

# THE LOOP

*The Federation of Fly Fishers Journal for Certified Casting Instructors  
Spring 2007*

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## *Line Control - Feeling It*

*By Jim Valle*

The novice student comes in all varieties. They may be a child or a senior, small or tall or somewhere in between. All of these students have different learning styles. My very first goal as an instructor in this situation is to find one little success----- that first little smile of confidence----- as simply and quickly as possible. Finding the approach that produces this little success isn't easy. It requires simplicity and that means understanding. I really must work to separate the *instructor's* perspective from the *student's* perspective.

After searching my experiences and library, experimenting with my students, and trying different approaches during my own practice sessions, I finally put all the pieces together in a method that has proven to be successful with every beginning student. I have now added this method to every lesson I teach: intermediate, advanced, kids or adults. It works so well I just can't leave it out. The method involves developing a feeling or sense of the entire casting system. You won't believe it until you try it. Here's how:

The dialogue and teaching perspective for beginners start by giving a very slow and simple demo of one or two, slow, complete basic casts.

*"This is how we cast a fly line."*

Then a step by step basic cast is required to match this dialogue.

*"Notice my back cast stop (thumb up)." I wait a bit for the line to straighten behind me. I move the rod forward to the forward cast stop. "Stop here. Notice the rod bend. This is what you will be able to do in a few minutes, but to learn it I am going to take you down a different path."*

The student now has a verbal and visual picture of the goal. This is very important. The idea of a different learning path seems to intrigue them. I have also been able to introduce the concepts of stop, pause and rod load.

*"Lets start with the grip; we'll use a key grip or thumb on top grip."*

Demonstrate the key grip, but keep the rod. Then ask the students step back as you move right into the following demonstration.

*"You have seen gymnastic demonstrations with wands and ribbons, right? I am going to ask you to swing the entire rod and line around yourself like this, in an easy constant circular motion. First this way, and then reverse to the other direction without stopping. Move the rod above your head and then continue with the rod tip about a foot or so above the ground and make sure to keep it all the way down low behind you."*

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*Jim Valle spent 5 years as a Naval flight officer, lived in Oregon for 10 years and then relocated to the coast of New Jersey. He currently teaches a 15 hour course "The Art of Fly Casting" at a local college and instructs in LL Bean's Outdoor Discovery Schools in NJ and VA.*

*Line Control (continued from page 1)*

At this point I am demonstrating the rod and line movement, figure eights and reversals high and then very low with the rod tip low behind me. As I am doing this I add:

*“Now I am going to show you what we will call the ready position.”*

The ready position is the back cast stop position. All students view the cast with a forward cast perspective, so keep that in mind and work with it. The direction of the final circular swing to the ready position must be appropriate for a right or left handed caster to make a backcast.

*“During the exercise I will ask you to go to this ready position. Wait for the line to roll out and then move forward and stop-----like this.”*

At this point we have given very little instruction and expended a minute or two. The student has a visual picture of the goal; however, the student doesn't see the connection yet. I am coming.

*“Give it a try. Just wave the rod around slowly, in any direction or shape you feel like making. Be creative and have some fun, you will understand in a few minutes.”*

I get out of the way. The rod is set up with two times the rod length of line outside the tip. Any more than this takes too much effort for the caster to keep the line aloft. As the student relaxes and gets comfortable I will ask them to attempt additional tasks.

*“Slow down. Slower -----as slow as you can. Now change direction. Keep the tip low in the back. Keep the line off the ground. Put it all above your head. Now low again.”*

I'll repeat as necessary until I see a relaxed comfortable amount of line control. I am looking for slow, effortless movement, which is just enough to keep the line moving. Once the students have the power under control, then we move on to feeling the rod load.

*“Can you feel the line? “Do you see the tip of the rod is bending?”*

Interestingly and almost invariably the response is delayed. They just haven't paid any attention to the rod. Once they focus, there is a sudden awareness. “Now, I do!” or “Oh Yeah.” This is a key element in the lesson. I'll keep at it until it all falls in place, which usually just takes a few minutes.

The real crux of the lesson is :

1. A massive and immediate dose of muscle memory for this line length and equipment configuration.
2. Total relaxation of the student and his or her arm. The student intuitively knows how to do the ribbon thing; it's easy from their perspective.
3. The student is feeling the aerialized line weight. Something that usually doesn't come for quite a while.
4. The student is made aware of and senses the rod load.
5. All concerns about keeping that much line aloft, which usually causes use of too much power, wristing, excessive rod arc in both directions, and wide loops, never enter the student's mind.
6. The student learns to use all of his muscles and joints. The particular task of getting the rod tip low behind you, forces them to loosen up and stretch. The wrist moves some. The forearm, upper arm, shoulder and body all come into the game naturally without any complicated dialogue.
7. Since the exercise allows for tip movement in varying planes and at constant elevations, the student already has an idea of rod tip path. The line goes where the rod tip, which is the predecessor to straight line path of the rod tip (SLP).

*Continued on page 3*

8. The constant motion is key. Compared to stroke motion, which is interrupted by stops and pauses, constant motion allows continual and incremental adjustments.

Now I make sure the current direction of the swing is correct.

*“On the next circle I want you to stop at the ready position, wait a bit, and then move the rod forward and stop.”*

9. The student’s sense of timing is already developed. They intuitively know how long it takes for this much line to roll out, having seen the end pass by so many times.

10. Additionally, they tend to move the rod forward slower with more of a pull than a push without the tendency to over rotate. This also develops the proper translation (loading move) and late rotation (power snap/tip speed) so necessary for a successful cast.

When they make this first cast----and it will look like a cast-----that little smile comes. The instructor smiles and from here on all casts are possible!

One last and extremely important part of the exercise is to explain what you’ve just learned, as a means of reinforcing the lesson. I demonstrate the exercise and explain.

*“You received a dose of muscle memory, when I had you move the rod in a circle, behind and low behind you. The line followed the tip path. You felt the rod load.”*

Continue with other points like flexibility, and components of the stroke to tie the entire package together. Add the pick up and lay down and the basic cast is complete. Your student is way ahead of the typical game.

*You won’t believe this method until you try it. Find a youngster or adult who isn’t interested in fly fishing -----if there is such a person--- and try this. You will be absolutely amazed.*

Beyond the beginner there are experienced students who don’t sense the cast. The smoothness just isn’t there. The cast is rigid and unimaginative, without freedom. They are missing the best part of casting a line. I have found places in all my lessons to include this exercise to set their casting free.

This method is appropriate for everyone, kids to adults, inexperienced to advanced, or just as a warm-up. When we pick up any sporting gear, a bat, tennis racquet, or golf club, the first thing we do is give it a swing. Why? It’s intuitive. Our muscles insist on sensing the weight, resistance or feel.

For those casters who tend to raise and tense their arms, the experience will improve their flexibility and improve their very next cast. Those who are wristing discover the rest of their arm and body. Those fast casters easily learn to slow down and use less energy.

The bottom line, for all good casting, is developing a sense, awareness, or feel for the cast. This is teaching by feeling the cast-----short, sweet and very powerful.



## **CONCLAVE 2007**

*42nd FFF Conclave*

**Where:** *Livingston, Montana*

**When:** *July 31-August 4, 2007*

# Must a Certified Casting Instructor Be Versatile?

by Pat Damico

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**Comparing two very different fishing situations has lead me to consider how to make our casting classes more meaningful. Do we take the time to understand the student's background and expectations?**

I recently fished a trophy trout stream in north-eastern Pennsylvania that was loaded with healthy, native trout, many of significant size. The stretch of water was very clear and for the most part relatively shallow. Fishing was limited to fly fishing from the bank. In this urban setting fish are bombarded daily with flies thrown by some very astute anglers. The catch and release regulations mean that fish have been caught many times. They inspect each offering with considerable scrutiny. Their nose will almost touch the feathered imposter before the take, or refusal. Are they difficult? They are for the most part impossible!

I always advise doing a little research before casting into unfamiliar waters. I've spent many years fishing for freshwater trout so I gathered information from some friends who are frequent visitors to this fishery, as well as from a few of the local experts. I saw a few fish caught and noted two of the requirements for success: Nine foot, 6x leaders, with two to three foot, 7x or 8x tippets, and appropriate flies, as small as size 26 and 28. Some Tricos were hatching, and these fly imitations were needed to successfully match the hatch. Many of the trout would sip these small natural morsels, refusing an imitation that was a little too large, the wrong color, had a floating leader, or exhibited a hint of unnatural drag. Most fish were caught within a few feet of the bank.

Contrast this to a June trip along our Florida coasts to catch one hundred pound plus tarpon, using a 12 - weight, nine foot fly rod with a weight forward line, attached to an eighty pound tippet and a 3/0 fly. Most

casts will be a minimum of fifty feet and must be quick and accurate. The cast is made to a moving fish with a minimum of false casting and most often in the wind.

These are two extreme examples, but they both are factual and do exist. If I take an accomplished saltwater fly fisherman and put him in the above freshwater situation, what will his success rate be? Not very good. Which is harder? They are both difficult, which is the allure of fly fishing.

As a certified casting instructor, the casting skills needed for the freshwater situation blew my mind. Very few fisherman had more than two or three feet of fly line extending past the tip of their eight and a half or nine foot, four or five weight fly rod. Imagine doing this every trip and catching fish. Here we have a fly fisherman who has great skill in stream entomology, stealth, presentation and remarkable fly tying skills and consistently catches fish with only a few feet of fly line and very long fragile leader past the fly rod tip. The technique could be called high sticking or dabbling. Casting skill is almost nonexistent. He is however, in the eyes of his peers, as well as himself, a master fly fisherman. How will this local expert do in the salt? You know the answer.

When instructing an individual, spend a few minutes asking about his or her expectations and needs. As instructors we should try to tailor our time to insure that these needs are met. You may have to better prepare yourself to fulfill the student's expectations. The end result will be an improved learning experience for both of you.

*Pat Damico is a Certified Casting Instructor from St Petersburg Beach, Florida.*

## *Casting Certification Update Regarding Workshops*

*Please read this as it is important!*

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I have been asked to explain my decision to revoke the rule allowing the workshop required by the Board of Governors to be given on a day different from the day of the test.

First, it is necessary to understand that the FFF Casting Instructor Certification Program has always required that a free workshop be given to candidates for Certified Instructor. The intent was to use the test day as an opportunity to lend some instruction to the candidates. The expectation, therefore, was that the workshop would be given the same day as the test itself.

Last month, the Executive Committee decided it would be helpful to let examiners separate the required workshop from the test. But despite the good intentions, that decision has caused considerable confusion.

Among other things, candidates are asking why classes they paid for before the Executive Committee's decision did not apply to the workshop requirement. The answer is twofold.

1. Because the prior policy did not allow separation of the workshop from the day of the test, such workshops could not reasonably be construed as applying to the requirement. The new policy, therefore, cannot reasonably be applied on a retroactive basis.

2. Because the program's ethics policy is explicit in prohibiting payment to the examiner for giving the test and because the workshop requirement is part of the test, any for-fee workshop is automatically disqualified.

Because of the considerable time already spent trying to make these points clear, I have decided it is best to reverse the Executive Committee and to suspend the new policy. The old policy is back in effect.

Does my decision prohibit FFF instructors from teaching for fee or otherwise? Not at all.

Our instructors should continue teaching. And if part of their teaching has included classes aimed at helping candidates prepare for their tests, our instructors are free to keep doing so.

But the candidate, at no point, should be told that such a class fulfills the workshop section of his test requirement, especially if a fee is exchanged. That requirement can only be fulfilled by a properly designated workshop.

How can a candidate determine that a workshop is properly designated?

1. The workshop must be given in the presence of a qualified examiner (a Governor or two Master Instructors).
2. The workshop must be given the same day as the test.
3. The workshop must require no fees other than the standard test fees as published on the FFF web site.

A class that violates any of those three statements does not apply to the workshop requirement.

**Tom Jindra, chair**  
**FFF Casting Instructor Certification Program**

# *How Rod Action Can Affect Your Cast*

*By Bruce Richards*

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All fly rods are not born equal. Most of the fly rods built today cast very well, but differences in flex or 'action' can have a big impact on how they cast. Understanding the differences in these basic rod 'actions' and what you need to do to adjust your casting stroke to make them cast well, can make you more effective with any rod.

Over the years I've heard many times that a beginner should start casting with a soft, slow, forgiving rod. In reality, very soft, flexible rods can be difficult to cast, especially for beginners. These rods are prone to throwing tailing loops because they are easy to overload, causing the rod tip to travel in a downward, arcing path. To prevent this from happening takes a very smooth casting stroke, something that takes most anglers some time to master. A beginner may be doing everything almost right but still get consistently tailing loops that can be very frustrating, all because of the slow action of their rod. Casting a lighter line can help some, but a long, smooth stroke is still necessary.

At the other extreme are stiff, fast action rods. These rods are very tailing loop resistant, but there are other issues that can make them difficult to cast, especially for inexperienced casters. Because these rods don't load or bend much when casting at normal distances the angler doesn't have the feeling of direct contact with the line. This vague feeling can make it difficult to determine the timing of the cast. Since there is little rod load at short to medium distances it is often necessary to cast harder with a stiff rod which often results in wider, inefficient loops if the stroke isn't just right.

Fast rods are excellent for long distance casts. They are made to work well when carrying longer than normal lengths of line in the air; this loads them properly. If an angler doesn't want to cast long, or isn't capable, fast rods can be very frustrating to use. Fortunately there is an easy fix to this problem. Using a line one or even two sizes heavier than the rod is rated for supplies

the load that the rod requires to work well, but at a shorter distance.

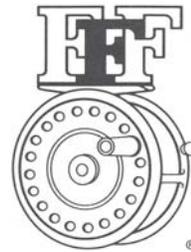
As you have probably guessed, a rod with an action somewhere between very slow and very fast is right for most anglers in most applications. Fortunately, most of the popular rods made today fall into this medium action category. They are stiff enough to cast non-tailing loops when cast reasonably well at normal fishing distances. They are soft enough to load well at the same distances, while giving the angler good feel of the line. While maybe not the ultimate short distance spring creek rod, or long distance cannon, medium action rods handle most day to day fishing casts with ease, without major casting stroke adjustments.

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*This article by Bruce Richards is reprinted from Fly Fish America where it was originally published. It is also included in the Master Instructor Certification Test Study Guide. Look for more of Bruce's articles.*

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# The Belgian Cast

*By Rick Whorwood*

The Belgian cast is also known as the horse shoe cast, oval cast, constant tension cast, swing around cast, side arm back cast, circle cast (not to be confused with a spey cast by the same name) elliptical cast and the Belgian wind cast

It was late December and winter had arrived in Southern Ontario. I was desperately trying to squeeze in one more day of steelheading. While working my Skagit system down a run I somehow got my reel wet. As I tried to strip out a bit more line, I realized the reel had frozen solid. Having had this happen before it gave me only a few options, pack it in for the day, or go back to my truck and set the reel on the dash board turn the defrost on full, and thaw the reel, then go back fishing. Who was I kidding --- frost bitten hands, numb toes and a frozen reel. It was over for another season.

When my steelhead equipment was stowed away, my thoughts turned to salt-water fishing. A trip had been planned for late February. This trip was to concentrate on permit and bonefish. I've been very fortunate to have Dr. Gordon Hill, FFF BOG, as my saltwater mentor. Gordy and I play with numerous different fly patterns. We'll work out new and different designs or tweak well known patterns. My task is to tie these counterfeits and Gordy is the field tester. During one of our phone conversations we got on the subject of the best cast to throw a permit fly. Gordy assured me that his experience has lead him to believe that the Belgian type casts are by far the cast of choice. Interestingly during our early conversations Gordy was kind enough to share some of the history and his experience with the cast. I asked Gordy to please e-mail me the information we had just discussed. With his permission here are the contents of his e-mail:

*As I look at it, the Belgian cast, belongs in the category of elliptical casts, which feature a distinct change in rod planes between the back cast and the forward cast. It embodies the principle of continuous tension. The back cast is made with a horizontal rod plane, which is low and climbing at its conclusion. There is no defined stop of the rod*

*tip, which continues in an elliptical or orbital path to a forward stroke, using an off-vertical or vertical rod plane with a straight line rod tip path for delivery. Done correctly with perfect timing, it allows for the use of a tight loop despite the weighted fly which translates to better distance with minimal effort, greater accuracy, and a straight leader/line layout needed for permit fishing.*

*Permit will often pick up the fly and eject it immediately. No hook-up results unless the angler can come tight instantly. The straight layout with no slack is mandatory for this.*

*Credit for popularizing this class of casts in Europe has been given to Hans Gebetsroither of Austria. Hans was head keeper on the Traun River during the 1930's. It has been labeled the European continuous tension cast in many circles.*

*It became known as the Belgian cast when it (or variation of it) was used by a Belgian distance competition caster named Albert Godart to win an international event in Europe during the late 1930's.*

*My Grandfather (Clifford Hewetson) was present at that event. Years ago, he described the actual winning cast as what one might call a, Reverse Belgian cast since he claimed that the back cast was made with the rod in the vertical plane, while the forward cast was made with a horizontal rod plane and a climbing rod tip. He described Albert as a very heavily muscled stocky man with tremendous arm strength----a body habitus sometimes associated with champion soft ball pitchers.*

*Confusion sometimes exists as casters discuss the uses of this cast. On the salt-water flats, I find it most useful for permit fishing, which requires accuracy, a straight leader layout, and the ability to handle bulky weighted crab flies on windy days. It is one of my most valuable options.*

*I use the Belgian wind cast as one way to solve the problem of casting with a strong wind from my casting side. Here I exaggerate the change of rod*

planes by having the rod tip pass over my opposite shoulder or directly overhead, after swinging around with continuous tension from a more horizontal back cast

I use the Belgian cast when I need distance casting a heavy weighted fly. I hesitate as the back cast loop straightens. This can be considered a pause even though my hand keeps moving as I change rod planes. With careful timing, as the back cast loop comes completely straight, I come forward with a tight loop forward cast. That is a modification of the Belgian cast which works for me because it yields good distance with a tight loop, despite the weighted fly.

Gordy Hill, Fla. Keys

After receiving Gordy's e-mail I contacted Al Crise, FFF-Master Casting Instructor & FFF-SOC VP of Education. I asked Al if he would be so kind as to ask his certified casting instructors study group their thoughts and opinions on the Belgian Cast. The information I received was outstanding. Thanks to all who participated. Al was kind enough to summarize this information. This is what he wrote:

*The constant tension means that you do not have a back-cast 'stop' to put the fly and rod leg in collision. This alone is a great help with saltwater casting, where you have heavy or large flies.*

Al goes on to list some other situations that you might use the Belgian cast:

- Bass flies that add increased drag
- When casting a "brace of flies" (two or more) tangle free
- When making casts that could be bothered by wind, from the casting arm side.
- When the wind is strong from behind you.
- Using it as a low impact cast.
- Placing the fly under a low obstruction.
- Raising sinking lines that are near the surface.
- Water loading the rod on the pick up.
- Change of direction cast up to 90 degrees.
- Faster presentation for change of direction

- When using split-shot reduces the tangle of the bolo action

Author's Note: Bolo is a South America catching tool, two dissimilar weights on a cord; this causes an entanglement of small game

- When fishing from a drift-boat ---it can help keep the line fly out of the boat
- Added accuracy in placing the fly. Reduced back-cast area is needed due to the 'circle' not the straight back-cast.
- Also you can add a haul to increase line speed on both the pick-up and presentation cast.

Al Crise, Texas

I believe my first introduction to a Belgian type cast was with Barry Beck some 25 years ago. Barry had shown me a modified type Belgian cast that he used for fishing dry flies. This circular type cast, where the line is under the rod tip on the back cast and over the rod tip on the forward cast, is a great way to present a dry fly. For many years after, I've used this type of cast not only to present a dry, but also nymph fishing pocket water. Using a big open loop cast, it is relatively easy to present the weighted leader and fly in one continuous movement. Although not a true Belgian cast, it is a continuous load type cast. Lately I've been using the Belgian style of casting to present big bait fish type flies for musky. Using 8 to 10 weight rods and 200-400 full sink lines, if your timing is right and you add a haul in the back-cast and forward-cast you will get good line speed and achieve the distance required.

At the beginning of this article I mentioned the Skagit System as the method I employ when steelheading. The Skagit cast allows you to cast heavy tips and large heavily weighted flies (often needed to entice a strike in cold water). The first time I saw the Skagit cast was on the North Lewis River in Washington State. Marlow Bumpus was giving us this demonstration, watching Marlow set the cast up I realized that its foundation was in the Belgian continuous tension cast. Once he made the sweep up-stream for the double spey, he made a stop.

(Continued on page 19)

# *Where Do the Line Lengths and Distances Come from in our Certified Casting Instructor Programs?*

*by Dan McCrimmon*

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What is the justification for the distances and line lengths we use for testing? The casting distances have evolved over many years of trial and error by some of the world's leading casting instructors. The single hand program began in 1993 and was founded on the combined experience of Mel Krieger, Gary Borger, Leon Chandler, Chico Fernandez, Jim Green, Lefty Kreh, Al Kyte, Steve Rajeff, Bruce Richards, Barbara and Allan Rohrer, Doug Swisher, Lou Tabory, Dave Whitlock, and Joan Wulff, along with input from many other instructors.

The originators of the certified instructor program wanted to set standards that reflected the opinions of leading instructors, who over their many years of experience had observed that, in the words of Jim Green, there is little correlation between the distance cast and teaching skill. As a result, the founders of the program decided on distance casts and line lengths used for demonstrations that were not easily handled by the vast majority of casters; however, these casts could be done with authority by excellent casters. They then added the teaching skills requirements. The result was a program where good instructional skills were combined with good casting skills.

The Two-handed program evolved more recently. The two-handed committee developed a program based on their own observations of what would constitute good casting skills within a set of casting distances and line lengths. Their objective was the same as that of the FFF casting program originators. Some of the founders of the program were Al Buhr, Mel Krieger, Bill Gammel, Denise Maxwell, Simon Gawesworth, Tim Rajeff, and many outside advisors including Dana Sturn and Steve Choate.

The committee mandated casting distances and line length for two-handed casts based on what excellent casters could handle with authority. The ability to cast using the distances prescribed by the committee demonstrates excellent casting skills.

Two-handed casting instructors must cleanly cast the prescribed distances, *and* are be able to instruct others on the how and why of a wide variety of dif-

ferent casts. This is key to the program. Once again, it was recognized that there was not a strong correlation between distance cast and instructional skills.

Here are some comments from Bruce Richards and Al Buhr on this subject.

***From Al Buhr, Master Certified Casting Instructor, Two-handed Casting Instructor Program Examiner, Chair Two-handed Casting Instructor Committee and Board of Governor.***

*The FFF website lists the THCI study guide, including the THCI performance exam. The THCI performance exam requires the candidate to demonstrate casting proficiency, teaching skills and fault analysis. The tasks are clear and specific; no assumptions should be made.*

*The THCI test includes performance tasks that require a specific distance. For efficiency during of testing, three lengths are used: 70, 80 and 100 feet. The majority of the tasks are at 80 feet (from foot to target), with no shooting of line allowed. This length of line is ample to show all the elements of a cast: good line control, proper alignment and placement, smooth power application, and good loop formation.*

*As in all FFF CICIP testing, each cast is analyzed as to all the elements of the cast and not solely to the single task. An instructor needs to demonstrate casting skill, and equally important is knowledge of casting mechanics, the proficiency in teaching and fault analysis.*

*The FFF CICIP is very clear that the focus and expectations of certification exams are for instructor certification. A good instructor will know why and how a cast is formed as well as properly demonstrate it. This is very important, not all good casters are good instructors. Good instructors demonstrate skills well beyond the execution of a cast.*

*(continued on page 10)*

*From Bruce Richards Founding member FFF Casting Instructor Certification Program, Casting Board of Governor Executive, and line designer for Scientific Angler (3M)*

### **Certified Casting Instructor Program**

*The FFF CICP program started in 1992. Mel Krieger recruited a group of recognized casting and instructing experts to formulate a program to test instructors casting and teaching abilities and to certify those who passed as FFF casting instructors. The original group included: Mel Krieger, Gary Berger, Leon Chandler, Chico Fernandez, Jim Green, Lefty Kreh, Al Kyte, Steve Rajeff, Bruce Richards, Barbara and Allan Rohrer, Doug Swisher, Lou Tabory, Dave Whitlock, and Joan Wulff.*

*This group spent about a year devising a test to determine a candidates casting and teaching abilities, with teaching abilities being foremost. There was no desire to include tasks that were not pertinent to a candidates teaching ability. The performance tasks chosen cover the majority of casts that beginning and intermediate casting students want to learn, accuracy, line control, distance, etc., and also require mastery of common casting flaws. Candidates must also demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate their understanding of these casting skills to someone who is trying to learn.*

*The distance chosen for the CI distance cast is not extreme, but is long enough to require good technique to achieve. We require good double hauling technique in an early task, and most casters also double haul for the distance cast. Most candidates who pass the test are capable of casting farther, but we felt that anyone reaching the 75 ft. distance with good technique had enough skill to teach beginners and intermediates to cast farther. Merely reaching 75 ft. does not insure passing this task. The distance must be reached, and the loops and hauls must be good, there is little tolerance for reaching the distance with bad form.*

*Many very good casters and instructors do not concentrate on casting long distances. At the time the test was developed the majority of anglers fished for trout with 4-,5- or 6- wt. rods and lines, and that is still the case. Most casting students*

*have little interest in becoming long distance casters, being able to cast 50-60 ft. with good control satisfies nearly all. We felt that making the long distance cast much longer than 75 ft. would prevent some very good instructors from being certified and would be counterproductive to our program. These casters must be very proficient in every aspect of the test, we did not see how requiring them to cast 80-85-90 ft. would do anything to insure that they were better instructors. And if we chose 80 ft., why not 85 ft.?*

*We continually review our tests to insure that they remain valid and at this time see no need to increase the distance requirement. Certainly there are more people concentrating on distance casting today and some of the distances achieved are remarkable. But these people are not coming to CIs to learn how to cast farther.*

### **Master Certified Casting Instructor Program**

*Our Masters test requires an 85 ft. distance cast, again with very good technique. And again, most of these casters are very capable of casting farther. Our rationale for this distance requirement is the same as for the CI test, but at a higher level. These instructors do need to be able to help intermediate and even advanced casters who want to cast farther. But once someone becomes proficient at distances beyond 85 ft., we find they become the instructors and no longer look to instructors for help.*

*We firmly believe that our tests, as they are, effectively insure that people who pass are good casters and instructors. We will continue to review the tests often and I am sure that they will be changed as appropriate to insure that our instructors have the skills their students desire. We did not want the performance tasks to be difficult beyond what is reasonable for an instructor at each level. That would be counterproductive, as it would exclude some very good instructors and open the possibility of having the program be viewed as an elite casting club instead of as a group of competent instructors.*

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Dan McCrimmon is a CBOG and Chair of the International Committee

## *From The Editors*

*We hope you enjoy this issue of The Loop. Although Spring is almost over, in some places winter still hasn't said goodbye. Personally I'm (Denise) never going anywhere again, at any time of year, without my polar fleece. A blizzard at the end of May! Yikes! A year of weird weather no matter where you live.*

*Now for some great news! In case you haven't read the current issue of The Flyfisher, the Casting Program has been busy this spring - very busy! We have attended certification events in Ireland, the UK, Denmark and now Italy for certification testing at all levels - CI, MCI and THCI. We are excited about becoming an expanded International organization.*

*We have such a good program with the right standards and the right people and experience that it is natural to share this with other countries. We go on (and on) about our program because it keeps getting better. It would not exist without the efforts of each of you. We are all working hard to make the casting program even better than we imagined.*

*We are reprinting some articles in The Loop, particularly articles that are included in the print copy of the Master Study Guide. There are some articles that are on the suggested reading list which are not readily available and in some cases are nearly impossible to find. We plan to make these articles available on the web site in the next few months.*

*The web site has been slow to progress but the Workshop Materials are posted and you can download them. Just follow the links. The Powerpoint presentations will follow.*

*Once again the Conclave is approaching very fast. This year it is in Livingston, MT again. Please plan on coming. Yes, the price of gas is very high (Denise's home has some of the highest gas prices in North America). But where else can you get such a good casting experience, go fishing and meet old friends, as well as, make new ones?*

*We all know that feeling of leaving the Conclave - -excited about what we have learned and done and looking forward to our next Conclave.*

*Please keep those articles coming. How about sending us a short articles about your **most memorable casting or teaching event?** The one that sticks in your mind, whether funny or perfect? Think about it. We all have one. How about reviewing a new book or a favorite book or DVD? Maybe you you have a stimulating question to ask the Board of Governors or would like to see a reprint of a favorite article from a past The Loop. Contact your editors.*

*Have a great summer. We will see you at the Conclave!*

*Denise & Liz*

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**You can have a link** from your FFF website listing to your own e-mail address.

We welcome your submissions via e-mail.

Please attach a short (1-3 sentences) instructor biographical statement, including your location and Certification level.

Also be aware that the back issues of the Loop are posted on the Program's web site. Any illustrations should be in JPEG format.

*The Loop* reserves the right to decline any submission for any reason, and to edit any submission.

Submissions may be to the editors or the National Office:

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# ***Committee Action: Initiating The Continuing Education Program***

*by David Diaz*

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The Committee on Continuing Education will select two proposals for new Continuing Education events each year for up to \$500 support from the FFF. All active certified casting instructors are eligible and welcome to submit a proposal.

Two limitations are emphasized: For events to qualify for FFF funding, the program content shall be restricted to *improving teaching quality* not instructors' casting technique, and participation shall be restricted to FFF certified casting instructors.

## **Guidelines for Application**

Written proposals should be addressed to the Chairman, Tony Vitale.

Please submit the application in electronic format, *e.g.* MS Word.

If you cancel your workshop for any reason after the Committee selects it for support, then all FFF funds received must be returned, regardless of the expenses you have incurred.

## **Application for Support**

Please provide the following information about the Continuing Education Program for which you are requesting support.

1. Instructors' names and contact information.
2. Where the event take place and when.
3. The number of students are you planning to serve
4. Provide a detailed cost estimate of the event, including the amounts needed for
  - Room rental
  - Supply cost for copying, projectors, furniture rental, janitorial services
  - Travel expenses for instructors
  - Catering cost
  - Other significant costs

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*Contact Tony Vitale with your application for support at: [t.vitale@verizon.net](mailto:t.vitale@verizon.net)*

# *Breaking Old Habits – Left Handed Casting and Other Interventions*

*By Tim Warriner*

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My right arm had been casting for almost thirty years. It could cast from the break of dawn to the trout's final rise after sundown. I did not need to think about what my arm and wrist should do. It just happened. The act of casting a fly rod had become ingrained—etched into my muscle memory.

After deciding that perhaps the most pleasurable part of the sport of fly fishing was teaching others, I decided to pursue Casting Instructor Certification. In furtherance of this goal, I sought help from someone with experience, a Master Instructor. The lesson was humbling. Although the instructor was encouraging, my goal of attaining certification seemed far off. I felt as though there was little I was doing that correct and worthy of emulation by the student of fly casting. I knew that to improve my casting I had to break away from my ingrained habits—my side arm, almost Belgian-style, my wrist flip that caused the back loop to twist, and the turbo charged backcast that tailed seven-out-of-ten times.

How nice it would be, I thought, to start with a clean slate. To begin the sport with proper coaching from someone who understood the mechanics of casting, who could help mold my casting arm into something more efficient, more powerful. That was not how I began. In the late 1970s I read *Curtis Creek Manifesto*—an excellent and humorous introduction to the sport. I learned by watching others cast, and by absorbing the lore and advice of the fishing guide. If only I could go back in time.

I then had a moment of inspiration. I could start over. I could teach someone very close to me how to cast. That *person* was my left arm—my non-dominant side. From the smallest brook trout to the giant tarpon, the left side was there, helping, playing a support role. It was now the time for lefty to step up and learn. What I discovered was that learning to cast left-handed was excellent preparation for the Casting Instructor certification exam in that it helped

me to move beyond the ingrained habits of my dominant side.

I am sure that many of you have encountered students like me, the experienced angler whose ingrained habits interfered with the learning process. This article discusses the methods, or interventions, I used to free myself from habit and improve my skills. In addition to non-dominant casting, I will also touch upon my use of practice rods and journaling. These methods were of tremendous help to me and they may work for many of your students.

My effort turned out to be worthwhile. Not only did I learn to make nice loops from my left side, but my right benefited as well. All of the instruction and problem solving produced a shift in my whole outlook. I had started thinking about the motions of casting instead of doing what was ingrained.

My left-handed practice produced another effect as well: I could now feel the casting motion and the muscles that were required to produce a good loop. All that practice with my left had somehow thawed out the feeling and sensation of my right side, frozen long ago. No longer would I pick up a rod without thinking about the basic motions, angles, and positions needed to produce an effective cast, and without actually feeling and sensing what was going on.

## Left-Handed Casting

If you have never attempted to cast with your non-dominant arm, I urge you to do so. It is an awkward, uncomfortable feeling. The arm has no idea what to do. The hand does not know how to grip the rod. The wrist is clueless. After a series of casts, the arm tires and the muscles grow sore. It is wonderful-----a blank slate.

*(continued on page 14)*

### *Breaking Old Habits (continued from page 13)*

I treated my left arm as if it was the beginner. I started with the basic casting motions. Instead of the side armed Belgian-style I had cultivated, I developed a more vertically positioned cast. I taught myself to pull through the cast, leading with the elbow. I developed a subtle wrist movement to give the loop a nice pointed shape. For two-months, I cast only from my left.

In my own understanding of things I tend to analogize to other outdoor sports. I had been a member of a rowing club for many years and once attended a sculling camp. The instructor, an accomplished athlete and coach, demonstrated how both hands should work in unison. In front of a group of rowers, he asked me if I was right handed. He then had me attempt to write my name on a chalkboard using my left hand. My attempt resembled the scrawl of a young child. "Now hold a pen in your right hand as well. Write your name with both hands at the same time." I was amazed to see how well my left hand could form the letters of my name when my right hand was also engaged in the act of writing. The writing of my left was the mirror image of my right. There was, I imagined, some hidden link between the brain's hemispheres. The right hand (left hemisphere) was assisting the left. The left hand felt relaxed, as if it were infused with the confidence of the right.

I wondered if the same technique could be applied to casting. I strung up two comparable rods at the park. I held one rod in each hand and started casting with about 30 feet of line out. The effect was remarkable. My right, through some mysterious process, guided my left hand. Interestingly, some of the sensations of my left hand were felt in my right. I was more aware, with my right hand, of the position of the rod, the strength of my grip, and the subtle action of my wrist. This strange synchronicity was just what I was looking for. It was another experience to help my right side break away from ingrained habits. I recall two joggers that ran by as I cast in unison, one rod in each hand like an old west gun fighter. I expected a laugh or some comment, but they looked my way and said nothing, perhaps concluding that this was normal behavior for a fly caster.

I am not the first fly caster to discover the utility of casting with the non-dominant arm. Dana Sturn, in his *Speypages, 12 Months to Spey Casting Mas-*

*tery*, urges the student to devote significant time to casting with the non-dominant side. He writes that when using "your dominant side you do everything unconsciously, and this can actually cost you because you lose the awareness of what you're doing right...AND what you are or might be doing wrong." My independent experience would tend to confirm the benefits of Sturn's approach and of utilizing non-dominant side casting as an intervention to promote the development of casting skills.

Along these same lines, Jason Borger, in *Nature of Fly Casting*, discusses the benefits of pantomiming casting motions with both arms in unison. He calls the technique "position matching," noting that "you get practice following along with the line hand, as well as re-enforcing muscle memory in both arms; one arm helps the other." My experience actually casting two rods in unison, an extension of the "position matching" technique, supports Borger's approach.

While my left hand is nowhere near as skilled as my right, the experience of learning to cast left-handed was an effective intervention to help break away from ingrained casting patterns. I have continued to practice with my left hand and am now learning to cast a double-handed rod from my left side.

### Practice Rods

In addition to my efforts at non-dominant side casting, I found that using an indoor practice rod was an excellent way to experiment with the casting stroke, thereby breaking away from ingrained patterns, and to attain beneficial muscle memory.

During my preparation for the certification exam, the Royal Wulff Fly-O, a miniature fly rod with yarn "line," became a fixture in our living room. It takes quite a bit of skill and wrist strength to make long casts with the rod. I found that improvement in my ability to cast the Fly-O directly translated to improved casting on the stream or practice field. The same arm, hand and wrist movements used to cast the Fly-O are used to cast a 9-foot rod. Similar muscle groups, especially forearm and wrist muscles, are also used. Use of the rod helped me to develop my ability to pull through the forward cast, leading with my elbow, and to control my wrist movement. I have no

*Continued on page 15*

doubt that the muscle memory I created with my Fly-O practice directly contributed to my success in the CCI exam.

In addition, the Fly-O allowed me to maintain regular practice and contact with fly casting even during bad weather or periods where work encroached upon my practice time. Using the Fly-O, I was able to practice while my wife and I watched our favorite television shows. Both my wife and I can attest that the Fly-O is an effective means of exercising overweight housecats.

I highly recommend the Fly-O as a practice tool and believe it could be of great use to beginner casters. Tim Raejeff's Echo 2 company now produces an indoor practice rod, the MPR Micro Practice Rod. I have recently purchased one and enjoy using it as well. It has a much slower action than the Fly-O and it allows you to practice roll casts and switch casts.

#### Journaling

I found keeping a journal of my casting practice helped me to overcome ingrained casting patterns.

The development of any skill involves a series of breakthrough moments—those times when frustration evaporates and it all seems to make sense. Keeping a journal allowed me to document these important moments for easy reference later on. The journal helped me to focus my thinking about the motions required for good fly casting, and enabled me to shift from being an unconscious caster relying upon ingrained habits, to a caster who was consciously aware of the casting motions needed to produce tight loops and powerful casts.

#### Conclusion

My preparation for the casting instructor's exam was challenging due to ingrained habits developed from years of fishing. Casting with my non-dominant side, using a practice rod, and keeping a journal of my progress were successful interventions that helped me to move beyond those ingrained movements. Based upon my experience, I would bet that these interventions would work well for other students attempting to free themselves of old casting habits.

---

Tim Warriner is a Certified Casting Instructor living in Sacramento, California. His short story "A Pilgrimage of Sorts" was published in the *Yale Anglers' Journal* where it won a prose award. Mr. Warriner is currently at work on a piece about the *Hexagenia* mayfly to be published in *Fly Tyer* magazine. Tim welcomes your comments about this article and offers his support to anyone pursuing Casting Instructor certification. His email address is: [tew@warrinerlaw.com](mailto:tew@warrinerlaw.com).

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## **CONGRATULATIONS**

### *New Master Instructors*

Randy (Lee) Davison - Rigby ID  
Martin Kjeldgaard - Denmark  
Henrik Haupt - Lejre Denmark  
Philip Maher - Clonmel, Ireland  
Clive Mitchelhill - Cumbria, England  
Jim Penrod - Pt St Joe, FL  
William Van der Vorst - Netherlands

### *New THCI Instructors*

Peter Humphreys - Grand Rapids, MI  
Bill Lowe - Fair Oaks, CA  
Steven Mear - Rogaland, Norway  
Bob Middo - Redondo Bch, CA  
Hideki Ozawa - Aichi-Ken, Japan  
Tim Rajeff - Vancouver, WA (BOG)  
Aaron Reimer - Carnation, WA

# *Casting a Mended Line*

## *(for Double-Handed Casting)*

*by John Lynde*

---

Sometimes it is an advantage to be able to cast a 'mended' line on to the water. This maneuver will not only save having to make the first 'mend,' but is also extremely valuable when a major part of the line needs to be 'mended' (Fig. 84), or when a 'mend' has to be placed in the line near the fly (Figs. 85 & 86).

With the vertical overhead cast it is quite easy to cast a 'mended' line. If you want to cast a 'mend' to the right, during the forward cast wave your rod to the right and return it to its original plane. To cast a 'mend' to the left, wave your rod to the left and return to center. An early wave and return will place a 'mend' close to the fly (Fig. 83-b), and a late wave and return will place it close to the rod (Fig. 83-c). To cast a big 'mend' (Fig. 83-a), an early wave and a late return will be required. At first you may find it difficult to obtain anything except a 'mend' near the rod; however, as your wave timing speeds up you will be able to adjust your 'mends' very accurately in the air.

When you want to drift your fly in the edge of a fast current, on the other side of a wide band of slow water (Fig.84), cast a line with a big downstream 'mend' to (1), allow the fly to drift to (2) and 'mend' downstream, then fish through (3).

To negotiate a fast riffle between two bodies of slow water (Fig. 85), cast to (1) with an upstream 'mend' close to the fly, 'mend' upstream at (2), fish through (3) and make a short downstream 'mend' at (4), throwing some extra line on the water as you do so.

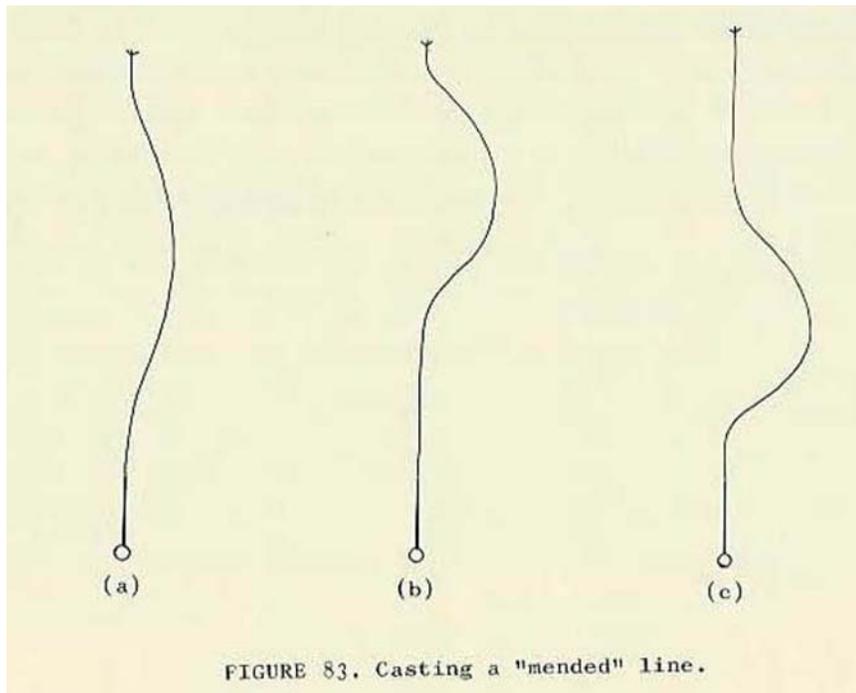
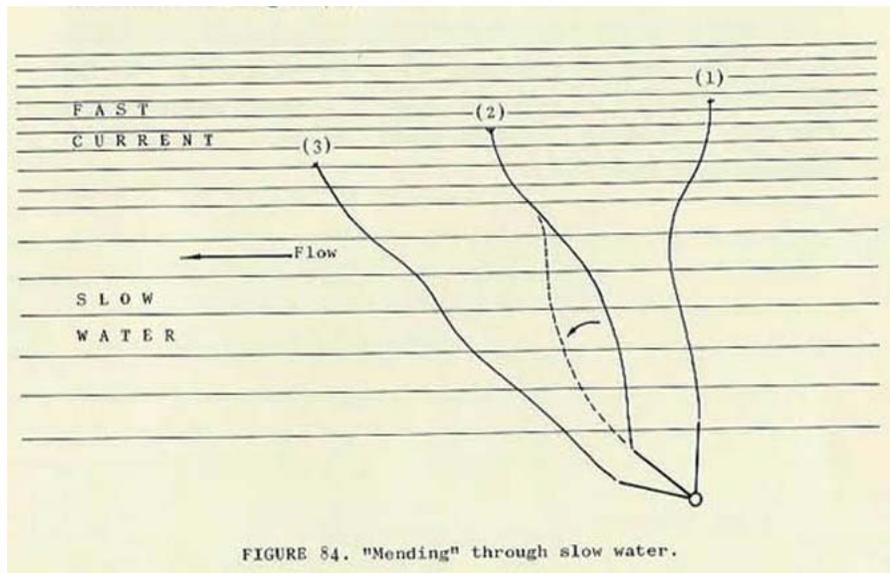
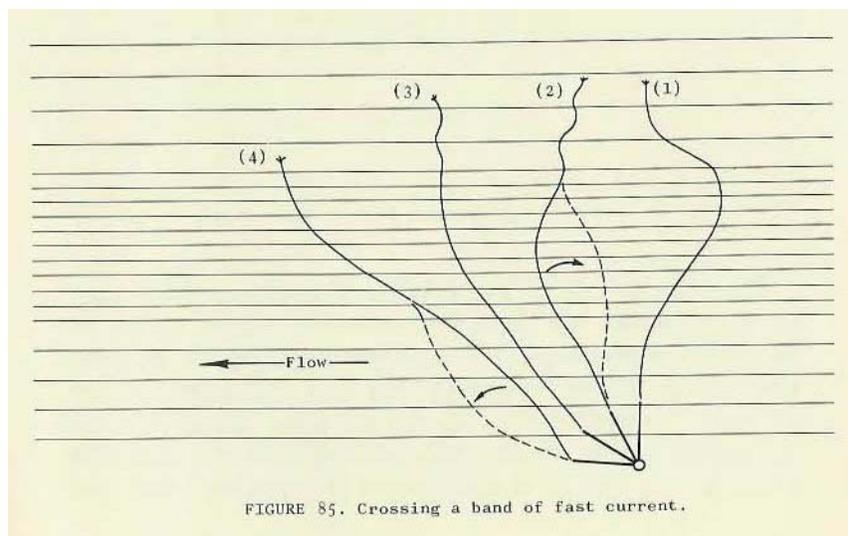


FIGURE 83. Casting a "mended" line.

*Figure 83. Casting a 'mended' line*



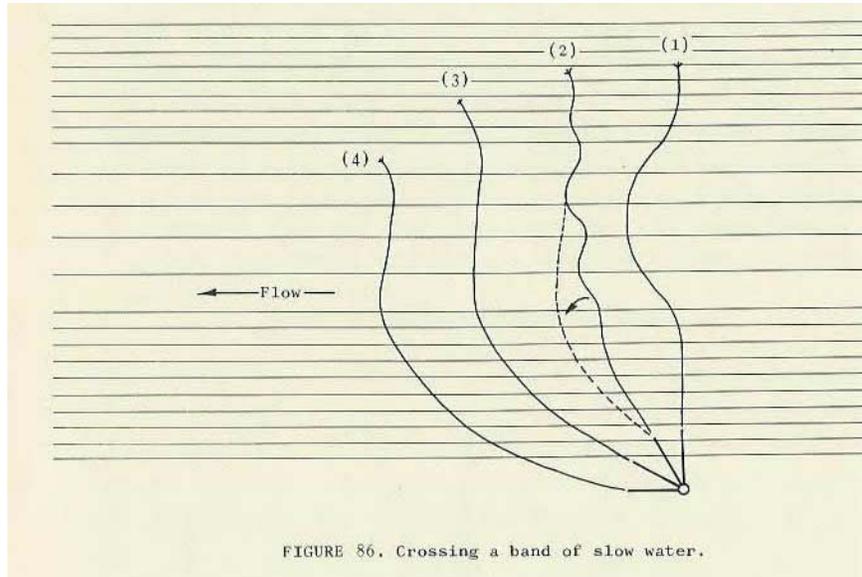
*Figure 84. Mending through slow water*



*Figure 85. Crossing a band of fast current*

A band of slow water between two fast currents, such as an eddy behind a group of rocks (Fig.86) can be fished by casting to (1) with a downstream 'mend' near the fly, 'mending' downstream at (2), and fishing through (3) and (4).

*Continued on page 18*



*Figure 85. Crossing a band of slow water*

There is no end to the possible situations which may be encountered, but these few examples should suffice to explain the techniques of overcoming drag in greased line fishing. Avoid 'mending' the line unnecessarily; let all you 'mends' serve a useful purpose. when you are fishing let the fly swing right around until it is directly downstream, but as it approaches this position see that the rod tip is held up, so that if a fish takes at this critical moment, as is likely to happen, you will be able to give line. Then as you begin to retrieve line in preparation for your next cast, pull in the first few feet slowly and deliberately, because a fish which has followed your fly around will probably seize it as it starts to move upstream.

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*Editor's Note: This segment was taken from the book by John Lynde called 'Thirty-four Ways to Cast a Fly', published in 1969. Look for more from this book. I find that it is a great source of information with perhaps **dated language** but you must remember that Mr. Lynde was British and this book was published almost forty years ago.*

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### **The Belgian Cast (continued from page 8)**

He then proceeded into a continuous tension cast; the rod didn't come to a complete stop until the conclusion of the forward cast.

There is more information on the Skagit system on my web site [www.fycastingschool.com](http://www.fycastingschool.com).

The Belgian Cast is an extremely import cast, well worth learning. Time to put another stainless hook in the vice, drop in a Jimmy Buffett CD and day-dream about Belgian casting to permit.

Note: when dealing with a sinking line it's a good idea to roll the line to the surface before making the presentation cast.

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*Rick Whorwood is a Master Instructor and Two handed instructor.*

# Coming Events for 2007

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Valsesia, ITALY                      May 31 - June 3, 2007                      CI, MCI & THCI  
Local Contact for more information - Raffaele Mascaro

Pine Mtn, GA                      Jun 7 - 9, 2007                      CI, MCI  
Southeast Council Conclave David Diaz  
For Additional Information - Callaway Gradens

Roscommon, MI                      Jun 15 - 17, 2007                      CI, MCI  
Great Lakes Council Flyfishing School & Conclave  
John Breslin / John VanDalen  
For Additional Information - MacMullen Conference Center

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Livingston, MT                      July 30 - Aug 4, 2007                      CI, MCI & THCI  
FFF Fly Fishing Show & Conclave - Rick Williams (THCI)  
MUST REGISTER FOR CONCLAVE TO SIGN UP

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Redding, CA                      Sept 15 - 16, 2007                      CI Prep class  
Guy Manning

Mtn Home, AR                      Oct 6, 2007                      CI, MCI  
Southern Council Conclave - Chuck Easterling

Redding, CA                      Oct 19, 2007                      CI  
NCC FFF Festival of Fly Fishing  
Guy Manning

Richland Center, WI                      Oct 19 - 21, 2007                      CI, MCI  
John Breslin

Ascension Bay Bonefish Club, Mexico                      CI Workshops                      December 3 & 10, 2007  
Dusty Sprague & Dan Wright (CBOGs)                      MCI Workshops                      December 4-5 & 11-12, 2007  
Contact them at: [dsprague01@comcast.net](mailto:dsprague01@comcast.net) or [dan@flycastingacademy.com](mailto:dan@flycastingacademy.com)