

Conservation Banquet registration deadline at hand!

By Michael Alwin

It's no secret that our Chapter was started by a bunch of guys who liked to fish...a lot...and who wanted to help preserve trout fishing in our little corner of the world. Because they liked to fish...a lot...at the end of the year they liked to do something special for the one person in their households who was responsible for their ability to go fishing. Hence, those first few December banquets went by the quaint name, Ladies Appreciation Night. Over the years the banquet's moniker and function have changed decidedly. With more and more outside interests taking aim at our local trout streams The Committee presciently changed the name to Holiday Conservation Banquet.

Form, as they say, follows function and this year you'll find many more interesting items in the auction mix, not to mention a few other opportunities for enthusiastic bidders. Do you need a little motor to push your boat around? Would you like to take a cooking lesson from an acclaimed chef? How about a long, relaxing massage and a basket of personal care items? Of course, we'll have tackle, books, gadgets, artwork, crafts and flies so we're supremely confident everyone who attends will find something they can't live without. Please remember, you'll be helping a good cause.

Here are the details: This year's Holiday Conservation Banquet will be held at Tartan Park, 11455 20th St. in Lake Elmo. The date is Thursday, December 2nd. Revelers will begin the social hour at 6:00 pm and dinner will be served at 7:00 pm. The menu this year includes a garden or Caesar salad, roast loin of pork served with apple chutney, sautéed chicken breast with caramelized citrus sauce, rice pilaf with dried cherries and pine nuts, parsnip potato puree, fresh seasonal vegetables and a mixed berry cobbler for dessert. The entertainment for the evening will be provided by Steve Kinsella who will present a slide show on trout fishing in the Black Hills. The sticker for all this good food, entertainment and fellowship is a mere \$35 and includes one chance in the drawing for an original watercolor of a brown trout by local artist Farrah Lemmon.

Reservations can be made by calling Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop at 651/770-5854. **YOUR LAST DAY TO REGISTER, FOLKS, IS SATURDAY, NOV. 27TH.** If you have items to donate, kindly bring them to The Shop by Dec. 30th. If you bring the item to the banquet please come early enough to fill out a bid sheet and help with set up.

Michael Alwin, the proprietor of Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop in Lake Elmo, MN, is a long-time K-TU activist and a frequent contributor to RipRap. When he's not gallivanting around Germany, he lives in Woodbury, MN.

RIPRAP

Contem-places:

The Test at Whitchurch

By James R. Humphrey

The gentleman behind the counter shook his head in a sad negative when I asked if I could buy, beg or borrow a ticket to the River Test, one of the legendary trout streams of southwestern England. Evening was coming when we checked into that intimate hotel which was a literal stone's throw from the river.

The air was luminous when I walked the walk to the bridge and leaned on the rail in the probable reflective pose of a thousand anglers before me. The water was glass clear, something like the lower Kinnickinnic following a spell of dry weather. At the margins the weeds were thick but tailing sinuously in the slow and complex currents. So, this is the fabled Test, not any wider than the Kinnickinnic at Highway 35 and no deeper than the solitary reach above Fuller's farm. For long moments there was no evidence of feeding trout.

And then my eyes adjusted and I saw them – here a trout, there a trout, everywhere a trout, suspended magically as if in air; browns for sure, but the English have taken the rainbow to their hearts and have planted them in the high Himalayas and no doubt above the Altiplano in the Andes where I once pursued that will-o-the-wisp.

Dozens of trout, finning gracefully, all of the same size – ten inches, possibly twelve. Alas, at that time they were all raised in "stews", something like our hatcheries, or perhaps more like pens; and the gentlemen who passed the "beats" down through the years from great grandfather to great grandson, or even longer, fly-fished dry in Harris tweeds, military tie and Wellingtons.

At another river in Scotland a Jaguar gentleman couldn't believe that we let common folk fish our trout rivers. He took himself back to the city without convincing me of the error of our provincial egalitarianisms.

I thank our illustrious forebears for the Revolution, and Kiap-TU-Wish and the Land Trust for saving the Kinnickinnic for ordinary people.

Jim Humphrey is the co-author of Minnesota and Wisconsin Trout Streams. He lives in Oak Park Heights, MN and is a featured contributor to RipRap.

Class

Editorial by Jonathan Jacobs

Back in October, PBS aired a program about class in America. Unfortunately, it wasn't about the kind shown by noble behavior, but about the socio-economic kind. I doubt that the program broke any ground in the conclusions that it drew – that we tend to hang out with others of our ilk, that regardless of education or financial success class lines are not easily blurred, that every class has its prejudices about the others, that high school cliques are class confrontations distilled, but it was fascinating nonetheless and I couldn't draw myself away from it, even though it ran on past my intended bedtime. I found the content of the program troubling to the point that I had a difficult time falling asleep that night. I had to sort through my emotions on the matter. Part of my difficulty arose from my belief that in my upbringing my family stood aside from matters of class. My parents owned a tavern and restaurant with living quarters attached in the lake district of central Minnesota. As providers of public accommodation, they saw all parts of the American public and did their best to serve them all well. My mother was an extraordinarily gregarious woman who strove to make everyone she met her friend, regardless of station. Through graciousness and considerable force of personality, she generally succeeded. My father was more reserved, but his high regard for intelligence and accomplishment of all kinds and his admiration for character - and "characters" - led him to friendships with people from many different walks of life. Despite that background I'm uncomfortable with the concept of class, perhaps because we didn't so much stand *aside* from it, but *outside* it, not fitting in particularly well anywhere. After all, while my father came from a successful farming family, there's not much social cachet to be found in agricultural husbandry and while he knew and understood the works of Shakespeare better than most college English majors, he seldom had the opportunity to put that knowledge to work in the tavern business. My mother didn't come from much of a family at all and, through no fault of her own, had been a street kid through her teens.

About the time I was slipping into the mental abyss, I recalled an e-mail that I'd received from a friend whom I hadn't seen in while. I'd run into him at Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop. This was the weekend before this year's particularly acrimonious and divisive (red state/blue state) elections and he'd written, "Isn't it a blessing that the fly shop is a place where people don't yell at each other?" I found this sentiment heartening. The fly shop is a place where people of strong opinions from startlingly different circumstances, political persuasions and world views find common ground in their affection for fly fishing. The fly shop's

clientele is K-TU membership in microcosm and I concluded that the Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter of Trout Unlimited is a better melting pot than America at large, something for which I'm thankful as Thanksgiving approaches.

Because of my involvement in Trout Unlimited, I've had the opportunity to work with, and make friends with a wonderfully diverse group of people whose interest in coldwater conservation transcends the usual barriers of class in the America. Here, in no particular order, are just a few of the occupations of the fine and interesting folks with whom I, a broken-down printer, have had the pleasure of working and angling over the years and with whom I likely would never have commingled without a common interest in trout: physician, shopkeeper, plumber, bus driver, carpenter, physicist, chemist, engineer, writer, publisher, computer nerd, soldier, massage therapist/acupuncturist, attorney, machinist, mechanic, teacher, business executive, non-profit administrator, artist, cartographer, pilot, journalist, electrician, musician and biologist. Somehow, a few other printers sneaked past the guard as well. Of course, income and social position vary wildly in this group.

Among the many relationships that I hold dear to my heart is the one I have with Jim Humphrey, a man with an abundance of the best kind of class. Jim has rendered, through his meticulous craftsmanship, a series of "Contem-places" that will be a regular feature of RipRap this year. Jim told me to publish them in any order that suited the newsletter's needs. I chose to publish "The Test at Whitchurch" in this issue because of it offers thanks for the work of the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust and the Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter in "saving the Kinnickinnic for ordinary people." If you think that Kiap-TU-Wish deserves your thanks, too, you may express that gratitude by making your reservation for the Holiday Conservation Banquet. The event is a fundraiser, yes, but your presence there will convey to the men and women who offer so much of their time and talent to the organization that you appreciate and support their efforts.

I am a Northwoodswoman....

By Jennifer Bruski

Wet wool and wet dog. My, what a wonderful smell I've discovered, I think to myself as I drive home with the newly cut white spruce tree, soon to adorn my living room, strapped to the roof of my car. With the windows down, the heat on full blast and an odd looking expression on my dog's face (I think he smelled it too...), I am nonetheless quite proud of myself, full of accomplishment and excitement over what I have just spent my morning doing. Like my forefathers and those before them (and all my spry

neighbors and friends in Ely, MN) I have just tracked and captured my first Wild Christmas Tree. One of Nature's largest tree farms, the Superior National Forest allows you to take a tree or two with a permit. There was no wagon ride, no hot cider waiting for me at the tree farm barn while hunky farm guys in tight overalls (did I say that out loud?) wrapped my tree up tightly in plastic wrap so that I wouldn't get tree sap and pine needles all over my 1996 UPS Brown Saturn. No sir.

This is hard core tree hunting we do up here in Ely, you betcha. Eh.

When I first heard I could go out into the forest and cut my own tree, I knew I HAD to do that. It just sounded too cool. Barbara, one of my friends/co-workers at Wintergreen mentioned she wanted to get a little tree so we thought we'd go out together to get our trees one morning before work. We met at the coffee shop in town, and then took off in our vehicles up the Echo Trail. It was a gorgeous morning - the sun was shining and the sky was a beautiful blue. All the trees looked wonderful! We had a map we were following to find the places we were allowed to cut. We pulled over at this PERFECT location - there was room for us to park our cars, and the sun was shining into a wonderfully inviting open space with quite a variety of little to big trees in sight. We were psyched. I got out of the Saturn wearing my new wool Mukluks, with my backpack holding my camera and a tarp, my dog on a leash, and my big bow saw. I felt like I was going on an expedition. Barbara stepped out with her hacksaw and rubber boots. Clearly, I had over planned again, even when I thought I wasn't.

Barbara and I take deep breaths of the clean northern air, look around, and smile at each other because we know we're one with Nature and about to embark on a very special adventure. Barbara has hunted trees before... she knew what she was doing. Had we not had to work later that day, the tree hunt would have included a tree ceremony and some wine and cheese perhaps... but that would have to wait for next year. This year we only had time for a focused tree tracking procedure and brief tree ceremony.

We point out the direction we're planning to head and take one step. Into the ditch and up to our waists in snow. My dog, Karma, is only slightly bewildered at the situation and proceeds to launch himself vertically in order to dislodge himself from the snow. Barbara and I however are not so easily mobile. We manage a few steps further into the clearing where the snow has evened out to more of a thigh-high depth and became much easier to navigate. I'm still doing well because I'm wearing my new Mukluks. I'm one with Nature. I'm a Forest Girl, a Northwoodswoman. You betcha. Eh. Karma is now pulling on his leash which I

do have to admit is helpful in this situation. Barbara, dog and I plow ahead. Barbara comments on the fact that snow shoes may have been helpful in our situation, and I concur. Still, we're enjoying ourselves and the day is wonderful and we're on our way.

A few steps later as I'm glancing around looking for my perfect Charlie Brown tree, I sense a coolness at about ankle height in my left boot. At first I thought it was my imagination, the same way I imagine having a leak in my fly fishing waders, then becoming paranoid I would be immediately consumed with water and surely drown in the one foot deep high trout stream I would be standing in at the time... so I brush the idea out of my head. I am wearing Mukluks after all. Knee high ones no less...ones that tied at the top. There is no way snow could have gotten down these boots. So I keep my thoughts to myself. We keep walking. The sky is beautiful, and I'm one with Nature.

A few steps later my other foot feels the same sensation... a little coolness near the ankle... but it's actually a bigger coolness than its sister leg felt. And I have to admit I leave being one with Nature for a few moments while I silently curse the darn stupid Mukluks. What good are these things if I can't go out in the snow with them on? That's the whole point of them, there must be some kind of manufacturing flaw, no, wait, I think it's all just a front - I've been foiled, duped into thinking I was getting something really great for my money, something that made me really feel like a Northwoodswoman but I'm not... I'm just a silly city girl coming up here, living this new life and here I was, thinking and feeling like I fit in, was getting along just fine and wonderfully, but really, this just proves I'm a big schmuck... I don't belong here, there's something wrong... but really though, I didn't try all that hard - my good life just happened naturally and really, I AM very, VERY happy here without thinking about it at all, so I'll just have to deal with leaky boots and learn how to wear them better because really, who should be walking in snow this deep anyway? I should get some snow shoes.... I am a Northwoodswoman. I am one with Nature.

Just then, Barbara turns around and calmly asks "Are we in a swamp?????" Karma and I pause and look around. Seeing trees growing nearby amongst the cattails, I answer "No, we can't be - there are trees growing here." Just then WOOSH! Uh-oh. Water. This is WATER in my boots. Coming in from my calf area and rushing down into my leather clad feet. "Ummmmm, Barbara... we ARE IN A SWAMP!!! RUN! RUN for your LIFE!!!" Actually, I just say "AAAAHHHH - it IS a swamp - my feet are all icky and wet!!!" And we shimmy out of there pretty quick like. Getting near the road, we again trudge through the snow in the ditch, where I proceed to tip over after losing equilibrium when the top portion of my body attempts to move at

a faster pace than the lower portion of my body because it is wedged into 3 feet of snow.

At that point I just have to laugh. I am stuck in snow up to my a __, my toes are swimming in water, my pant legs are clinging to my legs, my dog is again looking at me like I am some freak attached to the end of HIS leash, and Barbara is standing calmly, yet laughing, at the edge of the road in her dry pants and rubber boots. (Where is that wine???) I pull myself out by rolling over, the three of us then head down the road until we reach an actual trail... we're feeling much, much smarter now.

So life is good again... we're two women and a dog off in the great wilderness, in search of the perfect game. About 10 minutes later we each discover our perfect trees... the game is in site... we line up...we circle... we strategize... we have a silent moment with our respective trees, giving thanks to God, Nature and the Trees for the beauties that they are. Then we mow 'em down. Barbara's tree took about twenty six seconds to cut with her hacksaw. Karma and I each took an end of our dual handled tree saw and... just kidding. Yes, my tree was slightly bigger than Barbara's, it was beautiful. Both of them are. I saw mine down, reload the backpack and with dog in one hand, tree dragging with the other, we head back to the road.

Partway back I realize something really stupid is occurring. One arm of my body is being pulled by my dog, which has not totally learned how to not yank my arm out of its socket. The other arm is dragging a heavy pine tree. I stop for a moment to ponder the situation. Then I tie my dog to the tree and off we go. He could drag that tree all on his own, if he had had a harness. He has only his collar, so I can't let him pull it all on his own without hurting himself, but he is a big help. Back at our vehicles, Barbara props up her little coniferous specimen on the passenger seat of her van and I heave mine up on top of my car, tied 'er down, and we head back to town.

I AM a Northwoodswoman - hear me roar! I am soaking wet from my hips down, but I'm OK because thankfully, I'm wearing my "wicking" layers... you betcha. Eh.

Merry Christmas from Ely Minnesota,

Jennifer

K-TU member Jennifer Bruski lives in Ely, MN, where she continues to polish her skills as a Northwoodswoman.

An electrifying tale

By Jonathan Jacobs

July 27 on Echo Lake and July 28 on the Kettle River in the company of John Hanson, whose guest I was for the weekend at his cabin: This was a boys' weekend away and that aspect of it was a rip-roaring success. John's cabin is a wonderful log affair that sits nicely in the midst of 80 acres of mixed second growth forest. It's a great place to stay and John is always pleasant and entertaining company. Additionally, we had dinner Saturday night at the Outpost 23 near Holyoke, MN. There wasn't a single thing healthy about the meal, but the deep-fried chicken slathered in barbecue sauce and the french fries tasted great, as did the three glasses of tap Leinenkugel's red lager that I drank. We probably would have been back on the road for John's place by 8:30 or so, but the promise of live music kept us hanging around. We were glad we stayed to listen to the Jokimaki Band, three brothers and their sister who cranked out classic country rock and pounded down Budweiser longnecks and Marlboros with both style and incredible frequency. As it was, we stayed until about ten o'clock, which after the day we'd had, felt like the wee, wee hours.

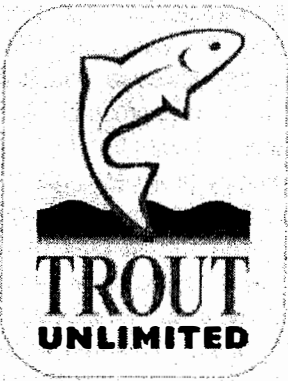
So, what kind of day had we had? It had begun pleasantly enough, considering that on Friday we'd seen John stick the tip of his Sevier Mfg. fly rod into the ceiling fan at his cabin and had followed that with a long, almost entirely fruitless largemouth bass expedition on lovely Echo Lake in Moose Lake State Park. John caught one little bass in that outing, which was harder to figure than to accept, as the evening was nearly perfect and the lake looked great and it has a reputation for producing large bass, although a milfoil "hatch" was heavily underway, making it nearly impossible to cast without hooking weeds. Anyway, the less said about that, the better, and where was I, anyway? Oh, yes, I was about to explain how we met John's father in town and took him to breakfast at the local café, where we ate heartily to stoke up for our big adventure. We hauled John's canoe down to Rutledge, where we readied it for launch in the Kettle. John drove my truck down to Banning State Park where his father picked him up and then shuttled him back to Rutledge, where I had been waiting by the canoe. We launched with high hopes and it didn't take me long to get an absolutely vicious rise to a yellow popper. A small northern pike had savaged the fly. It fought well, but I soon whipped it and had only the formidable task of retrieving my popper from its clenched jaws. It was the only fish I caught all day, but that's not the bad part. John caught only one fish, a little smallmouth, but that's not the bad part, either.

While the day was sunny and mild when we left Rutledge, it grew steadily more overcast as the day wore on. By about 1:30 we could hear the rumble of distant thunder while we waded and fished a big riffle that looked great, but failed to produce. As we made our way back to the waiting canoe, it began to rain, but we had good shelter under the heavy canopy of a tree. We ate a sandwich while we waited for what we thought would be a typical short summer thundershower and when the rain let up, we hopped in the canoe and took off. We hadn't gone a half-mile when the skies opened and we found ourselves in a blinding rain that was accompanied by frequent lightning. Then the weather got bad. I am an admitted fraidy-cat when it comes to lightning, but not wishing to admit that, I paddled on until John said, "We need to get off this river now!" I needed no convincing. This time we had poor shelter along a steep bank. We stood in a driving rain while a cold wind blew and lightning crashed all around us. I thought about how Martin Luther, when caught in what had to be a milder electrical storm, had prayed to be spared, promising to enter the monastic life if he survived. Being neither eligible nor disposed toward the ascetic life of a mendicant, this thought bore little solace. The storm subsided a little several times, but rebuilt quickly with another downpour and more lightning. This went on for close to an hour while the canoe filled with rainwater and we got steadily colder and while I grew steadily closer to panicking about the lightning. It had to have rained three inches in that time.

When the lightning finally faded, we took the gear out of the canoe, tipped it over to rid it of water, reloaded it and bee-lined it for the canoe landing. On the way we surprised a very large buck whitetail (after earlier having seen a very large eagle, one of the most magnificent I've ever seen, at close range) and paddled past some spectacular rock outcroppings and better looking fishing water than any we'd fished.

We were both surprised by the nature of the runoff into the Kettle. There were little tributaries, dry runs, I suppose, that were discharging at a great rate. There were also some larger tributaries that came down in big waterfalls that looked like something one would see in the Amazon. By the time we reached the Interstate 35 bridges, the river was brown enough and filled with enough flotsam and jetsam to look like the Amazon in the rainy season, too. We were happy to get to the canoe landing without further misadventure. The only remaining difficulty lay in getting the gear stowed and the canoe lashed to the roof of the truck while hordes of absolutely bloodthirsty mosquitoes chewed on every exposed square inch of our hides.

So, is it at all surprising that I began this little tale with the best part of it, which was hanging out in a smoky redneck bar?



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***REGISTER TODAY
TO ATTEND THE
HOLIDAY BAN-
QUET! SEE PAGE
I!***

MEETING SCHEDULE:

DECEMBER 2 (NOTE THURSDAY DATE): ANNUAL HOLIDAY BANQUET AT TARTAN PARK
JANUARY 5: DUKE WELTER ON THE TU DRIFTLESS AREA RESTORATION EFFORT
FEBRUARY 2: TBA
MARCH 2: ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING
APRIL 6: DRY FLY DICK FRANTES FLY TIERS
MAY 5: WISCONSIN DNR

DEADLINE FOR JANUARY RIPRAP: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24.