

News Release | May 2010



LEE WULFF

“Each fly is a dream we cast out to fool fish”

An Exhibition at Yale University’s
Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library
on view 25 June through 16 September 2010

The die was cast when Lee Wulff was born in Alaska in 1905, at that time a district of the United States, not yet a state. A childhood in a gold-rush frontier town associating with such colorful characters as Slop Jack, Rosy Roseen, and Outdoor Franklin would form the basis of an unconventional life. It would be Lee Wulff’s lifelong project to investigate unexplored territories, in his case remote parts of Newfoundland and Labrador. He would pioneer new approaches, techniques, and gear for fishing in general, and specifically for fly fishing for Atlantic salmon. Along the way he would become an expert and fearless bush pilot, flying a small float plane into remote areas of Canada before any established navigational aids or procedures for air/sea rescue. His childhood yearnings for the natural beauty and plentiful resources of his first home reemerged in adulthood, giving his restless spirit little patience for established wisdom in his chosen field—sport fishing. As Leigh Montville wrote in his obituary on Lee in *Sports Illustrated*, 13 May 1991, “What was a daydream for others became satisfying reality for outdoorsman extraordinaire Lee Wulff.”

On view from 25 June through 16 September 2010 at the Beinecke Library, *Lee Wulff: “Each Fly is a Dream We Cast Out to Fool Fish,”* will include manuscripts of Lee’s work, along with correspondence, clippings, and magazine articles from all over the world. Photographs of Lee fishing and tying flies will be on view. One of his fishing vests, an Ultimate fly reel, and one of his light six foot fly rods he used to subdue salmon will represent Lee’s many innovations. Included will be documents detailing his efforts to establish sound conservation measures for the Atlantic salmon.



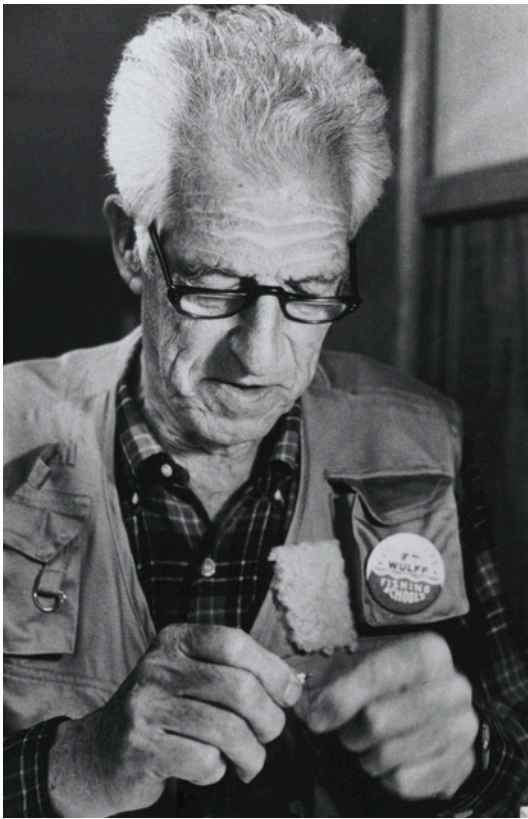
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Rebecca Martz, Public Relations Coordinator, rebecca.martz@yale.edu, 203-432-2969

Stephen Jones, Head, Access Services, stephen.jones@yale.edu, 203-432-7962



Born to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wulff on 10 February 1905, in Valdez, Alaska, Lee Wulff was catching trout in the brook behind his house on bacon and a bent pin at two years of age. After receiving an engineering degree from Stanford University, Lee promptly headed for Paris to study art, sharing the City of Light with the American expatriates Stein, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Henry Miller.

After artistic success resulted in an exhibition of his work, he returned to New York City to begin a career in commercial art and advertising, fishing avidly in his spare time. He soon made the choice to spend his life engaged in sport fishing, Atlantic salmon in particular, opening up new areas for fishermen, particularly in Newfoundland and Labrador. Lee became a successful lecturer and the author and illustrator of numerous books, untold magazine and journal articles.

What came to be popularly known in the second half of the twentieth century as “Catch and Release” fishing can be directly traced to Lee’s pronouncement in his 1939 book, *Handbook of Freshwater Fishing*, where he lays out the principle and terminology of catch and release: “There is a growing tendency among anglers to release their fish.... Game fish are too valuable to be caught only once.” Lee’s advocacy for catch and release has become globally accepted as the standard approach for conservation and to guarantee plentiful fish populations for sport fishing.

An early advocate and practitioner of photography and film making, Lee appeared on television in segments of the CBS show “Sports Spectacular” and the ABC program, “The American Sportsman.”

Together with his wife Joan Salvato Wulff, Lee opened a fly fishing school, relying as much on Joan’s champion fly casting reputation as his own legendary fly fishing history.

Lee Wulff played an instrumental role in improving sport fishing and insuring that fish stocks would continue to increase, often against great opposition from bureaucrats. While Atlantic salmon may never be as abundant as they once were, Lee Wulff alerted the world to their plight. His legacy is carried forward today by scores of sportsmen and sportswomen, as well as scientists, naturalists, political figures, and academics, all striving to protect Lee Wulff’s beloved Atlantic salmon.



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