

# Jack Schweigert



**John C. “Jack” Schweigert (1906-1985)** was born the son of a minister. The family immigrated to America from Germany and first settled in the town of Pigeon, Michigan. As a young man he worked in Saginaw as a foundry foreman for General Motors. While working and living in Saginaw he met and married his wife Ann, in 1929.

Due to health problems, Jack left his foundry job. He and Ann then opened their first tackle shop in Luzerne, Michigan in 1939. It was here that Jack perfected his skills as a river guide and fly tier on the Au Sable River.

In 1949 Mr. Duane McWilliams, from Roscommon presented Jack and Ann with an opportunity to rent part of his barber shop as a fly fishing store. Jack took him up on the deal because he was looking for a location that would provide an abundance of fishing traffic. Within just a short period of time Jack and Ann raised enough money to acquire some property on S. Fifth Street. They lived in a trailer on the property while they completed their combination fly shop and family residence. This would become the permanent location of Jack’s Rod & Fly Shop.

During his 46 years in the fly fishing business Jack became very renowned as both a fly tier and river guide. In the late 50’s and early 60’s he picked up the nickname “Saginaw Jack” by giving weekly fishing reports for a Bay City radio station. He developed a popular fly pattern called the “Doodle Bug.” He also developed a series of ice fishing lures affectionately dubbed “Jack Hooks,” by his customers. People came from everywhere to purchase his hand made, extra strong leaders and his ‘infamous’ fly dope. In Jack’s his last will and testament it stipulated that the formula for making his strong leaders and the formula for the fly dope were to be destroyed.

As a new business man and member of the community, Jack sponsored fishing contests for children and even started the Junior Conservation Club in Roscommon, to help kids learn about the outdoors. In the 50’s he started a conservation organization (prior to the existence of any national organization) called Jack’s Fly Fishing Circle, which boasted of over 2000 fisherman, with members from all over the world. He also, started a service for fly fishermen, notifying them when the “Hex hatch” would first appear on the Au Sable. He was constantly critical of DNR policies and battled against commercial canoes, litterers and poachers.

This “crusty old fisherman, wise-cracking outdoorsman, and master story teller” was often not in the shop; he would be preoccupied with other things like mixing up his fly dope or tying his special leaders outback of the fly shop. Ann was the one usually in the store.

The shop on S. Fifth Street was often cluttered with signs about fisherman, liars, tiers and smokers. His famous “fishing barometer” sign was mounted outside. In 1984 he was planning for retirement and posted a sign stating that only “old customers were allowed to enter” --- business became better than ever!

Jack Schweigert was a river guide, fly tier, rod builder, inventor, storyteller and all around sportsman. He died on April 9, 1985 after a long struggle with cancer. The shop was permanently closed a few months later.

Tom Deschaine  
~Westland, Mi.~

