

Ralph Hanna



Ralph Hanna (1930-) was born in Battle Creek, Michigan. His family moved to Grayling, Michigan when he was a young man. It was here that he met his bride to be, Cynthia Stephan. They met at a basketball game at Grayling High School where Cynthia was a cheerleader. Cynthia was the daughter of Lacey Stephan a famous river boat builder and guide on the Au Sable River. Ralph and Cynthia were married in 1950 and within a few years they relocated to the Traverse City area. They have two wonderful children, a boy named Lacey and a girl named Sherri.

Over the years Ralph had many jobs including working for the Buick Plant in Flint, Michigan, Bear Archery in Grayling, Michigan and a mink ranch in Traverse City. He eventually wound up working as a postal clerk in Traverse City where he was medically retired in 1978.

Prior to Ralph's and Cynthia's marriage, Ralph's future father-in-law had already befriended Ralph and was teaching him the fine art of fly fishing and fly tying when Ralph was only 18 years of age. Lacey Stephan and other river guides were selling Ralph's flies to their regular customers. Under the direction of Lacey Stephan, Ralph was soon accepted as a river guide and went on to develop relationships with Jim Wakeley, Jack Redhead, Bernie Fowler and others.

Ralph developed many famous flies during his life long career, but his most famous was the "Bicolor Walker," created in 1948. He also claims to have tied the very first "Parachute Michigan Hopper." His flies became so popular that it wasn't long before he was tying for shops in Grayling, Traverse City, Kalkaska and Mio. He was also supplying flies for a long list of personal clients that he had built up over the years of guiding for Lacey.

Over the years Ralph has taught 3 or 4 students how to tie flies. He used to tie 350+ dozen flies a year. He was a friend of Art Winnie and would often purchase fly tying materials from him. At 82 years of age he still ties a few flies daily and he still uses his old Thompson 'A' vice. Ralph's flies are still in demand. He continues to tie for the Stream Side Orvis Shop in Traverse City, The Old Au Sable Fly Shop in Grayling, Jack's Sport Shop in Kalkaska and Skips Sport Shop in Grayling.

His hobby is growing orchids and begonias.....

Tom Deschaine
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