



# The Guru of the Grand

story and photos by Doug Elbinger

**B**rowse the sports section in any bookstore and it seems there have been more books about fishing than any other sport. Sometimes I wonder if I'm the only fisherman on the river who hasn't done a book yet...but I'm only a beginner. I think it's because every fishing trip is an adventure and every adventure needs to be told.

I didn't start fishing until later in life, and often wish I had started earlier.

When I was initiated to the 'Zen' art of fly fishing several years ago by Miles Chance, owner of M. Chance Fly fishing Specialities in Okemos, I couldn't imagine how it could affect my life. Now, when I travel or plan a trip, especially in Michigan, one of my first concerns beside photographic opportunities, is what kind of fishing water I'll be near. Living in Okemos, and desperate for good fishing water I made a point of exploring the Grand River.

The Grand is the longest river in Michigan, winding 256 miles

from its origins in southern Jackson County until it reaches Lake Michigan near Grand Haven. The Grand River is studded with fine state and local parks, and numerous 'access points' especially in the Lansing area.

Badly polluted for many years, the Grand did not have a reputation as good fishing water. In recent years its much cleaner and many species of fish that have disappeared are now returning in abundance. I have not yet personally seen this, but I have heard from reliable sources that Salmon have been sighted and caught in downtown Lansing. I can verify the existence Brown Trout in the



*above: Andy "Guru of the Grand" Busch casts his eye on a cool dark pool that may hold some hungry fish.*

*left: A 'float trip' on a flat bottom river boat is the best way to explore the Grand. Andy, who has been guiding on the Grand for a years, greets other fisherman and swap stories. Going on a guided tour is an excellent way for the beginner to learn about different casting techniques and the 'flies' that attract Trout or Bass.*

*"For a fisherman, Michigan is perhaps the best place in the United States to live...unless you live in Lansing." ---anonymous fisherman*

Red Cedar River near Williamston.

Everything I know about fishing I learned from someone else, and I've been fortunate in having the opportunity to fish with some of the best.

When Andy "Guru of the Grand" Busch offered to take me on the Grand I couldn't refuse. Andy, an enthusiastic, 23 year old MSU student (majoring in Public Administration) is from Okemos, and has been fishing the Grand since he was nine and can attest to the improvement of the river. His day job, working at the M. Chance Fly fishing Outfitters in Okemos gives him a chance to learn about the latest techniques and fishing conditions first hand. Andy has also been 'guiding' fishermen on the Grand and knows the best spots. One summer afternoon in July, I left my office in Old Town at 5pm, met Andy, and was on the water by 6:30 PM with plenty of light to fish and get some photographs. V



*above: Miles Chance (with cigar) patiently watches the water for sign of life. He explains that he learned to fish from his father, who was taught by his grandfather. In many families, fishing is a sport handed down from generation to generation*

*foreground (above): Miles proudly displays a healthy Smallmouth Bass taken after a short struggle.*

*below: Fly fishing is a lot easier than it may appear and like any other endeavor you'll get better with practice.. Fly fishing is a 'quiet' sport. Enjoying the beauty of a summer afternoon is part of the game when catching fish not always is. Mike Alexander, an aquatic entomologist for the DEQ, casts for bass on a picturesque bend in the Grand near the English Inn.*

