

All for the Love of Fishing

By Chris Williams, January 2016

My love affair with fishing in general began as a six-year-old on outings with my father when we would hike into a high mountain lake or fish a tiny high desert stream in southwest Idaho for redband trout. I would hike along behind him carrying a Zebco spinning rod rigged with a Super Duper or Panther Martin lure and when we would reach the stream or lake I'd hunt around turning rocks to find little grubs to impale on my treble hook spinners. Little did I know that these were caddis larva and that these beginnings would shape the passion I would have for the rest of my life.

My introduction to fly tying and fly fishing came three years later when I was given my grandfather's bamboo fly rod and a fly tying kit inherited from a great uncle that I had once watched catch fish after fish in a mysterious way by flinging a fly line back and forth in a most magical rhythm. I spent many an hour attempting to replicate respectable facsimiles of the flies I found in a simple instruction booklet that came with the kit, and I still treasure amongst the myriad materials that abound in my fly tying room some of the old silk flosses and Indian capes that I began tying with 47 years ago.

Long story short, I was a self-taught fly tier and fly fisherman, with nary a lesson throughout the years. Whatever skill I may have acquired was won through much observation, a keen passion and desire to learn, and through overcoming many failures at the vise and on the water. I

always looked at those failures as an opportunity to learn something new, and to improve on my skill as a fisherman and tier.

Tying and fishing for me are totally intertwined. I cannot do one without the other. It is like the old argument of which came first, the chicken or the egg? My creation of new patterns comes from the observation I do on the water and the successes and failures that come about through fishing experiences. As a teacher by profession for many years, I always tried to be a learner from others as well as an imparter of knowledge to my students, and I kind of look at fishing and tying the same way. Throughout my teen years and adult life, I have always been fortunate enough to spend a great deal of time fishing and tying. Now in retirement, that time is increased exponentially. Luckily, I have a wife and son who have always been understanding of my need for solitude and these passions. I currently spend approximately four to five months of the year living the life of a glorified trout bum out of a trailer with my two vizslas, tying, hunting down new out of the way fisheries, and fishing daily while I'm away. Over the years, my expertise, interest, and focus in tying and fishing has really refined itself to the world of dry flies and emergers. I love tying and fishing dries and emergers for difficult trout on spring creeks, tail waters, and still waters. Out of these travels and adventures, are created the successful patterns that I market through a wholesale fly company called JD Flies.

I don't know exactly when I began tying in expos and shows around the northwest, but I really limited myself to tying in one or two a year for quite awhile until I was asked by a Whiting representative if I would be interested in becoming a pro team member. I was interested until I was told that I would be asked to do five expos or demonstrations per year. Frankly, this was outside my comfort zone at

the time. I was just not used to or comfortable putting myself "out there" in the public limelight. After some convincing, I did become a member of Whiting's most distinguished pro team, and over the years it has really become almost a life altering experience for me. First of all, I had always 100 percent believed that the quality of Whiting Farms products was light years beyond anything else on the market. I absolutely loved being a voice for this company, and always considered it both a responsibility and a privilege to be able to promote the products produced by Whiting to both folks who would sit in front of me at shows and demonstrations, and the many fly shop owners and managers I would meet on my travels throughout the northwest on fishing excursions. I always felt like Whiting's biggest cheerleader!

In addition to my total belief and fascination with the science and art of Tom Whiting's remarkable company, I owe a great deal personally to my affiliation with Whiting Farms. As a most humble person never really comfortable with the spotlight, this relationship has forced me to become much more outgoing through shows, video tapings, tying demonstrations, and contributions to fly tying books. I entered a wonderful world of which I never would have let myself become a part. As someone who is easing rather quickly toward his 60s and who spent a long career teaching young individuals, I see us losing a few of the most knowledgeable fly tiers and fishermen each and every year. The experience and wisdom we lose with each of these passings is irreplaceable. I really hope that I can use my position with Whiting Farms to help pass on to some of the younger generation a few of the morsels that I have learned in my years. If I can do this, I will consider my time here a great success.

Finally, when I found out that Whiting was reorganizing its pro team, I must admit I had some trepidation. I knew that there were so many very, very talented individuals who were on the Whiting Pro Team. I really wanted to continue as a member, not just for the benefits and status that goes along with being a Whiting Pro, but for the relationships that I have acquired along the way. I feel so blessed to have made friendships with the many people that work so hard at Whiting including Tom Whiting himself, Tom Mullen, Phil Trim, Colette, the girls and guys that do all the difficult work that no one sees, and the wonderful office staff. I really look forward to my infrequent visits to Delta, Colorado, and try to bring something with me to brighten everyone's day who works there. I also have been so fortunate to have made friendships with many of the members both past and present of the Whiting Pro Team. I am so happy to continue to see these people, maintain these friendships, and to be a very small part of seeing this company flourish.

That said, I look forward to my future as part of this pro staff and the challenges it brings with it, including pushing the envelope with social media, meeting new people both young and old in the industry, and continuing to communicate the benefits of Whiting products to others.