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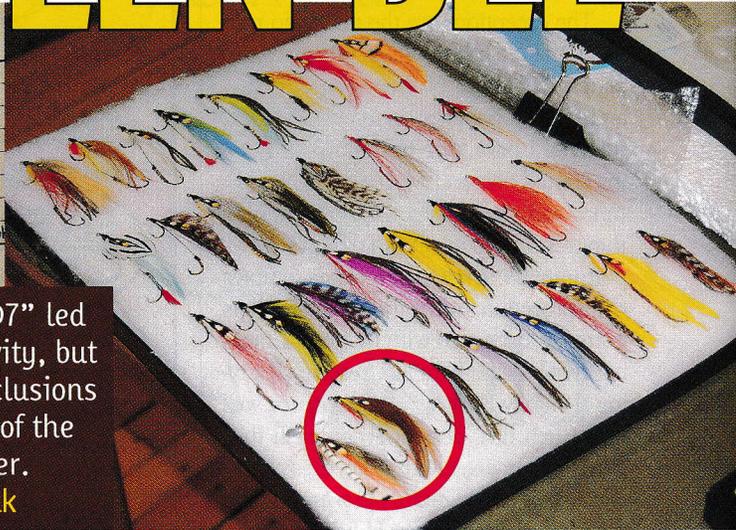
FIRST WRAPS

FLIGHT OF THE QUEEN BEE

Pink Lady
Rangely Centennial
Barnes Special
Blue Smelt
Lavender Smelt
Blue & White Smelt
Joe's Shimmer Little Brood

"Quest for the D7" led to a hive of activity, but no definite conclusions as to the name of the mystery streamer.

by Larry Antonuk



In my article titled "In Quest of the D7," which ran in the Winter 2010 issue of *Fly Tyer*, I detailed my search for the origin of a fly that I found stored in Phil Castleman's shop, Castle Arms. The fly shared a frame with other streamers, and all the flies except the pattern I dubbed D7 (column D, row 7 of the frame) were named. After the article ran, I received a rash of calls and e-mails, mostly from tiers and anglers from the Northeast area who know a heck of a lot more about New England streamers than I do.

I heard first from Chris Del Plato, who pointed out that the fly in question was likely the Queen Bee, which he credited to Dr. Hubert Sanborn and Emile Letourneau. On the heels of Chris's e-mail, I received a note from John Mundt, who said that the fly was first seen in Gene Letourneau's book (more like a pamphlet) titled *Secrets of Streamer Fly Fishing*. Most of the other responses fell along these lines, and a lively e-mail thread continued for a week or two. Jim Wilson pointed out that the Queen Bee was listed in Bob Young's pamphlet "Tandem Streamers."

Still, the end result of all this was that no one thought the fly was exactly a Queen Bee but more like a variant of the Queen Bee. The best summary came

The inventory of flies (upper left) in the frame (above) failed to name the circled pattern. Several readers think it's a Queen Bee or some variation.

from John Mundt, who wrote, "My wife (Phil Castleman's niece) is from Waterville [Maine], and as Phil could attest, the average Mainer wouldn't sweat such details as throat, tail, and hackle shade subtleties, and would think we are all crazy to even be discussing this."

That's a good point.

A couple of weeks later, though, I got a call from Phil Castleman. He had heard from a guy named Fern Bosse, who wanted to contact me. Fern and I corresponded for some time and then spoke over the phone. Fern also thought the fly was a Queen Bee. Fern was also quick to point out that there was a fly called the Sneeka in the frame as well, and that this was his signature fly. After sending him a closeup of the Sneeka, he was quite confident that it was one that he himself had tied. Based on the thread used and the width of the feathers, he felt the fly was tied in the late 1970s, but he had no knowledge of how the fly got into the frame or exactly when it might have happened.

Fern sent me a few flies of his own tying, a photocopy of the Gene Letourneau book, a photocopy of a letter dated March

1979 from Gene Letourneau, and a photocopy of a very interesting article from the *Portland Press Herald*. It seems that Gene had a weekly column in the *Herald*, and one of his topics was the Queen Bee. I'll just quote the article, which ran April 30, 1981, issue of that newspaper:

Bob Goode, veteran Waterville outdoorsman and trap shooting champion, seeks to set the record straight on the origin of the Queen Bee streamer fly. It was named, he informs, after Sister Leonard of Mount Merici Academy while his daughter Pat was attending the school.

"She had complete authority over her classes," Goode quoted his daughter as reporting, "and it was for that reason we gave her the name. I asked your brother Emile to tie a fly we could name after her. That's how the Queen Bee originated."

(The pattern was one of several Dr. J. H. Sanborn and Emile were tying in the 1930s. In a recent column we credited Sanborn with assembling the first one. Not so, according to Goode. The fly consists of yellow bucktail topped by white bucktail and brown streamer feathers, a red throat and jungle cock eyes. It has its followers. Sanborn favored it in trout waters.)

So, we have a lot of data to support the Queen Bee, who it was named after, whether it was tied with a red tail or not, and whether the white is on top of the yellow bucktail, and so forth. My only concern is that there is already a Queen Bee in the frame. It's in the left column, in position A7. If the original tier was familiar with the Queen Bee and could name the one in the left column, why didn't he name the one in D7 the same thing? So there's still a bit of a mystery.

We now know a bit more about the D7 fly—okay, I'll call it a Queen Bee Variant—but I still don't know anything about who made up the frame, or if the listing on the back was original or added at a later date, or if it is perhaps a reprint of a damaged original label. The important thing to all this, of course, is that it really points out the fellowship of the fly-tying community. We may never know who tied all the flies in that frame, or what they wanted to name them, but I'm totally amazed at all the friendly fly tiers who were quick to lend a hand to help me find out.

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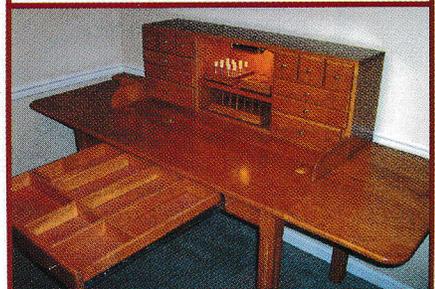
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