

A FRIENDSHIP RUNS THROUGH IT

By Pete Goodman

Back in April of 2020, Matt Seymour asked me to write an article for a series he calls “A Friendship Runs Through It” to appear in STREAMSIDE, the Dame Juliana League newsletter. I immediately wrote him back saying, “I don’t have any friends.” He wrote me back: “I don’t have any either – Fake it!” Since Matt’s request, I have been mulling over how to construct this article. I have struggled with this story, not because I couldn’t think of anything to say, but more about how to tell the story and who to include. Thinking about it has caused me to remember saying to my wife several years ago that it was curious how I had made friends in my life. I had a grade school best friend. I had a junior high school best friend. I had and still have two best friends from high school. My wife and I have made some lasting friends together. But through my military service and my working career, I made few or no longtime friends.

It wasn’t until I retired and became involved with Valley Forge Trout Unlimited that I started making friends again. I made numerous friends over the more than 20 years I have been involved with Trout Unlimited and fly fishing and continue making new friends usually with some sort of fly-fishing connection. But as I thought about the story aspect of the article, I thought I would stretch Matt’s charge a bit and go in a different direction. So here goes.

There was this boy (my son, Travis) who was learning to fly fish from his father (me), who was a beginner fly fisher himself. Travis had been at fly fishing just a year or two at the most. I had only a year or two on Travis as far as self-taught experience was concerned.



Ontario Camp

We were vacationing on Ashby Lake in Ontario, Canada. The cottage we stayed in was on a forested, rocky point that jutted into the lake with little bays on either side.

The bays were covered with lily pads, and in the early part of the day, lots of fragrant, white flowers. One day, Travis came screaming and crying into the cottage. We thought he had severely hurt himself. He had. He had hooked himself on fly fishing. The crying was over a lost bass and fly. As it turns out, he was fishing the lilies from shore, which we hardly ever did since fishing from a boat was so much easier. He plopped his big old popper fly out into the lilies, and there was a huge explosion of a

small mouth grabbing the fly and racing off. Inexperienced and shocked, Travis hauled back and – Bing! The fish broke off and took his fly. Once inside the cottage and calmed down, the little boy related the story, still with tears in his eyes. He had caught big bass before – large mouth and small mouth on ultra-light spinning outfits, some up to six pounds out of Ashby Lake. But now he was hooked, hooked on fly fishing. He started tying flies. He learned to spin deer hair before I could. He made big, hairy bugs and dragonfly imitations to fish the lake when we vacationed up there. He grew up and graduated high school and went off to college and even managed to graduate from college with some sort of a degree that he might never use. He came home after finishing his coursework, packed, and headed to Colorado following a girl and a dream to snow ski a lot. Sustaining himself was harder than I believe he expected. His mother



and I went out to see him in Boulder, which is a beautiful place to visit. Travis took us around the area and north. We saw some of those amazing Colorado trout streams and fished a few— mostly unsuccessfully. We went up into John Gierach and A. K. Best's neighborhood and saw the famous streams and fly shop. But alas, the love of the girl was not to be long lasting. Boulder soon lost its luster, and Travis moved on after introducing his mother to some very fine gin martinis. He moved to the Jackson Hole, Wyoming, area with a best friend from back home who had recently graduated from college.

The Jackson area was much more to Travis's liking. Most days found him out of doors for any

portion of the day he could manage. Fishing, biking, skiing, climbing, river surfing, kayaking— taking full advantage of what the Tetons have to offer in any season.

In the late 1990s, Judy and I went to Alaska, a bucket list trip. We went to a special lodge at the end of our vacation. It was billed as a trophy rainbow trout lodge and was fly fishing only. It lived up to its name. The fish were plentiful and some were quite large. In fact, in front of the lodge I hooked the largest rainbow I have ever hooked or

touched, but I could not get it in the boat. A couple of years later we returned to the lodge with Travis and our daughter Heather. We fished our brains out for a week. It was amazing. But it was Travis that got into the trophy. We had hiked well up into the braided part of the American River when Travis hooked into a spectacular fish. It was a big, thick-bodied rainbow that took his egg pattern in a long outside bend run that ended in a log jam. The fish took on the upstream side of the bend. As soon as it felt the hook, it was airborne. It jumped several more times, and it headed downstream. It ran right into the log jam and broke off. I remember Travis being like a statue, frozen in place, shoulder drooping, uttering expletives. I said something stupid like, "You should have followed it." Well, there was no time for that. We heard from the guide later in the year that another guest at the lodge was luckier and managed to land the just over 10-pound rainbow.

Travis's years in the west have done a lot to improve his fly fishing skills. He is also a darned good guide and quite skilled at rowing a drift boat, which I find to be totally backwards due to learning to row myself about in a boat on a lake. He has taken me down the Snake River Canyon in the bow of his raft while I try to hang on and still try to fish little pockets that we flash by at seemingly 50 miles-per-hour. I knew it was going to be interesting trip when he pulled off into an eddy and had me put on a PFD and fasten all of the zippers and clips. In some places it felt like he was trying to launch me as I hung on for dear life with one hand under the seat while flailing the flyrod with the other, trying to hit the micro pockets as they flashed by. It is amazing how many fish live in that super-fast turbulent water.

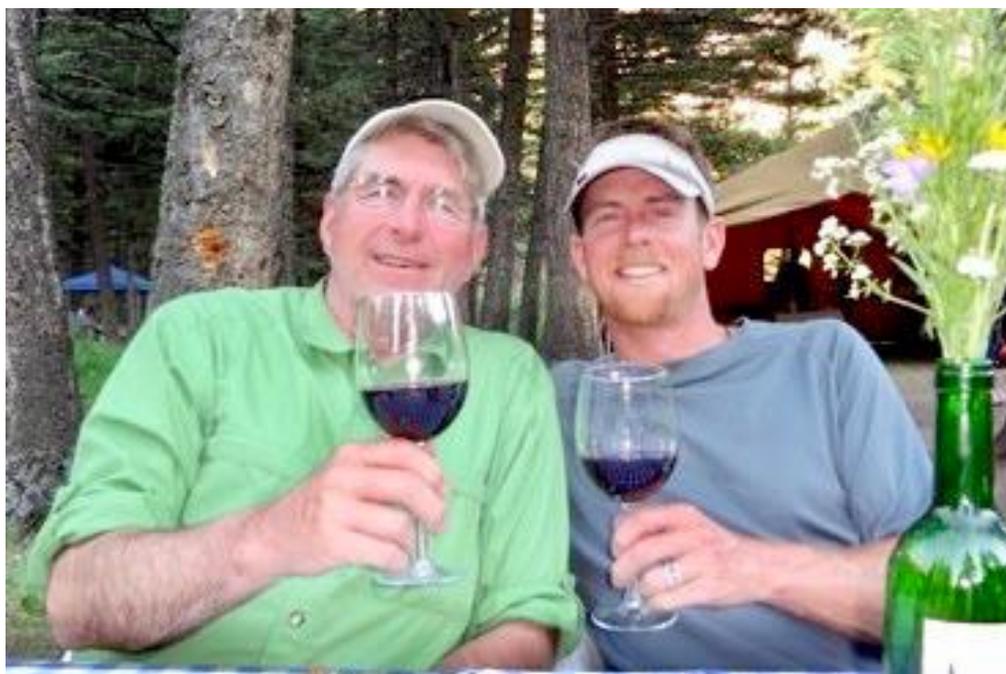


TRAVIS GOODMAN

Quite a few years ago Judy and I were up in Canada at our cottage, the same one that became ours where Travis lost that big bass all those years ago. I was out fishing, of course, when Travis called. When I got back, Judy was very excited for me to call Travis. I called and Travis was still bubbling over his most recent catch. He had stopped off to fish the Madison River below Hebgen Lake for an hour or two. He noted a boulder in the middle of the river and thought that behind that might be a good place for trout to rest out of the current. He swung a size 16 bead-head prince nymph, and when it got into the zone, he had a fearsome tug. He ended up landing the largest trout of his fishing career, a 32-inch brown trout. Now it is really great that the boy calls me

with all of his triumphs. But it is TRAVIS GOODMAN a bit frustrating for me to drag his sorry self all the way to Alaska to give him the opportunity of a lifetime at great expense only to have him go off by himself and catch a humongous fish. It can be frustrating to be Travis's father. But then I really do live vicariously through his adventures.

Travis and his partner Chas have opened a distillery just south of the Jackson town limits, Jackson Hole Still Works. Chas was an Orvis endorsed fly fishing guide before he and Travis went into business together. Several years ago, they conceived a fishing tournament on an unnamed Wyoming River. It has become an annual tradition. The "Invitational", as Travis refers to it, is just a single day of fishing, but there is copious celebrating before and after the all-business fishing day. Twenty-four good friends compete in lottery-selected fishing teams of three. Highly coveted prizes are awarded for the largest fish caught, not only for the angler, but for the person on the oars as well. Travis was most pleased to have won the Crimson Sportscoat top rower prize two years ago and was very proud of Chas winning it this year. The angler with the biggest fish wins the latest and greatest new rod, second place could be a high-end reel, and third place a fancy large landing net with a flask in the handle. One year Travis won third place, and I was re-gifted that fancy net. It now travels with us to the upper lakes above Ashby Lake in Ontario. The rule is that you can only take a pull after a fish is caught. It rarely returns with anything left in the handle.



PETE & TRAVIS ENJOYING THE REWARDS OF A DAY TOGETHER

about the same size, plus a better cutthroat of 20 inches. They didn't fish for an hour. Of course, the fish are hungry when snow is covering everything and few people are fishing for them. The fish might also be anticipating snow melt runoff that would be starting in a couple of weeks.

It was probably early May this year when Travis called and said he and his wife had donned their waders at the house and driven down to their access point where they slipped on their snow shoes to snowshoe down to the Snake River. Hadden, Travis's wife, in her first six casts landed three cutthroats all around 15 inches. Travis took the rod and made a few casts and got two more

So it is that this son, who also happens to be a very good friend, can seemingly keep me young through his fly fishing adventures. It doesn't seem to matter if I am there in person or not. We have fished together enough that the telling of the story brings each of us into the story as though we were there. It seems a lot of friendship is about shared experiences. If those experiences are with a family member or an acquaintance, it doesn't matter. There is the saying, "You can pick your friends but you can't pick your relatives." Maybe, just maybe, a relative can be a best friend if a river runs in each of your veins.



Bio

Pete Goodman was born in Philadelphia in 1945. He attended Haverford High School and Temple University. He served in the US Army. Pete retired from Security Elevator Company and became active in the Valley Forge Trout Unlimited as its multi term president and CEO. Pete and his wife Judy have lived in the woods on the north ridge of the Great Valley in Malvern for 47 years.

