

Remembering Ted Knott: Fly Fisher, Innovator, Mentor, and Friend

It's now five years since the passing of Ted Knott. As well as writing a popular regular column for The Canadian Fly Fisher, Ted was one of Ontario's best loved teachers and ambassadors of fly fishing, fly tying, cane rod building, and conservation. As a commemorative tribute, his close friend Ron Marini has collected a number of reminiscences about Ted and shares them below. Ed.

On the river, near a bend where fast water met slow, Ted stood knee-deep and quietly grasped at fluttering flies. He wore a tan fishing vest over his loose jacket and a wrinkled cotton fedora hat. A photographer from a local newspaper was posing him for an article on fly fishing.

"Stand here." Click.

"Now lift your arm." Click.

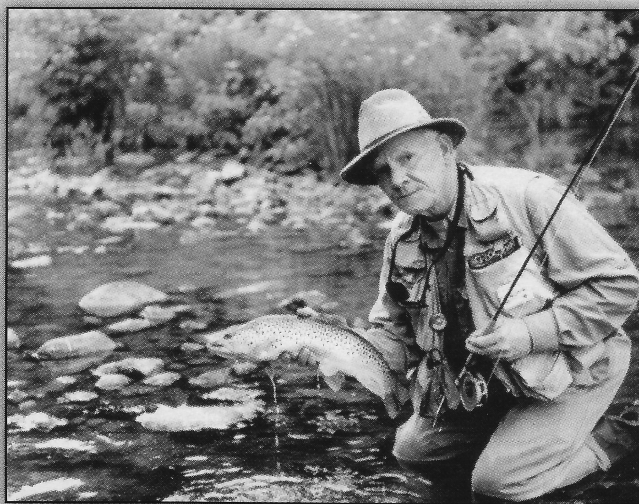
"Can you turn your body and face that way?" Click.

The picture taker was pleased with both his subject and the surroundings and commented on what a fine piece of river the angler was standing in. "Must be a good spot to catch trout," he remarked.

"Actually," said Ted, "it's probably the worst spot on the river. Too much mud there; too shallow there. It looks pretty, though."

And so began a basic lesson for the photographer in reading the water and the secrets of trout fishing from Ted Knott, teacher, friend, mentor, and innovator—as always, delivered with compassion and even a dose of devilish humour.

Ted was 69 when he passed away April 4, 2005 after a battle with cancer. He left behind a legacy of fly fishing friendship, commitment to the environment and a passion for teaching.



Ted's many friends, acquaintances, fly fishing companions and his wife, Josephine, identified four essential elements about Ted: his desire to learn, his teaching ability, his innovation, and his inherent goodness and humour.

Josephine tells a story about Ted that gives some insight into his playful nature.

She met Ted when the pair worked at International Harvester in Hamilton, Ontario. Ted invited her to a CMA dinner, and she promptly accepted, as she knew her boss at International Harvester was a member of the CMA (The

Canadian Manufacturers' Association). When she arrived at the dinner, she was somewhat surprised that the men were dressed a little casually for what she believed would be a prestigious dinner. It was only when the occupants stood up for the roll call to introduce themselves as Steel City Riders, Flying Dutchmen, and other similar names that Josephine realized the CMA dinner Ted had invited her to was actually the Canadian Motorcycle Association. Ted loved motorcycles and in his early years was a competitive rider. It was just one of his many passions.

Ted had a lifelong love of learning and was a natural teacher. After landing his first full-time job, he enrolled in night school and persevered, while working full time, until he completed his M.Ed.

George Genyk of the Hamilton Area Fly Fishers and Tyers and the Izaak Walton Club

Dave Pout, a long-time friend, recalls one day when the pair were fishing out West.

They walked a path to the river and, along the way, Ted obstructed a sign so Dave would not be able to read it. Only on the way back up the trail after a day of fishing did Dave notice the sign, and he was horrified to read the warning: "Beware of Bears."

On another outing on a Western river, Dave and Ted had an even closer call. Dave noticed a bear nearby and became skittish. Ted, simply turned and whispered: "Keep quiet. I don't want to attract his attention."

Bill Christmas, a noted fly fisher and past president of the Izaak Walton Fly Fishing Club, and Ted were childhood friends. He observed that there were traits about Ted that never changed.

"Even at [a] young age, Ted demonstrated his lifelong traits of goodness, civility and love of good fun."



In 2005, Ted passed his last bamboo rod blank to his good friend Carl O'Connor, who lovingly finished it to Knott's high standards and has donated it to the Ted Knott Chapter of Trout Unlimited to raise funds for the chapter. It will be auctioned, fittingly, at the 2010 Canadian Fly Fishing Forum banquet on April 10th.

knew Ted for over 35 years and recalls his commitment to teaching, which included teaching fly tying at Hamilton's Mohawk College night school, as well as beginner fly tying classes at the annual Izaak Walton Fly Fishing Forum in Toronto.

Genyk describes Ted as meticulous and enthusiastic and recalls how he organized and bagged all the materials for the flies to be tied at the beginners' table at home before the event.

He put the same energy into his instruction with students while pond fishing at Rainbow Ranch, fishing for moonies on the Grand River, or instructing river fishing for salmon and steelhead on the Credit River.

Professionally, Ted administered the Co-operative Education Program with the Hamilton Board of Education. Genyk recalls participating in the Co-Operative Education Program as an employer and remembers how Ted groomed his students for the work experience, showing great care and trying to ensure the experience was successful for all concerned. He was a co-founder of the Ontario Co-operative Education Association, and he had a major influence on the development of high school co-op programmes in Ontario.

Looking for new ventures was second nature to Ted. He began building cane rods



when others were building them with fiberglass. Josephine and Genyk remarked how he persevered to perfect his skill in building with cane.

Ted was instrumental in creating an organization of Canadian bamboo rod makers. Carl O'Connor, fellow cane rod builder and good friend, said that Ted came up with the idea after attending a gathering of bamboo rod makers in Grayling, Michigan in 1996. The idea blossomed into the Grand Bamboo Rod Gathering in 1997 in Fergus, Ont. Since then, the Canadian Bamboo Rod Builders has hosted some of the finest bamboo rod makers in the world at its biannual gatherings.

About the same time, Ted joined forces with the venerable Harold Becker to found the Hamilton Area Fly Fishers and Tyers, which now annually in their honour, presents the Knott-Becker Award to the club member who demonstrates exceptional service to the club over the previous year. Like Ted, the club is dedicated to teaching

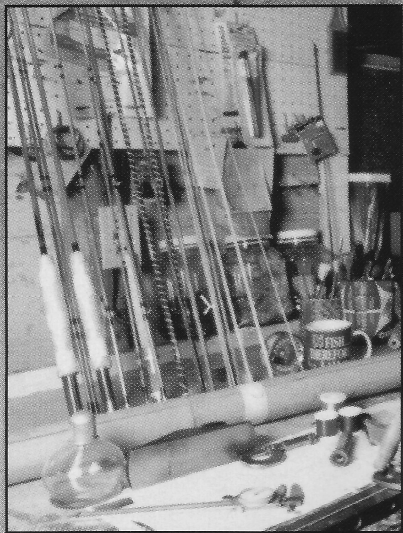
fly tying and fly fishing, as well as engaging in conservation projects.

Well-known expert fly tyer and long-time Izaak Walton club member, Elliot Deighton's fondest memory of Ted was a spring fishing clinic on the Credit River after opening day of trout season. Ted

was instructing a large crowd how to fish currents, and Deighton was helping out by demonstrating fishing the river. When he tied on a black Woolly Bugger with a lot of weight, Ted suggested he might hook a late spring rainbow trout. After just two casts, Deighton got a heavy strike and landed a 19-inch, out-of-season smallmouth bass, which he promptly released. He kept casting and was rewarded with three more. Ted turned to Deighton and with a grin on his face and observed, "That's not what we are here for, but it still counts."

Ted's fishing prowess is commemorated in the Catskills Fly Fishing Center and Museum in Livingston Manor, New York. He is honoured for his contribution to rod building and the sport of fly fishing. Closer to home, a pool on Ontario's upper Grand River, where Ted spent a lot of time chasing brown trout, is known as the Ted Knott Pool; a chapter of Trout Unlimited focused on protecting the cold water creeks of Hamilton and neighbouring Halton Region

**There can be no finer tribute to a great and giving man than to say:
"He taught us all by his example."**



flowing into Burlington Bay and Hamilton Harbour is named after him; a club of Hamilton and area fly fishers and tyers is grateful for his foresight and vision; and each gathering of Canadian Bamboo Rod Builders is a testament to Ted.

Among his most endearing characteristics was his love for his wife and his daughters. Josephine observed that Ted never criticized. His daughter Kristina said: "I always remember my dad as being the one to drop everything and come and help." Ted's other daughter, Sandra, recalls her father helping out by shepherding her children to school in the morning. Josephine revealed that Ted's grandchildren loved to have grandpa in charge in the morning, because he would take them to a coffee shop for donuts and hot chocolate while he had coffee with Dave Pout. Sandra misses the look he got when he was the one with good news, such as when he was asked to be part of the Canadian Fly Fishing Team or when an article he wrote was published.

The human side of Ted Knott is the most enduring aspect of his life, and no one said it better than his friend Bill Christmas: "As long as I have known him, he never demeaned anyone in word or deed. I now use Ted's examples as a model for relations with others and as a result have experienced a change in my own life and how I treat people."

Ted Knott was known for being a generous man and at times donated his cane rods to raise money for charities and as gifts for at least two retiring mayors. He refused to act as a fishing guide, preferring to share his love and skill for the sport freely. ✧

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