

Simplicity

by Mel Krieger

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"Have you ever thought, not only about the airplane, but about whatever man builds, that all of man's industrial efforts, all his computation and calculation, all the nights spent working over draughts and blueprints, invariably culminate in the production of a thing whose sole and guiding principle is the ultimate principle of simplicity.?"

"In anything at all perfection is finally attained not when there is no longer anything to add, but when there is no longer anything to take away; when a body has been stripped down to its nakedness. "

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Despite my feeling that the style and flair of Brownstones and Victorians have more appeal than the efficient geometric shapes of modern buildings, there is the strong ring of truth in Saint-Exupery's principles of simplicity. The perfect flycast is a good example; straight lines of line and rod with no extraneous force or movements or motions of hand and body, all energy solely directed through rod and rolling line to the fly. These principles of simplicity are also an integral part of both communication and instruction.

Nelson Ishiyama, a friend and the editor of my flycasting book, did more than help me with words. Early in our work together, he asked me if the purpose of the book was to teach people to cast. The real truth was that I wanted to show my peers and the world that once and for all, the flycast would be completely and perfectly analyzed and that it would be carved in stone forever and ever, and that Mel Krieger would be recognized as the author of flycasting's theory of relativity. Somehow I had trouble admitting this feeling, so I agreed to adopt the "Will this help someone learn to cast?" question to everything we did in the book. We spent a lot of time attempting to reduce complicated and involved theoretic concepts in flycasting to more basic truths and to simpler explanations. We eliminated photos and illustrations and many, many words. A funny thing happened to me and, like my transition from killer to conservationist in catch-and-release fishing, I began to feel very good about this new direction, finally embracing it, not only for the book, but in all of my teaching.

Do not confuse simple with elementary teachings only, or for that matter easy instruction. In fact the reverse is usually true. Helping the advanced flycaster commonly requires the most fundamental of adjustments. It may happen, for example that a small change of hand position will solve a tailing loop, timing, velocity or any or all of many other casting faults. That fine tuning, finding a basic common denominator does not come easy. Simplicity invariably requires more time, effort and usually experience. A famous author once said at the end of a letter to a friend, "My apologies for this long letter. If I had more time, it would be much shorter."

Over teaching, a universal problem in flycasting instruction consists of two major parts; not allowing the student enough alone time – time to learn without the impediment of instruction, and of course, too much instruction.

Have I solved this relatively easier explained problem? Hell no! My own biggest difficulty in teaching continues to be too much explanation, too many words, too much critique, too many “let me show you” casts – in short – over-instruction. For all of us, however, understanding is the first step to improving that complex relationship (almost a dichotomy) that exists between the simple ‘helping someone to cast a fly’ and the healthy ego that is a necessary part of being a good instructor. I hope it also means that we will continue to grow.

*The quintessence of learning is doing.
The quintessence of teaching is inspiration.*