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This interview was conducted with Denise Maxwell, on August 10, 2011, in Special Collections, WWU Libraries, in Bellingham, Washington. The interviewers are Danny Beatty and Tamara Belts.

TB: Today is Wednesday, August 10, 2011. My name is Tamara Belts. I am here with Danny Beatty and Denise Maxwell. She did just sign the informed consent agreement, and we are going to do an oral history. Danny usually kind of leads on this, and then I ask things or try to make notes of what we might want to get better spelling on or whatever. So, here we go.

DB: Denise, thank you for doing the interview and certainly for coming to Bellingham. That's great that we have a chance to interview you here right at the collection. So what we'd like you to do is start with your earliest fishing experience and then work up to, maybe it wasn't even fly fishing, but work up through the fly fishing, and we have some other things we certainly want to touch on.

DM: Okay. Well you are right. It wasn't fly fishing at first. When I was a kid, I was born in Saskatchewan, which is the middle prairie province, and we had a lake cottage, and we'd go up there on weekends and you know summer vacation, all that. And my dad would go fishing, not all the time but occasionally during the summer, out there rowing around, trolling a spoon, and he took me, I can remember maybe less than six times with him, and I was really happy. The first time I went out there with him, of course he's trying to be a good dad, so I caught all the fish. So he was busy taking all the fish off my hook, and this went on for, you know, we were fishing for pickerel and jacks, and all that. He took me a couple more times after that, and then I think he decided that he wasn't getting in any fishing, and I think he did go fishing to get away from the kids and the wife and all that, so I was quite disappointed. But my favorite lure was the red and white spinner, you know, the red and white squiggly one. So I have fond memories of that. And after that, I really can't remember doing any fishing at all until after I'd got married. My husband Mike was a consulting structural engineer, and he had just come back to fly fishing, probably as a means of stress relief and all that. He'd fished as a kid.

DB: Had you moved to Vancouver by then?

DM: No, this was in Calgary, Alberta. And you know, being newly married, you expect your husband to come home after work, and it was like well he's going fishing, so after a few times I thought, well, the

heck with this. I said, well, I like fishing. So the first few times I sort of just went out there and sat in the car or did whatever.

DB: Now, was this fly fishing that Mike was doing?

DM: Yes, it was fly fishing.

DB: And were you on the Bow--?

DM: On the Bow River, south of Calgary—a place called the Tree Farm. I don't know if it's still there. It was a piece of property owned by one of his business associates. So, he tried to teach me, which as you know it doesn't really work when a husband tries to teach a wife anything. We persevered for a little while, then decided that we were going to go down to West Yellowstone. My husband had read about the Fenwick Fly Fishing School, which was just south of West Yellowstone, on the road to Idaho Falls. So we went down there, signed up for a course, and both of us signed up. At the time, it was run by Frank and Gladys Gray.

DB: And this was approximately what year?

DM: This is probably the early 70s. And running around in the background were Tim Rajeff and Steve Rajeff, at the Fenwick Fly Fishing School. So very successful, I learned a lot. I came out a really good caster. We kept going down to West Yellowstone. We'd go down and get a guide and go fishing on the Madison or Henry's Fork or wherever; so really fond memories of West Yellowstone, fishing down there. I think it was probably a couple years later, we signed up for another fly fishing school, Fenwick Fly Fishing School, but this one was in Northern California. It was there that I learned how to double haul, so milestones in the casting.

TB: Maybe could you just describe what double haul is.

DM: Double haul is a technique that allows you to cast more line. What you do by pulling, essentially, is you give the line, line speed, and then you can then get more distance.

TB: And so you are still doing traditional fly fishing.

DM: Still traditional fly fishing.

DB: You're still single-handed.

DM: Yes. I was single-handed for quite a few years. I think Mel Krieger was involved in that. So, it was about the same time that we started to go steelhead fishing. We are still in Calgary, started to go steelhead fishing on the Kispiox River. There was a group of Calgary anglers who would go there every year. And a friend of ours, Harry Honer, took us out there. We stayed in the cabins, Olga Walker's cabins, on the Kispiox, uninsulated cabins, and fished the Kispiox River, mainly with shooting heads, so you needed that double haul. Continued going up there for quite a few years. Caught my first steelhead the first year, it took me a few days. We'd go up for a week at a time, and I think it was probably the

fourth or the fifth day before I caught a steelhead. Our friend Harry was so excited when I caught my fish, he comes running down the bank with his camera, trips over the biggest rock, you could not miss this rock, he trips over this rock, camera goes into the water, but landed the fish; so lots of really good memories out there.

DB: And still one, single-handed.

DM: Still single-handed, and it was probably just a few years later that Mike started to get into double-handed rods.

DB: Now had he used them in England?

DM: He had used them in England when he was a child.

DB: So he had some background.

DM: His dad was in the military, so they moved around a lot, and he remembered going fishing with the local blacksmith, who was using a double-handed rod. So, one of the reasons that he started going into double-handed rods was because he had arthritis. So he figured that this would alleviate or help with some of the pain, which it did. But at that time, there was nobody who knew anything about double-handed rods in North America.

DB: Now you're at what year, approximately?

DM: Probably, probably in the late 70s.

DB: Okay. Had you moved to Vancouver yet?

DM: Not yet. He was still—

DB: Okay. When you say that, are you familiar with the name John Lynde, from Trail, BC?

DM: Yes, I am.

DB: He was double-handing.

DM: Yes. He was a Brit though. He was British. So he knew what it was all about. In the fishing industry, none of the manufacturers knew anything about it—

DB: Oh, okay. But he and his wife—

DM: Yes. They did the casting ballet.

DB: Did you see it?

DM: I saw, yes, I did. I'm glad you brought him up.

DB: I wonder if anybody has a film of that. I've asked around. That would be so neat to have in the archives somewhere.

DM: But if you remember back at those times, there was very little video and film making going on.

DB: I know, I know.

DM: But I did see it once. They would stand, one would stand here and one would stand--and they would sort of cast with the double-handed rods—

DB: They had classical music that they cast—

TB: Well Joan Wulff did that too.

DM: Yes.

DB: It was a beautiful sight.

DM: Yes, it was. I didn't see that at that time. I saw it quite a few years later. I think it was in Kamloops I saw it.

DB: Yes. That's where I saw it.

DM: That was really good. I'm glad you brought that up.

DB: Okay, moving ahead.

DM: Yes, just to clarify. None of the manufacturers and nobody in the industry really knew, unless they were British, and I believe he was casting with the old bamboo or Greenheart rods. So, what happened then was that Mike was talking to Jim Green, and Jim Green produced some of the first graphite two-handers.

DB: He was with Fenwick then, wasn't he?

DM: He was with Fenwick.

DB: Yes, he eventually went to Sage, but at that time he was Fenwick.

DM: If I remember correctly, he made three blanks. One went to the Mike, one went to the Duke of Westminster, and the other went to somebody in France. So that was the early beginnings of the two-handed rods. Oh, let's see where we are, we moved to Vancouver in 1981. We had a little company, a little fly fishing company in Calgary, but we moved to Vancouver and we started teaching a lot.

DB: Is that when you started Gold-N-West, in Vancouver, or had you already--?

DM: We'd already started in Calgary but hadn't done a lot. We had done some teaching in Calgary, but when we got to Vancouver we started doing a lot more teaching, fly casting courses, fly fishing courses.

DB: Backing up a little bit and then bring it into your teaching, you talked a lot about when you went to these schools, early schools, near West Yellowstone, and then you went to one in California, and you focused on casting. It seemed that the instructors were focusing on casting. I'd like you to illuminate why that's so important in fly fishing. Why the casting is so important if you're going to be a decent fly fisher.

DM: Well if you want to go fly fishing, in fly fishing the weight that you're casting is in the fly line. If you're spin casting or lure casting, whatever, the weight is on the end of the line, and essentially all you have to do is get going and the weight will take it out. In fly casting, if you look at that fly line, it is just like a piece of big string, and you have to know a little bit about how to get it to go out there so that you can be successful. If you don't know a little bit about casting, you are going to go out there and get frustrated. You're going to get line tangles, fly tangles. One of the things that you do not want is a beginner fly fishermen, or fisherwoman, to get frustrated and throw it down and say enough of this.

DB: So lead that into presentation of the fly.

DM: Okay. Once you know how to form a loop, which is the basic of fly casting, a little bit about line control, then you can learn how to present the fly properly. You can't just throw the fly down, especially on a river. You can't just throw the fly down and expect the fish to come to it. So you have to take into account the current, the speed of the current, how you want that fly to approach the fish. So if you're casting and the current is going that way, you want to put your fly down so that you have the most amount of time that you have a drag-free float, where the current is not affecting the fly. So you learn to cast out, put an aerial mend in, or cast it down, put a water mend in, whatever you want to do, however you want to present that fly, and you present flies in different ways. The dry fly is probably the most important. That sits on the surface of the water. You want that to have the longest time where the current is not affecting it because that gives you the most, I would say it's the most bang for the buck. You get the most distance out of that cast. You have to remember that when you are fly fishing, you are probably casting hundreds and hundreds of times a day. I'm a fairly lazy fishermen; I like to get the most use out of every cast. I don't want to cast a thousand times if I can do it in a hundred. So this is one of the things we do in steelhead fishing too, is you cast, do your mends, present your fly on the water, and we'll actually feed lines so that you get a huge long drift on your fly, and then it swings in.

DB: Your education--your background was in education, right?

DM: Yes, yes.

DB: Did you ever actually go and teach in a classroom?

DM: I did do some teaching. I was a substitute teacher for quite a few years.

DB: Okay. What I'm leading up to then is, did that background help you with teaching fly fishing and fly casting?

DM: Yes.

DB: Could you just mention that a little bit?

DM: Well you learn how to present your subject, you know, how to involve people, keep their attention essentially. My husband, Mike, was also an instructor, did some teaching in the British Army. You incorporate that into what you're teaching as well, how to keep their attention, how to test if they're following you, things like that. You refine it over quite a few years, and, well, that didn't work, you know, I got to come at it from a different direction. You learn to have, especially in fly fishing or teaching fly casting, you have to have your, what we call, your little bag of tricks. If I'm teaching you how to do something and it's just not getting through, I have to come at it from a different direction. And that's only fair because different people learn in different ways, so you have to find a way to teach somebody who doesn't, who's not going to learn the way that you've presented it.

TB: Can I ask a quick question, back to the Gold-N-West?

DM: Sure.

TB: Was there a storefront for that or you did a lot of classes and stuff but you didn't have a--?

DM: We had a storefront in Vancouver. Probably from 1986 through 1993, something like that.

DB: You had a fly shop.

DM: Fly fishing shop.

DB: Well, didn't you have that earlier when you came to do the booth at the fly shows? Wasn't that part of it?

DM: I can't remember at that exact time. We didn't have a storefront in Calgary though.

DB: Didn't you have your own brand of rods?

DM: Yes, we had our own, it was a mail order. It was not a storefront. But in Vancouver, the storefront was essentially a way of having a classroom for our teaching.

DB: What are some of your notable fly fishing experiences? It could be people that you've worked with, or it could be actually a certain fish or a certain experience.

DM: Okay. I think I have been very fortunate that I've had a very rounded fishing experience. In the 80s, the early 80s, I competed in the international fly casting games. I went to a couple of competitions, one in San Jose, California, and one in Czechoslovakia. I was fortunate there to travel in the international

casting scene. So I know a little bit what it's about. Learning how to do the accuracy and the distance was really helpful as well for me. Other than that, I have been fortunate to go saltwater fishing, tarpon fishing in Florida. We went to Cuba fishing. Where else...?

DB: Were any of those experiences with people that we'd recognize the names, like Billy Pate?

DM: I did meet Billy Pate in Florida. I went to see him at his house. My husband wanted to buy one of his reels, so we did that; a very nice man, a very intense fisherman.

DB: Was it at this time, these two world expositions that you were world champion, or was that later?

DM: That was probably—they sort of overlap, so they would have overlapped.

DB: Okay, so do you think that you have adequately explained the difference between single-handed and double-handed casting?

DM: No, good point, Danny. Single-handed fly casting; you're using the one hand to cast the rod, the other hand helps with the line control. The difference when you're actually fishing, the difference between the two styles is the double-handed rod, of course you cast with two hands, which shares the load, you also learn to cast both sides, and your fly is in the water far longer than with the single-handed rod. So single-handed rod, you cast, mend, *duh de duh de duh*, then you have to retrieve your line in, you have to false cast, false cast, false cast to get your fly line out again, put it down, etc.

My husband and I used to fish—I would fish single-handed, he would fish double-handed, for steelhead, on the Bulkley River, and we'd do a test; I could cast as far as he could with my single-handed rod, I would catch fish, but his fly was in the water longer than [mine]. The double-handed rod allows you to mend easily, and many times he would catch more fish because his fly was in the water longer. So the double-handed rod is useful for keeping your fly in the water. One of the reasons it was so popular in Europe and the UK was on many of the rivers there they pay for their fishing. They pay a lot of money to fish a beat, a certain section of river. And back in the day, they would keep the fish, the Atlantic salmon. Sometimes they would sell it, it would help pay for their fishing. So it was important for them to have their fly in the water as long as possible to up their chances of catching an Atlantic salmon.

DB: So, Britain is the main area for this, but it was also on the continent, but Britain is the one we hear about the most.

DM: Yes, you hear the history—

DB: So, double-handed casting is also called Spey casting, isn't that correct, or is there a difference?

DM: Spey casting is a relatively new term. It was coined by Mike.

DB: How did that term, and where did it come from, and how did that develop?

DM: Okay. Double-handed fly fishing is what it is called. Double-handed or two-handed fly fishing is what it's called in Europe. Or salmon fishing is the other term. Now when you get to North America, salmon fishing is something entirely different. So, you can't call it salmon fishing in North America and mean the same thing if you're talking about two-handed fishing. So Mike—we searched around for a term, and he remembers fishing as a kid in, or running through the Spey, River Spey, in the UK, and so we decided to call it Spey fishing or Spey casting, Spey fishing. (The River Spey, I think it is in Scotland).

DB: Flows north through central Scotland.

DM: In North America, you know, the term Spey casting and Spey fishing has stuck, and it has even migrated over to the UK now.

DB: Do you think that Mike was the one that got the term started here?

DM: You bet.

DB: Okay. That's good to know. Is that historically written somewhere? Because that's important with this interview that we know that. We wanted to get some things about Mike while you're here, so—

DM: Yes. We published a book called *The Art and Science of Spey Fishing*, and Mike talks about all of that in there, so I'll have to see if—I should send you a copy. I don't have many copies left, but I have some limited editions. I'll send you one, free of charge, you can put in your library.

TB: Terrific!

DB: So, Gold-N-West was at one time a small fly shop, but it's now gone to guide service basically, right?

DM: Yes. We closed the store and concentrated on the guiding on the Bulkley River, which is what I do now.

DB: Do you also have some teaching along with your guiding or are they separate?

DM: I think a guide is always teaching their clients, but most of my teaching now is done through the Federation of Fly Fishers, through the casting instructor program.

DB: Okay. You hold the highest level, I know that.

DM: I'm a member of the board of governors, there are thirty of them, and we administer the casting program.

DB: And last, a year ago you were given a very prestigious award for that. You might talk about that a little bit.

DM: Okay. I've been a member of the board of governors since 1996. So it was started in, I believe, '92-'93. Mel Krieger came up with the idea, and I think the first meeting was in 1993. At that time I

couldn't join, but I did join in 1996. Recent developments, we have a committee called the International committee. We have been working to take our certify instructor program beyond the boundaries of North America. So we've expanded into worldwide actually, and I've been fortunate I've been able to travel to a lot of these international certification events. In June I went to Malaysia to Kuala Lumpur, and we had a fantastic event. They are absolutely nuts there about fishing, about fly casting and fly fishing. I've been to Japan several times. I was in Korea. I went to, let's see, Scotland, Hungary, Denmark, where else, Italy. That's just off the top of my head there; a lot of places.

DB: A lot of them. This is a good person-to-person type operation too, isn't' it?

DM: It is, and they're all--one of the great things about these events is you meet these people. We're all casting junkies, so you learn lots of new things. You see what their fly fishing experience is. It's interesting, you go to like Belgium, the Netherlands, they don't fish for trout, they fish for pike. You go to Scotland, they fish for Atlantic salmon, yes, but they also fish for other types of fish. One of the things that I try and do is educate our members in North America that not everybody fishes for trout. Trout is the ideal fish, but people in different parts of the world fish for different, way different fish.

DB: So, tell us about this award though.

DM: Oh, the award.

DB: 2010.

DM: The Ambassador Award. My friend, Dan McCrimmon, who started the international event, the International Committee, and organized, the whole program, and I each received an Ambassador Award, which is a fairly prestigious award from the Federation of Fly Fishers.

DB: Yes, and it's been given to all sorts of people of various backgrounds in terms of fly fishing.

DM: And it's not given every year. So, that was very nice.

DB: Yes. Are you the first fly caster that's gotten it?

DM: I am not sure. That's an interesting question. I am not sure. I think we are the first members of the casting instructor program that have received it.

DB: That's what I mean, right. Okay, let's see. So, you talked about your involvement with the Federation of Fly Fishers, mostly North America, but you've expanded this into the world really with your going to these international events.

DM: Yes, we have a strong international---

DB: Yes, so let's bring it back a little closer to home and talk about the BCFFF. I know you're involved a bit with that, or you were at one time.

DM: I was involved with the BCFFF. The BCFFF started off as a part of the FFF, and then they sort of broke apart. I don't know the whole part about it, but the BCFFF is still functioning at a reduced level. I'm not—a lot of things went wrong with the BCFFF, but I think they focused—they didn't operate as a council does. They operated more on a political level, writing letters, and trying to get our government to do things. There were no regular meetings. Essentially, your membership got you your membership, and that was it.

DB: I go back with the BCFFF to people like Rex Schofield and—and Yonge, last name is Yonge.

DM: Bill Yonge. Yes, Bill Yonge was a friend.

DB: Is Rex still alive? Last I heard he was up around Williams Lake or something.

DM: I have not heard about him for years.

DB: Jim McDermott, does that name ring a--?

DM: Jim McDermott, yes.

DB: And Peter Caverhill.

DM: I know Peter Caverhill, yes.

DB: Those are the people from years past that—

DM: Art Lingren—

DB: Yes; they were involved with trying to improve the fisheries of British Columbia which affects what you're doing up in the Skeena drainage.

DM: Yes, yes. I was involved with the BCFFF. I got involved a little bit more with them about five years ago, and then I realized that I didn't have enough time to do—if I take on a job I want to do it well. So I didn't have the time to devote to the BCFFF, as opposed to the casting instructor program. But, I have been involved politically. I was a member of the Pacific Salmon Commission for six years, in the early '90s, and that was a federal organization that dealt with the salmon fishery.

DB: It was international, wasn't it?

DM: Yes, it was US and Canada.

DB: I think that was the one Bruce Ferguson was involved—

DM: So I was on the north coast one. It's divided into three, the north coast, the south coast, and the Fraser River, and I was involved on the north coast. There are sport representatives, there are

commercial representatives, there are government representatives, and it was an extremely good political education on what happens with government and the fisheries.

DB: Okay. So, we've pretty much touched on the things that I have written down, but there are certainly probably things that we can—Tamara, you were going to—

TB: Well, I was interested—you are the first woman that we've interviewed. So could you just talk about some of the challenges you faced as a woman, starting in the 70s, getting into fly fishing?

DM: In the 70s, certainly in Canada, there weren't any women fly [fishers]. In the US, there was a small group, mostly out of California, Gladys Gray, Jim Green's wife, very few though, and mostly associated with husbands who fly fished. You're correct getting waders was a phenomenal exercise. At that time they didn't have the good waders, so I ended up with a pair of men's boot foot waders in size 7, and those things must weigh 30 lb. So, the equipment was always a struggle. Things improved; new things. Now it's like a dream. You can buy women's waders, in all kinds of sizes. You can buy women's rain jackets, women's boots. You can buy everything for the woman fly fisher, but that's only come about because of sort of pressure and increasing number of women fly [fishers].

DB: Maggie Merriman kind of started some of that.

DM: Yes, she did. There have been some pioneers, and you have to give them credit. They persisted, and I mean the market for women's fly fishing gear is not a huge market. As you know, the big push or interest in fly fishing came about after that movie, *A River Runs Through It*, which was early 90s. That was part of the reason the casting instructor program came about. Mel Krieger had this wonderful idea that--of course everyone's interested, all of a sudden you've got all the recent experts, who don't have the credentials, so he thought that we should have some kind of an instructor level where you take the test and you've reached a certain level where you can cast and you might know a little bit about teaching, and this came about because of that movie. So not only were men interested, but women started to be interested as well. I remember my dentist—he was looking for, well-established dentist, looking for a wife, a partner, but he wanted someone who was interested in the outdoors and interested in fishing, etc, etc. So, I said, well, you know, they don't come ready, you can't get them off the shelf. You've got to go out and find some good raw material and work with it. So he had this girlfriend, and he sent her to our course, and you know, she did well, and apparently he was in the bushes checking on her casting.

DB: The Federation has always been involved with the fly casting at the shows, and teaching and classes, but it was Krieger then that started focusing on a more international level in terms of getting people all over doing this.

DM: Well his idea was a good one, to have some kind of a level; you pass this you're a reasonable instructor, so if you're going into a fly shop, who knows, you don't know what that guy is teaching and whether it is any good or not. You have some reasonable expectations that you're going to learn something out of that shop. Then the Federation as well did some early forays into the international scene, and which were not successful. So, I believe there is a time for everything.

DB: I'm sitting here trying to remember names, having a little trouble, but there was a couple from the Los Angeles area that was always at the shows.

DM: Oh, Alan and Barbara Rohrer.

DB: Rohrer, Barbara Rohrer. She was a caster.

DM: Oh, yes. She was a phenomenal caster.

DB: So there were a few that got things going, and I remember Maggie Merriman putting on demonstrations and some teaching at the shows and so forth.

DM: Yes.

DB: So there were some, and of course Joan Wulff is always one we kind of think about.

DM: Oh, yes, Joan. She was quite unusual for her time period.

DB: In 1951 when she was an international—

DM: She was casting in the 40s as well. I've seen some pictures.

DB: That was her path.

TB: Well talking about her, I'm curious, because one of the things that she equated with her ability to cast so far was actually her background in dance. So do you have any other—was there another background besides your fly fishing that helped enhance your casting?

DM: I don't think there was—I've always been athletic and outdoorsy, but I don't there was anything like dance in my background, but I think you're having good instructors also helps you a lot. So at that time, you know fly casting was not as detailed in how it happens and whatever, but just having good examples of fly casting to see. Like if I can see it and have a little bit of instruction, I can do it, and just the opportunity to practice, the opportunity to go fishing a lot has really helped my casting.

DB: You mentioned people learn in different ways, visual, auditory and tactile, and fly fishing is kind of all three of those put together.

DM: It is. Yes, it is.

DB: You can tell somebody about it, but until they actually pick up the rod and they actually feel it and then see it—

DM: You can't talk someone into fly casting, but one of the things that a good instructor should do is provide a good visual of what fly casting is. So in the program, there's an emphasis on being a fairly good caster, having what we call a show cast, a presentation cast, so that people can see it. And once

they've seen it, they may learn with slightly different ways, but that first visual is something that you have to give a student.

DB: I'd just like to ask you about a student that might come to a class, kind of myself here back many years ago, that had learned things wrong or had started wrong. How do you get that turned around?

DM: Well, usually a bad habit is very much ingrained into a student. You can show a student or caster the visual, you can tell them what's wrong, you can show them how to correct, but it all comes down to their willingness to change, willingness to practice. That's something that an instructor, you know you go around and if you see a lot of resistance to change, you eventually come to the conclusion that that person is not going to change. You hope to make some kind of a small impact on them.

DB: There was, to me, a very key word in that explanation, the word practice, and do you have to always practice on water?

DM: No, you can practice—most of our teaching was done on grass. In fly casting, one of the things you're teaching your students is how to make that nice loop, that nice U-shaped loop, and sometimes introducing water at the very beginning can confuse the student. They get focused on the water, and they have to deal with the water. We didn't have water available without traveling a lot. So depending upon what's available for you to teach is how you structure your lesson. Some instructors teach the roll cast first, they'll pick up and lay down, but, personal preference.

DB: You mentioned Jim Green. Many, many years ago he came to Anacortes, and it was just a few little comments about how the cast made a difference, in terms of controlling the line.

DM: Yes, and it helps as well to—if you practice alone, sometimes you are just practicing your mistakes, so sometimes it helps to practice with another person who knows what's going on, or you can video yourself, get someone to video you, and then you look at the video and say, *What?!*

TB: I have some more questions back to the woman part.

DM: Sure.

TB: Well just getting into it, did you have any trouble at all being accepted, or you just kind of went along with Mike and nobody paid too much attention?

DM: I was fortunate I didn't have any resistance or very little that I knew about. Mike was very, he wanted a partner who'd go fishing with him, so we did a lot of fishing together. The really nice thing about that was you could travel some place to go fishing. We went to a lot of shows, which was great. I think I've been in every prime fly fishing show in the U.S. which was interesting. Certainly in the US I didn't have any resistance. Maybe a little bit in Canada. There weren't very many women fly [fishers] at that time, so you know, you just don't let it bother you.

TB: You're cited so often as being the first woman guide in BC. Does that bother you--?

DM: No, heavens, that was a great accomplishment.

TB: --or were you conscious of it too? Were you conscious of that?

DM: I wasn't so much conscious about it, but I applied for a guide's license on the Bulkley River, and there are a limited number of licenses, and there was one available, and they wouldn't give it to me. They didn't want to issue the license, for whatever reason, certainly not because I was a woman. So, a friend of ours who is a lawyer, a big labor lawyer in BC; he said he'd represent me for free if I just paid his expenses, so he took it up with the province. We went to a meeting over in Victoria, and as a result of that meeting they decided to issue me the license. But it was just about that time they knew that the Classified Waters system was coming, so I don't know for whatever reason they didn't want to issue the license, but that's how I got my license.

TB: And what year was that?

DM: That was 1993, I believe.

TB: Okay. And also, did you look to other women as inspiration or mentors, or you just did what you were doing and---?

DM: I just did what I was doing. I looked to everybody as mentors. I've been fortunate I have met a lot of the big names of fly fishing, fly casting, Mel Krieger, Gary Borger, Joan Wulff, Alan and Barbara Rohrer, Jim Green, you know, Steve Rajeff; I've met most of them, so I've been very fortunate.

DB: You mentioned Borger, and in *A River Runs Through It*, that was his son that did the wonderful casting in that.

DM: That's Jason, yes.

DB: I haven't seen Gary in a long time. I used to see him at the shows too, but I don't now.

DM: I haven't seen him for awhile, but he's still active.

DB: Are you going to be in West Yellowstone at the end of the month?

DM: Yes, I am. A very quick trip though. The date is so late; I have to leave early so I can go up north and guide.

DB: Yes, it's going to almost butt up against your guiding.



DM: Yes, it will be. At first they were going to have it in the middle of September, and I went, *Aaahh!* *You can't do that to me!*

TB: What about the Bulkley River? How did you get started up there? How did you choose that to be your spot?

DM: Well, as I said, we went steelhead fishing with our friend from Calgary. We went up to the Kispiox and just loved it. I've been fortunate that I've been able to fish some of the rivers like the Bow, the Kispiox, and the Bulkley, when nobody else fished it; so some really good memories there. So we started looking around, wanted to build our retirement home or a cabin or whatever. We started looking on the Kispiox. The Kispiox is a little dreary at times of the year and far away from civilization. Mike had a business associate who owned a piece of property just outside of Smithers, and he wanted to sell it, so we bought this piece of property, which just happened to be on the Bulkley River, and built a house there and had it ever since.

TB: So when you're up there, you're a guide. You don't actually have your own camp. I mean you have your own place that you live, but you don't have a—

DM: No, we went through that exercise and decided that because it was such a, not an urban area, but close to an urban area that it would be foolish to build the accommodation, which is a huge expense, and then you have to hire the staff to run it, etc, etc. So, what we do, we're essentially a guide service. We pick up our customers in Smithers, take them fishing, like any guide service, and the nice thing about that is our anglers can stay where they want, high end, medium, low end, wherever they want to stay. They can go eat wherever they want to go eat, and they can eat with whomever they choose.

TB: But you go out for five or six days at a time or six days at a time.

DM: Our usual trips are six days. I will take people for less if I have the space.

TB: So just tell me a little bit about how that works. I don't know, I guess I just find it fascinating that you could spend eight weeks up there going out six days at a time. Do you just pick them up every morning and go out fly fishing for the day?

DM: Yes, we go out to different areas of the river, we try and mix it up. We also have the ability to go to a [different] section if the lower section is dirty or high. We take them out; pick them up usually at 7:30 in the morning, depending where we go. We're fishing by 8:30-ish. So, they fish, we have coffee, tea, drinks, whatever, have lunch, make them lunch, fish the afternoon. Usually we quit about 5:00 in the afternoon, depending on the time of year. I mean if somebody has got a fish on or a fish is there, we're not going to quit at 5:00. But generally we have them back at their hotel room by 6-6:30 in the evening.

TB: So then the rest of the year you're doing these fly casting—you do like—you have your own school then as well?

DM: I don't do a lot of teaching anymore. There are a lot of teachers now. When we were doing most of our teaching, there weren't any teachers around. So it's nice to know that there's a lot of opportunity for people to learn now.

TB: Okay. Do you have other ideas of other women specifically that would be good to interview, to add into our collection?

DB: In the northwest.

TB: Yes. Or if you think of one, just let us know.

DM: Yes, there's a few—

TB: Or even men, actually, in BC. With this huge budget thing [right now], I don't know if we're going to do anymore, but if we did, we haven't really done anybody [in BC]. In fact, you are the first person we've done from BC.

DB: That's actually fly fished. We have one other woman that grew up on Pass Lake, it's a fly fishing only and so forth, and that was just a historical thing about Pass Lake [near Anacortes, Washington].

DM: Oh, my gosh.

TB: She's also though the first Canadian. We interviewed like Bill Nelson, who I think was really up in Alaska more than Canada, wasn't he?

DB: No, Bill Nelson? No, he was in Vancouver, Quadra Island.

TB: Okay, okay, so we did do Bill Nelson. I did do Bill Nelson.

DM: He's one of the originators of the FFF, right? And he was in Oregon at that time. He moved to Canada.

TB: Well, yes. He did that temporarily for retirement.

DB: Bill has always lived in Oregon.

TB: No, well he had a house up at April Lodge, April Point—

DM: April Point, yes.

DB: His residence was Eugene, but he spent a lot of time up there, yes, because he had that [guide] business.

DM: Oh, I'll have to think of some names for you.

TB: Yes, just if you do.

DM: I'm not sure about that many women.

TB: I'm not necessarily big on interviewing women just because they're women, but—

DM: I know, but it's extremely nice that you are thinking of women because I think women have a place in fly fishing, and it's never going to be as great as the men because there's a lot of women that may start out fishermen, and then they get married and the kids come along and the job, and there is no time for fishing. So, unless you're involved in the industry somehow, you're not going to stay in the industry full time.

Have you interviewed Carol Green?

TB: No.

DM: Carol Green; Jim Green's wife.

DB: Oh, well she's close by. I assume she still lives at Quilcene.

DM: No, Jim and Carol moved to southeast Washington, and they sold that, so I am not exactly sure how to contact her.

DB: That's right; over east the mountains, over by the Grande Ronde.

DM: You could find out where she is through Al Burr.

DB: Yes, that's right. I forgot.

DM: You might want to contact Al Burr, who is a protégé of Jim Green, very big in the two-handed teaching. Who else? Carol Green... Out of BC, you might want to contact Art Lingren.

TB: We have had contact with him.

DM: You have been? Okay.

DB: Oh, out of the men, I have a number of [suggestions]. I would include Pete.

DM: Pete Caverhill?

DB: Yes.

DM: Yes, Pete Caverhill worked for the province in fisheries for years, got lots of good information.

DB: The group that wrote *BC Flies*, that was part of the BCFFF. And there was a fellow from up in Kelowna or Vernon, up in that area, that did that.

DM: He did *The Gilly*.

DB: Is he still around?

DM: Davy.

DB: Yes, Alf Davy

DM: Alf Davy. Now we did a—Mike and I each did a section in *The Gilly*.

DB: Is he still around?

DM: I don't know.

DB: We'll have to found out.

DM: I have a couple of older friends, fly fishermen, who keep me up to date with this stuff. They are members of the Totems.

DB: Yes, those are the ones that I remember, that are my age or older.

DM: But you know, Danny, the thing is that a lot of these guys are reaching that age where they're dying, they're not around anymore, which is scary.

DB: I used to go up when BCFFF had executive meetings at a Legion Hall or something. That was on the way out to Hastings, on the road that went up to the park, out to the PNE area.

DM: And that was part of the period when they actually had some meetings, and they had a newsletter that came out that Richard Mayer did.

DB: I go back about 35 years.

DM: Well, that's probably in the '90s.

DM: I'm starting to feel old here.

TB: One more question. We've used this several times in our campus history program. Okay, we're not able to interview Mike, and could you tell us a little bit about Mike and his fly fishing?

DM: Sure. Mike was born in India. His dad was in the British Army, and he went out to India. His mom came out and married the dad, so Mike was born in India and lived there for probably the first ten years of his life. He was born in 1924. Then they came back to England, which was a big culture shock, and his

dad was still in the British Army, and they moved around a lot. So as a kid, he had a lot of freedom, saw a lot of the country, remembers, as I said, he remembers being taken fly fishing by the local blacksmith. He went with the son of the blacksmith, and they went out fishing. But it wasn't really until he got to Canada that he started fly fishing. Mike was in the Second World War. He was in a tank. After that, he went back to school, became a structural engineer, became a British civil servant, which is quite an accomplishment. Then in the mid-50's decided that, I guess like a lot of men, took a look and saw the rest of his life unfolding before him and decided that he wanted more. So he searched around where he could go and ended up in Canada, in Calgary. There he worked as a structural engineer for a couple years and then started his own company, did a lot of pre-stressed concrete, a lot of warehouse-type buildings, very successful. Then got back into fly fishing from there; just an avid learner, a compulsive teacher, you know, wanted to know everything. So, what else can I tell you?

TB: Well, whose idea was it to start to kind of make it a career or profession?

DM: Mike was still working as—at first it was part time, rather than me going and getting a job, which would have sort of tied us down a bit more. We sort of started this as a part-time thing that I could do, and then it just—I don't know if you remember the economy in the early '80s. There went the retirement, and so the fishing became more of a necessity, certainly in the Vancouver area, so we did this to help with the effects of the economy. Mike owned, we owned a lot of commercial real estate that went belly up because of that, and so it became a necessity. And it was nice. Fly fishing and fly casting, all of this is a great lifestyle. You're never going to get rich, but you're going to have a nice lifestyle.

TB: Well, is there anything that we haven't asked you, about anything, you, Mike, anything that you'd like to get recorded?

DM: I don't know, a little bit about the guiding. I've been guiding for 15 years or whatever, and that's something I really enjoy. I like taking people out fishing. I like seeing them catch their—help them catch their fish. As I've said before, I've been fortunate that I've done a lot of fishing, trout fishing, on the Bow, among other places, Montana, West Yellowstone. I've been tarpon fishing, bonefishing, steelhead fishing, which I love. I think I've caught my share of fish. I've been very successful. And to me, I don't really care if I catch another fish, but I do like helping other people catch fish. Last year, I got to go steelhead fishing for maybe three days. I went out with one of my guides. I can still do it.

TB: How many people work for you, then?

DM: I have two assistant guides that help. We have a very short season, very compact season.

TB: Okay, I don't have any more questions.

DB: Yep, that's it for me too. I liked your comment, it's fun to watch somebody else hook a fish.

I have focused on casting. We should have had some other parts in there.

DM: What I was going to tell you, Mike did fly tie courses for many years, and we put it all on DVD. He went through trout, nymphs, everything, and did an Atlantic salmon DVD as well. But his signature flies were the two steelhead flies. One was the Telkwa Stonefly, which is a very large dry fly, and the other is the nymph form, which is called the Telkwa Nymph, which is a great big black nymph version of the stonefly—on the Bulkley there are stoneflies that we see at that time of year. So those are the two flies.

What I was going to tell you is that when you brought up fly tying, I was just up north at our property there, and a couple years ago I put on an aluminum roof, so it's been a great learning experience. This year it took out the phone line, so you call up the telephone guys to come and fix it, and the guy that comes, he likes to come and see me. He is an old student of ours that took a fly tying course from Mike, and we figured out it was probably 25 years ago. So that was one thing, you meet these people everywhere.

The other one was this certification event in Malaysia, there were at least 20 candidates taking tests there. And the one fellow comes up to me, says, I was a student of yours in Vancouver at the store. This must have been, this is like 20 years ago. I was like, *Oh!* The interesting thing about most of these candidates in Malaysia, they were all fairly educated, they were doctors, lawyers, professional people who had been away to school, so he had been over here going to Simon Fraser and working, and he took our course and did a lot of fishing, and then he went back to Kuala Lumpur. So those are the two most recent cases of your past coming back to visit you.

TB: Any more comments about the dry fly? And this is probably where I show my ignorance, but I know that you and Mike were very big on dry flies. Is that just because that's the very best way to fish the Bulkley River? I mean I know it's a philosophical wet fly/dry fly thing [debate too].

DM: It is a philosophical thing, and it's an extremely—dry fly fishing for steelhead is very nice, and that would be my preferred way of doing it. You have to show a lot of line control. Your fly has to float because what you see, you actually see the fish come up and either roll on the fly or take the fly and run away. So it's a visual thing that you see, very much like tarpon fishing. If you're fishing on the flats, you see the fish come and take it. The only problem with that is that as the pressure on the river has increased, as the number of anglers on the river has increased, it has an impact on the steelhead. They become less willing to take a dry fly. They get fished over now from the mouth of the Skeena, all the way up the Skeena, all the way up the Bulkley. So unless they've been rested for several days, they're less willing to take the dry fly. And when you are guiding as well, many anglers they want to dry fly fish, but anybody that is dry fly fishing is going to catch less fish than they do on a wet fly or a nymph. So they will fish for awhile, and then they'll switch to the wet fly, or they will catch their first fish, catch a fish on a wet fly, I'm going to dry fly for awhile. So, we sort of made our reputation as steelhead guides on the dry fly, which is when you think a steelhead comes up, a 40-inch steelhead will come up and take the dry fly, it's pretty exciting.

TB: I can see that. I can see that. Yes, Trey Combs definitely talks about that.

DM: Oh, yes.

DB: The development of fly lines, then, has that been with your Spey, your double-hand—what do you call it now, double-handed or Spey?

DM: Any—two-handed probably is the—two-handed.

DB: The fly lines for that, the development, has that been important to your business?

DM: Yes, it has. In the beginning, you get the rods, so you get a blank, you get the rod blank, and then you're looking around at what's available in the lines, and there really was not a lot available. So we ended up using double tapers, and what we would do is splice on a section of a—like if we were using a double taper 10, we would splice on or loop on a section of double taper 8, 15 feet of double taper 8. So that gave you that long extended taper that would turn over your fly. Like a straight double taper, your fly won't turn over properly. So from that, so you have your two sections, and then if you wanted to nymph, if you wanted to get down, there really weren't any sink tips available. There were shooting heads available. So Mike thought up the idea of taking that 30-foot shooting head and cutting it into three sections, 15 feet, 10 feet, and 5 feet. So with the loops section, you could loop on a section of 10-foot sink tip that would take you down. I remember in the early years, Jim Vincent coming up, Jim Vincent of Rio Products coming up, and he did a lot of fishing on the Kispiox River. He came to see Mike, he wanted a lesson in two-handed rods, etc, etc. Now at that time, Jim was a, or he started as a professional photographer, so he made his living selling his footage to, his photos were in *Fly Fisherman*, a lot of hunting magazines, so that's how he made his living. And then he got started researching lines, and he did a lot of his research work on lines and took Mike's idea into his product, where he does the 15-foot sink tips and the loops and all that stuff.

DB: This was for the double-handed.

DM: This is for the double-hand.

DB: So the development of the double-handed and these lines kind of went in sequence.

DM: Yes.

DB: And then your dry fly fishing for steelhead went along with all this—

DM: Yes, everyone sort of tumbled over each other and grew as we went along, but now if you look at the variety of lines available for the two-handed rods, it's absolutely mind boggling. I can't keep track anymore. Which is good, you know.

DB: Now they've gone to systems, line systems.

DM: Yes, where they sell you this much, and it costs this much, incredibly expensive for a piece of string!

DB: Yes, I'm glad you got started on the tying and your dry fly fishing because that got me thinking about the lines.

DM: Well there are literally so much that's gone on that it's hard to remember it all.

TB: Do you have any specific—sorry, going back to the woman thing, which really isn't my thing—but do you have any advice to young women who want to get into it? Is there anything special or something that [they] need that you could tell them?

DM: Well, yes, but first I'd like to start by telling all the dads out there that don't just think about taking your boys fishing, take your girls fishing, because in many cases the girls will be more avid fishermen. I think there has to be more introduction of fly fishing as a recreational activity at the lower levels, like kids, teenagers, stuff like that. It's spotty, around the country what is offered. But any woman who is interested in fly fishing, the advice is to go out there, get some instruction, go fishing. Don't wait for a guy to take you. It's great, there are women fly fishing clubs now. You can always find someone to go fishing with you. If not, hire a guide, go fishing. There shouldn't be anything that holds you back. The equipment's there, the instruction's there, the guides are there, the fish are there, and the good times are there too.

TB: Is there any difference between men and women fishing? I know that they have a rod that's built more for women.

DM: No, not really, not really. Men can, just because of their physique, can usually cast farther, but that doesn't really have anything to do with fishing. Women learn, or women are better students because they listen to you. The guy thing or the macho thing doesn't get involved. So they learn, and all you have to do is show them what to do, and they don't have to be able to cast 75 feet to do it. Trout fishing, I mean, you're barely casting in some places. You just have to present the fly well. So there's all kinds of opportunities out there, opportunities to travel, opportunities to make new friends. Fly fishing is not just going fishing. Fly fishing is the books, the teaching, the DVDs, the shows you can go to, the people you meet, the conclaves you can go to. There's a lot of the social aspect to it as well.

DB: You meet a lot of neat people.

DM: You meet a lot of neat people, you do, very nice people too. I always tell my students, if you need a lawyer, find one that's a fly fisherman. If you can find a doctor who's a fly fisherman, go for it. It's just that fly fishermen are such unique, neat people. My doctor is the daughter of a friend of mine, who is a fly fisherman.

DB: Over the years, the Federation has had a lot of dentists.

DM: Yes, my dentist is a fly fisherman. Yes, several lawyers [are] fly fishermen; all good people to know.

TB: Okay, is that it?

DM: Unless we think of something else.

TB: Well, okay. [Thank you very much!]