

Fly-Fishing: The **Contemplative** Sport

Fly-fishing fundraisers all too often are affairs where everyone picks at a plate of rubber chicken and pretends to be excited



about silent auctions. But apparently no one told the folks in Grayling, Michigan.

Take a week of “intense camaraderie,” a big ol’ family cookout, men in funny outfits and a raffle for a truly unique rod and you’ve got the Eighth Annual Trout Bum Bar-B-Q. Each spring for the past seven years, the Fly Factory fly shop in Grayling, in conjunction with the George Mason Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the Great Lakes Council Federation of Fly Fishers, has held the Trout Bum Bar-B-Q (TBBBQ), at the Fly Factory’s premises on the banks of the AuSable River.

The Trout Bum Bar-B-Q is an all-in-one fundraising event whose primary mission is stream conservation. The event informally kicks off up to a week prior to the actual Saturday-evening Bar-B-Q (read lots of fishing), and Thursday through Saturday there’s also the bamboo fly-rod makers gathering, Rodmakers at Grayrock.

On the day of the Bar-B-Q (June 22) there’s the Fly-Flinging Festival, during which cheating and bribery are encour-

aged—and since the TBBBQ is a non-profit organization, bribes are tax deductible. Then there’s the Body Hair Pledge Drive, which means that if enough money is raised certain hairy individuals go under the razor. This year, Steve Southard, Fly Factory owner and host, has promised that for \$7,000 he will sacrifice his plentiful pelt from the waist up, top-knot included. And for \$10,000 he’ll even surrender his moustache and eyebrows.

“The Bar-B-Q was a pretty serious affair the first and second years, then we noticed attendance dropping off, so we decided to make it all fun,” says Steve Southard. “Basically it’s a parody of a typical fly-fishing fundraiser.”

The recipe appears to be working, as the Bar-B-Q has built a substantial following with close to 200 people in attendance last year from all over North America and even a few from the UK, Australia and Austria.

It’s not all hoopla and high-jinks, however. Last year it raised \$24,000 for the local chapters of TU and Federation of Fly Fishers, as well as the Michigan Hydro Relicensing Coalition. In the past five

PHOTO OF TBBBQ REGULAR SAM SURRE AS A BIG OL’ BROWN BY CHRIS BOGART

years, TBBBQ projects alone have landed \$82,000 for various Michigan stream-conservation and youth-fishing programs.

The crowning moment of this year's festive occasion will be the Makers' Rod 2002 AuSable River stream conservation raffle. Sponsored by the George Mason Chapter of TU and supported by the FFF Great lakes Council and the Trout Bum Bar-B-Q, 20 rod makers from throughout the United States, Canada, Denmark, Australia and Japan took part in creating a 6' 3", 2-piece, 2-tip bam-

boo fly rod (below), built according to the Paul Young Midge taper. This is only the third occasion that such an impressive cross-section of cane rod makers has collaborated on the construction of a single rod.

The 500 raffle tickets themselves are signed and numbered limited edition art prints by Michigan wildlife artist Larry Cory. The Makers Rod 2002 Raffle will benefit the Grayling Stormwater Management Project, a conservation effort by the City of Grayling and several conservation groups to retrofit the Grayling stormwater system to dramatically

decrease the effect of stormwater discharges into the upper AuSable.

For more information on the Trout Bum Bar-B-Q and the Makers Rod Raffle, call Steve Southard at the Fly Factory: 517-348-5844 or visit www.troutbums.com. But hurry—the deadline for raffle ticket purchases, \$50 each, plus \$5 shipping and handling, is June 22. Winner need not be present at the Trout Bum Bar-B-Q in order to claim the prize . . . but why not?

