

TIGHTLINES



MAN OF THE YEAR

Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds

JIM TRANER



TL: Congratulations on being voted Man of the Year by your fellow Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds members. How has life been as Man of the Year so far?

JIM: Pretty good until I found out I was going to be interviewed! Mike Benbow did a nice piece in the Everett Herald about our 2011 Conservation Auction and me receiving the MOTY award and my phone has been ringing off the hook. I've already turned down Katy Couric and Tom Brokaw for interviews.

TL: As the Auction and Banquet Chairman you were a busy man then and no doubt for countless days and hours leading up to the event. All the smiling faces in the event pictures are a testimony to that. But one event can't account for such dedication and fun. What makes this club so enjoyable and rewarding for you?

JIM: In all seriousness, it is the fellowship in the club. Yes, we have great informative meetings and excellent fly fishing outings and important conservation work, but it is the nature of this club to build lasting relationships between fly fishers. Put it this way, if you haven't had Steve Murray's chili after freezing your ass off on Pass Lake on New Year's Day, you don't know what you're missing.

TL: I know that the Club wanted to acknowledge your tireless work as Auction Chairman in 2010 and 2011. Now that your crew has held it's debriefing, tell us about the highlights of the event.

JIM: Overall, I think everyone had a great time. We made some money for the club, but what is more important is that I think everyone enjoyed themselves. I hate going to boring auctions. One thing about our auctions, they are never boring. Well, let me take that back. Auctioning off 128 pieces of jewelry isn't really exciting (old timers will know what I am talking about).

TL: Last year's auction produced donations to several conservation organizations, including a tidy sum for river land conservancy acquisitions. I recall your clear statement on that topic, I believe you said "in my view, if every auction dollar goes towards the acquisition of a few inches or feet of river land, that is the most direct way to conserve the resources I value as a fly fisherman." How is it that you came to value the conservancy approach?

JIM: I grew up in Yakima at a time when the damns were being built on the Columbia and logging roads were reaching every corner of the forest. I have no problem with utilizing resources, but I do have a problem when someone's utilization impacts my life style. When I was a kid we lived on the Naches River during the summers and I watched the salmon disappear as well as the native cuts and bull trout. Since the OFF is about fishing and fun, I think it is up to us to do more than preserve our current fisheries; in my opinion, we need to enhance them for our kids and grandchildren. Mike Truax has done a great job in supporting those groups that have that goal in mind.

TL: The MOTY award and Conservation Auction has always been a good opportunity for exposure and we have been fortunate over the decades that it has lead us to new friends in the community and new members. Tell us about your experience finding OFFE and your initial participation in fly fishing outings of the style that you enjoy.

JIM: I didn't even realize that the OFF existed until Phil Sacks took me to a meeting. We are in VFW together and he invited me and the rest is history. I think the best outings I have enjoyed have been over at Chopaka and Blue Lake, although watching Steve Murray try to break a channel through the ice at Chain Lake was fun. I recall coming off of Blue Lake and having wine and crab cakes in Capt. Larry's camp – not exactly your typical end of the day camp meal, at least where I grew up. Unfortunately, I missed the last couple of years since that week is when I am normally down on the Deschutes chasing steelhead.

TL: I enjoyed reading a recent December issue of the Beacon about another special public service event you were instrumental in. Tell us about the essay contest for local school kids.

JIM: One of my other duties in life is being the Commander of VFW Post 8870 here in Edmonds. Every year we sponsor an essay contest for high school, middle school, and elementary school children. The themes promote patriotism and Americanism and we have absolutely excellent participation. I should point out that both Phil Sacks and Dick Simmons are members of my Post. Phil participated in the crossing of the Delaware River while Dick and I were both in Vietnam.

TL: I know that native cutthroat fisheries in the west are a favorite of yours, share with us the story about the fellow who caught the big cutthroat, was it on the Yellowstone?

JIM: Actually what you are referring to is a backpack trip I took with my two daughters on the Crest Trail. We camped on a little lake called American Lake which is the headwaters for the American River in the William O'Douglas Wilderness Area. A couple of teenage kids were the only others camping on the lake and they wandered over to bum some flies from us since they had lost everything they had started with. A few hours later we heard them whooping and hollering and they came over with what was probably a 3lb. hen cut, just a beautiful fish. On top of not having any flies, they didn't have a knife between them (probably dropped off at the trail head by some New York parents). Anyway, they wanted me to clean the fish although I had to fillet it due to its size. Meanwhile my youngest daughter who was probably 14 at the time just gave this kid the riot act over killing a fish that was probably the mother to half of the native cuts in the American River. I swear she had the kid in tears before I was done filleting the fish and I suspect that was the last fish he ever killed.

TL: Thank you Jim, on behalf of all Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds members, congratulations again! Once you have a chance to "bask in the glory" and lay out your 2012 fly fishing plans, what will be at the top of the list?

JIM: Steelheading. I discovered some great lines from Airflo – the Switch Skagit and the Rage. Actually, Tom Larimer who designed the lines gave me a heads up on them. Both are awesome lines. I loaded them on an old Sage 6126 spey rod I had and they are sweet. The Skagit works great with sink tips and the Rage is a perfect skating line. Jack Mitchell and I have traded some emails about them and we both love those lines. I now have a Switch rod and I plan on doing some experimenting with both of the lines on that rod (grain weight is critical). So the next couple of outings will be playing with tips and hopefully touching a steelhead or two.

SITTING ON ICECREAM By Keith Stamm

When we fish the Skagit for dollies there's always a little wager: the guy who lands the biggest fish gets to buy ice cream at the Whitehorse Store for the others. And they have to eat it, a metaphor for "eating crow."

On this cold December day I expected to be the one eating crow. Why? Because I was rowing the boat and fly fishing with two guys up front casting rapalas. My job was to get the boat in the right position just inside the current seam and drop and secure the anchor. By the time I did this and worked out a fly cast my two companions would have already cast and retrieved two or three times.

Oh well, at least I would have the greater pleasure of handling the boat, staying a little warmer, and the pride of doing it my way, the OFF way. One nice fly-caught dolly would be worth several caught with casting gear. I was prepared. I had tied up a couple humongous, white marabou streamers, and shortened my leader down to three feet to keep the fly close to the bottom.

The water above Marblemount from the Copper Creek launch down provides access to quite a number of ideal drifts for fly fishing. (This launch is on the west side of the river about a mile upstream of the Bacon Creek Bridge.) There is good dolly water right in front of the launch, inside the current seam from the top of the pool down to the tailout. (Copper Creek dumps in on the opposite (east) side of the river.

The next drift immediately below is one of my favorites. You need to get the boat to the opposite side of the river quickly, and duck inside the current seam below a nasty patch of big boulders. From that point downstream there are over a hundred yards of perfect dolly water, not too fast and just the right depth. I worked the boat all the way down the current seam, setting and resetting the anchor several times. Toward the bottom of the drift someone up front got a backlash, giving me first shot at the water with my big white marabou streamer, tied to imitate a small whitefish. As the fly swung into the soft current the line came tight and began to peel off my spool. A



My long-time Skagit companion, Herb, announced, "Looks like you're sitting on ice cream." And quickly added, "But that won't last long."



Besides reading the current seams, there is another trick to finding dollies on the Skagit, which is to know the areas where the salmon spawn. Fishing seems to be especially good around chum salmon beds. We have identified these areas from years of floating the river, both from Copper Creek to Marblemount, and Marblemount to Sutter Creek (or Rockport). If you don't have the benefit of our experience, you can often locate productive drifts by noticing salmon carcasses and the beds themselves. You just have to know enough to be watching for these signs.

Generally speaking dollies tend to hang in the gentler flows, often in surprisingly shallow water.

The "Cone Head Drift" just above the Marblemount Bridge is one such area. It seems to be too shallow to hold good fish, but it consistently does. The flow also appears to be too fast, but that's due to shallow water flowing over a rough bottom. Why is it called the "Cone Head Drift?" Because of the number of times that the ice cream fish was taken from this last drift of the day. And that was the case again. Herb lost a good fish right at the boat that would have easily topped my 4-pounder, then on the next cast hung up and broke off. That gave me time to drop down, re-anchor, and get the first swing through the new water. At the bottom of the swing a 6-pounder grabbed hold, and I took my sweet time bringing him to the net.

Seventeen dollies to the boat that day, fifteen on rapalas, none of them over three pounds. Two on the fly rod, both of them ice cream fish. But I was merciful. I didn't make my competitors eat two scoops. If you've ever eaten the cones at the Whitehorse Store you know why.



A Balmy **NEW** Years Day At **MURRAY** Pond

The OFF traditional New Year's outing was, well, non-traditional. There was no frozen lake, no skidding pontoon boats over the ice; there were even some fish caught. According to Mike Bunney, of the eight members who attended five went fishing and despite the absence of a hatch they caught nine of the 24 fish in the open pond. But Mike says it wasn't all about fishing; it never is at Steve and Rebecca's. There were spicy chicken wings, prime rib sliders and salads and beverages, all hosted by the Murrays.

Steve McCracken will tell you the Murrays are great hosts, and the setting is **"The most beautiful 20 acres in Skagit County."** McCracken was among those who put his reputation on the line, so speak, and went fishing, but he had to borrow a wolley bugger from Mr. Murray to do so. ***It seems there was a shortage of dark, weighted wolley buggers, which is what you need to get to the bottom of the Murray's 24-foot deep pond.*** Inside sources report that McCracken, James, Bunney & Murray caught fish up to 18 inches. McCracken says it was unreal, like one of those pay-to-play places.

It didn't look that easy to Jim Traner though. He stood on the sidelines with Norm Primc and Ken Martin, who thought their proper roles would be to give advice, if anyone would take it. Apparently there was one member who was too proud to take their advice, or even to accept the weighted wolley

bugger from off Traner's dashboard. Otherwise, no doubt this member could have caught a fish too. Hopefully he learned a valuable lesson.

Along with the food and fishing, the conversation flowed. Some members learned from Rebecca about pedigree hunting dogs. Mike Bunney and Steve Murray talked about the three-man guide's raft they had acquired and refurbished, and the trips they plan to take down the Methow, the Yakima, and the Peninsula rivers. Ken Martin and Norm Primc talked up their interest in a trip to Merrill Lake, and Bill Scott responded with a promise to arrange a Club outing.

One other thing, you never want to head up to the Murray's from Seattle with a weak alternator. And don't forget your weighted buggers. Steve doesn't have enough for everyone.

OFFE Reporter Ketih Stamm For more on New Years Day 2012 see the insert news.



GENERAL INFORMATION

The General meeting is held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at the South County Senior Center, 220 Railroad Ave. Edmonds, WA. Social hour: 6:00pm Business meetings are 6:00pm on the 4th Wednesday each month at Alf's 4820 196th SW, Lynnwood, WA.

Officers:

Bill MacDonald, President
Wade Nash, Vice President
Jim Traner, Treasurer
Thomas Sawtell, Communications
Dave Gross, Secretary
Phil Sacks, Gillie
Bruce Johnson, Trustee

Chairs:

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William Scott, Outings
John Wendt, Auction & Banquet
Terry Zeitner, Membership
John Schwartz, Education
Beverage Meister, Jeff Bandy

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OLYMPIC FLY FISHERS OF EDMONDS EVENT SCHEDULE

2012 FLY FISHING OUTINGS: See the new Outings Calendar insert.

GENERAL MEETING: Wednesday January 11, 2012

Invited Guest Speaker James W. Cox, Western Rivers Conservancy

(See the December TIGHTLINES for Jim's program description)

GENERAL MEETING: Wednesday February 8, 2012

Invited Guest Speaker Don Adams, LT Mike Adams Fund

The February speaker subject is about Project Healing Waters and the speaker is Don Adams. Don is a fly fisherman, community volunteer and professional photographer residing in Leavenworth, Washington. Don began his photography career in 1990 as a fly fishing, conservation and travel photographer, giving slide show presentations at Sports Shows, Fishing Clubs and Conservation Groups throughout the Northwest so he is certainly not new to this activity. Don was a founding board member for Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing. Don is also a principal in a private foundation, the LT Mike Adams Fund. This fund is operated through the National Philanthropic Trust and provides funding to worthy non-profit endeavors in the area of fly fishing, conservation and environmental education. The LT Mike Adams Fund provides on going funding to the West Point (USMA) Cadet Fly Fishing Club and to Project Healing Waters.

If you are not aware of Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, I suppose the mission statement explains it best; "Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing is to assist in the physical and emotional rehabilitation of the disabled active duty military personnel and veterans through fly fishing and fly tying education and outings". Guys, this is not a warm, fuzzy happy ending presentation. It is about the catastrophic impact of military action and the important results of an activity we sometimes take for granted. Hope to see you there.

Beginning Fly Tying

**Eight Great Classes for All Ages 14+
Tuesday Nights Feb.7 - March 27, 2012**

Taught by: Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds

Venue: RECZONE Edmonds Parks & Recreation

Start tying your own flies to use for fly fishing on local streams, rivers, and lakes. Learn the tools, materials, techniques, arts and crafts of fly tying from members of the Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds, take home all the flies you tie in class.

Location: Edmonds Plaza Rm. (above the Library)

Address: 650 Mains Street, Edmonds, Washington

Class Fee: \$61.00* Supply Fee: \$30 Course No: 14935

Date: Tuesdays Feb. 7 - March 27 Time: 7:00-9:00pm

*** Edmonds residents Class Fee is discounted to \$53.00**

Information: www.reczone.org

Tele: 425-771-0230

To learn more about fly tying, fly fishing, and fish habitat conservation please visit our website:

www.olympicflyfish.com

Contact: Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds

Education Committee Chairman, John Schwartz -

E-Mail: johannkermit@gmail.com