

Klap-TU-Wish Trout Unlimited December 2005

HOLIDAY CONSERVATION BANQUET: Make your reservation today; space is limited!

By Michael Alwin

As of this writing (11/25/05) over sixty people have registered for the Klap-TU-Wish Holiday Conservation Banquet. By the time you read this the list will be approaching the room's limit of 110 and you will be perilously close to being excluded from this year's frivolities. Call **RIGHT NOW(!)** and we will slide you into a spot at what will surely prove to be the highlight of your social season. And here are the details: The date is December 8, the time is 6:00 pm, the location is Tartan Park in Lake Elmo, MN and the price is a mere \$35. After sufficient socializing (or at 7:00, whichever comes first) diners will feast on roast loin of pork with apple chutney, Queen's Breast of Chicken with wild mushroom cream sauce and cornbread stuffing, classic garden salad or Caesar salad, wild rice pilaf with dried cherries and pine nuts, parsnip potato puree and a medley of fresh seasonal vegetables. Dinner will be followed by coffee and a dessert of mixed berry cobbler.

Here are even more details: Our program for the evening will be provided by John Van Vliet, bon vivant, raconteur, noted boulevardier and world traveler, who will regale us with stories, photos and the details of his 120 day Canadian train trip with side bars to historical locations and a wee bit of fishing mixed in. You may register by calling Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop (651/770-5854) or Jon Jacobs (715/386-7822). **The deadline for registering is 5:00 pm on Monday, Dec. 5th.** Tartan Park will impose a surcharge if you register late or walk in without a reservation. And here are the final details. This is, as you well know, our only fundraising event of the year and it's filled with donations from Chapter members and interested third parties. We always have a big selection of materials, tools and tackle, but we also showcase artwork, crafts, delectable homemade goodies, books and assorted foofraw. This year we have many more interesting items in the silent auction and bucket raffles. Do you need a little motor to push your boat around? We'll have two of them at the Banquet. Would you like to take in a wine tasting experience? Six lucky folks will have that opportunity and there are many more items coming in almost every day. If you have an item to donate kindly bring it to The Shop by Dec. 6th. If you carry it to the Banquet please come early enough to fill out a bid sheet and help with set up.

The superannuated Michael Alwin is a long-time TU activist and the proprietor of Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop in Lake Elmo, MN

Figments and Fragments

Knockie Lodge

By James R. Humphrey

Loch Ness in Scotland is 24 miles long, about one mile wide and 900 feet deep. It has been the home of a mythic water dragon, first sighted in 565 A.D. Don't laugh. Who knows what wondrous beasts live in the caverns of the deeps? The coelacanth, a live fish of a species known to have lived 300 million years ago, was netted off the coast of South Africa in 1938. Since then others have been taken in the western Indian Ocean.

One vague and distant snapshot of the Loch Ness monster shows a long neck and a small head rising from the surface, making believers of some folk. Others ascribe the sightings to that heady mix of a lowering sky and a noggin of potent Scotch product.

We took our vacation week in a Georgian manor home on the heights above the loch a few miles east of Fort Augustus and west of Inverness on Moray Firth, the entrance to the North Sea. The lodge was set among rolling hills on the shore of a small lake. Other lakes and ponds were scattered over several hundred acres surrounded by plantations of pines managed by the Scottish Forestry Service. Except for the low slung sky, Midwesterners would feel at home. I had selected this place because the lakes were filled with brown trout.

Commander Bodie, our host, welcomed Joyce and me at the apex of the circle drive. A tan puppy named Zoot curled around our daughter Daphne's foot and peed on her shoes in an ecstasy of welcome. A haughty peacock fanned his tail and screamed. I took a good look at his herl and promised a closer acquaintance.

The commander explained somewhat apologetically that there was only one other visiting couple in residence and that we would meet them at dinner, which would be fashionably late. Duly introduced at dinner, both were teachers at San Francisco State University, only mile up the pike from our home in Palo Alto. We had mutual acquaintances, naturally, in keeping with the Six Degrees of Separation. An evening or two later, the Commander, in a kilt, before a pine fire in the fireplace, introduced us to a golden liquid dynamite which he called a "single malt whiskey." With a smile he added, "The Scots keep this for themselves; it is too precious to export." That might not be a faithful rendition of his statement, but close. Now you can buy a shelf full of single malts: the Scots have learned how to lay up a dime.

Fly-fishers of any state or persuasion would enjoy placing a traditional wet fly on the noses of Scotland's native brown

trout. Because the margins of the ponds were soft, and wading was difficult, I cast from a low-riding rowboat while fighting a constant wind. Because of the movement of the boat the catching was something like drift boat fishing in Montana tailwaters. The flies were gaudy English wets - Partridge and Orange, Partridge and Purple and others of like ancient origin whose names escape me. Identical patterns were no doubt known to Mr. Walton.

I caught trout on every sortie, and they were served grand gourmet style at breakfast, together with pinhead oatmeal, crisp bacon, fresh cream from a local cow, and brown sugar like translucent amber beads.

On that same vacation we walked the pebbled beaches of Loch Leven, from whose waters the earliest eggs of brown trout were taken and shipped to Michigan in the 1880s. And one evening, while seeking a rumored castle that offered food, drink and lodging, on a narrow road on the steep slope above Loch Awe, we came upon workmen lighting kerosene lamps at a section undergoing repair. A crudely lettered sign read, "Be warned, the loch is 840 feet deep at this point."

There seems to be a peculiar tradition at Scottish fishing lodges. Successful anglers will arrange their catch of the day at a small table just inside the front door, presumably for the unsuccessful to admire. The triumphant anglers then go and toast themselves in the lounges. Which reminds me of an incident in Scotland where I ordered a Bushmill's, a famous Northern Ireland whiskey, because I had lately been drinking it in various venues around Belfast. The waitress was horrified. "Sir! You are in Scotland!"

I also fished the River Dee in Wales. The fishing rights were owned by a consortium of rich men, probably outlanders from Manchester or Birmingham; but I was permitted to purchase a day ticket from the local fly-tier. The front door of the cottage tinkled when the door opened and I ducked my head to enter. The little old lady and her father before her, and probably her grandfather before, had been tying and selling flies for a hundred years. But those Welsh patterns didn't work for me, possibly because the sea-run browns were not in the river, but were hanging out at the mouth waiting for a freshet.

Far out on Loch Ness from the heights, against a glitter of sunlight on water, the girls saw the dark shape of Nessie, the ephemeral and legendary monster. I saw the shape of a longboat, possibly a lone fisherman dragging a hopeful line for Atlantic salmon. We see what we want to see. They saw fairy tales; I saw fish.

Jim Humphrey is a widely published author and a featured contributor to RipRap.

A holiday in June

By Jonathan Jacobs

I got a fine gift in the mail the other day. Jim Humphrey sent me a new series of essays for his *Figments and Fragments* that appear monthly in RipRap. As I did the transcription work tonight on "Knockie Lodge" I marveled, as I always do, at Jim's storytelling skills. I'm not alone in my admiration for Jim's abilities. A good friend, who I think is a fine writer, told me recently that reading Jim's piece on Portola Creek had convinced him that he'd never be a writer himself. A little harsh, maybe, but I understood what he was saying. Another friend, one of the most meticulous thinkers I know, told me this fall that Jim's writing reminds him of the passage from *A River Runs Through It* where the Reverend Maclean demands that the young Norman repeatedly halve the length of his essay until only the very best of it remains. There are no wasted words or inept phrasing in a Jim Humphrey essay.

Obviously, the finest gift I've ever received from Jim is his friendship. He's been an angling companion and a mentor. He showed me around on the Wolf River back in 1986, shortly after I moved to Wisconsin. He gave me advice and encouragement when I decided I wanted to try to write an essay for submission to *Wisconsin Outdoor Journal*, my first effort at writing for pay. In fact, he gives me advice and encouragement to this day.

I had the pleasure of going fishing with Jim this summer and I'd like to share the experience with you. Here's a little extract from my fishing log:

On Sunday, June 19 I went angling with Michael Edgerly and James R. Humphrey on Cady Creek on a very warm and somewhat humid day. I picked up Jim at his place. We rendezvoused with Mike at the park and ride lot in Hudson and drove to Elmwood and then to the Galoff farm, through which Cady flows. I'm not entirely accustomed to hanging out with people of Jim's intellect. Shortly after I picked him up, I asked Jim about the new book he thought he might be working on. Jim said he thought he might call it *Trout Fishing for Intelligent People*, since he "can't stand all these books for dummies." He said, though, that it was likely to be "much more anecdotal and discursive than instructive." He also said that he often woke in the dead of night and had to get up to jot down ideas for this book. Jim is not a man to let the passage of time stand in his way. Not long after that, after supplying some background information, he launched into a monologue on man's fascination with the number three and the symbolism it bears (The Holy Trinity, or, alternatively, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the triangle and some other examples). His ideas soon grew so esoteric as to leave me struggling to keep up the mental pace and I was glad when the conversation drifted back to fishing.

From the first time I visited the place years ago, the Galoffs had pastured cattle in their stretch of the creek, a practice that produced an almost lawn-like setting. I thought this would be a great place for Jim, who has to be careful about his footing, but the cattle were gone, much to my chagrin, and the creek was badly overgrown with tall grasses. Jim and Mike headed off down-

stream while I chose to approach the creek at a point halfway between Jim and the truck. I soon found that there was a challenge even greater than dealing with the tall grass: There were pestilential numbers of deerflies set to ravage me. At one point, just before I quit, I'd slap a deerfly on my wrist and another would appear there as if by spontaneous generation. However, I gave it the Jacobs try and if I could find a place to stand while not scaring fish that also gave me a place to put a fly, I could catch brook trout. They were mostly tiny, with the largest one perhaps eight or nine inches long, but, as it always is with wild brook trout, they were surprisingly beautiful.

Between the tough streamside conditions and the heat, it's not surprising that we bagged it after an hour and a half. Mike had barely fished and I don't think Jim had put in a cast, but their spirits seemed fine nonetheless. I partially recovered my fumble on the choice of fishing water by suggesting that we get the hell out of there and head to Handy Andy Park in Spring Valley for lunch. I had brought along marble rye bread, sliced turkey and ham, fresh sliced tomatoes, Swiss cheese, various garnishes, Golden Delicious apples and blue corn chips for lunch. I'd been smart enough to put some Summit India Pale Ale on ice along with water and sodas. Jim had previously allowed that he drank either water or wine, but after Mike spied the Summit, Jim thought he ought to have a beer, too. Lunch was a wonderful experience. There was a nice breeze blowing and we were in the shade. The Eau Galle purred along a hundred feet away. I think both Mike and I were dazzled by Jim's conversational skills. There was talk of politics, travel, trout, public radio, and food from exotic locations and, of course, Dry Fly Dick Frantes. Jim also told me that long ago, he used to stand, unbeknownst to me, back in the woods and watch me catch fish on Jacobs Run on the Kinnickinnic. He is, as Keith Richards once said of Muddy Waters, one of the world's great natural-born gentlemen and I am made a much richer man by being able to count him among my friends.

Jonathan Jacobs is soon to be the Editor emeritus of RipRap.

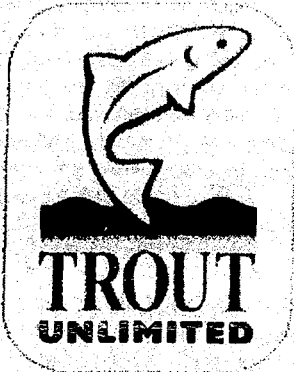
RipRap supporters step up

By Jonathan Jacobs

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President: Gary Horvath 715-425-8489
 (gmhorvat@pressenter.com)
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 (baddog@pressenter.com)
 Ted Mackmiller 715-549-6775
 (rumackmi@pressenter.com)
 Eric Forward 715-425-2588
 (kriteric@pressenter.com)

RIPRAP EDITOR:

Jonathan Jacobs 715-386-7822
 (turiprap@hotmail.com)

MEETING SCHEDULE:

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2005: HOLIDAY BANQUET AND AUCTION; JOHN VAN VLIET, SPEAKER

JANUARY 4, 2006: JONATHAN JACOBS ON SMALLMOUTH BASS FISHING

FEBRUARY 1, 2006: BRAD BOHEN, GUIDE AND AUTHOR, OF CABIN LIFE OUTFITTERS, HAYWARD, WI

MARCH 1, 2006: ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

APRIL 5, 2006: DRY FLY DICK FRANTES FLY TIERS

MAY 3, 2006: WISCONSIN DNR

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