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This interview was conducted with Tom Morgan and his wife, Gerri Carlson, on September 11, 2016, at their home near Bozeman, Montana. The interviewers are Hugh Lewis and Bill Kindler. Tom Morgan passed away on June 12, 2017.

BK: So I'm going to start with a few questions about steelheading, and I'd like to ask Tom: Do you remember your first trip to fish for steelhead?

TM: Yes. I went to [Lewiston], Idaho to fish with my friends Keith Stonebraker and Doug Vanerka. That was in -- I'm pretty sure that was 1964.

BK: Was that on the Snake?

TM: We fished the Snake, the Grand Ronde, and the Clearwater, mostly the Clearwater and the Grand Ronde. We didn't start fishing the Snake for a while, but yes.

HL: Do you remember the first steelhead that you caught?

TM: Well, there are several things I remember that would probably be of interest. Looking back now, in fact I just was reading something I'd read before about this that's in the book. Looking back now, it seems hard to believe that we didn't catch steelhead for four years. We fished quite a bit. We took a jetboat up the Snake to the mouth of the Salmon. I just don't know how we could have missed, but we did.

But the first steelhead I caught was about eight pounds, in the Grand Ronde. But the one that was really the most memorable was one I caught right below the Potlatch Dam on the Clearwater. And it was on the north side where there was not much current. And I was using a greased line or floating line with a [modern line that you don't grease], and a Purple Peril fly, which is one with a purple body, and kind of black Leech hackle in a mallard breast way. The fly hardly moved around, and this absolutely enormous fish came up, very gently, and took it, and it seemed like its tail was the width of two hands. It just so happened that Keith was driving by going to work when I was playing it, and he saw me out there and he came over, and it didn't run out of the very small pool actually. And I was able to land it, and it was 37 inches, almost twenty pounds, big fat fish. And that was the second one. That was the one I really remember.

BK: That fish was worth waiting four years for.

TM: Yes, it was.

BK: Oh that's a great story. As you think back, do you have a favorite place to fish for steelhead?

TM: Well, I guess the favorite would be the Kispiox in British Columbia. But they are kind of all my favorites.

BK: I understand that. I know in the book, we have the Bomber representing your steelhead fishing.

TM: Yes.

BK: And you mentioned the Purple Peril. Do you have other favorite flies that you like for steelhead fishing?

TM: Yes. The one that I ended up using the most in the Idaho-Washington area was the, I call it the Sparse Comet. The regular Comet has bead eyes, but using that with a floating line it would go too deep. So I tied up my own on a Mustad 9674 hook, which I like because it had a straight eye. And it was just orange and yellow hackle with a gold tinsel body, very simple. And that ended up being my favorite.

One thing I'm extremely happy about, when we first started fishing for steelhead, we were using sinking lines. But they [ran into] Bob Weddell, which I didn't know at the time, and he had just run into a fisherman from Washington, a sign painter, named Dub Price, and they were fishing for steelhead using the greased line technique with floating lines. Boy that really appealed to us. So we switched over to that, and I'm happy to say I've never caught a steelhead on a sinking line.

BK: You've talked about some people that you've fished with in steelheading. Any particular favorite partners stand out in steelhead fishing for you?

TM: Yes. Michael Howard from Denver. He was my benefactor and took me to British Columbia, where we fished the Morice several years, the Kispiox. We went to the Sustut two years, and the Morice to Jim Britton's camp, several years. And the next most favorite one would be the [Keith Stonebraker} and [Doug Vanerka]. Also Bob Weddell, who is a real character. When I lived in Clarkston, Washington, for a year and a half, Bob and I fished the Clearwater a lot.

GC: Did you fish with Gale?

TM: No. Well later on I did. [Anglia House], we fished together, which I enjoyed.

One thing about fishing with Bob and I, and most people won't believe this, but we fished when it was very cold in the Clearwater. As long as the slush ice wasn't flowing, we fished with floating lines. And there was a guide there that fishes the Clearwater a lot [Burk Lyda?], and they used Hot Shots, down deep in depth. We were fishing on the surface with water temperatures as low as 34 and still catching steelhead, right on the surface.

HL: Wonderful.

BK: Great.

We'd love to hear, what was your favorite rod, and what were the characteristics of that rod to use for greased line steelhead fishing?

TM: At that time, I used a Winston Bamboo rod, 8 ½ foot, 7 weight, with a double taper line. I used that for years, and then after I bought Winston, I used a, almost entirely, a 9 ½ foot, 7 weight. The 7 weight for most people is kind of a bastard line. Almost everybody uses an 8 weight or above, but for fishing floating lines, the 7 weight, in my opinion, is ideal.

GC: Was that a graphite?

TM: Graphite, yes.

HL: Ah, okay.

BK: What would you use today?

TM: The same thing.

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BK: The same thing.

TM: Yes. I did fish a Spey rod the last couple years after I got disabled because I couldn't really cast a single-handed rod. But if I had -- you know, if I was healthy and had my choice, I would still fish a single-handed rod. One thing that I think, from my experience, a lot of people miss out with a two-handed rod, is if you follow the line with your rod pointing straight down the line, the fish will hook themselves. And I've never seen anybody with a two-handed rod that fished with the tip down. So what happens is a fish comes up, takes the fly, feel a little resistance and spits it out, when they don't with a single-handed rod pointing straight down the line.

BK: Makes sense.

HL: It does.

BK: Is there anything else about steelhead fishing and your experiences with it that you'd like to share with this audience?

TM: Have patience (laughter).

BK: Yes, right, right. That's good. I have as, we were talking earlier. I have a good friend whose life revolved around fly fishing for steelhead. He said, If you're going to fly fish for steelhead, you'd better love the process (laughter).

TM: Well, yeah. I think to quote Winston Churchill, Never, never, never, ever give up.

BK: Perfect.

TM: But I just discovered, particularly fishing BC, the scenery was so wonderful, every once in a while fish would come up, take the fly, and spoil the day (laughter).

BK: Okay. Tom, that's wonderful. That's great insight on the steelhead. I know that people are going to love that. So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Hugh.

HL: Okay.

HL: Sure. I'm curious if you thought about designing a bamboo rod for steelhead, and why you selected the graphite as your tool of choice for that?

TM: Well, I guess it's easier to use all day long because it's lighter. And the other thing, you can cast a little bit farther, easier with graphite. I've stepped it off a number of times, and with a 9 1/2 foot, 7 weight graphite, without really pushing it, I can cast right at 70-75 feet, very comfortably all day long. And with a bamboo, you can certainly do that, but it's a little bit more tiring.

HL: Yes, it is.

TM: The other thing I notice is, I was -- and you can do this with a floating line, which you can't always, with a sinking line, I was a very efficient caster. To catch steelhead, you need to make a wider cast to cover as much water as you can. So I would do one false cast, and then shoot the line out.

Now in my later years, instead of a double taper line, I used a weight forward, long belly line, which in my opinion is the best combination because you can hang quite a bit of line on the rod tip and very easily make a longer cast.

HL: Thank you. That was actually the next question I was going to ask you, and you anticipated it perfectly. You know, let me shift gears a bit. In reading the Forbes article, I noticed that the author was very happy with the 4 weight rod, the little 4 weight rod that he owned that was your design while you were at Winston. And you gave him an opportunity to cast one of your modern Morgan Rods built here, and he said that it was better in his opinion. I'm crediting him with accuracy in that respect, even though I know that's very subjective. Can you tell us without revealing proprietary secrets what it is that you've done in your rod design, working here, that would cause him to notice, obviously notice the difference?

TM: Our rods now have a little finer tip. The thing that's really important with rods, in my view, is that it's a progressive action, and the action is really generated by what the tip does. So our tips are a little finer, and I think we have a better balance between the tip and the rest of the rod. The one other thing about all our rods is the ferrule. It looks like our ferrule is a tip over ferrule, but it is not.

HL: Okay.

TM: The ferrule is rolled onto the tip, so if the tip and the butt -- where the rod and the tip meet is the same diameter and the same number of wraps, so that's what makes for a really smooth casting rod. And I'll do a little song and dance here, but I've been preaching for many years, almost all the rods today are tip over ferrule design.

HL: Yes.

TM: Where you take a bigger diameter tip and put it over a smaller diameter thick-walled butt, there is absolutely no way in the world that you can get a smoother rod with that as you can with my technique. And now we just have developed four-piece rods, and they use a spigot ferrule.

HL: Okay.

TM: And they're exceptionally smooth and easy to cast.

HL: Do you use, I mean -- are the bamboo rods you're building today following the same principle with the finer tip?

TM: Yes.

HL: Okay. So that seems consistent across the different --

GC: Materials.

HL: -- materials for these rods.

TM: Well, from my experience, the different rods take a different number of wraps and/or a different mandrill diameter in the terms of composite rods to balance it properly. So I would say obviously the number of wraps and/or the mandrill diameter to achieve the action that I want.

HL: Okay. And for readers who are maybe not into the process, when you're referring to wraps, you're referring to the number of wraps of the cloth that's impregnated with resin over the mandrill?

TM: That's right. We never use less than three wraps for the integrity of the rod. I've always designed rods and often describe them as race car designs. They're light as possible but still with integrity. And we've experienced almost no breakage from customers with our current rods.

HL: That's nice, and --

TM: The other thing is, if you charge enough, they take care of them (laughter).

TM: And you don't have a no-fault warranty.

BK: Right.

HL: I'll just observe that there's some other manufacturers who routinely are building rods that are very light and break under heavy use. Have you designed Tom Morgan Rods for saltwater fishing?

TM: No, we have not.

HL: In your new design philosophy, is there anything you learned while fishing for steelhead that you're putting into your trout rods? That was not well phrased, I'm afraid. Did anything you've learned steelhead fishing make its way into your trout rod design?

TM: Probably not. Probably no there. I was a -- I felt that I was a great trout fisherman with dry flies. I didn't do much nymph fishing. So, I design rods for dry fly fishing. And so that was my emphasis.

HL: That's great. You know, I had a couple questions that the staff at the library wanted me to ask. Would you mind if I just -- they had one question about --

TM: Of course. I'm open to whatever you want.

HL: Okay. It's a question about --

TM: No secrets (laughter).

HL: Okay.

TM: That's one thing I've always -- from the first when I bought, was to -- I've always been available to share things that help other people. Go for it.

HL: Thank you. I mean, this is not aimed at rod building, but I do appreciate you saying that.

TM: I've been open about it, and, you know, if you can do it as well or better, why, be my guest.

HL: Okay. Let me ask one question of my own. I have friends who have bought much of the equipment that you've built over the last several years. I have got a Morgan Hand Mill, and it seems to have really revolutionized the way amateur rod making occurs in this country.

TM: It has.

HL: And I have bought some of your tools, and appreciate the fine quality invariably they exhibit. Had you ever had formal engineering training?

TM: I took one semester, one quarter of engineering in college.

HL: Okay.

TM: But I grew up in a motel. We had to repair a lot of things.

HL: I see.

TM: And, well, a couple things come easy for me, and I'm able to kind of be really good at visualization. And now that I can't move, I can still see things in my mind's eye. Like one of these days I'm going to touch a hand mill, where I never have yet, on my hand.

HL: Yes. And your response anticipated another question, so that's very good. There's several questions they asked me to ask. There's only one I think I will, and it's –

TM: Whatever you want.

HL: That's true. It's totally pedestrian, but it's -- you owned Woody's Fly Shop in Ennis.

TM: Yes.

HL: And you bought it from your brother Jerry and renamed it The Elite Tackle Shop, is that correct?

TM: Yes. Because that was the name of my folks' paint and glass store in Los Angeles on Sunset Boulevard.

HL: How about that. Okay. See, that's worthwhile –

GC: I didn't realize that either.

HL: And are there any favorite kind of stories, vignettes that come to mind today from that period of your life?

GC: I have one you should tell.

TM: Which one's that?

GC: About not graduating from college, and also why -- the car that you painted.

TM: Yeah (laughter).

HL: You know, I'm glad that I can be a straight man here.

TM: Well yes, I went to my -- it used to be MSC, Montana State College. Now it's MSU, Montana State University. I started out in engineering, and I discovered right away I didn't like it. So then I took a business course and just all kinds of general things. If you look at my transcript, I was all over the place, but I tried to get a broad education in that. In my senior year, the last quarter, I read, by Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, and I said the hell with college, and I quit. And my folks were so pissed off (laughter). But I've never regretted it. But, I mean, on the other hand, I've never stopped my education. I'm interested in a lot of things. So, I had a '58 Chevy station wagon that I owned then (laughter). The opening sentence in the *Atlas Shrugged* is, "Who is John Galt?" So I put that on the back of the Chevy wagon (laughter).

GC: So what about *Atlas Shrugged* stopped your education, I mean, stopped your graduating?

TM: It was about being a cog in the wheel.

BK: Yes, right.

HL: Yep.

TM: But happily, happily I've moved on. Her philosophy doesn't encompass taking care of people, and there's a lot of our situations now where people need help, and the government, really, in my view, is the only one that can do it.

Let's see. What else did I -- question was there?

GC: About the Elite. Anything else from that tackle shop era? Growing up on the El Western?

TM: Yes, that's really where I learned about quality. My folks were a real stickler for quality. Their motel grounds, the units and everything, I mean, sixty, seventy years later, they're still absolutely wonderful, so that's really where I grabbed the idea of quality. When I bought Winston, the quality was not what I thought it should be, and that's one thing I'm real proud of is I transformed Winston. And then wanted to build even a better rod, that's why we started Tom Morgan Rodsmiths.

HL: Thank you.

Well two questions come to mind. Did you still have the '58 Chevy station wagon in your Elite Tackle years?

TM: No. I bought a Mustang, a red Mustang, the first year they came out. Before that, I had a Volvo.

HL: Okay. What happened to The Elite Tackle facility when you bought Winston?

TM: Oh, I only owned it three years.

HL: Okay.

TM: And a man by the name of Tom Williams bought it.

HL: Do you know what happened to it?

TM: Oh, it's still there.

HL: It's still there, okay. How about that.

TM: But they call it a different name.

HL: And was there a time period between the end of Elite Tackle and when you bought Winston?

TM: Yes. I owned the tackle shop in Ennis, I bought it in 1961, so 1961, 1962 and 1963, and sold it, and then I worked at [Cope and McPhetres Marina] in Santa Clara, California for two winters, and then odd jobs the other time, from, started in '64 until I bought Winston in '73. And in '73, we ran the motel-- my [first] wife [Mona] and I ran the motel, and it's the El Western, but I couldn't get along with my dad. So I was looking for something to do, and a friend of mine who had guided for me, or really with me, Al Wilson, was staying at the motel, and he said Doug had Winston for sale. So when I heard that, I called Doug up that day, and flew down as soon as I could, and that was done. A little sideline to that, there were three other people interested. And my partner and I, [Sid Eliason], paid him \$10,000 more than he was asking, because I wanted it. So we got it, and it just changed my life. I couldn't have done anything I love more.

HL: And you're referring to Doug Merrick?

TM: Yes. Doug Merrick, yes.

HL: And do you know why he wanted to sell at that point?

TM: Oh, he was very old.

HL: Okay.

TM: Yes.

HL: How many employees did he have in that shop?

TM: None.

HL: Oh, I can see why he wanted to sell it. Okay.

TM: Gary, well, he didn't have any money in the shop per se, but Gary Howells who worked for him for a number of years, would do some cutting and gluing of the bamboo together.

HL: Okay. And that was in San Francisco, I gather – his shop was?

TM: Yes.

HL: How much of the equipment in that shop did you move back to your new facility here?

TM: Virtually everything. One thing that we did though was the metal lathe and the wood lathe were run off of overhead belts system.

HL: Oh my goodness.

TM: And I -- well, when I was in California, I bought a used South Bend lathe, a turret late, which I made a lot of the parts on, and it was much better and compact. And then the wood lathe I bought, a new wood lathe, so that we didn't have to run that belt system.

HL: Yes, it sounds as though those had been there for quite a while in that shop.

TM: Yes, actually, well as I have said other places, when I went down there I had stars in my eyes, and unfortunately it wasn't all that I thought it was supposed to be. So by the time we moved to Montana, we weren't doing many things with the same equipment. We rebuilt the bamboo cutting machine. I used a different glue machine that I made.

HL: How about that. It sounds as though some of that equipment must have been in the San Francisco shop from the days of Lew Stoner.

TM: It was. I'm sure from when they started Winston in 1929.

HL: That's fascinating.

TM: And Lew was a real inventor, kind of like I've been. I think we would have gotten along well.

HL: Yes. Well those were the questions that I had that I thought would be useful. Bill, is there anything else?

BK: No, that's terrific. I think that's everything we were hoping for, plus more.

GC: Right.

HL: Yes.

TM: Well, that was too easy.

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GC: Yes, he's got a lot of stories.

TM: Why quit now?

HL: Okay (laughter).

Well then, you know you said stories, I had a brief flashback to our interview with Peter McVey, where the stories went on, literally, for four hours, and that's not supposing that you're going to want to take it to the same lengths. Is there something that represents a story that's unique to Tom Morgan that you'd like to share now? Maybe that hasn't been publically described before, that would be something that would help people know who you are and how you've got to where you got in this amazing journey of yours. That's too open ended, isn't it?

GC: Well it's a good question, but it's –

TM: Yes.

HL: But maybe I could focus it –

TM: There's so many things that got me to where I am.

HL: Well let me focus down onto something that is just something that I am interested in, and that you both participate in. Did somebody ask you to build a hand mill, or did this come to you one day in your mind's eye, as you've described it?

TM: Before I bought Winston, I had actually thought about some ways that I could make bamboo strips by hand. And I thought about taking an old lathe where I had the ways that were accurate and making some kind of hand plane that would cut it in.

GC: Let me interrupt for a second. We call these "Morganisms" (laughter). Tom has a lot of Morganisms, some work and some don't, but it's always moving.

TM: Yes. The first step I did on the hand mill was I was going to make an adjustable bed, and I actually had bought the steel to make a bed. I just never got around to it. One day Per Brandin and I were having breakfast together at Twin Bridges. Per was just getting into rod making, and he was describing planing forms, and I said, Boy that sure sounds like the hardest way there is to make a rod. And so I kind of reflected back on what I'd thought about it. And the next morning we were having breakfast together and I drew out my ideas on a napkin, and Per kind of shook his head in agreement. Later he told me he thought, that was a dumb idea. That will never work. So then, but I have to say, Per was really helpful when I had developed it because I couldn't move with the MS, and so Per came up here three times and working on the design –

GC: And Bob Clay too.

TM: Well first –

GC: First you worked with Bob Clay.

TM: -- it was Per, and then I did work with Bob Clay, and we made the –

GC: You made the bed at the old house.

TM: Yes. But this was in Twin Bridges.

GC: Oh.

TM: Before that, Per said it would never –

GC: Right. But he worked with us here, didn't he?

TM: But then, he worked in this shop, later.

GC: Yes, yes.

TM: And Per was extremely helpful. He made three different trips here.

GC: He helped to refine that –

TM: And also, the first two, he loved saying, that won't work. And I persevered, and lo and behold it worked fine, and –

GC: Yes. I think one of Tom's strengths is perseverance.

HL: Yes.

GC: I mean, he just doesn't give up.

BK: That's why he caught steelhead.

GC: Yes, yes. It's amazing. It's why he's still going.

TM: I never think about giving up.

GC: No, he doesn't.

BK: Tom, we know about the advantages of the Morgan Hand Mill, relative to hand planing in terms of reproducibility and all that, but I was curious, how would you characterize the capabilities and what's possible with the Morgan Hand Mill versus the mill design, for example, that Winston uses?

TM: Well, actually what they do is really similar. The only thing about the hand mill that really is better than a milling machine is its versatility. With the hand mill, I've had different people request different cutter heads to make a variety of rods. And you couldn't do this on a milling machine, you'd have to get a whole set of cutters ground. Where with the hand mill now, people can make a 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8-strip rod using the hand mill, just by changing the cutter heads, which are quite easy to do. So that's a good benefit. Of course, using some power machine in some respects is easier and definitely faster, but you absolutely do not get better cuts. The hand mill will give you absolutely perfect cuts.

GC: I also think you lose more strips.

TM: You do with the power machine.

GC: Can you hollow through it on a power machine?

TM: Yes, we did all the time.

HL: That was Lew Stoner's invention, I guess.

TM: Yes, it was.

HL: Used in conjunction with the power beveller.

TM: Yes. But it's amazing how many people buy power bevellers, even though they're not making many rods. There's a real –

HL: Yes.

TM: -- cachet about using power –

GC: -- Tools.

TM: Yes.

GC: A lot of them own both, too. They own a power tool to do their rough cutting –

TM: Yes.

GC: -- and then a Morgan Hand Tool to finish.

HL: Yes, I built a rough cutter, simply because I'm older and I'm starting to get arthritis in the thumb, and working through the entire process the way Garrison described it in his book can leave you unable to do anything for a while –

GC: Disabled -- (Laughter)

TM: And that's one good thing about the hand mill that I stress, is that it used big muscles. You know, it uses the - your wrist isn't as important and that technique, so I think it's less tiring.

HL: That's great.

Do you see any further modifications to the hand mill that would make it more useful, or do you think it's achieved its zenith at the present time?

TM: I really can't think of anything I haven't done to it. I use it to make small butt rods. You can make, like I said, many different varieties of strips. You could hollow through by using the Magic Star Cutter.

HL: Yes.

TM: For hollowing with a ridge down the center. I don't know what else you could do. Well, or much to Gerri's chagrin I would be doing it (laughter).

HL: That's interesting. I think we will talk with Gerri about that in a minute. How about that?

GC: Yes.

HL: Anything else? Maybe even just something humorous?

TM: Well, god, I'm just getting warmed up. What's the matter here? (Laughter)

HL: Okay, one more, just again –

TM: Whatever you want.

HL: Sort of in the more practical vein but would bring forth Morganisms that have -- Is there a Morganism that is in your head that you have not built, a process that you have dreamed of that you have yet to put into use in your shop?

TM: Well there's one thing that I want to build, and Gerri isn't keen about me doing it.

HL: Well, I don't want to precipitate any marital discord here, but --

TM: No, she's aware of it. Will you go and grab the --

GC: Honer?

TM: -- the honer, yes.

GC: Well, you also don't want to build this, and this isn't my issue so much. My issue is I don't need any more work. So if he can build something with someone else to help him, I'm all for that. I don't want him to stop his creative bent. I just can't take on any more.

TM: Yes.

GC: And so if it involves me, it's like, mmm, mmm, mmm.

TM: Gerri's overwhelmed, and she's been a good sport.

HL: So she's going to run and get something?

TM: She is.

HL: Is that what is happening?

TM: Yes. At Winston, I made all the ferrules using durons in the turret lathe.

HL: And then, the durons is aluminum bronze?

TM: Yes.

HL: Is that what it is?

TM: Yes.

GC: The thing about this tool, is it's not that complicated but it's hard to explain to people how to use it, and that would take a lot of Tom's energy.

TM: Yes, it would.

GC: And that's the problem, if we could just sell this with directions, but you know we'll get a million emails about, well this didn't work and that didn't work. And so if you have people who really understand tools, I guess, or, you know, can imagine it. But a lot of times we'll get someone who has not used it.

TM: Now at Winston, after I made the ferrules, I honed them with an inside hone and an outside hone, which they make, so I put a dial indicator. The outside hone from [Sutherland]. And the problem with it is when you adjust it,

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the adjustment is too coarse. You can't adjust it -- I mean, ferrule fits, you're talking about millionths of an inch. And with a [center] horn, you can't adjust it with that finesse. Hold this up where I can see it.

GC: Yes.

TM: Okay. So what I did with this one, I mounted the shoe, it's called, which is the metal part and the stone. Okay, and that is halfway between the micrometer barrel and the pivot point. Okay? So the micrometer barrel is one that reads in ten-thousandths of an inch, so that's halfway in between where the stones are. So when you adjust out in ten-thousandths, on the whole you're adjusting it fifty-millionths. So you can get it really accurate.

BK: Cool.

HL: So it's a Starrett micrometer --

TM: Barrel, yea.

HL: -- seated into this device.

TM: So that was my creation.

HL: I like it.

TM: Oh yeah, and it would be handy for people fitting ferrules.

HL: Is there a photograph of this anywhere?

TM: It's on the webpage.

HL: I see. Okay, that's wonderful.

TM: And we've had quite a few inquiries of people wanting them, but -- and Gerri's right about that, it would take, quite a bit of time to write, and then to have people asking questions.

GC: And Tom's already overwhelmed as well. You know, with lots of emails and just lots to do, and getting older.

HL: Clever idea.

TM: Thanks.

GC: Yes. That's a Morganism.

BK: It's a clever idea. Like most clever ideas, it's elegantly simple.

GC: Right.

TM: Yes.

GC: Exactly.

TM: Actually, I would rather do other things here, to make the rod making faster, consistent.

GC: Efficient.

TM: Yes.

BK: Tom, I never thought of this question before, but your talking makes me wonder, has all of your creativity and ingenuity and ability to envision solutions been focused on fly rods, or have there been other areas that you've been interested in developing?

TM: Sex.

GC: Sex (laughter).

HL: Do you hold any patents --

GC: Oh, but he'd like some (laughter).

BK: So that's it, fly rods and sex.

GC: And writing. He's still -- and writing.

BK: And writing.

GC: Yes, writing.

HL: Bill, I'm really glad you asked that question (laughter). Oh my goodness.

TM: You liked that than -- (Laughter)

GC: You and Peter McVey.

BK: Yes, Peter McVey, exactly. That's great.

HL: Well maybe we should put Gerri in the hot seat --

BK: And then let Tom rest for a minute, and then we can go back to him.

GC: Yes, if it falls that way, yes.

BK: I think I indicated to you, we're so pleased to have that book, and to have it in the library where a lot of people have access to it. And we're really glad to see that the library made it the *Selection of the Month*, so it gets a lot of publicity.

HL: And Bill, for the readers and listeners, what book is this?

BK: Oh yes, yes, thank you. It's *Tom Morgan's: Favorite Flies, Favorite Waters*.

TM: And I wrote the story, and Gerri created the book.

BK: Yes. And for the listeners, it's a beautiful book, custom book, top quality paper printing. It's accompanied by physical examples of the twelve favorite flies, tied by some of the best fly tiers in the world. The flies are exquisite.

GC: Aren't they exquisite? They're really beautiful.

BK: Oh my goodness. I've burnt all of my flies, after looking at that (laughter).

GC: Rene Harrop -- unbelievable.

BK: Well, and [Matthew] Doak's, Bomber.

GC: And Doak's Bomber, yes.

BK: Oh, yes, I've never seen a bomber that exquisite.

GC: Yes.

BK: So much work had to go into that. There was the book, there was the box, there were the flies, there was the medallion. Stories that stand out, maybe different difficulties he had to overcome, warm stories about people and their desire to participate. Anything like that that you could share that would put more meaning behind the book?

GC: I think I'm -- well, I do books, so I was -- we talked about doing a book together, and I thought, well that would be a really -- I was at a gallery at the time working and showing books, so I was going to have an opening for me and another artist. It was a consignment -- no, not a consignment gallery. It's a local gallery that juries artists, and I was really pleased to be in there as a book artist. And so I had done a book by -- with Sylvester Nemes's flies. I don't know if you saw that one. I have a copy of it I can show you. And so I thought, well maybe Tom and I ought to do a book. And at that time, we -- and I think we charged -- Hazel and I and Syl decided on \$500 for that fly book, which was expensive, because it wasn't in a beautiful box, but it was cool. It was a really cool book. And so I thought, well I will, let's do a book. We're building, you know, a lot of rods, in addition to this, but it's something that I'm really passionate about, and it was a way for me to get a lot of extra paper and book cloth that I could have in stock. So I said, Okay, well I'll design the book and you start -- Tom started on the stories. And then we figured, well what kind of book do we want to do? And we figured it would be fun, because in Syl's books there's flies, tied in, so I thought, well we ought to have your favorite flies. I'm not exactly sure how that evolved, but that's what ended up after lots of discussion. And I think it took us two years, from the inception of let's do one. Then I laid out, I designed kind of what I thought it should look like. And I love things that open, and I love that binding. It's a pretty difficult binding to do to get all of those folds exactly right. And then you (referring to Tom) started writing the stories, and then I said, Well you're limited to this many words because --

TM: 900 words.

GC: And Tom's pretty verbose when he writes, so he had to really hone those down. And at the time, we had an English professor who was a really good friend of ours, who has since died. I'm trying to think of --

TM: Arthur Coffin.

GC: Arthur Coffin did the editing for Tom, so that helped too, I think. And I sort of stayed out of the writing and just did the design work on the book.

TM: But Gerri is extremely creative.

GC: As well as Tom is too, different. We have different ways of [being creative]. So the only really difficult thing -- well I knew, okay, so I designed the box because I knew that the book had to lift out easily. You didn't want to go digging for it, and that you still had to protect the flies. So that's how that design got done on the box. And then we found a box builder, interviewed a few people and a guy from Bozeman, who wasn't a -- who was kind of a cabinetmaker but not a real finished carpenter, so it stretched him too, which was really good. I showed him what I wanted, and he came up with some prototypes. And then we started getting the, decided on the flies and got the flies from all the, you know, started getting those in. And then, we thought, well you know, we really ought to have a history of the flies, so we asked Jim Adams, who's brilliant and has access to all of that information. So he just xeroxed places from books, and then I read it, wrote it, Tom edited that, and that's how we got the history of the

flies as well. So then, I ordered book cloth, and we got a great place to order the Italian book cloth and Italian paper from.

TM: I think they would be interested to see some of your other books.

GC: Well, I'll show you Syl's book because that's kind of a fun book.

BK: Yes, good.

GC: Let me grab that. (Gerri leaves the room)

TM: Well, and the bluebird book.

GC: Oh, the bluebird book is cute too.

TM: She's probably more creative than I am, truth be known. She's brilliant.

HL: I'll just say that we noticed in preparing for this that each of you has a creativity that exists on a higher plane than mere mortals typically possess, and that –

TM: Oh, thank you.

HL: -- you appear to complement one another rather well.

TM: We do. Yes, and we don't spark very often.

BK: Which is amazing for a husband and wife to work together, that's –

TM: Well, and be together 24/7.

BK: Yes.

HL: Yes. (Gerri returns to the room)

GC: I have a letterpress too, which is really exciting. I haven't really spent a lot of time on the letterpress, but. So this is what Syl's book looks like. So there's a little fish that you -- I can hold it or you can also hold it. And so these are just -- what happened was Syl, as he was by this time –

HL: Oh, wow.

GC: So this is just a little information about Syl in the book, and then the flies are –

BK: Oh, oh, oh.

GC: And then there's a recipe on what he did, because by this time Syl's dementia had –

BK: Oh, look at that.

GC: -- so these are tied by him -- [his dementia] had taken over pretty much, and he couldn't remember the flies. So what Hazel and I did is we went in his fly boxes and found what we could find of ten of a kind, because I wanted to build ten -- one book is too much work, and five books isn't almost worth it, but ten books is okay.

BK: Okay.

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GC: So we did ten, so those are the -- and this is a little bit of plastic behind that, so you can see both sides that way. So that was what this book looked like.

BK: Gorgeous.

HL: Are there photographs of this book anywhere?

GC: I think there are on our website.

BK: Yes, there are.

HL: Okay.

GC: Yes, yes. So I only built ten and we sold them right away. Hazel and I and Syl split the money, so that was a really nice thing for them, they needed a little bit. And it paid for my working on them and stuff, so that was good.

BK: Now, while we're thinking about those flies there, you have a rather unique method of mounting the flies in *Tom's Favorite* book.

GC: Right, we had an argument about that. I guess, well it really wasn't an argument.

TM: Well, I'm just going to say, a big argument.

GC: Discussion. Kind of strong discussion, because I didn't think the magnets were very beautiful. They didn't have the aesthetic appeal as a piece of glass, or the plastic, you know, how they sometimes mount flies.

BK: Yes.

GC: But actually the fact that people can pick them up and use them, I could see that it was also good.

TM: -- look at them.

GC: Yes, I mean look at them not use them.

TM: And we found pewter-colored magnets --

GC: Yes.

TM: -- that look good.

GC: We thought black would be nicer, but we couldn't find black. And then what we did is, the guy who built the box also builds -- he built about a 4 x 2 1/2 inch block that he drilled, or we drilled, he drilled, and then we just put in magnets underneath that with the paper over it, and then the magnet sits. So it was a good solution to how to mount them, really, and much faster than it would be to hand mount each one, oh man. And then we hired [Inga?], who still works for us. She's now doing all of the four-piece barreling and other things, to help me assemble the book. So she did the sewing, I did all the folding at first, and then I taught her how to fold that. Well this is a similar binding, but to fold this, and we got a lot better actually than even this one, so. Yes, we figured that out. And we had great paper. That's the real trick to doing that.

And this is a bluebird book that I did. We had a bluebird that landed in our back -- well he started -- This is just out in my garden, and this was a decorative box, so this is a story about this bluebird.

BK: Oh, nice.

GC: And these are the two culprits, of course. And we watched him build his nest, I mean, right out our bathroom window, a mountain bluebird, and then of course it's a very sad story. So, she's – Well, that was really a fun little book.

HL: Cool. You're fond of birds, generally?

GC: Yes, we do a lot of birding, and we feed a lot of birds all winter here.

TM: Yes, I've kept track of the birds pretty much that we've seen, either landing on the property or flew by, and it's a little over fifty species.

HL: Any raptors, any hawks?

GC: We'll see them fly over. And we do have a hawk, and we have a little falcon that hunts here at our bird feeders all winter long.

TM: We have a sharp-shinned.

GC: We call him the gangster.

TM: And we see -- well we have rough-legs come in the winter.

HL: Of course, yes.

GC: Red-tails.

TM: We have a few red-tailed families that nest nearby.

HL: And the rough-legs are coming out of Canada –

TM: Yes, they do, yes.

GC: What's the one that flies really low, the –

HL: The harrier.

GC: -- the harrier.

TM: Yes, harrier.

GC: He's here -- he isn't here this summer, but he's been here every summer.

TM: Yes.

GC: We used to have a lot of owls, till too many people moved in the subdivision, and then we don't have the owls. You hear them, now and then.

The other thing I do, and I have been doing for about a year and a half, it's called a noticing journal.

TM: Yes, this is really great.

GC: Each week I put together -- well I start each week. So this was last week. So I write down what I've noticed, I do a sketch, and then I write it. This is what I'm looking at each week, so my weekly highlights, what's happened, what lit me up that week, how I want to live, what I'm doing, I'd like to do that I'm not doing, problems that I created, what I gave, what I was given, this sucks, less, and then how I'm feeling each week.

BK: The same category each week --

GC: Yes, I have this on the same category, just this page, and everything else is different. And this is a similar pattern. I changed it, this was the week before. I usually write this way. I like her. You know, I'm always looking at art, or this is what I found this week at a thrift store. This was a dead bunny in my garden. This was just a collage. Let's see, this is a sketch. I'm trying to be a sketch artist. I'm learning how to sketch. That's my main reason, so.

BK: So what do you do with these, Gerri?

GC: I haven't done anything with them yet. I'm not sure if I'm going to bind them all or if I'm just going to -- Yes, that was a nighthawk.

HL: Yes.

GC: Yes, I think it was the last time I saw the nighthawk that was here. This is just -- So each morning I get up at 6 o'clock, and this is what I do from 6:00 to 9:00 AM. This is my time, and it really feeds me, and I will get up no matter what, just because I really --

TM: And she's a pen slut.

GC: And I'm a pen -- and paper, of course, but pen for sure. So this is leftover book paper.

HL: Oh, I see.

TM: And she just found the most wonderful pen.

GC: I did find a really great pen.

BK: Did you?

HL: This is a fountain pen.

GC: Fountain pen, yes.

HL: A very fine --

GC: A very fine point, yeah. And ECO, it's made -- I have a lot of them, but this is my favorite, so I started actually writing with that pen this, oh let's see, where's the one, the most recent one? Anyway, so I have like a hundred -- well I have a year and a half, so about 80 right now, of these. And I love them, and they're all a little different, and depending on what my moods are, you know, what I want to do here or. It's not very much planned out, but it's -- but I've made -- what I've done, is at the beginning of the year, I made all of these folded, and I put all of these dates, so then I know like I'm on week 35, 34, 33... This is last week's, 36.

BK: Yes.

GC: And then I keep a little moleskin journal that I write in every day. So this is really -- my paper is really my --

BK: Is it –

TM: Yes.

GC: Yes, it's really my passion, and doing the letterpress would be really my passion.

HL: So what did this, the framework there, that you have on that first page there, is that your creation?

GC: Yeah.

HL: -- or is that –

GC: Yes, that's mine.

HL: So this is not some kind of a –

GC: No. This is something that I just decided I really needed to do. And I taught one class on it, and I thought I might, when we're done here, if that ever happens, I thought maybe a course online –

BK: Yes.

GC: -- would be a really fun thing to do.

BK: Yes, I would think that you should share that concept with other people.

GC: Yes.

BK: That idea of kind of forcing yourself to fill out that framework, because those are cool titles, right?

GC: Yes.

BK: I mean, they make you –

GC: Yeah, they make you say, Okay, so what was I just pissed off about today? Or what were the highlights, you know?

BK: Exactly.

GC: Because it's so easy, by the end of the week, I don't remember.

HL: Yes, right.

TM -- when I bought Winston, Al Talbot did quite a bit of work for us, worked for Crown Zellerbach. And he -- well he made the milling machine, made a milling machine for himself, and he made Gary Howells' milling machine. And then after I bought Winston, he made the adjusting mechanism and the -- I laid out the bamboo patterns, and Al cut them out of my [cardboard?] for us. And then after I got to Montana, I used his adjusting mechanism and bought a Blanchard ground plate, and I mounted that onto it and then put a ball bearing spindle on it. Before that, Lew Stoner had made an oil bearing milling machine. So I did the ball bearing one. But Al worked for Crown Zellerbach.

GC: Oh, he did?

TM: And he made, at Winston, he made some guides for us to form the hoods, and we became great friends.

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BK: Oh, good.

TM: And then he, after he moved up here, he came up two or three times, and Glenn and I would take him fishing. Yes.

BK: I would have never guessed there was a connection between Crown Zellerbach and Tom Morgan –

TM: Yes.

BK: Who would have guessed?

GC: Who would have guessed? Yes.

BK: Gerri, we had -- we talked about the books, and come back to the books for a minute.

GC: Yes.

BK: So the bluebird book and a beautiful book of –

GC: Syl's, Soft hackles.

BK: -- soft hackles. And of course the *Tom's Favorites*. What's next?

GC: Well, I want to start really using the letterpress. I have a lot of wonderful type, so I will do some books with that. And I'm working on a new pattern. I found out how to -- I've always loved a carousel book, which has a floor and it opens, and I just have a prototype of it, but it's very cool. So designing new books, but mostly -- my passion, I would say, in addition to book design and book building, would be watercolor sketching. So that's what I love to do. I need to develop my skills more.

BK: And to do that in the context of a book.

GC: Or no, just like in that journal, or I have just journals that I just do that in, you know, good watercolor journals.

TM: Gerri's kept a journal, how many years?

GC: Oh, I've always, well, I've journaled like since college, but I haven't been steady. But this is the one I'm working -- I've had this one for now five years, I think, just this, this a little moleskin that I write in every day.

BK: Incredible writing.

GC: Well, it's this pen, 0.25, and it's actually not this one. It is a Pilot, but, I like this style of pen, but I take the -- I found that this, it's also a Pilot but it's not the micro, I think, but it's a 0.25, which is very tiny, but it holds up better. And then this is my new -- You can try this. Taiwan, ECO fountain pen. But I don't use that in here, but it would probably -- it wouldn't bleed through probably, but. So I think I've got seven years of this, or something like that.

TM: I have to tell you, rod making is not her passion.

GC: No. Did you want to try my pen?

BK: Do you anticipate any further work in fly fishing or rod making in your book work?

GC: You know, we thought about maybe doing another book together, so, you know, that's a possibility. And we also thought about maybe writing a book about rod building.

BK: Yes, yes.

GC: You know how to get to the last 2 percent, or something like that.

BK: Yes, yes.

GC: Yes, we have thought about that.

TM: And I –

GC: And it just pulls off, yes (referring to the pen cover).

TM: When I was writing –

GC: \$31 bucks.

TM: I was writing of fishing stories, and I hope to publish a book. I would be happy to share one or two of the stories with you if you would like.

BK: Love it.

GC: You mean, send it, email it?

TM: Yes, I could –

BK: We'd love it. That would be wonderful. We'd get it into the library collection.

GC: Yes, that'd be great.

TM: And so, I really enjoy doing that, and I'd like to write a book. I've thought about one on Winston, but probably not. But I would like to do one on Tom Morgan Rodsmith.

HL: Yes.

BK: That's a terrific idea because you know, between the Carmichael book and your work, the whole -- I don't need to tell you -- the whole world of bamboo rod making is just showing a huge resurgence. I mean, look at all the people that are involved and interested and spending a great amount of their time and energy on that. And the hand mill was a great start, and we have things like your emails, where you're answering people's questions. That's a great body of knowledge that will be helpful to people in the future. But to think about sitting down and writing, what is that last increment of quality? How do we get there?

GC: How do you get there? Yes.

BK: That, you know, most people don't have the opportunity, the time, or the creativity to develop that on themselves. To share that with the bamboo rod making world would be a big deal, I think.

TM: Yes, and so Peter may have told you about the bamboo rod gathering that used to be in his place.

HL: Oh yes.

GC: Yes, well, Hugh started it. He was part of that, remember?

HL: I did not make the first one.

GC: Oh, okay.

HL: But I have good friends, older fellas, who were my age at that point (laughter), who attended and said, Oh, you have to go. And I knew Peter from even before.

GC: From those other ones, yes.

HL: And from sportsman shows down in Seattle that he attended. And I'll just say that it was magic to be at Corbett and with people I roomed with, Per Brandin once. And it's truly amazing how Garrison spawned the first real interest in this, that was widely shared, and then you come along and raise the bar, kind of immeasurably. And the nice thing from my perspective in this, one of the great benefits that you provided to the rod making community is that you haven't treated all this as some proprietary secret, the way, you know, the trade rod makers did during their period of –

TM: I [prefaced that?] because I wanted to say that they give out a Tom Morgan award, and I was responsible this time for Hoagy Carmichael getting it.

HL: Yes.

TM: Because that book really started the amateur rod making, in my view. There were other books before, but that's the one that really got people started in it, and I felt that he really needed to be acknowledged for that.

GC: I think for me the Corbett Lake, just the generous nature of those gatherings and sharing is really amazing. Like you said, there's not many organizations that give out their information freely, explain it, give you paperwork on it, and...

TM: Well, it's really interesting too, you know, there's a lot of people in the States doing it and in Europe.

GC: They're doing it now too.

TM: The one country where they don't share anything is England. They don't – So there's no ...

GC: Innovation probably, then.

TM: There are no gatherings, there's no sharing. It's amazing. And we've sold over four hundred hand mills.

BK: Wow.

TM: And I know that's really revolutionized rod making.

GC: And not many into England, which is -- We're doing a lot to South Africa now, and New Zealand, and Australia, and Scandinavia...

TM: One in Chile, [a lot] in Canada. Most of in the United States, of course.

GC: Yes.

BK: How about Japan?

TM: Yes, some in Japan.

GC: Early, not lately. We haven't sold any lately in Japan.

TM: One in Tasmania.

GC: Yes.

HL: Okay. That's fascinating.

BK: Gerri, another question. We've been enjoying your creativity here in your books and your art and your journals, and we know you've been spending an awful lot of your time building rods for the last years. We're interested -- are there things that your creativity that's led you to believe about rod making, in terms of how the process might be improved or changed or done differently?

GC: Well, I think, I actually think the rod building has informed my book making, not the other way around. I think that attention to detail, the repetition, and because what I learned is, because I think was -- I definitely was building rods ten years, maybe five years, before I started building, creating books.

BK: Oh.

GC: So I think the attention to detail, and what I learned in building books, or creating books, is that I never did one or two, because you never get the quality. You only really get the quality by building ten. You figure out all of the - - So I think in this book, we have ten prototypes. It's like, now how do we do this corner? What's going to make this the easiest? Let's work this out, which is what we've actually done in building rods, I think. We have consistent strategies that it has to be done this way because this is the way it's going to be the most successful and you won't have to fix it down the road. So that's really, I think, and probably true with the hand mill as well, is you can't, you aren't going to get that quality by building two rods or ten rods. You're going to get it by building -- You know, you've got to figure out all of those -- So I think that. I listen to a lot of books on tape when I build them, especially wrapping and coating. Those are the only two places I can actually really do it, where I can focus. You stop when it's not right, take it out, re-do it. That's the big lesson.

TM: Well, and we view quality -- quality is real easy. It's either right or it's not.

GC: Yes.

HL: Yes.

GC: And that's hard to do.

TM: Well, like I said, and Gerri acknowledges every piece too, is ... Oh, I lost my train of thought on that.

GC: Oh, it's hard to teach -- it's hard to know what you're looking at?

TM: The hardest thing I've always had is teaching people to see what --

GC: What you want them to see.

TM: -- to see what they're looking at. So that they recognize quality and the right way to do it.

GC: The way we want it done, anyway.

TM: Yes.

GC: Yes. Or the way I want it done. So, repeatability is, you know, so setting up your system so that's it's repeatable.

BK: That makes sense.

GC: Yes, it makes it much easier. And then there's no gray area. It's got to look like this. Anything else?

HL: You know, I think you've, actually you've provided us more than we anticipated and –

GC: Oh, great.

HL: -- and yet, again, I'm not surprised that you provided us more than we anticipated, because how else would this have evolved?

TM: Would you like to see around the shop?

BK: Yes, sure.

GC: Yes, yes.

HL: We'd love to see around the shop.

TM: That's great.