1979 - Everett Drake
by Charles Weidman

Everett Drake received the FFF Buszek Award in 1979. He was a fine fly tyer who became a
dlegend in his own time. For over half a century Everett tied beautiful flies of all descriptions, but he
was nationally known for his original reverse deer hair pattern which he tied in several variations. He
perfected the fly after experimenting for several years, but due to poor health never fished with it
himself. Drake's Wounded Minnow is outstanding for bass fishing, and can be used as either a streamer
or a bug. It is also very effective for trout and other game fish and in smaller sizes is excellent for
panfish, especially in the Dragon and Decimator variations.

Everett started fishing when he was five years old. As a lad, in the summer he spent most of his
time fishing when he wasn't playing baseball. (He was a fine pitcher.) When World War 1 broke out, he
joined the Army and because of his expert marksmanship was trained as an aerial gunner. He flew in
planes which he described as "orange crates with engines," but the armistice was signed before he was
ready for action.

Although he had fished quite a bit as a bait caster, it was shortly after the war before he had his
first experience with fly fishing. While traveling around the country visiting some of his war buddies,
happened to run across a group of hoboes along the banks of the Gasconade River in the Missouri
Ozarks. The hoboes were cooking a Mulligan stew in a lard can and one of the ingredients was a young
Plymouth Rock rooster which they had requisitioned from a nearby farm. Everett watched with
fascination as one of the men caught three nice smallmouth bass from the Gasconade with a makeshift
casting rig consisting of a sapling, an old silk line with a horsehair leader - and a crude streamer fly
fashioned from a rusty hook and a couple of feathers from the rooster. The experience kindled in
Everett a lasting interest in fly fishing and tying.

In 1929 Everett married Miss Ruth Shufflebarger. They made their home in Indianapolis, except
for a few years spent in Detroit. While living in Detroit, Everett and the late Paul Young became friends
and they fished together occasionally. One of Everett's prized possessions was a Paul Young rod which
he built from a kit from the master rod builder. Everett worked for many years as a machinist at the
Allison Plant of the General Motors Corporation and after retirement, he and Mrs. Drake continued to
live in Indianapolis.

As an opera buff, Everett built up a fine collection of records. He enjoyed playing golf and did
some hunting, but his favorite hobbies were always fly fishing and fly tying. He fished streams in
Indiana and streams and lakes in Michigan and Ontario. Streamers were always his favorite flies and he
especially liked the "Dominecker," which he tied with grizzly hackle. Perhaps there was a bit of
sentiment involving the unfortunate Plymouth Rock rooster of the Mulligan stew.

Everett said that fly fishermen could be very cranky. He tied flies for many fine fisherman who
couldn't tie flies themselves, but knew just what they wanted him to tie and knew just what a good fly
should look like. One time a fisherman brought a fly to Everett and asked him if he could tie some to
match it. Everett said he could, but that they would be expensive because he would have to take a fly
apart to learn how it was made. The man didn't hesitate about the price - he had been fishing in
Kentucky and had bribed a guide $5.00 to purloin one for him for a pattern. Everett never heard from
the man after he came for the flies, but the "Kentucky Streamer" is a fine, unique fly.

During World War II Everett conducted fly tying classes for disabled veterans at an army
hospital near Indianapolis. One day a nurse mentioned that she would like to have an ornament to
wear on her dress similar to the flies he was tying, (minus the hook so Everett tied some "fly pins" for
her - and many more for others later.

Everett was a member of the Indianapolis Fly Casters Club and FFF. At the first pre-
organizational meeting of the IFC on a stormy May night in 1968, Everett reached into his jacket pocket and produced a little box of flies which he had tied. His fellow fishermen immediately flocked around him, as if magnetized by the sight of the beautiful flies. The scene was repeated many times during the ensuing years. The flies were always his own creations and were of wide variety, including variations of the famous reverse deer hair pattern. His streamers were especially beautiful, perhaps because they were his favorites.

Everett was very generous with his great talent and with his wonderful flies. He gave many tying demonstrations during IFC fly tying sessions and also took part in the fly tying program of the only Midwest Council conclave he was able to attend. As long as his health permitted, he donated splendid fly plates to the Federation Conclaves and they always brought top prices at the auctions. He either sold his flies to his friends, for a nominal price, or gave them away. At the time of his death, he had just a few of his reverse deer hair flies in his possession. In 1974 Everett received the Man of the Year Award from the Indianapolis Fly Casters, and in 1979 he was the recipient of the Buz Buszek Award from the FFF, which is the highest fly tying honor the Federation can bestow. A large plate of his flies is included in the collection of the FFF and several articles have been written about Everett and his flies in fly fishing publications.

Everett was a slender man with fine gray hair that never thinned out with the passing years. He had a friendly smile and a great sense of humor. He was a man of high moral standards who didn't hesitate to speak his mind on just about any subject. During most of his adult life, his health was far from robust and there were times when he had to fight depression. But he had a fighting spirit and lots of "comeback". He was down sometimes, but never out. He died May 19, 1980.

To all fly fishermen Everett left the enduring legacy of his great flies. To his friends he gave something of much greater value: the example of his splendid attitude during his last years when he never lost interest in the sport of fly fishing. Even in the frailest of health, long after he could no longer do any actual fishing himself, he would call up to his mind's eye lovely, bygone days on the stream. He would relive those pleasant experiences and share them with his friends in the good conversation he loved so well. He delighted in hearing of the current fishing exploits of his friends, and he shared their enjoyment vicariously, especially if his flies were involved in successful fishing ventures, which they very often were. Everett Drake was a gentleman and a sportsman - and a fine friend.