



Ray Bianco: As Good As It Gets



Federation of Fly Fishers (FFF) Master Certified caster Ray Bianco is nothing if not enthusiastic about fly casting.

The one-on-one Ray Bianco exudes a meditative, yet intense, passion for his favorite sport—balanced by a wry sense of humor—whereas the public, casting instructor, extrovert Ray Bianco emotes a steady stream of encouraging, “Not too stiff,” “Be sure to bend the wrist a bit at the top of the back cast,” or “Relax, let the rod do the work” reminders to his protégés. Therein lays the paradox: depending on the situation, Ray is a quiet, reflective, analytical man or an animated coach peppering his students with “Ray-isms” and appeals to their desire to cast with ease and finesse like the master.

As the Santa Clarita Casting Club’s instructor extraordinaire, Ray switched from spin fishing to fly casting one day in 1967 in Vancouver, Canada, after admiring the gracefulness of a nearby fly caster. Nearly forty years later, he has never regretted that decision.

“Fluid motion,” “An artist at work,” and “A pure casting machine” are just a few of the comments heard from club members attending the bi-weekly clinics where Ray demonstrates proper casting technique.

Born in Detroit, Michigan, Ray came west to the land of sunshine and year-round trout fishing in 1965 to pursue racing—horse racing that is - as a professional jockey. After 22 years, he decided to exchange a riding crop for a fly rod. In his pursuit of fly fishing, Ray managed a fly fishing shop in Rowland Heights for three years. While there, he started the Streamborn Flyfishing Club, which is still in existence.

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President’s Message

Bonanza at the Big Horn

By Connie Bullock

Experiencing the big skies of Montana is something that most of us just dream about, but I was fortunate enough to have the pleasure of a trip to Ft. Smith, Montana to float the Big Horn River this last summer to celebrate my birthday. It was an experience beyond my wildest dreams. Just imagine four days of floating in a drift boat and catching more fish than would be believable. That’s what happened to me.

This was a very big birthday for me—of late they all seem to have higher numbers than I’m ready for—but what a present to myself. We stayed

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... Ray Bianco: As Good As It Gets

After the fly shop, Ray went to work for the *L.A. Times* and then the *Daily News* newspaper where he is presently employed as a Pressman. Interestingly, as a reflection of his passion for fly casting, Ray spent a year fishing Washington State in between newspaper jobs.

Mostly self-taught, Ray's experience managing a fly shop and trout bumming through Washington caused him to become proficient in all aspects of fly fishing from casting to tying to teaching—lessons he is most grateful for now.

If you know Ray Bianco for even a short time, you will agree that he is a born teacher with a strong desire to see others excel at his favorite sport. If further proof of his love for casting were needed, Ray received in 1996/97, and maintains to this day, the FFF Master Certificate in casting. He is as proficient with a three weight rod as he is with a two-handed spey rod. Ray has the distinction of being in the first dozen Master Certified casters certified after the establishment of the program in 1995.

Ray tells a story about helping a friend's two teenagers catch their first Dorado on a fly rod in Mexico that he characterizes as one of the highlights of his fishing career. That story provides further insight into the man's humanity as opposed to just his mastery of the mechanics of fly casting. He loves helping beginners learn his craft.

While Ray's consuming passion is fly casting, lately he's been experimenting with line splicing, sometimes referred to as altering lines. He somehow fits that into his busy schedule of teaching rod building, repair, and maintenance; spey and traditional casting; fly tying; and repping for the R.L. Winston Rod Company.

The many years associated with the various aspects of fly fishing make Ray an articulate and qualified spokesman for the industry. As such, when asked about where he sees fly fishing going in the future, he responds, "It will probably always be a small, hobbyist's sport because it has limited exposure; at the same time, I predict slow to medium growth over, say, the next ten to twenty years." In fact, measured growth for an industry that depends upon a delicate ecological balance and a certain nod to tradition is probably beneficial for everyone.

When it comes to advice about fly casting, Ray Bianco is

The difference between fly fishers and worm dunkers is the quality of their excuses.
- Anonymous

our club's and many other casters' "go to" guy. For starters, he advises students of the sport to "Practice excellently and get good instruc-

tion." Being, for the most part, self-taught, this advice has the ring of lessons learned the hard way over many seasons.

So representative of Ray Bianco's philosophical and pragmatic approach to fly fishing is his idea of the perfect fishing trip: "Any place as long as it is with good people." Just maybe the most revealing thing about Ray the caster and the person is that very concept of the ideal trip: any place as long as it is with good people. The emphasis then is not with the fishing but with the people. To his friends and fellow club members, Ray is indeed the epitome of "good people."



Fly Fishing Small Streams by John Gierach

Reviewed by Bill Creitz

Fly fishing and guerilla tactics. What could they possibly have in common? Until I read John Gierach's *Fly Fishing Small Streams* (Stackpole Book Publishers, 1989), I'd have said "Not much."

But think again. When fishing small streams, I mean seriously fishing small streams; you travel light and go stealthily; right? You pare down to a light vest—or no vest at all—you employ your short 4 weight rod; your camera; one fly box; forceps, floatant, split shot, and tippet (and maybe your camo shirt). That's it. "You're light, mobile, unencumbered and determined," says the author.

When you look at small stream fishing from that perspective, you can't help but relate to a guy who thinks of himself as a fly fishing guerilla.

Author John Gierach, besides being a small stream fishing guerilla, is an icon in the fly fishing world; right there beside Lefty Kreh, Gary Borger, Joe Humphrey, Gary LaFontaine, and Dave Whitlock. His classic *Fly Fishing Small Streams* is less a how-to book than a reflection of a fly fisherman's love of small stream fishing for trout. Don't get me wrong, there are plenty of tips offered the serious angler, but it's more about the essence and joys of fooling wily trout in an environment where they hold most of the aces. In fact, says Gierach, "Small stream fishing is probably the purest fishing, if only because just about everything you'll ever find yourself doing on a little trout creek will be pretty traditional."

Even a quick scan of *Fly Fishing Small Streams* reveals a fisherman's passion for all things trout. From the cover



... *Fly Fishing Small Streams*

Photo Gallery

Judy McLean
(SCCC Treasurer)
at Kern River Outing
Nov. 2006



Mike Smith
(SCCC Vice President) at
Heenan Lake Outing,
with a Lahaton Cutthroat
Sept. 2006

Connie Bullock
(SCCC President)
Big Horn River,
Fort Smith, Montana
August 2006



Connie Bullock
with a Silver Bullet
caught at Big Horn River,
Fort Smith, Montana
August 2006



Robert "Kazy"
Kazahaya
at a casting clinic
instructing a guest



to the inside photos to the chapter headings, this book is compelling reading that invokes that "itchiness" to get on stream. "Many of us have elevated fly fishing (especially our favorite kind) to the highest category of human endeavor: something we don't have to explain unless we feel like it" so epitomizes John Gierach's approach to trout fishing.

Among the tips that you glean from the author are the following:

- The less line you have on the water, the less drag you'll get
- Nymphing is probably the most effective method in streams where the water is more than a couple of feet deep, or even in shallower creeks on those days when the trout just aren't looking up
- If you absolutely have to go fishing with only two flies, they should be an Adams and a Hare's Ear Soft Hackle
- An undercut is A-number-one trout habitat, never to be passed up
- "Trout hear vibrations through their sensitive lateral lines. That was hard for me to relate to until a fisheries biologist suggested I think of trout as having little ears from head to tail down both sides of their bodies"
- Use a pile cast when fishing a bend pool with conflicting currents. The pile cast is just what it sounds like. It piles the leader up so that the fly will float there naturally for the seconds it takes for the current to take up the slack. You do it by straightening the cast beyond where you want the fly to land and then dropping your casting arm, which pulls the leader back to land in a pile with the fly somewhere in the general vicinity
- "If I am fishing downstream, and the dry fly isn't exactly knocking them dead, I'll sometimes go to a streamer. I'll usually put a split-shot right on the fly's nose to get it down deep and wiggle it around in the riffle sort of feeling for the holding spots. I'll try to fish it straight downstream as I can pump it gently in the water like a little fish struggling in the current"
- When stalking trout in a stream, it's important to stay in the shade and against a dark backdrop
- If the fly types are geared to the kind of water you're fishing—big and bushy for fast water, sparse and trim for slow—you'll be in business most of the time

And just when you're convinced that this guy loves fishing for any type of trout, anywhere, at any time, in any season, he blurts out "I don't care for hatchery trout. They're better than no trout at all, but otherwise they're



... President's Message

at the Kingfisher Lodge, a neat, comfortable resting place after a full day of fishing. We had a gourmet chef who loved to please and, with 14 hungry mouths, we put away a lot of food during the story telling and laughter. We had some pretty funny things happen like people falling out of boats, getting lines caught in places you could never get to, and double hook ups of lines with your boat partner. We held nothing back, and teased the unfortunate souls mercilessly.

The Big Horn River is a wide, fast body of water that produces some very large and aggressive trout. My boat partner, Dave, caught a trout that jumped nine times. We were singing with the fish as he jumped. It was wonderful.

One time we stopped along the bank and fished until we were more than satisfied. Our guide took a little break and used my new 9-foot 6-weight Winston rod (a gift from the club members) and started casting. It was like watching Brad Pitt in *A River Runs Through It*. He was poetry in motion and used all kinds of techniques that our Master Certified Instructor would cringe at, but it was indeed an art form. His mastery of line control was almost as spectacular as his ability to catch fish—which was about every other cast.

This vacation lasted for almost two months in my head. For those of you who are close to me, you've seen the pictures numerous times and they are still in my purse if anyone wants to see them again. Did you see the one with my 24-inch trout?

If you can ever treat yourself to a trip like this, do it. It's good for the soul.



... Fly Fishing Small Streams

inferior in every way to their relations." Well, there's just no telling what you'll find with every new page and between each chapter of *Fly Fishing Small Streams*; it's just that kind of book.

After sharing his thoughts on and experience with so many aspects of the wonderful art of fly fishing, John Gierach, always the humorist and philosopher, encourages his fellow angler with these final words: "Maybe the biggest trout in the whole creek is in that one stretch you haven't fished yet." Thus said, it wouldn't be a stretch at all to say that *Fly Fishing Small Streams* should be one of the trophies in any angler's library.



One More Cast

By Ray Bianco

A cast. Oh, so fine, but never perfect.
Is it like trying to reach the Perfection of the Creator, and never being able to do so?
Is it the best one can do? Is it more?
Is it a standard, and if so, how would I measure?
Cast...Cast...Cast.
I'll try it again and again, just one more time.
Am I, a man, trying to become a machine?
Is it a contest between you, the rod, and me?
Am I not superior to you, the rod, an inanimate object?
Do you not come alive only when I resurrect you from your case?
Do I not carefully assemble you and dress you with fine accessories?
Do you mock me?
Shall I let you sleep?
I cannot; I must cast you just one more time
Again and again. ...



New Product News

by Bill Creitz

As with any sport or hobby, there are various new items and improvements to old items that we all use—the "stuff" of fly fishing. The New Year is no exception. Following is a list of some of the most interesting items that will soon be appearing in your local fly shop:

R.L. Winston Rod Company is introducing the Boron Ilt Series graphite/boron rod in what they call the "traditional action" category. Retailing at \$625, this is one of the company's flagship rods. Available in 3-, 4-, and 5-weight four-piece models, and complete with Winston's lifetime warranty, spiffy green and gold aluminum rod tube, and a choice of two different reel seats, this series looks to be a winner, especially with trout fishermen. I cast the 3-weight rod at a recent rod demonstration and found it to be light, responsive, easy to cast, with a very high quality cord handle and exceptional grip that fit my casting style perfectly; a "sweet" rod in every way. Contact the manufacturer at www.winstonrods.com.

Lefty Kreh, one of my favorite fishing personalities and authors, has designed a weight-forward floating fly line with Scientific Anglers that is both a great value (at \$39.95) and versatile. Lefty's intention was to develop a line that can be used anywhere on any fly rod between a 4-weight and an 8-weight, hence the "General Purpose Floating Fly Line" designation on the package. Given Scientific Anglers' history in the fly line and coating field and Lefty Kreh's pragmatic and straight forward approach to fly fishing and equipment, this latest offering should warrant a look-see by anyone considering a new or replacement floating line. For product information check www.scientificanglers.com.



... New Product News

Wading pants; you read it right, "wading pants" by Cloudveil are the newest thing in waders. If you need more than hip waders but not the height of traditional chest waders, check out these new lightweight Gore-Tex Crystal Creek waders complete with zippered pockets, elastic waistband, and belt loops. Priced at \$365, they are ideal for the Lower Owens and the San Joaquin River. See your local fly shop, call Cloudveil at 307-734-3880, or go on-line at www.cloudveil.com.

I love using my hand-crafted wooden landing net, especially on small trout streams. If you're like me, you'll love the new lightweight wooden nets from Fisknat that feature non-peel, non-break rubber net bags for safe catch-and-release, superior American-made wooden frames—did I mention light weight?—and rugged yet aesthetically-pleasing construction—all at a reasonable price (\$95 for the Stream model). Contact Fisknat Landing Nets at www.fisknat.com.

Perusing the latest Orvis catalog, I came upon, and promptly purchased, this nifty gadget to add to my vest or lanyard. It effectively crimps a split shot onto your tippet and then helps you easily remove it without having to cut your fly off and slide the shot down the line. This little device is called the Split Shot Companion, it attaches easily to your zinger, and it's available from Orvis at www.orvis.com for \$14.95.



Project Healing Waters By Connie Bullock

In casting a fly line or tying a fly, we all get frustrated because we feel it's not happening properly or that we are uncoordinated or just don't get it. Imagine wanting to do these same things and not having the physical ability to do it.

A joint project initiated by Trout Unlimited and the Federation of Fly Fishers was started with wounded military personnel from Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda Naval Medical Center that teaches fly tying and casting. This project helps veterans develop fine motor skills that will help them do many other things with their prosthesis.

In 2005, John Colburn, retired Army, started a fly tying program at Walter Reed Army Medical Center for injured personnel of Afghanistan and Iraq. It's been challenging as each person has had their own injuries that required special adaptation of equipment. But the program has been supported by such manufacturers as Pflueger and Vivarelli who donated equipment, specifically automatic reels.

This is a program SCCC will be looking into to see if there is anything we could do to assist with local personnel that would want to learn these skills. It's going to take some investigation and research but stay tuned for additional information on this program.



Conservation News and Updates *Piru Creek*

More than a few rays of light are beginning to show at the end of the tunnel—the tunnel that leads to great wild trout fishing at Piru Creek that is.

Friends of the River's Jim Blomquist has informed the Friends of Piru Creek, of which the SCCC is a part, that Assemblywoman Audra Strickland and State Senator George Runner have sent letters of concern to the Department of Water Resources (DWR) requesting that DWR's Piru Creek dewatering plan be reevaluated.

Consistent organized opposition to the DWR plan, which would all but eliminate summer flows into Piru Creek from Pyramid Lake, has begun to have an effect.

In addition to Assemblywoman Strickland and Senator Runner, Congressman Buck McKeon has registered his concerns with the Department of Water Resources. Additionally, casting clubs, environmental groups, recreational enthusiasts, and concerned citizens are continuing and, in fact, escalating their efforts to get the Department to revisit its plan, termed "Draconian" by many, to destroy the creek's trout fishery and eliminate it from the Wild and Heritage Trout Program.

If you are interested in helping the Santa Clarita Casting Club speak up for the Piru Creek, please attend one of our monthly meetings (the third Wednesday of each month) to learn more about what we are doing as a club or send letters to any of the following legislators urging them to oppose DWR's dewatering plan: Senators Sheila Kuehl, Richard Alarcon, Jack Scott, Tom McClintock, and Alan Lowenthal; and Assembly members Keith Richman, Lloyd Levine, Fran Pavley, Cindy Montanez, Dario Frommer, Carol Liu, and Pedro Nava (their addresses can be found on the web).



Famous Fisherman's Favorite Fly

"For many years, had anyone asked me to pick one fly to use all season long, I'd have promptly chosen the Wet Black Ant (sizes 18-24). A supply of tiny wet ants always fills a compartment of my fly box" - Ed Koch



Casting for Success, of Course

"Fore," yells the practicing fly caster in an effort to warn his fellow SCCC members of his advancing fly. "Why, 'fore' is a term usually reserved for the golf course," you might be thinking. True enough, but it is also appropriate for the bi-weekly casting clinics led by FFF (Federation of Fly Fishers) Master Certified casting instructors Ray Bianco, Bob Middo, and Bill Heard and assistant instructor Mike Smith.

Most people think of practice as boring, repetitive, or just plain hard work. Not so if you belong to the Santa Clarita Casting Club. Just last week, instructor Bob Middo drove home the importance of (1) accurate casting and (2) replicating real-life streamside conditions when he taught eight casting club members his version of fly casting golf. When prizes are offered to increase the incentive to take practice seriously, it all adds up to valuable lessons taught using a fun and innovative format—by some of the finest casting instructors this side of the Henry's Fork.

Every other Sunday morning at Alameda Park in Valencia, premier casting instructor, Ray Bianco, assisted by Mike Smith and some equally proficient friends on loan from the Long Beach Casting Club, provide free casting instruction for anyone interested in improving his or her fly casting technique.

Complete with an selection of Winston fly rods for those who do not have rods and a variety of teaching methods to accommodate almost any style of casting or type of problem, the Club's casting clinics are one of the most successful offerings to members and the community alike.

Right-hand and left-hand traditional casting, one- and two-hand spey casting, casting with ultralight or saltwater rods, casting games, casting golf, target casting, and even a trip to nearby Piru Creek are all available to the fly caster as part of the free clinics. Since the clinics began in early 2005, several members have shown significant improvement with one member even deciding to work toward his FFF certification.

Look for future clinic dates in this newsletter, on the club's web page, or by way of the regular club e-mails. And don't forget: there are no water hazards or stroke penalties at this course.



TRIP REPORTS

Over three consecutive weekends beginning September 23, club members Frank Avila, Rudy Brown, Chris Holm, Rod Wilmot, and John Williams met at Heenan

Lake near Bridgeport to fish for the famous Lahontan Cutthroat. Organized by Mike Smith, with varying weather conditions, also orchestrated by Mike Smith, members met with varying degrees of success from stream-size fish to a 26-incher taken by Mike Smith on a #2 black and purple Woolly Bugger. Chris Holm also succeeded in fooling a bragging-size Cut' on a #18 Holographic Scud. From every indication, the Heenan Lake trip will be an annual event for the Santa Clarita Casting Club.

John Wilkin and Bill Creitz scored six trout from Crowley Lake on October 21. Included in the tally were two 15-inch Rainbows from where the Owens River empties into the lake and one 12-inch Brown from Crooked Creek bay. All were caught on a #16 midge dropper rig in eight to ten feet of water.



Several Sponsors



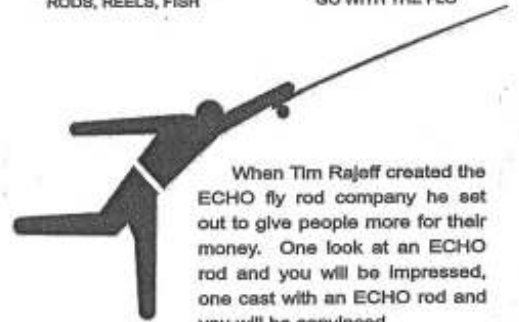


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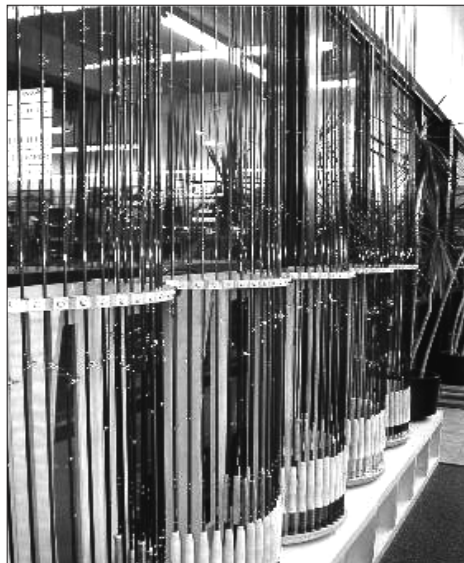
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