



Remembering Stell Huie



Sallie and I recently took a two-night getaway mini vacation to another location in Western North Carolina. I may be biased, but it is hard to beat a vacation site in WNC. No area is more beautiful than here and surrounding venues.

One morning on our trip, we had a picnic lunch on board our Mini Cooper, and we simply drove around to find a good picnic site. We discovered a dirt forest service road that took us down by a beautiful mountain stream. We searched for a site with a picnic area for several miles but to no avail.

We both thought we were so off the beaten path as no pull-off sites existed. I decided to look for a turnaround area but could not even find that. But, as I was about to lose hope, there was a turn-off near the creek we had been following. Even more to our surprise, there was a campsite next to the creek with a picnic table.

I had a fly rod in the car, so I brought it down to the campsite. As I set up for the picnic, Sallie explored the creek. She had heard an interesting bird singing and wanted to identify it. She returned in short order and told me the creek had a wonderful sand bar for fishing. After lunch, I rigged my fly rod and checked the sandbar out. She was right; it was a perfect place to

fish. The creek had deep runs and a fast current. I just knew trout would be lying in wait for that exactly right presented fly.

I go into my fly box to make the first selection. I had a plan. First, I would use a streamer. If that didn't work, I would use a nymph and go deep into the holes in the creek. Finally, if all else failed, I would resort to a top-water dry fly. I tend to use nymphs on creeks because one doesn't have to make long casts with a fly in such heavily vegetated areas.

Well, my first two patterns failed, so I opened my fly box to select a top water dry fly. And there it was, a small Jack Cabe fly. All of a sudden, the spirit of my recently departed fishing buddy, Stell Huie, came forth. Stell told me, by all means, to tie that Jack Cabe on my line. And I complied.

Stell was probably the best fly-casting fisherman in Highlands. He could place a Jack Cabe fly anywhere on a river or creek like no other person could. The funny thing was that when we fished together he always ragged me as being the lead man. I tend to rely on a nymph that is rigged with a lead sinker about 18 inches above. Stell never really thought that was a legitimate fly fisherman, and he was probably right. The joke among local fly fishermen was that Stell used only one fly, the Jack Cabe. He had been a close friend of the legendary Jack Cabe and had full faith in Jack's fly pattern. I have to say; I saw Stell catch a whole lot of big fish on Jack Cabe's while the rest of us were having no luck.

So, in the spirit of following Stell's advice, I tied on the Jack Cabe. It was as if he was standing by me, saying, by all means, use that fly. But here is my confession: I have never caught a trout on the fly after all these years of periodically fishing a Jack Cabe. But I thought surely this day would be different. I made some very good casts and got a couple of strikes, but again, I didn't catch a fish. Very soon, it was time for us to leave, so I put the Jack Cabe back in the fly box and told Stell it would be another day before I caught that big trout.

Nevertheless, it was a precious fishing moment as I remembered and thought about my wonderful fishing buddy, Stell Huie. As we all celebrated at his funeral, he was a Titan of community service and leadership. He loved and sang music and advocated for so many great causes both here and in Atlanta.

But, I also remember Stell as a great outdoorsman, whether he was bird hunting or engaged in his passion for fly fishing. He loved nature and the Western North Carolina wild and natural areas. Believe me, Stell would trek anywhere with his Jack Cabe if he thought that special trout was there.

Stell was a one-of-a-kind, unique character who continues to be missed by his friends, family, and community. And yes, I will continue to periodically throw a Jack Cabe fly as a remembrance of Stell. I have hope that one day I will catch that big fish like Stell loved to do.

MAYOR PAT