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**TB:** Today is Tuesday, June 12, 2018. I'm here with Ed Ruckey and Nancy Messmer and we're going to do an oral history with Mr. Ruckey. So, our first question is: how did you get started fly fishing? Or how did you get started in fishing, in case you evolved into fly fishing?

**ER:** I started fishing when I was about eight years old, back in Gardner, Massachusetts. My grandfather gave me an Orvis fly rod and reel, and I fished his small stream that went through his farm property. It was basically brook trout.

**TB:** So was that when your passion was born, or did it evolve over time, or?

**ER:** It evolved over time, but it really got to me how hard it could be to try and catch a little brook trout, especially on a fly rod. But my grandfather instilled in me the, not only the fly fishing end of it but the conservation end of it. At eight years old, it really piqued my interest. And if I'd remained back there, I probably would have to say I started fly fishing when I was eight. Unfortunately with the war over and everything, things were getting hard, my dad lost his job, so we had to move out to California. There I didn't do much in the way of fly fishing. I did fish with my father off and on out in the saltwater. Then the next time I had any fly fishing was when my dad and I went up the Highway 6, on the east side of the Sierras, and we fished Lone Pine, Big Pine, and Bishop area streams, and had a wonderful week and a half of fishing.

**TB:** What got you into tying your own flies? That evolution?

**ER:** That evolution came about when my middle son, Bruce, got interested in fly fishing and tying, and both of us took a class at H & H Sporting Goods. We started tying together then. We just fed off of each other: I can do this better than you can. No, you can't, I can do this better than you. It just progressed to the point where I saw it as the only way to really have fun and enjoy fly fishing was to tie your own flies.

From there, it just expanded out, and I started fishing some of the streams around here. I noticed there were people on the stream and a lot of them weren't having any luck. They didn't seem to have any luck. So I started handing out some of my flies for them to try, and things just progressed from there.

**TB:** So how did you decide what kind of flies were working best?

**ER:** By studying what was happening on the stream, I knew that if you're on a small stream, you're not going to throw some big ol' *Woolly Bugger* or something out like that. You had to go small and tie flies that would work, that would imitate the bugs more often, or they were imitations of the bugs. Sometimes it was just a real gaudy fly that worked, but it had to be small. So through the natural progression, I came up with flies that I used on the stream that worked, and that's what I put my emphasis on.

**TB:** So when did you get involved in the Fourth Corner Fly Fishing?

**ER:** That was in 1986. A friend of mine, Norm Love, also Dick Van Demark, and a few others said I should join the club, get involved with the Fourth Corner Fly Fishers, so I did. In 1986 I became a member of the Fourth Corner Fly Fishers.

**TB:** So can you tell me more about that? I know that you have been giving away a lot of flies and different things, but were there other aspects of the club that you were involved in?

**ER:** I was involved in part of the youth teaching, also in some of the conservation work that the club was doing. My major involvement was being a club officer for, oh I think I quit being a club officer in 2010 or 2011, I forget, some place right around there. But it was the teaching of youth that I really got my best thrill. Lynden Christian Middle School had a teacher there, it was a natural science class that she taught, and she had us come in and teach fly tying and also a little bit about conservation and whatnot. But the fly tying end of it was where the kids really got interested. I must say, the girls in the class were a lot better than the boys because the boys had a preconceived notion, well I can do that better, type of thing. But the girls listened and did what I told them to do, and they learned to be the better fly tyers.

**TB:** Did you then take them out fishing?

**ER:** I didn't take them out [fishing] myself, but other club members took them out. We had little fishing trips with them. But my aspect of fly fishing was, in taking people out, was more of a one-on-one buddy type system. I'd take somebody under my wing and show them what to do and where to fish.

**TB:** Do you know if Lynden Christian first reached out to the Fourth Corner club, or did the Fourth Corner club reach out to Lynden Christian to offer their services or offer that program to them?

**ER:** I think if I recall, and I may be wrong in this, but I thought Lynden Christian mentioned that they were, she had a group of girls, sort of a little fly club, but she liked to teach some of her students that, and she approached our club president. I believe it was the club president at the time. And we said, yes, we'd be glad to do it.

**TB:** What were some of the other positions you held as a club officer?

**ER:** A year after I was in the club, I became the outings vice president.<sup>1</sup> I was that for two years. The next year following that, I was what they called at the time internal vice president, where I took and actually set up programs for the club. I was that for several years. Then in 1994 -- no wait, 1993 I became the club president. 1994 I was reelected as club president, and also in 1994 was when I had my heart attack. (There's a little story about that). Then in 1995, I took another term as club president. Following that was a year that I didn't [serve]. I was past president but still a member of the board. Then I became

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<sup>1</sup> External Vice President (Outings)

the outings vice president again after that. And I was outings vice president, I think it was -- I was outings vice president until 2010. That period of being outings vice president, I looked at what was happening, and that's when I started doing the raffle on the outings, raffling off fly boxes full of flies.

**TB:** That you had tied?

**ER:** Yes.

**TB:** Is that kind of when you started tying more flies for -- ?

**ER:** That's when I really started producing the flies. I mean, you know, at times we had twelve outings a year, and I'd tie boxes of flies for those outings. The boxes would range from about 150 flies to close to 250 flies in the box. They'd come to the outing, one of the things that got them [to come was], oh boy, Ed's going to be a fly box there. I want to go to that outing! It would increase the participation of the outing, which was really great for the club because the more we did that, the more people got to know the club through contacts and everything.

On these outings, I always had extra flies along with me. [If] I'd see somebody, he didn't have to be a member or the club or anything. But if he was out there having problems catching fish, I'd either row over to where he was or I'd walk over to where he was if we were on a stream, and I'd kind of show him where he should be laying his fly and everything. Then I'd give him a handful of flies. I don't know how many, you know, could be anywhere from a dozen to two dozen, three dozen. It just depended on my mood for the day.

**TB:** Could you talk a little bit more about how you decided where your outings were going to be? Is that kind of a club decision? Or is it kind of a seasonal thing, what's a popular place to go fishing at a certain time?

**ER:** Well it was a popular place. I would ask for suggestions as to where to go on an outing, and I might get maybe a handful of suggestions out of the entire club. So I just decided, I started picking out the outings, and I'd pick them out so that they were very diversified. There was always several local outings that I knew a lot of people could go to. Then I'd have one or two real gems, which would be places like Montana or someplace like that, you know. I think the major outings that I had at that time were a couple of the Idaho and Montana trips that took a week and a half to accomplish. I'd make sure I had flies tied pertinent to that particular outing.

**TB:** So when did you get into illustrating?

**ER:** I always have done illustrations. At one time when I was in high school, my two sisters were friends with Walt Disney there. At one point in time, right before I graduated from high school, I was approached by the Disney company to see if I wanted to be part of the artist group at Walt Disney. At the time, being a young squirt of 18, it didn't pay good enough for me, so I didn't bother pursuing it.

But I have no regrets, because I got to go -- I joined the army. I was over in Germany, in an army aviation outfit, so I got to fly around the country with my officer. I also got to go on several trips around there. That's when I started doing some sketching. At that time also my commander found out that I had a drafting background, so I became their cartographer.

But then the real start in my eyes was I wanted to make a little extra money on the side, and I guess saw all these different art shows going on and everything, I says, oh, I could do that. So I started doing illustrations and put my booth into different art shows around the area. That was in the 1970s, mid to late 1970s, I started doing that.

About that same time, I met a person who became my friend up at North Cascade National Park. He happened to be the -- boy, I can't think of the word right now (heck I'm almost 80). He was the interpretive specialist for the north unit of the park. I started talking to him about some of the stuff I was doing and everything, and he said, well why don't you volunteer for the park here? We could sure use help like you in the early spring and in the fall. So I became a volunteer in the park, doing children's programs on Saturdays, where I showed them how to draw cute little character-type animals that were pertinent to the park, little squirrels and chipmunks, and how to do it in a sort of an animated form so that they would be able to do it.

That progressed to [where] I did up a complete learning format for children's programs, which as far as I know the park still has up there. I did a little story about how Diablo Lake got its particular color, the emerald green color. That really hit the spot with the park, especially Jim Harris, my friend.

**NM:** Did you write that story, or tell it?

**ER:** I told it, after I had done the original outline of it. I've got the rough draft still at home, and I took it out and read it to my nephew and I promised him I would take and finish it, polish it up a bit, and do the illustrations in it, and then I'd give it to him so he could give it to his granddaughters.

**TB:** So when you were doing that back in the 1970s, when you first started doing art shows, what kind of things were you drawing for that?

**ER:** I was doing old barns, old outhouses, wildlife, and birds. Basically it was the old buildings around the country. I got into doing the birds and wildlife. At one of the Coupeville shows, in the 1980s, I had a biologist for the State of Washington who happened to be walking through the show. He came back after he had walked through and told me, you know, Ed, your birds and wildlife have more life in them on the paper than anything else I've seen in this art show, which, you know, this was from a biologist, I was really feeling good about it.

Art has always been a love of mine. I combine my love of art along with my love of tying to the point where I can tie flies that have life to them, and it just works together so well.

**TB:** I know you [illustrated] the Dan Homel book. Are there other books that you have illustrated? And how did you get started doing the illustrations for the fly fishing books?

**ER:** I'd been doing some drawings and everything, and Dan Homel asked me to do the fly fishing book with him, and I said, yes, okay, I can do that. Then he wrote a couple other books, and I had some illustrations in those. But basically that was the only book I really did any illustrations for. The rest of it was hand-to-hand more or less, or my wife gave me away at one of her PTA things, and I ended up going into the schools and teaching art in their resource centers.

For example, out at Birchwood, I went in there and set up in the resource center. They brought the classes in all day long, and I showed them I was starting a picture. I showed them how I started the drawing and

everything. I worked to get it to the point where it should be. I showed them samples of what other work I'd done. Then, when I finished that particular picture I was doing for Birchwood, I framed it and everything, and I took it on in, and they had a special session where I brought it in and presented it to the school. *Birchwood* (the art piece) was a bunch of birch trees with chickadees in it.

Shuksan I think, yes, Shuksan Middle School, I was in there in their [Resource Center], and I did a drawing. I ended up doing a drawing of a cougar for them.

**NM:** Was it that cougar they had, that taxidermied cougar, at Shuksan?

**ER:** Yes, I've seen that. (Laughter)

**ER:** Lowell was another school that I went to and Roosevelt was another one. Sunnyland was the home school. That's where my children went to school. The one big project I did at Sunnyland was they had a lunch -- they had an outbuilding there that was their lunch room. They called them portables. But you know it looked so dull and grey and everything that my wife approached me and says, do you think that you could do something to liven up these walls? And I says, okay, yes, I can do that. I went in and I took a look at the place, and I said, okay, I'll start here and I'll work my way on around. I started doing Disney-like characters, and I started working them all the way around the entire interior walls. The running joke is we finally had to take the pencil away, otherwise we'd still be there. (Laughter)

**TB:** So tell me a little bit more about your involvement in the fly fishing club and/or just some of the people you've known, like Dan Homel, Ralph Wahl. You knew Ralph Wahl, he's not here, we didn't do an oral history with him. What can you tell me about your memories of him?

**ER:** Ralph, well, he was, to me, he was a gentleman's gentleman. I mean, I just -- I'd go down into his cellar there where he had all his photos and his tying stuff and all that, and we'd sit down and we'd talk about the state of steelhead fishing and what was happening. He would also bring out some of his artwork that he had, like the Tommy Brayshaw drawings of a pair of steelhead that he'd done, that Tommy had done and given to him. Then a wood carved steelhead that Tommy had done and given to him. But, I mean, he had personal notes from Zane Grey and several others. Then every now and then he'd say, you got to listen to this, and so on, and it would be the FFF major conclave meeting. We would listen to the speaker, whoever it may be, and everything, and we'd talk about, well, what do you think about this? We just sat around and had coffee, and even discussed flies. How they should be constructed and what we should try to impart into the fly.

**TB:** Did you know Harold Jellison?

**ER:** I knew Harold by name but not real close. Dick Van Demark, I knew.

**TB:** Could you tell us more about him? We have some of his books, yes.

**ER:** Yes. Dick was an interesting individual (chuckle). I mean you either liked him or you didn't. I mean, there was no middle ground with Dick. As far as being a fly fisherman and a fly tyer, he was hard to beat. I mean, his color combinations he came up with, his blending of fur and whatnot, I haven't seen anybody do the same in all the years I've been fly fishing. I mean, he was able to take objects, put them together, mix them on up, and come out with this brilliant color that just seemed to blend right into the

natural surroundings. He was a real staunch activist when it came to conversation and everything. He did not like what was going on, and he didn't pull back any punches when he did it.

I remember one trip, we went into this peat [bog] area off the Mosquito Lake Road, and the first thing we noticed when we parked the car and got out and took a look was there was smallmouth bass fry swimming around in what used to be strictly trout. I mean, it used to be strictly brook trout and rainbow. There were these little fry running around that shouldn't even be there. We went upstream a little ways and looked at another spot, and sure enough there were some bigger ones there. So I said, well this water comes in from Mosquito Lake, let's go over there. Well, we drove on into Mosquito Lake, and I said, well, there's a sign here that says private. We shouldn't trespass, or go in there. He says, oh yes, this is where it is. He went driving on in, and it belonged to the Deming -- ah, they had a fancy name for it. But it was a club that had been founded there. We got in there and we were looking at the lake. We could see the building there, and we could see a couple people there walking around. We were looking in there and said, yes, there's some big bass right there. And there's no screen over this, you know. Sure enough, we weren't there maybe 10 minutes, and all of a sudden here's this deputy sheriff driving up. Dick started to argue with the deputy, and he said, no, this is private property you have to leave. Dick said, well, they're allowing those bass to roam free, and they're getting down into [Mosquito Lake]. Of course, Dick wanted to settle things right there and then, but we did get out, and we were told not to come back.

But that was Dick. If he felt strong about something there was nothing that was going to stop him. Some people it bothered them to see that, they could not take Dick. But Dick Van Demark was one of my sponsors, and he thought I was a good catch, so.

**NM:** How many people [did] you sponsor in the club?

**ER:** I didn't sponsor too many in the club. You know some of them [would] just come up and ask, would you be my sponsor? Yes. But I didn't know anything about them.

**NM:** Right.

**ER:** I was thinking of the club when I sponsored [anyone], and I did sponsor quite a few of them that turned out to be longtime club members in good standing. But with me you had to earn it. I mean, I had to be out there on a fishing trip with you, or I had to be attending some other function with you in order for me to take and say yes, I'd be willing to sponsor you.

**TB:** Could you tell us, for people who might read this that don't know about the sponsoring system, could you tell us more about what is involved when someone wants to be sponsored to join the club?

**ER:** Now it's written right into the bylaws. In order to be sponsored, you have to go through twelve different steps. You have to attend the twelve different functions that the club participated in. You had to complete those in order to gain entrance. When you were completing those twelve steps, you also had to take and look at to the people who you thought might make a good sponsor for you. Also it was on the sponsor himself or herself to take and act accordingly and take and look at an individual and say, well, you know, I would like to sponsor you. I like what you're doing, you know. Then after the twelve steps are complete, your name is brought before the board, and the sponsors had to be at that board meeting so that they could get up and give their testimony. Then if they passed through the board, the next regular meeting, they would -- also the sponsors had to be at that meeting too, and during the vote, the [person] that wanted to be a member of the club would have to step out. But if he passed the vote and also did the

twelve things that were required, he became a member. [Some] of the things that were required was to attend a couple of conservation projects, you had to attend a board meeting, you had to attend so many club meetings, and you had to attend so many outings, and some education outings where you went into a school or went into a club and taught young kids or something. They had to do these twelve things to see whether or not [they could join]. It wasn't like it was in the old days when I was there, you know, [when] it was shake your hand, and okay, you're good.

**TB:** What about, were you involved in the next level of fly fishing? Like have you been involved in the Federation of Fly Fishers, or now it's something else, but –

**ER:** No, I haven't.

**TB:** You have been heavily involved in the Whatcom County and the Fourth Corner Fly Fishing club.

**ER:** Yes, I've been involved with them basically because it's local, and I really felt that I wanted to put most of my emphasis on local. I was initially involved in the start of Washington Trout<sup>2</sup> way back when it was the first thing [to advocate for conservation and recovery of the wild-fish ecosystem in the Northwest]. The initial start was on a streamside where three people, Hugh Lewis I think was one of them, chatted about what we should do. I was involved in the two meetings when we were finalizing stuff, and that was held at Jeff [Stasques's?] house, on the south side there. I even submitted one of my drawings as a possible logo for it. It didn't make it. It was too realistic.

**NM:** I see that you have there this statue [with an inscription that says], the *Ed Ruckey Mentor Award*, presented to Ed Ruckey in recognition of his major contribution to the education of new Fourth Corner Fly Fishing members, February 2002, want to tell us about that?

**ER:** Yes. First off, it surprised the heck out of me when I received it. But I would take out any new member that would ask me. I'd take them out, and I'd spend a day, a week, whatever it took, and show them how to fly fish and how to be successful at it. I would literally take them by the hand, and I'd give them a box of flies, and I'd tell them what rod he needs to have, or she needs to have, and I would take them out on the stream bank or out on the lake ([usually] it was a stream though). I'd show them how to read the water and what to look for, and then I'd hand them a box of flies. And tell them, okay, you should try that, do an up-hand reach, let that fly drift on down through there, and don't jerk or pull it out until it was all the way down at the end of its drift, otherwise you're likely to spook a fish. And I'd show them, You don't want to get in the water directly and wade halfway out and do some fishing. You start at the beginning and work your way out. Anybody that wanted to [go], I was there for them, no matter what.



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<sup>2</sup> Washington Trout (1989-2007) became Wild Fish Conservancy in February 2007.





During my tenure as the president, I pushed for the membership to allow women to join the club. I mean, we had one token woman member, and she'd been in the club a lot longer than I had, Susan Swetman. She joined the club when her husband was a member, and he left the club and left her, but she stayed a member of the club. I met her up at one of the lakes there up in Canada. But she's been the only [woman] member that we had for a long time. Through my effort, I was able to get some other women members – into the club.

**NM:** Including me.

**ER:** That's right. But the thing that made it easy for them to become members was the fact that I was willing to take them out, shoulder to shoulder and show them how to fish and what to look for and everything. [I treated them] like somebody rather than, oh well, yes, I guess we can have her; we need a few token members. In fact, it was I believe Sid Strong that put a title on me that I still can't get rid of half the time. I could be out there fishing with a couple of the ladies in the club, and he'd say, yes, Ed's out there with his harem again. (Laughter)

**NM:** How did you get the Doc Hackle name?

**ER:** Sid Strong. (Laughter)

He gave me the Doc Hackle name because I had -- when I was out each year, I had several outings to different fly shops. Now these fly shops, you know, you go in and they got all the goodies sitting up there on the shelves on their different display counters and whatnot, but they were, you know, if you went in and just bought what was right in front of you, well, no telling what you'd get. So I had these outings where I'd take a group of people out, and we would sit down or have coffee before we actually went to the shop and say, okay, what do you need for what you want to tie? I'd find out what they wanted to tie, what they were looking for. And we'd go into the shop, and I'd one by one take them, well, figuratively by the hand and show them, okay, now you're going to be wanting to tie this type of fly? Okay, these are the different feathers that can be used on it, but what you want to look for, and I'd pull off the back and I'd show them how the webbing was on it. Now, this one, even though it's in the same stack as the rest of these, wouldn't work because it's got too much webbing or it doesn't have enough webbing, so you want this or that. By the time I was finished with them, they had everything they needed for the particular fly that they wanted to tie. Then if they wanted to look around for something else, they'd grab hold of something and they'd come bring it back to me and say, what do you think of this? I'd say, well it depends on what you want to tie. He says, well I'm thinking of, I want to tie some Adams, or I want to tie this and some dry flies. And I'd say, well it's not bad cape, but what you want is something that's got a little bit longer feather and that the hackle stem is a lot thinner. I'd show them how to look for that just right dry fly hackle. After a couple trips like that, Sid came up with the name Doc Hackle, and it stuck.

**NM:** How did it happen that you have *youtube* videos up? The Doc Hackle *youtube* videos?

**ER:** Well that was part of a project we were working on, both Sid and I were working on. That was the rough product, that wasn't the finished product. He decided to put it on up, it got kind of hectic. I lost one



of my sisters, and a bunch of other stuff came up, so we didn't get back together to really polish it off. It was going to be a CD with about a dozen different flies, with me doing a narration.

**NM:** A narrative, yes. It's to music now.

**ER:** Yes, it was always going to be to music as a soft background, but the narrative needed to be done, but just never materialized. Things got busy, and he was busy with Jimmy Buffet there, and I was busy with a bunch of other stuff. I think at the time we did that, I was also volunteering up in the park. No, no, I was finished with the park, but I was still doing stuff around the schools and whatnot.

**TB:** So what are some of your own preferences for fishing? If you could go off and do anything you wanted, do you like streams or lakes? It sounds like you like streams better, but.

**ER:** Definitely streams. Small mountain streams, especially areas that might be a little harder to get to, but a lot of times you wouldn't have anybody else on the stream. I mean, you'd be there and you'd be by yourself. There was times when I'd just sit down on a log and watch the world go by. I mean, there was times on the Upper Skagit above Ross Lake there where I'd, even at club meetings, people would be off fishing areas, and I'd just sit down on a log and I'd watch. I was seeing all sorts of wildlife. I mean, I was seeing these yellow warblers along the stream bank, and I'd see kingfishers, and I'd see otters in the river, and I'd see black bears.

I was watching one time and I saw a black bear with three cubs walking, wade across the river down below me. I just said, hi, you know, talking in kind of a loud voice, and she looked up, gave a little grunt, and off they went into the woods. But I mean it was a restful time. I'd sit back and just enjoy what was going on. If I had a person with me, I would take and set them up and tell them how to fish this one particular run and how to read the water and everything. I'd show them what fly to use from the box of flies I'd usually give them, and then I'd sit back and even though my rod was strung up and everything and I was ready to go, I'd be watching them, watching them fish and hook into fish and having a good time. They would look at me, they'd come out of the water, Ed, how come you're not fishing? I said, well I've been fishing all along. They'd say, no you haven't, you've been sitting here. I'd say, no, I showed you where to fish, I showed you how to fish, and I gave you the flies to fish with. I was in the water with you. Oh, I forget who it was, one of the ladies. It might have been Louise, said, you mean, that's the force I felt when I was in the water?

**NM:** (Laughter)

**ER:** It must be.

**TB:** So do you like to just go up for a day, or do you like to go for weeklong adventures up there, or what's your –

**ER:** Locally, just for the day. But to get away for a week was really advantageous. Up until the last few years, I've been a tent camper, and I've got a nice lightweight tent that I use, and I had a foam pad that I used to use. Finally age got to me, and I ended up with a cot but still in the tent. (Laughter)

**TB:** So, anything else about how you see fishing? Have you seen a lot of changes over the years? Do you have any thoughts about that?

**ER:** Yes, I have seen a lot of changes over the years. Our small streams aren't as pristine as they used to be. A lot more people are fishing, but of course we've got a lot larger population in the world today. But some of them, and it's just a few of them, but I wonder if they think of the stream as their place because they sure trash it. I used to be up on the Upper Skagit almost every weekend during the season, me and one of my other fishing friends, we'd carry a trash bag in the back of our vest, and we'd see stuff in the water and everything. We'd set it up on the bank and put a stick up so we'd know where it is. When we'd walk back down stream to get to the car, we'd go by these piles and pick them up. We'd haul the trash on out. And you know, it just got to us. I mean, we'd find upwards of a full case of beer cans in an area and wondered, if they could pack it in, you know, without any problem, but they couldn't pack out the empties? I know one time we were hiking out, and we got to our cars, and about the time one of the fisheries officers from up in BC happened by, and he stopped, and he saw us tossing the trash bags into the back of my friend's pickup. He looked at us, he says, you guys must be from the states. I says, oh, why's that? He says, because most of you guys from the states seem to come in, and you're always carrying trash out that you found. He says, you take better care of our river than our countrymen. I'm going, what? No, really? He says, yes. And at that time I didn't have my Fourth Corner hat on. I just had a regular baseball cap on. He says, I bet you ten to one you guys are from the Fourth Corner Fly Fishers. I go, yes. He said, yes, because your group seems to be one of the most dedicated to conservation of any of the groups I've seen.

**TB:** Nice.

**NM:** That's a good compliment.

**ER:** Yes, I think it's a great compliment for the club.

But yes, small streams are my favorite. Up until a few years ago, the high mountain small streams were my [favorite], but at 80, you know, I'm not going to crawl over a lot of rocks.

**TB:** What about some of the changes in equipment you've seen? Did that affect you much?

**ER:** There have been a lot of changes in equipment. The fly rods you have now are just power rods. I mean, I had -- no, I gave that one to my, one of my nephews, I think. I had one of the original Sage graphite rods, the graphite ones when they first came out. They had this graphite reel that went with it, it was a set that I bought at H&H Sporting Goods. Back then, it was like -- oh, that was back in the 1970s? Yes, right around the 1970s. Dates are a little fuzzy to me nowadays. But that was their first introduction into the graphite rod and rod making business, and I think the whole package with the rod and reel were like \$100.

**NM:** A ton of money.

**ER:** Well it was then. I mean, it was after I'd started working for the city, and it was, you know, \$600 was my monthly salary with the city then.

But as it progressed, you know, the rods got better and better. I was basically a Sage person until, well until recently I noticed that Redington and Echo have come out with comparable rods at a way more decent price. I mean, you can buy a rod from Echo, say a 7 ½ foot, 3 weight from Echo for \$170. \$178 was the last price I looked. But the same rod, or the same quality rod would run you about \$400 out of Sage.

**TB:** Wow.

**NM:** So when you introduce fly fishing to new people that you meet that are trying to fly fish, what are all the things that you think are important to share with them?

**ER:** As an introduction? I tell them, first off, you want a decent rod, but you don't want to buy the top brand. You want a specific rod that meets your casting style because rods are categorized as fast, medium-fast, medium, and then slow. I'd hand them my rod so that they could take a look and see. They'd take and make a couple casts, and I'd say, okay, judging from your cast there, I'd say you probably want a medium-fast. The rod you want would be a five weight with a good weight forward fly line. You want a package, about 9-foot tapered leader, and about a, I think a 5X or 6X, which would give you -- say 5X, it would be about five pound test. 6X was 3.4, or something like that. But it varies from product to product and a set of flies, depending on how you want to fish. If you want to fish streams, here's what I would buy, then I'd tell them what flies to purchase. Or you might want some of these.

**NM:** It seems [there are] so many things to learn at the beginning when someone starts to fly fish, so many things that are new to a person.

**ER:** Yes, it's a total new experience. I had to learn to fish, fly cast with my left arm after my shoulder went out on my right arm. Having a hit-and-run accident when I was 13, it helped me make the changeover easy because I became ambidextrous. I actually got to fishing, fly casting better with my left hand than I could have ever with my right hand.

But I basically tell them, you want to be comfortable. You want a rod that's going to work for you and be a general purpose rod. That was usually a five weight would be right in that general purpose, because you could use -- get an extra spool. You could add weight forward sinking line or sinking compensation line, where it sinks at a level speed rather than a quick drop. Then you'd want an intermediate line that just sinks slowly below the surface, and you'd want your dry line.

They'd say, well if I'm going to fish, I want to fish mainly lakes, then I'd tell them what they needed to fish the lakes, you know, the different type of leaders. In most cases, you wouldn't want more than a 7½ foot leader on a lake because you're using a sinking line most of the time. You don't need to have extra leader hanging out there. I'd tell them what my preference is and what they should go for. Then the flies of course, I'd tell them what they need to buy in the way of different flies for the streams. Then I'd turn around and hand them a bunch of flies -- (Laughter) -- for streams, you know. It might be one of the little boxes like that, with maybe a dozen or so, a dozen and a half of flies in it, but it would be everything that they'd need, from the weighted nymphs all the way up to the nice little dries.

**TB:** So what are the things that you are most proud of in regards to your fly fishing? We've talked about the mentor award. Are there some other awards that you've gotten?

**ER:** I got the *President's Award*, which is something that's always given. But I think my proudest moments have been when people come up to me and just tell me, if it wasn't for you, I wouldn't be in this club anymore. That to me means more than any award I could ever achieve. This just blew me away. I mean, I wasn't expecting it. And it wasn't just presented, and Ed Ruckey gets the -- I mean, they had a big -- Louise Granger had a big, huge celebration, and her speech going into it was really something. I was wondering who the heck she was talking about. The person that had helped her out and showed her

different things, showed her how to tie the different flies, how to do this, how to do that, and I'm going, Who is this guy? You know. I had no idea. She had the award in a paper bag, so I didn't know. Then the president said, and the award goes to... Mr. Ruckey, would you please come up?

**NM:** It was kind of a double award because not only did you win this mentoring award, but they named the award for you. Now they recognize mentorship with other members of the club.

**ER:** Yes, there's been about, since this was awarded to me in 2002, I think there's been three others, that is all there's been. They asked, and on a lot of occasions they ask me what I thought of this person or what I thought of that person. So yes, and when we adopted bylaws, this award was one of the awards that was adopted into the bylaws. So long after I'm gone, this thing will still be there. And I still, you know, I pick it up sometimes and I get really emotional. I mean, because my life has been dedicated to helping people. I mean, so you know, to get an award, yes, that's nice, but the real reward and awards come from what people have to say about me.

**TB:** So is there anything else we haven't asked you? I've stressed several times that you should not be afraid of bragging. Nancy knows a lot about you, but I think what you just said is kind of hard to beat. Still are there some other things that we haven't talked about that are important for your story? You've got some articles here.

**ER:** Yes, this one article was one of the things that I was really happy with. It is an article that was in the *Bellingham Herald* -- oh gosh --

**TB:** 2006.

**ER:** Oh yes. And the sports editor was up --

**TB:** Oh, Doug Huddle.

**ER:** Yes, Doug Huddle, I couldn't think of his name right off. He approached me, he had heard about the *Bill Hall* fly and how it came about, and asked if I'd like to do -- he'd like to do an article on me. I said, yes, okay. We made a date and I met him, and he had photographs ready to go and a camera ready to go and everything. We sat and talked, and I told him how that fly came about being.

**TB:** Why don't you tell us again how that fly [came to be]? This is one that you had originated, then?

**ER:** Yes. I had been using a *Griffith's Gnat* a lot. It's an old, old fly, but it's just a real high floating, bobbing type fly. I decided to play around with it. I kept the basic body of the *Griffith's Gnat*, only I added red thread, and I added a tail, a red tail, and then I added a strike indicator. I got it tied up, put together, and decided well I need to try it out. So I tied up about a dozen and a half of them, and I had an outing scheduled for up on Canyon Creek, up by Glacier at the second bridge. It was an outing with food and everything else. I go up there and Bill Hall was there, and Norma was with him I believe that day. I walked up to Bill and says, here, I've tied these flies, I want to give them a try. Why don't you try some of them?

I gave him half a dozen of them, and I tied one on Norma's rod. We got out into the water, and lunch time came, and he came back and he says, you know, these are really working great. I've had nothing but luck with these things all morning. What are you going to call them? I says, well, I don't know, I haven't

thought of a name yet. He says, oh come on, you've got to think of something. [I said], well, maybe I'll call it the *Bill Hall*. So it was called the *Bill Hall* from then on. It's been a very popular fly. Here again, it's a small stream-type fly, and it works just great. Although I have fished it in the Methow, and it did exceedingly well on cutthroat trout, on parts of it.

That's how that one came about. I had some stuff laying on my table, tying table -- my tying table's always a mess -- I started picking things out, and I said, well, let's see. I'll try this, yes, maybe I'll try it like this, and I fiddled around and that's what I came up with.

**TB:** So are there some other flies that you developed?

**ER:** Oh yes, there's quite a number of flies.

**NM:** What's in your recipe book there?

**ER:** Yes, this is my personal recipe book. But as you can see, there's a number of flies here that I --

**TB:** Why don't you name them, and maybe the year that you developed it, and the purpose of it.

**ER:** Okay. The *P and G Soft Hackle*, I should mention I'm quite the soft hackle enthusiast. Talking with Syl Nemes at these sportsmen shows, he sort of wet my appetite. But the *P & G Soft Hackle* was a cutthroat fly I developed to fish small rivers, small to medium sized rivers during the time when the cutthroat trout, sea run cutthroats were in the waters.

The *Callibaetis Soft Hackle* is another fly, and that was designed in 2012. Both of those first two were 2012, and that was for lakes. The color is this ice dub. It's a UV *Callibaetis*, but you look at it and it's a real sparkly looking color. But when you dip it into the water, it just takes on an almost living motion.

**NM:** Is that why you like soft hackle, for the living motion?

**ER:** Oh yes. Soft hackles are an old English fly that's made it over here to the west, and I love them because they do impart a lot of motion when you're fishing.

Then I had a *Callibaetis Emerger*, and that's another freshwater, lake trout type fly.

Then I've got one called the DHDC, *Doc Hackle's Delectable Chironomid*. That was 2008.

**TB:** So what are all those starting letters about?

**ER:** Well, the fly is the DHDC, which spells out *Doc Hackle's Delectable Chironomid*.

**TB:** Oh, okay.

**ER:** Rather than say the whole thing.

Then the next fly was a *Doc's Lake Bug*, that was 1990. *Summer Duck Chironomid* is a color that's been developed by fly tyers and by companies, and it's hard to describe. It's sort of an olive-ish-brown but fairly light, and that was a 2012. Then another chironomid, *Small Long Olive*, 2010. *Burgundy*

*Chironomid*. Now these are out of order because I just wrote them in as I found the little scraps of paper I had and I put them in. The *Callibaetis Nymph Flashback*, it has mylar back over the -- the wing case is mylar. And the *Callibaetis Nymph*. Then *Doc's Peacock Eye Soft Hackle*. That's from the -- soft hackle with the feathers from the peacock. Then I had one that I found in a book, I modified it a bit. It was a Canadian book that I saw it in, I modified it a little bit, but it's called a *1952 Buick*.

**TB:** And it's best for?

**ER:** That is for lakes, and it represented both scuds or shrimp. Beside shrimp, it also depicted other stuff like a caddis or something like that in the lake. It was general purpose.

Here's another one, *Doc's Table Scraps*.

**TB:** Why are so many flies called Doc?

**ER:** Because I was the one who originated them, and they named them after me.

**TB:** Okay. Well, it even goes back farther, doesn't it? Doc Spratley and? There's a whole bunch of them.

**ER:** *Doc Spratley*, was named for the Mount Vernon dentist, Doctor. But that fly was originated by Dick Prankard up in Canada. I'd gotten my first two copies of it from an elderly fisherman. I thought it was real old back then, but, I was in my 20s, and this guy was at least 60, and I thought, oh man, he's real old. He saw me out on Stump Lake, my first trip up into Canada. I had an old Sears and Roebuck rowboat, which was real tipsy turvy, and Stump Lake can get pretty nasty. But I was out there fishing, and I looked at this guy, and he was hauling in the fish all day long. Finally when I rowed into shore, he was camped right next to me, and he said, I see you're having a little bit a [bad] luck trying to get some fish. I said, well yes, I just don't seem to have what's needed. He said, well here. Here, let me give you a couple of these. He gave me a couple of flies. I looked at them, sure, well, what do you call these? He says, well, they are named after a dentist friend down in your part of the country there, but my friend Dick Prankard originated them. I said, oh. He says, yes, they're sort of a minnow or general catchall. He said, try them tomorrow and see what you think. Well I tried it tomorrow, and I started catching fish. He told me how to fish it and how to, what sort of speed I had to have on the rowboat and that. I started catching fish all over the place, and I'm going, wow, you know. Then I lost it, and I started to put on the other one, and I said, No, I'm going to save this.

**NM:** As a model? To tie your own?

**ER:** Yes. And so I took it on home, and I put it away in an empty hook box that I had, container I had, and didn't think too much of it until I started reading a little more about the Canadian fishing and everything. And I saw this thing, and I go, oh wow, that's the fly I got from that guy. It told me who originated it and who made it popular and all that, and I go, wow, you know. I took it out and took another look and sure enough, the hook was an old style hook, and it had the barbs still on it. The material just looked -- and I said, huh. So I neatly put it in a little plastic bag and put it back in this hook box, closed it up, and kept it off to the side. Once I found out where it came from, it, you know. Now I don't know if Dick Prankard himself actually did it or whether it was just one of his friends, but I never did see the old guy again. Of course, when I really got to thinking about it, he was probably long gone. I mean, that's the way I've lost a couple of old friends. I've lost a Scottish friend I never did get his name. I

knew his email. But he used to come out from Scotland every year to visit his son who lived in Vancouver, and they fished the Upper Skagit at the same time I did. That's where I first met him. Half the time I'd be sitting on the bank listening to all these stories about fishing this loch or fishing that impoundment and everything, and I got to know a little bit about what actually went on over there in England as far as fishing went. Way different.

But anyways, that's –

**TB:** So are you done? I mean, you did the *Doc's Table Scrap*, and I think I interrupted you, so.

**ER:** Yes. That was my name. And then this one –

**NM:** *Ed's Ugly*.

**ER:** *Ed's Ugly*. That was named by one of the club members, I think [Earl McQuirk] was the one that named it. He said -- yes, I've used *Ed's Ugly*, and that name stuck with it.

*The Road Less Traveled*, and that used a little bit of exotic material that I no longer use, like macaw tail feather and blue dun seal fur, but that was one of mine.

Then another one was *Doc's Golden Pheasant Nymph*, and that was for streams, and it was done with golden pheasant tail material. That was the 1990s.

*Ed's Ugly* was 2008. *Doc's Golden Pheasant Nymph* was 1990s.

*Doc's OC Cutthroat*, the OC stands for Oregon cheese color. It was a cutthroat fly that I had designed.

Then I had *Doc's Bloody Mary*, that was 2007.

*Doc's Emerging Chironomid* was 2006.

Then I read an article in 1978, 1978 or 1979 in *Fly Fishing* magazine about a fly, and it just really piqued my interest. It was what would happen if Bear Hewitt, Bear was his nickname, or Bear -- oh, God, I can't think of his last name -- Williams. He was a 1924-era fly fisherman from Idaho area. What would happen if he and Hewitt, who invented the *Bivisible*, were to get together on a stream. Bear Williams originated the fly called the *Renegade*, and the whole article was a fictitious story about what would happen if those two got together and how they'd tell about one -- oh, I got this great fly. The other guy'd say, yes, I got this great fly. And what would happen if they had married these two together? Well, I married them together, and I came up with a *Bear Tracks Bivisible*, which has been one of my go-to flies on streams.

**NM:** Do you have a copy? Do you have one of all the flies that are in your notebook?

**ER:** Unless I've given them away.

**NM:** Yes (laughter), that's what I wondered.



**ER:** I think I got most of them. But I was thinking of doing up one of each so I could at least give it to my son when I pass away.

But then there's *Cooper's Bug*, which I'd gotten out of a book, and it's okay. It's a nice fly, but I tweaked it a little bit to fit my needs. But I didn't feel right in changing the fly's name because it was his fly. Then I did an olive version of the *Olive Bill* -- I call it the *Olive Bill Hall*, where I took a feather instead of being that griz -- some plain grizzly, with yellow dyed grizzly.

Then the next one, oh, that was about -- I don't have it down there. I think that was in the 1980s, my *Blue Wing Olive Soft Hackle*. That was when I first started using the soft hackles more on streams than I had in the past. That was 1980s I think it was. I think it was after I'd -- right after one of the sportsman shows down there in the Kingdom. It was the one show that I never did see the rest of the show. I sat in that one booth where, that was one of the fly shops down in the Seattle area, and I sat in that booth with Syl Nemes. I spent the whole time [while] the rest of the guys were out going through the rest of the show, talking soft hackles and what they should really represent, and how they should be tied, and you know. I gleaned an awful lot of information that particular show. I knew I was doing some stuff wrong, and I changed some of the things I did -- basically because of Syl.

But unlike some people I know, I don't spout off this name or that name, you know . . . Oh, I know so-and-so, I know so-and-so, I know so-and-so, you know. You get a lot of that in the fly fishing community.

**TB:** I'm going to come back and ask you to tell me more about him, though, because that is a name we have several of his books, and I know that he's failing if he hasn't already passed away.<sup>3</sup> I know he has dementia.

**ER:** Yes. I don't know if he's still around or not. The few times we talked, he talked a lot about his home in England and how he really loved it and how he just loved soft hackle fishing. He said, it so represented the actual bug without having to make a lifelike copy of it.

**TB:** Somebody put together, made a book of his flies that they found that he still had, and then Tom Morgan's wife, Gerri Carlson, they went together and they put up a -- did make a book of his flies.<sup>4</sup> That's why I knew he was sick.

**NM:** Oh, all the pictures of them?

**TB:** No, I think they actually got copies of extra flies that he had already made, and then they put it together probably with a recipe book. I don't know. There was only like maybe ten of them made, so we certainly didn't get one, but I kind of heard the story about it.

**ER:** Yes, some place in my collection, I think I put them up, I lost the card, but I had four of his flies he tied for me that particular time. They were four of his little soft hackles. I put them away with a card, and then of course in the move and stuff like that, I lost the card part but I found the flies. Of course I put them in -- I've got a box at home about so by so, by about so thick, that the City of Bellingham gave me on my retirement, it was made by the box maker out here on Whidbey Island. It was all felt lined inside

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<sup>3</sup> Sylvester Nemes died February 3, 2011 just outside Bozeman, Montana.

<sup>4</sup> *The soft-hackles flies of Sylvester Nemes*, by Gerri Carlson, [Manhattan, Montana: Slow Poke Press, 2008?]

and with compartments and everything, and it had a plaque on the front telling what year I retired and what, and how many years.

**NM:** And you have flies in it that are treasures?

**ER:** Oh yes. Some of Jack [Solstrums's] are in there. I've got a couple -- yes, oh man, I'm getting old.

**TB:** It's okay. We can add that in later.

**ER:** Then Doc Hac -- DHD *Doc Hackle's Damsel* -- that was a good one.

The *Red Quill* in downwing style. Now, the wing, this particular fly is a fly I use on the rivers. I'm trying to think who -- oh, I can't remember who it was got me interested in the downwing style. Then here's a regular *Bill Hall*, and it's 2003 when I did that. I had the date.

Then the *Copper Chromie*. That fly was designed in 2008 for Lost Lake, down there on south Whidbey.

Then my son got involved with me a little bit, and I tied this one that he came up [with]. It's called the *Royal Spider*.

And then the next one was Joe Kelly's fly that I took and copied and started using. It's called *Joe's Quick and Easy*. It's for chum salmon.

Then Phil Rawley had a chironomid there called the *Black Sally* that I really liked. In fact, I told him that I took and copied one of his flies I liked it so well. He said, That's okay, that's why it's in the book, which he signed for me. I apologized because it was being used and it had a couple folded over pages. He says, I wish more people would use it and not just put it aside signed, you know, I mean.

Then my *Cutthroat Magic*.

Then I had one just called the *Chironomid*, when I tried something different.

Then a wet fly for salmon.

And *Doc's Flaming Grouse*. Okay, that's both for trout and salmon.

*Doc's Lesser Green Drake*, and that was from studying the green drake hatches. I came up with what I thought was a better looking fly.

Then another salmon fly was a *Pink Bunny*, where I used pink rabbit strips.

Then *Doc's Chironomid Chromie*.

Then [*Lake Make?*].

The *Olive Willy*, that idea I got from a gentleman that was working for Swede down there in Woodinville, and he used that a lot in lakes.

And then my *Doc's Punkin Head*.

Then I got fancy on one, and I called it the *Cal-e-batis* (Callibaetis).

Another one I came up with, *Cataman*. Now that was -- think back. That I got from an article I read on the -- oh, I'll have to try and remember it. I know it had to do with New England fly fishers.

Then I did a *Carey Special*, which was designed by Colonel Carey, way, way back. It used to be called the *Monkey Face Louise* and several other names. But I put a bead head on it.

Then I did a fly, *Amherst and Grouse*, which is another more or less soft hackle.

And *Doc Hackle's Royal*, which is pretty much a -- let's see, was that the *Royal Trude*? Yes, that was a *Royal Trude*, only tied with slightly different colors.

That's a blank, and then these are ones that need to go in.

**NM:** You said you were thinking about drawing some of those flies.

**ER:** Yes, my nephew got ahold of me, and he borrowed this book for a while to take and do some. He says, I don't know how, you know, knowing it, how do I tie these? He says, what are they supposed to look like? And so I promised him, I even got a book now to do it. But I promised him I would make up the recipes and do a drawing, pointing to different areas.

**NM:** Oh, that will be great.

**ER:** So that he can tie them.

**TB:** Well, is there anything else we haven't talked about? I did want you to tell me -- is there anything else you could tell me about first about Syl Nemes?

**ER:** My meeting of him over the few years that I did get to meet him was one of a gentleman, one of the true gentleman of fly fishing. I think the fact that I didn't act snooty or try to BS my way into saying, oh, I'm this, this, and this, and just cut down to just plain, hi, I'm so-and-so. I would really like to know more about soft hackles. We hit it off. I mean, it was his explanations about doing these soft hackles that was how I got to understand what's involved and what to look for. That's why my soft hackle patterns are the way they are, because I incorporated his thoughts on the soft hackle itself and incorporated them into mine so that anybody that's used them, my hackles in the recent past, has always had success. I guess you can't -- I guess a lot of that is owed to what Syl -- I meant to buy some of his books and that and never did get around to it.

**NM:** What are the characteristics of him that you so admired, that you mean by saying he's a gentleman?

**ER:** He listens to you if you don't try and BS him. When I gave him a couple of my flies there that I had, that one there, he thanked me and says, you didn't really have to do that, but thank you, you know. When he had to talk to a customer that happened to be at the booth, he was always pleasant. He was a pretty portly individual, when I knew him, but he always said thank you and you're welcome. I mean, his language was always polite.

**NM:** Could I ask you just one question about, it seems like you've been an artist since you were a little child and been a fisherman since you were a little child. How does being an artist affect you as a fisherman?

**ER:** As a fisherman? When I'm out on the river I see the beauty of the whole scene. I see the beauty of the fish. I mean, some of my best experiences have been up on Granite Creek, along the North Cross State Highway (North Cascades Highway), parked right where the Granite Creek is under North Cross State, and fishing up that little section there, and the trout you were getting were native rainbows. They were just the most beautiful fish. I mean, they had a dorsal fin. I mean, their dorsal fin was probably a third again as high as a normal rainbow trout. A lot of the mature adults had the barring of a parr on the sides, even after being an adult. I never found one that was over eight inches. But they were just beautiful, wild fish, and they just represented.

The same thing with the Upper Skagit, above Ross. I mean, those fish, a lot of them are the descendants of the wild steelhead that used to come up the Skagit. Some of those fish are just really remarkable, you know. I mean, I feel bad the way things are going up there. I mean, the fish are declining in numbers there, and it's happening all through Ross Lake. They're trying to blame, oh, too much trash fishing here and this and that. But to me, some of it's got to be some of the fishermen -- because I've seen people up there holding fish out of the water while they handed it off to different people to take pictures.

I was fortunate on Rocky Ford Spring Creek to watch three guys doing that. The reason I say fortunate because I had a Fish and Game officer standing next to me with a plain jacket on, and we were talking, and I says, yes, those are the guys I was telling you about up in the parking lot. He stood there and watched, and watched them take that fish out of the water and pass it around while they -- never putting it back in the water, passing it around. Then when they were done, they gave it a toss. He said, I've seen enough. He said, can I use you as a witness? I was with Joe Kelly that time. He said, can I use you two as witnesses? I said, well, if it comes to that, you bet. He walked on over (I heard them, they weren't that far away), and said, well, how's fishing? Ah, pretty good. We've got a few. He says, yes, I noticed that as you passed them around. You know you're supposed to keep them in the water. He said, oh, I didn't know that. And he said, I watched what you did. Now, if you'd be so kind as to give me your gear and your licenses, and you're to leave this fishing area and not to come back. And that was after he wrote the ticket. So, you know, I saw it actually happen, but so often people just abuse them when they --

But, from the artist point, I can sit out there, I can watch the scenery, and half the time I'm sitting and watching the scenery go by, watching the mergansers with their young up and down the river, or watching wild birds on the bank, and this and that. Once in a while, I'd even see -- oh, I've seen a couple fishers up there, the animal, fishers.

**NM:** Oh really?

**ER:** Yes, up on the Upper Skagit. I've seen some mink down lower, and I've seen a couple of foxes in there, and lots of black bear, but never had any black bear bother me. In fact, I had one gentleman say to me, well, if a black bear came, all I got to do is wade across here and right up that bank. I looked at him and I said -- I don't know what club he was from -- but I said, are you kidding? I said, see those marks along that bank there. He said, yes. I said, well as I was walking up, this black bear and a cub waded across when they saw me, waded across there, went up that thing in less than five minutes. He goes, well, I can't even do that.

But I've seen lots of wildlife, and I've had lots of companions on the river, especially the ladies. I mean, I can understand why Sid liked to joke about me having a harem. But I'd take a couple guys out, and it was, oh yes, I know all about that, you know and everything. You gals you are so much better, a lot of times you'd bring lunch for me too.

**NM:** Ah.

**TB:** Ah. So is there anything else we haven't talked about?

**ER:** I'm trying to think. Yes, when I had my heart attack, there's three places on the Upper Skagit that are -- a couple of the club members named after me. There was at [Neapocketan], as you're walking into the trail. You walk down and get on the river. Well when you first stop onto the river, that's Heart Attack One. (Laughter)

Up where you cross that pool, to get over on the other side, is Heart Attack Two. And about 150 yards above that is Heart Attack Three. And that's when, well, Don Anderson was one of them along, and Bill Gorsuch, who worked for the hospital. He was a mechanic with the hospital and also an EMT. He was trained to work the emergency ward if something came up where they had to have a lot of people. He was my fishing partner that particular time. They said, well, let's call it a day. Fishing hasn't been that good. I couldn't figure out why. Well Bill and one other club member were walking in front of me as we walked back up the trail. Don Anderson and Earl McQuark were behind me, and they didn't even try and pass me even though they were --

**NM:** Oh, they were your team, huh?

**ER:** They were watching me as I walked out. I got back to camp, I just crashed. I said, I am not feeling good. He said, probably best. Apparently, they talked it over that night when I was crashed. But I woke up midway through the night there and was shaking and everything. I had another angina attack. As it turned out, when I counted up what I had, I had five angina attacks in the 24-hour period.

**NM:** Ooh.

**ER:** But still Sunday morning, I was saying, Okay, let's get up, and where are we going to fish today? And they said, you're not going to fish. They packed me up. Bill Gorsuch took me down. It was on a Sunday, and I wasn't feeling too bad, but I wasn't feeling real good. Monday morning, my wife called our doctor's office. At that time it was Dr. James. His nurse answered the phone, and [Patricia] said, I think my husband had several angina attacks over the weekend. The nurse said, is he home? And my wife said, yes. Well, I want you to put Ed -- make sure you put him into the car, take him up to St. Joe's immediately. He shouldn't even be alive today. She took me up, and yes, three blood vessels in bad shape. One was 90%, one of the smaller ones, with the main one pumping into the heart was 80%, and another one was, I think, about 50-60%, something like that.

**NM:** Well, good timing.

**ER:** There were a couple of smaller ones that were totally blocked. They said there was no way they could have opened those anyways. I went in and had open heart surgery about two weeks after that.

But, so anyway, Sid, every time I'd go in there he'd say, Ah, heart attack one. People, newbies, were looking at me, What's that? Where'd you get that name? You know. It was me.

But the one thing I learned about this club, and fly fishing as a general rule, is there are gentlemen out there. They're always willing to help. And the club members, I can't say enough about them. They've always been really great people to be around. And that's why I love giving stuff away. I don't give away that much anymore. I mean, the outings last year, I never tied one. But since Pat died last year, I was kind of busy for the year, so I didn't -- no, I did do one, I think, for the outing at Pass Lake, the warmup outing. I think that was the last one I did.

You know, that's, to me, that is what it's all about, giving back what you have been given. You know, this thing here [*Ed Ruckey Mentor Award*], I don't think I'll ever get over that. I mean, I keep telling people, Yes, they had to give it to at least one living club member, because when I look back, I'm the only living club member that has an award named after him now. Ralph Wahl has an award, it was one that I initiated when I was club president. I said, we need something to honor Ralph. We came up with the Ralph Wahl Conservation Award, I think it was. It's out there to be given to any group, not just the club members, but any group out there. Linda Sherman was a good friend of mine, and they've got an award named after her now. It's for women who are into fly fishing and promoting the women's side of the [sport].



**TB:** Okay. I'll say thank you very much!

***End of Transcript***