



NFLCC Honorary Member:

Helen Shaw

Helen Shaw was one of the World's best tyer of flies. She was born in Madison, Wisconsin but moved with her family several times ending up in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Fishing with her father at a very early age she demonstrated a real knack for catching fish.

While still in high school she began tying flies for her father and his friends and demonstrated tremendous talent. She found a lot of demand for her lures as word spread of their effectiveness.

Recruiting Helen Shaw at a young age before her graduation from High School, she and Art Kade formed quite a business partnership named Art Kade Flycrafters. They only produced one catalog in 1938 which was used throughout their partnership. Art used his skills to build fine bamboo fly rods while Helen produced all of their flies. She served with distinction in WWII and on her return to civilian life Helen opened a store on the second floor of 816-A North 8th Street, Sheboygan. .

Lure manufacturers recruited her to head fly tying departments in their companies. The Weber Lifelike Fly Company fervently recruited her. However she said, "I want no part of it. My meticulously tied flies would not be possible when speed and production volume is so contrary to what I do. All of the best materials I require would be gone each week by Tuesday."

In the early 1950s Herman Kessler the Art Director for Field & Stream met her and was smitten. She said, "I knew he was serious when his letters started arriving by Air Mail!" Art and Helen married and he moved her to New York where she continued her fly tying business. They produced three books on making flies that are still sought-after classics.

The publicity she received there was unbelievable to someone that loved the solitude of fly making! Herman took her to the New York Outdoor Sports Show. She became overwhelmed by crowds trying to see how she tied flies. Even with an overhead mirror keyed on her hands people pressed to get a closer look.

Helen became the Greta Garbo of fishing, wanting to be alone. With Herman's skills in publishing, they produced three of the best books ever on fly tying with great photographs of the steps in making the many patterns.

In 1979 they moved to East Chatham, New York. Herman born on March 31, 1904, died on January 28, 1993. Helen Shaw born in 1910 passed away in 2007.

We collectors are privileged to have many of her flies, books, photographs, art and other tyers books signed as gifts to her plus fly rods made by Art Kade.