Fly Tying Group of the International Federation of Fly Fishers

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The Fly Tying Group of the International Federation of Fly Fishers is dedicated to the preservation, enhancement and support of the art of fly tying as a historic element of the fly fishing experience. Archiving of historic documents, development of educational and instructional materials, teaching, and demonstrations are fundamental to perpetuating the art of fly tying for anglers who fish with the artificial fly. If this sounds like something you would be interested in, please join us today. Please Note: You must be a member of the International Federation Fly Fishers to join the Fly Tying Group.

Click here to join the Fly Tying Group
http://www.fedflyfishers.org/#Si9EDE95

Fly Tying Group Facebook Page
https://www.facebook.com/ifff.ftg
Tying Times Editorial
Chairman – Tom H. Logan, FTG-BOG
January 2107

There’s little question but what dead of winter is upon us and affecting our fishing in different ways. Record snow falls are exceeding 150 percent of normal in the Sierras, rainfalls are causing flooding in other areas and both record lows and highs are being experienced in the Big Bend of North Florida. Some of you have few alternatives but to wait for spring and warmer waters. I remember growing up back in Oklahoma when I could hardly wait for farm ponds to warm enough for bass and bluegills to move into shallows. All it took was a warm, sunny afternoon and I fished, typically didn’t catch anything but it still felt good. We’re fortunate to have good fly fishing throughout the year here around Tallahassee. We just make adjustments in how and where we fish.

Although winter may have some of us in a slow time of year, tying flies and waiting for warm weather, this is the time of year when our Headquarters Staff in Livingston and leadership of the Fly Tying Group (FTG) are very busy making necessary preparations for the next Fly Fishing Fair (Fair) that will be held again the first week of August in Livingston, Montana.

Invitations were sent in December to Demonstration Fly Tiers to show their skills during the Fair. Many have responded with the deadline being the 16th of January. Protocol specifies that assignments to tie will be made on a first received/first assigned basis for only those responses received by the deadline. Assignments to tie for up to two time periods per tier will be completed during February with notifications to be mailed soon thereafter. Peggy Brenner and her Fly Tying Program Committee have done a great job working with Staff to improve and create a more streamlined process and make sure all Demonstration Fly Tiers are of highest quality.

Though we still are in the early stages of planning the next Fair, we want to unveil our new plan and strategies that are intended to attract more public attendees, incorporate more educational opportunities and have more FUN!! These changes include a new concept added to the event called FishFest. The schedule for the Fair will be similar to previous years with meetings beginning on Monday, workshops beginning on Tuesday and the Fair ending Saturday. FishFest will include the demonstration fly tying, FTG booth activities, vendor booths and other activities on Friday and Saturday. Locations will include the High School, the Civic Center, Miles Park Band Shell and Sacagawea Park. Demonstration fly tying will be held in the Civic Center building. We expect these changes and associated advertisements to substantially improve attendance of previous years.

The FTG will have much to share and participate in on all aspects of fly tying during this new venue. Our activities will begin with our Annual Meeting on Tuesday morning, followed by our Rendezvous, BBQ and raffles of fly tying materials and other interesting items that afternoon. The Rendezvous is our most important fundraising event of the year and is open to all who purchase a ticket. Do plan to attend and bring guests. The raffles are dependent upon donations that you provide; so, watch for notices later this
spring from Chuck Collings and his Rendezvous and Booth Committee for where and how to get your donations to the Rendezvous.

There is one other very important event that will occur at the Fair…our new Fly Fishing Academy will debut with a series of related workshops on all aspects of fly fishing, including fly tying. Some of you have heard mention of the Academy and probably wondered what it is. You also may be aware that rebranding of our organization is underway with development of a new “compelling message” that represents our advocacy of fly fishing opportunity through education and conservation. Emphasis is being placed on the fact that much of what we do as members, especially of the FTG, is teach and share information on fly fishing. The Academy essentially will be the umbrella for integrating our fly tying, casting and conservation education activities for our members. It is our intent to serve as a foremost educator of fly fishing around the world. Leadership of the FTG has been instrumental with planning the fly tying program component of the Academy, and Jerry Coviello is lead on developing details and materials of the workshops that will be offered. It should be no surprise that the Handbooks and instructions that were developed under Frank Johnson’s leadership for the Fly Tying Skills Awards Program are very much a part of this planning.

I hope the above provides a few new and important updates for you regarding what the FTG is doing of late. Look for more information in this issue of *Tying Times*, our Facebook page, the new *Flyfisher* this spring and I’ll look forward to seeing you in Livingston next August.

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**Are You a Member of the President’s Club?**

Tom H. Logan, Chairman  
FTG/BOG and BOD

You may not be aware that the President’s Club exists, but it does. In fact, the Board of Directors has just placed a renewed focus on the President’s Club as part of the new Fundraising Policy and Plan that has been implemented for 2017. The general purpose of the President’s Club is to provide another important option for members who may be interested in supporting operations and programs of our organization beyond traditional membership dues and recognizing them for doing so. I just joined the President’s Club and I wanted to share my reasons.

I became a Life Member several years ago. Like you, I contribute volunteer services throughout the year, but I haven’t given dollars for years. The International Federation of Fly Fishers is important to me because of the many things we do to support fly fishing and conservation of our fisheries and their habitats, and for some time I’ve felt that I needed to do more.

The President’s Club provides me an equitable way to resume my giving on an annual basis, and I feel good that I have. It works for me and it occurred to me that some of you also may find joining the President’s Club appealing. I hope you do, and if my joining inspires you to join for your particular reasons, perhaps you will inspire others to do so. Wouldn’t that be a good thing?

Please do consider joining the President’s Club. You can find much more information on our website under Donate/President’s Club.
INTRODUCTION

In the introduction of Part 3 of this article, I provided some comments on mat boards including their color and their composition. It is appropriate here to expand some of that information.

Mat boards are available in a wide variety of colors, but the colors that you select for your framing project should complement the flies being displayed, not detract from them. As such, I tend to work with fairly unobtrusive colors: browns, tans, and cream colors with a brown frame; and blacks, greys, and whites with a black frame.

As discussed in Part 3, each mat board has a color side and a non-color side. As a general rule when using a straight mat cutter, all cutting guide lines are drawn on the non-color side and the mats are cut with the color side face down.

I typically stack four or five different colors of mats in my frames. For the purpose of this discussion, the following terms will be used:

- Main mat refers to the bottom mat. The openings for the fly boxes are cut from and the fly boxes are attached to the non-color side of this mat board.
- Second mat refers to the mat board directly above the main mat board in the stack.
- Third mat refers to the mat board directly above the second mat board in the stack.
- Top mat refers to the uppermost mat board in the stack.

CUTTING THE MAT BOARDS TO SIZE

Having earlier determined the sizes and arrangement of all of the fly boxes and legends to be included, you should know the exact size that the main mat board should be cut.

In this example, the fly plate that I’m building uses a stack of four mat boards. All four mat boards should be cut to the same size as exactly as possible. There are two reasons for that: (1) the Fletcher circle/oval cutter that I use requires that the mat boards all be the same size for accuracy; and (2) as will be discussed in more detail later, it is much easier to get accurate registry if the mat boards are all the same size.

There are two assumptions that you can’t afford to make: (1) that all 32 x 40 inch mat boards are the same size; and (2) that the mat boards are perfectly square. Mat boards may vary in size by as much as ¼ inch. This is due to the amount of shrinkage during the manufacturing processes. Conversely, the corners of the mat boards may or may not be exactly perpendicular. There is an old saying in carpentry that is appropriate here: “Measure twice; cut once.”

CUTTING THE OVAL OPENINGS

In this example, an oval will be in the upper center of the mat boards to feature a single large fly. In my opinion,
adding round or oval openings to a fly plate adds eye appeal and I try to incorporate them in my fly plates as often as possible. However, recognizing that not everyone has access to an circle/oval mat cutter, a rectangular opening can be substituted.

Unlike the straight cutter, my Fletcher circle/oval cutter requires that the color side be face up during the cutting process. This precludes the use of any measurements being drawn on the actual mat board. Thus, I typically cut another mat board of the same size for the purpose of making test cuts.

Once the oval is cut in the main mat, it is a simple process to increase the size of the oval so that the desired amount of main mat (in this example 5/8th inch) shows and the second mat board is then cut. This is repeated for the third mat board (showing 3/8th inch of the second mat board) and, finally the top mat board is cut (showing 3/16th inch of the third mat board). Since the mat boards are all the same size, and are placed in the same spot on the cutter as determined by the guide and stop, the ovals are registered correctly. Be certain to save the ovals for a later process.

CUTTING THE SQUARE OPENINGS

If you have not done so previously, carefully draw the cutting guidelines for the openings on the back (non-color) side of the main mat. Be certain to extend the guidelines beyond the opening size itself because, with the tilt of the blade when you are cutting, you actually begin and end each cut slightly beyond the actual opening size.

Apply a small strip (2-3 inches in length) of ATG transfer tape mid-length along the edge of each of the four sides on the back (non-color) side of the second mat board. Carefully align the main mat and second mat and join them so that the back (non-color) side of the second mat adheres to the face (color) side of the main mat. Use only enough ATG tape to securely hold the mat boards together during the cutting process.

Cut the openings in the main mat. Always remember that with bevel cuts, the cutting bar covers the part that is to be removed. Make certain that the depth of the blade is set so that it completely cuts through the main mat, and only slightly cuts into the back (non-color) side of the underlying second mat.

Carefully separate the main mat from the second mat. Using an ATG tape eraser, remove all ATG transfer tape from both mat boards. If necessary, use a sharp razor blade to remove the fallouts from the main mat (if cut correctly, the pieces will fall out without any additional cutting and there will be only tiny overcuts in the main mat).

Burnish the edges of each cut opening in the main mat, and put the main mat aside.
From your initial plan, you should have determined how much of the main mat will show outside the cut openings in the completed fly plate. For our example, we will assume that we desire a margin of 5/8\textsuperscript{th} inch outside of each opening. Using the score lines on the back (non-color) side of the second mat made during the previous cuts as reference points, measure exactly 5/8\textsuperscript{th} inch outside the score lines (toward the edges) and draw a new set of guidelines.

Since some of the cuts in the third mat board will extend into the oval of the second mat board, it is necessary to provide support for those cuts. Replace the oval previously cut from the second mat board and secure it with several pieces of Scotch Magic Tape.

As before, apply a small strip (2-3 inches in length) of ATG transfer tape mid-length along the edge of each of the four sides on the back (non-color) side of the third mat board. Carefully align the second mat and third mat and join them so that the back (non-color) side of the third mat adheres to the face (color) side of the second mat. Using ATG transfer tape, attach the oval removed from the third mat to the oval from the second mat board.

Cut the openings in the second mat and then carefully separate the second mat from the third mat. As before, burnish all edges. Do not attach the second mat to the main mat at this time.

As before, in our example, we will assume that we desire a margin of 3/8\textsuperscript{th} inch outside of the opening of the second mat. Using the score lines on the back (non-color) side of the third mat made during the previous cuts as reference points, measure exactly 3/8\textsuperscript{th} inch outside the score lines (toward the edges) and draw a new set of guidelines.

Since some of the cuts in the third mat board will extend into the oval of the top mat board, it is necessary to provide support for those cuts. Replace the oval previously cut from the third mat board and secure it with several pieces of Scotch Magic Tape.

As before, apply a small strip (2-3 inches in length) of ATG transfer tape mid-length along the edge of each of the four sides on the back (non-color) side of the top mat board. Carefully align the third mat and top mat and join them so that the back (non-color) side of the top mat adheres to the face (color) side of the third mat. Using ATG transfer tape, attach the oval removed from the top mat to the oval from the third mat board.

Cut the openings in the third mat and then carefully separate the third mat from the top mat. As before, burnish all edges. At this time you can securely attach the third mat board to the second mat board.

V-grooves are a nice decorative addition to any framed object. Although they require some degree of accuracy, they are relatively easy to cut. Because of the additional time involved however, they are not commonly seen in commercially rendered framing.

At this point in the process, the main mat has the score lines resulting from the cutting of the third mat. Outside of those score lines (towards the edges) there should be
approximately 2 inches at the top and sides and 3 inches at the bottom.

The plate legend should be centered in the space at the bottom. Once the guidelines for cutting the opening for that legend are drawn, the guidelines for the V-groove can then also be drawn. In this example, the guide lines for the V-groove along the bottom will be centered on the legend opening, and along the top and sides, 3/4 inch from the score lines made while cutting the third mat.

As is true with cutting any opening, the initial opening in the main mat is for the V-groove and is with the non-color side facing up. (Note: the opening for the plate legend is not cut at this time.) Also make at least one orientation mark across the guideline so that the two pieces can be accurately reunited later.

Next comes the tricky part: Once the large opening has been cut, the guide of the mat cutter is accurately aligned with the cutting head bar at a specified space. For most mats, that is slightly greater than 2 mm. For suede mat boards, which are thicker, it is 3mm. It is important that this space is uniform the entire length of the cutter bar so that a parallel cut is made. It is also very important that the blade is very sharp (I typically put in a new blade each time I cut a V-groove.)

Once the mat cutter is in the correct configuration, the cut out piece from the top mat is placed in the cutter COLOR SIDE UP. Each of the sides is then cut resulting in triangular-shaped scrap.

If properly done, the cut out portion can be reunited with the rest of the main mat without any gaps or spaces. The orientation mark assures that the pieces are returned in their original configuration. Once everything is in place; the two pieces are joined with long strips of Scotch Magic Tape.
Tying TIMES

Using the score lines from cutting the third mat, guide lines are drawn for the opening of the top mat. In this case, guide lines are drawn 3/16\textsuperscript{th} inch outside the score lines. The opening of the legend box is also cut at this time.

NEXT IN THE SERIES

We are getting close to finishing our fly plate. In the next article, we will look at the steps involved in constructing the back box.

Figure 11. The mat boards ready for final assembly.

HERTER’S, INC.

John Byron

Before Cabela’s … before Bass Pro Shops and World Wide Sportsman … even before Wal*Mart … there was Herter’s.

In the ‘40s all the way through to 1981 when the company went bust, Herter’s huge catalog is where you went for fly tying material, fishing tackle, hunting gear, custom gunstocks, duck decoys, and just about everything else an outdoorsman might dream of wanting.

Polar bear for stream-ers? Got it, cheap. English dry fly hooks. Imported jungle cock hackle capes. It was a fly fisherman’s dream and a walk through one of the six retail stores that later opened usually yielded a full basket and sticker shock at the checkout.

Herter’s pioneered the use of fiberglass in boats, proving their durability by pushing them off the factory’s third-story roof onto the parking lot. Brought fluorescent colors to chenille and feathers. Sold kits for bamboo flyrods and jigs to plane the bamboo into tapered hex strips to glue and wrap. If it was something you did in the fields or woods or on a river or a lake, Herter’s had the stuff you needed.

George Leonard Herter, the company’s founder and owner, was also an author, writing 15 books on outdoor topics and a range of other themes usually described as “oddball.” He traveled widely, was a worldly man, a family man, but also a recluse and—again that word—an oddball. I won’t repeat the histories documented here and here and easily googled from other sources. Let me instead tell you of the George Herter I knew as a young lad growing up in Waseca, Minnesota, where Herter’s was located.

Waseca. Just another small farm town in Southern Minnesota, Fertile Land in the dialect of the Dakota Sioux. My great-grandfather and his brother broke sod in the 1850s just south of where the town would be, driven by the Potato Famine from their home in Parish Kilteely, County Limerick. Byrons still work the same land. But I was a city mouse, living in town a couple blocks from Clear Lake and its bass, crappies, bluegill, carp, sheepshead, and northern pike.

When I was eleven, I fished a cane pole and worms from the dock behind a fancy house a new family had just moved into. The wife was Belgian and the father—George—a friend of my folks from before the war. My mother had some French from college and the wife spoke little English, so Berthe Herter and my mom became best buddies and I got to meet George.
He fished the lake too, wading with a fly rod behind the house and catching *beaucoup* crappies every night. I’d watch from the bank and one night he asked If I’d like to try it. George quickly taught me the rudiments of casting with Berthe’s fly rod, her hip boots fit me perfectly, and I became a fly fisherman. Two droppers, three flies. Usually a bee pattern, a black gnat, and what I came to call the Crappie Special: yellow tail, yellow chenille body, red hackle tied wet. George and I often had doubles and even the occasional triple. Gut ‘em, scale ‘em, coat ‘em in corn meal and fry in hot grease. Love crappies.

These were George’s flies I started with, but he asked if I’d be interested in learning to tie and I became an eager student, sitting at George’s tying bench in the house as he looked over my shoulder and coached me. No bobbins—we waxed just the length of thread needed for each fly. No whip finishes but tons of half hitches. I wasn’t very good at first, the hackles would unwind on the Crappie Specials, and thus was invented the Crappie Special Streamer (which worked even better). My folks bought me a tying kit and a fly-rod outfit at the tiny Herter’s retail store in a corner of the factory downtown and I was in business.

I did yard work for George, my first paying job, bucking brush and cleaning up his overgrown property. One day I came over and found the one-car garage stacked to the ceiling with burlap bundles about eight feet long, Chinese symbols on the side. “What’s this” I asked George. “Tonkin bamboo” he replied. “I think the Chinese communists are going to take over and I want to get the biggest stock I can out of the country before it’s impossible to buy anymore.” Another time he had me on the aluminum roof of the garage in the hot sun using carbon tetrachloride to remove some tar. Damned near passed out and probably would have cashed it in had George not found me woozy from the fumes.

George Herter was my friend, my mentor, and often a daily companion as I was growing up. If my dad weren’t such a great guy, I’d cheerfully have adopted George as my father. I got to know his oldest son Jack too, then not yet in school, now a clinical physiologist still trying to figure out his dad. And Berthe, a gentle woman of breeding and grace. She died in August at 91 and is buried beside George at Fort Snelling Military Cemetery in St. Paul.

The Waseca County Historical Society recently hosted a Herter Exhibit: “George Leonard Herter, The Man and The Myth.” That’s a good title. Though successful as a businessman and wealthy, George was a troubled human being. He’d had a tough war, an artillery officer in Europe who saw battle and was awarded a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart. Now we call it PTSD. He had it and it affected his life ever after.

My friends at the Historical Society alluded to rumors of George having “a dark side” and I don’t think I give up confidences to say without details that son Jack confirms this. But I saw George Herter as brilliant, a polymath of wide interests and deep passions. He was always reclusive and private, but gentle with me and kind. I’m of two minds on some of his writing: is he serious or just putting us on? Best
guess: tongue in cheek and laughing quietly all the time. He was an incredible man, deeply complex, and the father of modern marketing for outdoor sports.

And my friend. I miss him.

I still tie flies and chase fish, tarpon and bonefish when I can afford the trip and reds regularly in the Banana River behind the house. My stepson Jared and grandson Jon have taken it up. They tie flies too and so, as George Herter did for me and I hope you do in your circle, I’m able to pass on down the line the skills and folklore we fly tyers and fly fishermen share. Tight lines.

John Byron retired as a captain (and former chief petty officer) from the US Navy after 37 years of continuous active duty. He commanded the submarine USS GUDGEON (SS-567) and Naval Operations Test Unit, the Navy operation at Cape Canaveral responsible for testing TRIDENT missiles. He lives in Cocoa Beach FL with his wife Melissa.

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**Photographing Flies**
Jerry Coviello

You just tied the perfect fly and now you want to take a photo to share with all your Facebook Friends or better yet you want to write an article on the fly you just invented. You take out your cell phone and when you take that shot your photo is yellow and blurry. The magazine will not accept that photo, they want 5 mega pixels RAW or TIFF format and the photo to sharp and clean. So what do you need to do to take a close-up photo of your fly? If you have a digital SLR camera and some lenses, you just need to add a few more items.

What I am going to go over next has to do with Simple Macro Photography. Macro Photography is used to take photos of small objects and magnify them in the photo. A few pieces of equipment will be needed. You can just buy a Macro Lens for your camera but that could be expensive, but it is the easiest to work with. I have a Canon EOS and the price of a 100mm Macro lens can run up to $599.00 (At the time of the article I could not find one on eBay that was not gray market), and if you go to a camera store that is usually the direction they will recommend because it is the easiest way to go and the most expensive way. It is almost like buying a new fly rod, the one that is more money is better, that is what I am told every time I go into my local fly shops.

I started to use extension tubes; an extension tube allows the lens to focus closer than it does normally. I have a 25mm extension tube; I also have a 12mm extension tube. The 25mm tube will move the lens 25mm away from the camera body, and the 12mm tube will move the lens 12mm away from the body. You can also use both of them together which will give allow you to move the lens 37mm away. The result is you can focus closer to get larger magnification. A rough rule of thumb to use for the increased magnification is: **Additional Magnification = (Extension Tube Length)/(Lens Focal Length)**. For example 25mm Extension Tube Length divided by a 50mm lens the additional magnification would be 0.5 x magnifications. The cost of the 25mm Extension Tube can run around $140.00.

When taking photos up close any movement will be magnified, using a tripod will stabilize the camera and eliminate any movement.

Lighting can be an issue; a top mounted flash will not work because the light from the flash will travel over your intended subject. I use a ring flash so the flash is mounted at the end of the lens, the ring flash will screw onto the lens just like a filter. This will shine the light on the subject. The cost for a ring flash can start at $50.00 and go up to hundreds. Mine was low end and does the job, but I have to do all the
settings manually for the shutter speed and aperture, but with a digital camera you get your results instantaneous and can adjust for the next shot.

A shutter release cable so you are not hitting the shutter button and moving the camera which will blur the photo.

Colored cards to use as a backdrop against the subject you are photographing, you don't need them but they will eliminate a cluttered background and also show more detail of your subject. I use a dark backdrop for light color flies and light backdrop for dark color flies. Sometimes I will use a beige color for both.

You could just take the photo of your fly using your cell phone or any camera and then go to a photo editor and crop the subject, but you could lose definition and clarity. If you have any questions email me at jerry_coviello@verizon.net.
Confessions of a Lazy Fly-Tyer

John Byron

I’ve been tying flies since the Truman Administration. Rainbows, brookies, browns, cutthroats. Steelhead. Bream and crappies and bass. Tarpon, reds, bonefish, snook, seatrout. Size 3/0 for tarpon. 28s for some really picky rainbows feeding on midges at Lake Hannah east of Seattle. Lots of flies and I love to tie them.

I admire the truly skilled, deeply talented fly-tying artists in our ranks. They make beauty on a hook. Good on ‘em. But me? Life’s too short for all that and so I’ve evolved into what may be the world’s laziest fly-tyer. Here’re some things I think I’ve learned:

• Biggest lesson ever: the fish don’t care! Windings so close to the eye it’s hard to poke a 6/0 leader through it? The fish don’t care. One wing a bit long? The fish don’t care. Bit of a gap on the body winding? The fish don’t care. Tie flies for fish, not window dressing. Shape, color, texture, size, flotation/sink-rate: these matter. But how perfectly and precisely the fly is tied, not so much. The fish don’t care.

• But make damned sure it’s not gonna unwind! Whip finish? Always. Use half-hitches freely — if you don’t know what to tie onto the hook next, throw a half-hitch while you’re thinking. Head cement or HardAsNails, on the head and maybe too at the tail and where the bead-chain eyes are tied on. And acrylic. It’s magic, that goop you set with the U/V light. The test of a well-tied fly: it gets more and more and more frazzled and worn down by fish without ever unwinding.

• Exact copies ain’t. Until the Good Lord evolves for us a new insect with a hook hanging below its tail, none of us can truly emulate the creature we’re trying to imitate. Impressionistic flies beat the best imitation every time. Buggy-ness matters.

• Two things really count. Hooks. And thread. Cheap hooks are an abomination. Until the chemically sharpened hook came along, that’s all there was, regardless of cost: cheap hooks. But now there’s no excuse for tying on anything that’s less than scary-sharp stab-you-ev-ery-time-if-you’re-not-careful-ouch. Finding the right thread takes time. When you do, quit looking. I’m partial to 75-denier GSP for most saltwater, but also like Uni’s BigFly for tarpon. Settle on the best thread (for you) that you can find and use it always.

• Black and white may be all you need for thread. Yes, sometimes a tan or a hot pink or the perfect green is useful. But for most flies most of the time, black or white is just fine. Because…

• Sharpies are your friend. You can use a Sharpy to bend the colors of thread and most other materials and turn blah monochrome into banded fish-like bodies and tails. 24 colors for under $12.

• Modern materials are wonderful! Face it: at one time, every material was modern. But the growth of fly tying as an industry has brought an explosion of new materials, many superior to ‘the natural’ and usually at far less cost. Credit Wapsi and Enrico Puglisi and Steve Farrar and a bunch more for making the choices harder but the results so much better. And easier. Embrace the new technology.

• And that includes the modern substitutes for dubbing. Dubbing is a pain in the ass. Antron yarn works just fine for trout. Fuzzy chenilles and the big array of brushes available do well for saltwater. Dubbing. Bah.

• But! But amongst all this new material, there’s no substitute for good grizzly hackle! Grizzly necks are the jewelry of fly tying — for dries, a nice neck can cut into your child’s college fund. But there’s no substitute. (If I was tying a lot of dries these days, I’d probably make the same silly assertion for ginger hackles too.)

• Substitute freely. If you’ve been tying longer than a few weeks, you’ve got materials and colors and sizes enough for three people. So use what you have rather seeking out the exact item the pattern just has to have. Finding the precise barred ginger hackle from a virgin jungle fowl fed only on organic seed might suit some prissy pattern perfectly … but you’ve got something pretty darned close. Use it.
Keep some beeswax around. You may not be waxing thread like in the good old days, but it's nice to be able to make your fingers tacky for winding a small hackle and it's still the best dubbing wax … if you can't wean yourself from that bad habit.

Get the best tools. Your time and the cost of tying are enough important to not waste time with crappy tools. You need:

1. The right size vise sturdy enough that it never wobbles and good enough that it holds perfectly the size hooks you tie.
2. Really good scissors. Dr. Slick's are great. Enrico's are even better.
3. The best lamp you can find. I've got a fancy 30-LED bar light that does all but make coffee. $60, and it throws its light from about 8 inches above the vise. With bright fluorescents for general lighting.
4. A couple pairs of small pliers. Dikes for cutting tough stuff and snipping off beadchain eyes etc. Small needlenose for crimping stuff.
5. Tweezers. Any kind.
6. Maybe a magnet-on-a-stick, for all those hooks you drop.
7. A brush of some sort to comb out fiber tails and wings and fluffing buggy bodies. I like Enrico's finger brush (I park it on my magnet stick).
8. Hackle pliers? There are no good hackle pliers — all are the spawn of the devil. Use your fingers. Learn to love a rotary vise.
10. And a threader for those bobbins (though a crimped mono loop works fine too).

Get organized. Cabelas had the best tool organizer I've ever seen and I was lucky enough to get one of the last they had. Wood, lazy-susan design, nearly a hundred holes to park stuff in vertically. Indispensable. And no longer available. But many items nearly as good can be found, tying desks of exotic design, carousels to hang flash on, hook bins and rotating thread racks and a big bunch of other things to keep the clutter down. You should have as many organizing gadgets as you need. But no more.

Get drawers. I've got a wall of them, 30 total in three stacks, all labeled, with a lower cabinet to put the big stuff in and to hide my organizers when I'm not tying. The setup works perfectly. Plastic drawers are so easily available that there's no excuse for either clutter or confusion. Amazon has an incredible array. The Container Store is where I got mine.

Take care of your eyes. It's called presbyopia, the font seems smaller and your arms too short. Happens to all with age, the inability to focus at closer distances. Like the distance between your nose and that size 20 Quill Gordon you're tying. Easy fix. Get some cheaters. Any drug store. But there's a bit of science to bring aboard, the mathematical relationship between the power (2.0X etc.) of your reading glasses and focal length. I tie fairly close to the vise and so have found that 3.5X is right for me. YMMV, but no one should have trouble seeing in sharp focus the details of what they're tying.

And save your marriage. Get a good hand vacuum and maybe one of those powered brooms.
These days I’m tying saltwater flies exclusively, from size 6 up to 3/0. In keeping with this theme of taking always the easy path, a couple thoughts on saltwater:

- Dr. Aaron Adams — one of our true experts in marine biology for fishing — has the right approach: if you can choose a pattern that’s easy and quick to tie, that’s the one you want … even if there’s a more traditional tie. He has some good videos on Vimeo to show you what he means.

- Love beadchain eyes. Hate lead eyes (it’s like casting with a loaded .22). But if you do use beadchain, file the holes in the eyes smooth after you get them anchored (I use a Dremel zip zip).

- Love zonkers, rabbit for smaller and Finnish raccoon for the big tarpon butterflies.

- Rubber legs sure do beat all the fancier ways of making crab and shrimp flies look like crabs and shrimp.

- Yak hair (SynYak or the real stuff) beats bucktail. So do the 500 or so different kinds of bulk fiber that cover one wall of your favorite fly tying emporium.


- Personal theory here, or phobia: I think that weed guards and eyes on a stalk can get in the way of setting the hook.

- Tying saltwater flies makes one really appreciate a sturdy vice with no flaws, tough thread, and the best hooks you can find.

- Gotta chose between small hook or bigger, go bigger.

And that’s it, my guide to creative laziness when tying flies. If you’re an artist, do your art. If you’re a fisherman, relax: no one’s grading the flies you tie. Except the fish. And they don’t care.

*John Byron lives on the Banana River in Cocoa Beach FL.*
Quills from Peacock Herl
Son Tao - Indianapolis, Indiana
Facebook member of Fly Tying Patterns & Videos

I used to buy peacock quills all the time and they were terrible and expensive. Once I started making my own, I’ve been much happier. One thing I didn’t add but will edit the post now that I think of it is, you can color the quills with a sharpie. Then coat it with varnish or UV resin to lock in the color.

Bivisible Dry Fly tied on a size 16 Tiemco 100 dry fly hook by Son Tao.

Editor’s Note: George Leonard Herter credits the bivisible dry fly to be invented, named and popularized by Edward R. Hewitt, New York City.

I didn’t have much to go on when I first got started so I picked a lot of brains from older gentlemen at the local VFW. Many of those gentlemen were in their 70s and 80s and getting their insight was amazing. I learned a lot through trial and error. So find the Facebook group “Fly Tying Patterns & Videos” and websites like IFFF Fly Tying Group amazing.

Reason for barbless hooks: I don’t fish for a living or need fish to survive. I try to leave a smaller impact upon the fish’s mouth by going barbless. I may lose more fish than others that don’t go barbless but fly fishing for me is the overall experience. Catching a fish is just a bonus. I don’t push it on others. It’s a personal choice.

I often get asked two things. What type of quill are you using and do you soak the quills?

Answer: I use stripped peacock eyes and I strip the quills myself and if done right, there’s no need to soak before wrapping.

These are the materials you need.

1. Peacock eyes - very cheap and readily available. I buy mine from craft stores (i.e. Hobby Lobby, Michaels etc). They are generally larger at the craft stores compared to fly shops. Bigger eyes generally are better for quill bodies. (Eye section only - posterior side is bare with her on the anterior edge only.) Snip out eye section and save herl for other uses.

2. A water bottle - I use a 24 oz bottle because that’s what my wife gave me. A CLEAR 32-48 oz bottle would be best. I run the risk of death if I used one my wife’s bigger clear bottles. So I make do with this blue 24 oz bottle. It works just fine.

3. Bleach and baking soda - found just about everywhere. You probably already have it at home.
4. Add bleach to the water bottle (4 oz for 24 oz bottle, 5 for 32 and 8 for 48). (8 oz line of 32 oz bottle)

5. Fill up the bottle 2/3 of the way with HOT water. (up to 32 oz line)

6. Add the peacock eyes

7. Shake vigorously for 4-6 minutes (agitation is the key)

8. Look in the bottle often to see the status of the quills

This is what the bottle will look like after shaking. The bleach strips away the tiny green fibers on the peacock.

9. Immediately add 3-4 tablespoons of baking soda. To be honest, I don’t measure. I just dump a few shakes of baking soda in the bottle. (2 tablespoons of baking soda)

10. Add COLD water.

11. Shake the baking soda, water and peacock eyes to stop the stripping process for 1-2 minutes

Believe it or not, even with this blue bottle and murky water, you can still peer through and see the status of the peacock eyes. Once you see that the majority of the fibers are stripped off, STOP immediately and dump out the bleach water.
12. Dump out the baking soda water and refill with cold water. Repeat this process to ensure all the baking soda is rinsed off.

Brandon Natelli (FB member remarked): Both sodium hypochlorite and sodium bicarbonate are bases. They do not react with each other. This step would be as effective with just tap water. It would be better with an aquarium water conditioner/declorinator (various different chemical used). Thanks for sharing, you’re an extremely talented tyer.

Lay out the quills to dry on a paper towel. Every peacock eye is different so as you can see in this photo, one eye is done. While the other two still have a lot of fibers. At this point, you can do one of two things. Leave it alone and when you’re using a quill that has fibers on it, a pencil eraser will easily get rid of any remaining fibers. Two, you can repeat the bleach process again.

It’s better to under strip the quills verse over stripping. If you overstrip the quills, they become pale and very brittle. They’ll break, fray easily and makes it a royal pain to wrap. It’s better to just chuck overstripped quills in the trash.

Lastly, you can color the quills with a sharpie to get the desired color. Once you coat the body with a resin or varnish, it’ll keep the color from bleeding in the water. And here are 3 stripped peacock eyes. Hope this helped!

Different people learn in different ways. I learned to do this from this video about a year ago. Before that, I stripped individually with an eraser...not as nice of a quill either.

Quill
George Leonard Herter

Editor’s Note: This article was written, illustrated and published in the Professional Fly Tying, Spinning and Tackle Making Manual and Manufacturers’ Guide - Authentic Fly Tying Dictionary of Popular Patterns and a Complete Outline of Fishing Entomology Fresh and Salt Water Lure Making by George Leonard Herter, pp. 83-85 Copyright 1969. Reprint permission granted by Jacques P. Herter, son of George Leonard Herter. It is interesting to note that this professional guide was first published and copyrighted in 1941. It seems that with each subsequent edition more and more useful information was included.

“Quill-bodied” is a very confusing term and one that always muddles the beginner. It can, and does mean many very different types of bodies made with greatly varying material. Most frequently, when speaking of a quill-bodied trout fly, tyers refer to a body made with a single fiber from the eye of a peacock-eyed tail feather. The fiber is a light shade of tannish brown or ginger on the underside. These light backed eyes have fibers that give the illusion of light and dark stripes when stripped of herl (sometimes called fronds) or the metallic hair on the fibers. Regular peacock eyes usually have dark brown backs. Only a very few have the light backs so desirable for quill bodies. The reason for the variance is unknown.
Peacock eyed tail feather.
1. Fibers or “herl” that is stripped to make light and dark striped quill bodies.
2. Fibers or “herl” that can be used same as above but is usually not as well suited to the purpose as above.
3. Fibers or “herl” most suitable for wrapping bodies such as on Coachman pattern also for stripping when dark quill bodies are desired.

Taking the metallic hair near the base of the fiber so the “quill” will be as strong as possible. Many tyers strip the metallic hairs by merely passing the fibers through their fingers, scraping them off with their thumbnail. The will come off much easier this way if they have been soaked in hot water or peroxide. A rubber eraser will also remove them easily. Just lay the fibers on a piece of paper and erase them. Take a bunch of short ends of nylon leader material and tie them together so they form a stiff round bundle a few inches long. Such a stiff little brush will take the metallic hair from peacock feather fibers. If you want to make the fiber lighter in color, put it in a bottle of peroxide overnight. Peroxide will bleach the light side, but it will not have a noticeable effect on the dark side of the fiber. If you are in a hurry, heat the peroxide, but not boiling, and you can bleach the fiber 15 to 30 minutes. Before attaching them to the hook shank prior to winding the body, soak the fiber in warm water. It winds best when soaked and there is less danger that it will break.

Although the light-backed fibers found at the eye are best, the fibers found on the side when stripped of metallic hair, are dark brown and have their uses. The are widely used for quill bodies through Europe. These brown quills are dyed orange for good May fly bodies; dyed yellow for Dark Olive Duns; dyed red or claret for the Welshman’s Button; and dyed green for the male from the Blue Dun.

As a “quill”, you may also use a single fiber of condor wing flight quill (usually a secondary or grand nashua), a large white swan quill, turkey tail, pheasant tail or emu plume. The fuzz or hair on the fibers are taken off by the same methods described for removing metallic down on peacock fibers. In most cases, however, the fuzz is left on...or at least some of it. The fibers on emu plume make some of the finest quill bodies. They are used with or without stripping. Wind a light one and a dark one together to get a striped effect on the body.

“Quill” bodies can also be made by taking a hackle feather, stripping off the hackle fibers and winding the center quill around the hook to form a body. Still another way of making quill bodies is by using a large turkey tail, swan quill, goose quill or peacock tail feather. Take a small crosscut in the middle of the center quill or “stem” or such a feather. Then take your hackle pliers or fingers, and pull on the edge of the cut, stripping off a shaving of the outer shell. If any pitch adheres, scrape it off with a knife or with fine sandpaper. The strip is then soaked in warm water and wrapped to form a body. If you strip off a piece of center quill toward the base or butt of the feather, the strip will be transparent.

Here is where the confusion begins. A long, thick hair from a moose or caribou mane (the best way is to select two hairs, one dark and one light, and wind them together to produce a spiral segmented effect) is often wound on a hook shank to form a body. This is also called a “quill” body, although it has nothing to do with a quill or feather.

Still another form of quill body is made from the quills found on the sides of a Canadian porcupine skin. These
An albino peacock eye feather. Quills are thin, hollow and much lighter than cork. The end is tied on the hook shank, and the quill is wound around to from the body. Be sure that the ends are firmly bound down so that no water can get into them. These porcupine quills make wonderful quill bodies. They not only make lifelike segmented bodies on a fly, even though wound flat, they still hold air and help float a fly if the body touches water.

Still another form (there seems to be no end of them) is made using a large swan, goose or peacock feather, or a large Australian porcupine quill. Cut off the butt end or base of the quill in a piece as long as you want the body. Then remove the pith with a sharp wire. On the open end make a cut about three-sixteenths of an inch back and cut nearly through the quill, leaving it solid only at the bottom. Split off what you have cut, leaving the piece in front sticking out. This is to be used for binding the quill on the hook shank. Take a sharp wire, stick it down the quill on the inside and punch a hole in the closed end. Work the eye of the hook through the hole. Slide the quill back on the shank until the pointed end of the quill is covering the tail wrapping of the fly. Bind the piece of quill on the bottom of the front end to the hook shank with tying thread. Take the hook from the vise and drop a small piece of paraffin into the hollow quill. Shove a hot wire down the quill and melt the paraffin to seal up the tail end and let dry. Now pour a little fly head cement into the open end. This seals the quill to the hook shank. Seal the front of the quill with paraffin or plastic. If you desire you can wind the shank with colored thread before you start. The thread not only shows attractively through the quill but gives the cement something to stick to. Twisted pieces of tinsel or a small amount of dry aluminum or gold bronze powder sealed in the hollow quill add a good effect. Hackle feather or hair wings can be tied on in front near the eye of the hook, if desired. This type of lure can be fished on the surface or slightly below the surface. It is very effective for practically all game fish.

### IFFF Calendar of Events

**January 2017**
- January 19-22, 2017 International Sportsman Expo, Sacramento, CA. NCC will have a booth at this event. [www.sportsexpos.com](http://www.sportsexpos.com)
- January 21, 2017 Northern Ohio Fly Fishing Expo, North Coast Fly Fishers, [www.ncff.net](http://www.ncff.net)

**February 2017**
- February 25, 2017 Fly Fish New Hampshire. NEC will have a booth at this event. Contact Burr Tupper for more information, [nhflyangler@gmail.com](mailto:nhflyangler@gmail.com)

**March 2017**
- March 17-19, 2017, Great Waters Expo, St. Paul, Minnesota [greatwatersflyexpo.com](http://greatwatersflyexpo.com)

**April 2017**

**May 2017**
- May 5-6, 2017, Washington Fly Fishing Fair, Ellensburg, Washington, [flyfishalso@frontier.com](mailto:flyfishalso@frontier.com)

**June 2017**
- June 16-18, 2017 GLC Fly Fishing School & Conclave, Roscommon, MI [www.fffglc.org](http://www.fffglc.org)

**July 2017**
- July 29, 2017 Puget Sound Fly Fishers, Pierce County’s Environmental Services Building located at Chambers Creek Regional Park, [www.psff.org](http://www.psff.org)

**August 2017**
- August 1-5, 2017 IFFF International Fly Fishing Fair, Livingston Montana, [www.fedflyfishers.org/FlyFishingFair.aspx](http://www.fedflyfishers.org/FlyFishingFair.aspx)