



George 'Cap' Weise in his later years

**Sometimes called the Mark Cathey of Grandfather Mountain...**



**mBlazer George 'Cap' Weise 1901-1981**

**Wilson Creek – Collettsville, North Carolina**

Cap Wiese, the Headmaster of Patterson School in Lenoir is well known for his Sheep Fly (invented by Lenoir, North Carolina native Newland Sanders) and his marathon days on Wilson Creek. As the story goes, he would fish the majority of the length of Wilson Creek in a single day, beginning before daylight and focusing on all the most productive pockets until darkness. He was instrumental in the founding of the North Carolina Chapter of Trout Unlimited and served as the first President. Cap spent his final days fly fishing in Cherokee whenever he had the opportunity.



Sheep Fly



George F. 'Cap' Wiese



Early Nelson



**nBlazer**

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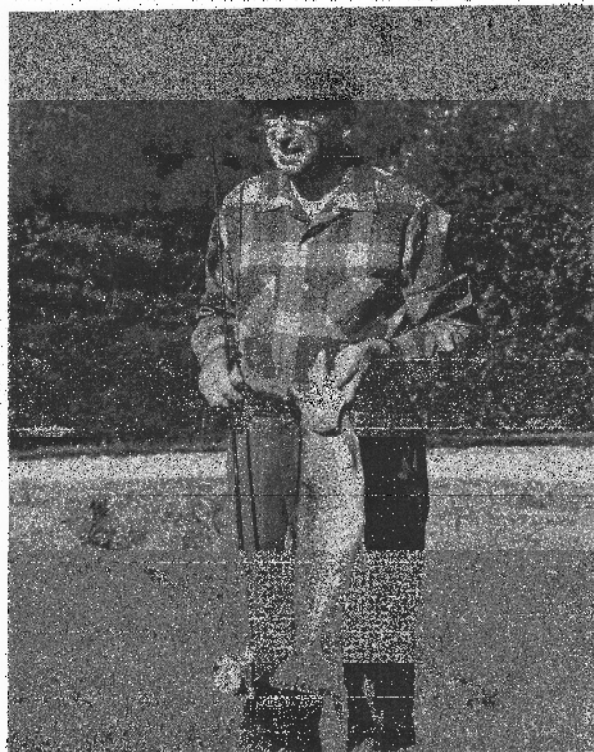
## 'Cap's' Departure Silences Fish Tales

"George F. Wiese, 80, died suddenly May 21, 1981 after he and his wife returned to Lenoir from a camping trip." The obituary read "but 'Cap' had been fishing – trout fishing – on the mountain streams of the Cherokee Indian Reservation. The benevolent providence that had allowed 'Cap' a full forescore of years had added a priceless boon. He had been able to fish until his last day; never would he suffer the agony of being housebound with only dreams of sparkling trout waters."<sup>1</sup>

Cap Wiese



George 'Cap' Wiese fly fishing his favorite waters in Cherokee, North Carolina



'Cap' in the 1970's.



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<sup>1</sup>Hickory Daily Record, Section B, Friday, May 29, 1981.

## Recollections from George F. “Cap” Wiese

Wilson Creek has always been my favorite stream. Before 1940, there was virgin timber all along the stream, and beautiful mossy pools. In early days, there were more rainbows than brown trout but high water brought brown trout on downstream after they were stocked up on Highway 221 around Grandfather Mountain. After the 1940 flood, new holes were opened up, and brown trout were everywhere. My favorite water was just above Bill Crump’s at the high bluff along the path and from there up to Andrews Creek and then on up the right hand prong above Andrews (Stack Rock Creek).

I usually fished a dry fly all day, a yellow fly, Early Nelson, and gray hackle with yellow body. The limit was 20 fish, and we paid one dollar to fish through the refuge. I would usually stay at Bill Crump’s, walk up to the road before daylight and walk down to Edgemont, to get my permit, and fish through to the Bill Crump place. Oftentimes, someone would take me by car back down to Edgemont, and I would pay another dollar to fish through and catch another limit of 20. I would nearly always take a Patterson student and would see that both of us caught our limit. So many times we would have 80 fish in one day, or 160 fish if we stayed two days. We would clean and salt our fish, put them in big 5 gallon jars and take them back to feed Patterson School. Many times we would keep the jars

in the Patterson spring house to stay cool. We would always stay in Bill Crump's woodworking shop and sleep on the shavings on the floor. Two students that I would take often were John Baskerville and Edward Jones. Many times I saw elk on the lower end near the old house place (now on the Edgemont Club "Todd" property). We also saw bear from time to time.

I also liked to fish Harper Creek and had many good days on Harper, especially during World War II, but I always liked Wilson best. In those days, I would use only a seven foot gut leader. I used to park at Brown Mountain Beach and walk up the railroad bed to fish through the gorge up to the mouth of Harper Creek. On one afternoon I had a young Patterson student with me and I caught two 20 inch plus brown trout from the same pool.

I first started going to Cherokee in 1936 and stayed at the Smokemont Logging Camp Ground before the Park Service took over. Back then, the best brown trout stream in the Smokeys was Deep Creek at Bryson City and there are still many large brown trout taken there each year. Nantahala River also has big trout and a state record fish was caught there in 1980. My favorite water in the Smokeys now is Oconaluftee from the parkway bridge down to Birdtown. Last year I caught a 27 ½ inch brown just below the campground in Cherokee. I catch rainbow of all sizes including big ones, and catch brown trout from 10 to 14

inches, and fish 20 inches and larger but very few from 14 to 20 inches. I usually use a size 10 Sheep Fly with a six to eight pound leader if the water is dingy. After a good shower, the river turns yellow and big fish come up and roll on top like a gig hog! The tourist fishermen don't bother me. I let them wade by and just go back to fishing.

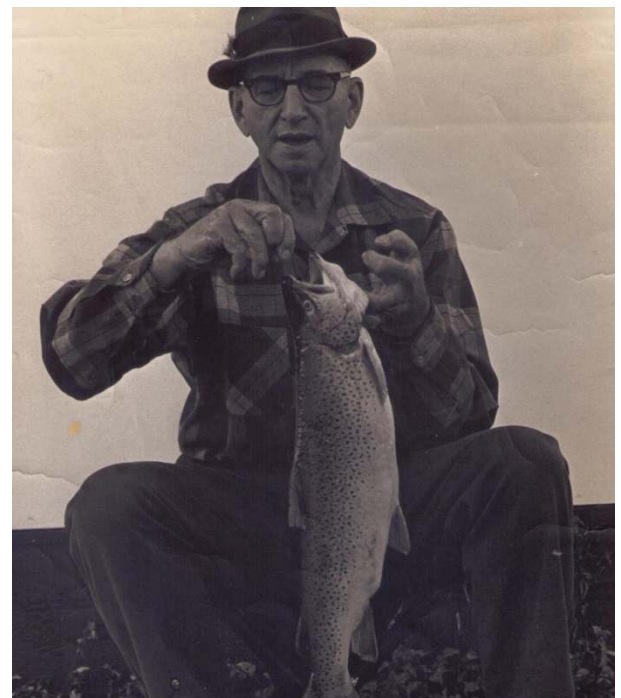
Two years ago, I took an 8  $\frac{3}{4}$  pound brown trout just below the checking station, and we baked the fish and it was more than eight of us could eat at one meal.<sup>2</sup>

– **Cap Wiese**

Note: Obviously, catch-and-release had not been a part of early fly fishing culture in the North Carolina Mountains as trout were considered very plentiful.



Ron Beane and 'Cap' teaching fly-tying at Hibriten High School, Lenoir, North Carolina



'Cap' with a trophy brown trout.



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<sup>2</sup> Written by George F. (Cap) Wiese - April 1980; found in an Edgemont Club scrapbook.

## **George F. “Cap” Wiese Remembered by Jim R. Todd**

George Wiese was a living legend – a legend as a man, Christian educator, teacher, and inspiration to thousands of boys and young men and certainly a legend as a trout fisherman. I remember Cap earliest for his strength and appearance – six foot plus and 200 pounds – strength of arm, back and legs and stories of endurance, and hiking, that exhausted young people half his age. As headmaster of Patterson School, the Episcopal Private School for Boys, he told tales of how he would “straighten out” young men at Patterson, some of whom I knew as pretty wild, with his unorthodox methods. Probably his greatest tool for discipline was “stump sitting” – violators of Cap’s rules would result in a sentence to sit on a prominent and large stump in the center of the campus from an hour up to 24 hours, rain or shine, sleet or snow, for a serious offense. Friends who have “stump sat” as punishment have confided that it was a memorable and effective lesson in discipline that they still remember vividly.

Cap Wiese has taught fly casting, fly tying and fly fishing to more people than anyone else in North Carolina – ever. Up until he stopped coming to Edgemont about 1972, he had caught more brown trout in Wilson Creek than anyone else – ever. In the early days of fishing the limit was twenty, then fifteen, then ten, etc. Cap always selected and kept his limit up until 1965 or so. He said it was good for the stream



to get some of the big brown out, and in the 30's, 40's and 50's, it probably was good for the overall population.

A typical Saturday for Cap would be to begin fishing Wilson at the concrete bridge on our property at daylight, while his companion drove into the Bill Crump place 4 miles upstream. Cap would fish through to Bills by about 1 PM, and then eat his lunch and listen to Bill talk on the front steps of the woodworking shop. After lunch, Cap's fishing buddy would drive him back down to the concrete bridge, and he would start fishing through again – this time fishing selected pools and runs and watching for the evening rise – often he would stop at one of the big pools – probably at the 2<sup>nd</sup> crossing – strip off his clothes, go swimming and then take a nap in the sun on the big rock. He would then be ready for the best fishing of the day – the evening hatches and looking for special big fish as darkness approached. Cap can actually see in the dark to a remarkable extent. Many times he would stay on the stream, casting and seeing the fly and the rises and catching fish until 9:30 or 10:00 PM at night. Only then would he complete the day's "fish" which had started at 5:30 or 6:00 AM.

Cap developed two flies especially for Wilson Creek browns. The "Early Nelson" is named for Dr. Fletcher Nelson, former President of Lees-McRae College, an old fishing companion, (in my opinion, the Early Nelson is still



probably the best overall fly for Wilson Creek from mid-May to mid-June). He also tied the yellow fly by using the yellow quill from a Flicker for the body – I think it needs to be soaked well in order to wrap the quill properly around the body.

Cap used large bushy flies, usually size 10 or size 12, often fishing the early Nelson and the yellow on a dropper, with 4 pound leader. Cap was not one to fool with midges or 2 pound tippetts, and with his casting ability he could fish Wilson Creek with heavier leader and not spook the fish. During the last ten years Cap fished nymphs more often, with the “sheep fly” size 8 or size 10 his favorite for big fish.

There are many other unique facts and stories about Cap. I’ll mention two concerning smoking and eating. Smoking cigarettes was a major offense at Patterson School, and only those who fished with Cap ever saw him with a cigarette, because he “didn’t smoke” except on a fishing trip, and he could go through two packs in a day’s fishing. I think he used cigarettes to slow him down and calm his nerves while fishing.

After locating a large trout or having a rise or a miss, he would just sit down or stand motionless and smoke two cigarettes back to back to “rest the trout”. He would also often change fly size or pattern. Numerous times I have watched him go through this “resting the trout” (while I would be impatient to move on up and fish the next pool),

then very carefully take his position and false cast about twice and then lay the fly exactly where he wanted, raise, hook, play and net the 10 to 13 inch brown he had seen ten or fifteen minutes earlier. He quit all smoking fifteen years ago, but still fishes slowly and carefully.

As to food, no one I've ever met had Cap's eating habits. He was once told or "discovered" that he was allergic to many food; therefore he selected other foods to replace the usual foods. Among them were: bear meat, deerburgers, pickled possum, rattlesnake meat, limburger cheese, and jelly sandwiches, etc., etc. he also had his own energy food to carry in his oversized creel. He would take a quart jar and fill it half full of heavy cream from the Patterson School dairy; then add six raw eggs, and half cup of pure sourwood honey. After six hours in Cap's creel along Wilson Creek, this mixture would be a thick heavy golden texture, which Cap would consume with gusto.

Cap now fishes almost exclusively on a two mile private area of Pigeon River, where big browns come up from Champion's lake below; also three or four weeks each year at Cherokee, fishing selected runs and pools on Oconaluftee River with the sheep fly for big browns.

Although I've heard and forgotten so many stories, and fished often with Cap; I recall three good stories. As to large fish on Wilson Creek – in the late 30's, the game warden would call Cap when he discovered the location of a large

fish in the county. Cap was told of a big rainbow – about 30 inches on Wilson Creek just below the mouth of Harper Creek. Cap had planned to go to Bill Crump's for the weekend, so he stopped on the way, caught the rainbow and took it to Mrs. Crump to cook for supper. Cap never would say exactly how big the fish was, but he insists that the one trout fed Mr. and Mrs. Crump and their 12 children, himself, and some left over for the dog.

One of his better weekends was during World War II when he took Ed Jones, then a Patterson student or recent graduate to Harper Creek. They had good luck Saturday on brown trout and fished Harper again on Sunday. The limit then was fifteen, so Sunday night they returned 60 brown trout to Patterson's freezer, all 14 inches or larger. Back then Cap liked to have "trout suppers" for Patterson School and his friends.

A later event which I witnessed was at one of our Trout Unlimited Council meeting weekends at Cane River lodge in the late 60's. The rest of us came in from the stream about 8 PM due to a heavy shower. Cap was left at the "swimming hole pool". About 10 PM, he finally returned to the lodge soaking wet, and carrying a handful of sticks. He said he had been fighting large trout ever since the rain got the stream up and wanted to show us his "catch". It seems that every time he would net a fish, he would measure it with a stick before releasing it back into the stream. One of our good

Directors counted Cap's "sticks" and there were eleven. Then they measured the sticks and the shortest one was nineteen inches.

I have no doubt that George Wiese was a man of great strength of character long before he owned a fly rod; but I also believe that his love and dedication to the stream and to the outdoors continues to renew his strengths, which have made him a living example and inspiration to so many who have known him.<sup>3</sup> – **Jim Todd**



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<sup>3</sup> Written during the summer of 1979 by Jim R. Todd; found in an Edgemont Club scrapbook.



## A 'Cap' Wiese Story by Walker Blanton, Jr.

Every year my dad would invite 'Cap' to fish Buck Creek with us. He would stay at our house and loved to fish in Lake Tahoma right at daylight for bass with his fly rod. Naturally I was tapped to paddle the boat. He was so demanding: too close, too far, too slow, etc. But he caught bass on a deer hair mouse. The window of low light was brief so we never got very far but I loved watching him bounce that frog under the alders. I still have one of those frogs. I'll send it to you. –  
**Walker Blanton, Jr.**



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