



Fly fishing . . . everyone?

EVERY YEAR thousands of men and women are attracted to fly fishing. Many were inspired by Robert Redford's classic movie of Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It*. I know this is true because at our fishing travel office we received many calls from people who saw the film then and wanted to take up fly casting. "It looks so cool . . . the way the line unfolds back and forth," would be a typical comment. Probably about 20 to 30 percent of the calls were from women.

Not only did *A River Runs Through It* attract direct interest to fly fishing, but it also influenced the media to use fly casting as a background motif in electronic and print ads.

Fly fishing was definitely "in."

People flocked to tackle stores to learn about fly casting and to buy the necessary equipment. They attended sport shows and watched casting demonstrations. How-to-fly cast books were

gobbled up by hopefuls. The movie spawned many new fly-fishing schools, dedicated outdoor shows, several fly-fishing magazines and hundreds of fly shops.

Many neo-anglers, decked out in brand-new waders and the latest in fly-fishing apparel, suddenly appeared on trout streams everywhere.

At a celebrated Latin American light-tackle spa, I asked an attractive thirtyish woman whether she was fly fishing.

“Oh, is there another form of fishing?” she said, not at all attempting to disguise her obvious snobbishness.

In my book, *FISHING PASSION: a Lifetime Love Affair with Angling*, I included a chapter called “Michael’s Great Bonefish Adventure.” Michael was a very successful young man, who decided to take up fly fishing for bonefish. I had not met Michael before and we were paired to fish together at a Bahamian bonefish camp. I’ve never seen a better equipped angler, and this was his very first fishing trip! He explained that he had been attracted to fly fishing after viewing several television fishing programs. He thought he needed a hobby, an escape of sorts, from his work, and his wife encouraged him to pursue fly fishing.

I thought Michael was doing well—he was first up at the deck—but soon he ordered our guide to take him back to the lodge. Suddenly he didn’t like fly fishing. He packed and went home. Just like that.

While Michael’s bonefishing adventure is unique, it is also true that many people who were attracted to fly fishing and fly casting never went through the normal fishing progression that most of us old-timers experienced: First we learned to fish with a cane pole, then with a bait casting or spinning outfit, followed by using artificial lures and finally fly fishing. I believe there is a better sense of appreciation that way.

But today, many—especially younger people or the “now generation”—want to get into fly fishing immediately. Of

course, they realize that in order to fly fish, they must learn to fly cast. They do so via several avenues:

- 1) They sign-up for a fly-fishing/fly-casting course offered at the many fly fishing schools across the country.
- 2) They may have a fly-fishing friend teach them the basics.
- 3) They may teach themselves by viewing the various videos or by reading some of the fly-casting books.
- 4) They may obtain a fly-casting lesson at one of the sport shows or at a tournament casting club, or
- 5) The majority of newcomers to fly casting that I've met have taken a casting course with one of the fly shops.

This book is not intended to teach you the basics of fly casting. There are many superb books and instructors who teach you that.

Instead, the goal of this book is to take the novice fly caster—casters who have had some instruction and can perform a simple fly cast—through a series of casting programs and transform him/her into a good, excellent or superb caster. The level of acquired and retained expertise depends on the novice. Similarly, it will help the intermediate fly caster to become an expert, and, if willing to devote the necessary time, enter that rarefied class that holds the upper five percent of fly casters.

The lessons or levels are designed to progress from novice all the way to a master level.

We operate as a team. I will provide the various casting events/games/disciplines that I believe are necessary to fulfill our goals, and you need to practice them and advance from level to level ***only*** when you master or conquer the event.

Practice is not a user-friendly word to most of us. Be assured that once you get the hang of these disciplines, most of you are going to love these games. Many of you will find these

games not only fun but perhaps addictive.

Some of you will find them so challenging that they may bring out your competitive juices. You may challenge fishing pals in friendly competition: Who can cast farther or who can cast more accurately or both? You may want to start a casting club. I'll tell you how in this book.

You may want to compete in local, organized casting tournaments. I'll provide you with the rules and casting schemes. You may even want to enter World Casting Championships!

Okay, okay, we're ahead of ourselves. One step at a time.