as he luckily stayed hooked. It was difficult to imagine a trout this size in this creek, now tuckered out and just maintaining its position, fly gently removed, in the stream at my feet. It was over twenty inches and likely weighed several pounds. Before I could retrieve my movie camera in my wader pocket, the huge, obviously camera-shy trout, regained

his strength and took off for deeper water. He was temporarily captured by a trout fly and permanently captured by my memory, but sadly not by film. Montana, despite Gary's initial disappointment due to the drought, had already lived up to its fame as a trout paradise in my opinion. We could have left Montana for home that day and I would have been more than satisfied. But this was just our first day a stream.

And, in spite of drought and lower water conditions than Gary expected, we continued to have much success on the Gallatin and the Big Hole. At least Steve and I did. Gary, for some reason, was being out-fished by two eastern dudes who had never fished western rivers. Yet, Gary alluded that even our success was meager compared to a normal Montana trout fishing season. Gary penned in his article: *"We've found pretty good fishing so far but not great."*

That's why when we ended our week on the Yellowstone River at Buffalo Ford with overwhelming success catching Cutthroat Trout, some very large, Gary was led to devote two pages of his article on our experience there. The choice of the Yellowstone River was prompted by the suggestion of Pat Barnes, proprietor of a fly-shop in West Yellowstone. His suggestion certainly paid off for us. Gary wrote: *"There was a glut of rising fish. The trout responded readily to several different patterns: Humpty, Royal Trude, Grizzly Wulff, Renegade and Irresistible...At moments, they can all be like this: Clark Fork, Rock Creek, Madison, and South Fork of the Flathead."*

Gary summarized our week-long experience very accurately. In spite of the conditions that we encountered on most of the rivers, he concluded *"Salvation on the Yellowstone"* this way: *"It was everything that was promised."* My Uncle Steve and I would certainly say *"Amen"*



to that.

Postscript: During our week with Gary, neither my Uncle Steve nor I had any idea that Gary intended to write about our experience. After our return east,

my uncle got his pics developed as slides and sent a complete copy set to both me and Gary. Just before the article was published in FFM, Gary called to say that his submission was selected as a feature article and that he used some of Steve's slides to illustrate the article. Due to an error on FFM's part they gave Gary credit instead of my uncle for the photos. My uncle was elated that they considered them worthy enough to include with Gary's article.

Another Brother of the Angle has passed.

As you read from Gary Chuck Kotten passed away I only got to fish with him one time but we had a great day as he was a very kind and not pretentious person at all. We fished the Quinebaug river for smallmouth bass at my best spot. I asked him several times more to go but he said his legs were weak for the wading involved. I did not get to visit him when I returned from Florida this year as I was only home a few days. He was a great help to me when I had a problem with setting up the pages in the newsletter, as Gary said he did many things for CFFA including many of the pictures from our events you have seen in this newsletter. If you want to see a beautiful ceremony click on the link Gary provided. Shalom Chuck





Iron Lotus Nymph
Tied by Paul Dinice
Tightlinesflyfishing.blogspot.com



Paul's FLY OF THE MONTH

Iron Lotus Nymph

Hook: Hanak H 400 BL Jig Hook Size #14.

Bead: 7/64" 2.8 mm Gold Bead.

Weight: Lead Wire .015.

Tail: Spanish Coq De Leon.

Rib: 6/0 White Uni-Thread.

Abdomen: Semperfli Classic Waxed Thread – 8/0- Olive Dun.

Wing Case: UTC Flashback Tinsel - Black.

Thorax: Arizona Synthetic Dubbing Peacock.

Hot Spot: Red UTC Ultrathread 70 Denier .

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 .

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