

The Pleasures of a Fishing Journal

By Jack L. Parker

I get a great deal of pleasure out of keeping a fishing journal especially because there are special memories written on almost every page. I started my first journal when I was in my early teens. Often, in the dead of winter I relive past experiences by reading through the pages of one them. While there is a good deal of information to be had, my entries are certainly not scientific in nature. In fact, in all the years I've been a fly fisherman I have never taken the time or trouble to learn more than a couple of the Latin names of our stream insects. I just don't feel it's that important.

You can buy pre-printed fishing journals in many fly shops or by mail order, but I have never used one. They seem a little to cut and dry for my tastes. My first journals were written in any kind of notebook I could lay my hands on. For the last several years I have been using a much nicer, note book made by Quill Mark. These books are tastefully bound and fit in very nicely on the book shelves of my library.

Even though no one else will probably ever read them I like my journals to be as interesting as I can possibly make them. One way I do this is by entering as many anecdotes as I can. The following is an excerpt dated May 21, 1965: Today, I fished the meadow stretch of the B. River from noon until after 3 o'clock without even the slightest hint of a fish. About 4 o'clock there was a fair hatch of Blue Dun's. The trout were very selective, but after much hard work I managed to land and release three fair fish on a No. 16 Quill Gordon. Saw a large fish rise in mid-stream. For once, every thing went right and it nailed the fly on my first cast. Immediately, it zipped off upstream. At the end of its run it jumped. As the trout jumped I became so excited I slipped on a rock and fell in for an icy bath. Thankfully, it was Saturday and I needed a bath anyway. Naturally, the fish got off. I wonder who made the biggest splash the fish or me? Oh well, that's the breaks! Maybe it will cooperate next time. Even though I've fallen in more than once since then I can still feel the shock of that cold water every time I read this entry.

Pictures also have their place in my journal. You certainly don't have to have an expensive camera or be an accomplished photographer for this kind of picture taking. What I like to do is record that special event, that nice fish before releasing it or the first fish caught on a new rod. Anything I feel important enough to put on film. This really adds a great touch to my journals. While I was writing this I checked through an old journal and came across a photo and entry dated July 22, 1952, which reads: Dad took this picture of me landing an 8 in. rainbow with my new rod. We were fishing the upper Owens River at Big Springs camp ground. That was the only fish I caught all day. I was using a No. 14 Adams.

Because of that picture I remember that experience as though it happened last week. The rod was a birthday present from my parents and became my faithful

companion on the stream for many years.

Something I always do is carry a small notebook and pencil in my fishing vest. Throughout my fishing day I will often stop long enough to jot down a few words of interest. These notes tend to keep things in the right perspective for the later, more in depth, entries in my journal. The notes will contain things such as the time of the hatches, kinds of bird and wild life I might see along the stream and the size of the fish I may catch before releasing them. You got it! It helps to keep me honest. After all I am a fisherman. Here's another excerpt from a journal dated Hot Creek Ranch, August 14, 1968: Began fishing below the Chalk Bluffs about 9 a.m. There was a good hatch of sedges and the fish were rising. I caught 6 fish from 13 to 15 inches. I measured each before releasing. Each took the No. 18 Brown Sedge when it was cast downstream, totally free of drag. After fish number 6 the hatch was over and the trout stopped rising, so I went back to the cabin. I was hungry and it was my turn to have breakfast.

Keeping a fishing journal does take a little extra effort, but I think the rewards I reap are worth every second of it. No matter how sharp ones memory is, (mine certainly leaves a lot to be desired and needs all the help it can get), a journal can help you relive those cherished hours spent with a fly rod in your hand.

One's journal certainly does not need to be a literary work of art. Put things down in your own words. I strongly feel that those of you who have not been keeping a journal are missing out on one of the many facets of our fine sport. So, if you haven't already started keeping a fishing journal there is no time like the present.