

Rim
CHUNG



- RS2
- Plebby

Rim Chung

In early spring, Rim Chung, creator of the RS2, conducts a fly-tying demonstration at a fly shop about 40 miles west of Denver. He sits behind a long folding table, the kind seen at church suppers and business meetings. Visible before him are his some of his tools and materials: a few broad hackles prominently based with white fluff; two bobbins, one with black thread, the other with gray; and his fly-tying vise that consists of a pair of hemostats mounted vertically on a steel post. My first thought was something like, “Why in the world have I spent so much money on tying flies when Rim builds masterpieces with cheap forceps and scrap feathers?” The question was quickly supplanted by the idea that I might learn a lot from the man, and that proved true.

Reflective and spiritual, but often mischievous, he is well-read in various philosophies, including those of China and Greece. He gives the impression he has come to accept completely both himself and the world around him. In conversation, his gaze is steady, and his eyes sparkle as he relates an experience that sounds profoundly serious. In a moment, he throws you completely off balance with a playful remark or self-deprecating comment.

Rim insists, “I am not a fly tyer, I am a nymph fisherman.” The RS2, he says, was merely a tool to enable him and other anglers to catch more fish. To this day, he has not earned a cent in royalties from RS2 sales. He observes, “My desire was never to make money, but instead to create a single fly that could be tied in any color and so imitate a wide range of mayfly nymphs. If the fly was successful, that was the reward.” (His perspectives call to mind another insightful man of humble background, British riverkeeper Frank Sawyer, originator of the Pheasant Tail nymph.) At least a few myths have sprung up around

Rim and his RS2. First, there never was an RS1; the precursor to the RS2 remained unnamed largely because Rim was not totally satisfied with its performance. Also, RS2 stands for “Rim’s Semblance 2.” He selects his words carefully. In fact, even in his small apartment, he keeps close by two up-to-date, unabridged dictionaries, and he’s consistently expanding and refining his use of the English language. Another misconception surrounding Rim is that he fishes the RS2 exclusively, but such is not the case. His fly boxes are filled with a wide variety of nymphs, including some Pheasant Tails he has modified to his tastes, as well as his newer pattern, the Plebby. Noticeably absent, however, are any dry flies. Rim estimates the last time he fished a dry fly was more than a quarter century ago. As he says, he is a nymph fisherman.

He developed and refined the RS2 in the early 1970s; he can’t recall the year. His designation of the fly marked a significant departure from fly-naming conventions of the time. The cryptic “RS2” moniker concerned him. Would it discourage fly anglers from adopting the pattern? He recalls a sense of relief following the 1977 release of the film “Star Wars,” in which the robot character R2-D2 gained fame. “If people like R2-D2,” he says, “then maybe they will like RS2.” When I ask if he might ever create an RS3, he shrugs and laughs. “What would be the point?” he asks.

Rim grew up in Korea under Japanese rule, which he recalls as miserable and oppressive. The family found consolation in their farm, which provided them with food sufficient to survive. At the end of World War II, Japan gave up its Korean occupation. However, Rim and his family found themselves within the borders of a newly created country, North Korea, where the communist regime was even worse than that of the Japanese. The main difference, Rim recalls, was that the new political administration took over all family farms, and food