

Valley Angler

The New Movie

by Bill Thompson

As you may have heard there is a “New Movie” in the works. Most fly fisherman are familiar with the “Original Movie”, “A River Runs Through It”. I have written about the original movie in this column on a couple of occasions before. “A River Runs Through It” was based on the novella by Norman Maclean; a great many fly anglers consider this to be one of the greatest of all literary works on fly fishing. The movie was directed by Robert Redford and starred Brad Pitt.

The “New Movie” is titled, “The River Why” also based on a novel, this one by David James Duncan. The star of the “New Movie” will be Zach Gilford, best known for his role in “Friday Night Lights”. The co star will be Amber Hurt, who by all accounts is a “Hottie”.

Unfortunately, I have not read the novel; however, I have ordered a copy and will correct that as soon as possible. I am told by my, English Major, friend, Nate Hill, that “The River Why” is just as good if not better than “A River Runs Through It”. I am not sure why I have never read it before now, but I am looking forward to reading it.

Too many dyed in the wool anglers the movie version of “A River Runs Through It” was a sacrilege and brought nothing less than chaos to the sport they loved. According to these cantankerous fellows previous to the release of “The Movie” fly fishing was a niche sport practiced by only a few curmudgeons, like themselves, and they had the streams pretty much to themselves. After the movie came out there was a tremendous up surge in the number of new fly fishermen. On the other hand the fly fishing industry rejoiced in all the new found business. For many years after “A River Runs Through It” came out fly fishing manufacturers, fly shops and guides did a land office business. The glow has worn off, so to speak, and the sport has been returned to us old curmudgeons once again.

With the release of “The River Why” due this spring the old debate has once again resurfaced. The “Old Curmudgeon” side is up in arms that the movie will bring a new onslaught of fresh newbie’s converging on the rivers raising havoc. In defense of these guys there is some truth to what they are saying. The “Old Movie” did seem to motivate a new class of anglers who had little or no knowledge of the self imposed traditions and rules that the old guys lived by. Stream etiquette seemed to disappear from the rivers and some of the more popular rivers became over-crowded.

The new interest in fly fishing did have its upside as well. On the manufacturing side there was a great deal of new research and development. There is no question that equipment has advanced greatly in the last decade since the movie. Now, those in the “Old Curmudgeon” side will argue that things were just fine the way they were and no one needs a hi-tech graphite fly rod to begin with. However, on the whole you have to admit that some of the new stuff makes life a lot easier. Another plus was to Fish and Game Departments all across the country. All those new fishermen meant added revenue. Of course new fly shops opened up on every corner and guide services blossomed everywhere there was a river.

To be honest it wasn't nearly that rosy, but to hear some of the old guys you would think so. I think that in the end most would have to agree that “A River Runs Through It” was a good thing for the sport

and in a round about way the environment. Let's face it a lot of those yuppies that took up the sport had never thought much about what was happening to the rivers before.

It is too early to know if the "New Movie" will have any effect on the fly fishing community. It is, however, a good bet that some manufacturers and retailers are beginning to salivate at the prospect of a "Hollywood stimulus package" for the industry; while others are bemoaning the forth coming onslaught of thousands of tenderfoot anglers descending upon their streams. However, if there is a renewed interest in the health and wellbeing for our rivers then this will be a good thing and we can all agree on that.

See you on the river.