



# *The Chicken or the Egg?*

## *Hatching Caddis vs. Yellow Drake*

*By: Tom Deschaine*

In the late 1950s a Michigan game warden and fly tyer by the name of Clarence Roberts created a fly pattern called the *Roberts' Yellow Drake*. It is a tremendously popular trout fly on Michigan Rivers. The fly was created for George Griffith, who lost sight in one eye in a fishing accident while fishing with Clarence. Clarence designed the fly so that George could see it more easily on the water's surface.

Back in the mid to late 1930s a fly tyer by the name of Earl Madsen, the first commercial tyer on the Au Sable River in Michigan, created a fly pattern called the *Hatching Caddis*. Earl was also a river guide and boat builder. His pattern the *Hatching Caddis* is very important because it is reputed to be the first fly to ever be designed with deer hair tied parallel to the hook shank.

So, what's the connection? Some claim that the two pattern designs are virtually the same, and that Clarence borrowed the design only to claim it for his own. To add to the confusion, Clarence and Earl were close personal friends and fly tying buddies. They would often meet in Clarence's basement and tie flies for hours on end. Earl was Clarence's senior by twenty years and obviously shared with Clarence his technique for tying deer hair parallel to the hook shank. He also, most probably, taught Clarence the technique of tying a 'post' style fly to wrap the parachute hackle on.

Although the techniques used and the style of the patterns are virtually the same, it is my opinion that there are enough significant differences that they should be considered two distinctly different patterns. The final decision, rest with you.

Let's look at the patterns:

### Madsen's Hatching Caddis



Earl Madsen (1895-1964), fly tier, river guide and boat builder.

Hook: Mustad #9672 Size: 6-2.  
Thread: Yellow, 3/0.  
Tail: Clump of Pheasant Tail Fibers.  
Wing: White Deer Hair, tied post.  
Body: Natural Brown Deer Hair, tied parallel to the hook shank and flared at the tail  
Rib: Crisscrossed thread  
Hackle: Brown, tied heavy and oversize, tied parachute

### Roberts' Yellow Drake



Clarence Roberts (1916- 1984), game warden and fly tier.

Hook: Mustad #94840 Size: 14-8.  
Thread: Yellow, 6/0.  
Tail: Pheasant Tail Fibers, 3 to 4.  
Wing: White Deer Belly Hair, tied post  
Body: Light Tan Deer Hair, tied parallel to the hook shank and flared at the tail  
Rib: Crisscrossed thread  
Hackle: Ginger, tied parachute



*Hatching Caddis (tied by Clarence Roberts)*



*Roberts' Yellow Drake (tied by Clarence Roberts)*

The *Roberts' Yellow Drake* has become so popular today that it has overshadowed the original pattern designed by Earl Madsen, so much so that Clarence will probably always be credited with both patterns. In later years Clarence went on to develop many original patterns using some of the same techniques he may have acquired from Earl.

Both Earl Madsen and Clarence Roberts were major players on the Michigan fly scene from the 40s through the 60s. Michigan lore has been deeply enriched by their presence and their contributions.

*See you on the water.....*

*Tom Deschaine*

[www.michigandryflies.net](http://www.michigandryflies.net)

copyright 2012©Deschaine