

Fly Tying Bench *by Paul Sequira*

CARL'S GLASS MINNOW

Our predominant baitfish in the winter is the glass minnow (bay anchovy) and Carl Hanson's Glass Minnow can't be beat for imitating this bait. Ft. DeSoto was a favorite fishing spot not only for Carl but Don Coleman too. It seems appropriate that we should feature this fly and put it to work at our Don Coleman Classic this month. Don taught Carl's fly for years so I lifted his tying instructions from one of the many papers Don wrote about it. In the following narrative you'll find Don's instructions and comments in italics; where needed, I've added my comments in regular print.



Top: Gray/white G.M. tied by Don Coleman

Bottom: Olive/white tied by Carl Hanson

Materials:

Hook: Mustad 3407 sizes 4, 2 and 1

Thread: Red 3/0 Uni-Thread or Flat Waxed Nylon

Body: Aluminum foil over wrapped with 15# – 20# clear monofilament

Wing: White bucktail under pearl or silver Krystal Flash under colored bucktail. All materials are sparse bunches and not less than twice the total length of the hook.

Directions:

Pinch the hook barb down with your pliers by coming in from the front of the hook. Now, put a slight bend in the hook shank as per Don's instructions as follows. *“Do not bend hooks using pliers or vises. Simply hold the hook point up by gripping the eye and part of the shank with the pliers lined up with the hook shank—not across the hook shank—and bend the hook by pressing down with your thumb inside the bend so that the shank will take a gradual bend and avoid creating a sharp bend which could weaken the hook shank. I find it best to use flat nosed, smooth jawed pliers with the tip of the pliers about one or one and one half eye lengths behind the back of the hook eye and allow the hook to bend where it will. Smooth jaws will avoid creating stress points in the hook shank. Long shank hooks are best, and bodies are unnecessary for bendback flies.”*

Now, secure the hook in the vise. *“Invert the hook in the vise before tying the wing so that the point is up and the short, straight part of the hook shank immediately behind the hook eye is level”*

Don describes Carl's method for creating the body as follows: *“Carl is credited with developing a fly with the body over-wrapped with 15 or 20 pound, clear monofilament. He wrapped the monofilament like you would snell a hook or tie a speedy nail knot. The body itself was usually aluminum foil from the kitchen wrapped around the hook shank.”*

Attach the thread with a jam knot on the straight portion of the hook shank directly behind the eye working back to the forward end of the over-wrapped body. Don's instructions for building the wing follows: *“The sparse wing of his [Carl's] fly was very simple: colored bucktail over white bucktail. Only in later years did he start adding Krystal Flash in the wing, although I don't believe he thought it necessary. The head should be kept relatively short, not long and tapered.”*

Some additional notes from Don: *“Carl Hanson's favorite fly has been bastardized so often lately by those who claim to have known Carl and the final version of his fly that some explanation is warranted. I was one of the regulars at Carl's fly tying clinic and his after hour's discussion group, for more than 15 years. I also fished regularly with Carl. In the early years of development, he tied the fly with the wing on top of the hook shank. The final version of Carl's Glass Minnow was a bendback on regular length saltwater hooks in sizes #6, #4, and #2. He always used red thread for his flies and coated them with fingernail polish. Period. No extra embellishments. His “Glass Minnows” have probably caught more fish in the Tampa Bay area than any other fly. Although Carl could tie any fly, the “Glass Minnow” was his trademark fly.”*

“This fly should be in every fly box, especially during the winter months when White bait have left the flats. Try swimming or swinging a brace of small bendbacks, using a dropper, around the sandy pot holes in the grass beds. Depending on its size, color, and how it is retrieved, this fly can imitate a small baitfish or a shrimp. Being semi-weedless, it is a great fly to use when floating grass is present.”