

Bio Mel Ochs

Born and raised on a farm in Iowa. Attended college there, and U. of Iowa Medical School. With the Viet Nam war at its peak, new doctors were drafted into the Army if they did not enlist in another branch of the service. After the usual delaying tactics failed, I decided the Air Force would be safest and sent in my request, and Uncle Sam said, "Congratulations! You are in the NAVY!" I became a Flight Surgeon with 6 months of training at Pensacola and soloed the T-28. (that's another story) and was assigned to San Diego to the Admiral's staff of COMFAIR San Diego, with two squadrons, one of patrol planes, VP-31, and VC-3 which towed banners for gunnery practice. (that's another story).

I was the first career Emergency Physician in San Diego county, and was the Director of the Emergency Department at Bay General Hospital, later to become Scripps Mercy Chula Vista. I was also the San Diego County Emergency Medical Services Medical Director for 12 years. I retired after 47 years in the Emergency Department in December, 2017. I tried some lake fishing with no results, then took up pier fishing with a lot of success on the Imperial Beach pier, much to the satisfaction of the Filipino ladies who not only taught me everything but enjoyed getting the fish that I caught.

My son lives in Colorado and I joined up with him for a couple 4 day fly fishing trips which didn't really teach me much, but 3 years ago he said, "I have a two for one, salmon fly fishing trip to Alaska...but you need to learn how to fly cast before you come up!" I got basic equipment from Rick at Strouds and found out about the Sunday Fly Fishing Lessons at Lake Murray. Don Smith, Frank Beaty, Barry Perchersky, and Alan Thompson all were mentors and I learned the basics, only to find that the weather at the Nak Nak fish camp was so windy and rainy all the week we were in Alaska that I could never do any fly casting. Nonetheless I was fascinated with fly casting and continued to go to Lake Murray every week and progressed to become one of the instructors.

Having fallen into the icy waters in Alaska a couple times, and struggled with near falls on the large rocks in the rivers in Colorado, I had no great desire to return North. I then found out about float tubes and bay fishing and the same folks mentored me on that. While I know that many of the folks dream about that those great 1 week trips twice a year, I wanted to fish EVERY WEEK! Float tubes were the answer.

I joined up with Bob Pharoah's group of Wednesday fly fisher folks, and also started fly tying after winning a rotary vise in the raffle at SDFF. I have picked up the baton for the Wednesday Fly Fishing group after Bob had caught so many spotties that he almost knew them by name. I also host the Thursday evening Zoom Fly Tying Congress which grew out of some initial Skype sessions of fly tying I had set up with Alex Rae after Covid shut down the meetings at the San Carlos Rec Center. Lucky Ketchum continues to show us new flies at those meetings, but the sessions also gives us a chance to hear Bob, Barry and Lucky tell stories about their adventures in the past as well as get tips from other fly tying folks.

I am a relative newbie but enjoy getting out each week to fish the bay and have learned a lot from those mentors, along with Charlie Wright who provided me a lot of starter flies, and gave me a lot of tips. I also figured out a few tricks as I went along, so I will start from the very basics and go through some tricks and techniques I have learned and then show you where we usually go with the float tubes. I post a lot of pictures and fishing reports on the SDFF page on Face Book and the pictures are generally aimed at showing you the flies that were successful, since most of you already know what a spottie looks like. Hopefully, we can interest some more of you folks to fish with us!