Recovery Part 1

**Updates:**

**I plan on being there this week as long as its a good day. With an incision that starts at the tip of my tailbone and reaches up to the middle of my shoulder blades I'd say it's safe to assume that I have the longest butt crack in the chapter now and I'm still sore, weak and wobbly and can't spend much time on my feet or walk very far yet so at almost 6 weeks post op I've still got quite a ways to go. Good thing I don't have to wipe that much as I'd soon go broke on TP and have a helluva lot less to spend on the important things like fly tying materials, hooks and other such necessities.**

**I had asked them to put in a zipper for future access but even with medical technology being what it is today they haven't quite reached that point yet, and darn, I had hoped to be the first with such a feature as I'd hate like hell to need to have such an incision opened up again so hope is all is good and I'll just have to wait for things to get better.**

**I doubt I could even cast more than a few times if I could get to the water somewhere so I'm still dreaming about the day to come and just now learning to tune in the new radio stations I get on my two new titanium rods held in place with eighteen titanium screws and the connecting hardware along my lower spine and pelvis.**

**I also leaned a few new things since my surgery and yes evidently you can teach an old dog new tricks as I've learned two things one important and one not so, but still good to know just in case. I'll explain.**

**First, I thought my arms ended up shorter as I found I couldn't reach the nether areas of my posterior region so they taught me how to use a pair of salad tongs to reach such spots and wow I picked it up quick but I shore did go thru a lot of paper in the process. Now the second part of that learning process has kicked in and hopefully I'm a quick learner and keep the bathroom tongs in the bathroom and the kitchen tongs in the kitchen and all will be well.**

**In case you come over for dinner and a salad is being served just remember if the tongs have a rubber coating on the ends it may be a good idea to skip the salad and go straight for the main course.**

**Second, I grabbed a Coke out the fridge the other day and used my butt to shove the door closed and made my way to the living room to stare at the tv some more and upon sitting down felt a pinch and heard quite the crackle and looked back to find half the refrigerator magnets I've collected from the places I've fished around the country stuck to my butt, not a problem at home but could get me arrested for shoplifting in a store some where if I'm not careful. Well just kidding about that, thought it sounded like a good story so I put it in. The first part about the tongs is true as I'd never tell a lie, well unless it involved fishing.**

**So hope is when I'm further down the road and you're out on a trout stream someday and I'm off in the distance I won't look like a penguin with a short leg wobbling down the bank. Having a short leg was quite an advantage at times on streams where you don't wade much as long as long as you were fishing in the right direction cause at times when I wasn't I had a hard time remembering which one was the short one and almost fell in many times. Got accused of getting too close to the drivin' liquor a few times too because of this and now I don't know what my excuse will be. It's like those mountain born cows you see on the steep slopes grazing along, some are this a ways cows and some are that a ways cows , depends on which side has the shorter or longer legs and the direction they are traveling along the mountain side as they graze along.**

**I'm also hoping now with my pelvis aligned closer to the correct position with my legs and spine I'll no longer limp quite as bad as for several years now I've spent a lot of time looking over my shoulder as I hiked along fishing looking out for any predators that may have taken up my trail. After seeing those shows on National Geographic about how the bears, wolves and mountain lions cull the old, crippled and sick members from the herd I had begun to think I fit into that category and felt as though I was being followed whenever I was out in the great outdoors although many times it was just John, Roger or Tim.**

**And after seeing a show on tv about the Native Americans talking about shape - shifting creatures or spirits in the mountains you never can tell what you're seeing out there so even when it was just John, Roger or Tim, sometimes I couldn't tell for sure so if they were a little glassy eyed ( been too close to the drivin' liquor ) or drooling I'd quickly loose them in the brush, circle around and start fishing out of sight and later find them hunting for me thinking I was lost or had been culled from the herd and on the verge of calling in the National Guard or the Girl Scouts or whoever was available or closer to the area to start an all out search for my remains so at least they'd have something to tell Judy when they arrived back at my house that night, the usual meeting spot for such trips with hopes she hadn't seen it on the news before they got there.**

**So far I've survived and got in some good fishing while they searched for me all afternoon and all the time I was just around the bend hiding behind a rock or mountain laurel bush changing flies or puffing on a cigar.**

**Well, turns out I've learned something else in this ordeal,  tv can drive you crazy if you watch too much of the wrong stuff and I'm getting close so I'm gonna tune out more than usual in the coming weeks and spend some of that time I can't fish looking at the pictures I took of all the bears, mountain lions, wolves, chipmunks and other such dangerous creatures of the mountains I've seen as I sat there waiting for the search party to come along.**

**So far neither the search party or the predators have caught up to me and even though I'm slower than I've ever been I have no plans to feel the breath of either on the back of my neck so I guess I'll be alright.**

**Always be aware of your surroundings and who or what is behind you, always have the right answer or excuse, never get too far from the drivin liquor or too close or you'll never live it down and then I almost forgot there's Bigfoot. But then again Bigfoot doesn't eat Brook Trout or Brook Trout fishermen, takes too many of the first mentioned to make a sandwich or so I'd hope. The latter, me, is too tough, full of scar tissue and metal so I'm not very chewy and doubt I'd taste very good either with that metallic taste so I guess that's why I'm still around.**

**So what was that tree shake and rock throwing incident on the Conway all about?  Probably just a chipmunk, or the drivin' liquor or both.**

**As I always say look a the bright side of things no matter how tough the situation is as mine's been tough for several years now I can't see any other way to handle it. I can always find a reason to laugh at myself or a situation and that's what got me this far and I still got a ways to go so I'd say it works.**

**So I guess the main message here is to go fish whenever you can 'cause you never know when life will catch up to you and put you on your ass in front of the tv and unable to get out and you'll have too much time to ponder things that  you can't do anything about at that moment so concentrate on the good times and those memories and make those future plans and you'll get though the rough stuff.**

**A little taste of drivin' liquor in your morning coffee or straight from the bottle can help with either clarifying the situation or clouding it so sip responsibly and keep everybody wondering why that shit eating grin is on your face, the same look you have as you rig up along your favorite trout stream.**

**'Till next month still on the inside looking out,**

**Chubby**

**Trout Fishing Report:**

**I'm glad to report that my concerns about low flows in early spring disappeared in April with ample rainfall returning just in time to save the season. May saw more than twice the normal rainfall for the month falling across the region with 9-10 inches falling along the east slopes of the Blue Ridge swelling most streams far above ideal fishing levels for most of the month.**

**June so far has continued the trend and just a week or so ago as I watched stream levels finally start getting down to normal for the time on the USGS charts the heavy rain returned and brought flows back up although some watersheds have missed out. Today as I sit writing this the forecast for the afternoon is calling for 2- 4 inches of rain across the region again so it looks as though we'll keep good flows for the immediate time being.**

**Typically by this time of the year with the tree canopy over the streams being in full foliage a lot of the rain that falls gets caught in the canopy and absorbed by all the trees and stream side vegetation so not as much reaches the surrounding soil and is able to drain into the streams. So once the heat of summer arrives this along with evaporation rates being high stream flows drop and begin the downward trend they typically see until we get into the cooling weather of October and the leaf drop occurs and rainfall rates rebound.**

**Although many streams are not on my list of summer trout fishing destinations and hopefully at the least they'll have better summer flows this year and that'll last until fall returns and gives the trout a break from the low warm flows of a typical Virginia summer.**

**Many anglers once Memorial Day comes around head for other fishing destinations on saltwater venues or warm water sources such as the many lakes and rivers across the region in search of Bass. This leaves those of us like me that trout fish year round a lot more space on the cold water resources that fish well in the warm months giving the trout a break until October rolls around and the trout streams cool and rejuvenate themselves for another cool season that lasts until June comes around again.**

**Stocked Streams**

**The VDGIF stocking trucks have been parked for the summer once again and being checked out and made ready for the first day of October just a short or long 4 months away depending on how you see it when they'll hit the road again filling area put and take streams with trout. As of now there's still some opportunities on these types of streams in the area and if you want to get away for a couple of days several streams in the southwest Virginia region can fish good during the summer in the higher elevations found there.**

**The heavy rainfall over the past two months and the resulting high flows has scattered the trout in these often larger streams more than usual so getting out and searching likely holding spots will bring success to those who keep on keeping on as long as the conditions allow. At this time stream temperatures are becoming marginal for trout holdover in many of these streams so keeping an eye on water temperatures is the key to finding trout in the early summer.**

**With air temperatures averaging in the mid 80's or even higher at this time of year the best times to fish will be the early morning or late evening hours and in streams with a heavy overhead tree canopy to shade the water and you as you fish along. If you are fishing out in bright sunshine on the water this time of year its doubtful you'll run across many trout so seek out those areas that are well shaded and contain the type of water that is most likely to hold trout.**

**Fish the riffles good and into the deep holes they dump into and concentrate on shaded moving water as its likely cooler and more oxygenated important factors on whether trout will be found there or not. Check water temperatures and as long as its in the mid 60's you can still do well and trout will be active but if its close to 70 or above trout will be very sluggish and unlikely to move to take a fly with any gumption at all. If the latter temperatures are encountered move further upstream of to another stream that is likely to have the more favorable conditions.**

**On the surface terrestrial insects are in abundance now so these patterns such as ants and beetles are good choices and even fishing them drowned is a good bet. I like to use larger sizes if the flows are good such as an appropriately sized cricket for the time of the season or a big stonefly nymph so I offer the trout something worth the effort to eat. With the major mayfly and caddis hatches over you'll still see an occasional mayfly or two but nothing in large enough numbers to get the trout keyed on them so observe what you see around the stream on the water and in the streamside vegetation and brush.**

**If you plan to harvest trout on streams regulated for that please go ahead and do so but when fishing catch and release streams or no plans to take them home leave the trout in the water to unhook them as bringing them out of 65 degree water into 85 degree air will be quite a shock and possibly lead to their demise even if they do swim away as if all is well.**

**Where to go:**

**The South River in Greene County, the Hughes River in Madison and the Tye River in Nelson County are good places to try that contain the type of conditions in their lower reaches where they are stocked for harvest to find trout in the early summer months. At this time flows are still good and searching the water in the cooler times of the day can bring some nice trout to the net.**

**So for the next couple of weeks or so these streams can offer good fishing in their lower reaches and hopefully good rainfall rates will remain the normal and air temperatures stay in the normal range in the mid 80's and stay away from those sweltering 90 degree days we often experience here in the foothills.**

**South River - Waynesboro-This stream is now catch and release in the section through downtown year round but the in town section contains a lot of marginal water in the summer months especially if its been hot and dry. The trout here scattered out and look for the best spots where springs enter so remember to look for the above mentioned areas and fish in the early mornings and evenings to catch more trout. Good trico hatches often occur on the favorable mornings so early risers on the stream at daylight often can take advantage of this opportunity.**

**The Special Regs section on the south side of Waynesboro again has a lot of marginal instream trout habitat but is well shaded so look for the types of water trout like and you'll find trout. Again here in the summer trout seem to scatter and hole up in the best locations where springs enter and silt is not an issue. Good water will hold a few good sized trout so look for the best spots and fish them well. Be careful wading in this section if you are not strong in the legs and back, the silty areas can bog you down and with a lot of instream trees and brush getting around can be tough for those of us with some age or ailments that hinder our leg and back strength.**

**Mossy Creek - Although not the high class Brown Trout fishery it was in the past hopefully some of the stream rehabilitation efforts will turn the tide on what is still one of my favorite places to fish for trout. On the public section there's a lot of water out in the sun but with its cool temperatures, undercut banks and scattered shaded areas you'll still find some good, challenging fishing conditions along most of the section.**

**Terrestrials are good bets such as ants, beetles small hoppers and small crickets on the surface and small scuds and San Juan worms have been good producers for me  there over the years.**

**There are some good sized Browns hiding in the favorable spots there so search the good water well and when you move a trout and don't get him mark the spot and come back to him later for another shot. Many times sitting down and giving the trout a few minutes to settle down and get back into his comfort zone and feeding position will get you another chance so remember those spots trip to trip that produce a catch or a look.**

**On Mossy and anywhere else for that matter in early summer use terrestrial patterns that are size appropriate for the time of the season. Using huge cricket and hopper patterns that are the size these insects are in late summer and early fall in early summer often spooks  the trout or fails to bring a rise as trout are smart and see quite well and know to expect when on the feeding prowl.**

**Several years ago as I fished up the public section towards the iron bridge below the church an angler ahead me far enough to allow the trout he passed to settle down and take my size 16 beetle brought several Browns to my net. A couple of which were in the 16-18 inch class which even with the distance between us he was able to hear the ruckus on the water eventually causing him to stop and sit down on the bank and watch me work upstream toward him catching a couple more along the way.**

**When I reached him he asked just what the hell was I using that caught so many trout behind him when he never moved a trout. I looked at the 3 inch hopper he had tied to line and showed him the beetle I was using and asked had he seen any hoppers that size as he fished along. Well he said no and being mid June he got the picture when I said when using those types of patterns match the size you see along the stream and hoppers don't reach that size until August and September so there you go.**

**He thanked me and I moved along never running across him again as far as I know but hopefully he got the message and became a better angler after our conversation along the weedy banks of Mossy Creek.**

**With large numbers of ants and beetles available to trout in most streams this time of year its hard to beat a well drifted appropriately sized pattern such as these to catch often spooky , smart summer trout. Japanese Beetles are either just appearing or will soon along ,Mossy and other streams too so be sure to have some poatterns to match these insects that are welcome along a trout stream and despised in the rose garden.**

**Jackson River Hidden Valley Section- The Jackson River in Hidden Valley up in the special regs section can fish well in the summer as long as there are good flows and give you a shot at a big trout if you read the water and look for the favored holding spots. Shade again is the key so look for trout sipping bugs on the surface under overhanging trees and brush. Small ants and sometimes beetles or even small dry midge patterns are the ticket and just because the rises are just little dimples on the surface doesn't mean it's little fish making them .**

**Look for deep runs and riffles and fish large stonefly nymphs through these areas, this is a good pattern to catch not only any size trout but some big ones as well as they will definitely go for a large meal when presented in the right places and times.**

**Jackson River below Gathright Dam - With the cool  discharge from Lake Moomaw being in the mid to high 50's even during the heat of summer wading this section offers a great escape from the heat but also will purt you on some nice trout as well. Most will be Rainbows and run 8- 14 inches but there are some big Browns and 'Bows in there as well that go well over 20 inches. Same patterns mentioned above work here too but caddis and tricos are good producers as well so be on the look out for trout taking these insects as well. The section just below the dam is good just as are just hitting all the publicly accessible sections further downstream along the road and wading the areas and covering the likely looking spots.**

**Late evenings can be quite good along the lower Jackson as many times rising trout can be seen dimpling the water taking emerging midges and other insects in the last hour or so of daylight.**

**Buffalo Creek- Lexington- Buffalo Creek is another good summer fishery that produces some nice trout to those who fish there in the warm months. Its a freestone type stream that has spring influences as you'll see their presence in many areas and this is also where you'll find the trout. Big stonefly nymphs and my Xmas Tree pattern have taken many Rainbows over 20 inches here over the years and some big Browns too. Just fish the right patterns in the right places to up your chances and enjoy. You'll catch several beautiful Rainbows on most days that run 8-12 inches if the big ones aren't cooperating so give this one a try sometime its well worth the drive.**

**Spring Run- Bath County - Some of the largest trout I've landed and lost in Virginia have come from this stream. Just mentioning the name brings up many memories and stories yet to tell about fishing this great stream. That's all I got to say about Spring Run for now, look for more later. My last trip out before my spine surgery was there on a day I hooked 5 trout over 2 foot in length landing only one, a Rainbow which went about 28 inches and 8 lbs.  I landed several other "small' trout between 14 and 22 inches that day. Only 1 pattern is all I need there, its a size 16, gray and weighted, enough said.**

**If you want a trip of a couple of days or so try the summer trout fishing in the streams around Damascus, Virginia such as Whitetop Laurel and other nearby waters such as in the Grayson -Highlands State Park region /  Mt Rogers areas. With elevations averaging well over 2500 feet in most of the area the streams run cool with nights that are in comfortable 50's and days that seldom go above 85 degrees even during heat waves. As long as flows are good the fishing will be too. There's no sense in going to the over crowded Smokie's with streams like these here in Virginia where traffic is light and very few other anglers are seen.**

**I've spent the 4th of July weekend here one time and although I saw a lot of bikers both the pedal powered ones on the Virginia Creeper Trail and the motorized type on the roads passing thru I saw damn few fly rods or spinning rods in the those 3 days and never had to contend with angler on every bend in the streams I fished . Other than on Whitetop Laurel where I saw a handful of anglers over those 3 days on the other streams I fished I had them all to myself.**

**Mountain Streams - Native Brook Trout**

**Even as we get into the last week or so of June we are fortunate to have such good stream flows and water temperatures for this time of year. So if this type of trout fishing is what you like its best you get out and enjoy it while you can because conditions can change quickly with summers heat and dry weather subject to appear at any time. We may get lucky and keep good flows and weather a few more weeks but mid July into early September can be awfully hot and dry for most of these watersheds.**

**Higher elevations are best at this time of year on these streams with the best flows and water temperatures so concentrate on these areas especially as time goes on.**

**There are still some Sulfurs out there to bring the Brookie's to the surface and Little Yellow Stoneflies as well so be sure to have patterns that match these insects in your fly box as well various types of terrestrial insect patterns such as ants, beetles and inchworms.**

**With heavy shade over these streams if its not too hot you can fish all day and do well but try to catch the last couple of evening hours if possible in case of a spinner fall which will get many trout up feeding on the surface. Searching with a Little Yellow Stonefly pattern will produce well but as usual be aware what 's going on around you on the stream and fish the appropriate patterns.**

**I tie the Little Yellow Stonefly Patterns with foam bodies in yellow, cream and pale olive as you'll see them in all these colors and the they'll also match the Sulfurs if they're around. I use a fine upright natural elk hair wing and no hackle so they ride flush with the surface and they pass for spinners as well and are easy to see on the surface in the often hard to see conditions along these shady streams with their oily surface look in the afternoons. I often color the wing tips yellow or orange with a permanent marker the night before I go to help with visibility.**

**Again, don't remove hooked trout from the water to help with their continued survival and have a great time while this fishing lasts.**

**Go fish and send me a picture and good story if you do, it'll help me get through this time that I can't get out there do it myself and hopefully pass the time until I'm able to stagger along the streams again.**

**Chubby**