

Valley Angler  
Caught in a Thunderstorm  
by Bill Thompson

Fly fishing is a sport that encourages solitude. Fishing alone gives you the time to listen to the river and possibly hear your own inner voice that is often drowned out by the demands of modern day life.

I started this piece by saying fly fishing encouraged solitude, but in fact any kind of fishing will suffice, and in fact other sports may have the same effect. Runners, for instance will have no trouble understanding what I am saying. Golfers, on the other hand, who are forced to play in foursomes, will probably be left out of the loop.

There are times, of course, when we do appreciate having company and thoroughly enjoy the experience. The other evening was one of those times. For the past two weeks Janet and I have been booked solid for guide trips. When last week a good friend called to ask if we had time to fit him in for evenings fishing I immediately wrote him in on the calendar and announced to Janet that day was booked no matter who called looking for a trip.

The friend who called was Tom Jutras who owns Mountain Road Fly Shop in Raymond New Hampshire. As an added bonus Tom was bringing another mutual friend Peter Whelan who is one of our sales reps. Regular readers of this column will remember that Pete had taken Janet and I out last October striper fishing in Portsmouth harbor. Neither one of these fellows had ever fished the Saco and were looking forward to catching some "White Mountain Trout". Needless to say this put the pressure on the "old guide".

They arrived at the shop about three in the afternoon and after an hour or so of catching up we headed out for the river. Four in the afternoon is a little early to be on the Saco, especially on a warm bright day. I had decided that in order to avoid as many swimmers and boaters as possible we would head up stream to the Cornfield Pool. It was pretty hot so we decided to pack our gear in rather than try a walk in with waders on. True I could afford to sweat off a few pounds.

When we arrived at the Cornfield we had all worked up a sweat and doubly great full that we carried our gear. We plunked ourselves down on a log and changed into our waders. Tom and Peter headed to the head of the pool while I started to work down stream. After about a half hour I hadn't seen a fish. I walked back up stream to check on the progress of my friends. I was pleasantly surprised that they had both caught fish. The pressure was off.

The middle of the pool proved fruitless for all of us, but at the tail we all found some action. Several trout succumbed to our outstanding casting skill and artfully tied flies.

At about this same time the sky had started to darken and the occasional rumble of thunder could be heard in the distance. We decided to reel in and head down stream to the pool where we would not be as exposed to lighting and the impending rain.

As we walked along the gravel bar carrying graphite lighting rods I remarked that I had heard that morning on the Today Show that it was "National Lighting Awareness Week". The spokes person for the, I guess, National Lighting Awareness Foundation, had said that lighting could strike up to three miles from where the thunder was first heard. Valuable information, I thought.

We had just made it into the head of the outlook Pool when the storm overtook us. Fortunately there were no lighting strikes.

We took shelter along the bank under some trees. Only Tom had been smart enough to have brought along a rain jacket. Here we waited out the storm. We passed the time with good conversation and it was here under those trees that the best part of the trip took place. Nothing special just three friends sharing fishing stories while waiting out the storm.

The storm lifted and we went back to fishing. The fishing was pretty good for about a half an hour and than the fish stopped working. We waded to the shore broke down our rods and with the aid of two small flashlights hiked back to where we had parked our trucks. When we came out of the woods into the field the it was lit by the light of hundreds of lighting bugs. A fitting end to the evening.

Back at the truck we met up with Janet and Summer who had also had a great evening of fishing. We shared a cold soda and recanted the events of the evening. It was agreed that it had been a good days fishing and we all vowed to return and

do again some day, but you know it will be pretty hard to top this one.  
See you on the river.