

Valley Angler

A Fly Tiers Life

by Bill Thompson

This past weekend gave us our first real taste of winter and technically it really isn't winter yet. Most of us in the "Valley" managed to escape relatively unscathed. If you live in the southern half of the state or in Massachusetts you have my sympathies. I hope that by now you have your power back on.

My son and his wife along with their puppy, who live in Hampton, sought refuge from the storm and spent the weekend with us. Needless to say we were delighted to have them. Summer still has some reservations about bringing another dog into her house, but she managed to survive. The new puppy is a chocolate lab and despite Summer's occasional rebuffs thinks that she is great. I had the two dogs in the shop together for a few hours on Sunday while Andy and Meg did a little Christmas shopping. All and all they got along well enough; the dogs, that is. Summer was a little put off when Larger claimed her bed as his own. At one point in the afternoon they found it amusing to chase each other around the shop at high speed while barking loudly. My apologies to the folks at Elvio's.

I talked to a friend who lives in Fremont Saturday. He was without power. Like a lot of New Hampshire residents he was fortunate to have a wood stove. A couple of weeks ago he had purchased a new fly tying vice. I stupidly remarked that, "At least he could tie flies". Forgetting, of course, that it might be difficult to see without lights.

Fly tying is one of the best ways I know to wile away a winter's night, or winter's day, for that matter. Fly tiers have the luxury of being able to fish all winter without ever having to leave their house. The experience may be in the mind's eye, but it fills the gap.

A few years back Dick Stewart, who at the time owned the North Country Angler, commissioned Larry Largay, a fine Maine artist, to do an original painting depicting a typical fly tier. The result was a wonderful illustration, in the Norman Rockwell style, of an older gentleman seated at a roll top desk tying flies. He is in the act of admiring a fly that he has just removed from his vice. A golden retriever sits at his side and seems to be admiring the fly as well. On the walls various accouterments used in fly fishing are hung. A wood stove heats the den and in the background there is a window that looks out over a winter scene. A limited edition print was issued and I have one hanging in my own den where I have for years found refuge from all kinds of storms.

Fly tying can indeed be a form of therapy; just as fly fishing can. Time spent at the tying bench has a way of making you forget the real world. With all the crap going on in the world these days that may not be a bad idea.

See you on the river.