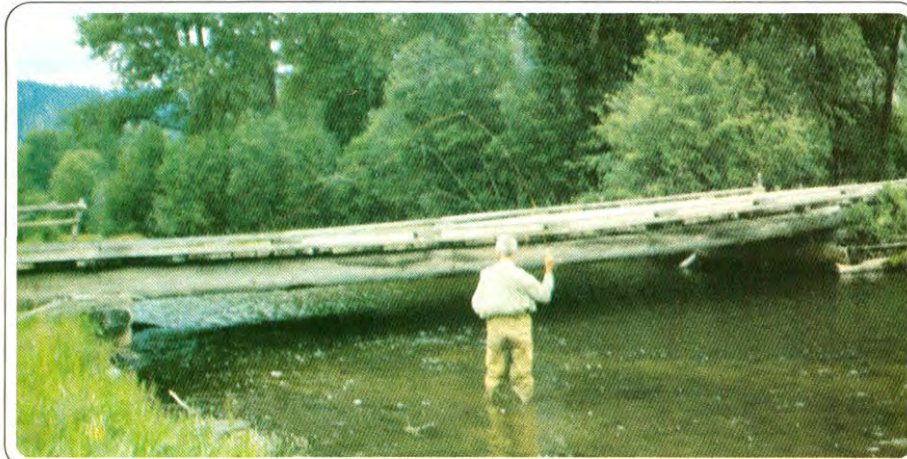
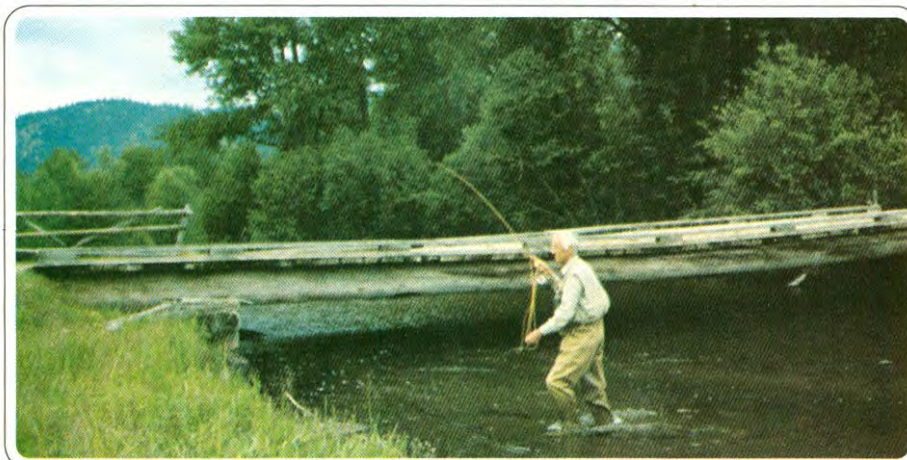




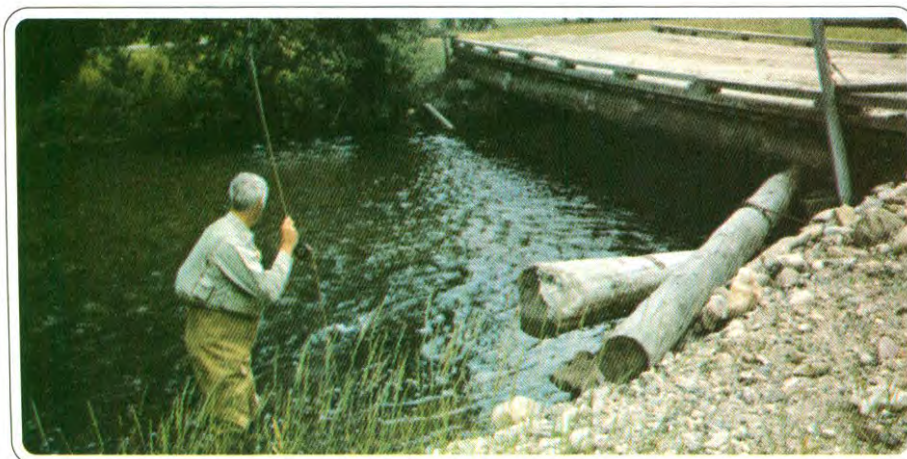
The author aims his cast high to reach over the bridge to the rising trout on the other side. It's a long shot, but worth a try. Photos by Joan Salvato Wulff.



The cast was right, the trout rose to the author's fly, and Lee sets the hook by throwing the line out and up.



Having connected with the fish, the author hurries around the bridge.



Finally the situation is back to normal as the author plays the fish on the upstream side of the bridge.

The trout are always rising on the other side of the bridge

SUDDEN INSPIRATION

LEE WULFF

THE CHALLENGES OF FLY-FISHING are never-ending. Some of the problems have no solutions, and for many others the solutions, if there are any, are realized only after the opportunity has passed and the angler has made the wrong move. How often has a fisherman, talking over his fishing day, suddenly realized that a particular cast or angling tactic he failed to use might have caught a fish he tried and failed to catch.

It's a great feeling, then, when you're confronted with an unusual situation and you master it. Last season I ran into one of those problems on a tributary of Montana's Bitterroot.

The stream was a small one, and the water was low, but it held some good rainbows. I had been working upstream to our lunching place, a bridge we'd driven across on our way in to the nearby ranch.

The morning fishing hadn't been good. I'd seen only three small fish rising and had caught two of them. None of the stream's larger trout had surprised me with a sudden rise to my blind-fished dry fly. Therefore it was with delight that I noticed a good trout rising in the upper part of the shadow of the bridge. I approached to within casting range.

My wife, Joan, who had been fishing the upper water, came walking along the road toward the bridge. Seeing me, she walked quietly to the nearby bank.

The trout rose again. "Can you catch him?" she asked.

"I don't know. He's in a tough spot."

I moved up as close to the bridge as I dared without spooking the fish. It would take a very long, very low cast to reach him. The first cast was short by about

eight feet. The second was short by six. I put all the drive I could into the next cast . . . and banged the fly into the underside of the bridge. The bridge was too low. The distance too great. I was wrong. The fish wasn't in a tough spot. I was.

Joan, with the trained eyes of a tournament accuracy caster, was looking on as if I ought to make that cast successfully, but I realized I'd given it my best shot. If I move closer, I thought, I'll probably put the fish down. If by a miracle I manage to reach the fish with the fly, there'll be no slack and instant drag.

I stood there a moment, undecided, and then, with sudden inspiration I stripped off an extra twenty feet of line and made the longest, highest cast I could manage, sending the fly up over the bridge to settle slackly down to the water a few feet above the trout's position. Just as the fly reached the shadow of the plank-ing, the fish rose and I flipped the line upward to set the hook.

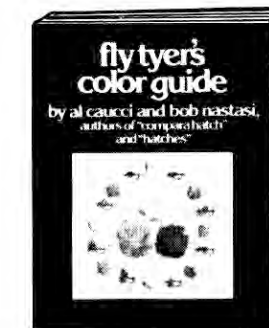
Gathering in the line by fast stripping, I rushed ashore and up onto the bridge. When I reached the upper side I felt the pressure of the fish on a direct pull. From there the playing was routine—reel in the slack coils . . . play from the reel . . . slack for the jumps . . . increasing tension as he tires . . . and fingers down to the fly for the eventual release.

About fourteen inches long, he was not a fish to grace an angler's wall but rather an individual trout to remember because of the particular problem he'd presented, where only an unorthodox cast, born out of sudden inspiration, would work. One that had to be perfect the first time. 🐟

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