



Son of the Smokies



Team Blazer

Frank Young

1925-2005

Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Bryson City, North Carolina

Probably no Tar Heel fly fisherman has fished more and caught more trout than Frank Young. A son of the Smokies,

Young lived in close proximity to some of our finest trout water and sampled its bounties for many decades.

He had a special fondness for remote waters in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, but Frank was equally at home on the boisterous Nantahala River.

He was an individual who loved to fish. In a lifetime devoted to the sport, he had accumulated an unmatched degree of wisdom in the demanding ways of Tar Heel trout. His casting technique would not win any contests, but using better than 20 feet of tapered leader (as he normally did), he invariably put the fly precisely where he wanted it.

Frank opted, at times, to fish really big flies in unlikely places. His theory in using dry flies tied on size eight or ten hooks was simple – big fish like big meals. He would work such patterns on the back side of big holes, under tree limbs, overhanging bushes, and the like. In so doing, he had taken scores of fish in the 20-inch plus range, and that was trophy size in North Carolina. Frank also had used the same big flies, this time worked in skittering fashion over the surface rather than allowing them to drift naturally, to catch spawning run steelhead in the Smokies.

Frank served in the Korean War. He said all it took to enable him to endure amidst battlefield trauma was to think of babbling streams, blooming laurel, and feeding trout which awaited his return to the Smokies.

Frank had a deep love for the natural resource we have in our trout and he was determined to fish as much as possible. He was “a caring angler” that cherished the natural world in which the trout lives, and he was tireless in sharing with others his inexhaustible store of trout lore. He truly enjoyed catching trout, yet he took an even greater delight in watching someone else catch fish. When pressed on the matter, Frank would quietly remark that he had caught his share and enjoyed watching others share the timeless thrill of a throbbing rod.

Frank suffered from heart-related physical problems for years, yet he still fished at every chance. Gone are the decades when he roamed the remote Smokies with his bedroll home and his plastic sheet roof. Gone are the 300 plus days of fishing annually he averaged for over 30 years.

A deeply religious man, he says there is no way of being closer to God than on a trout stream.

Reference:

Casada, Jim. *Profiles of North Carolina Angling Greats - Frank Young: Son Of The Smokies*, NCTU Fly Line, Spring 1988.



ream Blazer

Frank Young

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Frank Young the Innovative Fly Tyer

Frank was at least as innovative in tying flies as he was in his fishing. Noteworthy in this regard was his use of the soft underbelly fur from opossums in tying the myriad of patterns – such as the Wulff series – which call for kip tail or deer hair. One road-killed opossum provides the makings for dozens of flies, the material is softer and easier to work with than kip tail, and it has a very high level of buoyancy.

His Royal Wulff tied with opossum fur was a favorite.

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Casada, Jim. *Profiles of North Carolina Angling Greats - Frank Young: Son Of The Smokies*, NCTU Fly Line, Spring 1988.



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Jim Casada and Frank Young

I first came to know Frank Young as a boy, when I had the good fortune to spend time fishing the waters of Deep Creek. I would frequently encounter Frank in the late afternoons. He was a fine fisherman even then; however, some three decades would pass – all too quickly – before I again had the chance to renew my acquaintance with Frank. I soon realized that his endless hours a stream and, extraordinary powers of observation had made him, quite simply, a fly fisherman *par excellence*.

Our renewed friendship had its origins in the sort of circumstances that any devoted lover of the fine fishing paraphernalia can appreciate. A classified ad in a local weekly, The Smoky Mountain Times, caught my eye. In this most unlikely of places, I saw two bamboo rods offered for sale – a one-piece Hardy 6 ½ footer and a three-piece F. E Thomas model. A hurried phone call proved that the heretofore anonymous owner was none other than Frank Young, and after a bit of bargaining and much more reminiscing, these treasures were mine. It turned out that an appreciative angler had given both of them to Frank as a token of appreciation for a veteran taking time and considerable patience to introduce an “outsider” to the streams of his beloved Smokies.

In fact, this fellow had once asked Frank what he would consider an ideal small stream rod, and Frank had replied his “dream stick” would be a short, one-piece bamboo for a three- or four-weight line. Frank had fished with both of the rods for many years and with great pleasure, but he saw their sale as an opportunity to make a substantial donation to a project for underprivileged children sponsored by the Smoky Mountain Bible conference. Thus did I become the proud possessor of two fine rods, and in short order they came to mean even more to me. Frank and I agreed to get together for a day or two of fishing the next time I was back home in the mountains, and at that point I realized that two magical wands, which had been wielded by a true streamside magician, had become mine.

Frank Young proved to know more about trout fishing than anyone I have ever encountered, either in person or in print. To fish with Frank was a revelation. Like many before me, I became the beneficiary of his soft-spoken knowledge, his quietly advanced suggestions, and perhaps most of all, his example. The man is a born teacher, and to watch him in action is to obtain instruction which transcends that offered in the most prestigious of fly fishing schools.

For example, in the course of a three-day backpacking trip with Frank which saw us cover much of the water of Deep Creek, I learned more about the haunts and habits of brown trout than I would have thought possible. Up at

dawn each day to take full advantage of the brown's preference for feeding when light intensity is low, we fished together and Frank would carefully point out where he "knew" there would be a brown, and why. Invariably he proved right – even to the point of making accurate judgments on the size of the fish likely to be found in a particular feeding station. He showed me the locations, frequently overlooked by the average angler, which are likely hangouts for browns. Among these were eddy waters in big holes, places where water undercut logs or rocks in the stream, difficult-to-reach sites under overhanging limbs, and "ambush" hideaways at points where the water cascaded from one pool to the next. In those three days, I learned more about brown trout than I would have on my own in the three years.

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Casada, Jim. *Profiles of North Carolina Angling Greats - Frank Young: Son Of The Smokies*, NCTU Fly Line, Spring 1988.



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