



Fishing With Cousin Rick

Continuing The Education of Ansel Head

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Nelson H. Head

Fishing With Cousin Rick, Continuing The Education of Ansel Head
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Homebase
The Fishing Village of Craig, Montana

Introduction

Cousin Rick is not really Ansel Head's blood cousin. He's not really Dr. Steve's cousin either. Dr. Steve had removed Head's worn out knees and replaced them with the latest in highly polished metal ones. Dr. Steve's wife, Bev, is Cousin Rick's cousin. Dr. Steve, Bev, and Head share the same grandchildren; and Bev and Head have the same family name in common.

Working through such relationships is an essential part of Southern culture. And as is usually the case, everybody is ultimately related to everybody else in some form or fashion. Even though Dr. Steve and Bev were born outside of the South, Cousin Rick is from South Carolina and lives in Savannah. Therefore it is perfectly acceptable in polite society for Head to refer to Cousin Rick as Cousin Rick.

Head had fished with Cousin Rick at the family wedding in South Carolina. Cousin Rick was in his own element along the coast. He had paddled Head out into the middle of feeding blue fish; but Head had been unable to attract any nibbles to his flies. Cousin

Rick was a perfect gentleman about Head's poor skills giving Head hope that he had found a good fishing companion.

Head's God given knees had been in such disrepair that he had found it impossible to properly fish streams; but Dr. Steve's handiwork had re-opened that possibility. So he called Cousin Rick with a proposal to spend a week trout fishing along the mountain rivers and streams in Montana. He accepted.

Those seven days in September were neither as important nor as life threatening as Kennedy's seven days in May with the Cuban Missile Crisis; but don't try explaining that to the rainbows and browns living in the Missouri River near Craig, Montana.

Nelson H. Head, November, 2013



Cousin Rick - knee deep in the Missouri River



What They Did

The game was soon afoot along the Missouri River, or more accurately, it was soon afloat.





Head had fished with the two guides before. Luke grew up in Virginia. Known by his friends in Craig as Big Luke, he was a well mannered, mellow, and very competent companion. He put the two fishermen over many fine trout.

The other guide, Austin, is from Montana. He gets quite excited when fish are coming to the boat and very irritated when his clients fail to execute properly. Head had hoped that the first two days with Luke would give his friend the experience necessary to withstand Austin's chiding. Head knew to take up fishing in the back of the boat away from the guide's steely stares. He had chuckled to himself as he watched his friend go through Austin's infamous "Fly Fishing Initiation".

Austin is a real pro and always puts his minions over big fish.







"Uh oh!" Cousin Rick suddenly announced, "It's that time again."
Fortunately there were a remarkable number of men's rooms along the Missouri.

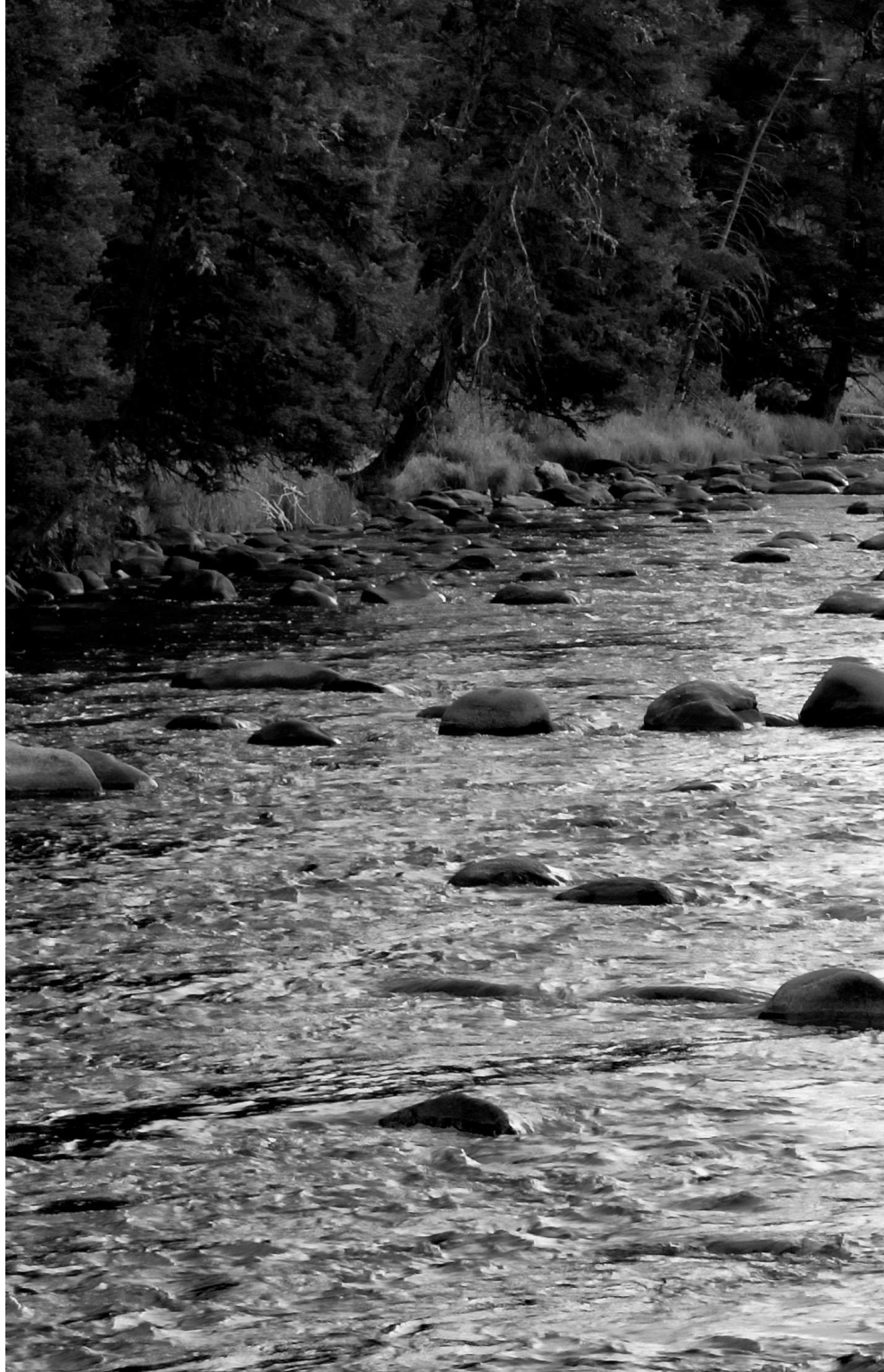


After two days of luxury fishing from a boat with an experienced captain, Head thought it time to introduce Cousin Rick to the other face of the Montana trout angling game - wading in a fast stream. He took his friend to the Gallatin near Big Sky.

The change was stark. The weather had turned cold and wet, threatening snow. The shallow holes that held fish were out in the middle. The rocks lining the bottom were loose and slippery. But Head's new, highly polished metal knees worked as advertised. For the first time, he managed the wading exercise and nymphed many fish onto his line.

Cousin Rick fared less well - slipping often, occasionally falling, and managing no strikes in the difficult environment. Once back safely in the car, he announced, "This may be a three but most probably a four Advil night."

Head recalled his own frustrating education when his Cousin Bart had introduced him to the Gallatin many years before.







The food along the way was good, but not inexpensive. The local beers were particularly good after long days on the river. Proprietors had wasted little money on finishes and décor - not by Eastern standards anyway. There was also a casual approach to zoning. In Wolf Creek, the church butted up against the local tavern. Head wondered if the Montana Baptists were also given free rein to play cards.







Back on the Missouri, it had snowed in the mountains the night before. All morning it had grown windier, colder, and wetter. Then it started sleeting. Austin couldn't raise fish. Patience was the only lesson being taught and learned.

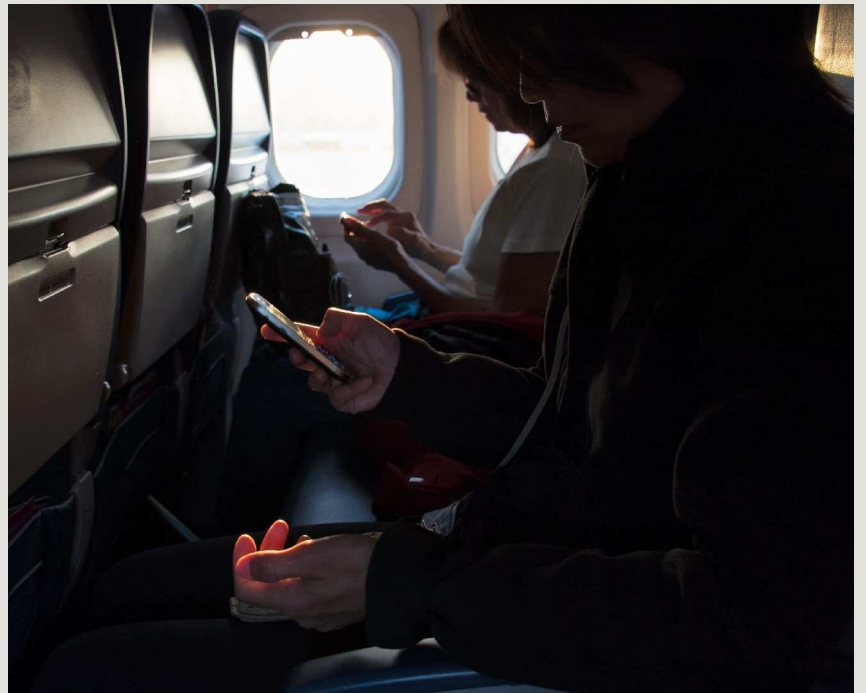
The trio anchored for lunch. Suddenly the wind and rain stopped. The air began warming. Everyone cheered up. Out of nowhere, millions of tiny mayflies descended upon the calm river, deposited their eggs, and lay spent upon the surface. Everywhere monster trout were rising to the hatch. Austin brought new fervor to his already trying course. It was dry fly fishing at it's very best, and Head was glad Cousin Rick had been part of it.

On there last day together, Cousin Rick had gone to the airport well before dawn. Head followed at a more appropriate time because he had reservations. When he arrived, he found his friend still trying to game the system.

Cousin Rick's best (cheapest and only) way home was not from Bozeman where he was but through Missoula where he had been the previous day. So it was back to the rent-a-car counter for the needed transportation. And Head, what did he do? He enjoyed a leisurely breakfast, the wait in an uncrowded airport, and an uneventful and on-time flight home.

He was awakened after midnight with a text message from his friend. Cousin Rick had finally arrived in Savannah without having to spend the night in the Atlanta airport. Once again, Cousin Rick had taken on the system and beaten it into submission.







What They Saw

























































