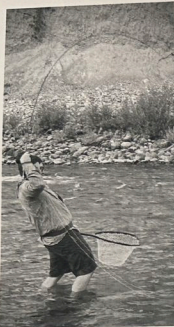


ferry county cycling federation

Barstow Dispatch
Volume 2, Number 3

Summer 2022





Dopamine hitting. Kettle River: Fall 2021. Photo: Maddie Speare

Subscribe to Barstow Dispatch

Subscriptions are free. We mail the Dispatch when we feel like it. To subscribe indefinitely, send a cool postcard with your address to:

John @ POCF
1 Rooster Way
Kettle Falls WA 99141

New masthead custom font and design by Augustine.
@augustinemachine on the 'gram.

Amateur 1st-timer screen print jobber: John. It'll get better!

On the cover: the ghost of John A Speare rolling down the river road by POCF World HQ. Circa 2008.

FERRY CYCLING COUNTY FEDERATION

Summer 22 Fishue

Biking and fishing. What could pair better? It's easy to imagine biking out to fish a remote stream or lake deep in the backwoods. A common fantasy for many anglers is the mythical spring-fed beaver pond with giant trapped native trout hungry for dry flies. For those roadless, far-flung sections of river or hidden ponds a bike seems like the perfect pairing. But in practice, biking and fishing work best together in fairly spaced scenarios.

Most backcountry fishing, whether in streams or mythical ponds, requires some level of bushwhacking that very often will be practically impassable by bike: mainly lots of deadfall to crawl over.

Whereas stream fishing, even within proximity to a passable road or trail is usually a "don't grow roots" affair. In the fly-fishing world, "growing roots" is when you camp out a section, rather than keep moving. You gotta keep moving when you're fishing a stream: work a pocket here, drift a seam there, then move. So perhaps having a bike to get you to the stream may be useful, but once you are fishing, the bike is a liability: managing a rigged pole while attempting to ride or push a bike is a cumbersome and dangerous game. The delicate tips on fishing poles really like to break in those sorts of scenarios.

So when it comes to bike fishing, it's usually best to think of the bike part as distinctly transport. Destination is all fishing: rig your pole and leave the bike and pile of transport gear in a heap as you bushwhack your way upstream.

All this is to explain why this Dispatch is pretty much all fishing and not much biking.

But we not none! We've got an interview with Swift Industries Martina, a bit of ebike news, and we've got the perfect bike-fish mashup with a featured column by Rivendell founder, Grant Petersen.

Nailed it!

Some fishing context

We wrote this history snippet in V1, Number 2. The readership has grown a bit since then. This column was about the original fishing situation just down the road at Shontikwu.

Any attempt at telling a history of the Barstow Chapter must begin with Kettle Falls. So let's begin by riding on Highway 39S.

As a rule, we avoid riding Highway 39S. It's an unpleasant place to ride. However, we make an exception in this case. In fact, we ask that you stop reading now and do this: Go to the town of Kettle Falls and ride north on 39S. In a couple miles, you'll crest the hill above the Columbia River. Roll down 39S and take in the scenery. When you get to the bridge, don't ride the deck. Instead, walk your bike on the south catwalk and stop in the middle of the span. Stare into the calm water of Lake Roosevelt below and imagine...

Today, the little town on 39S, formerly known as Meyers Falls, is now called Kettle Falls. But 100 years ago, Kettle Falls referred to a pinch in the Columbia River where the elevation dropped about 50 feet to quartzite below and over a series of massive quartzite slabs into deep cauldrons boiling with salmon.

This place is referred to as Shontikwu by the Indigenous Colville (sx'y7ɬpx) people.

Shontikwu was the social, spiritual, and economic epicenter for this region for thousands of years. Every summer, massive runs of salmon traversed the falls here to reach their spawning grounds upriver—so many salmon, the legend goes, that a man could walk across the river on the backs of salmon. The Colville would catch these salmon with baskets attached to long poles as the fish leapt up through the terraced falls. With the salmon arrived thousands of travelers from across the region to share in the fishing bounty: the Coastal Salish from the west, the Kalispel and Nez Perce, the Plains people from as far away as Montana, the Lake Arrow People from the north, the Cayuse from the south.

As the host tribe, the Colville salmon chief controlled fishing rights and salmon distribution. The Colville were well-suited for this task, as, according to legend, Coyote long ago blessed the falls with massive salmon runs as a result of the generosity that the Colville people showed him.

In the early 1840's, early missionaries and trappers estimated that the Indigenous people fishing during the summer would catch about 3000 fish a day. A day. So, it's summer: food is plentiful. Thousands of people from all manner of tribes are camping, eating, trading interesting stuff. Marriages, truces, pacts, and other agreements are being negotiated. Annual festivities and friendships are renewed. New connections made. One can only imagine what a highlight of the year this must have been for so many people for countless generations.

No doubt, we are guilty of romanticizing our vision of this place as we stare down into the still waters below. But let's indulge ourselves and linger a bit, because we know how this story ends. And all lives in all times include sadness and some misery and relative levels of suffering but by all

accounts this place, buried under 30 feet of water, until just 100 years ago, was undoubtedly a place of joy for thousands of people for millennia. Somewhere deep under the water below, perhaps the joy still reverberates through the quartzite slabs.

In the latter half of the 19th century, the first cannery was started at the mouth of the Columbia in Oregon by some brothers from Maine. Salmon were abundant and easy to catch. By the end of the century, 50 canneries had set up shop. By 1930, the Colville were catching about 1500 fish per year. Per year.

In 1930, the Rock Island Dam was built downstream on the Columbia near Wenatchee. In 1930, the Colville annual catch was 267 salmon.

But the worse was yet to come. In the late 1930's the US Department of Reclamation built the Grand Coulee Dam and flooded Shontikwu under water. Imagine a June day in 1940. Thousands of somber Indigenous are driving in from all over the region: the Colville, the Sinkiut, the Cayuse, the Okanagon, the San Pöl, the Nez Perce, the Kalispel, the Spokane, the Coeur d'Alene. Many of the 10,000 who make the trip are undoubtedly elders who are returning to this place where they had spent some of the most joyous summers of their lives. Perhaps a small handful recall those days where 3000 fish a day was the norm. They have arrived for the "Ceremony of Tears" and are gathering here for the last time, before the dam fills the once-raging

Shontikwu and is buried by Lake Roosevelt. And with it, hundreds of miles of shoreline all the way into the neighboring tribes of the Spokane and San Pöl and the Lake Arrow People (Simast) to the north are flooded. We will not attempt to summarize the enormity of loss to the Indigenous people. No doubt we'll touch on some details of this event in future Dispatches.

One final thought before you break the hold of your stare into the water below: The Indigenous are not dead. The cultures, the tribes, the nations—the people are alive. Our tradition, those of the European armchair chroniclers, tends to frame these histories as the telling of dead cultures of a dead people who played a role in the order of a preordained evolutionary cultural history.

Events such as the "Ceremony of Tears" may mark the end of an era. But it certainly did not mark the end. Rather, perhaps this event might serve as a critical milestone in how we understand the history of the Indigenous of this region. Cook-Lynn describes an analogous event in Sioux history when she explains that the massacre at Wounded Knee was not the end of Sioux history, but rather, that the event was "the beginning of hard times, the basis for evidence of a long and glorious history, the focal point of survival."

Fly fishing, wha? Don't bring Barb

We're talking about fly fishing here. You can certainly pack a telescoping spin-bait setup in your frame bag and pedal off to fishing bliss. If that's your jam, you're good to go.

So what's the difference between fly fishing and spin fishing? The essential difference is one of what (and how) you are presenting to fish to entice them to bite.

When fly fishing, you are using an artificial bug or "fly" that has been fashioned (tied) around the hook. A critical factor in fly fishing is how you present that bug.

With spin fishing, you often use live bait (worm, grub, etc) or some kind of hardware that spins, jigs, bobs, weaves or whatever. Presentation is important in spin fishing, but fish are more apt to hit a fat wriggling worm regardless of how it's presented, than they are a sketch-looking fake bug poorly presented.

From this first principle of fly vs spin fishing, the gear that one uses and the technique one employs with that gear diverges completely.

Speaking for the fish here, perhaps the most critical distinction between these two styles of fishing is the lowly hook.

The hook on the left includes a barb near the tip of the business end. That's a barbed hook. The hook on the right does not. That's a barbless hook. Barbed hooks pretty

much ensure that you're going to keep the fish on the line after you've hooked it. That barb does a good job of keeping the hook from backing out. The barbless hook, on the other hand, will slide right out of the fish's mouth if you're not managing line tension and angle as you land the fish. While barbless requires

practiced skill and technique, which is always fun, the point (pa dum pum) of barbless hooks is to reduce damage to fish as much as possible. The vast majority of fish you'll catch will be tossed back into the water. Fish are very delicate. Removing a barbed hook from a fish's face (or gullet) is a terribly destructive operation. If you're not convinced, jam a barbed hook into one finger and a barbless hook into another finger, then remove them. Take note of

the gristle that comes out with the barbed hook vs the clean slide of the non-barbed hook. Always fish with barbless hooks. Many (most) hooks come with barbs. Squeeze the barb down with pliers to make it barbless. It's easy.



The brothers Speare slaying on the Kettle. Circa 1980.

Pole position for the curious

As with bikes, there are endless discussions, opinions, and debates about the right gear for beginners to fly fishing.

As with new cyclists and the LBS, the right approach for beginner fly fisher people is probably to point them to a local fly shop. A good shop will work to understand what your goals and budget are. Word of warning, fly fishing gear gets silly expensive quickly.

For those who want to DIY, borrow, or find used equipment, this little article attempts to distill the important differences between three different setups that you might consider for bike fishing: the 4 or 5 weight standard, the 2 weight shorty, and the mighty Tenkara.

4/5 weight standard

First off: "weight" refers to the mass of the fishing line that the rod has been optimized for. One way to think about it at this juncture is, lower numbers (0-3) are ideal for smaller fish, while bigger numbers (7-10) are for monsters. So if we're talking about 4 or 5 weight rods, then we're talking about a middling, good for most reasonable stream, lake, and small river scenarios.

You want to find a rod that around 9-10 feet long. For bike fishing: find one that breaks down into 4 sections, not two.

The longterm benefit of going with a 4/5 setup is that you'll have rod that is way more capable on bigger water than the 2 weight option. And as a beginner, much more usable on big water than the tenkara.

It's important to realize that you can catch bigger fish on smaller poles, the "weight" thing has a lot to do with the action and flex of the pole, which will matter more if you get suckered into the vortex. But for now, imagine you may have a preference for a

flexier/lighter action (4 weight) vs a slightly stiffer (5 weight).

Stiff, yet compliant? Steal is real? CX vs gravel bike. Fast/slow handling? If you're already substituting bike lore wizardry with these notions than you get it.

The 4 weight is the CX bike that's quicker handling and requires a bit more skill in throwing for, and landing bigger fish. But it's slightly lighter profile helps you with accurate casts and rewards good

technique especially when casting lighter dry flies.

The 5'er is the gravel bike: capable and usable for pretty much any moderate water. It's stiffer profile and heavier line is a bit more forgiving for distance casting. Tying on heavier flies (like streamers or weighted buggers) is more manageable with a 5 or even a 6. So why not just get a 4 or a 5 weight standard rod and call it? In most cases the 4/5 approach is the right beginner move. However, if you see yourself doing a bunch of small stream mountain fishing, where the fish are mostly small and you're always boxed in with

overhanging bushes and deadfall, then a 10 foot rod is not your friend. Read on...

2 weight shorty

If the 4 weight is the CX bike and the 5 weight is the gravel rig, then the 2 weight shorty is a pump track bike: a purpose-built indulgence that is just excellent at one thing. If you're committed to small streams the 2 weight is your move. The "shorty" part is that you want a 6-footer that breaks down



John working the 2 weight shorty on lower Sherman Creek. June 2021. Photo: Maddie

When I decided to devote most of a Dispatch to fly fishing, the following article by Grant Petersen was in the back of my mind. I wanted to create a perfect intro-to-fly-fishing mini treatise that could cover the basics in a single read. I finally dug this article up from the Internet to re-read it more than a decade later. I wanted to see if it was as useful as I remember. God it is. So much. So I was thrilled when Grant gave me enthusiastic permission to publish it here. It's unedited. Put your readers on, I had to knock down the font a bit to make it fit, but I just couldn't cut any of it. It was originally published in 2009 in Rivendell Reader Number 41. (John)

Trout, rivers, insects, trout flies, and fly-fishing

By Grant Petersen

Trout fears and fishes

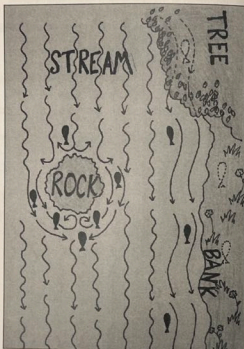
Trout that don't live in New Zealand are afraid of fish-eating birds, so they hang out in deep water, in undercut banks, under overhanging trees and bushes. They're also afraid of sudden shadows, which suggest something from above is about to get them. New Zealand-based trout often hang out where no other trout would dare to be, because there are no trout bird-predators there. Athletically, trout are sprinters, with little endurance—much like a cave-man in that way. This makes as much sense for a trout as it does for a cave-man, since a trout not hooked to a line wouldn't ever have to exert itself maximally (and anaerobically) for more than the five or five and a half seconds it might take to escape a river other trying to chop it.

Water requirements

Trout need cool, clean, clear, well-oxygenated water. If the water doesn't have enough dissolved oxygen in it, the trout can't breathe well, and it's like you or me in a room choked with smoke or tear gas. How much oxygen is in the water depends on its cleanliness, temperature, elevation, plant life, and turbulence. Oxygen is highly soluble in the 56 to 60°F water trout prefer, and a lot less soluble in water above 70°F. Clean water holds more oxygen because it lacks pollutants that eat up the oxygen. Turbulence caused by steep gradients and rocks helps infuse the water with oxygen. If environmental conditions such as a hot drought, or man-made conditions, such as letting warm lake water into a river, make the water too warm, the trout's metabolism increases and it needs more oxygen, at the same time that the water provides less of it. Then trout go into a lethargic survival mode, and don't care about food. If you were in a room full of smoke or tear gas, you wouldn't care about food, either. Besides well-oxygenated water, trout also like slow water, because it's easier to live in than fast water. The rivers may be fast on the surface, but even the fastest white-water rivers have plenty of slow places, and trout find them.

Where trout find the nice, relaxing slow water

- 1. Next to a bank.** Water in a stream moves by "laminar flow," where, the closer it is to the unmoving mass such as a stream bottom or a bank, the slower it flows. Maybe it's friction.
- 2. Behind rocks.** Rocks break up the flow, and the pools behind them are good shelter from the current.
- 3. In front of rocks.** The water hits the rock and rebounds upstream against the flow, and the rebound cancels out the downstream flow.
- 4. Next to rocks.** Going back to that "laminar flow" phenomenon, the water is slower next to a rock than it is well away from it.



In this unusual photograph, the light squiggly lines represent the faster water, the loose ones, slower water. There are eleven trout shown in typical trout hangouts—where the water's slow, but with ready access to faster water that brings them food, like one of those sushi bars with the heating food trays. Did you find the dotted line trout under the tree branches, and the one under rock?

5. On the riverbottom. The bottom has it all: Protection from raptors, lots of food (bugs live there), & friendly slow water (because of the "laminar flow").

Trout eating habits Trout are foragers, and rarely refuse food if they don't have to work hard or risk their lives to get it. If a familiar bug drifts by a trout in a familiar way, most of the time, the trout will eat it. Ninety percent of a typical river-trout's diet is aquatic bugs that live at the bottom of the river. The rocks and depth provide the bugs with shelter and food (vegetation and other bugs), and trout eat them when they get dislodged and are drifting freely, or when it's time to change from juvenile to adult. Then they let go of the rocks and drift or wriggle up to the surface to hatch.

Why trout like to be near, but not in, fast water Fast water delivers food more quickly than slow water does. The food in the fast water is generally drowned adult insects, and sometimes drifting bugs that were floating to the surface to hatch, but got caught in the fast water at the surface, and are being carried by it quickly downstream. Trout like to be in slow water, with ready access to fast water, so they get food from both.

How far will trout move for food? In a slow, clear stream, three or four feet for a big mouthful. In a typical rocky stream, when the food is a tiny bug, a foot is the most you can expect. Trout will move farther for food in clear, slow water because they can see the water, and they don't have to fight the current. In a lake, they cruise for food, because the water doesn't bring it to them.

When do trout eat at the surface? When the river is slow and the water is clear, and the water bugs have drifted or wriggled their way to the surface, and are ready to hatch into adults and fly off to mate. Sometimes trout eat only bugs that are an inch below the surface; sometimes they eat only bugs that are emerging into adults; and sometimes they eat only bugs high on the water letting their wings dry before flying off to mate. Trout also feed on top when the flies are laying eggs in the water, or when land bugs, like beetles, grasshoppers, and ants, fall in. In clear, deep, slow water, trout sometimes feed at all depths, but in a typical two-to-four foot deep trout river with a decent current, most of the eating is done at the bottom and most of the rest is done on top.

What a trout sees Fishermen and scientists have studied how trout see things underwater, on the surface of the water, and above the water (for instance, a fisherman casting to them), but in the absence of a trout's testimony, the debate goes on. Everybody agrees that trout see things underwater better than on top of the water, and that trout see color, but differently than we do; and when the water's clear, trout see you standing tall in your bright red shirt waving your fly rod at them. The trout-sight debate is about how much of the water surface trout see from various depths, and whether or not they see the portions of bugs or flies that are just above, but not touching, the water's surface. Nobody is quite sure, but everybody has ideas.

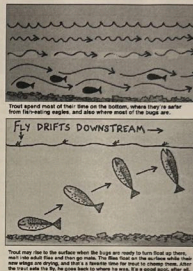
Can trout hear? Trout can't hear you talk, but can feel the vibrations created from tramping heavy along the banks and stirring up the rocks in the river as you wade it.

Do trout feel pain when they're hooked? PETA may have a problem with fishing in general, but a trout's mouth is mainly cartilage, and if it's like our cartilage, they can't feel the hooks. When you fly with bait the trout may swallow the hook along with the bait, and then when it fights it's also ripping its own guts out. Not a pretty picture, but also not a possibility when fishing with flies. Once the trout can tell it's been duped (immediately), it tries to reject the fly, like a person ejecting foil stuck to the chocolate.

The kinds of food in trout rivers

Trout are opportunistic omnivores, but in a typical small to medium-sized stream, most of what they eat are caddis flies, mayflies, and stone flies. Caddis flies hold their wings like an inverted V; mayflies hold their wings upright and parallel; stone flies hold theirs flat over their backs. They also eat freshwater shrimp, crawdads, frogs, damselflies and dragonflies, small fish, and land bugs (called "terrestrial") like beetles, ants, inchworms, and grasshoppers. Local fly shops know the kinds of bugs in the rivers, and the fly patterns that best imitate them. You can also pick up rocks and look for yourself, and mostly what you'll find will be small and dark. There are no "secret flies," although fly shops depend on your thinking there are.

Kinds of trout flies Flies that float are called Dry flies, and usually imitate or at least suggest to the trout mayflies, stone flies, or caddis flies. Since dry flies are flies that float, the category also includes flies that imitate landborn insects, like beetles, grasshoppers, ants, and inchworms, since they also float. Land insects and the flies that imitate them are referred to as terrestrials, and they float too. Flies that sink are called wet flies. "Wet flies," is a big category that includes: nymphs (pupal forms of the insects...remember "egg, larva, pupa, adult?"); emergers (flies that imitate hatching insects, and see fished sometimes a few inches below the surface, since many insects actually crawl out of their pupa casing on the way up to the surface; and drowned flies that got splashed by a wave and sunk before they could fly off. When a guy says "wet fly" he usually refers to one that looks like a drowned insect, with wings swept back all soggy. Streamers and bucktails, which are tied with feathers and hair respectively, imitate small fish. Big fish eat small fish, and in some rivers these fish flies catch the most and biggest trout. But a typical trout between 9 and 18 inches eats mostly bugs. Tricking the trout When you cast to trout feeding on the water's surface, make the fly land three to six feet upstream from where you saw the trout come out. That's because as the trout moves up to the surface to eat, it drifts downstream to do it. Then it eats a bug and goes back to where it was before it started to drift up and back to get the bug. Why trout can be hard to catch Trout are no different than people, in how they eat. If you're an omnivore at a smorgasbord, you go for the stuff you like most and select



An assortment of trout flies are better than salmonids could eat in the trout streams in the country.



the choicest morsels. That's what trout do when there's a lot of food in slow, clear water. The literature of fly fishing propagates the notion of "educated" trout. But a trout has fish brains, and if it's hard to catch, it's because the water's clear, there's lots of food, and it's not to inspect the food before trying to eat it, and there's a lot of people fishing on that river, so the fish learn to discriminate between imperfect imitations imperfectly presented, and real bugs.

Which trout are easier to catch & how come Trout living in a shallow river with lots of fast water and not much food grab stuff that moves by them fast just in case it is food, and spit it out if it isn't. They can't see it well, and they can't afford to be picky, or they'll starve. That's why they aren't as hard to catch. Trout in typical high-mountain creeks are usually easy to catch because there's not much food and the water's fast.

Summary Slow, clear water and lots of food and lots of fishing pressure makes trout hard to catch. Faster water and less food and fishing pressure make trout not as picky, and easier to catch.

KINDS OF TROUT FLIES

Close imitations of specific insects When there's a preponderance of one particular bug on the water, typically when it is hatching, sometimes trout won't eat anything else. Then you need not only a good presentation, but a good imitation, too. In rare circumstances, trout have been known to eat only crippled bugs that didn't hatch successfully (equivalent to a butterfly that got only one wing out). These situations are rare, but everybody experiences it eventually.

Generally buggy looking flies that look like generic food Unless you know the exact bug the trout are eating to the exclusion of all others, you're best off fishing a fly that's generically suggestive of common trout food, in its size, shape, and color: small, dark, and slender. The trick is not so much to imitate the food exactly, as it is to not present anything the trout can find fault with. Good flies usually don't look like much.

Flies that look bright & gaudy Trout sometimes go for a gaudy or oversized fly, in the same way that people sometimes go for gaudy people with oversized features. These flies are called "attractor" flies because they're highly visible but don't look like real food. Sometimes they'll catch more or bigger fish than grubbiest, more realistic flies.

How you present it is more important than what it looks like It's easy to get caught up in the trap of fly pattern obsession, where you think you have to have flies for every possible bug and every stage of its life. But you'll catch trout if you use flies that are the right size and color (usually small and dark) and make them appear to be free-

drifting, like a real bug that isn't tied to a line. If you drift it so the trout doesn't have to move more than a few inches to eat it, he'll eat it. Some bugs move in short spurts, and when you're fishing one that does, you need to make it behave the way its real counterpart does. For example, mayflies don't race across the surface of a slow current, and grasshoppers don't swim upstream underwater.

The two most common mistakes fly fishermen make

1. Casting too much. People learn how to cast, and like casting, so they cast too much, which keeps the fly in the air, where you can't catch a trout.
2. Changing flies too often. It's comforting to think, "it's not me, it's the fly I'm using," but unless your fly is way off, it's not the fly.

If your fly is reasonable and you aren't catching fish, either the trout aren't seeing it, or you're doing something to the fly during the drift to make it look wrong to the trout, or the fish just aren't there.

If you understand all of this and can wade and cast quietly, you'll catch trout. You may go all day without one, or two or three days, but if you don't give up, eventually you'll catch some. Then you'll repeat the things that worked, and learn the particulars of the rivers you fish, and then you'll catch a lot more trout. Plus, some rivers look good, but do have many trout in them, because even though they look like a classic trout stream, the chemistry or temperature is wrong for trout, or lots of the trout get killed when conditions become inhospitable over a hot, low-water summer, or a freezing winter.

There's still a lot more to catching trout than understanding their environment, nature, and preferences. You have to be able to put the fly where you want it, and to control it once it lands. That can be tricky when the river is tumbling and swirling at different rates between you and your fly.

It is common for a new, rich fly fishermen to short-cut the basics covered here, and hook up with a professional guide who knows the river well, and can provide the right flies, tie them on the line, and all but guarantee that they drift by fish, because he knows the river and where the fish are. It's sort of the equivalent of gym-fit businessmen climbing Everest with sherpas, guides, and oxygen.

A skilled fly fisherman fishing solo, without a guide, and without doing any research or even quizzing the locals, will learn where the fish are in any river, and will figure out how to catch them. Trout are the same everywhere. They like slow water near fast water; they like safety from rapids; and they like pretty much any food that floats by or falls in, so long as they're familiar with it and they don't have to work hard to get it. Probably all fish are like that, but trout for sure are.

Profile

Martina Brimmer
Co-Founder | Head Honcho
Swift Industries

In our last Dispatch we reviewed the Swift Industries Anchor Hip Pack. We incorrectly stated that this was made in Seattle. Reader, Alex W. contacted me to tell me that Swift had recently begun producing some of their stuff overseas.

I had some contact with Martina through some events Swift hosted many years ago, and I've wanted to profile her here. So with this news that she's started to move some production overseas, I wanted to connect. I was curious to understand how the transition works, scales, disrupts, etc...

This has been edited and compressed.

Quick timeline

2006: Martina is sewing professionally for Reload Bags in Seattle

2008-2009: Reload shuts down, Martina buys one of the sewing machines and a roll of fabric and starts Swift Industries. Her first product are panniers, the "Roll Top Pannier."

FCOF: Let's start here...

I was 24. I was going to shows. I was living my best punk rock life. We were living pretty scrappy, and exploring a lot. Jason (Goodman, co-founder) and I have always been super outdoorsy-adventurous. After I left Reload, I got a job that was the best situation. I ran an after school program for a Waldorf school from 2:30 to 6 PM. That left me all the rest of the time in the world to do what I wanted. And I loved sewing. I could not stop sewing. So I had time. I had some ideas for bags. I liked the puzzle of it. And I just started going.

So you're building bags. When did you start selling bags to people outside your friend group? How are you getting the word out?

I drew this super sketched out image of a bicycle + the roll top pannier + a sewing machine. We had a Wordpress Blog with a cut and paste PayPal button. I would go to punk shows all over the US. Mostly Philly, New York, and the west coast and I would put these little



All images are from Instagram

fliers around handlebars on the bikes that would show up at these shows. And from that we would start seeing orders coming in. There was a direct correlation. We'd go to a show in Baltimore and the next week we'd get 2 orders from Baltimore.

We're still in 2008-9 here. When does the business go from a few bags a week to you quitting your day job?

There's chapters to that answer. The first chapter, early 2010, was with just Jason and me. We're no longer living with a bunch of crusty punks. We are adults living on our own with a sewing machine and a dog.

I was still working for the school, but taking Swift much more seriously. I'm pretty obsessive and I just couldn't shake it. I was trying to find different ways of marketing—still totally homespun and DIY marketing. And then I decided that I wanted to hire somebody to help out. We knew we couldn't do that from home and so we found a spot in Ballard. Jason was still working full time managing a bike shop. I was still part time at the school. We were still not paying ourselves.

Around 2014 was when I finally quit the school. My role at the school had developed and some really cool stuff was happening there. I moved up to the high school and doing outdoor ed and developing programs. I loved teaching high school. I taught high school for about 4 years. And even though I loved it and it was a super flexible schedule, the same thing would keep happening where I'd find balance and then Swift was growing and I wanted it to grow. And I began to feel resentment that I felt torn between putting all my energy into teaching vs the energy that needed to happen for Swift. And then I ended up just choosing Swift.



What part of the business do you like the most? What really drives you?

I'm really intrigued by deep problem solving. And that's good for an entrepreneur. But the things that really bring me to life are marketing and career development for my people. Examples are working to develop talent in project management, communication, general management. Generally: honing craft and deepening skill for whatever the discipline is. I think that is also what made me a really good teacher because I just wanted to see people explore and push their boundaries. And I'm very compelled by the puzzle of doing that for all these different personalities. Sometimes it's great. Sometimes it's hard and not the right fit.

My own personal developments have not always been easy transitions. Increasingly, when the company demands something new of me, it takes me a minute, but I do end up falling in love with the new version of what I'm supposed to be doing to keep the business healthy. So right now, that is very much about increasing my financial acumen. And I'm totally down to show up.

This is like deep dive on spreadsheets and number crunching?

Yep, totally. And understanding that numbers are just representations of the operation of the business. Working with financials like that is really a creative pursuit.

You've mentioned that you like puzzles and problem solving. What's an example of a problem that you solved well?

It's gonna sound a little weird, but utilizing debt was one. We were adamantly debt free for the majority of our company history. Getting comfortable with debt and managing debt unlocked so much for me. This was in 2018, which is pretty recent.

I had a mentor that I worked with for many years who always told me, "Martina, growing is really expensive." And it's true. Scaling a business is insanely expensive and you're taking on risk. Typically what happens when you're scaling, you're kind of putting the cart before the horse a little bit in order to make a leap.

So you get to these pivotal points where you figure out that if you are going to have better margin in the company, thus hire people who are going to be able to push the envelope so that we can increase sales, then I'm going to have to lay out money now in order to reap the benefits of that in a year, or 2 years, or 6 months, or whatever the timeline. But I'm going to be confident that if I have inventory to sell at the right price and I have the right sales team here, then we're going to get there. And that's the risk.

So figuring out how to handle debt responsibly really opens up doors. That was one.

The other one (problem) was in 2018 when we decided that we weren't going to make every single Swift product by ourselves. Until 2018, we made every single bag, by hand, in-house.

Talk through that overseas part -- how did you figure that all out.

We were introduced to a company in Seattle that does all of the logistics and communication with overseas factories. We met with them and they were so awesome.

They have been and remain such incredible business partners. They are so down with educating us because we just don't know SO much about foreign manufacturing.

Everything from tariffs, to tagging, to poly bagging, to our next quest, which is packaging. We only do hang tags. But we're realizing that we're missing a critical opportunity to educate our customers on the proper use of the bags. For example, now we can call them and ask them how to work with factories to incorporate assembly with packaging. We lucked out super hard. We had a first conversation with a company and it has been an incredible fit for us.

I will say finding domestic partners is so much harder.

Are you ready to jump into this whole international question?

Yes! Totally.

Here we go...

When we saw the samples come back from the sample houses overseas (Indonesia) -- I had never imagined that our designs as the finished good would come back that stunning.

There's just all of these considerations with overseas production. The talent is there because it is a thriving and well-orchestrated and advancing industry. Whereas here, it is dying. And it's so hard to say this stuff because I wish it weren't so, but the industry here does



not have the energy and innovation and the precision that competition affords. It's eye opening.

The folks we work with over there: the textile mills are local to them, and parts, fasteners, molding suppliers.

Everything is close by. We just don't have that kind of infrastructure here.

One thing is hard and I'm learning how -- and I may not do the best job -- speaking about overseas production without feeling like I'm kind of throwing our domestic partners under the bus. I have so much respect for our domestic partners who have supported and contributed to our company. These comments are systemic. We don't have the infrastructure. I'm totally convinced that sewing manufacturing is only alive in the US because of military spec (military spec) manufacturing. If the military were not in need of regulated, domestically made products, I don't think

there would be any sewing in the US. And truthfully, most of it is happening in Puerto Rico.

So how do you choose what gets made overseas vs here?

Pretty simple: If we can hit their MOQs (minimum order quantities), then we're sending it overseas. For example, a MOQ may be 500 bags in a single color. We may not be able to sell 500 bags in a given color. This is why we have this hybrid model. One of our domestic factories will do smaller runs of 100 units. This is where inventory planning and forecasting comes in: everything we can, we're moving overseas. And so these questions come up for us.

I don't know if you've noticed, but every bike bag on the shelf is black. And there's a real good reason for that. Because if you can sell one color and that's black, then I can meet a company's MOQ and I don't have to worry about switching styles and meeting another company's MOQ. The life cycle of a product is so much longer. You can hold the inventory more responsibly. But it is increasingly homogenous. And that freaks us out. As a brand, that's not good. I love color. I love rotating styles and small collections. This is something that sets Swift apart.

For new products: how do you make figure out what makes the cut?

We're watching our business very closely.

For example, pannier sales are not what they used to be. So for the time being we're not going to put our efforts

there. But that doesn't happen in a vacuum. We understand what is going on with gear. So, what our bags are supposed to carry has changed so much in the last decade that we had better step it up. We are just here to provide really high quality cargo. We're here to make bags to carry your essential gear list.

We are getting ready to release a new product in September, and this bag is tiny. A lot of people are going to say, "this is way too small." So if we're talking about ease of movement, and adventure, and making the ride as fun as possible we owe it to our customers to be adapting to the gear. The lightness and the playfulness of not having these big bulky loads -- that is just a delight! It's such a nice progression in the industry and we're here for that.

As you think about your company. Is growth required? Is there a steady state where you can hold?

I think reaching a "steady state," for me feels like a bit of a fallacy. My awareness of my wants and needs of where I was at 25 were within very specific parameters. I didn't think we would be a crew of 18 people who were wanting to purchase homes and have children and make careers here. None of that even occurred to me.

We had to develop a company and wanted to make choices to say, "Y'all are showing up for this. Let's mature this business so we can be at Swift and make that stuff happen."

So we hit that target. And then, "Oh my god. My knee is hurting and I'm not getting any younger! And what am I doing for retirement?"

OK, Next goal: How are we going to start thinking about retirement and insurance benefits for people.

For every milestone we

reach, we see the next horizon. And each thing demands more money.

I want to build a lifestyle brand that focuses on community creation and story telling and is outward focused.



PSA: E-bikes are verboten in CNF and KCT, FYI

Although not plainly laid out on any single official Colville National Forest webpage, e-bikes (all types) are not allowed on CNF non-motorized trails. This prohibition includes the Kettle Crest Trail and all feeder trails.

Signs are posted at each trailhead.

We are in the midst of an e-bike rule reckoning, where edicts are percolating up from smaller organizations and land managers while federal and statewide agencies are slowly developing policy from the top. In the meantime, we're in a soup of e-bike rule chaos!

So having the hard copy signs at each trailhead IRL is critical.



Reddy Kilowatt remix: Augustine



Holy hell: Donate \$25 to NEW Hunger Coalition and get this perfect FCCF Pace cycling cap

Thanks to all who have donated and got a hat. We ordered 100. We've moved about 50 so far. So we've got a ways to go.

Tell your friend. Tell your frenemy.

If this is all news to you here's the nutshell: Ferry County is one of the poorest counties in Washington. Food, gas, the essentials are climbing. The cap thing is a fund raiser for Northeast Wa Hunger Coalition. They're a good org. They stock 14 food pantries across Ferry and Stevens county.

If you donate \$25 to them and email proof, we'll send you a hot-pink Pace cycling cap.

Want to smile like Satish? Be alert like Pat? Cool like Livvy? Donate. Get a cap. Do it please.



Point your phone at that code thing on the left or type this into your machine:

<https://www.johndogfood.com/fccf>

July 2022



Afternoon on Hodgson-Lankin Road.



Early morning on Sherman Peak.



Maddie rolling up Gallaher-Barrett Road,
Stevens County.