

A Reel Collector

Stanislav "Stas" Gorbounov

Text: Miki Álkás & Stas Gorbounov Photos: Stas Gorbounov's archive

A few years back I found on the internet a very interesting site called www.vintageflyreel.com. I looked at those reels many, many times, and later on, when I decided to take the job of Editor at Chasing Silver, I decided to contact the owner of the site and ask if I could write an article about those reels.



I was more than surprised when I opened my mail to find a response from the site. This guy's name is Stanislav Gorbounov, and he lives here in Finland... What the heck, small world.

When I sent my initial message, I was 100% sure that, if I got any response, it would come from the other side of the world, but no, it came from within 200 km of the place I live. Amazing!

Anyway, we exchanged some emails, and Stas decided to accept my idea for an article on his reels. Let Stas tell you about his collection and his way to live among the Atlantic salmon fishing.

Born and raised in Moscow, Russia, I graduated from the Moscow Institute for International Relations (MGIMO) and worked for state trading companies, dealing primarily with chemicals and petrochemicals. I moved to Finland in 1989 while still working for Oy Neftek AB, a Russian-Finnish company. In 1992, along with my partners I founded Crudex O, a company trading in petroleum products, petrochemicals and chemicals.

My passion for fishing began at the age of 6 when my father took me on a hiking trip around Moscow where I caught my first roach. Since that first trip, fresh water fishing in the rivers and lakes surrounding Moscow became a regular activity for me, mainly in the summertime. In 1978 I bought one of the first books published in Russia dedicated to fly fishing, written by Latvian fly fishermen – Sticuts and Ozols. Fly-fishing was not popular in Russia at the time, so getting a hold of equipment was a struggle until the 90s when its popularity grew. That summer was a turning point for me: as I tied my first fly and caught a fish



with it, my passion for fly-fishing began.

Having moved to Finland, I acquired my first decent fly rod and with it fished the beautiful lakes and streams there. I caught my first Atlantic Salmon of 8lbs on the Ponoj River in the Kola Peninsula, a river of vast size but relatively small salmon. It was 1995 when I fished the Varzina, Drozdovka and Sidorovka – the great northern rivers of the Kola Peninsula, and instantly fell in love with them. In the early 90's the Kola area was opened to western fishermen by Finnish fishing and hunting enthusiast Eero Pettersson, along with Thorpe MacKenzie and Gary Loomis. He later offered me a great opportunity which I could not pass on, participation in the Varzina River Company project.

In 1997 the new camp on the Varzina was built and became one of the best camps on the Kola Peninsula. Although not as famous as Kharlovka or Yokanga, the Varzina, as wise fishermen know, holds big fish. Sir Seton Wills's fish, caught in the early 90's, is still considered to



be the biggest salmon caught in Kola Peninsula Rivers. Eero Pettersson did a great job establishing a smooth and pleasant operation, and my friends and I continue running the company in cooperation with our partner in Russia "Sportfish Tour", successfully headed by Dmitry Gordon.

I have fished for a lot of saltwater species around the world as well as freshwater like peacock bass in the

Amazon, golden dorado and pacu in Bolivia, tiger fish in Tanzania, mahseer in India to name a few. We rafted a lot of rivers from the Ural Mountains to Kamchatka, seeking steelhead, trout, lenok, arctic char, pacific salmon, and visiting the northernmost areas of Russia in the Taymir peninsula. But still Atlantic salmon fishing is my favorite and my biggest passion. On my tenth anniversary fishing the Varzina





with our head guide Alex Danchukov, I lost all the fish I hooked during the prime June week. However, upon returning a month later for just three days, I landed 11 fish in six hours

along with a 15.5kg salmon, setting my personal record. A year later I beat my record by landing a 17kg salmon, which remains my biggest salmon landed on the Varzina to this day. I feel truly blessed to have been able to fish the 'best' Salmon River in the world – Alta. After several years of hard work, a 19.6kg salmon was my reward. Personally, Alta and Varzina are my two favorite rivers. They never fail to excite me.

My second passion is collecting vintage fly reels. Once, a long time ago, while fishing river Spey with my good friend Andy Majerus from London, I

was introduced to the Edward Vom Hofe reel. Andy said that it is a pity that it has a right hand retrieve as he is left-handed. Andy sold that reel to me, and it marked the beginning of my collection. He later got me acquainted with Neil Freeman, the famous auctioneer and owner of "Angling Auctions". Since that time I have become a regular client of "Angling Auctions" and "Mullock's " in the UK along with "Lang's" and "Crossroads " in the USA. As years passed by, I got acquainted with avid collectors all over the world.

At present, my collection





includes about 200 reels and consists of two parts: antique and vintage reels produced by the Hardy Brothers, Edward Vom Hofe, Zwarg, and Talbot and a more modern group that includes Walker, Fin Nor, Seamaster, Charlton and Bogdan reels.

I have some British jewels in my collection like an early Hardy Original Perfects, Hardy Alta reel and Hardy Cascapedia reels. As to the Cascapedia series, I now have all sizes including three 3/0 reels with

different designs and mechanisms.

Through the years I managed to locate and purchase all Otto Zwarg fly reels; Edward Vom Hofe "Restigouche", "Tobique", "Griswold" and "Col. Thompson" reels, with an exception of the smallest sizes of "Perfection" and the biggest of "Peerless" Edward Vom Hofe reels. As to American reels, I am very close to completing my Bogdan collection, which is missing just two sizes. My collection now includes two extremely rare Alta reels. One

is the Bogdan 400 reel, being one of ten made at the request of Tarquin Millington-Drake for the Alta Syndicate. Another, one of only ten reels made in 2004, is a 5 1/2 inch Alta reel, the "door stop" as Stanley called it.

Personally I consider Charlton reels to be the best for both fresh and saltwater fishing, as close to a universal reel as you can get. Thanks to genius high quality design and craftsmanship, these reels are superb. I have been fishing with Charlton reels since the mid 90's, and they have required literally no service over the years, and produced not a single fault playing either big salmon and tarpon or spooky permit. Recently I bought an 8550SS reel with Jack Charlton's signature, one of three produced.

Along with fly reels I collect vintage fly rods, silk lines, catalogues, books, scales and gaffs. ■

