

## Dry Fly Dick Frantes Memorial fly Tiers to tie favorites in April

By Jonathan Jacobs

Our lineup of tiers for this gala event is nearly set. As this issue of RipRap goes to press, we've secured the talents of two industry figures (Scott Hanson, the friendly face behind the counter at Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop, and Edd Twigg, Gander Mountain's fly fishing guru), two cane rod aficionados (Bill Steiger and Dennis Hook) one falconer (very talented new tier Mark Bolton) and one New Richmond resident (Jay Rogers).

This meeting draws numbers of "civilians" from outside our little coterie of trouting goofballs, so make it a point polish up your social skills and to attend this meeting to welcome them.

### Richard John Frantes

By Jonathan Jacobs

Richard John "Dry Fly Dick" Frantes, whom we remember every April at our fly tiers meeting, fished around the last bend eleven years ago at the age of seventy one. Eleven years is a long time in our ephemeral world and it occurred to me that some of you might be wondering who Dick was.

Dick was an able, ardent and intelligent conservationist who worked hard to stay informed on pertinent issues and to take action on them. He wrote to government officials to urge them to do the right thing. He raised money for conservation organizations. He worked hard for Kiap-TU-Wish, serving as chapter secretary for four years and as chair of a membership committee for several more. He made it a point to attend TU meetings both here and in the Twin Cities and was a member of the Rush River-Eau Galle Sportsmen's Club, the Federation of Flyfishers, the Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society and the St. Paul Fly Tiers Club as well. And he rounded up fly tiers for our April meetings, too, which is reason enough to memorialize him every April. You would do well to pattern your membership in TU after his.

You could do worse than to pattern your angling attitude after his, too, because I don't think I've ever known anyone who took more pleasure from fishing and I am certain that I've never known anyone who more enjoyed displaying the persona of a trout angler. Dick was, by any reasonable definition of the term, a character. It was as if he'd read

Robert Traver's stories of fishing-obsessed souls in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and decided that he ought to replicate that lifestyle here. Then again, perhaps the judge heard of Dick and modeled his motley crew after him. He surely did his best to look the part of a cartoon angler. His standard fishing uniform consisted of a U.S. Postal Service pith helmet (which was heavily festooned with truly god-awful looking flies, placed there, I think, to distract fellow anglers from looking at the fly that was at the end of his leader), a khaki shirt with the phrase "Save A Worm's Life - Flyfish" emblazoned across its back, a vest that Lee Wulff himself might have sewn, and canvas waders with old khaki pants worn over them to protect them from punctures. I never quite figured out what held the pants up, as they were never zipped. This created, at first glance, quite an arresting vision.

And then there was "*Deceptive Designs for Fish and Fishermen of Discernment Since 1955*". That phrase appeared on the letterhead of the stationery of *Frantes Fine Flies & Folderol*, the skunkworks fly shop that intruded on the space occupied by John M. Frantes' Sons Plumbing & Heating in West Saint Paul. I'm not convinced that FFF & F ever turned a nickel in profit, but it doubtless gave Dick both an opportunity to surround himself with angling junk on the pretext of earning a buck and to engage in his nearly manic penchant for alliteration (about which more later). I wasn't using the word "junk" in its usual pejorative sense in the last sentence, but as an affectionate term for what a younger generation might call "gear". In fact, much of what Dick had in stock was from the most renowned names in the business, e.g., Hardy, Scientific Anglers and Orvis. Goods from those manufacturers are listed in a May, 1986 "Fire/going out of business/moving/inventory liquidation/ etc Sale" flier that also lists, in a unique bit of advertising phraseology, flies "By over eighty tiers (15 deceased)." Maybe Dick was thinking about how the value of works by Van Gogh had skyrocketed after the painter's death, I don't know. In a separate piece of correspondence, Dick praised one of his suppliers as, "Perhaps the best one eyed tier in the USA."

Dick once wrote, "Thirtysome years ago enough authors finally convinced me to start keeping a diary; whether it be one or two lines, a paragraph or a page; The longer I did it the more sold I became." I should say so. Jim Humphrey, one of Dick's closest friends, wrote this about Dick's diary in the book that he co-authored with Bill Shogren, **Wisconsin and Minnesota Trout Streams**: "His monumental, detailed 35-year record reveals more than 8500 hours devoted to fishing on 271 different streams in the two states." "Of the 10,576 trout he kept for the creel or released, 8136 were brown trout, 1855 were brook trout and 574 were rainbows." I am pleased to report that I have a copy of this magnum opus. Dick came from a generation

of anglers that took pride in ferreting out information ("When we got gas at the high priced Standard Station in Hudson yesterday, [the] attendant noticed my shirt & told me how to get to [the] \*\*\*\*\* right above \*\*\*\*\* & that it is wadable & he gets big, big trouts there spin fishing") and filing it away for future reference. And if you were entrusted with any of this information, you did not, under pain of ostracism, share it with anyone ("Of course, no one should expect a TU member to reveal a secret brook trout spot in less than 5-10 years. Such special spots can be groped with secret grouse coverts & mushroom patches."). Thus, that Dick's cronies entrusted a copy of this remarkable document to me is, for me, quite a point of pride. And a remarkable document it is: Pages and pages of six column accounting work sheets with the streams fished listed alphabetically. There are columns (not necessarily corresponding to the six printed on the sheet) summarizing number of trips, fish caught, hours of effort, size distribution of fish, bottom type, size of stream, ease of access, overall quality of the experience and other details. Because Dick made so much of his lust for secrecy, it's surprising how few truly secret streams are listed. You can look at DNR-published maps of Minnesota and Wisconsin and find at least 95% of them. Then again, can you find "Toilet Seat Creek" or "Mackmiller Creek" on any map? (Kiap-TU-Wish has a board member named Ted Mackmiller. I'm sure that's a coincidence, even though it's not a common surname.) I think there's a lesson to be learned from that: Get out there and do the research and you'll have your own secret places right in the midst of millions of people.

Dick's never-flagging enthusiasm for all things trout related was remarkable. In 1988, he typed out a thirteen point plan for exploring new water in 1989. Actually, there were more than thirteen points, but he abandoned numbering them at that point. I hope to be as eager to explore new water at the age of sixty six.

His enthusiasm was also well expressed. He had a wry sense of humor and enjoyed producing a nicely turned phrase. In an article he wrote under the *nom de plume* The Acerbic Angler (the alliteration again), he described his fly boxes and their contents. "Box 3," he said, was "another tiny Wheatley box I just added in 1989 after the John Gierach books convinced me I can no longer refuse to try near invisible #20 dry flies & 18 underwater flies, unless I want to set a new record for times skunked." He continued, "I plan on carrying Valium & Lopressor & believe I can anticipate my breaking point from past harrowing experiences with Tricos." He began one letter to Jim Humphrey, "Dear Peripatetic Pfisher of Phenomenal Piscatorial Prowess; (Done without a dictionary, help or Roger's cheat book)" and ended another "feel free to refer to me as Despicable Dick, Rotten Richard (the two most

used by my girl friends) or the Ancient Angler, Doddering Dick, the Absentminded Angler...).

This has gotten long and sentimental, so perhaps I ought to wind it up and strike a bit of balance, so I'll say this: While Dick's devotion to conservation was absolutely beyond question, he could be just as wrong and just as arbitrary as anyone. As someone who, in my capacity as a K-TU officer or board member, would occasionally be subjected to an undeserved lambasting by the Acerbic Angler, I'd like to describe Dick with one more alliterative sobriquet. It's a politically incorrect one, but one of which I think he'd readily approve: Dry Fly Dick Frantes, the Bull-headed Bohemian.

## Plan to attend Conservation Congress Spring Hearings on April 12

By Jonathan Jacobs

St. Croix County hearings will be held at Indianhead Technical College, Cashman Auditorium, 1019 S. Knowles Ave., in New Richmond. The Pierce County hearing will be held at the Ellsworth Senior High School Auditorium, 323 Hillcrest in Ellsworth.

Likely to be of particular interest to trout anglers this year are Trout Committee Questions 53, 54, 55 and 56.

Question 53 asks voters if they are in favor of reinstating stream access up to the ordinary high water mark.

Question 54 asks voters if they are in favor of increasing the inland trout stamp fee to \$10 dollars, while the related Question 55 asks if voters are in favor of increasing the inland trout stamp fee to \$10 for resident anglers and to \$12 for non-resident anglers.

Question 56 asks voters if the Wisconsin DNR should seek added legislative authority to be able to deny high capacity wells that could have adverse or undesirable impacts on wetlands, fisheries, ground and surface wells.

The following web address will provide more information:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/nrboard/congress/springhearings/2004/index.htm>

## A suggestion

By Michael Alwin

Not long ago we learned that our traditional winter projects done in cooperation with the Wisconsin DNR had ended (It remains to be explained why we can't do winter projects without them). There is still one project we undertake which can't occur without the wonderful volunteers from our chapter. That would be the Trout Fishing Clinic we hold every spring in conjunction with the River Falls Parks and Recreation Department.

This year's Clinic will occur on June 5th from 1:00 - 9:00 pm. As always, it will be held in the open shelter at the east end of Glen Park in River Falls. As always, the clinic will include casting instruction, an entomology lesson and instruction in streamcraft. As always, the program includes supper and guided fishing. And, as always, we need volunteers. If you'd like to work a full day or half day as a guide/mentor, if you'd like to help serve supper to the hungry crowd or if you'd simply like to pass on a few flies for the students we'd welcome your support. Let me know what you're willing to do and I'll happily take your name and phone number. Contact me, Mike Alwin, at the meeting or call me at Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop, 651/770-5854.

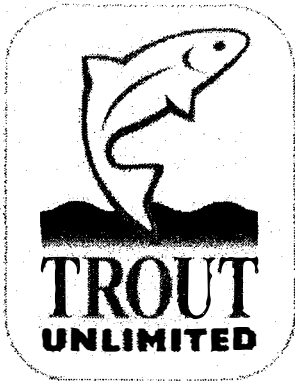
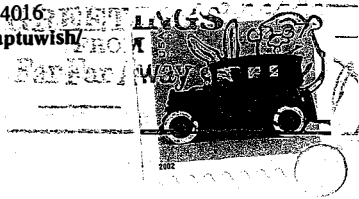
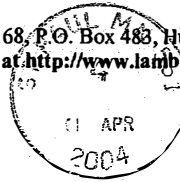
*Michael Alwin of Stillwater, MN, is the proprietor of Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop in Lake Elmo, MN, and is chair of the Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter's Education Committee.*

## Gaylord Nelson bio to be published April 22

From the 3/15/04 issue of WSNetwork News

The University of Wisconsin Press will celebrate Earth Day, April 22, 2004, with the publication of *The Man from Clear Lake*, a biography of Gaylord Nelson, former U.S. senator and founder of Earth Day, who continues to be one of the nation's leading environmentalists. Author Bill Christofferson, a former journalist who has worked in local and state government in Wisconsin, is a political campaign consultant based in Milwaukee. Christofferson and Senator Nelson will appear together for events, both of which are free and open to the public, in Milwaukee and Madison to launch the book. Details follow:

- Tuesday, April 20, 7:00 pm, Harry W. Schwartz Bookshop, 2559 N. Downer Ave., Milwaukee, 414-332-1181
  - Thursday, April 22, 7:00 pm Barnes and Noble, 7433 Mineral Point Road, Madison, 608-827-0809.
- SOURCE: Deidre Woods, Publicity Manager, (608) 263-0734, [deidrewoods@wisc.edu](mailto:deidrewoods@wisc.edu).



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**MEETING SCHEDULE:**

**APRIL 7: DRY FLY DICK FRANTES FLY TIERS**

**MAY 5: WISCONSIN DNR**

**DEADLINE FOR MAY RIPRAP: FRIDAY, APRIL 23**

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