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Fly Fishing Oral History Program

Dave Hughes

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This interview was conducted with Dave Hughes on October 16, 2009, at Skagit Valley Community College in Mount Vernon, Washington. The interviewers are Danny Beatty and Tamara Belts. Don Uppendahl is also present.

TB: It‟s Friday, October 16, 2009. I‟m Tamara Belts and I‟m here with Dave Hughes, Danny Beatty, and Don Uppendahl, and we‟re going to do an oral history with Mr. Hughes. I think Danny‟s basically going to ask the questions so here we go.

DB: We‟ll start from the beginning (Astoria). One of your first books was about growing up in Astoria and fishing the small streams in the coast range out there. So we‟d like you to start at that point and we‟ll work forward.

DH: Okay, well I grew up in Astoria, Oregon. When I wrote _An Angler's Astoria_, I lied about most of the names of the streams, that‟s probably a confession I ought to get out of the way. I either didn‟t name them, or I misnamed them. In fact, the reviewer for _The Oregonian_ who reviewed _An Angler's Astoria,_ read three chapters of the book, and then I have this vision of him throwing it aside. He wrote, "This book is worthless; it doesn‟t tell you where to fish in Astoria."

It was a book of essays about fishing around Astoria, and about growing up there, but it wasn‟t my purpose in the book to give away the places that I fished. The reviewer felt that a book that didn‟t tell you where to go fishing was worthless, so now I warn you: Don‟t read _An Angler's Astoria_ hoping to find out where to go fishing there. Of course, the book is long out of print now, so that‟s neither here nor there. But anyway, that‟s that particular book. Did you want the history of growing up there?

Well, I was born and raised in Astoria. I lived there until I was 45, with excursions to college and the Army. My dad was the kind of outdoor person who hunted and fished, did everything, and his specialty was waterfowl hunting. I had two older brothers. The thing that Dad did that I had the most affinity for, and loved most, was the fly fishing. I still sometimes think the reason that I fly fish is because I still have a vision of my dad on a trout stream, standing in a riffle and struck by the sun, casting his Phillipson bamboo rod with his not silk line, but an old brown early nylon line that looked like a silk line, and these loops going back and forth, lit in the air by the sun. For some reason I wanted to do that, and that vision hooked me. That was what I wanted do in life, and here I am still doing it, which is a mistake I suppose. That small-stream fly fishing was what I grew up pursuing, and my two brothers went in other outdoor directions that my dad pursued.

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DB: Is this approximately in the Fifties?

DH: This was in the late Fifties. I graduated from high school in 1963, so it was the late Fifties and early Sixties. Well, I guess I would say from the time I got my driver‟s license, in the early Sixties, I worked a lot—I worked really hard from the time I was about 15. I started working on mink ranches then, so it sounds like I fished a lot, but actually I was the kind of kid who went to school in his work clothes; when school got out, I went to the farm and worked until dark and then went home, had dinner and fell into bed. Then in the morning, I got up, dressed in work clothes and went to school—I never paid attention to school. I was a very bad student, an underachiever.

DB: So where you lived was an Astoria address, but you didn‟t live right in the town?

DH: No, I grew up five miles outside of Astoria. I grew up definitely in the country, so to speak. When we say Astoria, we think of the whole area, but I grew up outside of Astoria.

DB: Yes, I totally understand what you‟re talking about. So from high school then, what happened? In the Sixties, after high school, what was the next step in your development towards being a professional writer (fly fisher)?

DH: Well, I wouldn‟t say that it was direct—my next step was to go to college at University of Oregon, and that wasn‟t a step toward being a professional fly fisher. I was kind of focused on other stuff then. I was working on weekends, so I‟d drive from Eugene up to Astoria to work and then drive back; it‟s a couple hours between.

DB: We can strike that comment about professional when we edit this.

DH: Oh good, I‟m not even a proficient fly fisherman, let alone professional.

DB: Was that where you met Rick Hafele?

DH: No, that wasn‟t. I met him later at Oregon State. I went to the University of Oregon. I graduated with a degree in finance. I fished from there. I fished the McKenzie a few times. I didn‟t fish any of the small coastal streams around Eugene. And, of course, it‟s not right on the coast. But I identify myself with the coastal hill streams, because that‟s what‟s around Astoria.

Then from the University of Oregon I worked on a shrimp boat for a summer out of Astoria. That was a good experience, working on the ocean. And I have to say, I almost got hooked on the ocean. I don‟t know if you‟ve ever worked on the ocean, but if you have, there is a certain point at which the ocean hooks you. There‟s a reason that people become fishermen on the ocean and they stay there their whole lives. I was almost at that point when I got my little yellow notice from Uncle Sam that I‟d be welcome to join the Army, which I did. That was in 1967.

I went to Officer Candidate School, and became an officer. I became a communications officer, a signal officer in the army. I commanded a couple of signal sites on the Mekong River in the southern part of Vietnam for half a year, and then for a year became a liaison officer to the two-star general who commanded all of the communications in Vietnam. I always think in terms of the war--I wasn‟t in much combat--that I got to see the kind of micro-view as commander of a signal site out in the Mekong Delta. Then I got to see the macro-view as the liaison officer to this Major General who‟s flying all over the country. When he‟s flying, I can go, if there‟s room on the helicopter or the airplane. So I got to see both views of the war, which was very educational. It‟s a terrible thing to sit here and talk about war in terms of education, but that‟s kind of one of the things I got out of it. Then when I came home, that‟s when I turned to fishing.

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Maybe it‟s relevant to say that—and this can come back toward the end of the interview if anybody can remind me that this whole thing can be brought back: Rick Hafele and I were just fishing Grassy Lake Creek last week in pursuit of something I‟ve been working on for many, many years about Grassy Lake Creek, which is one of the little coastal hill streams near Astoria. My vision in Vietnam, of the one place I wanted to be when I got home, was just sitting alongside Grassy Lake Creek, which is a little tumbling forested hill stream. When you‟re in Vietnam you have this peaceful place you want to be, that‟s in your mind all the time. And I developed that vision, and I even ordered an Orvis fly fishing outfit when I was there. I paid $75.00 dollars for an Orvis fiberglass rod, reel and line to match. When I got home, it was waiting for me, and my dad said, "You paid $75.00 dollars for a fly rod? That‟s crazy!" And I‟m thinking my dad had a couple of thousand dollar shotguns, that he shot trap with. I‟m thinking: "In a day of fishing along the stream, I‟ll make more casts with this rod than you‟ll shoot that shotgun in a year. $75.00 dollars is not too much to pay for a rod." But he thought it was. But I went to Grassy Lake Creek then with this vision in mind, with that rod, when I got home.

To reach Grassy Lake Creek, you had to park alongside the North Fork Nehalem River and go down a cliff, wade across the Nehalem River, and go up another kind of cliff to get to Grassy Lake Creek, which is a feeder that comes into the Nehalem over a thirty foot waterfall. So if you can picture this environment, upstream from this waterfall is this pristine forested watershed. It‟s not been logged, and it‟s got wild cutthroat trout in it. It‟s got wild native cutthroat that are isolated by that waterfall. No salmon, or steelhead, which we sometimes jokingly call trash fish, can get above that waterfall. At any rate, what‟s isolated above that waterfall is a pristine environment. There are elk up there; I saw a cougar up there one time. Just a very, very pristine environment with these wild native cutthroat trout that have been isolated for who knows how many tens of thousands of years, and they‟re genetically pure. They‟re 10, 12, I think the biggest we ever caught was 14 or 15 inches long. So that‟s the beautiful place I had in my mind in Vietnam, and that‟s the first place I went when I got home. It was in May of 1971.

I crossed the Nehalem and went up the cliff around the waterfall, and crossing Grassy Lake Creek, about 150 to 200 feet upstream from the waterfall, there is a log bridge. Loggers had punched in a road. The rest of the day was kind of this awful juxtaposition to me: I‟m fishing up the stream and I have a backpack—I‟m going to camp so I have a real light pack--I‟m fishing upstream and I‟m catching tons of fish because nobody‟s fished the stream for a long time, and at the same time, I can hear loggers felling trees for the road that‟s being built right up along the stream. So this kind of became, and maybe I‟m off the track that Danny wants me to be on right now, but at any rate, this began a track that actually unspooled to a finish just last week when Rick and I went fishing up there, and we‟re here in 2009.

I wrote a long piece about Grassy Lake Creek, in 1985, after they had logged the watershed, which indeed they did, and it was based on that road going up the river, which was a portent of something that was going to happen, and did happen. They logged the entire watershed, and I went up there when they were done, and I was trying to repair the stream, I was putting brush in the pools and whatever I could do to protect these—they were suddenly exposed—little cutthroats. I sat on a tree stump when I was done for the day, in what had been a forest but became a clearcut alongside the stream. I was exhausted, and actually drinking gin and tonics--because I‟d forgotten to take a glass, I‟d cut the bottom off a milk carton, and I was mixing gin and tonics in the square milk carton bottom and drinking out of that. I was probably mildly inebriated when I did this, which is fairly rare for me.

I sat on that fresh bleeding stump, and I counted the growth rings of the tree, and there were 65. That let me piece together the history of the stream in a way I‟d never known it. Because I could count those growth rings, I knew that the tree had been planted about 1920, or had grown about 1920. It made me realize that the first logging on this stream probably ended in 1910, 1915. In 1920, this tree was planted, or it took root, and it grew in the period from

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then until 1985, and then it was cut. So you can see—I wrote a long piece called _Life Cycles_, that hasn‟t been published yet, but it‟s based on my dad‟s life cycle, and Grassy Lake Creek‟s life cycle, and my own life cycle, and the life cycle of that watershed.

You can kind of picture it now: It was first logged before 1920, grew up again for 65 years, was logged again around 1985 and really cut down. Then it began to re-grow again. But always in my mind--and I would go back and revisit it often to see how it was doing after I tried to repair the damage, then drank gin and counted those growth rings in 1985--it still had those seeds of the native wild cutthroat in it. I fished it ten years ago, in 1998. My wife and I went up and fished it. The watershed was starting to recover from the logging in 1985, so in the 13 years it had just started to recover. But the one thing that we did find was that the wild native cutthroats were still there; the seeds for the recovery of the stream, in my thinking, were still there.

Just recently, I wanted to go back and write an epilogue to this life cycle story that I wrote so long ago. It‟s a pretty long piece, it doesn‟t make a book because it‟s too short—it doesn‟t go in a magazine because it‟s too long. But I have a book of essays coming together, and it fits that.

Anyway I wanted to write an epilogue, and I called Rick Hafele, my best friend and co-author of _Western Hatches,_ and asked if he could get away and go down with me. He‟s a biologist, he‟s fished Grassy Lake Creek with me before; he knows what‟s going on there. He‟s part of the story actually, but it‟s too long a story to tell here. It‟s probably already too long, isn‟t it? Anyway, so Rick and I went back, now this is just a week ago we went back, and I‟m trying to get my epilogue. My feeling is, when we went, that what I‟m going to find is that the stream--it was 1985 and now its 2009, it‟s 25 years later--the watershed is going to be grown up more, the cutthroat will still be there, and there will be some more recovery. So I‟m hopeful going down there, I‟m looking for the end of my story. But I‟m also looking for the stream in its state of recovery 25 years along after the logging.

What we found was pretty tragic. There had been a recent storm. These 25-year old Douglas firs, a lot of them had blown down in the stream. I got this real dank, dark, bones and dead feeling. Because the trees had blown down, they were just bare branches and trunks and they‟re in the stream, along the stream, crisscrossing the stream in the air, and everywhere. It was a very dark, kind of a dead sense to me.

Rick, surprisingly, didn‟t pick this up, we talked about it and Rick didn‟t pick this up. But it‟s my stream and that‟s what I picked up. Probably that was pursuant to the fact that all the trout we caught were, number one, five- or six-inch long rainbow-cutthroat hybrids, or number two, they were two- or three-inch long pure rainbows, and number three, we caught one single 11-inch native cutthroat. To me, that‟s the last trout; that‟s the death of the stream. That stream is dead now. Because the environment is going to recover at some point, after the logging, the environment will come back some day. That‟s the life cycle.

But now what they‟ve done is they‟ve planted steelhead smolts. What they want is to have steelhead rear in Grassy Lake Creek, and go out over the falls. Probably what this will do is add maybe a 100 or 200 steelhead to the run on the Nehalem for the steelhead fishermen.

Well, nobody else values Grassy Lake Creek as I do—I value it like the Mona Lisa. To me, this is just like ripping up the Mona Lisa when they put steelhead smolts in there, but to the people who put those steelhead smolts in there, this is adding some steelhead to the run in the Nehalem, and this is very beneficial, and at no cost. But to me, it‟s at a tremendous cost for a very small benefit. I haven‟t written the end of that life cycles story yet, but you can tell that instead of an epilogue, its going to be kind of a eulogy. Because in my opinion, now, you can restore the stream by letting the trees grow, which we‟re not going to do, but that could be done, or after we‟re gone it could happen. But

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what will it take for the native cutthroat to ever come back in that stream? They never will. Those things will never exist again; that‟s finished. So to me, that‟s why I said this whole thing comes in kind of a circle. I didn‟t mean to draw it into a circle this soon in your interview, but I did. So that story kind of ends a week ago. That‟s a long answer to your short question about what was next, Danny, sorry.

DB: One native cutthroat?

DH: That‟s the only one we caught. Well then the other thing is—

DB: Well I mean out of a bunch of little, cutbows, they call them?

DH: Yes, hybrids. We would fish a pool this long--as long as this table--and in the old days you‟d walk through that pool and the trout would just be scattering everywhere. You know, the sun striking it, and you can see the fish. You would walk up the middle once in awhile just to see how many fish were in there, and last week there were none, absolutely no fish. I‟d say in the whole day we caught probably 15 or 20 fish. Well, you‟d catch 10 or 15 little fish out of a pool the size of this table in the old days, and two or three of them would be nice fish. What‟s happened, of course, is that they‟ve planted smolts. There‟s a little feeder stream that comes down off that road that they punched up along the stream. They‟re going up there with tank trucks, and they‟re putting in steelhead smolts, and the smolts are going down the feeder to Grassy Lake Creek. They‟re rearing in there, up to a certain point, like spring and summer, and then they‟re going out over the waterfall, and it‟s leaving the stream empty except for a few hybrids and that one cutt.

DB: I‟m not sure how critical this is, but I do have an interest, personally. Were there rainbow in there in 1960?

DH: There was never a rainbow in there.

DB: It was all cutthroat?

DH: Absolutely nothing, nothing but—

DB: But how did the rainbow get into the system?

DH: I haven‟t checked, and I‟m not going to, but there‟s only one way they can get into it. There is a logging road there, they‟re driving up a tank truck full of steelhead smolts or steelhead fry, and they‟re putting them in there.

DB: Because we‟ve witnessed similar situations in the hills here.

DH: Yes, I‟m sure you have.

DB: I‟m curious, mostly.

DH: My wife said, "Well it‟s just one stream, and there‟s lot of streams down there." And I said, "Yes, but it‟s the one with a waterfall, and that waterfall is what makes it different." That waterfall is what makes it the Mona Lisa to me. It‟s a one of a kind thing when you put that waterfall there, and steelhead and salmon can‟t get up there. That makes it a sanctuary. Now, there are other streams down there that have waterfalls. The day before Rick and I fished Grassy Lake Creek, we fished another of my old streams, the South Fork of the--well I won‟t name it. It too has a waterfall. The first thing we noticed was that the stream was almost empty of water. It‟s been logged, too, in the

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same cycle. My dad used to have this expression, “The stream‟s flowing under the rocks.” I‟d never seen that creek so low, in all of my years of fishing it. When my dad would say that the stream was flowing under the rocks, it would have three or four times as much water as it did the day that Rick and I fished it.

However, that stream still had its native cutts. We didn‟t catch anything like a rainbow in there. So I‟m kind of hopeful maybe they‟re not going to do it to this one. I don‟t know. You think that if they‟re doing it to one, this may be just what they‟re going to do from now on, plant steelhead in all of these little streams and wipe out all the little native cutts. They need to realize that they‟re doing that, that they‟re changing the environment, that this can‟t be reversed. There is no way to reverse this. If they do that, it‟s done. If there‟s no waterfall, and I don‟t know if that‟s the case in the streams that you‟re talking about here in this area—but if there isn‟t a waterfall and they‟re planting smolts up there, well they‟re probably planting smolts where there‟s already steelhead anyway. But in the cases I‟m talking about, there are no steelhead, there are no salmon.

DB: Various barriers can create a situation. There are different kinds of barriers in streams.

DH: If you‟re a steelhead fisherman those barriers are bad things. My feeling is: if the barrier is natural, then you should leave it for whatever is up there. I actually went through this as part of the life cycles story. In the early part of the Eighties or late Seventies, I used to write a column for the ***Daily Astorian*** newspaper, an outdoor column. The district biologist at the time, Warren Knispel, called me and said, “Dave we have a philanthropist builder here who wants to build a fish ladder around the falls at Grassy Lake Creek, to let steelhead go up into Grassy Lake Creek.” He said, “We wondered what you would think about that.” And I said, “Well, I think that what‟s above Grassy Lake Creek is very unique. It‟s genetically adapted to that stream; it‟s separated from the rest of the world.” This was when Grassy Lake Creek was being logged. And I said, “Warren, I think that when the stream recovers from the logging it should recover to what it was, it shouldn‟t recover to something different.” And he listened awhile and said, “Okay,” and hung up. When he told his philanthropist, I don‟t know if he used my name or not, but probably that guy wanted to kill me. But I‟d said, “No,” and told Warren that I would fight it as hard as I could. Warren recognized that with the laws the way they are and everything, that he didn‟t think they could get that fish ladder built if I was against it.

In fact, Hafele used to work for DEQ [Oregon Department of Environmental Quality]; he‟s retired now. After we fished Grassy Lake Creek that last time, he said that Fish and Wildlife putting steelhead smolts in that river actually violates DEQ‟s regulations about the quality of the water. So what they‟re doing is illegal, essentially. But nobody is going to call them on it. I could, but its dead now. It might stop them from doing another stream though.

DB: So when did you actually start writing essays and stories and so forth about fishing and fly fishing? You said you wrote a weekly newspaper column?

DH: Right.

DB: That was in the Seventies?

DH: That was in the late Seventies and early Eighties. I can actually remember exactly when that happened because Rick Hafele and I, we started teaching *Entomology and the Artificial Fly*, the workshop, in 1977.

DB: Yes.

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DH: This is really kind of naïve—everything I"ve done is naïve. But we thought that the real money in fly fishing is in speaking to clubs and giving workshops and stuff, and we were doing this workshop. I"d always wanted to be a writer, don"t get me wrong. But Rick was actually on a bicycle trip to England and Europe with his wife, and I started writing articles based on our workshop. I would take one insect, one hatch, and I"d write an article about that hatch and the flies that match it. Well, at that time, nobody had looked at western hatches. Everybody had looked at eastern hatches. There was this huge kind of demand for this. So I was writing articles and sending them in to Salmon Trout Steelheader at the time, Frank Amato"s magazine. I was writing under both of our names: I was writing the article, doing the photography and everything, but I was writing them under „Hafele and Hughes" while Rick was in Europe, so that we could promote our workshop. I sold two of those articles and I quit my job. I wasn"t satisfied with my job at the time, and on the strength of two articles--this was in winter of 1977, I can still remember--I sent in two articles, I was paid a $110.00 dollars for the two articles, and I quit my job. I was a bachelor at the time. Quit my job, and became a writer. That was what I"d always wanted to do; I did it. I kept a part-time job for probably fifteen years before I was making a living.

DB: That was about the time that you started this Western Hatch Quarterly.

DH: Well, Western Hatch Quarterly was Rick"s. That was Hafele"s, that wasn"t mine.

DB: It was not yours?

DH: No, Rick and I actually had a conference about that. Rick wanted to do that and I didn"t think that—I"ve done this a few times in my life where I just said, "That"s your idea, it"s your thing. There"s no way it would support two people, it might support one person. You should do it." And that"s what he wanted; he wanted to do it himself. But Rick is so kind he asked me if I wanted to do it with him.

DB: Oh, okay. I got the impression when I took your workshop thirty-five years ago, whenever it was (a long time ago), that Western Hatch Quarterly came out of workshops, and that you were both involved in that. But it was Rick"s, okay.

DH: That was Rick"s. I was involved with the workshop.

TB: Can I ask a quick question, though? Did you ever pursue finance?

DH: No. I still don"t even balance my checkbook—I balance my checkbook whenever I write a check, but I don"t balance it at the end of the month.

TB: You didn"t seem interested in English or literature when you were in college—to have majored in finance—I just find that amazing.

DH: Well, I loved writing assignments, and I did very well at them. I was not a good student. In my undergraduate years, I was a very poor student, I just skated by. Egotistically speaking, I had a high IQ and I was the kind of guy who could go in and take the tests and do fine, though I got low grades in classes. I always got marked down for lack of attendance, and lack of paying attention, and when I worked on the mink ranch, for lack of even being there. So I didn"t pursue writing, but I was very good at those subjects. I can still remember in freshman English that I would sit in the back of the class and talk with my friends, and then when they got a question that was a stumper, then finally the teacher would get me to pay attention, and I would come up with the answer—parsing out sentences and stuff. My name is Welsh, and there"s a little Welsh in me; I"m not Welsh, but I have a little bit of Welsh in me.

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They say that the Welsh have an affinity for the flow of words, or the sounds of words, or whatever. Obviously it‟s innate. I wanted to write, I loved to read, and I spend way too much time reading right now. But no, I didn‟t pursue English or literature as a subject.

DB: So about this time you were getting involved with Amato on Salmon Trout Steelheader and writing an article for every issue almost?

DH: Well it‟s interesting that I did write an article for every issue. What happened with the magazine writing, and this is serendipitous—but I wrote those two articles for Salmon Trout Steelheader--but I didn‟t know at the time Frank planned to start, and did start, Fly Fishing the West. And it was just perfect timing because I had just quit my job and was entering the world of trying to make a living as a writer, which is fairly difficult to do, as you probably can imagine, especially in something as narrow as fly fishing writing. At the same time Frank started this magazine, Don Roberts was the editor. I always call Don Roberts my founding editor. So I started writing and I wrote for every issue for gosh, it must be 10 or 15 years. I eventually became editor of the magazine under a different name (not my name, the magazine‟s name). But at any rate, I have a long history, and I still write a column for that magazine.

DB: Yes, I know. So that was going to be one of my questions. Somehow could you compare your approach to writing articles or being an editor of a magazine versus an author of a book? How you approach it or what you find as similarities or differences?

DH: Well the big differences are that there‟s a much longer deadline in working on a long-term project with a book. On a magazine, you‟ve got to keep a lot of magazine articles in the mill to make a living. You can do one book a year, or even less than that, to make a living—well not to make a living, because I don‟t make a very good living doing it to this day. I see magazines, at least with my kind of brain, as being kind of, if you‟re going to make a living with magazines it‟s kind of confusion. I counted once, at the average when I was writing for magazines a lot I would have fifteen articles at some stage in the mill. You‟re sending a proposal, or you‟ve got the proposal accepted, or you‟re working on the article, or you‟re gathering the pictures or something. So I would have--I‟m not saying I would go out there to my office—I always kept a small office in downtown Astoria and walked to it and walked home--at any rate, when I went to that office I wasn‟t going down there to work on 15 articles. But I‟m going down there to work on one of 15 articles that are in some stage of progress. I‟ve always loved reading books, and I‟ve always loved writing books. When you‟re working on a book, you‟re going down to your office, and you‟re working on the next stage of the book that‟s in some stage of progress. But it‟s a much more fluid kind of life, and it‟s much more graceful.

DB: Is the discipline different between the editor and the author? Do you find yourself thinking about a different discipline?

DH: I‟m sorry, do you mean between being a book writer and a magazine writer or being an editor and a writer?

DB: Yes, either or both.

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DH: Well the difference in discipline between a magazine and a book is—I think that you have to discipline yourself to know that the deadline is out there, and know how much work is between you and the deadline, and to space that work out instead of letting it stack up at the deadline. I‟ve had situations where I‟ve—out of the demands of life—wound up with three months to write a book right before the deadline. Then you really have to focus so to speak, you have to put the rest of life aside and do that, and that‟s not a good situation. But I‟ve written close to 30 books now, and I really have a sense for how much work it‟s going to take to do a book. I pace that work through the course of the book. I‟ve got a deadline right now, December 31st. But the book itself is written, and what I‟m doing right now is I‟m gathering the pictures for it. The publisher, I think very wisely, wants long captions instead of little short magazine-type captions. He wants a real thorough caption, almost like a sidebar for each picture. So I‟m pacing myself now where I have until December 31st and this is October 16th. The pictures are chosen, more or less, and what I‟ve got to do is get these things scanned, in this digital age, put them on my computer, and then alongside of them write a long caption. My publisher (the president of the company), has given me the freedom to back away from the context of the book and write what I think is important about this picture, and what this picture—I may have a story about this picture, whatever I want to do. It‟s a very great deal of freedom and I‟m loving doing it.

DB: How has your photography progressed with your writing?

DH: Well, I‟ve always considered photography a necessary evil. I‟ve always looked forward to the day that I can go up on a really high cliff and take my cameras and put them in a bag and throw them off that cliff. I became, over the years I think, a fairly proficient photographer, especially with macro, with Jim Schollmeyer‟s help. Jim, bless his heart, has always helped me along. He is a professional photographer, and he has always helped me a lot, probably to his own detriment. But I always long for that day when I can throw my cameras off a cliff. In the days of film I went through black and white, went to color, and got to the point where I would depend on the automatic of the newer cameras and everything. Then digital came along and blew everything out of the water, and I have to say, I don‟t have a digital mind.

I think the most interesting thing about photography is that Rick Hafele, in the days of film, would not take a picture. He hated it. He‟d put his slide shows together, you probably never noticed this, but his slide shows were about 85-90% my pictures and Jim Schollmeyer‟s pictures. We would sit in back during one of Rick Hafele‟s slide shows, and we‟d be jarred by: *That's my picture!* But we love Rick. But the interesting thing is that now it‟s digital and Rick loves computers, or I shouldn‟t say loves computers, but he‟s worked with computers all of his life and he‟s got that kind of mind. So now we‟re in the digital age and Rick is helping me get into the digital age of photography, and I still want to throw my cameras off a cliff. I hate it, I hate digital photography.

DB: Okay, I have another question about the books you‟ve done, a number of them have been pattern books. Anyway, my question is: How do you decide what patterns to include? How did you develop criteria for these pattern books? Especially the first, the one I remember and have and use, it‟s a paperback—I think it‟s *American Fly-Tying*—

DH: Yes, *American Fly-Tying Manual*, yellow cover, $10.00. Well on that one, that was actually Frank Amato‟s idea to do that book. And what he wanted to do was he wanted to do a book that had lots of fly patterns, and that covered the waterfront, so to speak, all kinds of fishing. Because I focus on trout I had a pretty good idea of what trout flies to put in there, but not all of them, because it had to focus not just on what I use, obviously, but on what‟s popular.

I can distinctly remember what I did with that particular book. I gathered all of the fly fishing house catalogs, and I went through them, I even made lists of what fly is repeated most often in those things. So I came to those flies,

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partly out of my own experience, but partly out of research—and reading a lot of books. I looked at books to see what‟s in the books: What flies are frequent? It‟s a terrible thing to say, but it‟s almost statistics: I‟m looking at frequencies of the fly pattern showing up. If a fly pattern shows up in the Orvis catalog, and a lot of other catalogs--if it showed up in all of them that was one that was included. And of course, I had a familiarity with the flies, so I could say this one belongs in there, and this other one doesn‟t.

DB: Right. So in your books, or even these pattern books, do you feel like you‟ve gone from a regional author to more of a national author? Or included more area?

DH: Well, what propelled that was actually starting to work for Stackpole Books in Pennsylvania. I write for Frank Amato Publications in Portland, Oregon, and most of those books are western, but not all of them. Nothing that I do for Stackpole has a regional focus. When I write for them, then I‟m looking at things more broadly. I‟m a western fisherman, my pictures are western. For this book I was just telling you about, the one where I‟m doing the long photo captions, Masako, my wife, and I took a ten-day trip to Pennsylvania. I said, "For these photo captions, this is a national book. I just don‟t want everything to be out of the west. We‟re going to take a ten-day trip to Pennsylvania; we‟re just going to go see streams." We went back there and we‟d see three famous Pennsylvania rivers: Big Spring Creek, and Penns Creek, and Falling Springs--we‟d see them all in one day. We‟d just take pictures; we‟d set up Masako fishing or me fishing. I was with Jay Nichols, who was the managing editor of *Fly Fisherman* magazine, and now he‟s an editor at Stackpole. But at any rate, Jay was with us. When I got home, I got an email from Jay, and he said, "Dave that was really a frantic trip." We just went from stream to stream and got pictures of them and rushed on to the next. It wasn‟t really fishing.

Your question was national versus regional. And yes, I have written national books, and I definitely have that in mind when I do it. If you think in terms of being a writer, there‟s a lot of fishermen back there. That national audience is more than twice as big as the regional audience, the western audience, so it‟s become necessary to do that. And my speaking draws me back there; I try to go back and speak when I can go fishing, but I can‟t always do that.

Actually one of my favorite places in the world to fish is North Carolina. I never turn down an invitation to North Carolina. I love the people, I love the waters, and they have those Appalachian streams that are—if we think about it, now we‟re sitting here in Mount Vernon, Washington, we think that we have beautiful clear pristine streams--well there are two places in the world where I fish the most pristine streams, except New Zealand, that‟s another one. But Japan, they have the granitic mountains and no commercial timber to speak of, so the streams come out of those mountains pristine, where you‟d think they‟d be terrible. And in North Carolina, when I first started thinking of North Carolina, I thought, "Wow, they‟ve got water moccasins down there!" But what they have is the Appalachian Mountains, granitic mountains, and no commercial timber left. They harvested it all at one time and it grew back into laurel and hardwood that‟s not harvestable. It hasn‟t been harvested in 150 years, and you‟ve got pristine streams coming out of the Appalachian Mountains. When you jump from rock to rock down there, with felt soles, you stick to the rocks. You jump from rock to rock in my streams in Oregon that have been logged, you‟re not going to stick to those rocks, you‟re going to go on your butt.

DB: Are you saying that North Carolina has areas that are better in terms of pristine streams than Oregon has, in the story you told us at the beginning of the interview?
I mean, that‟s quite a comparison—

DH: It is; it is.

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DB: Because it‟s something tragic that happened out here that didn‟t happen back there.

DH: That‟s exactly what I‟m saying. I‟m not writing Grassy Lake Creek‟s story with a eulogy at its end about a stream in North Carolina. Now they do have their problems down there, but we have a set of problems that runs on these cycles. And they‟re out of the cycles. They have a stream that may have problems, but they have streams coming out of the Smoky Mountains that are beautiful. They‟ve got the little native brook trout in a lot of them. And they‟re going to stay that way; they‟re not going to change because they‟re protected. We have some of that in our wilderness areas, but our national forests are being logged.

DB: Now you‟ve fished those streams in North Carolina you‟re talking about?

DH: Yes.

DB: And the brook trout are the native fish—have you found that they are stunted, like you found the cutbows and the other fish up—I think you said the first river was the Nehalem, wasn‟t it?

DH: The Nehalem, yes. Grassy Lake Creek goes into the Nehalem.

DB: In the upper drainage, wasn‟t it?

DH: Yes. When I fished Grassy Lake Creek before it was logged I was catching fish 10, 11, 12 inches long. In its recovery now, 25 years later, the one I caught was 11 inches long, I should be catching lots of those nice fish. If they hadn‟t put the rainbows in, the stream would have been recovering. But in North Carolina, they‟re not going to put steelhead above a waterfall, that‟s just not going to occur to them. So the brook trout, you asked me about their size, I‟m going to say that their size is in keeping with the size of the streams. If it‟s a small stream they‟re going to be small, because they‟re not getting a lot of food; if it‟s a bigger stream they‟re going to get more food, and they‟re going to be a little bit bigger fish.

DB: You‟ve fished all over the world. You mentioned last evening that you fish with Dave Whitlock. Have you fished the White River with him, or any of his local streams?

DH: Oh, no, I haven‟t. I‟ve only fished with Dave one time, and that was on a lake in Chile, just one time I fished with him. Now, he used to write a column for me at the magazine. I have fished the North Fork of the White River, but it‟s a long story; it was bad fishing, and the water was high, and it was dangerous, actually. It‟s something I should write some day; I was put in danger down there. I‟ve fished down there, but I haven‟t fished with Dave down there.

DB: Well I was leading to a question as to similarities of technique and flies you use from the northwest to these other areas—your programs and your seminars have sort of a general outline to them, from my perspective. Do you find that much difference?

DH: I said last night that the club ought to have Ed Engle up here to speak. Ed Engle says, and he says that he got it from somebody else, but he always says that: "All fishing is regional." And all fishing is regional. He‟s from Colorado, he fishes these park rivers and they‟re mostly tailwaters. They‟re very slow-flowing. Remember I said last night that there are some rivers you can read water and look for spotted trout, and there are some rivers you just fish them and you read the water by looking for where the fish should be; you don‟t look for the fish. But Ed fishes streams in Colorado where you look for the fish. So there are huge differences between that and what I do up here.

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Then say, let‟s look at the White River that you talked about in Arkansas. It‟s a big tailwater and they have these huge run-ups in flows. I mean you look at that thing when the water‟s low, it‟s just like the tides out here. It‟s very low and you can see the rocks are wet and muddy, everything like that. Then they start running power again, and the water is up and high and you can‟t fish it, and you‟re looking for those times when it‟s a fishable level. And the insects that they have are not even insects. They are a little crustacean, the aquatic sow bug. You‟re fishing really tiny flies a lot on really long leaders, and you‟re trying to get them to the bottom, and it‟s very, very, very different then say the Deschutes. The Deschutes is a tailwater, too, but it‟s got a re-regulating dam, so the flows are stable. You‟re fishing a river that has stable flows; you‟re going to be able to get your flies to the bottom. I even talked about that last night, where you rig with your yarn indicator, and you make your roll cast to get that above your fly, and you‟re fishing water of a certain depth on the Deschutes. You know when you go to the Deschutes what you‟re going to find. When you go to the White River, you‟re going to find more of a tidal river, up and down. People drown when they‟re running the electricity; fishermen drown because the water comes up so abruptly. Those rivers are very different.

End of Tape One, Side One

DB: One of your programs is titled: "A Schwiebert Mystery." Did you know Ernie?

DH: Just in passing. I met him a couple of times, I worshipped him, and I worshipped his writing. What the mystery is—and this is very esoteric—but if you look at *Nymphs*, which is the book that actually propelled me into fly fishing writing. I‟ve written this to Schwiebert. I just really admire Schwiebert. He passed away of pancreatic cancer, I think it was about a year ago, a very, very admirable man, extremely brilliant. But the mystery is that every drawing of a caddis pupa in Schwiebert‟s *Nymphs* has what I‟ll call a wing case on its cheek. Caddis pupae have wing cases, the pupae have wing cases that their wings are in. Then when they become the adult, the wings come out of those cases, unfold, and they fly away. But they don‟t have wings on their cheeks; that‟s kind of like Pegasus has the seeds of wings on the shoulders of the horse—but that‟s a myth and this is, too.

But I pieced together where the wing cheeks on the caddis pupae in Schwiebert‟s drawings came from. In1971 *Selective Trout,* by Doug Swisher and Carl Richards, came out. It had one picture of a caddis pupa, and it was one of the first pictures of a caddis pupa, and the foreleg was lying down alongside its cheek, because that‟s the normal position when they‟re pupae: they hang that front leg along their cheek when they‟re taken out of the pupal case, which I‟ve done many times. And the leg has swimming paddles, it‟s probably the middle leg, with swimming hairs on it, and what it did was, the leg was lying—I can‟t do this because of the way my anatomy is—but from it‟s cheek, it had it‟s foreleg hanging down with these swimmer paddles on it, and it looked just like a wing case. When Schwiebert modeled his drawing, he modeled it on that picture. And he modeled all his other caddis pupa drawings on it—he changed the size and color—but modeled them all on that one picture.

He interpreted that dangling leg as being a wing case. And if you look, if you‟ve got a copy of *Nymphs*—Don has it at home, I saw it last night; we‟ll go look at that, Don—there‟ll be this little wing cheek coming off there. The reason we found it was when Bunse did the illustrations for *Western Hatches,* he used Schwiebert as his model, and put wing cheeks on his pupae, and Hafele said, "Bunse, what in the hell is this?" Richard said, "Well here it is, right here, look in *Nymphs,* and there it is." What‟s interesting to me is, of course, we changed ours when we figured it out, and we didn‟t know why it happened at that time. But Bunse started modeling his drawings--he got a microscope and modeled his drawings off the naturals that we collected, and there are no wing cheeks on them.

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Schwiebert‟s two-volume *Nymphs* came out two or three years ago, and I looked at the drawings of the caddis pupae, and they still had their wing cheeks. So in those 20 or 30 years, he had never noticed that. It was a mystery to me—what were the origins of these wing cheeks—because they don‟t exist in nature. It was just when I saw that picture in *Selective Trout*, it just jumped at me, there it is. So what I did is I put together just a five-minute slideshow. If I had my computer here, I could show it, of how this all came about and how I figured it out. It‟s only about a dozen pictures. Quite often when I speak to a club like I did last night, I‟ll start off with it just as joke, make sure my computer works and everything.

DB: Do you spend much time reviewing books and trying to analyze that type of situation?

DH: I‟m not trying to analyze that type of situation when I review them, but I do spend a lot of time with the books. I don‟t read as much fishing stuff as I used to. I‟ve read *War and Peace* three times. I spend most of my time reading old Russians, sorry.

DB: I‟m going to move away from this—

DH: Before you do, I‟m going to get back to that. Tamara, you mentioned that you‟ve interviewed Darrel Martin. I reviewed Darrel Martin last year and I love Darrel Martin, he‟s a good friend. But I also think that Darrel is probably the most brilliant fly fishing writer out there and I‟ll tell you why: because Darrel, you know he spent a lot of time in Europe fishing. I don‟t know if a lot of people know this, but Darrel is the bridge. He‟s really studied the past but he spent a lot of time in Europe where we‟re bringing a lot of our future stuff in. So Darrel is that bridge between what used to be done and what‟s going to be done in the future. And Darrel is a tremendous—we don‟t know what value we have in Darrel. I mean the fact that he‟s this bridge. I don‟t think that Darrel would even put it in these terms. But Darrel is an enormous bridge between the past and the future.

DB: Oh yes, he showed us some old rods and designs.

DH: Right, yes.

TB: But we didn‟t get the future aspect, we didn‟t put that together—

DH: Well see that‟s what I don‟t think Darrel even realizes that Darrell is a bridge. That‟s why I say Darrel‟s our most brilliant writer. Tell Darrel I said that when you see him; I love Darrel.

TB: All right.

DH: Anyway, go back to your question now.

DB: Oh, that‟s fine. I‟m glad you brought it up, that‟s good. I was just curious, on an organizational level did you ever belong to the Astoria Fly Fishing club?

DH: Well I started it.

DB: You started it?

DH: Yes, I was writing a newspaper column and I just sat down one day and wrote my column and I said, “We‟re going to start a fly fishing club in Astoria and we‟re going to meet in the library for a formational meeting.” One

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friend, Colonel Tony Robnett, retired infantry colonel who passed away two or three years ago, very good friend. He and—no, no, wait a minute, I met Tony at that meeting. So I just called the meeting myself and I said we‟re going to have a club and went there and about thirty people came. The interesting thing about that was that I was seen as kind of—I didn‟t want to be president, so we chose a president right away; but I was seen as sort of—and I‟m not a dominant person—but I was dominating the formation of the club. I founded Oregon Trout, too, later. But at any rate, Kerry Hoyer was one of the original members who came to the library. We decided to have a club and we had meetings. Then it came time to name the club and of course all along I had in mind the Sunset Empire Fly Fishing Club, based on the Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club, and the Astoria-area being called the Sunset Empire. And Kerry stood up and said, "No! We‟re not going to name it that." And for some reason, he was very obstinate, and we went through this long round-table litany of what to name it. And it finally came down to a vote between the Sunset Empire Fly Fishing Club on my side and the Rainland Fly Casters on Kerry Hoyer‟s side. I lost and you know, I‟m really glad I did, because Astoria, Oregon, the Rainland Fly Casters, it‟s just appropriate. It‟s a good club. I go down there whenever I get a chance.

DB: So from that small club, did you get involved with other fly fishing at state level? Or did you do any involvement with the organizational part of fly fishing?

DH: Well as you know, I was made a life member of the Federation in, I don‟t know, the late Eighties or early Nineties [1985].

DB: One of the life membership memorials—

DH: The Lew Jewett Award [Memorial Life Awards]. I‟m honored by that.

I belong to TU [Trout Unlimited], as a member. I don‟t go to a lot of their meetings, but I belong, partly because I speak a lot nationally as opposed to locally. I have one trip this year where I go from Kansas City, Missouri to Phoenix, Arizona to Detroit, Michigan. I go from Portland to Kansas City to Phoenix to Detroit and then home. So I get invitations back there.

I just got an invitation from a lady‟s fly fishing club in New Jersey. I don‟t know if that it‟s going to work out but I said, "Well that would be a lot of fun." You know, because I‟d like to go to New Jersey and speak to a lady‟s club and combine it with some fishing. We‟re trying to work it out because it‟s very difficult to go to New Jersey for $750, from my point of view, and it‟s difficult for a club to pay me $750 plus my expenses, from their point of view. What you try to do there is you try to work out two or three engagements. But that‟s getting away from what you‟re talking about.

I started Oregon Trout, I did almost the same thing I did with the Rainland Fly Casters. Actually it started with a conversation. You know who John Judy is? John Judy wrote—(he‟s somebody you should interview)--he‟s the Metoluis. I was asked about the Metolius last night, John Judy lives on the Metolius River, and he‟s written two or three books. One is *Slack Line Strategies for Fly Fishing* and one is on the Metolius River [*Seasons of the Metolius: the life of a river seen through the eyes of a fisherman*]. But we were at his house on the Metolius and it was Schollmeyer, Hafele, Bunse, John Judy and I and we got in this discussion about, and this is bad for the Federation and TU, but we said the money that is being collected for dues is going out of the state, and only a tithe of it coming back. If we spend $20.00 dollars for a membership to TU or to the Federation, two or three dollars of that is coming back, and we wanted $20.00 dollars to go towards conservation of native fish habitat in Oregon. So we decided to do it, and I did the ground work on it.

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John Judy actually backed out right away because he didn‟t think we were going to be radical enough, he wanted to really shake things up. I‟m much more, kind of calm. John‟s calm too. Lovable guy, I call him the bear. He used to be the black bear, now he‟s the grizzly bear just like the rest of us, because his beard has gone gray. But anyway, get John Judy up here. He‟s a wonderful speaker and he would do an interview that‟s much better than this one we‟re doing because I‟m rambling.

But at any rate, I sent out letters to—I had an old K-Pro computer, does anybody remember the K-Pro computer? You could do mail-merge on the K-Pro. And the first thing I did was send a bunch of letters back and forth to Dick May who was president of Cal-Trout in California. He encouraged it, and we modeled it on his. Then I started sending out mail-merge letters to twelve guys, trying to get an organizational meeting, and to get an agreement on a name, and get an agreement on everything. We met in Jim Schollmeyer‟s back yard.

There was actually a criticism in print by a later executive director of Oregon Trout: that Oregon Trout was started by a bunch of almost bums, he called us, sitting in a back yard with a six-pack of beer. I thought, well, you know, those guys were pretty smart; the guys that were sitting in that back yard weren‟t dumb. You know it was Billy Bakke, Tad Sweet, Dick Mace, and [Jim] Schollmeyer, [Richard] Bunse, and [Rick] Hafele. Not a bunch of dummies there, they were pretty smart boys. They weren‟t rich boys. Later, Oregon Trout got into where it wanted to court board members who could contribute $50,000 a year, so it changed quite a bit. There weren‟t many of us who started it who could contribute $50,000 a year. But anyway, that‟s how Oregon Trout kind of came about, was out of those letters. We held an initial banquet, and we were shocked at the initial banquet. It was in 1983; it was so well attended, 200 or 300 people, that the Board of Directors couldn‟t eat. There wasn‟t enough food. So somebody came whispering around, "Dave, you don‟t get dinner." You might have been there. So yes, I got involved in that way.

DB: Over the forty plus years of involvement in fly fishing—you worked with Ed Rice and his shows at one time?

DH: One year, just one year. He hired me for one year to keep me from speaking to somebody else‟s show.

DB: How have you seen the development or progression or what‟s happened to fly fishing in your estimation over this period that you‟ve been so involved?

DH: Well I think I draw it quite often, because I think in terms of books. I know we‟re speaking and I‟m drawing a graph as I‟m speaking, but we‟re going to draw it and I‟m not going to put dates on it. But I got out of Vietnam in 1971 and *Fly Fisherman* magazine came out while I was over there (I always wished I had all the copies of *Fly Fisherman* but it started while I was over there so I couldn‟t get them). So from then, it was on an up curve, a very steep growth curve, and what‟ll we say, until the movie (we‟re talking about *A River Runs Through It* [(1992)]). I‟m going to put the movie here at the peak of the graph, the movie kind of propelled it. My royalties took a spike when the movie came out.

I was driving across a bridge on the Yellowstone River. I was doing a book on the Yellowstone River. There was this red pickup that came across a bridge at Livingston, and I‟m with somebody and it‟s a narrow bridge, so I‟m watching where I‟m driving. My passenger says, "Did you see who that was?" And I said, "No." And he said, "That‟s Redford." So he was there filming the movie. Anyway, I didn‟t see him because I was too dam busy trying not to run into his red pickup.

Anyway, we‟re going to say fly fishing peaked after the movie. It‟s not really true that it leveled off, but that growth curve on the graph really slowed down until, what are we going to say, 1995 or something, 1998. There‟s some

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period there where the growth curve of fly fishing began to go down: participation in fly fishing began to slide down. So I‟m always doing this with one of my publishers, and I‟m drawing this same graph in my own office, I‟m not really telling him this, but when fly fishing was on the growth curve, you could make a certain set of decisions in publishing. When it flattened out on the graph, you had to make a different set of decisions. And when it started going on the graph, you had to make a different set of decisions. What you had to do was you had to narrow your book selection. You had to say, "Now things are leveling off, I can‟t publish so many bad books." When things are going up like crazy, you can publish any book and make money on it. When things start leveling off, you had to narrow your book selection and be more critical. When things started going down you had to narrow your selection further, be more critical about the books you publish. Well that‟s the business curve, and that‟s how I see fly fishing having happened. Does that kind of answer your question? Because you asked what the trend in fly fishing is. Right now I think it‟s leveling off and going down a little bit, and part of it is you‟re looking at our ages.

DB: Along those lines, do you have any opinions on the development of equipment or rods? You started out with bamboo, through fiberglass and on into graphite, boron, and all these—do you have any opinions or comments to make about that development? And then maybe how it fits in with—

DH: Well I think that I go with that development. I‟m not an equipment person. I keep myself about 5-10 years behind the technology curve, I‟ll call it. So I didn‟t start fishing graphite until graphite had been around five or ten years. But now, when I fish, I‟m fishing graphite. It‟s just light, efficient, and everything. I‟ll fish bamboo once in a while. I took out a bamboo rod the day that Rick and I fished Grassy Lake Creek. Actually, I took out an old Skip Morris rod that Skip built for me, it was graphite, and Rick took an old bamboo rod that I gave to him, a Granger. The biggest mistake I ever made in my life was I gave Rick Hafele a Granger—a seven-foot, four-weight Granger -- for his graduation, for his master‟s degree. You know what that thing‟s worth now? It‟s worth a bundle, but Rick‟s still a good friend, probably just because of that rod.

But anyway, equipment: you know there‟s no question that the modern equipment is infinitely better than the old equipment. I love bamboo; I still fish it on small streams. I don‟t fish it much on big rivers. It‟s kind of interesting right now, what I‟m looking for in life is—have you ever heard of tenkara fishing? It‟s a Japanese telescoping rod that‟s about 11 to 13 feet long, and has no reel. The line is a furled leader the length of the rod. And you fish small streams with this thing without a reel, and you do casting. It‟s just a really graceful way to fish.

Masako and I were tenkara fishing the other day, and I broke my tenkara rod, which is a very unique rod that I got in Japan, and very hard to replace I‟m discovering. And what I‟m looking for right now, and what I got at one time—and I‟m getting off your subject—but I‟m looking for a blonde or a ginger or a tan tenkara rod, so it‟ll show up in pictures when I‟m out fishing a small stream. Because you go out with black graphite and the rod doesn‟t show in the pictures, and it looks like your giving benedictions to fish. You‟ve got a fish out there jumping in front of you, and you hold your rod high, and it looks like you‟re giving a jumping fish benedictions. So at any rate, I‟m looking for that blond tenkara rod.

Many years ago, a person who became a good friend, and he just passed away, but he built five-strip bamboo rods. I had never met him before. Rick and I were at a conference or something, we were doing something for G.I. Joes, of all things, and G.I. Joes is gone now, too. But at any rate, he came with a rod that he wanted me to try, and it was just a beautiful small-stream rod. We cast it in the G. I. Joe‟s parking lot. I‟d never met him before. I said, "You know, I‟ve always wanted to have a rod like this in a blonde color, so when I fish the small streams, it will show up in a picture." So this guy, about six months later, he calls and says, "Dave, I‟ve got a rod for you to look at." And I said, "I‟m just really busy. You know, I want to look at the rod but I don‟t have time right now to look at the rod." He called me three or four times, "I‟ve got this rod for you to look at, Dave." Finally at the—you were there,

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Danny—at the 25th FFF conclave in Eugene, Dean Jones comes up and he says, "Dave, I‟ve got this rod for you to look at." And I open the tube and pull it out and it‟s this blonde bamboo rod with my name on it. I felt about three inches tall. And that‟s the one I use to this day, it‟s just perfect on small streams, beautiful rod. He became a great friend; my daughter called him Grandpa Dean.

DB: I don‟t have any more questions particularly. I know there‟s lots more we could find here but—

TB: I just have a quick one. What is the story behind the March Brown Flymph?

DH: The March Brown Flymph*,* well that‟s a long story.

TB: Do you have time to tell us?

DH: Oh, I don‟t have anything to do; I don‟t even know if we‟re going fishing today. This is what we call a perfect sea-run day though, but it‟s a little—the water doesn‟t stop at the river.

Dave Hughes and Danny Beatty

The March Brown Flymph: well when Hafele and I were in Boise, Idaho doing our *Entomology and the Artificial Fly* workshop before Western Hatches was published, we met Pete Hidy [Vernon S. Hidy]. He was the co-author with James Leisenring of The Art of Tying the Wet Fly, it was 1941 that the book was published: a very classic wet-fly book. Pete Hidy coined the term "flymph" for a wet fly that represents an insect that‟s no longer a nymph, but not yet a fly. So the March Brown Flymph then, became an interpretation actually that Rick came up with. We fish the March Brown hatch a lot. He tied a flymph that looked like the March Brown, in that transition. A lot of them will cast their—this is a mayfly—they‟ll come up as a nymph, just underneath the surface, and they‟ll cast their shuck. This happens on the Willamette River (and a lot of your rivers here, I just fished them on the Deschutes last year). Then the dun will go from that last few inches from underneath the water, just this deep, two or three inches deep, and then it‟ll come to the surface and become the dun. What the March Brown Flymph does is it imitates that last two or three inches of the cycle, between when dun leaves the nymphal shuck and before it‟s a floating dun. We fish that fly a lot during the hatch. Rick and I actually tie different interpretations of it now, but they‟re both the March Brown Flymph, and they‟re both very effective.

DB: They‟re all just soft-hackles?

DH: Well, yes. A flymph is kind of a soft-hackle that‟s tied with a hen hackle or a weak rooster. It‟s interesting, I spoke to a rich old club in Philadelphia one time, it was at a polo club, of all things. And I described Leisenring‟s lift technique, which is to locate a trout in a certain kind of water, and then cast twenty feet upstream, and let the fly sink down toward the level of the fish, and then animate it by stopping the rod and lifting it up. Out here in the West, we don‟t have places we can do that, not very many, we have a few. But I described the situation that you have to have, which is a long flow of even water with a known drift line, and you can spot the fish and everything. Somebody in the audience said, "Dave, you just described the Little Lehigh River." It‟s just north of Philadelphia, and it was James Leisenring‟s home river. So his technique was very specific for the water that he fished.

DB: Do we have anything else? Do you have anything that you‟d like to add to this oral history? Something that we might have missed asking you in terms of maybe your philosophy towards fly fishing or your life‟s work?

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DH: I think my whole history in this thing has been maybe number one, to just enjoy it, its fun. Don‟t get hung up in fly fishing only, and don‟t get hung up in dry fly only, and don‟t get hung up in this and that. I think number two, is that what I‟m always searching for are simplicities, the simplicities in fly fishing. I write a lot of books about different aspects of fly fishing. But I think when I look at an aspect of fly fishing, I‟m always trying to draw the simplicities out of it. Maybe that‟s why my books are read, because I‟m looking not to complexify the subject.

I mean look at entomology; entomology is extremely complex. But what I‟m trying to do is draw the simplicities. How do you look at these insects and make them meaningful in an understandable way. For example, the more I look at, say the mayflies, the more I realize that all the mayflies are shaped pretty much the same. Well, talk about the mayfly dun. They vary in size and color, but there are certain repeated color themes. The pale morning duns; I was just fishing in Pennsylvania, there was this big hatch of "sulfurs," they call them back there. Well, I just fished with my pale morning dun patterns, and did very well.

There are these repeated color themes: the olives, the sulfurs, and then the march browns and mahoganies. That‟s the three big ones, and then the blue dun is a minor one. There‟s just those three. So you take a fly pattern style in each of those colors, and tie it in a range of sizes for the mayfly dun and you‟ve got all the mayflies matched, almost all over the world. You can simplify your mayfly imitations to the Sparkle Dun style tied in three different colors and a range of sizes, and you go to New Zealand and by golly one of them is going to work. You go to Chile and you‟re going to see a different species and a different genus of insect, and obviously it‟s going to be slightly different, but it‟s going to be a mahogany. If you go to New Zealand or Chile, they both broke off the same supercontinent when mayflies were developing, and their mayflies are related to each other, and to our *Paraleptophlebia,* and what they all are is mahoganies. So it‟s very interesting that you can go around the world with a very narrow set of patterns, and match all the insects. I‟m trying to draw those same simplicities in nymph fishing, in my program last night, "Nymph Fishing Simplified." There are just three main ways to rig, and a few different methods you use with each rig. But it‟s always trying to search for the simplicities; that‟s my brain.

TB: All right, great. Thank you.

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