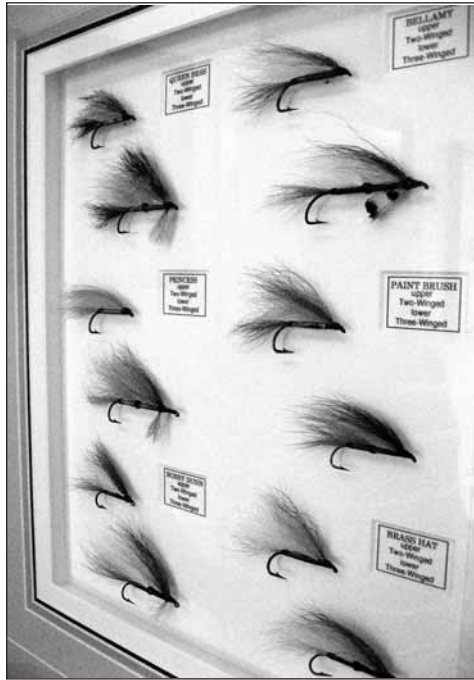


Couple is hooked on fishing equipment



Pat and Gary Waller, right and on page 3, have been collecting fishing memorabilia and tackle for nearly 30 years. Above, a case displays flies tied by Peter Schwab of Hornbrook, Calif., more than a half-century ago. Below, the Wallers' collection includes a photograph of Zane Grey. Opposite page, reels fill a display case in the corner of their dining room.

Gary and Pat Waller share a love of fishing, evident from a walk through their home at the base of Mount Sexton.

It's a tad scaled back from the outdoor look of their previous home along the Rogue River . . . but not much.

Inside a hutch where most couples would place their best china, the Wallers have stuffed a batch of shiny fishing reels.

There's a few Rogue reels, made by the late John Shaw of Grants Pass. Ambassadors. Pflugers. Shakespeares.

Story and photos by Jeff Duewel

One that looks almost like a winch stands out at the bottom — a 16/0 Arthur Kovalovsky saltwater reel like the ones author Zane Grey used in the Pacific off of Southern California.

Next to the hutch are photographs of Grey, who made his mark on the Rogue River nearly 100 years ago, standing by a giant marlin. On the wall, Grey is posed with about 30 steelhead, in front of the Weasku Inn, the center of the fishing universe around Grants Pass in the early part of the 20th century.

On a mantle sit some fishing trophies, from Edna Skinner, known for playing Wilbur's neighbor Kay on the Mister Ed TV show years ago.

Skinner, who lived on the Oregon coast, became a noted fly fishing author later in life. The Wallers went fishing with she and Umpqua River guide Denny Hannah once, Gary said.

Wicker creels sit on the mantle, from the late Jerry James, a

master fly tier who had a fly fishing museum in his house on Elk Lane. A few other James items dot the Waller collection.

Their prized possession is likely a canvas shark flag owned by Grey, from 1936, the kind of flag fishermen would run up while fighting a giant marlin on the ocean. A friend of a friend had connections when the Grey estate was being sold.

Gary's older brother dealt in fishing tackle in Southern California and provided the first bounty for the Wallers.

"I started collecting reels, and she liked it," Gary said. "Then we thought 'Let's grab anything we can.'"

After three decades of trading, they have a roomful of stuff that needs to be out on display.

Gary pulled out a round metal object sort of resembling a parking meter or small spaceship. It was a Worden's belly reel you could strap around your waste and cast line for hundreds of yards with the unattached rod.

They have two or three fly plates — framed works with either a painting or photograph of fly fishing combined with the actual flies themselves mounted in a shadow box — made by local artist-fly angler John Edwards, and Jack Smrekar of Florence, whose father-in-law was Bill Cushner. Cushner pioneered the fly plate design and owned a fly fishing museum in Florence from 1986 until he died in 1992.

Peter J. Schwab, famed angler from Hornbrook, Calif., and noted steelhead author from outdoor magazines last century, has flies in the Waller collection.

