At Conclave 1990, The Buz Buszek Memorial Fly Tying Award was presented to Kent Bulfinch, of Yreka, California. If you're like I am, you'll have to find the town on a map. You'll find it on Interstate 5, close to the Oregon border. Kent has lived there since 1976. He started the Siskiyou County Fly Fishers there in 1985. He has been very active in a number of conservation, club and tying activities for many years. Listing his credentials isn't necessary. He's a prototype Buszek Winner: long history of tying, giving away flies to raise funds, long history of teaching, developer of patterns, a fly fisher who enjoys fishing and is content to work without headlines.

Kent was born February 28, 1917 in Syracuse, New York. He was raised in Suncook, New Hampshire which is in the southern part of the state by Manchester. Summers he spent in the extreme northern tip of New Hampshire in an area called the Connecticut Lakes region. He started fishing there at age seven, using worms for brook trout and trolling smelt for land locked salmon. However, by age nine he was tying and fishing with flies. His grandfather got him started, and Kent says he bugged a couple of the area guides long enough that they gave him lessons. The year was 1926, and Kent remembers it well.

"I didn't have money to buy flies," recalls Kent, "so I got Dr. Fred E. Steele of Montpelier, Vermont and Roland S. Nickless of Manchester, New Hampshire to teach me to tie. Dr. Steele's flies were an inspiration, and it was fun."

He remembers the names of the guides he pestered too: Austin and Fred Scott of Pittsburg, New Hampshire. "My first fly rod was subsidized by Jack Rynolds, who at one time was scout for General Custer in Kansas," says Kent.

The military connection was cast; Kent went on to become a graduate of Annapolis, class of '40. That was followed by Navy years in W.W.II and Korea. After that, there were years as an employee of Shell with an eventual landing in California. Always a fly fisherman seeking fish, Kent came across Yreka and decided to make it home some day. He made good on the promise.

Among his many activities as a tyer, he includes tying for FFF fund raisers, sportsman shows, teaching fly tying and tying for special museum displays. On hi list of conservation activities he lists working for the conservation and restoration of the Klamath River including the Save the Klamath River activities. He has worked numerous rock rolling projects with the California Department of Fish and Game. He's a Resource Specialist for the Siskiyou Department of Education with its Adopt A Stream and Steelhead In The Classroom programs.

Kent also fishes. He says he's fished most of the waters in his own Siskiyou County, and he gets to the Klamath, Rogue and Sacramento Rivers with some regularity. He has also fished the Dean and Babine in British Columbia. What's more, Kent says he plans to keep it up for a long, long time.

On the list of organizations he currently supports are FFF, TU, CAI Trout, Trout Pac and the Nature Conservancy. Since August 1990, when he won the Buszek Award, Kent says requests for flies and other forms of support to causes has taken a decided upturn. He's lending help wherever he can.

Among Kent's innovative fly patterns, there are two that he feels are truly his own creations: the Retaliation Streamer and the Improved Hutchinson Damsel Nymph. However, most recently he has been working with producing realistic stonefly patterns using rubber bands. He says it gives the flies a "chewey" abdomen.

Kent's nomination for the Buszek Award had considerable support. When his name was announced, several former winners of the award stood up and gave the 1990 winner applause. It seems that birds of a feather do in fact recognize the work of a fellow worker bee.