

[00:00:00] **Brett Barry:** The Jerry Bartlett Angling Collection presents Sporting Legends of the Catskills: Casting Memory; the legendary Ed Van Put, a talk by Judy Van Put, Sunday, November 2nd, 2025 at the Phoenicia Library.

[00:00:22] **Beth Waterman:** Hi everyone. What a beautiful day. So nice that you could come. My name is Beth Waterman. I'm on the board of the Phoenicia Library and I'm the curator of the Fishing Collection upstairs.

So if you haven't visited the fishing collection, I hope you will while you're here at the end of the program. The fishing collection was established in 1995 and we built a special room for it upstairs, and then the library burned down in 2011. And so we started over and, we rebuilt on the same location and then we started doing these programs, which are on our website.

I'm going to pass around these cards because it's a link to the website on the back, and, all of our programs are recorded as a podcast by Brett Barry of Kaatscast. We have some of his cards here too, because he's interviewed a lot of anglers and sportsmen and other people of interest, if you want to just pass those around; and we have masks. If anyone would be more comfortable wearing a mask.

All, as I said, all of our programs are recorded and still photos taken by Mark Loete and on our website, which was created by Stephanie Blackman. So I'd like to thank those Brett, Mark, and Stephanie for their work.

To date we have recorded 13 episodes in a series called Sporting Legends of the Catskills. This is the 14th and we're really fortunate today to be talking about Ed, who was a legend; by Judy, who is another legend. Judy started out as a wildlife tech at DEC and became a fishing columnist and member of New York State Outdoor Writers Guild, association. She's a longstanding member of the Woman Fly Fishers Club and a member of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild. And recently she helped to relaunch the Beamoc chapter of TU in honor of Ed. So thank you so much for coming, Judy.

It's a real pleasure.

[00:03:06] **Judy Van Put:** Thank you, Beth.

[00:03:08] **Beth Waterman:** And we're also lucky to have Nick Lyons, author, angler, and publisher, who's going to share some of his recollections of Ed also. Let's get started. Judy's presentation will be first, and then Nick will speak, and then we'll have questions at the end.

We want to use the microphone for the questions so that they get picked up on the audio tape. And one last credit. This event is made possible with funds from the Catskill Watershed Corporation in partnership with New York City DEP. Thank you.

[00:03:58] **Judy Van Put:** Casting memories. The legendary Ed Van Put.

1. EARLY LIFE WITH FISHING

This may come as a surprise, but Ed Van Put did not come from a family of trout fishers; in fact, no one in his family fished! He remembers fishing with neighborhood kids when he was about 9 years old in the Passaic and Saddle Rivers of New Jersey. As a teenager while lake fishing for panfish, he noticed that they were taking flies hovering near and on the surface of the water, and was curious about fly-fishing. He experimented with flies he bought from Jimmy Salvato, the father of Joan Salvato, who was then in her early twenties. And after learning that there were rivers containing wild trout that didn't rely on stocking, the idea of trout fishing became more appealing.

He began fishing the trout streams of northwestern New Jersey, and, from reading A.J. McClane and Ted Trueblood's columns in *Field & Stream*, his interest in the sport grew.

Ed caught his first trout on Flat Brook on a dry fly named the Mosquito, and describes his introduction to fishing with a dry fly:

"I had never fished a floating fly on flowing water...A few false casts ...gently place[d] the fly on the surface film. I was fascinated by how realistic the Mosquito looked, and can still picture the fly sitting upright, high on the surface film, seemingly unattached to my leader. There was suspense as the fly drifted **slowly** back toward me. My eyes followed the fly and I was captivated by how life-like it appeared; my rod, line, and fly had created a scene that imitated nature. There was a **splash**, the fly disappeared, and I set the hook. After a short tussle I netted a brown trout of about nine inches and was quite pleased with the accomplishment. I **liked** the idea of dry-fly fishing. ... I was hooked."

And so began the journey to a wonderful life that included 60 years of fly-fishing for trout, and an illustrious career in Fisheries, conservation, and writing.

2. EMPLOYMENT IN THE DEC

As Ed became more involved with fishing he started driving up from New Jersey to fish the Catskills. He caught his first Beaverkill trout on an April Gray; choosing that pattern as it had no wings, and his fly-tying skills had yet to be perfected.

He would often stop at Harry & Elsie Darbee's, where he learned more about trout fishing, conservation and the importance of protecting the rivers. Ed's fly-tying skills improved through the kindness of Harry and Elsie; as well as Walt and Winnie Dette. Later, he would tie flies wholesale for the Darbees, and it was there that he first met Bill Kelly, a fisheries biologist with the New York State Conservation Department. Recognizing his deepening interests in fly fishing, he decided to move to the Catskills, and purchased a brown cedar-shake house between Livingston Manor and Roscoe, just upstream from the Darbees. A few years later, Kelly asked if Ed would be interested in working in Fisheries. He would be conducting a creel census for a two-year study of the Willowemoc Creek to evaluate the impact of the new Route 17 highway, and gathering data on the section of the Willowemoc that Kelly had just designated "No Kill." Ed spent many 14-hour-days interviewing fishermen and collecting data, but there were also occasions when few fishermen were on the river, which enabled him to spend time observing the trout themselves.

Ed's powers of observation were exceptional; gifted with extraordinary eyesight, 20-15 vision, and a strong desire for knowledge and getting the right answer, he used the tools at his disposal.

Ed describes in his book, "to amuse myself I would watch for a fish that was high in the water column and feeding on the surface, occasionally rising to take a fly or ant... that came floating along. My approach to the fish would be careful, and when I was close enough ... I would pick up a pea-sized pebble... or anything else that was small enough to toss in front of the feeding trout.

If it landed **right in front** of the trout, invariably it would be seized immediately by the feeding fish, and then expelled. This came as a revelation; it revealed the predatory instincts of the trout and the reflexive instincts that trout maintain.”

These experiences helped further develop his skills, and his diligence in gathering scientific information enhanced his enjoyment and desire to excel in fly-fishing. The job on the Willowemoc was the beginning of what would become a forty-year career with the Bureau of Fisheries.

3. THE ANGLER DIARIES

Ed used a diary when he started working in the Bureau of Fisheries in 1969. In addition to serving as a reference for timecards, diaries were used to record the details of daily activities in the field, biological and physical data such as water chemistries, temperature and flow samples.

Fish species were recorded, along with weight and length, and scale samples were taken for age and growth analyses. Ed loved the statistics and learning more about the rivers in which he fished, and he put to good use the knowledge he gained observing fly hatches and habits of the trout. He started keeping a fishing diary in 1970, not only recording the fish he caught, but also the dates of fly hatches, water temperatures and conditions, and other information that he observed. For keeping these notes he carried a pencil and paper in the first tray of his FVE chest fly box.

Over time the variety of different fly patterns that he used narrowed, as he found what worked best for him. He related that “often while fishing it was just easier to keep the same fly on and remember the **number** of trout caught, than to change flies and have to stop and record that **one** was caught on this, and **three** on that. My focus was more on catching trout on the fly I was **using**; and my fishing improved by concentrating more on casting and presentation, as I didn’t need to waste time changing flies. While some ...may look at this as a handicap, I am certain that it contributed to my becoming a better fly-fisherman.... I wanted to keep things simple and I had great success and confidence in the Adams and a few other dry flies.”

“Early on my selection of **dry** flies included patterns like the Adams, Pheasant-Tail Midge, or Royal Wulff. I believed in these flies, and learned there was no need to use others unless I **wanted** to, not because I **had** to. This might be difficult for some to accept, but I’ve recorded an accurate account of my fishing experiences for more than fifty years.”

Those diaries revealed that during the **thirty** of those years that he kept records, he caught a total of 12,167 trout on various flies; and overall, 76% were caught on four patterns:

The Adams, the Royal Coachman, the Leadwing Coachman, and the Zugbug.

4. CATSKILL WATERS - A CONSERVATIONIST

Ed’s record keeping and frequent time on the stream led to an important chain of events on July 25, 1972, when he sent a memo to DEC Biologist Tony Bonavist, after having recorded the following:

“At 8:15pm the water temperature in the main Delaware River was 80° Fahrenheit. The air temperature was 70° F and there were approximately two to three **hundred** fish off the mouth of the creek, approximately 95% of which were trout. The pool was about 2’-3’ deep and 25’ long. Quite a few smaller trout were also seen in this area.

”

This is the actual photo of Ed in the river with all those fish - you can see the large shapes in the water below. Thanks to Ed’s documentation,

Tony’s follow-up, and the reporting of Ed’s fishing buddy Phil Chase, a columnist for the Middletown Times-Herald Record; word got out that there were serious problems with the rivers and trout downstream from the New York City reservoirs, caused by erratic, infrequent water releases during the heat of summer. A group of about 25 concerned citizens, gathered by Frank Mele, began holding monthly meetings at the Antrim Lodge in Roscoe. They called their group Catskill Waters, and elected John Hoeko as their president. Catskill Waters lobbied heavily for regular releases of cold water to maintain habitable rivers for the native trout population, and received support from State

Assembly Representatives Maurice Hinchey and Jean Amatucci, as well as U.S. Representative Matt McHugh.

They took the fight to Albany, and on June 28, 1976, newspaper headlines reported that the bill to adopt water release legislation passed by a 1-vote margin.

Ed was fond of saying that their group had fought the largest City Hall in the country - and won! Tony Bonavist, now retired from the DEC and a columnist for the River Reporter, wrote in a recent article that "Because of Ed's dedication to and monitoring of the Delaware River, that memorandum began the process that led to the adoption of the water releases legislation of 1976. As a result, any angler who fishes the Delaware system owes a great deal of gratitude to Ed for the efforts he made to restore flows to that great river system."

5. PUBLIC FISHING RIGHTS

Ed had a great work ethic and was never late, probably stemming from his time in the US army. He often volunteered to do things that no one else wanted to do, such as working in the Public Fishing Rights program. This was not a "fun" job, as most everyone in fisheries wanted to be handling fish, not buying fishing rights. But in 1973 the State passed an Environmental Bond Act, with funding for purchasing Public Fishing Rights, a crucial program since few miles had been purchased since the late 1930s. It was not an easy task to acquire these easements, as it involved knocking on doors and meeting landowners, and convincing them to allow the public to enter their private lands to fish. Most landowners did not like the DEC, nor the public!

If they did agree to sell an easement, the next step was a trip to the County Clerk's office to look up deeds, tax payments, and survey maps to prove that the person owned the lands and could legally sell the fishing rights.

Not only was it difficult to convince land owners to sell a permanent easement, but you then had to explain that it would take at least **one year** for the owner to be paid! But Ed immersed himself in the position and became the Stream Rights person. His wit, personality and warm demeanor bridged the gap, and he was successful in leaving his legacy along more than a dozen rivers and streams in the Catskills,

as well as the Roeliff Jansen Kill and others in Dutchess and Columbia Counties.

He became known for his abilities to work with the public in securing fishing rights, and by the time he retired, Ed had purchased 26 fisherman parking areas, a number of boat launch access sites, and an unparalleled total of more than 54 miles of public fishing!

6. FIRST MEETING

Ed and I first met on August 4, 1977, which was my first day working as a Fisheries and Wildlife Technician for the DEC in New Paltz. I was hired by Tony Bonavist, who introduced us. He asked Ed to pick me up at my house in Grahamsville on his way to work the next morning and drive me to New Paltz, where I would then be given a State vehicle. I had heard that Ed was an expert fly-fisherman, but that next morning, in the hour and a half it took to drive from Grahamsville to New Paltz, I was so impressed with his easy-going manner and kindness, his choice in music, his appearance in a flannel shirt, faded jeans and LLBean boots, that I actually wondered what it would be like to be married to this person! On my second day at my job!

6. STREAM SURVEYS, READING SCALES

After I was hired, we worked together on different projects and I was amazed at his knowledge, talents and expertise.

A favorite assignment was conducting Stream Surveys, which involved choosing a section of stream, setting up a blocking seine at the head of the section, with a crew of fisheries staff, wearing waders, two holding the wire which electrified the water, the rest following behind with scap nets to scoop up the fish that were momentarily stunned, and put them in buckets of water for processing. Ed was quick, with that incredibly keen eyesight - and he took his work seriously, doing his best not to miss any fish during a survey.

After the fish were weighed, measured and had scales taken, he would return to the fisheries lab to study the scales for the purpose of aging the fish. He became the "go-to" person for aging fish, and spent many hours down in the "fish lab," which took up much of his time in New Paltz during the winter.

Ed utilized his expertise on a personal level as well, collecting scale samples of each fish he caught in the Delaware for the purpose of conducting an age-growth analysis of Delaware trout.

He carefully measured each fish with a measuring tape, rather than just estimating by holding it against a rod or net. So when Ed told you he caught a 15 inch fish it was a 15 inch fish! And in doing so, he found that on the Delaware during those early days, rainbow trout of 20 inches were rare.

7. PERSONAL - HAT, THOUGHTFULNESS

Fisheries staff was at times called on by the bureau of Wildlife to help out during the deer season, and we worked together at the deer check stations; Ed would bring his fly tying vise and I would bring my horse magazines to pass the time when not registering hunters. One day I saw a beautiful western hat in the magazine and showed it to him, saying that some day when I had enough money saved I would love to buy a hat like that.

The next Christmas a large box appeared under the Christmas tree - and there was the hat!

8. FISHING WITH ED

Ed taught me to fly-fish. Although I had grown up fishing with my Dad for as long as I can remember, fishing with Ed was an incredible experience. His casting was effortless and beautiful, and he made it look so easy. The fly was cast out with such precision - a tight line low to the water.

He cast a line further and more gracefully than I have ever seen and in fact, more than most people have ever seen.

That's what I observed for almost 47 years, and I can still see that perfection in my head. He was a master at presentation and fishing with confidence, believing that those two elements were the key to catching fish.

Ed always cast with accuracy and never wasted a cast - saying you should make your first cast the best - always **expect** that the fish is going to take your fly, don't "hope" the fish is going to take it - because that millisecond when you should have set the hook can mean the difference between catching and not catching the fish.

As Don Roth, one of his fishing companions, remarked, "Ed didn't cut corners, he did everything right."

Ed told him "I pay a lot of respect to the fish" for example, by making sure his equipment was in good shape, his flies were tied on well, and tippets were properly trimmed.

My first lessons were on the Willowemoc, and I just watched and tried to absorb as much as I could, trying to match his cadence and timing. Shortly afterward we went to Buck Eddy, where I caught my first trout on a fly, a Royal Wulff he had tied for me.

Soon he brought me to the Delaware, his favorite river.

I had never fished such a large river and needed work on my wading in such deep and swift water.

One evening I noticed a steadily rising fish pretty far from shore. I was already out in water near the top of my waders, but needed to get **just** a bit closer.

Ed was catching fish after fish and I didn't want to disturb him, but in my attempt to cast further out, I stepped into a lamprey eel nest, started to feel my waders taking on water, and lost my balance. I called to Ed and said "I think I'm floating downstream" - and he calmly pointed his flyrod toward me - I grabbed a hold and he just sort of pulled me back to shallower water.... I was very grateful he was using his **one piece** rod that day!

9. CUMMINGS ROD

That rod stemmed back into the early 1970s, when Ed was fishing the Delaware with his friend Gardner Grant, a passionate fly-fisherman and conservation activist. Gardner had an eight-foot, **two-piece** rod made by Vince Cummings that he let Ed cast. Ed liked the rod, and was especially fond of the grip, which was finely tapered and different from any he had ever seen.

It was delicate and light, similar to bamboo, and he believed that without ferrules there would be no dead spots, so he asked Gardner if Cummings would make him a **one**-piece eight-foot rod. That rod became his favorite **and**, because he spent an enormous amount of time on the Delaware, where long casts were a must and any trout larger than 14 inches could put you into the backing, he replaced and rewound all of the guides three or four times over the years.

The first person he allowed to try out the rod was **Cory Wells**, an avid fisherman who was a lead singer with the rock band Three Dog Night.

One evening, Cory phoned him and said that the band had just finished a concert in Binghamton, and that he was anxious to fish the Delaware. They met in Hancock and fished that evening. Cory was broken off twice by large fish; and Ed thought Cory might do better with **his** rod due to its sensitive tip that would bow to the fish if the strike was too quick. Cory then hooked and landed a rainbow of about 16", and liked the rod so much he asked Ed to order him one. Years later, he sent a letter and photo and mentioned that he still loved the rod, stating "Looking at that rod, it brings back memories of you and me and the Delaware."

And just a couple of years ago, Ed reflected that his fishing experiences had been greatly enhanced by his Cummings rod. He felt that the rod aided his timing and was as delicate and flexible as bamboo, and when he hooked a trout, it permitted him to feel the strength and energy of the fish directly.

13. BEAMOC

Although he was not a club person, Ed was instrumental as a founding member of the Beamoc chapter of Trout Unlimited, serving as a director. He was passionate about protecting the streams.

In particular, working to improve access for trout spawning in the fall by clearing obstructions from tributary mouths, and working with Highway departments to replace or modify problematic culverts, to enable trout to swim up the tributaries to spawn. Supporting this work in his official capacity, Ed and DEC Habitat Protection Biologist, **Jack Isaacs**, worked with county, town, and state highway

departments to make sure the work was done correctly.

One such project involved “daylighting” Darbee Brook, a tributary of the Beaverkill which was running through a long culvert.

Thanks to their efforts, they were able to open up and remove the culvert, turning it back into a stream, which enabled fish to spawn - and today Darbee Brook now supports a wild brook trout population.

10. LUMINARIES IN THE SPORT?

In the early days when Ed and I first met, there were so many luminaries in the fly fishing world that he knew and considered friends. In addition to the Darbees and the Dettes, there was Art Flick, Al McClane, Art and Kris Lee, Poul Jorgensen, Nelson Bryant, Nick Lyons, and Lee and Joan Wulff, among others.

For someone in their early 20s like me, getting to meet, socialize, and fish with such esteemed company was thrilling. Lee, one of Ed’s mentors, spoke at a Beamoc TU dinner and stated that part of his decision to move here from Vermont was due to Ed taking him to the Delaware River, explaining that it was “a changed river since he last visited it in 1931.”

We helped Lee and Joan move into their home in Lew Beach, and that fall, spent a couple of weeks with them up in Nova Scotia on the Stewiacke River, helping film a movie called “Autumn Silver” to promote the fall salmon fishing on that river.

We became very close, and on September 15, 1981, Lee and Joan served as honor attendants at our wedding - Ed’s Best Man and my Matron of Honor. We were married on a portion of their property along the upper Beaverkill near a pool that, as a result, became known as the Wedding Pool.

And 10 months later, we named our first child, born July 8, 1982, Lee, after his “Uncle” Lee Wulff.

11. OTHER JOBS, STREAM IMPROVEMENT, WULFF SCHOOL

Working for the DEC was a dream job, but it wasn’t very lucrative as far as salary was concerned. Through the years, Ed served as a stream watcher, patrolling private fishing club waters, and became the first

stream manager for the Beaverkill Stream Club, during which time he was involved in stream improvement, carefully planning and designing structures to look as natural as possible while improving the trout habitat, always with the benefit of the trout in mind.

His conservation efforts, protecting trout through stream work - there, as well as on the DeBruce Club, Beaverkill Trout Club and others, lasted for many years, even after he retired from the DEC. He was also one of the original instructors at the Wulff School of Fly Fishing.

In a recent conversation with Joan Wulff, she explained that Ed was not only a fly-fishing instructor, but spoke about the importance of monitoring **water temperature**, encouraging students to pay attention to the conditions of the river in which they were fishing, and contributing something Joan said they had never done.

The first Wulff School brochure described Ed as “The Catskills’ legendary Ed Van Put,” which resulted in an amusing anecdotal story that happened while fishing with Art Lee.

Ed and Art were walking along a tributary on their way down to fish the Delaware, and Art mentioned “Lee Wulff said you’re legendary,” but that he didn’t understand why, and asked Ed - “doesn’t that bother you?” As they walked along, they noticed a very large trout in the tributary. Instinctively, Ed reached down and scooped it up in his net, measured the fish and then released it.

He said “gee Art, we haven’t even gotten to the river and I’ve already caught and released a trout that was nearly 20”, to which Art replied, “Oh! I would never think of doing that!” And Ed smiled, with that twinkle in his eye, and said “Well Art, I guess that’s why Lee said I’m legendary!”

12. ED AND JACK

In the mid-1980s after a major flood, Ed was given a break from the PFR program and assigned to work for Jack Isaacs, under the Article 15 Stream Protection law. They were responsible for issuing permits for streamwork after floods, and found that people were angry, and often wanted to punish the stream for ruining their property.

Ed and Jack would visit the site, explain to the landowners **what** they were allowed to do in a way that was understandable, and write permits on the spot for the repair of flood damage; they wrote hundreds of permits after each flood.

The two became known as “best budzos” in New Paltz, and with their high-spirited but hard-working personalities combined, many landowners they interacted with came away with a newfound respect for the rivers and the importance of careful stewardship. Jack was also an expert fly-fisherman and would routinely bring along his fly rod for after-hours if he was working in the field with Ed. On one occasion they actually had the opportunity to be paid to fish as part of their job.

In the late 1980s Bureau of Fisheries officials decided to monitor the trout in the Delaware for toxic substances; and, as the river was too large for a traditional stream survey, they decided that they would send out 10 of their DEC staff to go **fishing** and **catch** fish for the study. Unfortunately, conditions were not good, and only Ed and Jack were successful; Ed caught 9 and Jack, 2. This resulted in many years of good-natured ribbing between the two friends, whether Jack caught 2 fish or 3, as he insisted. As recently as a few years ago, Ed sent Jack this email:

“While going through my diaries today I came across this entry: ‘May 31, 1989 Fished with personnel from regions 3 & 4 to collect ...rainbow trout for toxic and genetic analysis. We caught 11 in two days. Of the 11, I caught 9, Jack Isaacs caught the other 2.’” Ed noted in the email: “No one else caught anything, and you did **not** catch 3. This could possibly get a mention in a book.”

14. ED’S HISTORIC WRITING AND BOOKS

Ed was curious to find out whether the DEC had ever stocked salmon in the Delaware River, and he learned that the Hancock Herald kept bound editions of the newspaper dating back to around the time when that might have happened. This experience sparked his interest in research, and before long he was visiting other newspaper offices to seek out collections of historic newspapers, finding that many editors were trout fishermen, and they would report on large trout or unusual

trout activity.

This led to his idea of writing a history about trout fishing in the Catskills, with the newly-forming Catskill Fly Fishing Center in mind. And so he began to research in earnest, and became a historian along the way; spending many evenings at home with bound copies of old newspapers, or scrolling through reels of microfilm.

In those early days before digital collections, we traveled to newspaper offices and libraries, museums, colleges and Universities in the tri-state area. It provided great table talk at night to review what we had found. He would double- and triple- check his sources, to ensure that what he wrote was historically correct rather than relying on recollections or hearsay.

His **Beaverkill** file grew so large that he decided to branch off and write a book about that river, and in 1996, Nick Lyons published the first Edition of *The Beaverkill: The History of a River and its People*. He continued researching, and finished writing ***Trout Fishing in the Catskills***, a broad overview of the fisheries, the rivers, and important figures of the Catskills, published in 2007. His research continued, and as historical works became increasingly available online, a trove of newly discovered information led him to an expanded edition of ***The Beaverkill*** in 2016. After the discovery of another notable figure in local fishing history, Ed published ***The Remarkable Life of James Beecher*** on Juneteenth, 2021.

The biography covered the untold story of a son of the famous Beecher family of abolitionists, who fought in the Civil War as a colonel leading the first all-Black regiment of freed slaves, and who sought spiritual salvation after the war as an early pioneer and fisherman in the wilds of the Beaverkill Valley.

While historical writing was his preference, Ed's last book was written in response to the many requests over the years for a more autobiographical work focused on his fishing skills. Reviewing decades of meticulous record-keeping, Ed realized there was material worth sharing, which thankfully outweighed his innate reluctance to talk about himself!

Nick Lyons came out of retirement to serve as editor, and on July 8,

2025, *A Flyfisher's Revelations* was published.

Ed was an avid reader and kept extensive files from his research, in addition to a large library of books that he assembled through the years. In fact, he made sure our entire household understood that **those** were the top priority to save in case of a fire (after ourselves, of course)! He always encouraged our children to read, stating that they would learn more from books than any other form of education. He never stopped learning, and as his reputation grew, some of Ed's favorite authors eventually became friends, who in turn encouraged his writing.

Lee Wulff had written about Ed in a few of his books, and encouraged Ed to write an article on the importance of water temperature and its effects on trout, which was published in Fly Fisherman Magazine in 1978, and started Ed's writing career.

Ed grew up reading A. J. McClane's columns in sporting magazines when he was first getting into fly fishing, though he never imagined that they would later meet and become close friends!

Al asked Ed to be a contributing author to *McClane's Game Fish of North America*, and soon after, he appeared on the cover of another book, *McClane's Angling World*, with the disclaimer that he was "not a leftie, the photo was flipped."

15. CFT GUILD

Ed's love for preserving and promoting history went beyond the written word. He was a founding member of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild back in 1993. He tied beautiful flies, but modestly said he was not a great fly tyer; rather he paid attention to **proportion** and was diligent in his efforts to tie correct historical patterns. He fished with traditional flies, and loved the fact that patterns were passed down through generations.

Ed always used natural material in his flies, going so far as to raise his own roosters to supply hackle and hackle tips for tying his favorite fly, the Adams. As he explains in *Revelations* "I believe that the Adams works exceptionally well because of the

blending of the hackle. The red/brown hackle mixed with grizzly gives the fly a multicolored natural appearance, not a solid one, resulting in an **optical, imprecise** image that is reminiscent of a number of natural mayflies.”

He felt his success came from being particular about how a fly is tied, especially its proportions and the materials used. He tied his dry flies in the ‘Catskill Style,’ with an overall sparse appearance and a finely tapered body, matched divided wings, and sparse, stiff glossy hackle.

He believed the **grizzly wings** are the most important feature of the fly, and used well-shaped grizzly hackle tips that held their shape when tied to the hook shank.

Having learned how to tie from some of the original Catskill Style tyers themselves, he wanted to ensure the preservation of this unique and rewarding art form for future generations through the Guild.

16.HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Ed’s interest in fly fishing history led to a number of other outlets: he was a regular contributor to the CFFC’s monthly calendar of events, providing fishing tips, info on fly hatches, and interesting tidbits of historical information.

17.MONUMENTS/HISTORICAL MARKERS

He was contacted by TGF member Jane Timken, who wished to contribute toward a stream-related project. Ed proposed commemorating famous pools along the Beaverkill and Willowemoc by erecting historical markers.

After the applications and granting of permission, he became a one-man operation in his eagerness to see the project through: he wrote the text, ordered the signs and met with county highway officials, and even erected the markers, at times with the help of our teenaged sons Lee and Tyler.

In recent years, a few other organizations have contributed additional

markers.

Ed wrote “It has become a tradition for some trout fishers to travel to see the historical markers and fish each of the famous named pools, cementing forever in their minds the importance of the Beaverkill and Willowemoc, and passing along these memories to generations to come.”

In later years, despite his reluctance to be a public speaker, he created a variety of presentations and talks, covering fishing history on various rivers, wild vs hatchery trout, the artists who fished the Catskills, and more. We gave these presentations in private clubs, public events, and libraries (including this one!). Ed looked forward to sharing what he learned and discovered, and readily took questions afterward.

18. PASSING ALONG LOVE OF FLY FISHING

He was passionate about fly fishing, and was often asked to take people fishing.

And when he did, whether with a friend, neighbor, or one of the many well-known personalities who sought him out, Ed would always strive to ensure that the person he was fishing with had the best possible experience and, most importantly, caught fish. If it was someone he was asked to guide, he would rarely fish himself; if they insisted he fish, he gave them the best spot; and kept a vigilant eye on the river for rising fish to ensure his guest had the best chance of success. Ed only fished with his own flies, and would graciously share them.

While he enjoyed fishing with experienced anglers, he remarked in *Revelations* that “many of my fondest memories are of introducing people to trout fishing in the Beaverkill for the first time: children, veterans, neighbors, and friends, and family members.”

20. HANDICAP ACCESS/EASY ACCESS

Ed’s interest in contributing to the pastime that brought him such great pleasure, solace and comfort, sparked a desire to help others enjoy this great sport.

This included his work to help TGF member Joan Stoliar create easier

fishing access for wheelchair-bound or elderly anglers, in a volunteer program named “Project Access”, which constructed more than a half-dozen sites along the Beaverkill and Willowemoc.

He also taught terminally ill patients how to cast and fish through the Reel Recovery program on the Beaverkill, in addition to working with Veterans. In fact, one of Ed’s last fishing outings, at the age of 87, was spent on the upper Beaverkill guiding and instructing Gold Star Veterans.

And, in a reversal of roles, later in life Ed taught his father Emil to fish; and both Emil and Ed’s mother, Agnes, enjoyed fishing while traveling to Montana, Alaska, and Newfoundland during their retirement.

Over the years he cast flies with an impressive range of people, from international flyfishers, to politicians, ambassadors, Olympians, CEOs, Rock Stars and other celebrities. But Ed treated everyone with the same kindness and respect, regardless of their title or background. He enjoyed the camaraderie and community of the sport, and perhaps the best example of this occurred in 1988, during the end of the Cold War, when Ed got to partake in a bit of ‘ping-pong diplomacy’ as a member of a team of American fly-fishers who fished the Beaverkill in a friendly competition with trout fishers from Russia.

He described it as “one of the most exciting experiences I’ve had on the Beaverkill” and proudly wore, on his fishing vest, the Russian medals he was gifted with from the cultural exchange.

19. PRESIDENT CARTER

But it was his experiences in guiding President Jimmy Carter for five days in September of 1984 that were his most memorable, and he devoted an entire chapter to it in his recent book. President and Mrs. Carter were invited by members of the Catskill Fly Fishing Center to be their guests of honor at the Center’s fall fund-raising dinner. Ed was asked to serve as their fishing guide during their stay, and for the two weeks prior to their arrival, he would rush home from work and dash off in our car until dark each day to check the fishing conditions. At dinner on the evening of their arrival, Mr. Carter came over to the table where Ed and I were sitting and said he had heard we were married along the banks of the Beaverkill, and that we had two small

children, 2-yr-old Lee and 4-month-old Tyler, and wanted to meet them, which he did the next morning.

On the first day of fishing, the Delaware was high, but Mr. Carter was a fearless wader, and they decided to cross at Dark Eddy. Although there were Secret Service agents along the riverbank, Ed felt that **he** was directly responsible for the President's safety in crossing the river, and was a bit nervous.

He suggested locking arms, and they took off.

Ed wrote,

"The river was high due to the added releases, and we came close to "taking on water"

..., but we made it across. Afterward I remarked that now there were two Presidents who crossed the Delaware—George Washington (in a boat) and Jimmy Carter in his waders!"

I had suggested to Ed that he park far away so as not to draw attention to our car, which desperately needed to be washed. He did so, but after fishing that afternoon, Mr. Carter said "I'm going back with Ed, we have to talk fishing!" and jumped in the front seat of our car! Ed said the hour's drive back was very enjoyable; Mr. Carter asked many questions about fishing and Ed's work with the DEC; and that he had an unforgettable warmth and kindness, with a genuine interest in others.

After saying goodbye to the Carters, Ed wrote "sitting on the (river) bank yesterday ...I had two heroes, Ted Williams and Jim Thorpe. In saying goodbye, I told him I now have a third, and his name (is) Jimmy Carter....

"He wrote that Mr. Carter was very pleased and said he had read about me and did not know what to expect, and was happy that I was the way I was. He said the hardest part of the trip was leaving me behind. Mrs. Carter said they talked about me at the end of every day."

The former President stated he would be back and that he wanted to fish the Delaware with Lee. Ed replied that that would be no problem, since Lee liked to fish the big water. Realizing that Ed was speaking of Lee Wuff, Mr. Carter clarified -

"I mean **the** Lee, your son."

Shortly afterwards, Ed received a letter and a gift: a tippet holder that Jimmy Carter had made, which included his own tippets, along with a letter of thanks. The post script said “enclosed is the tippet holder. It’s to be used, not framed.”

But that one-of-a-kind gift, handmade by the president, meant so much to Ed that it was indeed framed and still hangs on our wall.

21.CHILDREN

Ed had strong moral convictions and a high level of integrity in whatever he did, and he worked to instill these qualities in his children. He was the proud father of four. He never pushed the children into fishing, but made sure each was introduced to the sport and was able to catch fish.

And as a grandfather to five beautiful granddaughters, he was happy to see that talent passed on.

22.SPORTS AT HOME

Ed was a natural athlete with excellent balance, which helped when wading rivers like the Delaware. After our first year together, I asked about the possibility of getting horses. Although Ed had never ridden in his life, it wasn’t long before his father built us a barn and we soon had 2 horses - and spent many happy years riding together.

He enjoyed spending time outdoors, taking the kids fishing, camping, canoeing, cross-country skiing, hiking, hunting, playing baseball or shooting baskets in the back yard. We went to high school basketball games for about 40 years, where Ed was a fixture, attending almost every Livingston Manor game, and many in Roscoe and Liberty as well.

In fact, one coach pointed out that we were often the only parents at the away games and we didn’t even have children on the team!

I always thought of Ed as a Mountain Man;

he spent many hours up in the woods during the spring, late summer and fall, cutting and splitting firewood for the woodstove, our favored

source of heat in the winter.

He preferred using an axe over a logsplitter, as he explained that it enabled him to stretch out the muscles in his back, and would carry armloads of wood into the house each day during the winter, up until the year before he passed, happy for the exercise it provided.

23. GIVING CREDIT

Ed believed in giving credit whenever credit was due. He'd hurry out on the court after a game to shake hands with the players and coach; or after a concert to commend the musicians.

He was generous with his compliments, quick to notice a nice outfit or hairstyle, or if someone looked healthy after an illness. He would lift your spirits with that great smile and twinkle in his eye, and was witty, funny and clever.

24. HONORS, AWARDS

Ed had a presence and exuded self-confidence, but was very humble, and never liked the spotlight; becoming anxious if he learned that he was going to receive an award, worried he might have to give a speech. He was uncomfortable getting up in front of people, but great at answering questions, especially from his seat in the audience - he could talk all day about the environment, conservation, fly-tying and fly-fishing.

Throughout his life he received awards and accolades from numerous organizations and groups, but felt the most significant came when he was selected to receive the Ernest F. Trad Award, which is the highest honor given to an individual employee by the DEC. It was established to recognize an employee whose abilities or special achievements further the Department of Environmental Conservation's goals and **objectives** of public service, and represents outstanding dedication and achievement in environmental protection and public service for the state of New York.

25. CONCLUSION

It was not an easy task to sum up his 88 years, mention the key events and stay true to the tone of how Ed lived his life, but I hope that this presentation accurately portrayed Ed as one who accomplished much, and was admired and beloved by so many. Recently, a review of Ed's book by Steve Voit was published in the UK in the current issue of *Classic Angling*.

Steve wrote that Ed was "direct and understated, with an air of quiet authority". He ended the review by stating "Ed's life of humility and good-natured interaction with both fish and fishermen provide a lesson for us all."

I want to thank you all for coming and listening and watching.

[00:51:49] **Nick Lyons:** That was just lovely.

That seemed to me an absolutely beautiful portrait of Ed, well-written as if she had five editors! And it was all her own. I have not much to add. I'm a great fan of Ed's and I have been lucky to know him and lucky to have shared a few pieces of work. I was one of those who for years, asked him to write something personal and he would always say that he didn't like to, he never wanted to, and it came as a shock to me about three years ago when he finally said, you know Nick I've been working on this. And, there was the possibility of a book. I have been out of publishing for more than 20 years now, and it is a hard job to do when you lose your memory, you forget what's on the previous page in many cases.

But, I was really delighted Ed had done it, and I read it with enormous pleasure when he showed me the manuscript. Since my son runs a different kind of publishing house with nothing really on the, of the fishing world that I had been so devoted to, I recommended another publisher, wrote to that person, and, for whatever reason, they dawdled and took time and eventually, I believe they told Obie who had come in as a great liaison, they told her it would be the end of December before they could make a decision, and then it would be another year and a half before they could do it. So there was nothing else to be done.

I jumped in and took this wild chance that I wouldn't muck up the work too badly. I did virtually everything we did, together, Obie was involved. She is as

much an active participant in the book that I am so proud of now, that came out, and it has been just a delight to work for her.

Even though every page I was worried that I had missed something on the previous page. There's one little anecdote that I've always liked from the early days that Ed, worked with, creel census. And he said he had been downstream of a gentleman who was fishing with an old conventional creel, and he saw the man in a no kill section, put the fish into, into the creel. Now, a bit later in the day, he was up in that section and he stopped around to talk to this gentleman and give him a quiet statement that it was not appropriate to kill fish. The man said, oh, it's all right. And he opened his creel and came out with a white hat.

I met Ed many years ago with Tony Bonavist one day at the suggestion of Frank Mele, whom I had a fished with once or twice, and was a great fan of also. It was the oddest day and I acted like an absolute ass. I think I told them that I had wanted to see, I liked the thought of the reservoir very much and thought I'd go fish for small mouth bass and trout if there were any in it.

We went out in a rowboat and for some reason I had my fly rod with me and I, they must have thought I was an absolute idiot to take a fly rod out into the middle of the Ashokan. And, at one point I, I thought I might want to do something with it. And they said, no, not here. They did take me to a place on the Esopus and Ed Ostapczuk would know exactly where a gentleman had caught something like a 10 pound trout out of a bend that goes right near the, near the, main Route 28. We passed it, I guess just as a, just as a part of the little tour they were giving this foolish young man. And, I said, it looks like a wonderful pool. I'll have to fish it sometime. And I remember Ed said they got the big fish already. But we did fish a number of times together.

It was, as Obie said, those casts were beautiful, soft, always low to the water and enormously accurate. We fished together once on the, big Delaware, the Big River as he always called it, with, Mike McGill and Len Wright. And Ed caught three or four fish and then stood and watched the rest of us, and we did reasonably well.

A few years later, he took me to, with those same two folks, Mike and Len Wright, about dusk, he had worked that day and about dusk, he came and took us to, I guess you all know the place, dark eddy, on the big Delaware, which I have never mentioned in public before. It seemed like a very private place. When we got there, there were about 10 trout rising. It just looked like it was a, some kind of a super hatchery which was never, they'd never seen a pellet, but that there were a lot of bugs around. We started to fish and, I went a little up by

myself with Ed and it got, it was very close to dark and within a few, maybe 10 minutes it was dark. You couldn't see, there were no lights there. It was a dark evening. And Ed was standing right next to me. He said, why don't you try the Adams? And he put one on and he says, that was perfect cast. He said, I got it exactly the right place. You'll get one this time. And I didn't get it.

And five, six casts later, it looked like we had to give up the place. So I went out and I used to smoke a cigar in those days when I fished, and I got to the car, with Mike and Len Wright. I looked at the end of my fly line when I was reeling it in, there was a, it had a burnt end on it, and I wrote a little something called, the Emperor's New Fly or something like that.

But, he was a wonderful human being. And, with all else, with all of his knowledge about the fishing, it was a, an honor to know him. I went to him several times for special advice. I brought out a new edition of the John McDonald edition of Theodore Gordon. And at lunch, John had told me, maybe Ed knows something we don't know.

And I got in touch with him and Ed sure enough had another letter or two, another column or two that no one had ever seen, and those are included in the book. And John was enormously grateful as he was for an endless amount of work that, that Ed did. So much of it as, in contrast to so much of this very materialistic world, done because he loved it. He loved fishing, he loved being with other people who loved it, and he was an innately kind human being in a world that has gotten a little more ferocious lately. I'm very, very honored to have worked on the book. I thought Obie gave one of the great little profiles that I've heard, and I have already encouraged her to publish it, but I have not an editor.

I have heard it. I love it. I'll see it printed, not before. Thank you all for coming.

[01:00:44] **Judy Van Put:** I just want to say that I thought it was uncanny that, that book, the notes and letters of Theodore Gordon was Ed's all-time favorite book.

And all these years later, he grew up reading that book and enjoying that book.

And all these years later, he was able to add a couple of letters in there, and that was great. The other thing is I wanted to thank Lee, for all of his help. I have never written one of these things. The presentations we gave was all Ed. He would hand me the script and I would read it, but he could take a mountain of material and narrow it down to that little mole hill that was interesting, and it

wasn't detail oriented, but it worked, and compile the pictures. I tend to take a mole hill and make a mountain out of it, so Lee helped me cut things down, but his work with the pictures was incredible. And to put them all together in a format and order me a new little projector and all of that.

I want to thank you very much.

[01:01:48] **Lee:** You're welcome.

[01:01:50] **Judy Van Put:** Anyone has any questions?

[01:01:50] **Beth Waterman:** Anyone have questions, I'll bring the mic to you. But I just also wanted to say that Judy brought some books for sale.

[01:01:56] **Judy Van Put:** At your suggestion.

[01:01:57] **Beth Waterman:** At my suggestion. We are promoting books. It is a library.

[01:02:02] **Nick Lyons:** I have a little question. I noticed that the flies were tied with the barb down.

Did Ed always fish with barb down, smashed, barbless hooks?

[01:02:14] **Judy Van Put:** No. In the old days nobody fished that way.

[01:02:17] **Nick Lyons:** No, I know that.

[01:02:17] **Judy Van Put:** He would fish with, traditional 94840 mustad hooks. Dry fly hooks.

[01:02:24] **Nick Lyons:** I always lost so many fish that I couldn't possibly have gone without it, without the barb.

[01:02:29] **Beth Waterman:** Anyone else have anything they would like to ask Judy or Nick or say about Ed? Many of us worked with him and knew him.

[01:02:40] **Bill Johnson:** It's a question, but maybe more of a story I want to share. My name is Bill Johnson and I went to Lee and Joan Wulff's fly fishing school. I think it was 1981, could have been 1980, and I think it was on our last

day. We were at the casting pond and we were casting into the hula hoops. Remember the hula hoops?

[01:02:59] **Judy Van Put:** Yeah.

[01:03:00] **Bill Johnson:** And of course, we can't use a fly 'cause there's trout in the water. We're learning how to cast, we're not fishing. And I believe, if I can recollect, my instructor was your husband and I can only think that's correct when I saw his photos from back then, because it looked like the guy that was giving me some instruction.

And so I said to him, will we ever have an opportunity to like fish in the pond here and catch one of these trout? And he said, yes. When, the school's done, they'll let you fish there with the instructors.

So of course I don't know what I'm doing. I'm new with a fly rod and I'm casting and I'm not catching anything. And then I think I was joking with him because I had seen trout get fed with fish pellets. And so I said to my instructor, who I think was your husband, I said, you know, if only I had a pellet fly. And he laughed. And he walked away and he came back with a pellet fly.

[Laughter]

I said, can I use that? And he said, absolutely not. And I was like, why not? And then it was over, school was over and that was that. So you know, I would've never remembered that if I didn't see your husband's photo.

And I'm like, that was the guy that was teaching me at the pond, so that's my memory of your husband. It's awesome.

[01:04:24] **Judy Van Put:** That's great. Thank you.

[01:04:27] **Jack Isaac:** I have a quick, I caught three, by the way.

I fished with Ed a lot when he wasn't writing a book thanks to Nick.

He cut into a lot of our fishing time writing. Ed and I are fishing on the Upper Beaverkill below a bridge, and I look and there's a young lady crossing the bridge. I look up. And I see they're looking and pointing and looking and something's going on and I can't really hear him, but I see. And then he points and she looks at me and I see she's crossing the bridge to come down to where I'm fishing.

So I quick go on the other side of the river and get in the woods on the other side, and she's walking down. So I get up to Ed, I go, what was that all about? What? I said, you were talking to that young lady. What'd you want to know? Oh, she asked me if I was rich.

I said, what'd you tell her?

I said, no, but you were!

... well, she asked me if, if, I minded if she smoked a bull.

I said, a bull?

Yeah. She wanted to smoke a bull and then she had this little pipe. I said, no, a BOWL. She wanted to smoke a bowl.

A bowl of what?

I said, not Cheerios.

[Laughter]

[01:05:54] **Judy Van Put:** I also wanted to say that I am, I was so excited to see so many former friends from the DEC here, Bill and Patti and Ron Pierce. And Tom Bodanza, and Jack, Heather. Heather, of course. Heather, sorry. We all worked together. I didn't work with you, Heather, but, but we all worked together and, it's just great to see so many here. Thank you so much. DEC was part of the family.

[01:06:25] **Mark Loete:** Yeah, I just wanted to add, years ago we did a presentation at the library about the, what was alleged to be the first fishing resort in America, the Milo Barber boarding house, which is just up the street on the Stony Clove. And a couple years before that, I asked Ed, Hey, Ed, do you know anything about this Milo Barber place?

He sent me I think probably four or five handwritten pages based on his research, which were newspaper inserts from 1825, 1845, 1850, meticulously handwritten, that went a long way towards us verifying that the, in fact, the first fishing resort in America was just up the street. The Milo Barber boarding house, that was, there was, I think the word is certified or licensed as a boarding house in 1825, which blew my mind that anything needed licensing here in 1825.

[01:07:22] **Beth Waterman:** Yeah, it was right up by the school.

[01:07:24] **Mark Loete:** Yes.

[01:07:25] **Beth Waterman:** Thank you so much.

[01:07:25] **Judy Van Put:** Thank you so much. Yeah. And you should go up and see the fishing library upstairs and the collection up there and...

[01:07:33] **Beth Waterman:** Stay and share more stories of Ed.

[01:07:36] **Judy Van Put:** Okay.

[01:07:37] **Beth Waterman:** Thank you all for coming.

[01:07:46] **Brett Barry:** [Applause]

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