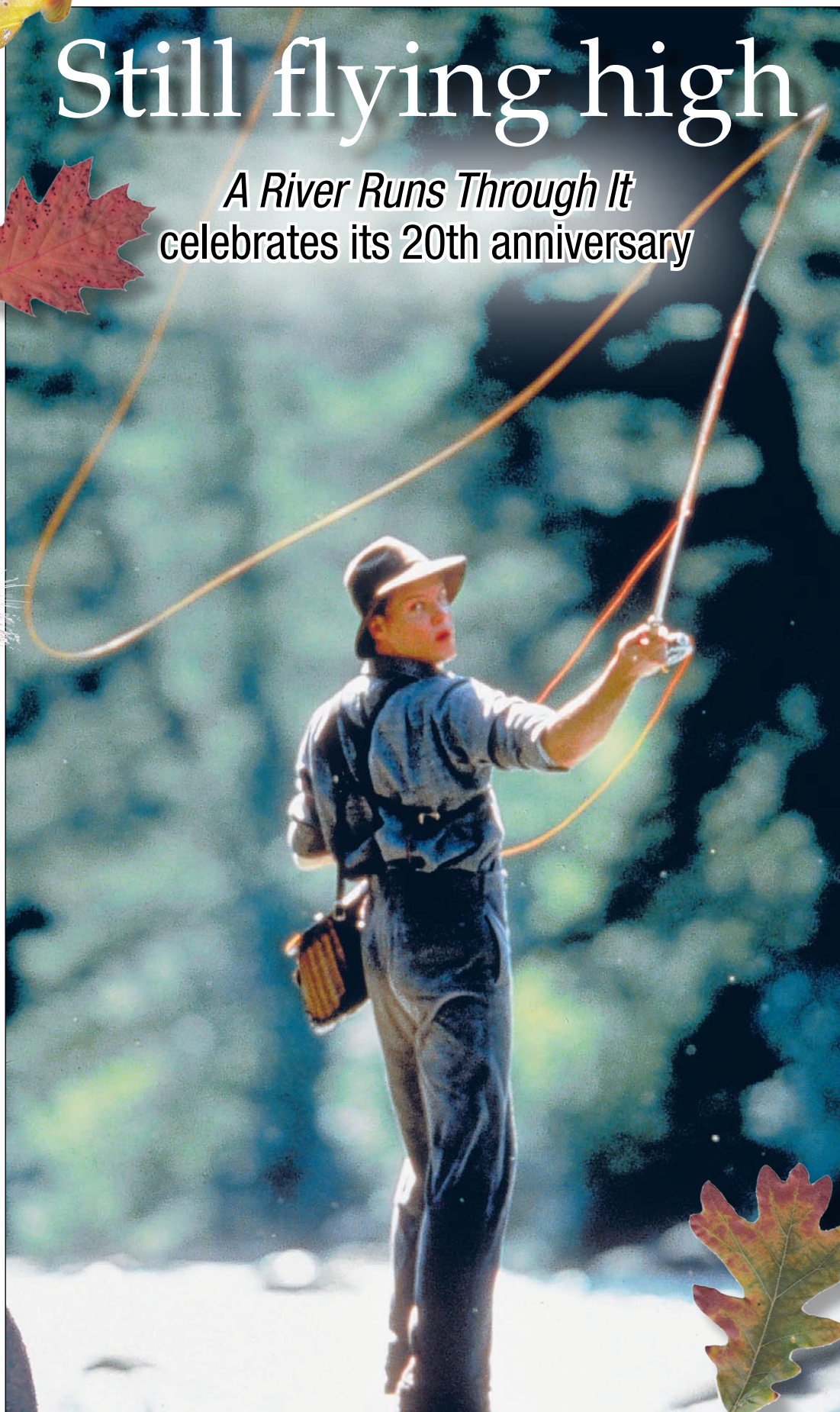


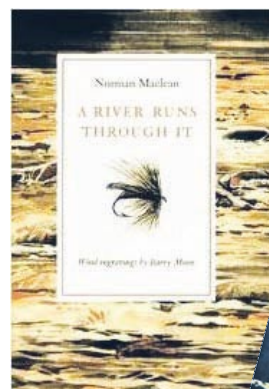
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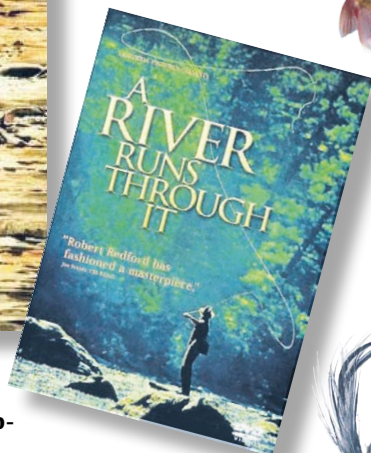
A River Runs Through It celebrates its 20th anniversary



Craig Sheffer, as the older brother Norman Maclean in 'A River Runs Through It'.



Norman Maclean's book 'A River Runs Through It' and Robert Redford's 1992 film about the story.



By MATT MARKEY and JEFF BASTING

LIVINGSTON, Mont. — We never set out to make a trout fishing movie. Director Robert Redford made that clear from the start.

But a couple of decades ago, I was part of the cast and crew of about 90 that Redford took to this rugged area just north of Yellowstone National Park, and spent three months here intent on making a film about a family in conflict.

He did that with *A River Runs Through It*, a true story centered on a Montana Presbyterian minister and his two sons — one a troubled free spirit, the other a stoic traditionalist.

The only solid link connecting the trio is their passion for fly fishing, and with this Promised Land for the American trout fisherman as the backdrop, the movie won an Oscar for its gorgeous cinematography.

The film debuted 20 years ago next month, and besides helping launch the career of a charismatic young actor named Brad Pitt, it also sent a new wave of trout fishermen into the streams, fly rods in hand.

"The movie had a huge effect on fly fishing," said John Bailey, a Montana trout fishing guide who worked as a consultant on the film, and the owner of the iconic Dan Bailey's Fly Shop here, just north of picturesque Paradise Valley.

"Locally, regionally, nationally — the effect was the same. People who maybe had heard about fly fishing but had never done it saw these beautiful surroundings, these great trout streams, and really got a look at the essence of fly fishing. There were a lot of converts as a direct result of that movie."

Dennis Aig, the head of the School of Film and Photography at Montana State University in nearby Bozeman, was along for every arbor knot, dead drift, and roll cast during the filming, which took place in the summer months when typical Montana weather was served up. It could be 35 degrees just before dawn, then close to 90 by late afternoon.

Mr. Aig, an Ohio State University graduate and a PhD, produced the documentary *Shadow Casting: The Making of 'A River Runs Through It'* as Redford led the movie company through a series of problematic locations near the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness to get the scene settings he desired.

"The movie really brought trout fishing into the national consciousness," Mr. Aig said. "Before that, if you told most people 'I'm a fly fisherman' they wouldn't know exactly what you meant, but the movie turned trout fishing into something with a lot of grace and beauty."

While on location in Montana, most of

my attention was directed at the logistical side of the production — transportation — and assisting in the process of moving a lengthy caravan of people and equipment to remote locations on the Boulder, Gallatin, and Yellowstone Rivers, in a timely and efficient manner.

Before Redford, Pitt, and Tom Skerritt, who played the role of the minister, showed up on the set each morning, a virtual city was already in place. Generators, large trucks holding all of the cameras, lighting, props, and catering equipment, trailers that housed the actors' dressing rooms, and the on-set bathrooms, all had to be positioned close enough to the shooting site to be convenient, but far enough away that they were out of the background and did not pose a sound problem.

Very little of the fishing footage was shot near a paved road, so most days it was a tedious, difficult slog, but in keeping with the most basic principle of the sport of fishing, we went where the fish are, and beautiful trout streams are rarely located close to anything resembling civilization.

Before shooting began, Mr. Bailey spent a lot of time schooling Pitt and Craig Sheffer, who played the lead character Norman Maclean, in fly fishing techniques. He said those two young actors made the film appeal to a whole new crop of fly fishermen.

"No one expected it at the time, but the movie also brought a lot of women into fly fishing, because they saw the beauty in it," Bailey said. "I think people could also relate to the fact that this was a really dysfunctional family and the only time they were really communicating was when they were fishing. That happens in real life."

Orvis, a leader in the manufacturing and sale of fly fishing gear, supplied equipment and instruction to the filmmakers. Tom Rosenbauer, marketing director for Orvis Rod & Tackle, said that both Orvis and the fly fishing industry experienced a spike in their business of 25-30 percent that he attributed to the popularity of the film.

During the project, the director had a lot of apprehension about how the trout fishing scenes were shot, so there were countless retakes on many of them.

"Redford was scared that the hard-core trout fisherman wouldn't approve of the movie, if the fly fishing scenes were not near perfect," Mr. Bailey said. "But I think a lot of people ended up loving it. They still see it as a fly fishing movie based on a great family story. The family really came together when they went trout fishing, and there's certainly a lot to like about that."



Tom Skerritt, who played Reverend Maclean, father of Norman and Paul in the movie, still enjoys trout fishing.



Brad Pitt, as the younger brother Paul Maclean.



Outdoors editor Matt Markey caught this brown trout on the Yellowstone River during location work in Montana.

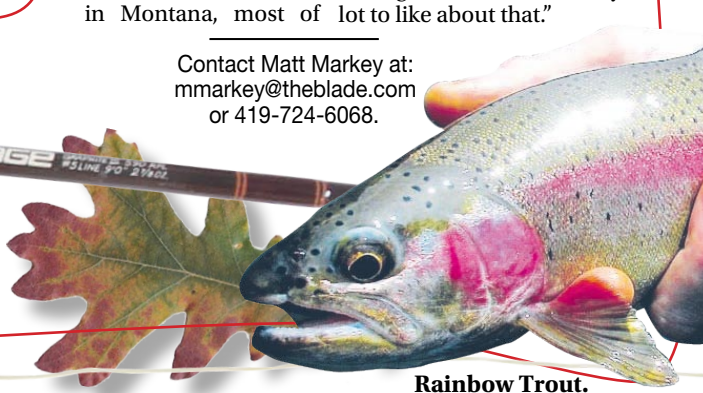


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