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HL: Today is April 29, [2019]. The occasion is the oral history of Dave McNeese. I'm Hugh Lewis. With me are Bill Kindler and Bill McMillan. Dave is here, we're in his house [in Salem, Oregon]. We're surrounded by an amazing collection of flies, fishing gear, artwork of all types, and several thousand butterflies.

So Dave, we're going to ask you some questions. And I'm going to see if we can't keep our voices up. I think at one time or another each of us has questions for you. Bill McMillan had a series of questions that he had put together in advance of this recording session, and given that they were his questions, I'd request that Bill actually be the person who directs these questions today. Is that okay for everybody?

BK, DM: Yes. Yes.

HL: Great, alright. Thanks.

BM: Okay. I've known Dave for quite a long time, actually, and I've much enjoyed listening to his own early history in fly fishing and in nature in general. My impression of Dave for a long time has been that he's more or less an overall naturalist. I think quite a few fly fishermen probably are or at least often times become after they become fly fishermen. And that one can't help but have a broader interest in what goes on around them when you're on a stream fly fishing where you've got to determine what sort of hatches are coming off or whatever to relate to how to approach your fish on the stream.

But anyway, Dave, just kind of a basic question is: When did you begin to fly fish and with who and where, when you were a kid?

DM: Well, basically it all started in the family. My grandfather, Albert, came to Oregon many times in the teens. He read stories of sporting magazines and great big salmon so eventually he moved out here in 1925. But in the teens, he bought property on the Rogue River, on the Siuslaw River, which is just west of Eugene, and other places. He purchased boats and a vehicle, built a barn, kept his rigs there. So when he traveled out by train, he had this little Ford rig pulling a boat, and fished. And my father, naturally, would become a really great fisherman, his whole life, and taught me at an early age. You know, we were fishing a pond, some of the ponds when I was three or four years old, catching bluegill and bass.

One of my favorite aspects in fishing is bass. I just love it because they're difficult. Fish are intelligent, and each type of fish has responses that are different, whether you're fishing in saltwater or fishing in freshwater, you know, a warm water fish, they're all different. So you learn these techniques over your lifetime.

When I was young, Grandpa had all these fly rods in the garage, and I'd pick these fly rods up, and they were so big I had to fish them like two-handed, because they were huge. Half of them, most of them were broken, but there were a couple of cane rods that were fishable. And later in my, oh, twelve, thirteen years old, I was able to purchase my first seven-and-a-half foot, six-weight cane rod and [fished] that for years.

BM: This is all Willamette Valley?

DM: Yes, yes. It was all here. We lived not very far from the McKenzie, so I'd ride my bike up there every day. I hunted in the winter and I fished in the summer. We'd catch butterflies and fish. And as I grew, you know, one of the things, like you've seen, is my butterflies. It's one of the really important things, aspects of my life is collecting. And it's let me travel all over multi-hemispheres. I went down to South America a lot, Central America, as well as throughout Oregon. I've got another generation of kids that, my children, and they all fly fish, and they all collect butterflies, and they all love birds. We go out on field trips every week, and it may be butterflies, and they'll see a lizard, and all of a sudden they're out there chasing lizards, and I'm going, don't, you know, there's vipers out there. There's rattlesnakes in one part and vipers in another.

But as a child, it was -- we had a lot of great fishing here. My worry is, in the future, as we'll talk later about this, is the decline of almost everything in nature.

BM: Butterflies, fish, birds.

DM: Everything, everything. Except for the starling and house sparrows.

BM: When did you begin to tie flies?

DM: Oh god, the first fly that I tied, my mom bought an Indian hat, and I remember this so well, and there was a red feather in there. We're at the coast. We had a house at the coast. It was in June because everybody has hay fever in the family. And I pulled a feather out and I cut it, and I took the hook just with my hand and wrapped some red sewing thread on it. My mom showed me how to tie a half-inch knot. And I took that out to the stream that was in the backyard. It's called Salmon Creek, which is virtually no longer there. It's all built up, mansions. I just bopped that in the water, and the cutthroat trout, you know, they're just the simplest thing in the world, and I just caught fish after fish with it. I was probably five, yes, I was probably five years old.

But you know, there was no fly shops. There were a couple of hardware stores that sold flies. And my dad goes -- learn how to tie flies. There was a fishing guide that lived, Bill Hunt was his name, lived fairly close to us, and I'd go over there and watch him tie flies. He kind of showed me how to tie them, and I got started that way. But I had a great interest for some reason, it was when I was young, I just go, I want an outdoor store. And with my hunting and my fishing, I thought, I'll put this together. The mayor of Eugene was John Warren. He had a huge hardware store, and he goes, you're going to have to have a lot of money, I mean, a lot of money. So I go, okay, that's not going to work.

BM: At what point do you start to catch steelhead on flies?

DM: Well, my first steelhead, I think I was, probably had just turned six years old and we were fishing on my grandfather's lot, on the Siuslaw, where Lake Creek comes in, and I caught two steelhead that day.

BM: Wow.

DM: I was using crayfish, little crawdads that I'd caught. I threw them out in the water with my level one Pflueger reel. You couldn't cast it because the crayfish would come off the hook, and I'd just strip the line out and toss it out on the water with a sinker on it. There's a picture somewhere and I'm holding these two fish, and they're probably like that, five pounds, four pounds, five pound fish. But later, and it wasn't much later, probably when I was seven that I could cast, you know, cast a fly rod well enough that I could catch fish. From that point, I just got better and better and better. We fished the Rogue, going down there. You know, back in those days, in the early 1960s, there were lots of fish. So it wasn't -- whether you call those steelhead, actually, you know, 12-inch to 7 –

BM: Half-pounders.

DM: Yes, half-pounders. And every once in awhile, you'd get one 20, 22-inches long, but not often. But we caught, you know, hundreds of fish down there.

BM: How's your balance between steelhead with trout? I know that you have continued to have a great joy with trout for the rest of your life too.

DM: Well you know, being close to the McKenzie, I fished it almost every day. That was just a habit. And getting back to that point, when I was, oh, I was about twelve years old, and it goes back to the butterfly collecting, I became interested in the insects that were on the McKenzie. I had a friend, you know, I taught a couple of people how to fly fish, so we'd ride our bikes to the river and fish every day. I took some screens off windows, took them down to the river and left them up on the bank, and we'd go down there at daybreak, throughout the day, put the screens in the water with sticks on them at a 45-degree angle to collect the nymphs and the surface insects, whether it was bees or beetles and mock larvae. And we'd sample that stuff. I was able to get little vials from -- the Lane County would give us little vials. We'd put the insects in there with alcohol. I eventually took them up to Oregon State, and Stanley Jewett looked at all the vials that I had and made a list of the aquatic insects. Of course, he had already studied the McKenzie, and he gave me a list all these aquatic insects that were in the river. I was just amazed. So I did this over a period of about three years. So I took stomach samples from trout. We analyzed those with what was coming into the screen, so that gave me a really good idea on -- it didn't make me really catch more fish, in a sense, but it gave me a really good clue on what was going on in the river.

BM: So about that period of time, how old were you?

DM: Well, I was twelve, thirteen, and fourteen.

BM: Yes. You were really an early, what they call today citizen scientist.

DM: Yes. And it was due to the big part of my butterfly collecting. You know, just being involved with insects.

BM: Sure. You've become a remarkably good fly tier and in part because you really understand the materials that flies are made out of, and also how to replicate colors that you want to represent aquatic life or what your interpretation of what color would be of primary interest to a fish. So, what started you on that track, sort of your own track of invention and fly tying? Was there any single person that influenced you?

DM: Well, there were. Probably one of the greatest gifts that I ever got was in 1975, and that was the best, I mean, I always tear up, but that was the best year in my life, and I had no clue when I started this journey. I opened my fly shop here in town in 1969. In the other room, I've got one of my old catalogs. And it was called *My Flies*, and it was basically just a mail order type business, because there was -- even though we had lots of fly fishermen here in Eugene on the McKenzie, there weren't any fly tiers. So here I had this, I had my shop, which was about the size of this room, and pegboard and materials all over. Nobody would come in. I mean, it was just rare to see somebody. You know, two or three people a week, and that was it. So it was mainly mail order.

And I wanted to become -- I knew my flies weren't very good. I thought they were good, but I knew they weren't that good. So in 1974, I bought *Art Flick's Master Fly-Tying Guide*. And I opened that up and I go, oh my gosh. So I called Art Flick, and I got the phone numbers of each of the people in the articles that were in the book. So I

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talked to each of them. And I spoke with Art Flick quite a bit. And what got me in the game was that I had blue dun necks. I raised my own chickens, because you couldn't buy feathers that were worth crap. It was all Indian capes. So I had a good flock of grizzlies and gingers and andalusians. So I sent Art Flick a couple of capes, and he goes, holy smokes! I sent him some flies first, and I never got a call back from him. This was the interesting part of the story. I knew that they were not very good, but there wasn't any good, really any good fly tiers around here. So I sent him those capes, he called me immediately and he said, where did you get these? And I said, I raise them. And I talked to him, and he said, well, practice.

The Darbys and Dettes are here, and so I bought flies from them, which I have in the room there. I looked at these flies and I just go, my God, they're incredible! Then I talked to Ted -- I called Ted Niemeyer, and this was over about a six-month period, and I sat there at the vise every day, every night after work, tying these flies until they could look similar to what the Dettes and the Darbys tied.

Ted said, well, you're not going to learn anything unless you come out here to the East, because he said, there's really no good fly tiers in the West, that are like the Eastern. So Ted arranged for me to stay with the Darbys for ten days.

BM: Wow.

DM: So I flew back to New York. I had no idea what I was getting into. And I'd tied up a lot flies prior to that for the Darbys. I think I tied like forty dozen flies. And I got back there, and it was the greatest experience that a kid could ever have. I mean, who's who in the world of fly fishing? I came through the Darbys' doors, and it was just, here's this little teeny fly shop in their front room, and they sold so much stuff every day. I'd watch, I sat right next to Elsie, and she goes, oh, don't be nervous, just tie your flies.. You'll get faster. I was like seven or eight minutes a fly, and she goes, now you got to get down to four minutes.

BK, HL: Whoa.

BM: Wow.

DM: She'd just whip the flies out. You know, get up at 6 o'clock in the morning, feed the anglers that came in. She'd have, you know, they had lots of chickens, so she'd have all these eggs, just a big pile of eggs and bacon, and people would come in the door early in the morning, because by 11 o'clock, 12 o'clock, the humidity was so high and the heat. But that's when I really saw, you know, just how beautiful they could create a fly and how they organized their materials in advance.

Later that summer, I had met Poul Jorgensen on the trip. The first day Eric Leiser introduced me to him, and I was casting on a pond, and he goes, shit, you cast better than Lefty Kreh. And I go, I'm from Oregon, you got to cast. You got to cast!

So, Poul came out in August, didn't call me, he just showed up in Bend.

BM: Poul Jorgensen.

DM: Yes. He flew in to the Redmond airport, and he said, come and get me, the god-dang mosquitoes are biting the hell out of me. It was lucky because I just had a two-week vacation from work. So I ran over there, picked him up, and we went down to the North Umpqua. So here I spent a week with this fumbling man, tying flies, Atlantic salmon flies, and that's how I kind of discovered the crossover fly from the ragged steelhead fly with the wool or chenille body, into the more glorious type of fly with seal fur and decorative materials on it. I'd been dyeing feathers, you know, for six, five or six years, not knowing a lot about it. But that same year, later in the fall, I was taught from a Keystone Dye Company representative, gave me a two-day lesson on dyeing if I'd buy a couple thousand dollars worth of dyes, so I did that. And that's how I started my business. I flourished after that.

BM: So did you start your interest in Atlantic salmon patterns, did that start about then, tying flies?

DM: Yes, yes. I mean, that point of Jorgensen, I had purchased old salmon flies from England prior to that, and it was just the beauty of the flies. I didn't tie anything like that. I couldn't, until I sat down and watched Poul, day after day after day. We didn't fish very much. We just fished, an hour or two in the morning, an hour or two in the evening, and the rest of the day was 95 degrees and we just sat at the picnic table underneath the fir trees on the Umpqua tying flies. Watching him tie these Atlantic salmon flies. So I'd be on one side of the table tying what I watched him tie, say a *Jock Scott*, and I would tie a Jock Scott in a steelhead fashion, with polar bear wings, with different colors. And that's how I came up with this crossover type fly.

BM: So you opened your fly shop in 1969, was that it?

DM: Yes. And then it was sold, the shop sold -- in October of 1975, I had a company in New York, the owner flew to the house and had a blank check, and he said, I'm buying you out. The contract stated that I couldn't open a fly shop for a year, and so I waited. And with that money, I was able to travel back East and go to different furriers and feather merchants, a couple of them, and purchase a lot of goods and bring them back to Oregon.

They were hard to sell at the very start because there were so few -- you know, I reasoned that everybody that was fly fishing was tying flies, and that wasn't the -- there was like this really small number of people. So when I opened the shop up, I said, well, I'm going to have to have fly tying lessons every week. It's the only way I'm going to make any money, if I'm going to make any money at all. But I left Eugene and moved to Salem and opened the shop there in 1977. And you know, the Greased Line had opened up, what, 1976?

BM: 1976, I think.

DM: Yes. Because I went up to see you guys just prior to opening.

HL: Can I interject a question here. For the people who are going to read the transcript of this or listen to the audio portion of it, that will be retained, the greased line was the *Greased Line Fly Shoppe*, that's correct, Bill? And how did that start?

BM: Well, the *Greased Line Fly Shoppe* was -- a young fella moved to Vancouver, Washington because he'd read some articles I'd written on steelhead fly fishing. He wanted to come up and catch steelhead on flies. I fished with him for a bit, and he pretty soon decided he wanted to open up a fly shop in the area that focused strictly on catching steelhead on flies using a floating line. And so subsequently, the name the *Greased Line Fly Shoppe*. He wanted me to help him initiate the business because my parents had had a retail store, and he had no knowledge about retail business. So I came in to work for him and help him get started.

HL: Great, thanks. Okay, so Dave, you opened your shop in 1977 in Salem. What is the name of it?

DM: It was *McNeese's Fly Shop*.

HL: Thanks, alright. I'm done.

BM: And that's kind of about the period of time when things really began to take off, a lot of fly fishermen in the Northwest starting to tie flies a lot more than they used too.

DM: Yes, yes. In this article I was just writing about, part of it's about Bill. And I said, here's a new generation, the old class guys, the Al Knudson, Wes Drain, the Syd Glasso, Enos Bradner, and all those guys, they were aged. Their cane rods were going to be retired. All of sudden here's Jimmy Green out at Joe Romania's Chevrolet casting these new graphite rods in 1973. And I was going, whoa! But you couldn't buy the blanks for a number of years. But as I wrote in this article, between, I'd say, 1975 to 1980, probably 200 fly shops sprung up on the West, you know, from Denver to the coast. They were everywhere. I would think many of them were probably mismanaged,

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but people just had, just like myself, I had a really good job, and my wife goes, you want to start a fly shop? You already had a fly shop and you only make a few thousand dollars a year. Now back then, that few thousand dollars just added, you know, well, it was more than a few thousand, it was six or seven thousand, which wasn't very much, in today's standard. But I ventured ahead, and she gave me the signal, go for it.

And after a year, she gave me the signal, thumbs down. (Laughing) You're going to have to do something else. You can get your job back in Eugene. We'll move back there. So what we did, we rented a house in Salem, just on that aspect that if I didn't make it, we'd move back to my house that I had here in Eugene. We just rented it out. So I thought about what we were going to do. We got to be in the mail order business.

There was no fly fishermen when I started the Santiam Flycasters with a couple of other people, prior to my opening my shop. Dan Callaghan got all the bookwork done. The first meeting, there was over a hundred people, so I go, wow, that's pretty good. But they were just intrigued with the idea of fly fishing. But it took a couple of years. I moved -- in about a seven or eight year period, I moved five times, my fly shop, until I found a big enough building, where it stayed for the next, I think, probably thirty years.

BM: So, you developed a relationship at some point in time with Syd Glasso. Syd Glasso by that time was past his fishing years, primarily, but he became a very noted as a fly tier. From my memory it was somewhere right around 1976 when Trey Combs came out with his steelhead flies and fly fishing book, and all of a sudden, bam, here was this page with Syd Glasso flies. Is that essentially when you kind of became really interested in Syd Glasso?

DM: Well, I met him prior to that at the Washington Steelhead Fly Fishing Club. Wes Drain called me and said, Syd's going to be at the club meeting next week, so if you want to meet him, bring up a bunch of fly tying materials. And what I did in 1975, they had the conclave here, the McKenzie Fly Fishing Club. And since they started the FFF that was the best show that I had ever been too. I mean, all the great personalities were there. And my wife said, well, bring down a bunch of your dyed feathers and furs and stuff and show the fly tiers, and give them away. So I made little paper sacks and gave -- There was only like six or seven people tying flies at the show, compared to what it is today. So I gave these sacks. And Sunday afternoon when it closed, Wes Drain and Ralph Wahl and Enos Bradner, Ted Trueblood, I don't know who his friend was, but they came to the house and went through the fly shop and picked materials up. And they were going, whoa, wow, all this stuff. They didn't know how to dub fur, none of them. So I was showing them how to rub the seal fur and make a noodle out of it, tie it on the [stem], spin it in your fingers. And they go, god, that looks really complicated. (Laughter)

DM: I said, well, you can use your damn wool. I don't sell wool or chenille, you know. You got to learn this aspect. But that was, that was the great point. But meeting Syd, he looked through the materials very selectively, didn't take -- I don't think on that first meeting, he took maybe a couple of bags of seal fur, of different colors. And I had all these beautiful purple necks and saddles and dyed purple, and I was going, he didn't take any of it! (Laughing)

DM: Purple has been my big color throughout my whole life. So I was kind of shaking my head. The next year, that was the same time you met him, at Ed Rice's sport show. Syd was there, and I had a booth, and Syd stopped by the booth, and we chatted. He said, why don't you, my wife was there, and he goes, why don't you come over to the apartment. And so after the show, we drove over to Issaquah and basically spent, I think we left there about one o'clock in the morning. We got there like 7:30. And you know, Syd was showing me just a few things. You walked into his house, it was totally sterile of fishing, except for one frame, an Atherton picture of Atlantic salmon. Otherwise you wouldn't even have known he was a fly fisherman. There was nothing. There wasn't a feather, there wasn't anything.

BM: So he was living in Issaquah, then?

DM: Yes. He was living in an apartment. His wife had passed away in 1972, and so he sold the house and just, this apartment was right next to a fish hatchery. He just loved going there and chewing the people out. (Laughter)

DM: But within a couple of years, he, like his fishing was not all that much anymore, but he got into tying Atlantic salmon flies, and he just went nuts with that. The only problem was, there was nobody that had the materials, and he begged. You know, I'd go up there and he'd beg me, god, I need golden pheasant, I need Indian crow, blue chatterers. So I got ahold of a guy in England that sold antique flies, and I bought several hundred antique doubles, big, usually 5/0, 4/0, and they would have Indian crow and blue chatterer and toucan. I'd take the feathers apart, you know, take the flies apart and pop the feathers in an envelope and send them up to Syd. And at times, I'd get Lady Amherst or golden pheasant. I could show you some of the letters in there that people wrote to Syd and said, geez, I'm sorry, I just can't find any materials for you. The material business was really horrible back then. But that's our relationship. You know, I went up there quite a few times and spent the day talking. We never fished together, but he would show me his beautiful cane rods and his flies. Luckily I was able to get this collection of flies from a collector that purchased these from Dick Wentworth ten years ago. And researched out Syd, and I just got to keep this man's name from fading away into -- gone.

BM: So that's kind of stimulated your book.

DM: Yes, that was. So, I started researching this probably close to ten years ago. I started to call Dick Wentworth, and I talked to him probably once a month and just took notes. You know, I've got notes everywhere from all this stuff. And a list of Syd's friends that were still alive. So I've talked to those people. Some of them, at least five of them, have passed away.

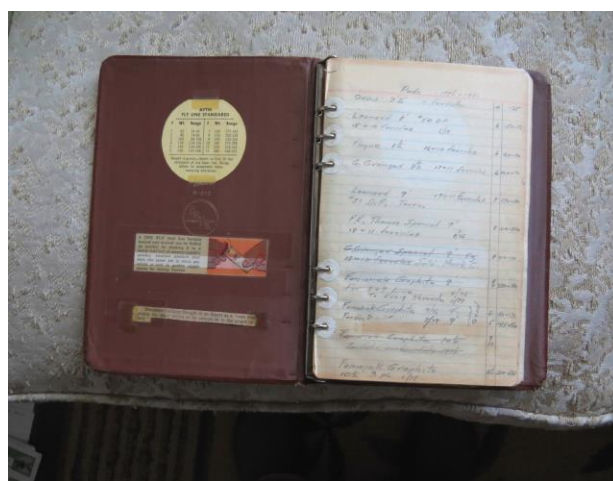
I did get to talk to Skip [Shell?] who ran Schoff's Tackle, and he recalled the day that Syd caught his first steelhead on a dry fly, which was in August 1964. And he goes, he came sliding in with this white Porsche, almost sideways like he always did. He'd turn the steering wheel. I've got a picture of it over there. Jumped out and he had this little, you know, stick, little 25-, 26-inch steelhead that he caught there in the North Fork of the Stilly at Deer Creek, and caught it on an actual dead drift dry fly. And Al Knudson was laughing, he said, shit, I caught my first one in 1927, here on the same river. (Laughing) But he said, there was no road up here then, you had to walk.

BM: Wow. I talked, you know, at that same early Seattle fly fishing show, Ed Rice show, that's the only time I ever talked with Syd. And Syd, oddly, I don't know why he revealed it to me, but anyway, he kind of told me a few of his favorite things. And so he told me, you know, he says, I know you used to like to fish in the Olympic Peninsula. If you ever go out there again, he said that you might want to fish it a dry fly, and I know you like to fish dry fly. And if you go to the Calawah or if you go to the Clearwater or the Queets, he said, fish an upstream dry fly. He says, the fish will be anywhere from 16-20 inches. And he said, you never know when you land them if they're a cutthroat, coho, or a sea-run cutthroat, or a steelhead. Then he also told me about, he said, you know, if you ever get interested in it, he said, you might want to go down to the lower most Hoh River, that first half to three-quarter miles ---

DM: That was the interesting thing, in his diary. He told nobody about that [late winter run].

BM: Yes. That the steelhead would come in real late in the year, in mid to late May, just come in immediately, silver bright, spawn within a day or two and they're gone. He said, nobody knew much they were even there.

DM: Yes. And the interesting thing is that we've scanned Dick Wentworth's diaries, and there's fifty years of diaries that we scanned, and it was -- Dick's father was still alive, so it was probably in the late 1960s, and I think Syd had left Forks and gone, moved back to Seattle with his wife, to their house above Lake Washington. But Dick was floating down the river and he said, dang, if we didn't see these great big fish! And it's in May, you know, it's mid-May.



First page of Syd Glasso's notebook

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And there was a pod of like six or seven, I think he said there was like seven fish and they went over with the boat and spooked them. And his dad goes, boy, those are big cutthroat. Well, they were huge! No, they weren't cutthroat, they were steelhead. And Syd never told Dick about it. (Laughing) And he wrote in there a couple of times about these pods of fish that would show up. He never caught one. He always spooked them because he didn't realize that this little short section of river -- you know, biologists didn't know about it. Your son knows about it. You know, he saw those fish, I'm sure. Hopefully there are still a few of those around. But each river has those little oddities. And there's some logic to fish spawning in the lower river.

BM: Yes. You explained to me some interesting things, I thought, that, you know, Syd was having a difficult time finding materials he needed. You were about the only source that had really good materials, which he required for his type of flies. And maybe tell us a little bit -- I was always impressed myself in that you always had a great kindness in your heart for people that you liked and then you knew didn't have a lot of money, in that you would oftentimes help us find materials. Not only that, you would oftentimes give them to us without taking money from us. Maybe you could tell kind of that relationship that you had sometimes --

DM: Well, I mean, that's part of the joy. I mean, people come here to the house, and I meet a lot of tiers, and they start digging through the materials. And they go, oh, wow! Then, oh, darnit! Just take it, you know, if you really -- (Laughing) But I do sell a lot of materials.

But it's like these young, what I call kids, you know, they're in their Twenties and Thirties, that are tying these gorgeous steelhead flies. Whether it's steelhead flies or nymphs or dry flies, you know, they're just gifted people. And it was just like, I go back to when I was a kid trying to learn how to tie flies, and all of a sudden, how could these people just pop out within a couple of years and tie these beautiful flies when it took me, you know, a decade or more, just to tie a fairly decent fly? But one of the things you want to do, and that I've done for a long, long time, there's a letter on my refrigerator from a young man, and he was -- well, there were several of them that were in their early teens, they couldn't drive, so their parents would bring them to the fly shop and drop them off for the day. One of them was John Shewey. They learned to tie flies. You know, they would watch me tie, and I'd teach them. But it was a gift that you pass on.

Sometimes when I go to a restaurant, I see a young couple holding their hands, I'll walk over and I'll pull their slip and I'll pay for it. And I say, pass it on. You know, I don't have tons of money, but that's just the enjoyment I get, whether it's fishing or any aspect of nature.

One of the things I've done, I've got a lot of kids that I've raised, nine of them, but I've also taken dozens of kids into the woods or out in the desert. You know, I ask their parents, I said, we're going to go, hopefully it's not a dangerous thing and no rattlesnake bites them somewhere. But they would have no chance of ever seeing that, because their parents, they're just, watch TV. And that's one of the things that I really like to do is take young kids out, whether we're fishing or collecting butterflies or looking for rocks, or whatever my kids want to do, because I mean they change when we get to an area, it's everything.

That's kind of a favorite thing, but it still goes back to the blessings that you give to people, you know. If someone needs something, you send it to them. I remember Wes Drain called me up and he said, god, I can't believe people would pay a hundred dollars for a Drain's 20. And I go, told Wes, I said, Why not? I said, You tie me one, I'll pay a hundred dollars for it. (Laughing)

DM: So he said, Well, I don't have any cock-of-the-rock or toucan feathers. And I said, not a problem. (Laughing) So I sent him a bunch of feathers, and he sent me one fly, which I was grateful to get. It was a little, little one. And so here a couple of years ago, Aaron was here and I went out to the garage, we were talking about the Drain's 20, and he goes, god, that's such a beautiful fly. And I had, you know, I had tied one. So I went out in the garage and opened up this envelope and brought it in, and I said, here you go, I've had this for thirty-five years, it's yours now.

BM: Oh my. So what was it about, I think a lot of us think about, and you maybe have more insight into it than any. What was it about Syd Glasso's fly tying skills or what he came out the pipe as regards to what he tied that was so distinctive?

DM: Well, I can show you some of Syd's early flies from the late 1930s, early 1940s. And he would have gone back East and seen Preston Jennings or some of the other people, he would have come back with different ideas. I don't know where -- we talked about his love of Atlantic salmon flies. But the skill that he put into tying his flies was unlike anyone in history. And this started when he moved to Forks. He was isolated there. I mean, there was no place he could buy materials, actually. He would drive into Patrick's or Shoff's, order, pre-order materials and have to select, you know, through the feathers and the furs that he got. But it was that floss and the tinsel and those little teeny heads that he tied with a 9/0 thread, but he tied it loose so it was more like a floss rather than on a bobbin. He didn't use a bobbin, he just had a paperclip that he weighted, a clip that he put on this line just like the Darbys and the Dettles did. You know, they didn't use bobbins. Syd was born about the same year those people were born. But it was just the shock of when the little steelhead trout book came out, it was black and white, so you really, those pictures really didn't impress anybody. And about half the book was sold to spin fishermen, less than 2,000 copies. So it really was unnoticed. And then when his little bible came out, here you saw this glorious ten-fly set, and you just, you were shocked. You would just sit there and you'd go, oh, my God, who is this guy? You know, I'd just met him, but I hadn't seen any of his flies yet until that -- Frank Amato sent me that book in October, about six months prior to it being published, and he goes, read through it, find the errors, and send it back to me. It was just a photocopy.

BM: And this was Trey Combs' book that's --

DM: Yes, that little, his little steelhead book. So I found all these errors in the book and I sent it back to Amato, and they never proofread. The errors are still in the book. But Syd, the shock that it gave people. Anybody that became his friend, tied a much, much better fly. I mean, they saw the work, you know, like Walt Johnson was telling me, he says, god, he's a, you know, I'd just tie these horrible flies, and then Syd came up to the house and he opened up his fly wallet up, and I go, whoa! Spey flies, what's a spey fly? And then Walt figured out his *Deep Purple Spey*. I always wondered why Syd wouldn't buy any purple, and it was out of respect for his friends. Wes Drain, Walt Johnson had purple flies, and he didn't want to develop a pattern that would out fish their flies, so he just dropped it.

BM: Oh, interesting. And he also seemed to use native duck breast feathers for some of --

DM: Oh, he loved, yes, he loved that. And if you look at a number of his flies, they kind of represent what Walt Johnson did with the flank feathers at the throat and the spiders that Al Knudson, his Yellow Spider. That was a really popular fly, and they just changed the colors. The bottom material and the widgeon, teal, pintail, mallard flank, to make those big, breathing hackles. They would cast those out and pop them.

And of course, you know, like he said, you never knew what was in the river. Could be -- some years in diaries, they talk about, there was so many coho, males that would return one year, you know, salt fish that were like 13, 14 inches. We couldn't even hook a steelhead because there was so many cohos in the river. And that happened like every decade, there'd be this high count of these little jacks that would come in the river.

And of course, they caught a lot of fish, but that breathing action of those flies, popping those spiders. And apparently, Syd tied a lot of them. There's probably at least 30 different patterns that I have in the spider form.

BM: Well, and another thing, maybe what influenced it, like you indicated, is isolation in Forks. He had no access to materials out there, and here's native critters right around that you can hunt and shoot all the time and that they've got materials that he could easily work with and apparently adapted to as his vision of what a fish ought to like.

DM: Well, one of the things that probably very few people know, his Sol Duc, the yellow flank feathers, he would go out to the beach there at the Lower Hoh and pick up sea gull feathers, the flank feathers on the sea gull and take

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them back home and dye them yellow, because they were so long. He couldn't find hackles back then. And you know, we didn't have China in those days because we had a trade embargo. And so all the saddle hackles were loose, and they'd stick like a dozen saddle hackles in a bag, and nothing was matched, they're just loose. So it was kind of a waste. But he used the sea gull feathers for years. Then of course, any duck feathers. He would go down when he was living in Issaquah, there was a lake there and it had all kinds of ducks. He's got pictures of a hundred mergansers and teal and mallards. And he would go along the shoreline and pick up and look at the feather, Oh, that's a good one. You know, he'd throw the feathers back that he didn't want, take home -- He had plenty of time to walk around, you know, get out of the house. And you just think, you can't buy this stuff.

BM: Yes. His flies were really a Northwest Coast representation of native wildlife that you could use to, use for your fly tying.

DM: Yes, yes. In his early years, that's what he had to do in order to get the materials. And it shows in some of these early flies. When he lived in Parkland, Washington and was a school teacher back in the 1930s and 1940s, you can look at the materials that were used on the flies and the materials were not very good.

BM: Yes. Well, and also, you know, every bad winter we have, which is maybe ten years, some years you can get another bad winter in between, but it seems like every one of those years, you always find heron carcasses along the river that don't make it through the winter. That was probably a source for his heron hackles too.

DM: Well, I think one of the reasons why he moved next to the fish hatchery --

BM: Oh, yes.

DM: -- is that they shot herons every day.

BM: Yes, yes.

DM: And the guy would -- that Syd would go over and pluck the feathers off the herons, and they'd throw them in the dumpster. You know, they finally quit that, but during the 1970s that was real common. There was a time when I had talked to John Vineyard, and he said, we've got a new law in effect that we can't sell any wild bird feathers anymore. So I said, what do you have? And he had, I think it was like eleven gross of heron. I go, I'll take them. And I bought a bunch of hooks and Russian jay wings and black squirrel tails from Russia. He shipped them, and I took up two of those blocks to Syd, and he goes, whoa, I won't have to go to the fish hatchery. (Laughing) Because most of the birds that they shot were juveniles.

BM: So how early do you think Syd maybe started tying spey-type flies, about what year?

DM: Well, with heron, I've got, in 1955, I've got the order forms. He ordered from [Mecina?], a company in England, in 1955, 1957, and 1959. Why? It was three dozen heron feathers over that period. And of course the first spey fly that he tied was the *Orange Heron*. He took that up on the Stilly in 1959 and caught five steelhead that day. And Al Knudson watched it. And of course Al Knudson's neighbor down the creek a little bit was Walt Johnson, who said, yes, this guy just came up here and just slaughtered it. Took five fish!

BM: So essentially, probably somewhere in the mid-1950's he was starting to tie experimental stage of those flies.

DM: Yes. He bought Taverner's book first and was really intrigued with Crossfield's slim flies. That's what really got him involved with --

BM: Okay, ah.

DM: -- you know, just like your thoughts, minimalist in your flies.

BM: Yes.

DM: Just minimal materials, because you didn't want bulk so your flies could sink in the winter or stay on the surface in the summer. Syd delved into Crossfield's work, even though it's limited in that book. There's just very few pages in Taverner's book that detail the *Black Silk*, for example. But I'll tell you, when Syd -- I went to his house, probably like the third time, and he opened himself up a little bit. He was really private. You didn't want to, like I was told before, don't ask him any question about his family, and don't ask for a fly. One day he went into his bedroom and brought out some fly wallets and one of his diaries and put them on the table, and goes, look at that. And I just, god, I was just going, ho, ho, ho. And I go, a steelhead will eat a fly this skinny? And they were twiggy. I mean, it was just, you think about when I talked to Clarence Shoff, he said, you know, if I had gone back East and learned to tie flies from the Dettas, like you did, or the Darbys and Dettas, he said, maybe my flies would really look nice. But, he said, out here we just tie this big, fat, ugly flies with -- a dry fly with chenille, I mean, come on. That's how I started. I mean, that's what we had here, chenille with a big chunk of deer hair on it to make it float.

BM: Spey flies became -- I can still remember that they just exploded in popularity in Oregon, because I was more -- Southwest Washington was more connected with Oregon than Puget Sound, and so I always remember, you were a big mover in this, as regards helping spread this extreme interest in spey flies. Everybody was starting to tie steelhead flies, you know, that had some sort of spey-type characteristics to them.

DM: Well, you were really, like I wrote in this article, you were the one that I looked at, because I had never seen those. I had lots of chickens, and I was looking at those flies that you tied with big, long hackles on them, and I, you know, we didn't use that kind of, the shorter hackles, half the length of the hook. And a size four was a big fly. And a size six or a size eight, that was the stuff that we fished with, for summer steelhead. Winter fish, you might use a two and a four, but the hackles were still short. And then here's Bill's flies with these big neck hackles that he got from [Swaloff?]. And I go, holy smokes! I called Victor and said, send me ten pounds of that stuff, and it was like \$36.00 a pound back then. Of course, there were 7-inch hackles in those days, and then it went to 6- and 5-inch. But I learned about that movement, and that was real critical. Then of course, the heron hackles, and I taught a lot of people. We still could get heron feathers legally out of China, and it really sprung forward.

BM: Oh, yes.

DM: I mean, a lot of people, once they saw -- I mean, Trey Combs' book sold, Frank Amato said it sold over 25,000 copies. God, there must be a dozen printings of it over a period of from 1977 to at least ten years. People would open that up, they'd look at the spey flies. Now look at the Great Lakes. We don't talk about it, but their fishery is so huge compared to ours. And most of the spey rods, that's where they're going. Even though the streams, two guys can be on the opposite side and almost touch their rod tips. And they got these --

BM: They've got big runs a lot, what are now wild steelhead, some of them.

DM: Yes, yes, yes.

BM: What have been the greatest changes you think have been in steelhead fly fishing in the last fifty years?

DM: Well, what happened in the 1970s, like when the Greased Line, my shop, Kaufmann's, it was just this blossom of businesses opened up. Well, at the very start of that, probably two or three years from 1976, say 1975 to 1980, there weren't very many places where you could buy anything. Even though graphite rods were available, they were only available in manufacturing. The blanks, Kennedy Fisher, you know, Joe, started to manufacture, turned his plan over to graphite part of the time and fiberglass the rest of the time, and then pretty much graphite. But the process of material houses had to be developed. And we've got a great thing with Bob Borden, opened up Hareline. And over the years, you know, that was in the early 1980s, and over the years he was able to create some of the best fly tying materials in the world. And it was all from his hard work. There's other, Wapsi and some other places that are huge. But we had to have those supply houses in the material end of the business. And without that, you know, I've been to shops in Denver, and they maybe had a thousand or two thousand dollars worth of fly tying materials,

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and that was it. And the rest of it was T-shirts and sweaters and a few fly rods. And I go, is this really a fly shop? And the guy said, yes, we gross 900,000 a year. And I go, whew! But until those businesses, the wholesale businesses were built, that's probably one of the reasons why there weren't fly shops in the West. There were very few, maybe a dozen, from Washington to California. You know, there were more fly shops in West Yellowstone then there were in two or three states.

BM: Then there was, during that period of time, there was a lot of hands-on learning, making your own rods from blanks, tying your own flies. There was a big boom in that. It was kind of like the *Whole Earth Catalog* came out and people were learning to do things all over again with their hands. And anyway, do you still see that continuity, or is that kind of disappearing?

DM: That's gone.

BM: Yes.

DM: Yes, that's gone.

BM: People are pretty much dependent upon manufacturers making –

DM: Yes, and it's incredible today versus say 1985. You have a newcomer walk into the shop, they go, I want to learn to fly fish. So I said, Well, how much money, I mean, are you really an outdoors person, or are you just going to do this one or two days a year? So we didn't really have a good option for the beginner, here's a rod from Cortland, rod, reel and line for \$70.00, and it casts lousy. Today, the options, you know, they're more expensive rods, but they're, like Sage they use their G1 and G2s, and they're really good casting rods.

BM: That's all I –

DM: I mean, they're, it's just like my old Fenwick sitting right there. That thing's 40-some years old, 45 years old, and those rods are great.

BM: So, I always remember that sort of like you say, there was the first big shift when there started to be a burst in fly fishing shops available to do things with, and then there was a second one that was the *A River Runs Through It* explosion.

DM: Yes.

BM: It seemed to be after that point, people were less inclined to make things and be more focused on buying things. And like you say, the one or two day a year fly fisher.

DM: Well, you see that. I guided in Alaska for nineteen years, and you saw that in Alaska. When I first began guiding up there in 1974, it was just a couple of people. And then by 1986, you know, we had thirty-six people a week come through the door. So they're paying \$2,500-\$2,700 bucks, you know, new tackle, new waders. It was just look at today, the rods are almost hitting a \$1000, and waders are \$600 bucks. Wading shoes are \$150. You walk in, you buy a small little pack of materials and you have to pay \$30 bucks for it, and I go, god, it's incredible. But it's the technology has, you know, we've seen this huge improvement in everything, angling. It doesn't matter what it is in angling. You can go down to Cabella's and look at a \$3000 spinning reel, and I go, whoa! But it's all hand machined. We have the same thing in the fly reels.

BM: Yes. It seemed like it was the old Hardy reels became cheapened up and they're no longer a lifetime investment like they used to be, then all of a sudden we started to have a new reel industry develop, like what your old reels were, where you developed a very high quality, well machined product to try and fill in that void that was sort of disappearing.

DM: Well, in a sense it's just like when you jump, when I started building that reel, you know, I mentioned that I called Mark [Solson], and he said, well, there's seventy-two reel manufacturers in the world today. By the time, it was like two years, by the time I got that reel on the market, it had gone to another like thirty more reel companies. And all of a sudden I go, whoa! Where did they come from? Look at the fly tying vises today. My god, the old Thompson Model A, I was just talking with the owner at one of Ed's shows, it was in 1993, there in California, I was talking to him and he was worried because he goes, Thompson Model A vise has been around for seventy years, and we got all these vises. By god, there's a dozen people here at the show with vises that are, you know, above \$200. Now they're way up there.

BM: I still use my old original Model A that I bought when I was 11, and I think it was \$10.95 or \$11.95.

DM: Yes, yes. You look at the old catalogs. I've got one on the table here, back in 1955, and in here they're \$9.00 for a Thompson Model A. They'll last a lifetime.

BM: What do you think the future of fly fishing holds?

DM: Well, as you know, as you well know, the climate's changing and we see these disasters, you know. We had forest fires here. We couldn't breathe in this town last summer. You couldn't even see down the street, it was so smoky from the fires. It's never been like that until the last ten years. Massive changes. You know, we've always had fires every year, but not these massive fires. We had one a couple months ago, a big forest fire. And they go, how could we have a forest fire right after the heavy snow, and we've got a forest fire? And it's just the conditions. One thing that Syd said that I remember, with tears coming out of his eyes, he didn't tell me that he had cancer, it was the last time that I saw him, and he just said, as long as there's steelhead in the rivers, I'll be known. He knew the steelhead were going downhill, and he was really worried. He told me, he said, I just hate to think about it. It's not that he caught thousands of steelhead. He didn't catch that many, his diaries show. But he learned, really learned how to fish and enjoyed his tackle, especially in his later years when he spent a fortune on his cane rods and reels. Like one of his friends said, after spending probably \$20,000 when he was probably 72, 73 years old, he just went on a spending spree and bought these cane rods, the most gorgeous Vom Hofe reels you've ever seen, paid \$5,000 for one reel. It was in mint condition. Of course when he passed away, he gave all of his tackle to Dick Wentworth. And a couple of my friends purchased the tackle. But like Syd, you know, this was back in the early 1980s, he looked in the future and he saw what he didn't like it. You've got the Puget Sound with, you know, there's going to be millions of more people move out of California and come wherever these tech companies can swallow them up. And all that pollution that goes into the rivers, the fish can't survive that.

I've always been thrilled about your work on the wild fishery, part of it, and you just look at the gene pools that have been destroyed.

[BM?]: For breeding.

DM: My 13-year-old son goes, Dad, I want to be a fishing guide. And I go, No, you don't want to be a fishing guide. I said, I can take you to Alaska when you're a couple of years older, I'll get you a job, and you can work in one of the fish camps up there, and you'll realize why you don't want to be a fishing guide. You're never going to be married, or, you'll be married and divorced, because in order to make money, you've got to be on the river 200-plus days a year. And you're not going to be able to catch that many fish. Because the cycle is now, these *El Ninos* were long, long periods of time, now they're just minutes. And it's so rapid. I remember the wet years that we used to have in the 1950s and the heavy snows, and then all of a sudden things have just changed.

BM: Every year is unpredictable from the next.

DM: Yes.

BM: It's just incredible shifts, changes are just so dramatic so soon.

DM: And just like this flood we just had at the first of the month, I'm worried to go down on the McKenzie and sit there and not see a fish. It's really critical. I was shocked I got three people that wanted to learn how to fly fish. So I built them some inexpensive rods, and they got the reels and lines, and we went down to the McKenzie, right here on the lower river. The end of June, three weeks in a row I took them out, every Tuesday. And I may have seen one trout rise, when there's thousands of mayflies and caddis and stoneflies coming off. I saw one trout, it was probably ten inches long. I go, where'd the whitefish go? There's no more whitefish. What happened to the river? So I talked to the -- I went over to the Springfield Fishery, sat down and talked to the guy, and I go, you guys have no clue. Well, we don't study that much. They have no clue what's going on in the rivers. They said that the 1996 flood wiped out the Upper Willamette, those great big rainbows that used to swim in that river. The guy said, we've got fish traps up here. I haven't seen a big trout in the fish traps for years. And I go, where'd they go? We got a reservoir right there. I mean, if the river's pushing the fish down, they could go in the reservoir. But they disappeared. My grandfather and my father, back in the 1930s, my grandfather got a permit from the state to catch 250 trout a week to feed the poor people at our church. You wouldn't believe the size of trout that they caught in the McKenzie River. There was a picture of ten trout on a rope, and the writing says seventy pounds. And they're huge. They're all 25, 27-inches long.

And I remember in the late 1950s, early 1960s, I would sell worms to this guy up at McKenzie Bridge. He'd come down to Springfield, and I'd have a bucket full of worms, and he'd give me \$20.00 for them. I went up and stayed overnight at his cabin. He had one of those Asian bobbers that now the spey casters use. I had never seen one, where it got real -- a big treble hook with about six worms on it, and he'd go, (verbalizing casting sound), cast it across the river, and all of a sudden right on the bank, I'd see this big trout, just like a steelhead, big, and he'd just swim over and (verbalizing fish swallow sound). Those fish are gone.

And the thing with the McKenzie, it always had that 14-inch, under fourteen inches, you could keep, and over, you couldn't.

BM: (Inaudible, multiple speakers)

DM: They still disappeared.

BM: What do you think, guys?

HL: You know, could I ask just ask a couple of follow up questions on the reel that you designed and built? When did you get in your mind the idea of building reels? And why?

DM: Well, it was in the late 1980s when *Scientific Angler* came out with their new reel, and I was selling them. We couldn't get enough of them. And I thought, well, I'm going to build one reel, so I'm going to build that reel right there, the 3.2 steelhead reel. I went over to my neighbor, right across the street from me, and he was a machinist. And for \$1500, he built the reel for me. We made some alterations to it. I took the reel and had an engineer design it in blueprint form so I could take it to a company and get it put into a CNC machine with a disk, and I could go in there and at night, which I did, and feed -- you know, they cut the aluminum for me, and I would feed the parts into the CNC machine and close the door and push the button, and that's all you have to do. And when it's done, you just go in there and open it up and turn it around, punch a button, and (verbalizing whirring sound). And so I did that month after month.

But I built the reels as a challenge, and it worked out.

BM: And that was 1992 to 1997?

DM: Yes.

BM: How many do you think you made?

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DM: I made 1560, something like that. A lot of work, you know, they take probably twelve hours from the start to the finish.

HL: So having the CNC machine just gives you the frame, and it's a machine frame out of a solid piece –

DM: Yes, the frame, the spool and -- actually, that little trout reel over there, the 2.4, that's the most expensive reel, because it comes from a 6-inch bar stock and I got to cut that down first, all the way down to that. The marlin reel, which is really big, is the least expensive because you can cut, got to the center with a rough cutter and just go (verbalizing electric cutting sound), and it just cuts, it just takes like two minutes to cut out that inside frame.

BM: I recall that you had a very high tech material from, was it 3M?

DM: Yes, Vespel, uh-huh.

BM: Vespel, to use as bushings and bearings in the thing, and that gave you a smooth running, I mean –

DM: Yes, just like a piece of ice. I mean, when you feel it, you can't hardly even handle it it's so slick.

HL: And nobody else was using materials like that.

DM: No, they couldn't afford it. So I put \$45,000, when I bought those 9-inch sticks, I put \$45,000 and I just wrote it off as a loss.

HL: And that's the sticks, you're talking about the aluminum bars that were –

DM: No, the Vespel, the Vespel sticks were nine inches. They were an inch by nine inches long, and I think they were -- they were close to a \$1000 dollars apiece. So I couldn't, you know, I couldn't charge -- I didn't want to charge Stan Bogdan's prices, you know, I knew I wouldn't sell any reels. It was bad enough having, being overcharged from the machine shop. When they gave me the bill, I was -- I took the owner to Alaska, I guided him on a hunting trip, and he got his big bulls and we came back, and a couple of days later he called me up and he goes, well, we got to square up the bill. And I looked at it and it's like three times higher than I thought it was going to be, and I was just sick to my stomach immediately. But, we increased the price a little bit at that point, and they sold. And then I got that contract from the Japanese fly fishing shop, and they bought -- they said, we're going to buy every reel that you make. And so I only made about maybe 200, 250 reels for the U.S. market, and that's all, and everything else was shipped to Japan. And so today, I just bought that last month off eBay, that 3.2, because I don't have one. (Laughing)

And that's the only reel, that little reject trout reel, that's the only reel that I have. And then my son, my 13-year-old son, he saved his money, he's got two. He's got a 2.8 trout and a 3.2 steelhead. He beat me on it. I didn't know he was bidding on eBay. He beat me. (Laughing)

BK: Is it listed as a McNeese reel?

DM: Yes. I've got an app on eBay so anytime one comes up it hits my phone. But I mean, that was really hard work, and, you know, I got to 1997, and my dear wife passed away in 1994, and we had one child. And I just got to the point in 1997, I said, I'm going to stop all this stuff, and I decided to start a landscaping company in Portland. And I did that for, oh geez twenty yes, probably twenty years. I just retired from that. And that was really hard work, but I enjoyed the work, you know, six days a week, ten hours a day through the summer and eight hours in the winter.

But I still piddle with dyed materials. I wish I had the gumption to start another company but, you know, getting close to 70 years old, you just don't. But I got college for three more kids, so maybe I'll have to do it. But it's great having you guys down, and it's wonderful to see Bill again.

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BK: Today, the highlight for me is your stories about Syd, because there's so little known about Syd, even on the Olympic Peninsula, you know.



Dick Wentworth flies (top). Syd Glasso flies (below)

DM: Well, I can tell you, his student, Dick Wentworth, and there's a couple other kids that were younger, maybe a year or two years younger than Dick, that have never been written about, that Syd took fishing. One of these guys, I haven't talked to him, I don't know why he won't talk to me, and I asked his friend. He's 76, 75 or 76 years old. But I noticed him in Syd's diaries, he talks about this kid. And he goes, he just picked a fly rod up, and he goes, god, he's almost as good as I am. He's only like sixteen or seventeen years old, and he's catching more fish than Syd or Dick. Syd's kind of going, complaining about it. (Laughing) Because he's so young. And you never heard from him. You know, there's nothing written. But Syd was such a private person. I talked to his granddaughter, she goes, Syd never came to Thanksgiving, Christmas, I don't even know him. I can visualize, I can see him, in what I remember. But he just wasn't a social person at all. When I'd go to his house, we'd talk, and it was just basically about materials, sometimes about fishing. He was a great admirer, Bill, of you, and the *Washougal Olive*. So I've got a spey fly that he tied that's green because that theory that you wrote about, you know, the new leaves and the greenery popping up, and he goes, god, I wonder if this fly's going to work.

DM: Well, the interesting thing is, is that, you know, since John lives out there now, my son, and his favorite river is the Sol Duc. And the Sol Duc and the Washougal are so similar except that the Sol Duc has about the same size channel as the Washougal but carries two times the volume. And so I find it an extremely difficult river to fish with a floating line in winter because it's –

DM: The volume.

BM: The volume of water is moving through fast in the same size channel as the Washougal. And my son tried dry line winter fishing for his first couple years there and was catching very little, and so it's one of the reasons my son shifted. It was a very difficult river to focus on for winter fly fishing. So Syd did, I think, considering the tackle limitations back then –

DM: Syd's got one of the –

BM: -- he was remarkably successful on the Sol Duc, because it's such a difficult river to fish in winter on a fly.

DM: Well, in the diaries that I read, we were counting -- now, whether they're really accurate, they're nothing like your diaries, which are more like a scientific paper. And just like my butterflies, when I write down what I see and where the location and the temperature and all this, which is great for the entomologist at Oregon State. We meet there every first of November, late October every year, and exchange data. But looking at these diaries, you know, over 50 years of fishing on the Olympic Peninsula, you can see the effect of *El Nino* just, I mean, it's real, way apart in years, maybe fifteen to twenty years, and then all of a sudden there's an abrupt, god, there's no fish in the river! Like 1973 or something like that, they were talking about there was -- they only caught three steelhead that winter.

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BM: 1969-1970.

DM: Yes, it was.

BM: Yes, that was that first time where I first heard the word *El Nino*.

DM: Yes. And they were complaining about, where did the fish go? But the winter fishing was almost, as everybody knows when the water comes up, the fish go in, they spawn, and they come back out. And most of the steelhead that they caught, the majority of steelhead were spawned fish. It was a big note that they would, finally caught a fresh fish. Because they had silk lines. And you know, Syd had that lead, powdered lead line that, those shooting heads that they used. Dick Wentworth always used lead core, I don't know. He broke his Orvis cane rod several times because the stuff would get wrapped around the tip as he flipped it forward. There's lots of broken hooks, because with a cane rod, you can't cast high enough to keep that lead core line off the ground behind you because it just drops. They'd hook a steelhead and it comes off, and the hook comes back and it's busted. But you know, that's a big problem with the coastal streams, just like here. We go down to the coast, you know, there was a couple of surprising years back in the 1960s when we just hit it right. The water had come down and the fish were coming in at high tide, and you could see them on these little creeks. You'd just have a great day. People don't believe how many fish you caught, because it's not like that anymore.

BM: It still amazes me about your butterfly work and your expertise in it. And it reminds me of Vladimir Nabokov -- who is essentially known for *Lolita*. But Vladimir Nabokov was one of the true experts in, what are they called the blues?

DM: Yes, Lycaenidae.

BM: Yes. And you know, he wrote some scientific papers that were accepted in the journals. And he was truly like Dave. I don't like the word citizen scientist. To me it sounds like a communist plot. I like the term hobby science, because a person does a hobby for one reason, because you love something, because you love to do something. Citizen science doesn't tell you anybody loves anything.

DM: Yes. Well, I mean, everything I have is a hobby. And there's probably too many of them, but I don't like sitting around in the house. I'm an outdoorsman. And when I grew -- I'll tell you another thing about my life. My father being a great fisherman, he was also a big elk hunter. And we would leave about the 23rd or 24th of October and wouldn't come back home until December 1st.

BM: Wow.

DM: And so I got my school work all planned out. My chemistry teacher goes, Mr. Browning said, you're never going to make it. You're never going to get -- you can be in chemistry but you can't be gone this long. (Laughing)

DM: So my senior year in high school, I went over and I got my elk opening day, like I always do, and I told him, I said, I'll be back. And he goes, bring me some elk meat. (Laughing)

DM: And that was it, I finally got -- he gave me a C. And he goes, I can't give you much better than that. And I said, geez, three years? And I get back that was the shortest elk hunt.

But like I said, the butterflies are just like a fish. And you know, I've got some Indra swallowtails in there, and I'm always amazed at how the female will select -- the Indra particularly has one host plant, *Lomatium grayi* on the Deschutes, for example, and up in the Wenatchee and Klickitat. But the Lomatium, if it's out in the open, which you see hundreds of them on the Deschutes, it's attacked by a viral fungus, and it protects itself that way from insects eating on it. So the Lomatium that grows next to a rock has got the extra heat to kill that. So the female

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butterflies, they don't lay the eggs on that plant. They go down there and they touch it with their feet. Instantly within just a couple of seconds, they know the plant's diseased and they leave. And then they'll fly over, they'll touch another plant with their, they've got these little thorns on the back of their legs, and they'll touch the plant. They go, uh, it's safe, and they'll lay an egg or two on the plant. They'll crawl down. So I watch them, and they'll land inside the plant, and they'll crawl down to the base of it and lay an egg or two and fly off. And those survive. But the time it takes to find one plant next to a rock, it's amazing.

And it's just like, you know, female fish. The male doesn't do anything but swim, and it just follows the female. And she's the one that finds that certain spot. But what my worry is, those spots are getting really small today. You got dams on the rivers. The rivers don't, you know, we just had this flood. There was a man on the news a couple of days ago, and he said, I watched this boulder the size of a car go down the river. He said, I couldn't believe it. So maybe it stirred up some gravel, but the number of spots have decreased substantially for spawning. And that's why the populations have plummeted. And they know it.

HL: And the fish that are returning tend to be the smaller fish these days. And only the larger fish could excavate redds in the main stem, especially main stems that carry huge flows of water, like the ones in the peninsula that we're accustomed to. It's a bad spiral.

DM: And that's the problem. When you get fish that go down, you know, below the seven pound range, it's really hard. These upper rivers, to find gravel that's two inches and under that they can rip up. Luckily there's still some Chinook, because wherever the Chinook spawns, the steelhead are going to spawn, right on top of them.

BM: Yes, they stir up the gravel.

DM: It's just later, you know, it's just the Chinook spawn in November, and the summer fish spawn in January and February. And then the winter steelhead come in and spawn right on top of all that in May.

HL: Any more, Bill?

BK: No, just to say that because so little is known about Syd and because he's so influential to the Northwest, your book is really important.

BM: Yes.

DM: Well, that was my goal. The first couple of people I talked to that knew Syd, I said, I want to write a book, and they were kind of PO'd. They said, well, we really knew Syd well. I said, why don't you write something about him? That's all I want to do, is carry his name forward. I want people to see these flies that he created, because all they've seen is the ten flies in that book, and that's all they think Syd ever developed. And most of those flies he didn't fish that much. They wanted pretty flies. Syd didn't even want to tie those flies for Trey.

BM: Really?

DM: He refused a number of times. They can't remember it, but back in the 1980s when I was fishing with Trey, we were talking about that, and he goes, yes, I contacted him, I was doing an article on Al Knudson, and I asked Al who else he knew that was a really good fly tier. And Al goes, well, I met this guy, he lives over there in Forks, Washington, this little teeny town, Forks, Washington, and he's a school teacher. He came down here and fished, and that was the day that he caught five steelhead. And Al Knudson was sitting on his porch in that little shack he had, just watching this guy hammering these steelhead, and walked down, and he said, who the hell are you? (Laughing)

DM: And then Syd gave him a fly. You know, Al Knudson was a commercial fly tier his whole life. And I bought out all of his hooks. He drove down here one summer in the early 1970s and the whole back of his pickup was full of boxes of hooks. I still have some of them here, you know, like \$.15 cents, \$.12 cents, for a Mustad hook. And we just sat and talked about the old times. That's just before I met Syd, so it was probably 1974. And he said the

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same thing, he said, yes, there's this guy out there in the middle of nowhere. He said, I can't believe the flies that this man ties. I mean, it shocked everybody that -- I mean, there's people today that can tie flies better than Syd or equally, but every fly tier's got a characteristic in his flies, and like some people said, he was the best salmon fly tier in the world. What's incredible, he didn't get the materials until 1980. And so, from 1980 to 1981 and a half, he tied all these salmon flies. It was every day, all day, all night. That's what he did. He had got the materials from Joe Bates, who got them from Paul Schmookler. Bates wanted those flies for his big book, which is really a great read. And the photographs that Michael Radencich did in there just exemplifies the skill of the tiers. And there's several photographs of Preston Jennings, T. Price-Tannet, and Syd Glasso. These are the people that he worshiped, and here's three of the flies in that book, and it's just, that's the photograph. You can see, here's one hundred years of fly tying. And all these individuals were extremely private, you know.

I remember talking to Wes Drain when he went into the service, and he was in South Carolina, or North Carolina, or wherever it was, and he took a train up to New York to meet Preston Jennings. It was just like me, going to see the people back in the Catskills. He said it was unbelievable. He said, this guy was so orderly. He'd open these files up, and there'd be all these drawings of fish and flies and little minnows or mayflies. He'd have them drawn out, beautifully drawn out, with an example of his pattern in there. I was fortunate in the late 1970s, after I had gone back East, I met a couple of people on the phone and they sent me their Preston Jennings collections, to me, just to look at. And I was just going, man, oh man! So we started studying them, the light and the colors. I'm into dyeing feathers, so that was just a big project for me. But the difference in his flies were he didn't realize that he was using materials that were non-reflective, that absorbed light instead of bouncing the light off. And by using hackles and other feathers for the wings, you get this reflective material.

One of the greatest experiences I had was a lure maker from Luhr Jensen. We'd go on the South Coast, and he'd park his van there and he'd paint your lures, and you could come back in a couple hours and purchase them. And so one day I was there, watching him painting these lures, and I had my fly tying box with me, and he was going through it and he saw the teal feathers and the guinea, and he goes, oh my god, this is the stuff. This is the stuff you want on your fly. He said, these spots, that's what I do on these lures. That's what drives fish nuts. And that's, you know, they spend, the lure companies spend a lot of money developing colors and actions with their lures, and that's what the fly tiers are way, way behind on. Then all of a sudden, here they come up with new patterns in the 1990s that just went, you know, Ed Ward. The world just went crazy with those *Intruders*. You know, it's the perfect name for a fly. Just like your *Winters Hope*. I mean, it's just a classic, classic name. And now that's on, thousands of -- I look at the names of flies, and I can't believe people can, you know, on the Internet, and they've got -- you know the names have run out. (Laughter) There's no classic names anymore. They just come up with stuff, and I go, how do they remember all these names? And everybody wants to sell their flies to the fly tying outfits. You know, they're not going to make any money. They might make -- I talked to several people recently, you know, they might make a \$100 or maybe \$300. And one out of a thousand-some more money. But that's the change, like we were talking about, the change in fly fishing is -- it's going to be there, but the number of fly shops have decreased by about 40%, and that's due to the Internet. And boy, if Amazon ever gets into the fly fishing business, they're going to wipe them out. And they're going that direction, into the outdoor industry, and that's kind of scary. It's like Sage -- we're never going to sell to Cabella's. Then 2008, 2009 hit, they dropped a shift. They were not making any money, they had to [sell to Cabella].

HL: It's a different world, isn't it?

DM: Yes. So it's, you know, it's the profitability --

BK: Well, I'm glad that we were around to be able to experience it, and I'm glad we're protecting it and preserving it.

DM: Yes. Well, the other thing is, I'm writing this article about, take kids in the outdoors. It doesn't matter what, just drive down the street and honk your horn, have them jump in your rig, tell their parents you're taking them to someplace for a day. That's what I do. And these kids had never experienced this stuff.

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BK: The average kid today spends eight hours a day in front of a screen, eight hours a day. We have kids that live in Port Angeles that have never been to Lake Crescent. So what we do is we send every sixth grader to *Nature Bridge*, which is a campus on Lake Crescent, for three days, an overnight trip, two overnights, to do nothing but outdoor, scientific research, sixth graders. And those kids, you would -- I just love to go out there because it just warms your heart to see these kids in nature. But that's where they're supposed to be. I agree with you, it's the most important thing for us to do.

DM: Yes. I wish I had that picture here, and I don't have it. Dick Wentworth's brother, Hugh, sent me a picture of Dick and his stepson. Dick never had his own children. He married a Native American, and she had three children. But the boy's just like this tall, and he's -- they're holding this trout. It's fifteen pounds.

BM: Oh my god!

DM: It's the size of the kid. Dick's holding it right in front of the kid, and it goes all the way to --32 inches, probably. And I go, where in the world? So I got all the -- looked up Lake Crescent. And as I received the last couple of diaries that Hugh found -- Dick couldn't find all of his diaries. He sent me I think six or seven, the first, about like four years ago. And then I asked Hugh, I said, well, they stop back in the 1990s. And he goes, well, I'll go over to his house and I'll start going through. He called and he said, man, I haven't been in this room, his library, all the books, everything are just piled on the floor. He just, he was looking for it, and he just went like this down the shelves looking for these diaries. Hugh found the last three and pretty much all of his, Dick's fishing in the 1970s was, late 1960s, 1970s, was either in the ocean for coho and Chinook, or on Lake Crescent. And he talks about the big trout.

HL: That's a Beardslee trout.

DM: Yes.

HL: That's the name of it, as I recall.

DM: And he was talking about the different lines and the different depths, and he got a fish finder. And he goes, god, I'm going over these fish. I can see a school of fish and they're ninety feet down, so I'm using like three sections of fifteen feet of 700-grain lead core. Three sections of it, wrapped, so he can get the fly down ninety feet.

BM: Wow. Then there's the Crescenti cutthroat too, and they're pretty -- they get up to six or seven pounds.

DM: In that lake?

BM: Yes.

DM: Yes, yes. They talk about --

BK: They're beautiful fish. They're bright silver with kind of a blue cast to the back. They're really special fish.

DM: Yes. Well, Clear Lake, at the headwaters of the McKenzie, the trout in there -- I take my kids up there four or five times a year. The water's so clear, you can see right down to the bottom.

BK: Same with Crescent.

DM: You can see all the old fir trees in there from, oh, it was a couple thousand years ago, the lava came across and formed the lake. So there's a big waterfall coming out of there, a couple of them. And we'll hook one of these fish and just watch it swim around. It's just blue. I mean, blue as can be on the back. They're beautiful.

BK: Beautiful.

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BM: Yes, you know my -- Lynn's daughter has two children, and they come out to our house. Their mom allowed them to come out when they were quite young and stay overnight with us. And their enjoyment of being in our place, you know, on the river, never need to occupy them with anything. They're just constantly busy, turning over rocks, turning over logs, throwing rocks in the water. They're busy all day long, never bored. Then there's my two grandchildren through my daughter, and bring them out. Unfortunately, she won't ever let them stay out at our house because she's leery about our driving, but anyway. When she brings them out, I mean, the two of them are just constantly fighting all the time, just two problem children if ever. They come out to our house, not a problem. They're out there all day long, throwing rocks at the river instead of themselves. They're never a problem. They're never in trouble.

DM: Yes, when I take my kids out, I always know they had a good day when I get in the car and I'm driving for like 10 minutes, and I look back and all three of them are asleep. (Laughing)

And I know they're -- you know, they're thirteen, my daughter just, her seventeenth birthday was yesterday, and then I got a fifteen year old going on sixteen. But they all, you know, all the kids, I took them out on all these trips, and they really didn't have loving parents, the five of them, in a sense. And I hope, I've told them, I said, well, you're all grown now and I just hope you enjoyed that experience with me in those years. This was seventeen years ago and forward. But they always enjoyed that, and I just, you know, the boys, they want to hunt and fish. But it was really good that they had, they weren't on the computer.

HL: And the expression that has developed is, this is for the children who have spent eight hours a day on the screen, they suffer from *nature deficit disorder*. And there's a cure for it. It's what you're doing. You take them out in nature, and they come alive. It's real therapy.

DM: Well, there at the steakhouse, I've taken out a couple of the waitresses butterfly hunting, and they just couldn't -- I took three of them out. One of them was screaming at me the whole trip, going up in the mountains. She was hitting me and cussing at me the whole time because she was scared to death. And I said, I'm not going to drive off the road into this deep canyon. Well, I told you I'm scared of heights. I said, just close your eyes then. Quit beating on me. And then she wanted me to slow down. So we're driving up to Diamond Peak, and I'm going to take her up to this meadow with jillions of flowers. I said, you've never seen anything like this in your life. Apparently you never will. (Laughing)

DM: So we get up, she goes, Stop! And I get right to the summit and I just pull off the road just like it's going to go down in the canyon, and I slam on the brakes and skid. And she jumps out of the car and she's, all these nasty words. Then she just stops and she looks out, and she goes, oh my God, it's so beautiful! (Laughing)

DM: And that picture, when I'm collecting butterflies, that picture's right about where we are. And I said, all we have to do is drive from here right over there, and we're on flat ground. We're almost at six thousand feet. She goes, no. Then she just looks around, and she goes, oh my god. And then all of a sudden the butterflies. She had so much fun. Then we get back home, and she goes, mount those butterflies and frame them for me (inaudible, laughing). And then she goes, I'm never going anywhere with you again!

The other two girls were, I couldn't believe how well, I mean, I just gave them a net, and this one girl just picked the net up and she goes (verbalizing swooshing sound), and she flipped it. And I'm going, kid, you're a professional! How the hell did you know to turn the net, fold it? She caught quite a few. In fact, she caught a really good one, but I told her I'm keeping it.

But they just, you know, they were really shocked. And my neighbor down the street, this woman down the street, she had never been to Crater Lake, and I said, well, I'm going tomorrow, because I want to collect some butterflies at the Antelope Desert. So she hopped in, and it was the middle of August, and there was still like, this was a couple of years ago when they had a lot of snow there. There was still like six feet of snow on the ground. She's up there

throwing snowballs at me and looking over the rim, and she goes, oh god, this is incredible! And I said, you've lived here all your life and you've never come down here? It's only a two-and-a-half hour drive. They just don't leave the house. And that's just what you were saying. There's this deficit. And that's a problem with, you know, hunting and fishing. When I was over there talking to the guys at the fish and game, they had a chart, there was only like nine-hundred kids two years ago that bought fishing and hunting licenses in Lane County. That's it. And he said there used to be ten to eleven-thousand. This was when the population was a third of what it is now. But people move in, they come from an area that they've never fished or hunted, and kids grow up playing games. Every single kid that walks by here has got a cell phone, and they're just, they're walking and they're (verbalizing button tapping sounds) like that. And everything else is –

HL: Well Dave, I'm thankful for our opportunity to speak with you, get to know you better. This is quite the experience for me, personally, I would like to say. And on behalf of the university, I think this is a really nice opportunity to round out Western Washington University's oral history program. I sent you an email early on that said, you know, the fact that you're not from Washington, it was not really a deciding factor at all here. You know, we're looking -- the world needs to understand what motivated people in its formative, the formative years of fly fishing as we understand it today. It required pioneers and, you know, you're one of them. So, I'm going to have to shut this off right now. But I'm just going to say thank you very much for participating in this.

DM: Well, like I said, all this stuff that I have, I mean, I'll talk to the person that owns these flies and see if he would donate them. Because I know when I send these flies back, he'll probably sell them. He'll probably sell them in little batches, instead of the whole collection at one time. I told him before if you sell these flies, you'd better sell them in lots of like a dozen. But they'll be gone. We'll have photographs. We'll have the dressings of every fly, the hooks, like you saw in Syd's diary. Every hook is in there, so all I had to do is match it up. I just take the fly and I match it up to the hook that's in his diary, and write it down. Most the hooks are Vineyard, up by low waters.

BM: Have you got one of his diaries here? Maybe I can take a photograph.

DM: Yes, right behind you, that leather, that brown leather one, right up on top.

Now, what was interesting was years ago, and this was just before, it was probably a year or so before Syd passed away. But Bill was down at the Santiam Flycasters, and he brought some of his diaries down there. And so I was sneaking in there and looking, and I was, oh dang, how many does this guy really catch? And I was looking at March, from mid-February through March, and it was like, he was fishing almost every day and catching fish almost every day. And I was going, damn!

BK: Did you say you had a photo of Syd with his car?

DM: I've got a photograph of his car, after it was -- let's see, where the heck?

HL: I think I'm going to stop the audio portion of this while we –

(End of audio recording)