

SCOF

southern culture on the fly magazine



issue 60 - summer 2026

AI FREE!



THE SCOFCAST

To die for

Jul 22, 2026

★★★★★

Julia Roberts

I binged the whole show on the way to New Orleans and now I can't get Hank's voice out of my head. He sounds just like my dad!

Almost perfect

Jul 24, 2026

★★★★★

William Faulkner

Ernie and I were playing mah jong the other day and he told me what these boys were up to. Glad we get wifi down here. Can't wait for the next episode!

Why did nobody tell me about this?

Jul 19, 2026

★★★★★

Chipper Jones

I don't even watch TV anymore. The scofcast is really that good.

Listen to this, your majesty

Jul 22, 2026

★★★★★

Arsenio Hall

I really don't have anything much to celebrate these days since Coming 2 America came out, but every-time I hear these fine young men I get to pumping my fist and woof-woof-woof

My favorite fly fishing podcast

Jul 27, 2026

★★★★★

George W. Bush

I just can't get enough of these boys and their fascinating conversations. The reading rainbow trout episodes are the reason Barbara still rides shotgun with me!

This podcast ruined my life

Jul 29, 2026

★★★★★

John Grisham

I don't think I'll ever write another book. These guys have changed the game.

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SUMMER 2026
ISSUE NO. 60

A BALANCED BREAK-FAST

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photo by Dave Fason

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Built To Fish



A Letter From the Creative Director

Dear Readers,

I hope this letter finds you healthy and free from the various gastrointestinal plights that often befall the scoffy on their daily journeys from the bed to the bed again. Sam Bailey, praise be, is down 50 something pounds since he started intermittent fasting, which I was doing pretty successfully in grad school, but no longer. I used to get all my calories in one big snake meal in the afternoon when I started to feel the heavy confluence of bad vibrations from the imbalance of nicotine and blood sugar in my veins. Sometimes it would come on when the fridge was empty and I'd have no choice but to eat whatever was left under a heat lamp at the gas station. Sometimes, that was my first choice, even with a fridge full of groceries.

Miraculously, my taste for foods of questionable freshness has never caused me so much distress as to interrupt the unsoiledness of my clothing, but fine dining has gotten me into some trouble. For example, I once got a shot of morphine for severe gastroenteritis after a birthday weekend of gustatory ecstasy at the best restaurants in Charleston. I don't think I'm at risk of losing a foot or gaining a goiter, but I could probably dial it back a little bit. At least try to have a balanced breakfast once in a while.

The FDA, with its puppet hand firmly up the rear end of the cereals industry, would insist that a balanced breakfast needs an apple, an orange, some fat free milk, and a helping each of cage-free organic eggs and turkey sausage to subsidize the nutritional value or maybe offset the nutritional harm of the sugar loaded milk decorations that were constantly advertised to us as kids. The ones with bright colors and fun mascots. I say eat more bacon.

Some in this industry may think SCOF needs a disclaimer. They may say that like a cereal with no nutritional value, our magazine is just a sweet treat to be enjoyed alongside publications with substance. I don't think that's true. If you read this issue, you'll digest a balanced breakfast. Some fiction and poetry, some relationship advice, some photography, some conservation, a gonzo article about country ham, and a pair of recipes for the floating gourmand. Yeah, some of it is just for fun, but if you chew your food, you'll get all the nutrients you need.

stay scoffy,

Dr. Hank

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Box Canyon, Island Park, Idaho

HAIKU

by Jay Thaw

BIG OL' TITTY BREAM
SLURPS THE BOOGLE FROM THE FOAM
GOOD DAY TO BE ME



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THE OLD TIME WAY — FEATURE STORY WITH DARRELL BENTON P. 96







Lost River

by Shawn Swearingen
photo by Jonathan Kelley

The summer haze hangs over the valley. A mix of smog from the urban centers and dust from the agricultural fields being worked; the heat dome keeping it all in place. Neil had worked his way across the country since leaving the mine a year and a half ago, fishing when he wanted and working when he needed.

The eastern Cascade foothills are taller and would be classified as “mountains” in his native West Virginia. While not holding snow any longer in this time of high August summer, the crystal blue streams still run cold from the snow melt from higher above. Work had been steady as a farmhand and the people decent, but he had been unable to get into the higher elevations to wet a line.

She worked her humble 30 acres alone, helping some of the elderly farmers when she could. The two of them had been neighborly, passing each other between fields and town during the past few weeks. When Neil returned one of her heifers that escaped, and patched her pasture fence, he turned down payment in exchange for some beta on the confounding trout streams.

His worn Ranger rolls to a stop in her drive a few minutes earlier than agreed, the hour before dawn. He watches as she finishes checking on the laying hens. While normally in blue jeans when working

the fields, her khaki shorts show off the toned, long legs glowing in his headlights. Her ponytail waves out the back of her ball cap the sleeves of her paisley button down are rolled up. She catches him getting comfortable, leaning against his truck and she says, "I'll be finished in a minute. Grab the cooler off the porch."

The truck doors slam shut and they start up the paved main road into logging country.

She had watched him drive around the rolling farmlands over the past few weeks, and wondered what was inside the truck with West Virginia tags. Hooks with tufts of fur and feather are stuck on the truck cab ceiling, and on a few foam patches on the top of the dash. The backseat is a clutter of colorful tubes, fly boxes, and a couple of small hiking packs.

The bottles in the cooler rattle amongst the ice as his truck bounces from the last of the paved road onto gravel. Logging roads are a maze of pebbled threads up and down the draws; some of them dead-ending in former logging decks on top of small knolls, others continuing onward and upward. She points out the turn offs and directions as a contrail of road dust rises behind them.

The orange glow of the sun rises over the timbered horizon in front of them. From the stereo, Sturgill Simpson's soft melody underlies the conversation. The flick of rocks against the inside of the truck's fender wells unsuccessfully keeps time. With the threat of fire being too great this time of year there is no worry about running into any speeding log trucks making a run down to the mills.

She guides him around the next turn from the ridgeline and down the road into a draw, where the Douglas fir trees are taller and older. She directs him, "You can go halfway down this stretch and pull over." As Neil turns off the ignition and rolls down the windows, the gurgle from the stream 20 yards below them greets their ears. A wide smile breaks across his face.

"Fish or not, thank you," Neil tells her. "Do you want to try?"

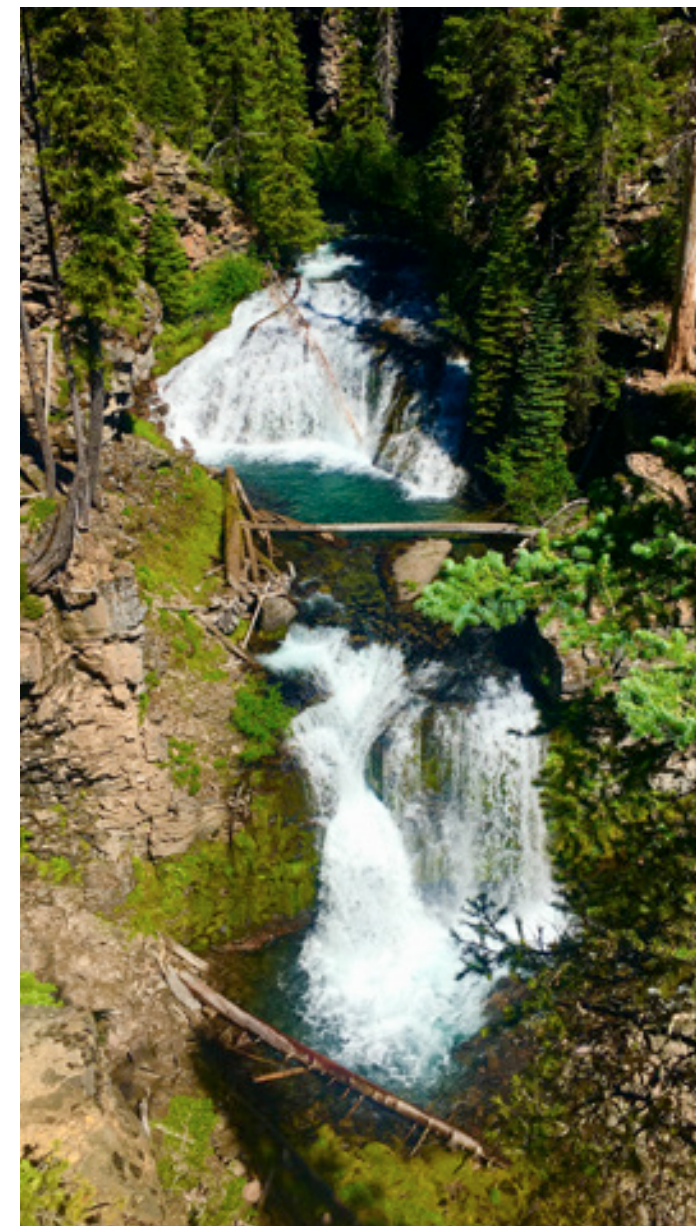
"I'm just your sherpa today. I'll watch," she smiles.

He takes a rod tube and reel from the back seat of his truck and opens the tailgate. He pieces it together and strings up the four-weight rod with metered patience.

With one arm, she takes the cooler down off the tailgate and leads him through the thicket of huckleberry bushes and forest understory to the shadowed stream.

This is her gem, hidden by the cathedral of old growth fir trees and hemlock; a pocket left from yester-year. Gazing upward, the trees seem as if they are as tall as the ridgelines on either side of the stream. A cool breeze wisps across the top of the water and through the branches; they smile.

The bottles clink gently in the cooler as she places it beside a hemlock root. A fly box cracks open as Neil determines his first choice of the morning with no visible hatch of bugs to make the fish look up. The river lolls in front of them, tired after the series of tall cascades upstream. Just below, some large boulders and pockets of deep water continue downstream before the river



rounds another bend and out of sight.

Her eyes closed, she takes a deep breath and holds the crisp air in her lungs before slowly letting it out.

Neil watches the swirls of current at his feet. Gauging the brush and overhanging branches, he takes a few steps up stream before casting. A green wooly bugger splats at the base of the riffle, sinking and drifting before pausing briefly. He lifts the rod, holding the line tight, setting the hook in the redband trout's jaw. The native

shows gaudy acrobatics in his efforts to get free; Neil's rod bending and jumping in response.

Wetting his hand, Neil bends down to gently grip the hook, and then releases the fish. He cups hands together and splashes the holy water on his face.

"No photos for the 'gram' or your buddies back home?" she asks him.

"Might post an untagged and un-marked spring creek here or there just to share the beauty of a place, but the fish are for me," he replies, looking up and admiring the jagged points of fir trees piercing the baby-blue clear sky. "How did you know this spot?"

She just smiles at him from behind her sunglasses pretending that she didn't hear him.

He turns to go farther upstream, fishing from boulder to boulder. The fly works the seams and holes and eddies. She watches as he misses a few hooksets, then sticks one, bending down to wet his hand again before releasing the trout.

"I decided to break into it for an early lunch," she says to him as he rock hops down the bank to her. She sits with her back against the cooler, chewing on a sandwich, her feet in the water. "You want something to eat?" He pauses, admiring this mountain mermaid in front of him, kneels down and tries to steal a kiss as she holds the cooler open for him.

"Not so fast, slick," she laughs with her mouth full, pulling back from him after a

quick peck. “You’re going to have to work harder than that.”

Neil stammers shyly at first before regaining composure, “Well, I hope I’ve earned my beer, at least.”

She grabs a bottle for him from the cooler with one hand and picks up his fly rod with the other. She checks the balance at the handle. Passing it to him she asks, “Mind if I take a look at the fly box?” Bewildered, he hands it over.

“You want me to tie it for you?” he asks as she flips through the box as if it were a book she had read before and is looking for a passage she had memorized but not read in a long time. Neil just pauses and watches as she plucks a streamer from the selection.

Weighing the fly in her hand she asks him, “Tungsten?” He simply nods back. She cuts off the other fly with her pocket knife, returns the fly to the felt patch on the box cover, and ties on her selection. Handing back the fly box, she says simply, “Thanks.”

Completely unsure of what he just saw, he pops the beer bottle open and stands to watch. She quietly and quickly moves through the shadows that remain from the trees immediately along the bank, stepping from rock to rock downstream as deftly as a mountain goat.

Making a wider loop around a plunge pool than would seem necessary to the uninitiated, she pauses, looking up, and then back across the river. She strips off a few arm lengths of line from the reel. The

clicking sound with each pull washes away with the current. Neil, curious, stands at the distance and watches her.

She begins a half-hearted roll cast due to the weight of the fly before methodically whipping a ‘t-cast’ up and across the pool. The streamer quietly drops below a large rock at the top of the plunge pool on the far bank.

Even as far away as he was, he could feel the reverberation of the line coming tight in her left hand as she set the hook. A mist of a million little prisms bounce from the taut line forming a momentary rainbow in the sunbeams.

As the rod bends in half before the breaking point, Neil rushes down the bank with his net in hand. He had not put the rod into such a deep bend since a surprise smallmouth bass in the driftless area of Wisconsin.

“Get below me,” she calmly tells him as this was not her first rodeo. After a few quick back and forths of line off and on the reel, she guides the fish to his awaiting net. She gently kneels, tucking the rod handle under her arm before wetting her hands. She gently holds the tail of the bull trout while still in the net, and plucks the streamer from the corner of its mouth like a ripe strawberry.

She moves the trout back and forth, facing into the slow current of the pool. She whispers a ‘thank you’ and sends it along.

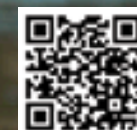
Rinsing her hands in the pool, she stands and smiles at Neil, “I guess I’ve earned my beer now too.” ☺

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DIRT BAGGERY IN BOZEMAN a trip report by Sam Bailey

4:30 a.m. came extremely early, but it didn't take long for me to wake up with excitement for the week ahead. My wife, on the other hand—the Uber driver for the morning—was not nearly as excited. Being the wonderful woman she is, she got up, got ready, and drove me to the airport so I could go fishing without her.

I had stayed up too late the night before, reorganizing, repacking, and making sure I had everything I wanted and needed (I always take too much), thinking I would get some sleep on the plane. The flight that morning wasn't full, so I had an entire row to myself to stretch out. But being the dreamer that I am, I can't sleep on a plane. I love looking out the window, trying to figure out where we are. What lake is that? What river? What mountains?

As we flew north, from Atlanta I looked out and realized we were flying over Lake Allatoona and I could see my neighborhood and even my house. That was a first for me. From there it was the Tennessee River, the mighty Mississippi, all the flyover states, and eventually the mountains. As we flew over some of my old favorite fishing places in Wyoming and Montana, it felt good to recognize them as well as I could my own home in Georgia. My excitement was at peak level.

From the Bozeman airport in a rental car, I headed south to Ennis to meet up with an old buddy, James, for an afternoon float on the Madison. On the way, I stopped by the North Slide Inn, Kelly Gallop's new shop, to say hello to Kelly and the crew and drop off some stickers. I also got to see another Atlanta boy, Eric Hurst and catch up with him. Eric ties some badass

streamers, and he's absolutely loving it out there. In Ennis, I met James and Riley, the shop manager at The Tackle shop, and we headed out.

Everybody talks about how busy the Madison is, "bumper boats" and all that, but we got on the river around 3 p.m. and saw only three other boats all afternoon. The fishing was great. The company was even better. That night, I had decided I'd just sleep in the back of my rental truck at a campground on the river. It was 62 degrees, and I figured I'd be fine.

But, I'm 6'2 and don't fit very well in the back seat of a truck. That might have been the worst night of sleep I've had in years. The next morning, I woke up shivering. It was 43 degrees. After doing my best to warm up, I got dressed and headed out to fish for a little while. About an hour into it, I broke my 5-weight, quit, and ran back into town to get some coffee, warm up and see how the boys at the fly shop slept.

I headed north to Twin Bridges.

My plan for the day was to meet Adam Hutchinson with Winston Fly Rods. He greeted me at HQ and took me through the museum before giving me a private tour of the rod shop. Any regrets I had about breaking my 5-weight vanished. I picked up a couple of new ones: an 8½-foot, 5-weight Air 2 and an 8½-foot, 7-weight Air 2 Max.

Somebody had called in sick, so Adam had to stick around later than anticipated, but he gave me a couple of spots to explore before he could meet me. He also told me I should swing by Anderson & Platt Outfitters to pick up some local flies, and I'm glad I did because the owners are from North Carolina and were old buddies of our friend Brownie Liles.

So I headed out to explore this new spring creek with my new Air 2. Walking through the willows, watching fish rise to little yellow Sallies, was about as peaceful as it gets. Casting that new Winston made it even better. I even caught a brown trout with a tag. (Montana Game & Fish, I still haven't received anything in the mail from you guys.)

As the afternoon went on, more hatches started coming off and the fish became extremely active. Caddis were everywhere. It was basically: pick a target, make a cast, catch a fish. I saw a couple of big ones and put two in the net that were over 16 inches. I could have spent the rest of the evening there, but it was time to walk out and meet Adam for our late-afternoon float.

We ran shuttle and launched at 6:30 p.m. I tried my best to get on the sticks and let Adam fish first, but he insisted.

"I fish here all the time," he said. "You've never fished this."

So I stepped up front.

We rigged up the five-weight with a dry fly and right off the bat, a really nice brown came up and sipped it. Of course I missed him. After that, things were pretty tough for about an hour. So we decided to switch things up. It was time to strip streamers. That's when it turned on.

We ended up putting six fish in the boat, all over 18 inches, with the biggest just over 24. We lost count of the chases and hookups that came off quickly. Then in true "Sam fishing trip fashion" a thunderstorm rolled in that ended with a beautiful sunset—and me standing in the boat, fishing with a rainbow hanging over my head. Man, what an amazing evening. We got off the water around 10 p.m., said our goodbyes, and I headed north back to

Bozeman for the night.

The next morning, I met up with Jared May, owner and founder of Cling Fishing Products. For those who aren't familiar, Cling makes fly patch magnets, net holders, rod holders, and all kinds of other cool fishing accessories. They can even customize them with your logo. What started just a few years ago in Jared's garage has grown into two warehouses with two fully automated CNC machines running. It's a very impressive setup.

Jared, like all good Western outdoorsmen, was on a scheduled regimen. He was getting ready for the upcoming hunting season and had to shoot 15 arrows every morning for practice, so I waited for him to get his shots in and we headed out toward Yellowstone.

No matter how many times I make that drive through Paradise Valley, the beauty always amazes me. As we drove through the park, we traded stories about trips past and talked about places we'd always wanted to hike into and fish but never seemed to have the time. Places we'd only seen through an airplane window.

We parked and started down the trail toward the river. A few minutes in, I looked down and noticed some extremely fresh grizzly bear tracks. Time to keep our heads on a swivel. Then I realized something. "Oh shit. We didn't bring my bear spray." "I think we'll be okay." Jared said. "For now."

The water temperatures were still pretty cold, and there weren't many bugs hatching. I tied on a hopper-dropper and we went to work. Jared landed the first couple of fish—beautiful Yellowstone cutthroat. By the time we made it back to the truck, we realized we had walked about



4½ miles. Neither of us could remember exactly how many fish we had caught, and we had forgotten about the bear. We headed out to grab some dinner and beers in Gardiner, but on the way there was one pond we had wanted to fish. As we pulled up, all the cars stopped.

Something was going on. We got out and looked. There was a damn black bear walking right down the trail toward the pond where we wanted to fish.

We thought about heading on, but got rigged up anyway. We watched the bear. It decided to take a swim, right where we were planning to fish. We watched for about 20 minutes as he rolled around in the water, and then it was our turn.

We made our way down to the pond and started casting. The pond was supposed to be full of brook trout, including some big ones. Just like earlier, Jared drew first blood on the first cast. After that, it was all me. I have no idea how many of those little six- to eight-inch brook trout I caught, but it was a bunch. I did manage to hook into one really nice fish. He appeared to be somewhere around 12 to 14 inches—not one of the giants we'd heard about, but still a solid fish.

We headed out, stopped at a Cowboy Bar in Gardiner, had a couple of burgers and beers, and listened to a guy playing music on the deck. Another amazing day in the books.

If you know me, you know everything runs a little late. It was around 10 p.m. when I made it to the airport, not to catch a flight home, but to drop off my rental truck and get in the car with Rich and Finny, Rich's partner in crime and boat dog. They took me home with them for another quick sleep before my last day in Montana.



In the morning we drank some coffee, loaded up Rich's early-'90s Yellowstone Drifter, and headed to the Yellowstone. Rich bought this boat shortly after moving to Montana in 1994. It's like a little sports car on the river—small, quick, and nimble. Finny is a great boat dog. He finds his place, settles in, and waits for the right opportunity to hit the bank for a run.

The river was big, and there wasn't much happening on the surface, but we managed to wrangle up a few fish. Although the fishing was a little slow, the conversation and friendship were great. We talked fly shops, new gear, old things we liked, new things we didn't, and plans for the future. At the takeout, we unloaded

the boat, and I unloaded my gear under a shade tree. I had about an hour to kill while waiting for my ride to Wyoming. We said our goodbyes, and Rich and Finny headed back toward Bozeman.

As I sat there under that tree, I thought about the first half of my week—the great times, the friendships, the fishing, and the incredible Montana countryside. I wondered why I'd ever left this place. As the guide boats started coming in, people walking up saw a homeless-looking guy with thousands of dollars of fly-fishing gear spread out under a tree, drinking Spindrift and eating an orange. I got some funny looks.

I suppose people have different ideas

of what an amazing fishing trip looks like. For some, it's staying at a lodge or hotel. It's booking a guide, eating fine cuisine, sleeping in comfortable beds, getting on the water a little later, and getting off a little earlier.

I'm sure those trips are really nice.

But I'll take the dirtbag life. Sleeping in the back of a truck. Crashing on a couch. Every once in a while, getting a comfy bed. Up early. Out late. Plenty of wind-chill time. Lots of time in the dark. And epic fishing with even more epic people. At 46 years old, the dirtbag fisherman life is still for me. 🐟



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at her choosing
and not too bad a bottom
for wading
with enough room
on the bank
to sit down for lunch
and how we can spend
days on this stretch
of silver
and when we begin
the journey home,
we still stop
to glance back.



Micropterus pucpuggy

by Leland Martin
Photos by Alan Broyhill

Not many have heard of it, but we've known about the Bartram's Bass for a long time. It's a river species similar to all its Redeye Bass cousins and it is downright nasty when it takes a fly. Barts don't grow all that big (little over a foot, tops), but they can pull some weight around and damn, they're mean. They are legit gamefish, and they deserve to be treated as such. This is exactly why Chattooga River Fly Shop, where I've been a guide for two years, hosts the annual Bart's Day Bass Tournament – to promote the awareness, enjoyment, and conservation of this species. All of us at the shop and many others believe this fish should be protected. Like the other redeye species (which got their official names first) Barts can only be found in one river system, the upper Savannah River Basin and within that system, its range is much smaller and more fragmented than what it was before development, dams,

invasive species, and pollution came to the upstate. It was here way before any of us were born, and we are hoping it is here for many years after we are all gone. We just need to figure out how to protect it, and how to convince everyone else it deserves those protections.

The first step to protecting any species is to make sure everyone agrees that it is in fact, a species. The process to gain that recognition can take years of scientific work, sampling enough specimens to fully describe the genome. Only very recently was that work completed for our Bartram's Bass.

Micropterus is the genus that encompasses all black bass: from the Suwannee Bass in Florida to the great Largemouth Bass. Each species gets an epithet that differentiates it from the others. Bartram's epithet *pucpuggy* was chosen by the authors of its description to honor the Seminole-Creek people that endowed William Bartram, famous American Naturalist, with the same nickname, Puc Puggy, which means "flower hunter". Now that it has a scientific name, we can deal with the threats it faces. Chief among them, the integrity of its genome and the loss and fragmentation of its habitat by dams and reservoirs. These two problems are closely linked.

The range for this species has dwindled tremendously from its original habitat, cool upland rock-bedded streams, due to the construction of reservoirs for hydroelectric power since the early 1900s. Interestingly, on their own, Bartram's bass tend to do better than other redeye in reservoirs. The problem, as with most native fish populations, is the introduction of non-native fish. The greatest threat to Bart's bass is the all too famous Alabama bass,



which is spreading to every reservoir in the Southeast through illegal introductions by anglers. When an Alabama Bass spawns with a Bartram's bass, the progeny are hybrids and the hybrids then spawn with more Bartrams, and more Alabama Bass, and more hybrids, and so on. The genes that took forever to find, the ones that make Bartrams unique, are being edged out generation after generation by these Alabama Bass and their hybrids. Stopping the introduction and spread of non native and competing bass species to water holding native fish would greatly help preserve this fish for the future.

Yet another threat to the Bart's Bass is habitat degradation and fragmentation. Populations that used to be connected in a network of streams are now isolated in pockets, reservoir tributaries whose connections have been severed by dams. When one population got hit hard by a hurricane, for example, there were natural processes that would let neighboring populations recolonize the lost area. Without that connectivity, that resilience is lost. Furthermore, these fish, like trout, require clean water and a healthy ecosystem to thrive. Many of the tributaries that you used to could find Bartrams Bass are silted in and polluted. We have a lot of cleaning up to do in our post-industrial age.

Thankfully, the main river we find these fish inhabiting is already designated under the Wild and Scenic Act and is a federally protected body of water. However, federal protections are flimsier than ever, and it is imperative that we do what we can to keep designations like "wild and scenic" resilient to the whims of politicians. We want these fish to be

around for our grandchildren to see and hold and in order to do that, these fish need a good home. The oxygenated water and rocky structure of the Chattooga provide a perfect place for Barts to live and breed but without continuous efforts to protect it then it could be lost.

An extra nail in the coffin for this habitat and inhabitants would be over commercialization of the river and overfishing. We have been advocating for lowering the legal limit for keeping these fish from five per person to only two per person and promoting good catch & release practices - releasing fish immediately where they were caught, and not dragging them downstream on a stringer and culling as you go. As it currently sits, there aren't too many people that actively fish for Bart's. A lot of times they are by catch for trout fishermen who have no idea what they are. However, we are starting to see that change now with the species' new status. We are hoping that more people will see how important it is to protect this fish and its habitat. Fishing for them, especially with a fly rod, is seemingly the best way to truly grasp and appreciate this species in my own humble opinion. We want Bart's Bass to have a voice and be protected, but without the help of others, this will not be an easy task. As stated earlier, these fish and where they live are the real deal. If you don't believe me, then have a look for yourself. As usual, remember to leave it better than you found it, and native fish are always cooler.











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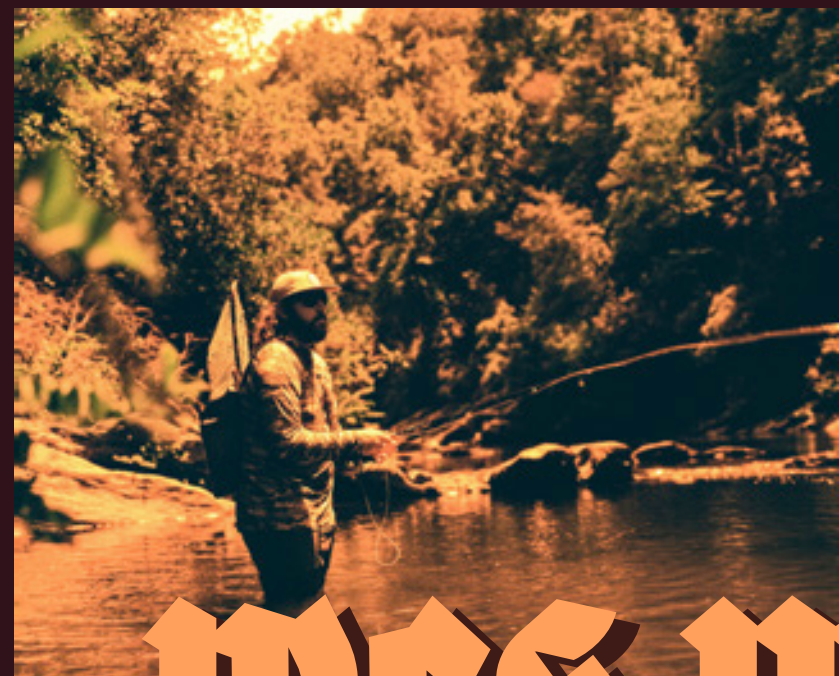
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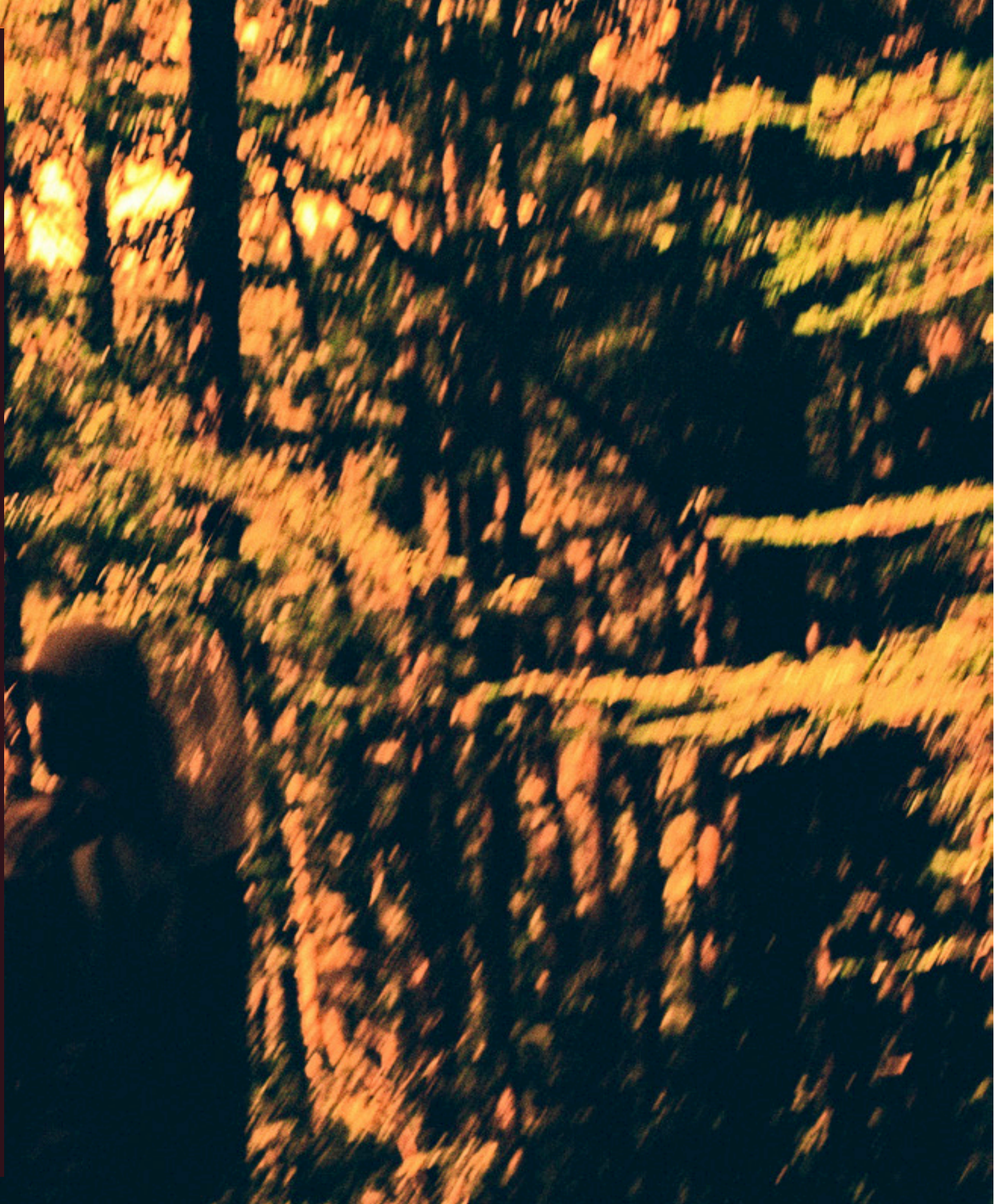


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THE AUCTION PAGE



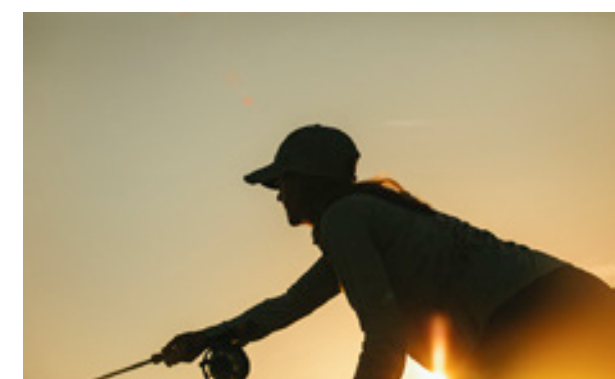
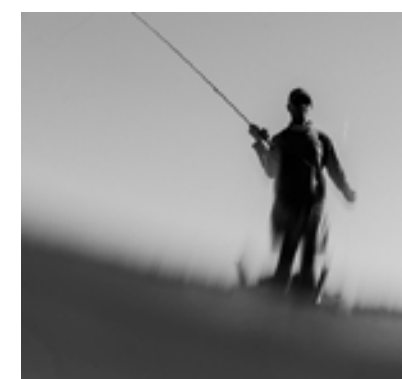
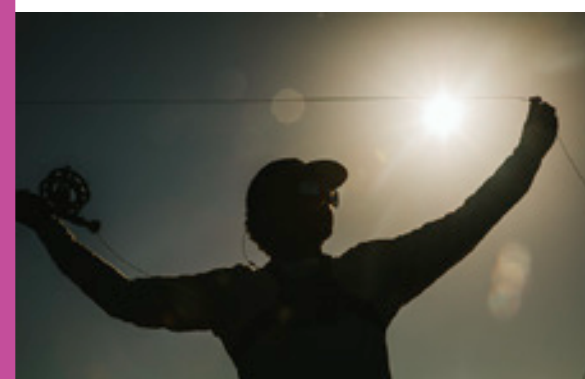
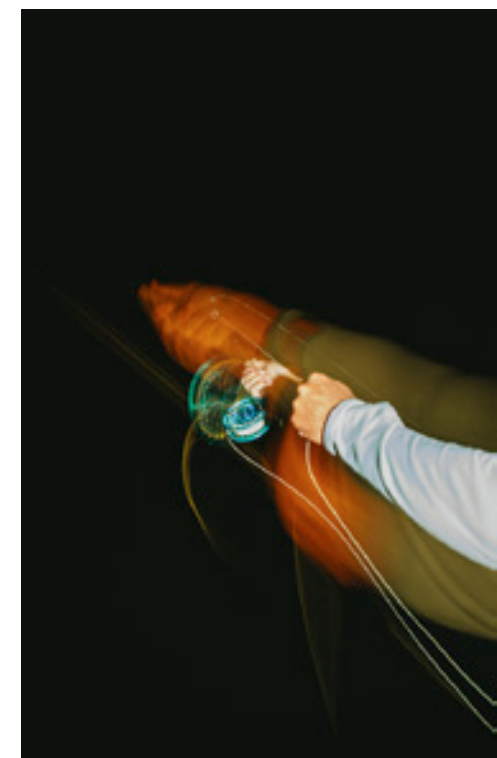
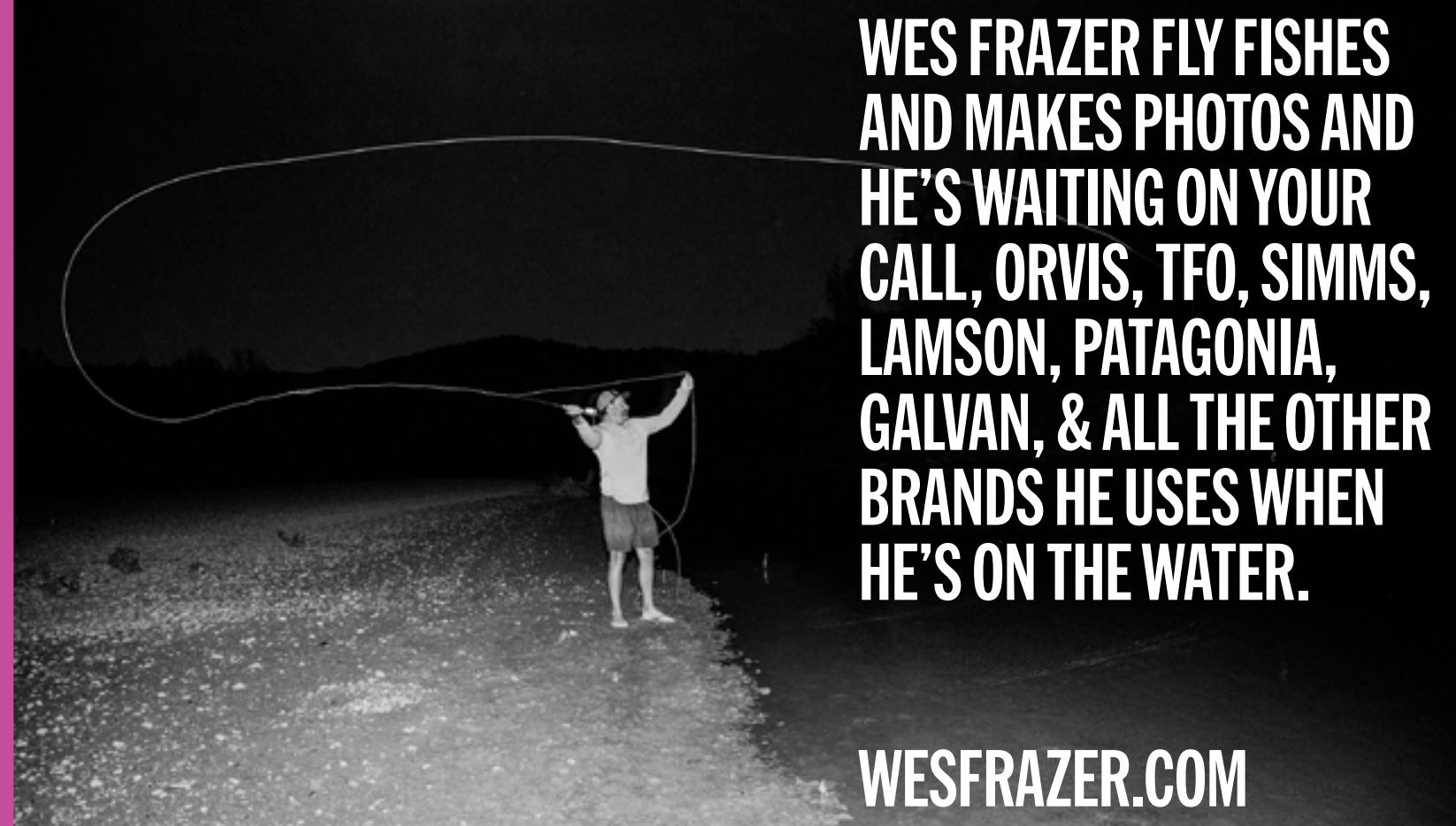
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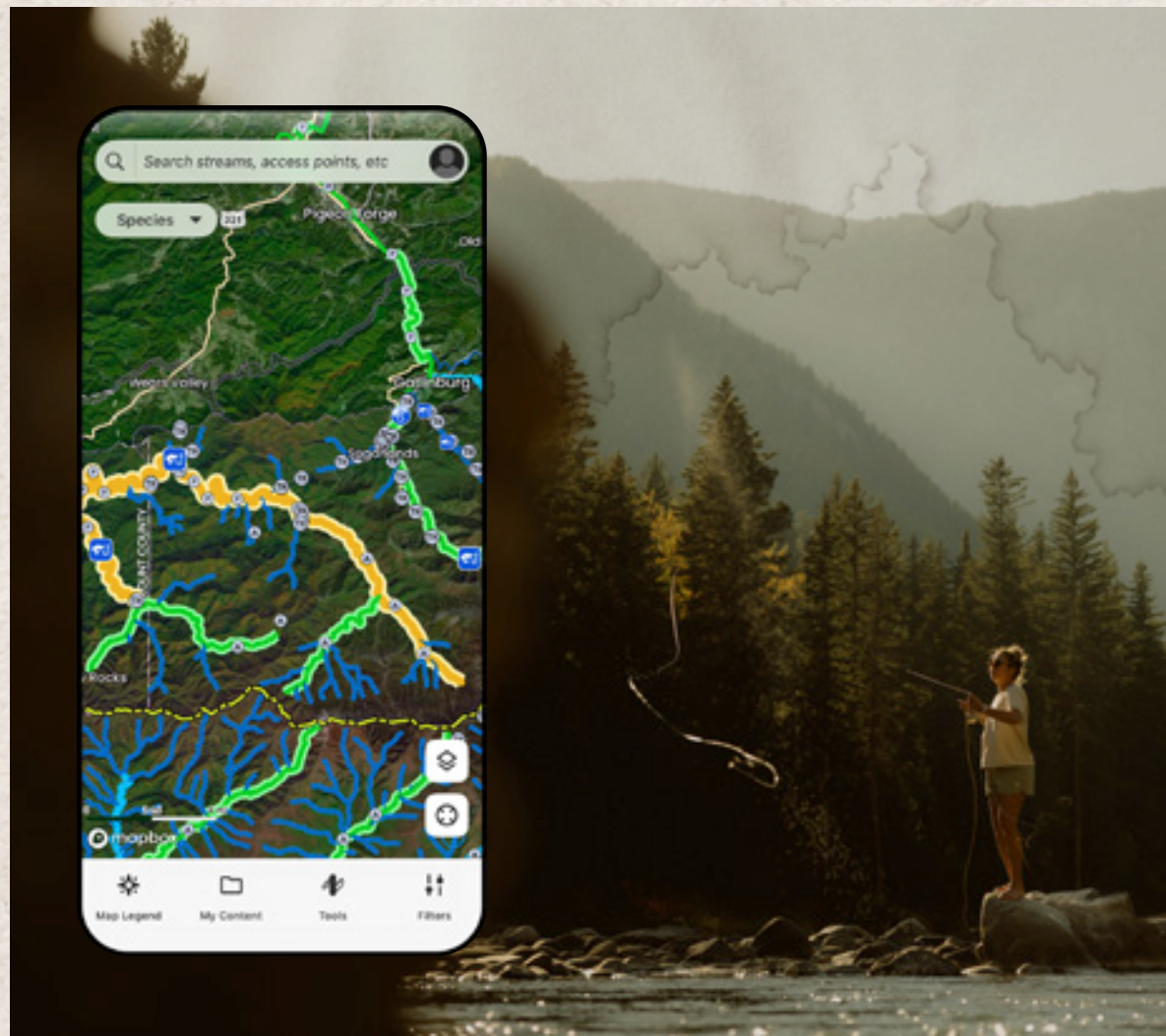






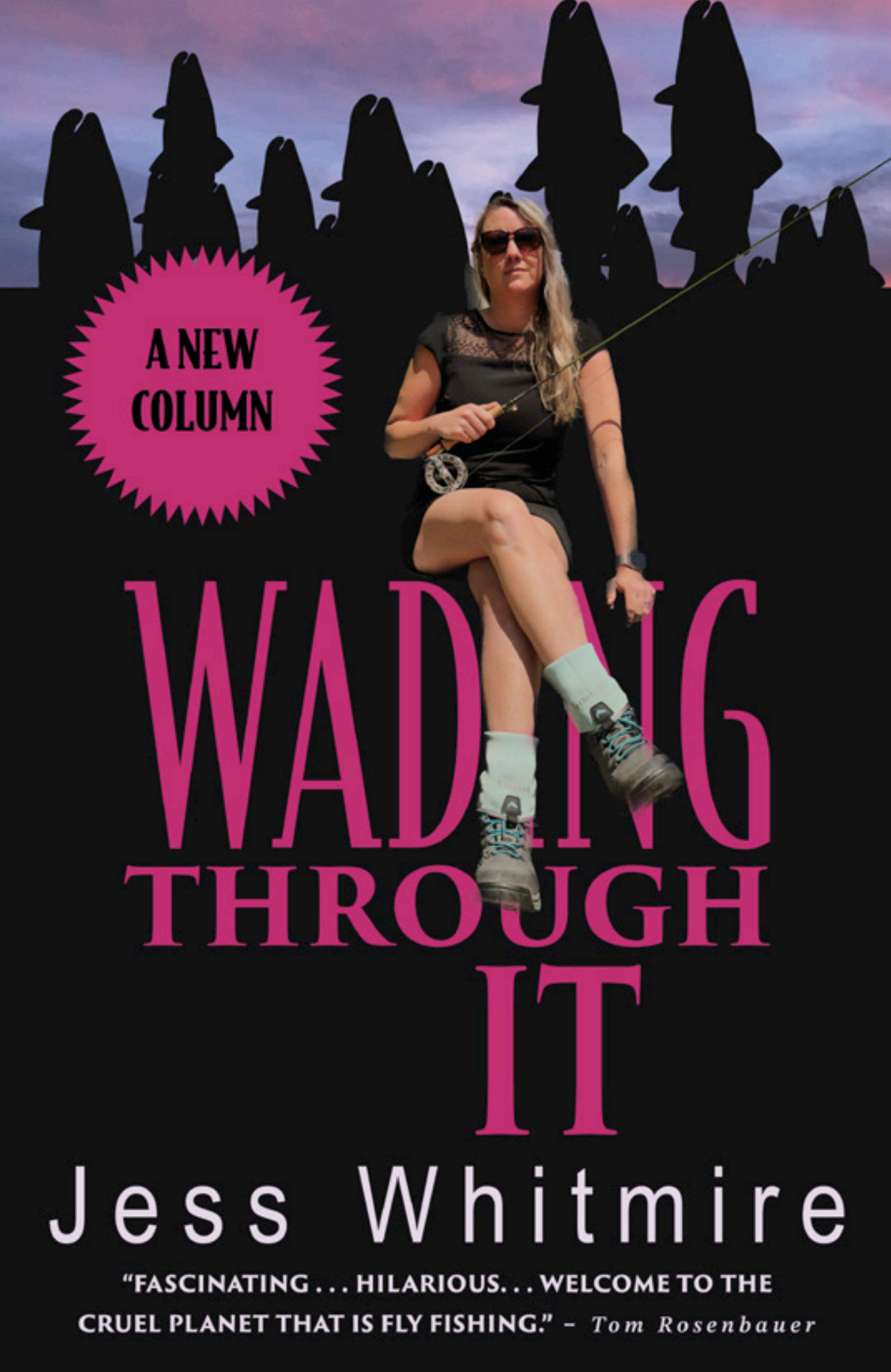
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A NEW
COLUMN

WADING THROUGH IT

Jess Whitmire

"FASCINATING . . . HILARIOUS. . . WELCOME TO THE
CRUEL PLANET THAT IS FLY FISHING." – Tom Rosenbauer

Should Fishing Always Be the First Date?

To be honest, I wasn't sure I wanted to tackle this question when it first came to me.

I turn 40 this year. And the thought of going through a first date again makes me physically sick to my stomach. Ugh. A first date.

We all remember them. The energy spent wondering if just being ourselves would be enough. The outfit debacle. Do I shave my legs? The full Mariska Hargitay detective deep dive — finding every detail the World Wide Web has to offer on this person.

As I type this, the person I once stalked on Instagram is on the couch in front of me, playing a heated game of Fortnite with our soon-to-be 10-year-old son.

So. There's that.

I remember our first date for a lot of reasons. It was an Easter Sunday. We went bass fishing. I had just come out of a divorce, and honestly? I was not in the mood to smile over a spread of ham and deviled eggs while answering *so how are you doing* on repeat. A boat sounded a whole lot better than a buffet.

Here's what I remember most about that day. My biggest concern going into it wasn't whether he'd like me. It wasn't what I was wearing. I genuinely cannot tell you what I wore that day. Most likely at that time in my life, I was probably pretty hungover and smelling like cigarettes. Does he like cigarettes? Not that I smoke, but when I drink the urge for a marlboro always takes over. "We can tackle that later"

What I remember about these butterflies, I was worried about my cast. I just knew this guy was about to judge my double haul. I had just been introduced to fly fishing outside the small creeks of WNC, and I had recently wrapped up a humbling and honestly embarrassing trip to Charleston where I learned, quickly, that roll casting was not going to cut it if I wanted to fish anything larger than a 14-inch trout. I had been practicing my double haul every single day since that trip.

So that Easter Sunday on the water, I was focused. Not on him. Not on whether he liked me. On my cast, and yes whether I looked good doing it. But it had been more of an internal challenge of mine, to not show greenness. Where I lacked confidence before on first dates, I gained in my casting distance and accuracy.

That was until I hooked a popper straight into the pad of my palm.

I ripped it out as fast as it went in, hoping, desperately, that the fishing guide in the other boat didn't see that. Today, he still won't tell me if he knew or not.

It was the first time I had ever been on a first date and never once second-guessed whether this person would like me for me. I wasn't performing a version of myself. I was just... there. Just Fishing. Having a good time with friends. Cracking open a Coors Light at 10am. Flooding the motor of my dad's old john boat, because I had never really paid attention to how he operated it. But looking back, I think I knew that day. He was a keeper, and he wanted to keep me.

Maybe that's something fishing does for us, if we let it. Maybe it pulls us out of second guessing and drops us into something more honest. Instead of obsessing over the outfit, we're focused on the cast. Instead of managing first impressions, we're rigging our own rods. The meaningful things take over — and somehow, we stop performing and start just being.

The real version of you shows up on the water whether you invited them or not. So here's the question. *Should fishing always be the first date?*

Because it seems like, for a lot of us, it's the moment we are most ourselves. Most confident. Most real. No outfit panic. Just you, the water, and whoever is lucky enough to be sharing the water with you.

And if someone's going to like you — really like you — that's probably the version they should meet first.



photo by Wes Frazer



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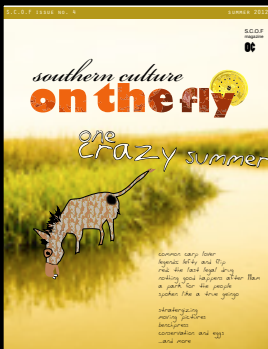
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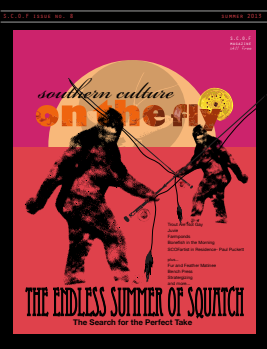
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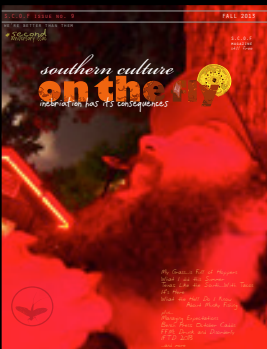
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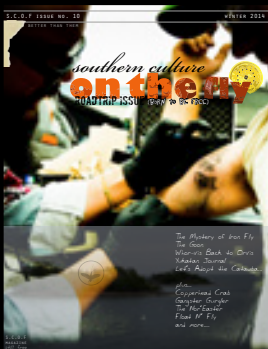
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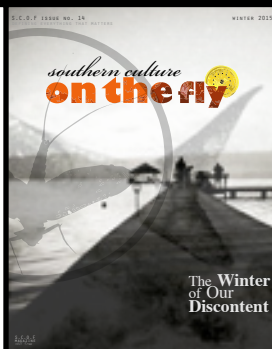
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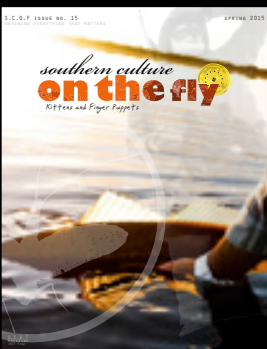
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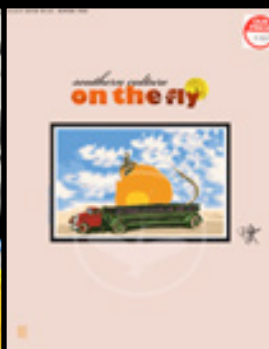
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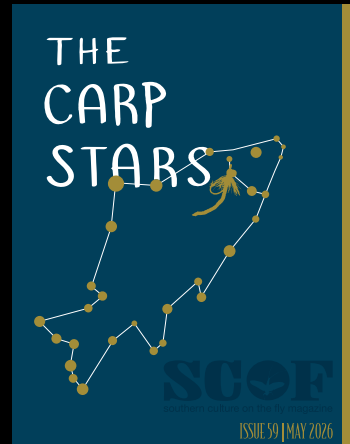
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THE OLD TIME WAY



a visit with
Darrell Benton
of Benton's
Smoky Mountain
Country Hams
& Bacon
Madisonville,
TN

words by Hank
photos by Dave Fason



The Old Time Way

by Hank
photos by Dave Fason

“Y’all smell like Benton’s,” said the waitress as we eased up to the hostess station at The Mudpuppy, a marina bar on Tellico Lake. We did smell like Benton’s, because one of us was a Benton, Darrell Benton, and we had just come from his shop where his family has been curing, smoking, and slinging ham for over 50 years.

The old waitress’ tone was tough to decipher. Was she ribbing Darrell? I couldn’t tell if she knew him. I didn’t know him. I had just arrived for a self-assigned SCOF story. I didn’t know what kind of celebrity this guy had in his home town. Was the waitress fond of the smell? The hickory smoke on our clothes was pretty pungent, but it’s the signature scent of some seriously comforting food. I got the answer to my questions later when she came by the table and told us, “Y’all tell Mr. Benton hullo for me. I worked for him for 12 years.” She knew Darrell’s father Allan, not him, and the smell had brought her back to a time when she wasn’t working in an open-air dock-side restaurant on one of the prettiest lakes in East Tennessee, and when Darrell was stuck in a radiology reading room in Knoxville trying not to think about bacon.



Darrell came back to the family business after growing up in it and leaving for a smoke-free environment. He went to medical school, got married and had a couple kids, learned how to fly fish, and maybe always knew in the back of his mind that one day he would be drawn back to the nucleus of his life, a wood stove in Madisonville. Life in that valley, it seems to me, orbits around his dad's plume of brown smoke. Not the life that drives too fast to Gatlinburg, but the life that drives back home and gets on a four wheeler to chase sheep with a border collie.

For some, Benton's Country Ham is a treat to be savored every once in a while, and for others, it is the foundation of their food pyramid. While we were touring the facility (no press pass required, just ask for one) Darrell showed me a package he had just received from a grateful customer who wrote in a cursive handwriting you might find on an old-timey love letter, "[I] humbly thank y'all for giving me the opportunity to be a customer. Please know my heart of gratitude. Benton's Bacon has really helped my health." Enclosed with the letter was a raccoon hide he had tanned, and oversized photographs of the customer with a "legendary fur trapper" named Mr. Davis (87 years old) who had taught him a lot about "the Old Time Way".

So why do the Bentons get this kind of feedback? You'd probably come to understand if you sat on the church pew by the deli counter and watched the steady stream of hill-folk coming for their weekly sustenance. It's because both Darrell and his dad greet them at the door, and treat them like doctors treat their patients.

Darrell's background in medicine probably has something to do with a lifelong belief that serving people is honorable work, and his bedside manner was almost certainly cast in the mold his dad made, busting his back to move product, and never once putting profit on a pedestal. Allan only ever cared that the product was world class, and that people left his shop feeling anointed. Darrell, since 2023, is gracefully keeping those values alive – and even still doctoring a little on the side. He told me he gets asked to look at bumps and rashes at least once a week.

The ham really is a blessing. It's being served in the best restaurants from LA to New York, and there are food fanatics everywhere now that want a piece. You can get the bacon unsmoked, smoked, thick cut, thin cut, or peppered. The country ham comes two ways - aged, or very aged (prosciutto style). If you want it any other way, all you have to do is ask. They do custom work, too, even though they definitely lose money doing it. Darrell showed us a rack of Ossabaw jowls he was aging for a chef in the low country. It's not about the money for the Bentons. It's all about making really good ham, and serving really good people.

Coincidentally, Dave Fason, our photographer, had his first taste of Benton's 15 years ago, around the same time Darrell started reading SCOF. When I learned Darrell was a subscriber, and that Dave was a Benton's fan, I knew we had to put a trip together and try to have some fun, the Old Time Way. We decided we'd fish the reservoir for carp with some long rods and Panther Branch Bugs.



Fly fishing, and the fine foods industry, are all about who you know. Our conversations weaved back and forth between the two subjects, like a water ski slalom through the names of everyone we had in common. Dave and Darrell talked about the chefs they have photographed or sold ham to, comparing notes. I chimed in every once in a while when they mentioned a restaurant I've been to, or a chef I've seen on TV. I got to add the name Trevor Stockton to my rolodex when Darrell bought me one of his miso-glazed pork chops at RT Lodge the night before fishing. It was exceptional. We also talked about our favorite fly fishermen and women, the trips we've taken to see them and the stories they've written for the magazine. Only once did a phone come out to show off a really big trout. And one other time to check a baby monitor.

Between casts, we talked about fatherhood and fishing, how the choices we made about our lives were in some ways reactive to the homes our fathers made for us. Darrell's dad was rarely home, understandably, since he was trying to keep a business alive for the sake of a product that was too good to fail, and the sake of his family who now enjoys a better than modest amount of comfort, and a lot more time with Dad. Allan and Darrell got to visit Spain and Italy to see how their country hams are made, and are planning a trip to China for more curing recon. That time together, Darrell told me, has been redemptive. Dave, a child of divorce, flew the coop for a career in professional paintball, and spent his golden years signing autographs in France, Spain and Belgium. Now he cooks international cuisines for his COVID baby and travels





to photograph like-minded people, people more similar to his father than his younger self may have liked, but can now love. I became a fish doctor, not the kind of doctor my father expected me to be, but one that he showed me I could be if I put myself out there, like he did moving to Belgium to meet my mother. The three of us fishing were global citizens, each with overlapping passions that converged at the end of a Towee skiff on Tellico Lake. It was a beautiful thing.

The willow flies were out, and the sunrise was magic the way it can only be on the west slope of the Unicoi Mountains. We thought for sure the fish would be excited

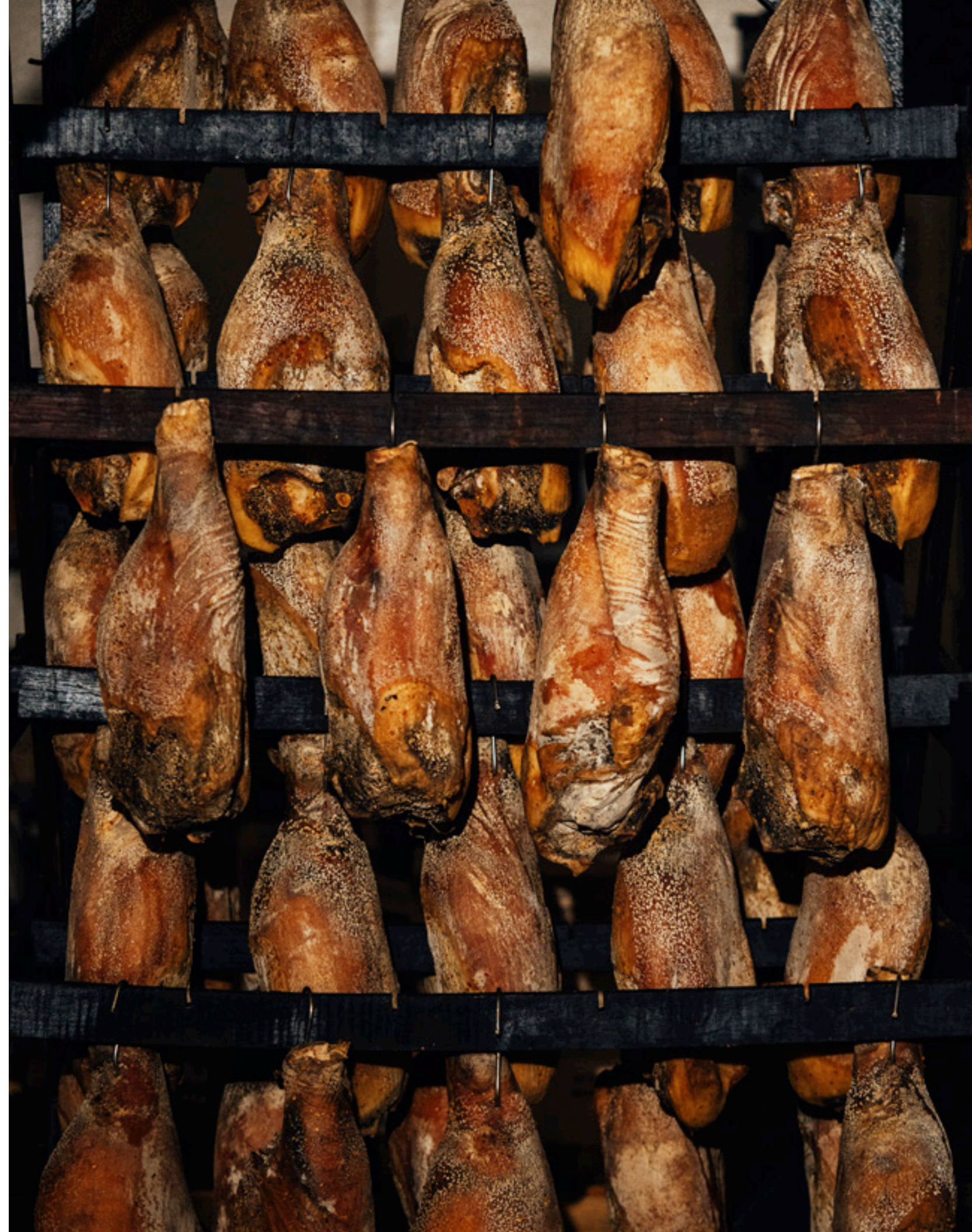


for breakfast. Not as tasty as ours (bacon with fried grit cakes and jammy eggs) but plentiful and accessible. Their thick pulsing bodies rippled the surface in all directions. Some white bass were excited, but finding a carp proved difficult until we got a tip from another SCOFer who just so happened to be casting from a Hog Island in a nearby spot that I shit you not is called Bacon Bend (sorry Bobby, but the unbelievable coincidence must supercede secrecy this time). Until we couldn't take it anymore we cast to dozens of smallmouth buffalo who were apparently too tired from their annual migration up the creek to jump on our Carp Kwans. We wound up calling it early so we could go eat more bacon. I'm telling you, it really is that good.

Back at the shop, Dave made us lunch with some 20-month prosciutto-style ham and snapped some more shots of the well smoked interior – every square inch of that building gets smoked the tags, labels, and even the merch. I sat on the famous pew and admired the quaint signage and the age of everything. Darrell answered the phone, helped customers, and filled orders at a disciplined, but not urgent tempo. Allan sat outside and listened to bear hunting stories. He still comes to the shop almost every day. I thought I saw Darrell in the back with a stethoscope at one point, but it was just a piece of rope they use to hold one of the closet doors closed. They've built out additional space when they've needed it over the years, but like everything in the mountains, they try to make what they have last as long as possible. That's why they cure their meat, take care of their people, and feed their carp. It's the Old Time Way. 🐟









SMOKY MOUNTAIN COUNTRY HAMS

LOT NO. 15

NO. PIECES 240

TOTAL LOT WEIGHT 6514

DATE IN CURE 4-17-26

DATE OVERHAULED 4-24-26

DATE OUT OF SALT 6-11-26

DATE OF EQ. RM. _____











**DAVE'S BOATRAMP BREAKFAST BOWLS
WITH BENTON'S!**

What you need.

Grits:

- . 1 cup grits
- . 3 cups water
- . 1 cup whole milk
- . 1 tablespoon salt
- . black pepper - use good pepper
- . 2-3 tablespoons butter

For the bowl.

- . 2 eggs
- . Bentons bacon - sausage or country ham works too
- . 2-3 green onions
- . chili crisp - lao gan ma or a salsa macha
- . cheese - smoked cheese or Monteray jack
- . more pepper

Grits.

Add the water, milk, and salt and bring to low boil. ~~Sto~~ slowly add grits, stirring as you go. Then drop to a ~~sim~~ simmer. Cook for about 20-30 minutes, stirring often. Grits like attention. If you walk away too long, they'll remind you by sticking to the pot. Once they're creamy and cooked through, add the butter and pepper. Taste.

Bacon.

Don't ruin the bacon. Cook the bacon however you like, but I will judge you if it shatters. You want some color and rendered fat, but the bacon should still have a little chew and bite. No bacon croutons.

Eggs.

Bring a pot of water to boil. I only cover half the egg. Less water equals faster boil and the eggs don't care. Lower the eggs into the water, cover, and set a timer to six and a half minutes. Have a ice bowl of water ready. When the timer goes off add the eggs to ice water. Then peel.

Put the damn thing together.

Spoon a healthy amount of grits into a bowl. Break or slice the eggs in half so the jammy yolks are shown, add to the grits. Add the chopped bacon. Chop the green onion and scatter them over everything. If you want it pretty, only use the greens. Finish with a spoonful or three of your favorite chili crisp and more pepper.

EAT IT WHILE ITS HOT.

-DAVE

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DURABILITY

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Weird Years With Lacy

by Grayson Guyer

I was awake

but resisted opening my eyes. I sensed I was outside, and the sun was high enough that it gave my eyelids a translucent quality that threw a pinkish-orange hue across my field of non-vision. Rolling through my memories of the evening prior I got as far as stumbling across the campsite and dropping my shirt in the fire as I attempted to hang it on a limb to dry out. My ankle hurt and I could feel the crusty tightness at the edges of exposed sub-dermis where a new scab was forming. I must have taken a good spill, again. At the forefront of this cacophony of sensory stimulation was the distinct odor of dog shit. I was snuggling Lacy spoon-like, and upon opening my eyes, realized that the spoons were inverted in such a way that her tail was draped over my forehead and my nose was mere millimeters from her bunghole. At least I had the good sense to lay the tarp out before picking a spot to curl up and die for the evening. Muffled pop country played in the tent, probably Kenny Chesney. I unzipped the door. "Turn that garbage off, we've got a penance to pay." My soon-to-be cousin-in-law, Chris, looked at me through bloodshot eyes, grinned, and told me to go fuck myself.

Twenty minutes later, our outlaw camp was broken, rolled into a wrinkly bundle, and stuffed into the back seat of Chris's

late '80s Oldsmobile Delta 88, and we were wet wading belly-deep in the creek above Trashcan Falls. Fishing in moving water was new to me, but I was beating the curve with a cast net, a bait bucket full of creek chubs, and a gas station spinning rod combo. Lacy and I rock-hopped from pool to pool. When it was time to get wet, she'd find a comfy spot for a nap until it was time to move upstream again. We rallied at the car, tallied our numbers, and crowned Chris the red-eye champion of the day. After one last Bush Light on the porch of my apartment above the Polaris dealership, he split back down the mountain for a week of selling cell phones and changing diapers.

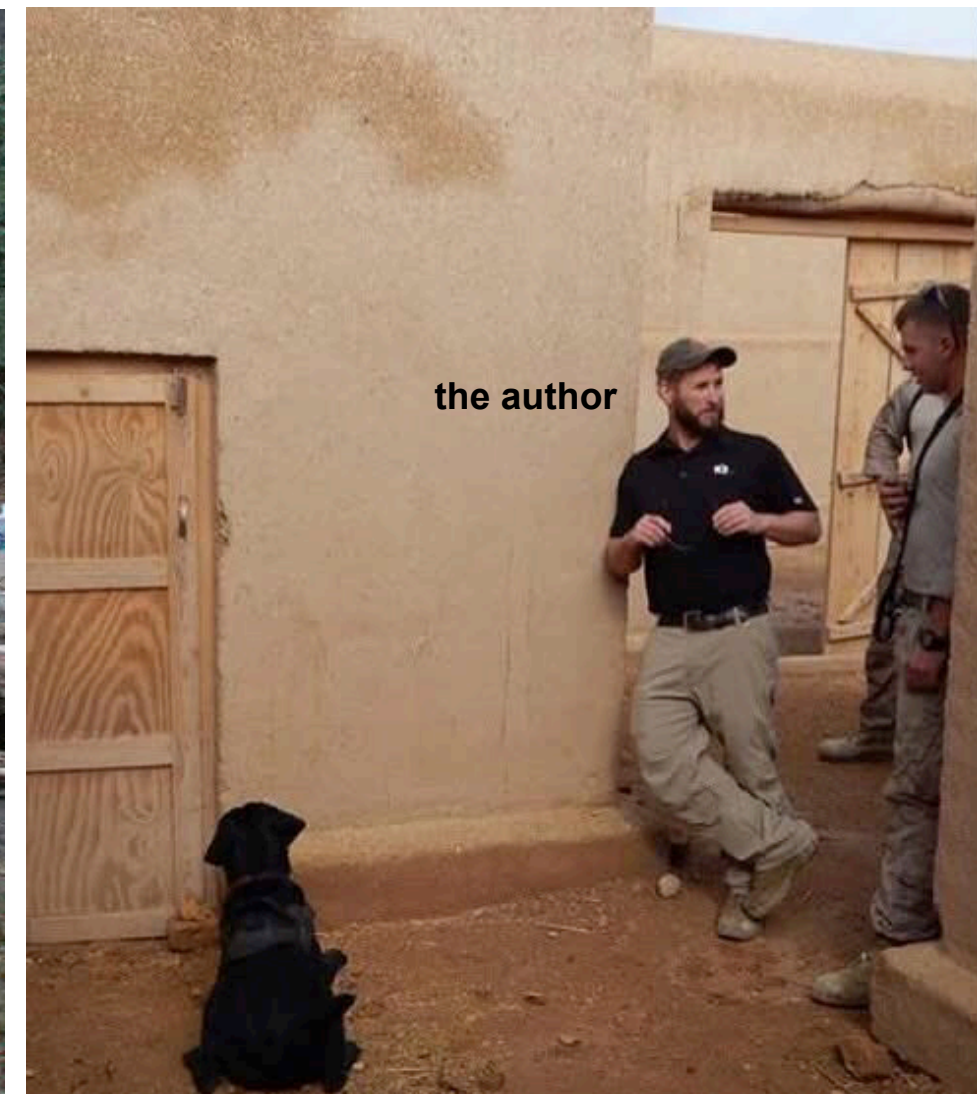
In the summer of 2005, I was in my second year out of the service. These were the years around the battles of Fallujah and Ramadi. I was semi-successfully suppressing the guilt and shame of getting out and leaving that war to my buddies. From the perspective of twenty years on, memories of my time in Boone play like a weird edit of one long blackout. There was rugby and 8 a.m. classes, fist fights, and sobbing alone on the steps of some App South apartment complex, joy giving way to despair and back again, playing off each other like the vanes in a Crookes Radiometer. Lacy was there for all of it, and her need for sustenance and exercise was pretty much the only level I could rely on to keep me somewhat oriented. The cool water between Ashe and Avery Counties was the only place I ever seemed to be sober and firing on all cylinders. Chris's life continued down a path of complexity and increasing income demands while I began to more deeply appreciate my time alone on the water with Lacy in tow.

My friend Dave worked downstairs and lived just up the hall from me. He was one of several trout bum transplants I knew from back home in High Point. He spent his workdays wrenching on four-wheelers, his evenings in the creeks around town, and his weekends on a drift boat over the TN line with some of the guys from Foscoe Fishing Co. Dave is the strongest son of a bitch I know. I don't think he's ever seen the inside of a gym, but one time he military-pressed my 250cc four-wheeler out of and over a deep creek bank on a three-day bender. He was and is a horse of a man, and somehow managed to look as graceful as anyone I'd seen when he had a fly rod in his hands. After a few trips to local streams with him, I spent a large portion of my monthly GI bill allotment on a 5wt Clearwater combo, accoutrements, and a pair of Patagonia wading sandals. Dave and I began to make a ritual of untangling my shit every evening while his yellow lab Lady and Lacy chased tennis balls down the banks of the creek at State Farm fields. I began to head down ahead of these casting lessons and offer obedience lessons to random folks with random dogs. To my surprise, I was pretty good at it and soon had a little more money for beer and flies.

The idea of fishing in waders never appealed to me, so in 2007 I added a setter pup named Clyde to the chaos, and three of us took up grouse hunting in the cold season. The dogs and I spent more time training, hunting, and fishing, and less time partying and studying. Three years piled up quickly, and in the summer of 2008, somehow Appalachian State saw fit to



clockwise from topleft:
the author in an Afghan poppy field,
grouse hunting with Clyde the setter,
training IED detection dogs,
hanging by a trout stream with Lacy, Clyde, and Chris.



the author



hand me a diploma and shove me out the door with an education in the humanities and no plan for the future. My rugby mate Joe and I got a rental house back in High Point and commenced to try and starve to death for the next year or two in entry-level sales jobs. Joe ground it out and started his journey up the corporate ladder during the financial crisis while Lacy and I bought a cheap kayak and played hooky most days, beating the banks of the city lake with gear.

For whatever reason, my career in sales didn't pan out, so Clyde went to live with my hunting buddy and his kids, and Lacy and I tried our hand at chiropractic school in St. Louis. Ironically, it was there that I really began to earn my chops as a professional dog trainer. In the summer of 2010, in some midwestern franchise vet's office, Lacy died. I sat cross-legged on that cold tile floor right there in front of the vet and his office staff and cried until I nearly puked. I cried up all the bullshit that had been weighing me down for the last seven years. I told her I was sorry. I begged her forgiveness and squeezed her body like a toddler squeezes a stuffed animal. I don't know exactly what I was asking her to forgive me for. I reckon it was for leaving the boys back in '03 and making a fucking mess out of my life. I went back to class that day and heard a lecture on how DD Palmer, the first chiropractor, cured a man of deafness by cracking his back. I walked to the registrars' office and disenrolled. Two days later, I went back to North Carolina and spread Lacy's ashes near a point on City Lake where a couple of years earlier, we caught a decent bass.



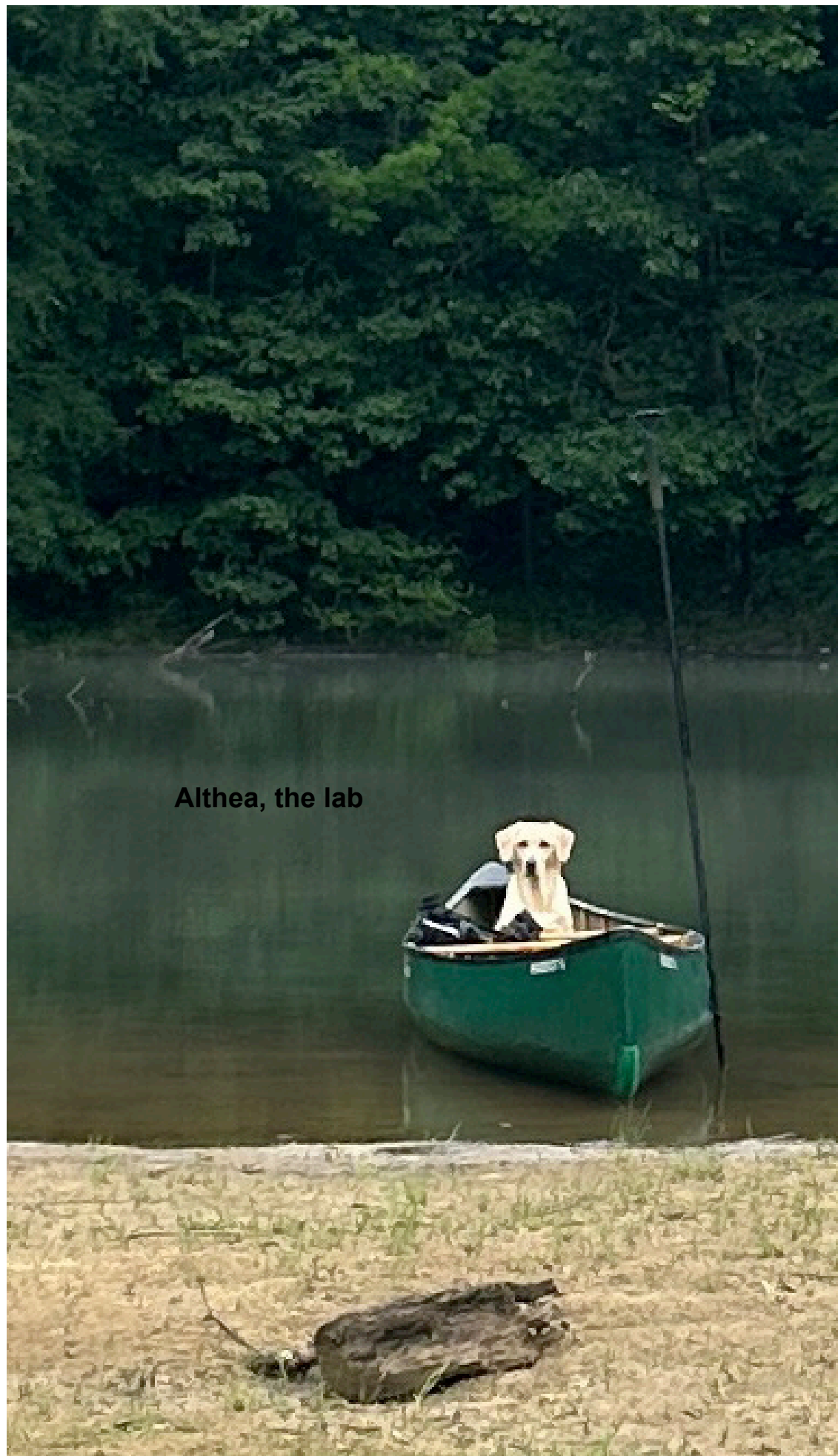
Ella, the Brittany

the author

I spent most of the next decade or so bouncing back and forth between home and Afghanistan with my beloved young Marine infantrymen as a trainer for the IED Detection Dog program. It was in that time that I finally settled up with Lacy and myself over the things that came up on the floor of that veterinary office back in Saint Louis. When I wasn't in the field with the boys and the dogs, I was in some empty

GP tent writing up business plans and love letters to a girl back home. In 2012 I bought a little Brittany named Ella and fell in love with her and the gothic beauty of woodcock hunting as well.

The Global War on Terror slowed to a pace that made it evident that soon my services would no longer be required. for As that played out, tThe girl I'd been



Althea, the lab



Ella, the Brittany

the author

writing to from Afghanistan moved to Cullowhee with her little West Highland Terrier for grad school. I chased her up there and proposed marriage on the steps of the Jackson County Courthouse. Regular visits to the high country got me reacquainted with grouse and flyrods. Ella enjoyed the former but found lounging streamside while I fished too confining for her bird dog sensibilities. I took a couple of trips to Africa on anti-poaching dog contracts before it was made clear to me in no uncertain terms that it was time to plant some roots. Kristin and I were married in 2016 and eventually she, Bennett the Westie, Ella, I landed on a private hunting preserve just west of High Point where in exchange for game keeping and kennel duties I hung my shingle as a gundog trainer to the public.

Not long after arriving, we bought a house adjacent to the preserve and added a yellow lab pup named Althea. She's the type of dog that curls up in the shade at the edge of the dove field or in the duck blind and sleeps until a safety clicks. She earned her place in the field by being comfortable at heel and enthusiastically flushing and retrieving for Ella and the other pointing dogs on the preserve. In the home she's quiet and mostly out of the way unless there's an errant hand hanging off the couch that needs nuzzling. Althea's a hell of an all-around dog, but her greatest calling is that of canoe ballast and fishing companion.

Somehow, we stumbled into this juxtaposition of a slow-paced life on the farm and the time warp that accompanies aging. In 2019 we welcomed a baby boy



named Luke in honor of a friend that didn't come home from the war. He has not known a life that doesn't involve dogs, fish, birds, and space enough to enjoy them all. His first word was "Ella". Luke was four years old when Ella got old and sick. We had the vet come to the house so he could be exposed to this part of life. I didn't cry as she took her last breaths in our living room. It was an odd guilty feeling as I thought I should want that or need it. The next morning, I poured a cup of coffee, glanced at her empty dog bed, and the tears came with a smile.

Last week Althea and I paddled out to Lacy's spot at City Lake and caught a dink on my Clearwater combo. I told her about my little boy, and that she would have hated sharing attention with him. I wondered aloud if she thought it was cool that I finally grew up and became financially solvent as a professional hunting dog trainer. I reckon she couldn't have cared less. She was happy just the way things were in the weird years. 🐾





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GAMGAM'S RECIPE BOX

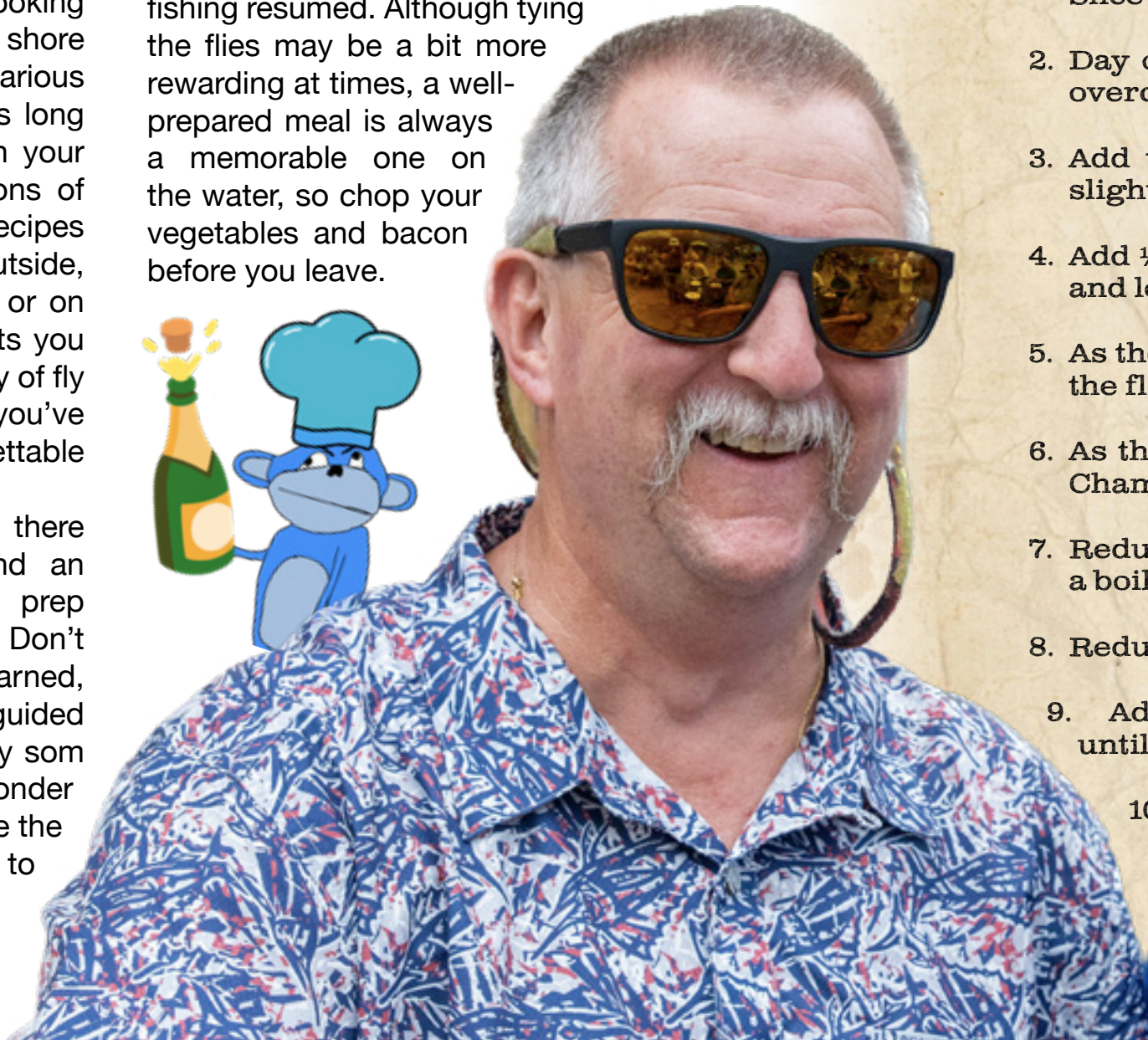
Scallops and Shrimp in Leek & Champagne Sauce by Karl Ekberg

Owner at Chattooga River Fly Shop

Even though I retired from my career as an Executive Chef a long time ago, and been a fly shop co-owner for a good while, too, I'm still always intrigued by new opportunities to incorporate the old standards of cooking with my time on the water. For shore lunches, combining pastas with various ingredients can't be a bad thing as long as they all seem to go together in your mind. Little additions or subtractions of some ingredients can nudge your recipes towards perfection. Cooking them outside, whether over a charcoal/wood fire or on the grill with friends and family, gets you even closer. Now, mix that into a day of fly fishing on your favorite water and you've turned your recipe into an unforgettable culinary experience.

As noted in this recipe, there is Champagne in the sauce, and an inspection tasting required during prep while your friends are still fishing. Don't leave this ingredient out, but be warned, too many sips can lead to some misguided casts in the afternoon, and possibly some squirrel hunting. Friends will wonder where their promised bubbly is while the empty bottle is "86". Try your best to save some for your friends.

Preparation the night prior to the trip makes all the difference for serving this stream side lunch, meaning the more prep, and less fly tying, the more expeditiously the lunch can be made waterside, and fishing resumed. Although tying the flies may be a bit more rewarding at times, a well-prepared meal is always a memorable one on the water, so chop your vegetables and bacon before you leave.



Ingredients:

1 pound Sea Scallops
1 pound Shrimp (21-25, peeled/
deveined, tails off)
2 TBSP Flour
8 oz Sparkling Wine/
Champagne (Reserve the
remainder for lunch)
16 oz Heavy Cream

8 TBSP Butter (split in 1/2)
1 pound pasta (linguine or
whatever)
½ pound of Portabella
Mushrooms, thinly sliced
1 leek (white part only),
julienned
¼ pound of bacon, diced

Directions:

1. The day before your trip, cook the pasta and throw it in a ziplock. Slice your mushrooms, leek and bacon and refrigerate.
2. Day of, in a hot skillet add bacon and cook until crispy, not overcooked and remove from the pan.
3. Add the scallops and shrimp, quickly sauteing them until slightly firm, and remove from the pan.
4. Add ½ the butter and as soon as melted, add the mushrooms and leeks.
5. As the mushrooms and leeks just start to become tender, add the flour, stirring to cook out the flour.
6. As the flour turns a blondish color deglaze the pan with the Champagne, and take a sip for quality control.
7. Reduce by ½ the volume and add the heavy cream, stirring to a boil.
8. Reduce heat and simmer to a sauce consistency.
9. Add back the bacon, scallops, shrimp, and pasta, and heat until hot, then serve.
10. Pour remaining Champagne in glasses and enjoy.

The Back Page

SCOTT STEVENSON

Like all good Southerners who fly fish I occasionally think about relocating to Wyoming or somewhere out West, especially this time of year when you just get sick and tired of hearing the cicadas and taking three showers a day. Then I think about the things I would miss if I moved. I remember chatting with Garner Reid about his years guiding in Missoula, and how they came to an end when the bass-sized hole in his heart got too big. Probably I'd have the same hole. I might could plug it up with breakfast burritos for a while, but even then, Biscuits (capital B) would be calling me like a siren back South.

And these delicious golden biscuits have come a long way since the hardtack or biscuit cookies of old times, well forgotten. There's a regional fast-food franchise, here in Eastern Central Southern Alabama called Jack's (not Jack in the Box) that makes the best biscuits I've ever had. One is on the way to my local river. They open for me at 4:30 or 5:00 am depending on the day of the week. I know there's a sawmill down the road that they probably open for, but deep down I believe it's just for me. The same franchise has another location about thirty minutes away and on the other side of the river. It is never open as early as my favorite location even though they carry the same hours. And the biscuits aren't half as good. They never have their shit together and I have left there plenty of times when they were understaffed and couldn't open in time. Because of this I never fish certain sections of the river that are only accessible from that side.

The first sign to a good biscuit is the bag grease that is visible when they hand over the goods. I like to keep it simple, and my order usually consists of a steak biscuit combo with a coke. I get a sausage biscuit as a chaser. And I bring my own coffee. No fast food serves good coffee, nor does any gas station, especially ones that are open at sunrise. I like to sip the coke with the coffee alternatively while I take a few hours off my life with these lard infused baked concoctions. I've tried Dr Pepper and Señor Pibb but neither plays ball with the coffee like a co-cola. I could do without the hash rounds, but two biscuits is a must. I need the sustenance while I am elegantly casting Boogle Bugs all day long to 22" bass in class VII rapids.

My wife (and the ladies that work at Jack's) think I'm weird that I don't like putting jelly on my sausage and steak biscuits. It doesn't do anything for me except take away from that savory goodness. If I want jelly I will get a plain biscuit and dab it up. She says it is because I grew up in the city and not the country. I think it's weird that she correlates that. Country folk have wild imaginations.

You might say Hardee's makes the best biscuits. I used to think that way too, but they are extremely inconsistent and I usually get let down more times than not. I'm sure I will hear some Bojangles chatter, especially from the Carolinas. Ignorance is bliss, I guess. The Martin's restaurants around Atlanta will make an incredible biscuit from time to time. I do love their large biscuit size, which is about the size of your boat anchor. And I know Pal's gets a lot of praise up in NE TenRsee. Come down here and let me buy you a Jack's biscuit. You'll see the light. The fact that they all open no later than 5am should tug at every fly fisher's cholesterol laden heartstrings, whether that heart has a bass-hole or not. 🐟



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Find the following words in the puzzle.

Words are hidden ⬆ and ⬇ and ➡ and ⬅ and ↘

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BACKPAGE	COUNTRYHAM	GROSSMAN	ERS	SURLY
BAJIO	CULTURE	GUIDE	SEINGBERG	TROUTROUTES
BENTONS	DOGSHIT	HOWLERBROS	SINKINGLINE	WALTERS
BLUERIDGEBOAT	DRAWL	JERRY	SKWALA	WINSTON
S	ERICHRICE	MAGAZINE	SOUTHERN	WSP
BOOGLEBUG	FISHFORCHANG	MIKEY	STREAMER	YALL
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