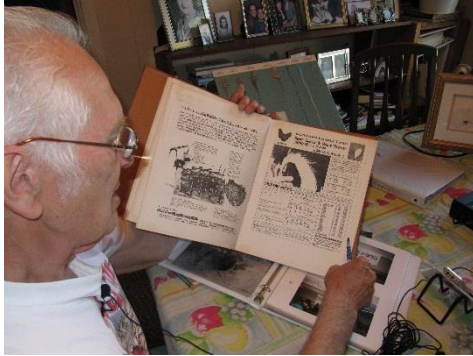




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TB: Today is Saturday, August 20, 2011. My name is Tamara Belts, and I'm down in Warrenton, Oregon with Henry Hoffman. He is a well-known cultivator of chickens for hackle, a fly fisherman, and a designer of some special and unique flies. We're going to talk about that and he did sign the Informed Consent Agreement.

So, how did you get started fly fishing?

HH: Well, my neighbor and high school friend one day says, "Oh, we live close to the ocean. (Actually we lived near Bodega Bay, where the movie *The Birds* was filmed), and so we should go fishing there." I said, "Well, we don't have any equipment." So my dad rigged up on a piece of one by four board a couple of throw-lines with a weight on the end and a couple of hooks, and we went and bought some bait and started catching a few fish. We bought some fishing gear and got involved in lake fishing, and spinning gear when that came out, shortly after that. And I saw articles like Ted Trueblood in *Field & Stream* magazine showing fishing different places with flies and seeing the fly of the month in the magazines, and so I decided I'd like to tie some flies. Never had seen anybody actually do it before. I'd seen some people on the Russian River fly fish for shad and steelhead and at times do pretty well doing that, so I found where they had broken off some flies on back casts on a steep bank and took them apart and saw how the material was tied together.

My dad raised chickens—they weren't for fly tying or anything like that. They were just normal laying chickens and sold the eggs. So I used some of his feathers, but his feathers weren't very good because his chickens were raised for fast feathering for the meat industry, and chickens with fast growing feathers usually [have] shorter feathers with quills that are too thick at one end and too thin at the other so they kind of twist at one end and break off at the other end when you're tying. So I got some of the neighbors' banties, and I tied the first flies like Lee Wulff used to demonstrate, holding the hook in your hands, using no tools, because I didn't know what any tools were.

When I got out of high school, I didn't yet have a car, so I used to hitchhike to go fishing, and one of the people I got a ride with was a fly fisherman. I showed him flies I'd tied, and he says, "Oh, you need a Herter's catalog," and he says, "I'll bring you one next time I give you a ride and you'll have it." And so then I found out that there was a vise to hold the hooks and bobbins to hold the thread, and my fly tying got better. Then I started selling flies locally to some of the stores. Grant King, who was well known in the area, had a fly shop in the back of his newsstand, and he gave me some tips on tying the flies.

I still wanted to get better flies, and imported hackle was so poor from India, China and the Philippines. I saw an article in *Field & Stream* magazine, which I still have the article here, July of 1955, Al McClane wrote about Harry and Elsie Darbee raising some of their own chickens to get feathers for their commercial tying. In the same magazine was an ad that's been in the magazines for the 50 or 60 years that I know of, advertising Murray

McMurray. I happen to be wearing one of their T-shirts that I got in a rummage sale locally that comes from their company, which is in Webster City, Iowa. So anyway, I bought baby chicks.

The minimum amount you could buy was 25 of each one, so I'd buy 25 of each of them for about seven or eight breeds to get each of the different colors I needed, and raised those. But I found feeding those big 7-10 pound roosters cost me more in feed than what Herter's AAA-rated neck was, which was \$3.90 at that time. I didn't get very many trout flies from these necks, although I got a lot of shad and steelhead hackle out of those necks.

Then after I came back from the army, from between 1957 and 1959, and moved to Oregon, I started commercial tying up here. I had a couple friends that I worked with help me tie. I'd take a 15% commission on the flies that I sold for them, and I would supply the material and show them how to tie patterns they didn't know how to tie. It was really tough tying flies then because at that particular time Japan started exporting to the United States flies that retailed, not wholesale, for nine cents a fly in some of the stores. And the best money I could get for the flies we tied was \$1.15 a dozen for trout flies, \$1.35 a dozen for weighted steelhead flies.

To speed up things, myself and the other guys, we developed techniques where we used the, what I call, a third-hand tool in the vise. The material was held close to the vise, and you got an extra hand to manipulate the material, and by putting a magnet just under the jaw of the vise, you just have to move the hooks about three inches from where you start. And little tricks like that to speed things up. About the best we could do was make about \$1.80 an hour for our time tying the flies, plus we had to supply the materials. Poulson had 19 other tyers employed, and they were housewives, women living at home, and he supplied the material and paid them 75¢ a dozen, so I'm not sure who came out the best, them for 75¢ or us supplying the hooks and materials for \$1.15.

Pretty soon we ran out of the hackle I'd raised in California, and I went to a fair at the Portland International Livestock Exhibition. That year I went up there to see a political candidate, and he didn't show up, the vice presidential candidate showed up instead. Didn't find that very interesting, so I started looking through the fairgrounds, wandered away from the speeches and stuff, and saw these Barred Rock Bantams, and I thought, Oh, they're only a fourth as big as the birds I raised in California, and they have smaller hackle. The only thing is they were almost as webby as hen feathers were. And so I went back the next year, and there was one rooster that had a little bit of gloss to the feathers. They were only about 60% web-free on each feather, which is better than what I'd been seeing. So for \$5.00, I bought that and the hen to go with it, and a Blue Dun rooster for another \$3.

I didn't own any land at the time, but my parents owned a 95-acre ranch not too far from where I'm living now, so we used to go to the neighbor, and every time they had a setting hen, we'd take the eggs that were laid from the chickens I bought and put them under one of these setting hens and hatch the eggs, and then give the guy back his hen when it got through setting, and hatching the eggs. That first year, got about 26 roosters and approximately that many hens from those two chickens.

The next year, I realized all the off-spring were brothers and sisters, so I called up Murray McMurray to see if I could get Bantam baby chicks sent out to me, but to survive in the cargo part of an airplane, the chicks have to be big enough to keep each other warm. In fact, one time in California in 1956, I had 25 Barred Rock baby chicks sent out to me, and they all arrived dead. They guaranteed live delivery, so they sent me another 25, and they threw in 50 White Leghorn Cockerel chicks free, just to keep the others warm so they would survive. So I went ahead and raised those 50 white ones, and I had all kinds of white hackle to dye for steelhead colors and to use for shad flies from that.

TB: But what was the criteria then for selecting the appropriate birds? How did—you just took what you got?

HH: Yes, in those days, you just took whatever they sent you, and then when I started the second time here in Oregon, after I'd served my time in the army, I tried to get Bantam Barred Rock chicks, and they said, "Well, they're too small to keep warm on an airplane." At that time they had Railway Express out as far as Astoria, and that's only 10 miles from where I lived. So I had them send me, for \$7.50 each, two adult roosters and four hens

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and crossed those with the ones I had. One rooster's offspring were terrible, so I had to eliminate those from that rooster. Every breeder used got a numbered leg-band. And I saved feather samples from all the Barred Rock breeders used and for most of the other colored Breeder birds I got started nine years later on in 1974. So the story going around in some written articles and on the Internet is that I searched far and wide to find really good birds and what I ended up with was already good, and so I had a head start, well, that's completely incorrect. That's kind of revisionist history because I bought these birds sight unseen.

Out of that first two, one worked okay crossing with what I had, and then I bought four more. One of those four twisted from one end to the other. Another one was too small and hardly had any feathers on it, so I was forced to use just the remaining two out of that. If I knew then that I was going to really get into the business of raising hackle and be putting up all kinds of buildings and cages and everything I got involved in, I would have spent \$200-300 extra dollars and driven back to Webster City and said, "Instead of \$7.50, I'll give you triple that amount of money—you just let me sort through the birds and pick out the best ones I could find." For many years, I never told anybody where I got my stock from because there's people that live close by there that could actually have done that and got a better start than I did, and some fly tyers may have bought stuff from Murray McMurray but never knew how to improve the quality. Bill Keough, who I've met at the fly tying symposium in New Jersey, he lives close by there, and he says, "The Murray McMurray stuff is about the same quality as it was when I got it, you know, about 40 years ago." So it's a matter of being able to cull the birds you get.

I end up using about one rooster out of every 50 that we raise to reproduce with. And when the birds were growing up, I was still tying. So I was actually using the feathers, so if I saw any feathers that twisted, I knew I wouldn't want to use that rooster they came from. On a lot of your best looking hackle, it's like wrestling with a snake when you go to wrap it because the quill is too stiff.

There's three things that make a bad quill, being too big, the wrong shape and being too hard. Somebody will buy a neck from some place, and they'll ask me, "what do you think of this neck," and they're puzzled, because the first thing I do is take my thumbnail and I pinch down on the quill and feel the stiffness of that quill. If it compresses, then it will compress some when you're wrapping it, and that shape won't matter as much. If the quill is hard and rigid, and has sharp angles it is more likely to twist. So good quills was one of the first things I learned to breed for.

In fact, I built out of light cedar a little portable table with a desk lamp on it and a fly tying vise attached to it, and I'd go through the birds, and 15-20% of the roosters that looked the best, I would do what I called performance testing. And later when I was getting ready to sell the business, there were people I talked to they never bothered to do that, and that's why a lot of them ended up with feathers that looked terrific but don't work well when you go to tie them because they didn't pay any attention to these quill factors.

So I bred to have a quill that's as close to the same diameter from one end to the other as possible. In a thinner quill, the barbs tend to be closer together so it takes less wrap, so you end up with a neater fly from the other perspective too of getting more actual barbs with less turns of quill going onto the hook.

TB: Now how was your recordkeeping done? How did you keep track of which birds were--I mean, you've got some books over here, I think, that you talked about showing the first feathers or their hackle, but how did you keep track of everything?

HH: Well, the breeders I used got a metal aluminum band and they're numbered. You can get them numbered from 1 to 100, so every year I would get another set, like the first year it would be 1 to 100, the next year I'd use numbers from 200 to 300. I never used that many breeders, like the first year I only used breeders number 1 and 8 and 15, were the 3 out of those 26 that were good enough to use for breeders. Then when I got to about 80 hens and roosters, then I'd have seven or eight breeders, or nine, whatever it was. So anyway, then I would save sample feathers from each breeder used. I've got binders where on each page I have the number of the rooster with neck and saddle hackle samples. As the size of our flock grew I divided the birds into separate families. We ended up with 13 families of grizzlies and six to seven families of each of the other colors we raised. Each family was selected

to concentrate the gene pool in some specific direction. Later one family would be crossed with another to spread the improved gene throughout the flock.

Joyce and I would use felt tip pens and write a code on each egg, like there was: A, B, C, H, N, T, W and X and others with numbers on them. We also used different color pens on some of the eggs, so then they sorted into egg flats, and we turned our garage into a hatchery. And so each tray would have just one individual family of eggs in it.

When we first started raising chickens, there used to be a disease called Marek's disease, which affected the chickens. It was kind of like a cancer, where some of them get paralyzed, others get tumors on them, and we used to lose 12-15% of the birds each year to that. Then they developed a vaccine for that about 1980 or 1982, somewhere in there, so Joyce and I used to do what we call stab and slash. I would go to the incubator and get out a candy box-- what we used to sort the chicks in, and put chicks from one family into the box, and put an egg shell with code on it in with the chicks. Joyce would have another box with an egg shell or egg that didn't hatch in it to identify what family we were working with. My wife sat across the table and she had a chart there I made. You can get up to 13 combinations by cutting in between the toes. You've got two webs on each side, so one family would be marked just the inside left, another one would be both inside and outside, another one would be right and left on the other side, and so forth, and one family would be unmarked. So I would do what I'd call stab the chick by injecting under the skin of the neck 0.2 cc of this vaccine to keep the chickens from getting Marek's disease. Then when I got that bunch done, I'd push the box over to her, and then with an X-acto knife that's been slightly, purposely dulled so it wouldn't cut through but it would pinch through so it wouldn't bleed and seal back together, you'd end up slashing their web between the toes. So at any age, you could always catch a chicken, even if they all got mixed together and tell what it was.

We kept the roosters well sorted like in the cages they're all sorted by age and family. So whenever I was going through a group of chickens, I'd know, well I've got to get at least one breeder, maybe two, from the T pen, maybe one from the A pen because I have a smaller group of them, and maybe three of another group because I have a larger group of them. I'd go through the oldest ones first, and like I said before, pick out about 12-15% of the best ones. Once I got through the whole flock, or close to it, then I'd go back through them again and go through those and pick the best. Like if I had five A pens, I'd say, Well, I need one of these, so I'm going to pick the one out of the best five that's left. If I need three in this unmarked family, and I've got 15 set aside, I'll find the best three out of those 15. And so when I got through, I figured I had only about 2% of the roosters that actually got used, and those 2% were the best I could find, so I'd have enough breeders to go to each one of these families to mate with the 15 or 25 hens or whatever each family of hens had. I found I made very fast progress in the feather development that way.

The quality of the feathers on the roosters was what they called sex dimorphic, which means they have shiny, glossy, long feathers where the hens have soft, short feathers. So a hen could be carrying genetic hackle qualities for 15-inch long hackle on a rooster, but her feathers might only be an inch or inch and a half long. So you couldn't really tell a whole lot by what the hens looked like how good the roosters were going to be, except you knew what the background was.

(Interruption)

HH: I forgot where we left off.

TB: You were describing how you—

HH: Picked the breeders?

TB: --and sorted like the roosters and families.

HH: Yes, that's right. For the first nine years, I just raised grizzly because about 1964, grizzly hackle became very short in supply. If you look in the old poultry books, the American breed Barred Rock was very commonly used,

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and so was Rhode Island Reds, in the meat market. More and more people moved from the farms and into the cities, they wanted things to look very clean, and chickens that have dark pin feathers when they're growing up and feathering out, that shows, and so they went from Rhode Island Reds and Barred Rocks to New Hampshires, which my dad raised, which were a buff colored chicken. Then they went from that to white. The same thing with turkeys, which is how you get all the white marabou for dyeing the feathers there when they went from dark ones to lighter ones. So anyway, when people were no longer raising Barred Rocks commercially for anything, the only ones available were what was at the fairs.

One thing I learned going to the fairs to buy chickens to use for fly tying, people that have show birds, they don't raise the birds for fly tying quality, so what they're looking for is a bird that's got smooth transitional feathers, not narrower feathers that create ridges. So they're breeding away from what fly tyers are usually wanting. But if you tell them you're a fly tyer, like it happened on two occasions, they'll sell you some bird that they know is sterile that they just want to get rid of. They don't like lots of people raising birds to pluck feathers out of them or something anyway. They think that's kind of cruel and unusual punishment to the chicken. So if I had magnetic signs on that said Hoffman's Hackle Farm, I'd always peel those off before I went to some ones place.

I joined the Bantam club (American Bantam Association), so I knew who had what. And in 1974, I decided to go from strictly raising grizzlies to raising whites and blue duns and browns and gingers. I went out looking for these colors, and I joined the Bantam club, like I said, and found out who had what kind of birds, and I would go there and look at the birds and pretend like I wasn't looking at the hackles too much, and most of the time get a bird for anywhere from \$1 to \$5 for a chicken. The feathers were not being bred for fly tying, were just ordinary barnyard quality, but in 1974, I'd bred the quality of the grizzly up quite a bit, and by crossing each of these different color strain birds with the grizzly I already had, I'd match their roosters with my hens and then match the offspring back and forth with each other until I got back to these other colors.

TB: And you talked about this a little bit, but maybe explain it a little more fully. What particular feather attributes did you finally accomplish?

HH: Oh, well first of all, of course length. The imported hackle, and it's still that way if you got a neck that's come from China or something, the feather's almost as wide as it is long, so you can only get three or four turns. A lot of time, you had to use two, sometimes three feathers to hackle a dry fly to get enough hackle on it, and it'd be really bulky because you were always tying in the feather and tying off one and tying in another one. And each time you tie in a feather and tie it off, you're adding more wraps to the fly and making the fly heavier and bulkier and creating gaps in your wraps of your hackle. So I bred for longer length, finer quills, and less taper to the quills, and bred to have the barbs close together. The saddle hackle tends to have less taper because the part that has the tapers, is at the fluffy part at the bottom, which you don't usually use anyway. But the neck hackles takes quite a bit of work because they have a natural tendency to be thicker at the butt end than at the tip, so I worked on all of that.

In the Rainland Fly Club book, I wrote part of the book, and in the book, on page 59, I wrote down ten things for people to look for. I call this chapter "Helpful Hackle Tips, Things To Look For When Selecting Hackle." First would be: "Check the thickness of the neck to get an idea of the feather count. See how far down the neck the small sizes are. If they are down into the wider part of the neck, there will be more of them. Look for and feel the quills. Quills with thick, hard and sharp edges don't tie up very well. Check the taper of the quills. Some are too thick at the base and too thin at the tips. The barbs are usually much closer together on thin, un-tapered quills. This shows up quite well on good saddle hackle. Check color. Grizzly should have straight and close barring, not chevron shape. Solid colored necks and saddles shouldn't have flash marks. Flash marks are blotches of different color, usually found at the base of feathers. Look for stress marks. These are places on individual feathers where the barbs and the quills narrow down significantly. The quills are so weak at these stress points that they often break when hackle's being wrapped on the hook. Stress marks occur as the feather's growing out of the skin and the bird is stressed by disease or other causes at that time. Check for juvenile plumage on the top end of the neck. These are small, underdeveloped feathers that are halfway between hen hackle and cock hackle. Check for grease on the skin and on feathers, especially on dyed ones. The barbs should not clump together. Hackles should always be washed.

Look for broken feathers. Check to see if the neck or saddle you are about to purchase contains more hackle of the size you are most likely to tie or use.” And that’s the ten tips that I put in the club book.

I never went to school for genetics, although I used to go-- Well when, I had only a few dozen birds to raise. I’d go to the Portland Library, and most of the books there were like 40 or 50 years old, a lot of them. And I’d learn a little bit about what specific proteins are good for feather development, to help speed up feather growth, and get glossier hackle. I used some of that information. And I learned from reading a book on Australian sheep breeding about instead of having just one family and trying to get six or eight things you’re looking for in each individual, which is impossible, to get--you only get like 1 in 240 chances of getting six or more attributes in one individual bird. That’s why I divided into families.

I raised certain families for neck quality, certain ones for color, and certain ones for saddle hackle length. And then when the birds started getting hackles so long that they were stepping on them or breaking them off, then I started in 1985, breeding for actual leg length. And that’s one thing I did a lot with on the hen side. On the roosters, you’re always having to make compromises. Sometimes a bird that has the best neck you’ve ever seen, has like a grade 3 saddle hackle. So if you use that bird, you’re going to be driving down one quality to increase another one. So sometimes you got to take your second or third best bird and cull out your best-looking one for one quality so as not to sacrifice something else.

So anyway, I’d had 13 families of grizzly and 6-7 families in each of the other colors I raised and would work 3 or 4 characteristics in one family heavy, and some birds I raised for neck and some for saddles. And then when each family started to get a little bit inbred, you could tell by you’d get a few freak feathers or the hatchability starts to go down, you know you got to cross this family with another one. So we made these crosses, then you started getting all these qualities starting to emerge across the board on the different families. One family I raised, I was trying to get down to size 20 saddle hackle, and a few of those birds were getting down to the size 20 in the saddle hackle, where the others were mostly 10’s and 12’s, and pretty soon I got the average down to 14’s and 16’s for my straight across aboard, with certain birds showing up with occasional 18’s and 20’s, and occasionally a 22 showing up.

TB: And wasn’t grizzly your most famous feather?

HH: That’s what we’re the most known for, although we got about a dozen other colors from cross breeding. I started raising—at first, I got a couple Blue Andalusian roosters and crossed them with grizzly, and I found there’s a correlation between feather color and feather quality. Tom Whiting, who’s studied a lot of this in school, could probably explain this better than I can, but I noticed this right away. Like raising Blue Andalusians, you’d get a whole tray full of all chicks that looked blue, the blue-grey color that everybody’s looking for, a nice medium blue dun, and they would shift color when they got to sexual maturity, at about 4 ½ to 5 months. Some of them would turn to badger, some of them would turn to furnace some of them would turn to pretty much a natural black or what they call iron-blue dun. You’d get a few that were watery dun that’s almost white. And some were the medium dun that you were looking for. The ones that would turn to ginger or badger or furnace would have much better quality feathers than the ones that are the natural blue dun you were looking for. You’re going to see this all the time if you look at barnyard birds. A natural black bird is pretty much all webby. On a badger and furnace, the part that’s got the black stripe will be webby. So the more web-freeness you breed into badger or furnace, you start losing that marking up there at the top of the neck where you want it in the small hackle. It starts disappearing there. As you breed out the web you breed out the black also.

So Barred Rock are a fairly slow feathering bird that tend to have naturally longer feathers than some of the other breeds that grow their feathers faster. And then when I cross the other ones, like the whites, I got the whites like in this chart I have over here, I have feathers up to 16 ½ inches long by 1989 in both the white and the grizzly. That’s because I bred white to the grizzly, got it back to white again, bred it to grizzly again, and I got it back to white again, so these birds even though they look white, they’re actually three-fourths grizzly. So once I got that white going good with all those grizzly genes into it, I could dye that. My first wife had two beauty shops, and I learned to use her hair dye. I could dye a neck or a saddle before it was even skinned. I’d chop the heads off and dye them

right then. So I could get a natural-looking blue dun with the same quality as a grizzly, where the natural blue dun, no matter how many times you cross it, never seem to get as good as what the grizzly was.

TB: What is the lifespan of the chickens that you breed?

HH: Since you asked that, the chicken people buy in the Safeway grocery store or whatever are 6-9 weeks old. These birds are 9-13 months old. And so, they're fully mature and stop growing. All their body feathers are all grown, except the saddles keep growing. And one thing that I have on this display shows when I started raising the birds, the saddles were like four inches long, and then by 1971, they were about like five, and by 1974, some of them were getting up to seven. By 1979, they're nine inches long and by 1984, I've got them up to about a foot long, and instead of having fluff and a little button at the end of the feathers when they stop growing, they became non-molting.

The feather continuously started to grow at that point on some of the birds. I could tell which ones were going to have this non-molting feature instead of having a molt at the end of the spring and growing in a summer crop of feathers, which were inferior to the winter prime crop, and the prime crop starts growing in at the end of summer, so that the birds have a thicker, longer layer of feathers through the cold winter, just like fur-bearing animals. The prime fur is in the wintertime. And I could tell which ones were going to be like that because on our baby chicks they're born with a coating of soft fuzz on them, and then within two or three weeks, that fuzz is pushed out by what I call juvenile plumage.

They're kind of soft hen-like, like bird feather-type, and not stiff, ridged, like their dry fly hackle that they get later on. And so that juvenile plumage would come in until they're about 8-9 weeks old, and then the very tips of these feathers, like little blades of grass, will start coming out and pushing those out, and that's your prime feathers that will grow in over the next several months through the winter.

Well the birds that were going to be non-molting on the saddle patch area on the back would never get that in between coating of feathers. They would be bareback all the way up until they're 8-9 weeks old. In fact, we had to actually raise the temperature of the rooms with more heat lamps to keep those warm because, like I say, they were actually naked across their back because a lot of chick fuzz will just thin and eventually wear out and wear away, and there was just nothing there but bare skin, and then all of a sudden at 8-9 weeks, here would come this next crop of feathers, which was going to grow as long as the birds would live.

In fact, when I sold the business to Tom Whiting in 1989, and by the way I kept raising the birds until the middle of 1995, but while he was building up his flock, I spent five years consulting, showing him how to pick the breeding stock. He had 11 years of college and had a doctorate degree in poultry science and genetics, but knew nothing about fishing, especially fly fishing was all new to him. He wanted something unusual to do, so he and I struck up a deal that I would sell him—like I shipped him 23,000 eggs in 1989 and 1990, and he hatched those, and we sat side by side catching the birds, and I'd hold the bird and show him what made a rooster a contender for a breeder or not. And this one rooster had about 600 absolutely web-free saddle hackle across his back, 100%, and I used to grade the birds on what percent web-free they were, and I said, "Now, this is one you'll want to use over and over again as long as you can because this is what I call a sport, an unusual step up in genetic quality." So this bird that's hackles were already so long that they were breaking off when he was stepping on the ends, so they're already a foot long, kept that bird another 4 ½ years before it finally died. And he told me after it died, "Those hackle never stopped growing all those years." They would've been like six foot long if there were some way of keeping them from breaking off because he said they'd grow out a foot and break off, or the hens would step on the ends or pluck them out, and then he'd grow out another foot, and they'd just continually do that year after year after year.

So the white birds started doing it, and the last year I had the birds myself, I started getting a few brown birds that were doing it, and Whiting's birds, all the colors he has now that he got from me are all non-molting now, and started getting the first ones, like I said, in 1984. And pretty soon, I started breeding pretty much exclusive with those. That genetic trait became fixed all through the whole flock then as time went on.

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TB: Well one question is, what is the future of quality feather production? What do you think the future of what, probably Whiting is doing it now, but what's the—Is it changing? Is it--?

HH: One thing I was asked one time when I was at Frank Amato Publications, placing an ad about our birds, I was asked, "What else can you do?" Of course at that time, back about 1978, the saddle hackle was about 8 inches long, and I said, "Well, I can get the saddle hackle longer, and I'd like to get the neck hackle as long as the saddle hackle." And they said, "Oh, you can't do that." And I said, "Well, if I had enough time I could." And after about 29 ½ years, I stopped raising the birds, but Whiting has gotten the neck hackle almost as long as I had the saddle hackle back in about 1974. And through genetic selection, you can keep getting the feathers longer and longer and narrower and narrower. Once a year you get a new generation, so each generation, if you're doing your breeding right, you'll get a little increment closer to what you're striving at. And there's no end to what you can strive for. You can just keep changing the birds as time goes on.

TB: Okay, do trends in fly fishing itself kind of change things, like the focus on—like you said, it started out it was a lot of dry flying, but now a lot of people like to have wet flies. Does that sort of change what you try to get your birds to do?

HH: Yes, now that you mention that. In 1987, I started saving the body feathers off the roosters, the soft hen-type of feathers, although on the rooster the feathers I use off the breast look a lot like what's on the back of a hen, what some people call hen backs. I call these soft hackle with Chickabou. And a lot of people were asking me for steelhead flies that had the soft hackle instead of being the wet fly neck hackle or saddle hackle, with the thin stiff barbs. Off the breast I was finding I could get what they were looking for, thicker barbs that looked more like legs and have more flowing action in the water and also sink much faster.

So I started selling these to Marriott, Bob Marriott. He was looking for something for Matuka patches, and these fit the bill for that. And then when Matuka started falling out of favor for some other type of streamer patterns, I started using and selling the soft hackle and Chickabou patches for nymphs. If you look at the old fly pattern books like when I started tying in the 1950s, hardly anybody fished nymphs. They didn't know how to match the nymphs. They didn't particularly study what the nymph forms looked like very much. So as time went on, people started fishing dry flies smaller to imitate the actual size of the insects more. I saw a tremendous trend towards smaller flies as time went on, as far as dry fly fishing goes.

Then imitating much more the nymph form, people started realizing the fish are feeding 90% of the time subsurface on what's down at their level and only come to the surface when there's a major hatch coming off that bring them up to the surface and get the fish to start looking up instead of down. So after I sold my business in 1989 and started raising only about half as much from 1990 to 1995, I stepped back into fly tying and fishing my own flies much more.

I've got three different plexiglass tanks that I fill with water to test new fly patterns. When fishing is slow, like in the afternoon, I'll try and fish and it'll slow down, unless there was a hatch, I'll go along the shore line and turn over debris or pull up weeds and see how the insects look, especially like dragonflies and damselflies.

You can turn over a piece of debris and they'll be an olive-brown color to match that piece of wood. You can hardly see them unless you get them to move. You can reach a foot farther over and the same species will be the color of the weeds, and as the weed changes through the summer, they'll tend to bleach out in the summer, and so you'll go from a kind of an olive-green to a golden olive as the weeds change color, like when the damselflies and the dragonflies. I've noticed that quite a bit. So I'll tie up a fly that looks like these, or I'll wade through the weeds and watch the insects swim from the weeds, one weed to another, and get an idea of what to tie. It's one of the reasons like in lakes, especially in the shallow parts of lakes, I'll use glass beads instead of the metal beads that are so favored in streams where you're trying to get things down in the fast current. I've noticed when you wade through the weeds, the insects will dart and they go "di-di-dit" and they'll stop, and then they go "di-dit" and they'll move some more, then it'll stop, and they don't plunge down on those pauses like a weighted fly will.

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They're about the same specific gravity as the water, so I try to get my flies to be that way too and fish an intermediate clear line so that once I get a certain depth, that fly, during that whole retrieve, that fly will stay at that same depth all the way through the retrieve. And so there has been quite a change in matching not only the surface hatch but the underwater life forms. And I imitate crayfish and snails and different things that I've noticed in the streams. So there's—

(Interruption)

TB: Okay

HH: And people, a lot of innovative anglers, have developed minnow patterns to imitate the different species of minnows that are in streams, especially if you're fishing smallmouth or warm water fish like largemouth, or anything like that, or also a big Brown trout will eat minnows and crayfish, and so those things are being imitated now, and I've drawn up several patterns for fishing like that.

(Interruption)

TB: So why don't we talk about that. In 1995, you had sold the business and you started more focusing on-- Well, you sold the business in 1989, so some time in there you started focusing more on tying flies, and why don't you talk about—

HH: Yes, I raised less birds between 1989 and 1995 and started a new business, and I have my stationery, and my business cards say, "Hoffman's Fly Tying Innovations," and on there I mention the past 30 years or so of raising the hackle and so forth, but now I, like I said, try to find insects. And crayfish and putting them in a tank and watching how they move, and taking dragonflies and damselflies, nymphs, and I put them in a tank and get them to move, by nudging them with a piece of doweling. And then I tie flies that look like that and I try to imitate the action and make little fishing rods out of a foot and a half-length of doweling and tie about a foot or so of monofilament, and then I tie the fly, and I work the fly. If I want the fly to ride point up so it doesn't hang up on the bottom, especially like crayfish and sculpin patterns should be bounced in between the rocks. If it's point down it's going to dig into all the stumps and rocks and dull your hook point even when you do get the fly loose. And so I learned how to weight the flies a lot of times that are usually just wrapped in lead wire around the hook shank, instead I put dumbbell eyes on it, either lead dumbbell eyes or black painted for like dragonflies, which don't have shiny eyes. Or for some minnows, I'll use Spirit River Real Eyes, where they have the plastic eyeballs that you can press on to the dumbbell eyes.

Then for a sculpin pattern instead of having a Matuka with the wings over the back, I tie the wing on the inside of the bend, and put dumbbell eyes on the other side so it rides point up. And I find you only get hung up about a fourth as often that way as if the point was down, plus I hardly ever hook a fish in the gills if the point is up, and so that's a good conservation thing too. This one guy in Japan made what's called a swimming nymph hook. I think it was a 400T was the first one made by Tiemco. I found when I tied damselflies with that using the soft Chickabou instead of marabou, which the Chickabou works better on small flies because you got finer strands of it and you build up a body that's fluffy and has life-like action without having to bulk up the body and making it too thick. But anyway, on a swimming nymph hook, if you didn't weight the fly, two of the three I tested would turn up on their side when you would twitch them.

If you weight the back end it rode point up, you weight the front end it rode point down, and like I said, if you didn't weight it, it couldn't decide which way it wanted to ride. So by actually testing the fly in a tank where you're only a foot away from it, you can see all this. If you're casting a fly out in front of you out in a stream or in a lake, you're not close enough to see all this fine detail. So if the thing looked good in a tank, then I would test the flies in an actual stream or lake, successfully, and then use a new pattern as a dropper up ahead. Generally, anglers who fish two flies have found that fish usually, everything being even, they'll take the point fly first, but if they don't like that as well as the dropper, they'll swim past the point fly and grab that dropper. So when I start getting a lot of fish on

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that dropper, then I know I've got a new successful pattern. And then once I've figured that out, then I'll try using the same pattern as a point fly and as a dropper, but maybe different colors or different sizes.

Lake fishing up in Lenore, I've seen where fishing will be real slow after a lot of hot weather, and then you'll get a storm come in, cool the water down, the fish will go on a feeding spree after having not fed for a while. And chironomids are usually small insects, some size 20 to 16, sometimes 14, size 12 is a big one. But I found when the water is stirred up from the storm and the fish are really hungry, they'll grab the big fly instead of the small one because they can see it better, they're hungry, and they don't care—they're not very fussy about matching the hatch, so to speak. But a day or two later, after they've kind of filled up and the water settles down and there's more fishing pressure, some people say, Oh, the fish are feeding and go out there and fish, and all of a sudden then they start getting selective, then you got to get down to that small, match the hatch type of thing, even though it's not a hatch really that's on the surface, chironomids are coming up to hatch.

By fishing two flies and then instead of using a dropper off of a blood knot, or barrel knot as it's sometimes called, you can only tie a fly on that once, and then if you have to change the fly, you don't have enough left to tie on a new fly. Or if you get a double hookup, like just the Lehontan cutthroat a lot times averages 20 inches, and you get 18-20 inch fish on each fly, that knot's going to break because it's the weakest knot, and you'll lose both flies, both fish, and part of your taper leader. You may have it tapered down to 3X, which is about eight pound test, and be tying six pound test or whatever to that. Pretty soon you're up to 10-12 pound test by changing that knot so often, and then you have to throw away that tapered leader.

So I use a small tiny, black swivel, or better yet I take a size 14 treble hook and break one barb completely off and take the other two, break the barb and the point off, but I leave enough that I can circle that around so I've got like a little spreader. So I tie my main leader to the original eye, and then there are the two eyes that I've made, and I flatten them out so they're parallel to each other and not in a V, and then I tie my dropper to one and my point fly to the other, so I can change flies any time I want to without sacrificing my main leader. And if a fish breaks off, it will break off at that spreader I've made with this tiny treble hook, and then I still get one fly back and one of the two fish that I hooked. I don't lose the whole thing.

So a lot of times, I'll test six or eight flies a day doing this. I keep changing, especially that short dropper. I'll change that quite often. A lot of time I'll fish two different levels. Especially in kind of deep water like Omak Lake, one of my favorite places to fish, I use a fly like a size 6 or 8 on the point fly that's got dumbbell eyes that are going to ride point up so it can drag along the bottom like a sculpin. And I can have a chironomid or one of my Knee Hackle Specials, which imitates a mayfly or caddis nymph, and that can be up there 30 inches higher, and there will be fish on one level up here, and I've got another fly down here at the other level. And I've noticed not all the fish will be at the same. One fish will be going along the bottom looking for sculpins or dragonfly nymphs between the rocks, and some other one will be up here in this mid-depth looking for the smaller insects that are hatching, so I'm covering two different fish that are feeding at different levels, fishing that way. So I do a lot of that.

TB: What is your most well-known fly? If there was just one that you're known for?

HH: It could be the Chickabou Damsel Nymph. I demonstrate that a lot when I tie at shows. The Chickabou Special is another one. There's damselfly nymphs in the lakes all the time. If you're fishing lakes, you just have to change sizes. They're a year old when they hatch, generally. Dragonflies can be one to three years old or something, so there are a variety of sizes. But when the damselfly nymphs hatch out-- It's the same thing with stoneflies, like on the Deschutes River, just before the hatch they're going to be as big as they're going to get, so you use great big 6's and 4's, 3X long. Then after the hatch is over, then you just got the younger ones in the stream, or the eggs have just been laid, and so they're going to have a lot of the small ones. Like on the damselfly nymphs, I go down to like a size 16 after the hatch is over, and I continue to catch fish. Like I say, the damselfly nymphs, they're one size or another all year round, so there's something there—you don't have to depend on the hatch for the damselfly nymphs. But when the damselfly nymphs are hatching, in June or July usually, the fish will key in a lot on them because they're all migrating towards shore to hatch out, so that's a good time to pretty much just fish damselfly nymphs.

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And then I use the Chickabou Special, which I tie using a soft hackle, or I use the base of the feather to create a marabou hackle collar and tie the body and the tail out of the Chickabou. And by Chickabou, I mean marabou that's off a chicken. The original marabou came off the Marabou Stork, which is also known as the Adjutant Stork, was a great big—it's either about four foot high, three or four foot high, buzzard in Africa, and of course it's illegal to kill anything like that now. Just like the Jungle Cock, people are raising them now to make it legal again to have them. But most what they call marabou was originally from white geese. And then when they started raising a lot of white turkeys, and it now comes from the turkeys. But I get the same type of feather off a chicken, only it's a smaller size, which wraps better for making a marabou wrapped hackle collar or a whole marabou wrapper body on smaller sized flies. And I use what's called the blood marabou when on the turkey; it is much smaller on a chicken and I call these small Chickabou plumes. And so I can wrap that and make like a peacock herl body, only this adds more action than the peacock does, it's softer. And you got the quill in there for reinforcing to make it stronger, although I do a rib of wire wrap through most of it for extra strength.

So those are the two. A lot of people like the crayfish I've tied for smallmouth bass fishing. I've yet to try it for trout, but I imagine in big rivers like the Yellowstone where you've got a lot of big Brown trout and stuff, a small crayfish pattern would be gobbled up too.

TB: Okay, well what haven't I asked you that you'd like to talk about or that you know about yourself? I do want to ask about all your awards, but I usually do that kind of at the end.

HH: Oh, one thing I bred the chickens for was to be gentle. A lot of chickens, like my dad's chickens, he had laying hens, were very wild. He always wore the same Levi clothes in there, and if I went in there in my school clothes, the chickens would go flying against the wall. I found to pick the breeding stock, I had to have the chickens gentle. I'd hold them in my lap. I made a slip knot that I slipped around their two ankles, and then another slip knot on the other end that went around the toe of my shoe, and I'd pull that tight so there was tension in between so I could hold the chickens. But when you get them in and out of the cages, or even after you've got them tied down, you don't want them squawking or pecking you with their beak or spurring you, which I've had happen.

So when the chicks were first hatched, after we vaccinated them and toe punched them, if we moved them out into the brooder and left them overnight, then the next day we'd go in there they'd be scared because they're used to imprinting on their mother and going underneath their wings and hide for protection, only coming out to feed when the hen would cluck and get them to come out to feed. So I learned to have a radio going out there in the buildings, so they'd get used to different noises, and I'd go out there and sit in each pen. I would sit with them for about an hour and put some chick scratch in there. I'd kind of spread my legs out and have them come up between my feet and around alongside me, and if they were strong enough they would hop up on my ankle or something. And they would imprint on me, and then they would think I was their parent. So the next morning you'd go out there they'd be calm.

Then I also picked the breeders when I was going through with my little portable table and checking the feathers for how they looked and they performed when I'd tie them on a hook, I'd also write down on a flash card how gentle they were, with the factor I called wildness, so that would be rated. So when I went back through to pick that last 2% of the best birds, if a bird had "wild" or "kind of wild" next to it that was strongly considered. Like in some of the pictures I have, I have a picture where I'm holding one of my Pflueger fly reels in one hand, and that bird is roosting on that reel I'm holding without me holding the bird.

And I have other pictures that Jim Schollmeyer took where I have a pair of roosters, one of my white breeding roosters and a Barred Rock, sitting on my forearm on each side facing each other. And I have another picture that he took where they're facing opposite directions, and nobody's holding those chickens. I just caught them in the cages, brought them in the house, and Jim Schollmeyer took 130 pictures of these different colored birds in these different poses, and the birds were just like a tame pet, and that's all part of this, you know, selecting genetically and environmentally conditioning the birds when they were chicks.

TB: So you kept most of your records on like note cards for each chicken or for each family?

HH: Yes, out on the cages I used a clothespin, and then a card, with written information for each bird. I have a book for each year, and each breeder two pages. I'll use one page for the neck with feather samples, and one page with saddle hackle samples. The cards that were pinned to the cages with the written information for each breeder was added to the page with the neck feather samples of rooster used as breeders.

Information recorded was what family the rooster was from, what family of hens it was used with. Also information about the feathers, such as size range of the hackle, how well they turned, how web-free, how stiff, etc. On the saddle what sizes most were, and what percent of the saddle hackle was web-free.

Towards the end, I started getting some birds here that were 100% web-free, and in the beginning they were about 50-60% webbing-ness in most of the feathers. And as time went on, I was able to breed the web out, as well as, you know, get the longer feathers with the thinner quills and the barbs closer together. These are all the different things I bred for and as time went on, longer legs. When I started out these bantams had 4-5 inch long saddle hackle. The birds only weighed on average about 2.2 pounds. Towards the end there, I got some all the way up to six pounds, though the average was about 3 ½ to 4 pounds.

When Whiting got the birds from me, there's two things I emphasized to him. One was don't locate next to your neighbors. That's one of the reasons I could never expand beyond 3350 roosters a year here. The neighbors' school kids would tell our kids when they came back from school, Oh, our parents are really mad because your chickens are crowing at 6 o'clock in the morning.

People would wonder when I used to sell the orders back east, they would call here at 7 o'clock in the morning, which would be 10 o'clock their time, and they'd get my wife right out of bed, and they would always say, "Well, we thought farmers got up early to work." Well, like I have a Japanese article in one of my books here where I'm wearing earmuffs. I always wore earmuffs because I had the chickens from the ground up to a foot higher than my head, so I'd have three or four rows of chickens on each side of me with a four foot aisle, and those birds would be crowing from six in the morning to 10 AM.

My wife and I would go out to feed, we learned to use hand signals because if you talked they would answer you. They thought you were talking to them, then in the whole building, the birds all of a sudden would all start crowing, and they'd drive you out of there. Also, when the saddles started getting longer, they'd start breaking them off from 9 ½ to 10 inches long, so I'd try sweeping the saddle hackle up to the tail sickles and wrapping scotch tape around them. The scotch tape wouldn't stick very well because the rooster would reach back with his beak and use his preen gland to oil the feathers. So then I used strapping tape, and that worked except I had to skin the saddle and the tail all off in one piece, soak it overnight in gasoline, and that was in the days before they had the unleaded gas, so I had kind of an oily stickiness to the saddles, and they smelled for three weeks afterwards. You'd have to hang 'em up, and then cut the saddle loose from the tail. So that was a pain.

My wife used to color her hair, and I asked her one time if she had the rollers. So I got the rollers from Joyce and rolled the saddle hackle up on rollers across the top of the back, and that might have worked, but the stress on that would pull where the feather rooted into the skin, and then the rooster would reach back with his beak, and he'd break the feathers off between the roller where they were growing from the saddle, out of the skin on the back. So I figured the only way to get around that was to raise the birds to be bigger so the feathers had to grow farther across the back before they started down, and also I started picking as many of the breeding roosters as I could for leg length. And on the pullet side, which I normally pick for how easy they were to sex, which is by how dark the leg shank and the beak is, and also a white head spot that is shaped differently on the pullet, so I'd select for that. And then I'd pick the pullets definitely for leg length, and as much as I could on the roosters without sacrificing his other qualities. So the birds started getting up to the saddle hackle up to about a foot long before they started breaking them off. And for Whiting, I saved extra breeders so he could get more fertile eggs from us, 23,000 that first year. And those birds I kept over for two years grew their saddle hackle out about a foot and broke them off, but I got three feathers that were around 16-16 ½ inches that never broke off. One off a white and two off a

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Barred Rock rooster, and they were all still growing when I finally did kill the birds after getting the needed fertile eggs.

TB: So when you sold to Whiting, did you give him the birds or you sold him all eggs?

HH: Sold him all eggs. He didn't want to relocate from Denver, the area where he grew up, to Oregon, because we at that time had a 10% state income tax, and then it was 9% later, but he didn't want to have to pay that and move here. We found out that Federal Express would take the eggs. I got especially strong egg cartons or cases, supposed to hold 360 eggs each, but I eliminated some of the layers to put foam rubber on top and bottom to cushion eggs, and had the eggs insured for \$2.00 each. They were actually worth a lot more than that, but we just picked a figure. So the first shipment, there was \$460 something worth of damage from broken eggs, and then I put even more foam rubber, and there was some \$50 worth of broken eggs in the next shipment. After that second shipment they said they couldn't take our shipments due to these losses.

I said, "What if we ship them uninsured?" And he said, "Well, in that case, we'll take them." So then I shipped the rest of them uninsured. So out of that 23,000 eggs, he got about 6,000 eggs that actually arrived in good enough shape to hatch. Eggs normally are stored at 55 degrees, the optimum temperature to store eggs before you put them in the incubator, which the incubator runs about around 99 degrees or close to 100 degrees until they get close to hatching. By the time eggs have been kept 14 days, half have already lost their fertility, so we tried to get them shipped about every seven days, we'd make a shipment off to him. By the time he got them, he'd get, you know, about a 50% hatch out of the ones that weren't broken. Well, he must not have got that many if he got 6,000 out of 23,000, so maybe a fourth of them hatched. But anyway, he got enough to get a good start. He tried to raise them without cages the first year. He didn't have the time or the money to get the cages in. He'd had to rent a place to put them. And a lot of the hackle got all broken off because the birds were fighting each other, but he was selling his carcasses, I don't know if it was 10¢ a bird or 10¢ a pound, to a mink farmer that had been raising mink for about 50 years. People started getting mad at the fur industry. Animal rights-type people didn't like animals being raised. I'm surprised they haven't attacked us hackle herders, as we're called for that. But after 50 years, they went out of business, and they started renting the cages to Whiting, and everything went really good after Whiting got cages to put the birds in.

So one thing, I do an hour slide show on my birds at shows and the Federation conclaves and things like that, and I show these slides where I have the roosters in cages where there's a space in between. When I started out, down the road about three miles from us was two big egg laying places. One had 11,000 laying chickens and another one had something like that, and they both went out of business when there was a bad turn in the market. And I got regular laying cages, only had one layer wide of partition in between, and I found that the cages that I'd bought for 15¢ a cage cost me several dollars each because the birds would reach through the wire and would break the feathers off, even through those wires. The mink cages prevent damage to the fur by having a spacer in between. And when the mink farmers were in our area, there used to be about 150 mink farms in Clatsop County because the weather is kind of favorable for that here, and so most of the cages I got free, and we just modified the front. We couldn't afford mechanical feeders or waterers in the beginning, so we used to have the restaurants and fish markets save us these one gallon cans of what they used to call #10 cans. And we used one for feed and one for water, but watering them was really difficult in the cans because they'd get the feed in their water, and you'd have to keep cleaning those cans. So then we found out there's automatic waterers, so we ran a pipe through the cages, and the chickens could water themselves.

And I show this white rooster here crowing. People were always complaining about the noise of the chickens, and I had one Barred Rock rooster that couldn't crow. He tried to crow, and I don't know if it was genetic. And if he had any good quality feathers at all, I would have tried to breed non-crowing into the roosters, if that was genetically transferrable. That would have helped us a lot then. But since he wasn't very good, I didn't try that.

Back in 1990, Chuck Furimsky started having fly fishing shows in New Jersey, and they had what they called the great chicken hackle debate. He wanted to help draw people. The first year he had four of us. It was Ted Hebert, Dr. Whiting, and myself, and Bucky Metz there for the first show. And they had us answer questions from a

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moderator and also from the audience, and they had the microphone where we answered questions. One of the questions was why the other raisers didn't genetically select for good saddle hackle. They're mostly using saddle hackle the way it came genetically, which was real wide, only for streamer hackles, like steelhead flies and stuff like that. And when I was tying for Poulsen in 1962 to 1966, we used to get like an ounce of imported saddle hackle, and some of that would tie 10's and 12's, and we were tying like Royal Coachman Trude wing dry flies. We found out it was much easier to work with that saddle hackle than the neck hackles where you had to use two or three feathers to get enough hackle to float a fly. So that's when I decided to put as much time into developing the saddle hackle that would tie the same type of flies that you would get out of the neck hackles, as far as the size range, and the dry fly quality, and the stiffness of the barbs, and of course the flexibility of quills. So I set out originally from day one to try to get a good saddle hackle, and that's what we became known for, not only the good neck hackles that brought us the highest price on the market, but also saddle hackles. When saddle hackles started selling for like \$20 for a patch, then the others started trying to breed for the saddle hackle, and that's taking them a long time to catch up, but they are starting to get good saddle hackle quality after all these years, but I was the first one to get that.

In the year 2000 Chuck Furimsky had us "Hackle Herders" back for the great chicken hackle debate revisited in Somerset, N.J. at the International Fly Tyers Symposium and we were all asked when we started-- and a lot of people back east thought Metz started before I did, but I'd actually raised hackle in 1955 to 1957, and then developed the current stream from 1965 onward. Metz got about 12 dozen eggs from Andy Miner in 1972 for his start.

Andy Miner got eggs from Harry Darbee in 1954 and greatly improved the hackle over the next 20 years. In 1973 he supplied eggs and birds to Ted Hebert of Hebert Hackles. In 1978 Cary Quarles got his start from Miner birds and formed Colorado Quality Hackle, known as CQH. In about 1990 or 1991 Bill Keough bought the birds from CQH and has made great improvements to these. His business is called Keough Hackles. Collins Hackle Farm was started by Charlie Collins and his birds came from Dick Bittner, Harry Darbee and Andy Minor stock in about 1980.

I stated that I started with a pair of barred banties from a fair in Portland and about ten common birds of the same type by mail-order, from Murray McMurray Hatchery in 1965-67. In 1974 I bought about a ½ dozen bantam birds of various colors to cross with my grizzlies. These were chickens that were shown at fairs here in Oregon. Dr. Tom Whiting of Whiting Farms said that he was the new home of the Hoffman Hackle and got the eggs from me.

At this show I had with me 1965 to 1989 feather samples from breeding roosters I'd used mounted on a display board. The item can now be seen at the IFFF Museum in Livingston, Montana.

In 2010 the fashion industry started buying up most of the long saddle hackle to use as hair extensions and for earrings. The fly shops can hardly get any for their fly tying customers. Here is a copy from eBay where one saddle patch went for \$1250.01, and there's six other ones where six saddles that looked like they're only \$10.00 saddles, they're asking \$1999.00 for those six saddles. They look to me like they're just not that good.

TB: So are you selling these on eBay or someone's selling them for you?

HH: Oh, I've sold all my good saddles years ago before this fad started. I've got one good rooster grizzly saddle I've kept for my own as a souvenir. And then these other ones in here on eBay that went for \$800 and \$900. I know there's one white one in there that went for, I think, \$841.

TB: So, what do you think of the fad? I mean, I know what you think of it, but say it on the tape here.

HH: You know, I feel sorry for the fly shops that can't afford to pay these kinds of prices and then resell them to fly tyers. The only hackle I have left is the loose saddle feathers, and I've been putting between 15 and 20 feathers in a package that will tie about 100 flies and charging fly tiers only from \$10 to about \$18, which is about \$1 a feather for some of the feathers, about half of that for some of the other ones. But my son went to the Clark County Fair

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recently, he says they're only putting one feather a package and charging \$10 for one feather. And my other son just told my wife, now they're taking the longer feathers, cutting them in half, and selling each half for \$12, so they're getting \$24 for one feather if they're long enough to cut in half. So the fad, it's kind of like the gold rush. People are looking at kind of unlimited demand for a limited supply, and so the fly tyer and fly fisherman are kind of getting squeezed out of what was actually raised just for them. So I don't know if I was raising 2,000-3,000 roosters a year like I used to, what would I do?

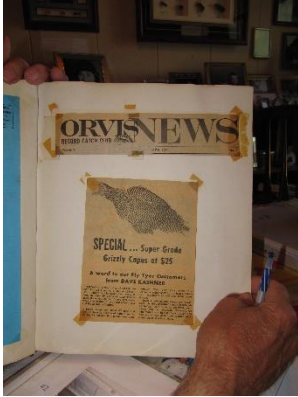
I know some of the fly shops are hiding the feathers under the counter. If a lady comes in, she has to establish that she's a fly tyer before they're going to sell to her because they don't want to undermine their regular client because they depend on them in the future, their good will. Just like me, I could've sold all my feathers to Japan and Germany and made 30-40% more on them, but I limited it to only 25% a year of that with export, and the rest I sold to my customers on the west coast. I didn't have enough feathers to sell to the east coast. In fact, Joyce used to have to answer the "no letters." That was her unfortunate job. So now Whiting is selling to all these accounts I had to turn down.

The only reason I advertised was when I started raising hackle, I would sell it to Dennis Black. At first I had an exclusive sales contract with him. He would do all the selling, and I did all the raising. And nobody else that I knew of was raising the feathers for resale. But then other people, back like in New Jersey and different places, they would get Bantams, probably, maybe from the same source I got mine, but they weren't genetically improved very much. And they'd say, Well, these are the same ones you see advertised, like Kaufmann's Streamborn started advertising my hackle. They weren't as good, and then I'd get back, and they'd say, Well, this hackle we heard was so good isn't as good as we thought it was. Well, this isn't even mine. So then I started stamping my name on them, and I found some capes I'd sold to a fly shop as #3, they would have more than they could sell, so they would sell to some other shop like one I ran into in Montana, something I'd sold as a #3 was marked up to a #1, so they'd get a higher price for it. And then the neck, you could see had been bent back and forth, people had looked at it, thought it wasn't worth \$20, when it was only supposed to have been like a \$10 neck to start with. So I stamped the grade on to stop people from doing that. And so then I advertised, and in my ad, see if I can find one real quick here that I used to run for a short while.

See here how gentle that bird is sitting on my shoulder with the saddle hackle resting on my shoulder there in this ad. What I put in the ad was: "If you are interested in obtaining the finest grizzly necks and saddles and don't want to be tricked into buying a substitute, ask for the authentic Super Grizzly. As an aid to fly fishermen, here are some of the firms that distribute these capes..." and I named nine there. Yes, there's nine I'm selling to at that time, in 1975. And I said, "I also sell directly to a few other fly shops remaining amounts as supply permits. And please no more dealer inquiries. To maintain quality and continued improvement of the stock, I raise only enough birds to supply present accounts." And then I put a post office box number here so people wouldn't know where I was because I received a warning from Kaufmann's who was one of my biggest accounts.

They said, "People come into the shop and say, 'Where does this guy live? I'd like to steal some of those birds.'" And Lance Kaufmann would say, "I believe some of them really mean it." Sure enough, people came to the feed store to find out where I was, and one time two guys showed up from Longview, Washington. First they almost insisted that I sell them some livestock, and after that I started running in the ads, I do not sell any eggs or livestock. We always maintained two or three German Shepherds in there. They looked at the fence like they could throw a ladder up and jump over, and then they saw the two dogs and said, "Nevermind," and they were gone.

See this ad from the *Orvis news* where Dave Cashmere shows one of my necks. This was addressed to a friend of mine. He saved this for me, and you see the date, 1970, and here's where they were selling for \$25. And this is where the term Super Grade Grizzly comes from. He says, "Through a stroke of good fortune, we have located a source of the most beautiful grizzly capes ever seen. And fact, in over 20 years of time and experience, these are the



best I have ever seen. They are available on first come, first serve basis, and supplies limited. These capes are about eight inches long.” See now they’re 12 or 13 inches, but they used to be about the size of what the hen necks are now, about the size of your hand. “And so heavily feathered with size 14, 16, and 18 hackles, they must be seen to believe, and they even have on a size 22 and smaller. For lack of a better description, we will call them Super Grade. Super Grade Grizzlies are \$25 each. Should our limited supply be exhausted before your order is received, your check will be returned. However, we will maintain a list of these orders, and we’ll notify you should we receive additional capes at a later date.”

That’s why I had to stop advertising. I only advertised for a couple years to let people know where these hackles were coming from or where they could get the real Super Grizzly. I talked to a patent attorney to see if I could get that name copyrighted. But he said, “Well, this is a grading term. You’d have to prove you’re the first one to use it.” But this is actually where it came from, Dave Cashmere at Orvis.

Here’s kind of a human interest story here. In this article that Don Roberts wrote for the *Oregon Magazine*. He came out and took a picture, and this is the fence. I showed this slide when I did the slide show. And I’ve two others where the dogs are standing there and another one where they’re fighting. One’s on the ground with his teeth up and another one down, and I tell the story about—How I used to never let anybody see the chickens or how my cages were set up. I’ve seen in farming too much where my dad and mother used to make a living on 600 egg laying chickens a year. When the big corporations got in and started raising millions of chickens where they only made pennies per bird. All the small farmers like that got forced out. And I figured that would eventually happen to this feather raising business that I had started, so I kept everything a secret. But one day, my wife who used to go get the feed, so I had more time to pick the breeding stock and work with the chickens themselves. But the pickup broke down, so the guy that ran the feed store brought her home, and she said to me, “Can’t you show him something?” And I said, “Well, I can take him out to that building there where the steps are.” And there’s just laying hens in there. There’s nothing in there that would help anybody. So I started walking up the steps, and here he is behind me, and all of a sudden he says, “Ow!” I looked back, and Gypsy had grabbed him in the back of the calf with her teeth. And then, a couple years later, the same thing happened to our oldest son. He had moved from here and worked at Shilo restaurants in eastern states, and he got relocated here. And he went to help me unload feed, and Gypsy, the same dog, ran up and bit him in the side of the leg and tore a hole in his Levi pants and left a mark on his leg.

TB: Could you back up quick and do that other one and let me try taking a picture of that?

HH: Yes.

TB: The one, I think it was just before the ad, when you were reading that ad one.

HH: Oh, this one?

TB: Yes. I was having trouble with my camera. Let me just try...

HH: I do have a copy of this one where the paper hasn’t aged so much, it’s more white. But this is the earliest picture I have of my chickens. Randall Kaufmann came and took this picture, and this was in the back of his first catalog when he used to have a small envelope size catalog. Then later on, they used to take and bleach some of my necks and dye them these different colors. That was another one of their ads. And this was when I was still tying. You can see the neck hackles I’ve taken out of here, there’s gaps in there. I’ve taken out some of the saddles up in here that were less webby. These back here were too webby to tie with, but I’d taken the best quality ones here out.

TB: The flash kind of showed on it. I’m going to try that one again too. I’ll see what happens.

HH: People took my ad and inserted in theirs, and then Dave Inks--used to sell feathers to him, and he did an article in 1976—

(Interruption, technical difficulties)

HH: These are some of the articles. This is another one. Here's one showing the dogs, this one here. Craig Lassiter wrote that one for *Fly Fishing the West*. And then Japan, they used to run these full page ads showing the feathers. Even though there's not much water to fish over there, they really took an interest in fly fishing, and a lot of them come over here to fly fish, but they do what they can over there. In fact, when I ran that ad, 11 different companies from Japan all sent me letters. They said, "We'll buy all the hackle you have." Each one said that. And I just stayed with that [Yuki Sasano] and sold him what I could. This was the article in a German magazine here.

(Interruption)

HH: Had so few birds to pick breeders from when I first started, we used to keep some of them more than one year. Usually I didn't keep the birds past the first year because if I did my breeding correctly each year, there was better birds than there was the year before to pick from.

TB: Oh, sure.

HH: There's usually a few. Some of the birds, since you can't select the hens the same way you can the roosters for feather quality, I usually used-- You'd get some of the birds would be better than the ones before, a lot of them would be the same as what you had before, and a few would not be as good, so I always picked, you know, the best ones. So, I used to have chickens over at my folks place as well as here, and I went over there. While I was feeding the chickens or whatever, Joyce would be gathering the eggs. So this one bird, band #58 here, you can see above the long spur. When they're a year old, there's just a little nub sticking out, then each year the spur gets and a little longer until they start getting pointed. My wife would go in there to gather the eggs, and the rooster would get possessive, especially after the first year. They get more and more possessive, and they think those are their hens, you don't come in here and invade their area. It's kind of like a protective dog in a way. And so the rooster would come flying at her, and she would hold that basket of eggs up to protect her, and the rooster would stab an egg on each side with the spurs, and I thought, those eggs were too valuable. So volunteered and said, "I'll go in and gather those eggs myself." And that rooster came at me, and I put the eggs behind me. I sacrificed myself to save the eggs, and he hit me up on the thigh and spurred me right on down to the calf, coming down, one on each side, and I turned around and I kicked him up against the wall. And the next time I went in there, I saw one spur was gone. It had broken off when it hit the wall, so I called him Old One Spur after that. And I still have that in a container in another room. I saved that spur as a souvenir.

And then in this 1980 article here, I show that at that time, the saddle hackle was about the same length as what the neck hackle was. And then of course in later years, the saddle hackle got to be several times what the neck hackle was through that selective breeding.

TB: So why don't you tell me about all your awards. And don't be shy, I want to hear.

HH: The first one I got was 1994, I have in there the F.F.F. Lee Wulff Award. They award that to people who have businesses that the Federation considered substantially donated something valuable to the fly fishing industry. Metz had won that one year, and then I won it. And since then, Whiting has also won it for the work he's done in improving the quality of the roosters and supplying more people with hackle since I had it.

I won the Oregon Fly Tyer of the Year in 2000. And then, the Fly Fishing Legend Award, from the Federation of Fly Fishers in 2003. In 2007 The Federation awarded Ed Rice and me each the Don Harger Memorial Life Award. And the last one was 2008, the Buzz Buszek Award, which is their version of fly tyer of the year for the Federation of Fly Fishers.

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TB: Okay. Now, is there anything else I haven't asked you that we should talk about?

HH: Not that I can think of.

TB: Okay, maybe I'll shut this off. Maybe will you tie a fly for us if I film it?

HH: Uh, yes.

TB: Is that hard?

HH: And you can take one of these books too. I get these from the club at 5% over wholesale, and then they get the difference.

TB: Oh, wow. Okay.

HH: And our club has done what the Inland Empire did, you know, our club's is called *Northwest fly patterns & tying guide*.

TB: I just noticed it. Do all the clubs do that, or is that just you two who have done that?

HH: I don't know of any others other than these two. And so—

The president of the club at that time noticed-- Well, they have a free fishing day out at Coffinberry Lake, and we help kids learn how to fish, even bait fish or whatever they want to do it. And Chuck Cameron and myself and Bob May, mostly it's us three, oh I think there was Dick Fogel. The four of us, club members, would set up a table and do demonstration tying. The then president of the club, he says, "Well, we got some good tyers here. Why can't we do what the Empire did and show flies that we've had?"

Each newsletter, there'd be a fly of the month, and so there'd be 12 flies a year, and they'd been doing that for several years. So in 1999, we did this, and they had me do some of the dry fly patterns. A lot of the people haven't learned how to do duck quill wings. When I was learning to tie flies in the early 1950s, most flies either had hackle tip wings, duck quill wings, or just the hackle collar. They didn't have hair wing patterns like they do now, and so a lot of people haven't learned. So I'd tie those and ones like that, and I tied quite a few that was like that, the renegade and so forth. So anyway, then they got a story in here about fishing wet flies. They had me write that one, and the shad fly, I learned to tie a lot of shad flies.

And this is one of the steelhead flies. I caught quite a few steelhead on the *Fall Favorite* fly, and salmon on the *Green Wienie*, and so forth. Anyway, you'll see my flies throughout the book. I tied that one there. And Joe Miltenberger wrote an article on the nymphs. And here's my *Chickabou dragonfly*. This is Chickabou wound on the edge and then trimmed to shape to make the body and use Chicabou for the tail. And I tied this grasshopper for them, and that one. Here's a marabou leech. I tied this in different colors. I find the trout will hit red or maroon just before dark better than about any other color I could find. In the daytime, I don't use those bright colors. And here's my crab I was talking about. And the color that we have here, this is the Dungeness color.

TB: Kind of nice, a cool history too.

HH: Yes. This is Don Abing, he was with the police department. In fact, he was there guarding Arnold Schwarzenegger when he came here and made one or two—I think he did two movies. So each one of us had our own fly boxes, patterns that we like. Chuck Cameron, he's a good tyer. He's over in Washington, is a couple years older than me. He's still hanging in there. These are his patterns. Lee

Clark, I don't know if you know him. He's one of the Oregon Fly Tyers of the Year. He's famous for using macramé yarn, and he's got a book out, and he put a couple, two or three, of my flies in that I've used his material with.

This is a lady—she's won that trophy. Our club, since 1990, we go on a picnic each year. And after we've had our lunch and stuff, several of us guys have a casting competition to see who can hit targets from 15 feet to 65 feet away. And Chuck Cameron and I have kind of dominated on that. That one year she won it—this is Colleen Hanson. She won it.

TB: Really? Yes, in 2000.

HH: She's one of the ladies that's in the club that really is a good fly caster and a good fisher person. And then on page 58, I wrote what I quoted before. And then these are all patterns that I've developed and that I've caught fish on. I didn't put anything in here that I haven't actually fished.

They have a fly tying contests each issue of *Fly fishing and tying journal*, a Frank Amato publication, and I've won it about ten times over the years on that. Jim Schollmeyer, that ran the contest for a long time for the magazine, and he put 46 of my patterns in, making his book. But some of those are just patterns you—people, they don't know what the next contest is going to, and they really just tie something that looks inventive, a creative use of material that sums what the contest is on. And I always try to put a fly in there that I would fish with. And a lot of time, eventually I do get around to using it. But these are all ones that I actually have fished, like this *Necanicum Special*. I got 19 steelhead on that in the tide water. In December of 1976 we had a drought, and the fish all held up in tide water at mid-depth, just perfect for fly fishing. And I was the only one doing it for a while, and had the Necanicum River all to myself until others saw how effective the flies were working and then there were 29 people fishing that one Saturday. This short stretch of tidewater became so crowded that I could hardly catch a fish myself because I could no longer move up and down the stream and follow the fish as they cruised with the tide. Then I started selling my flies to the local shops for tidewater fishing. And these are some of the other patterns. Like this one is for silver salmon. This is an imitation of a caddis larva, and shad minnow for the Umpqua smallmouth bass, and rainbow minnow—these were good in streams. This is the one I caught most of the fish on, was that right there.

TB: Which is the orange and black Chickabou?

HH: Yes, see I tie those so I can imitate actual food, especially for trout, used more barred-olive in the lakes, and the barred-brown in the rivers. But the bass, you know, they kind of strike out of curiosity or aggression.

TB: So what's your favorite place to fish or your favorite kind of fishing? Do you prefer lake over the streams?

HH: You know, when I was younger I used to fish streams and rivers because I figured lakes are kind of hard to figure out unless you live there and fish there all the time. Where in the heck are the fish at, you know? But I used to carry 80 pound sacks of chickenfeed up a flight a stairs, and I started getting neck and back problems, and the doctor said, "Well, you're wearing out your spine." He says, "You're going to have to get some hoists." So I developed some hoists to lift the feed and stuff. And I started getting knee problems, so I found if I go on a fishing trip and walk the Deschutes River over those boulders for about three days, I'd be shot by then. But on the lake, I can have a float tube, and I can fish 10-11 days in a stretch and come back feeling the same as when I left. It's just like sitting in an easy chair. You just have to be able to cast for that many days. And so I started fishing lakes a lot. And I like the Washington lakes, Lenore and Omak a lot. I like the Columbia River for the shad fishing, although I can only do that for about five days, six days at the most, climbing up and down that riffraff.

But I started out fishing for shad on the Russian River. The first 12 fish I caught on flies were shad because there wasn't a whole lot of trout fishing on the coast. It's like here, most of the fish, by the time they get to eight inches, they go out. When the trout season opens, most of the fish have already gone out into the ocean to become steelhead, so you have to go inland. So I mostly fished the coast. Dave Hughes is in this book too. He's one of the founding members of the club. So anyway, you can take that with you.

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TB: Oh, excellent. Thank you. Okay, we'll shut this off for a minute, but I do, before we get too far from this, want to get some spelling. So like you kept referring to the guy who's-- Oh, first of all, is Andy Miner, is that Andy Miner, M-I-N-E-R?

HH: I'm trying to think where I could find his spelling real quick.

TB: And Metz. What is Metz?

HH: Oh, it's just M-E-T-Z.

TB: Okay. And what's his first name?

HH: Bucky.

TB: Okay. There's a type of chicken that was a Blue something?

HH: Oh, Blue Andalusian.

TB: And Bob Marriott, is that M-A-R-R-I-O-T?

HH: It's spelled like the Marriott Hotels. In fact, they sued him and tried to get him to change the name of his fly shop because he was using their name.

TB: But it's his name.

HH: But it's his name. It's not like he borrowed it. So they weren't successful at that.

TB: Okay. Oh, somebody shows, Chuck, his last name began with an F?

HH: Oh, Furimsky. Yes, he had us back in the year 2000, the 10th anniversary, as a reunion. Yes, I had that name in here by my...

TB: I might be able to find it. I google things—

HH: Oh, here it is. These are the breeds that I raised: Barred Plymouth Rocks, Blue Andalusians, Buff Orpingtons I raised, Brown Leghorns, White Leghorns, Black Minorcas, Silver Spangled, Hamburgs and Light Brahmas. Like right here, these last two were not very useful. I didn't get them ever again after that. And so, those are the ones I bought. I used to get like 25 of each one of those and raise them up in different colors.

Part II

TB: Okay. How about I get you tying a fly?

(The following sounds like they moved to another room, away from recording device.)

HH: Yes, here's some of the birds I had mounted.

TB: Oh, yes. (Inaudible)

HH: See this is a 1986 rooster when first I started getting 100% web free saddle hackle.

TB: Let me just grab my camera too. Oh, let me bring this too.

(Sounds of bringing recording device along on tour now, and sounds of photographs being taken on following lines.)

HH: Here's a side view of the saddle hackle. See when they're longer than the legs, that's when they start breaking feathers off up here. That's why as you see, that bird over there is bigger than the ones I'd started with and I'd already started increasing the leg length, and I started getting them bigger as time went on.



TB: Oh, okay. So this is 1995.

HH: I think both of those are, the second Barred Rock and the Silver Badger rooster I had mounted.

TB: Yes.

HH: Those are from the last year I made the birds here. Oh, Don Harger Award was what I was trying to think of, this is 2007.

TB: Oh, it's going to shine.

HH: That's what I found taking pictures of roosters—the glossy feathers had a sheen to them.

TB: Oh, that—

HH: And what's black and white there ends up kind of just a light gray blur because of the reflection.

TB: Yes, well we'll see.

HH: There's that Legend of Fly Fishing right here.

TB: Let's see if I can-- I'll do this from the side (inaudible). Oh, wow! Oh, man.

HH: Flies like this take about 4 ½ hours to make with the final. About every three years or so I'll make one of those.

TB: Oh, man, that is amazing.

HH: Black bird eating a damsel. In fact, something I did was tie a Red-Winged Blackbird with a damsel fly in its beak about to feed two chicks in a nest. I framed these in a display case and donated it to one of the F.F.F. Fly Fishing Shows.

TB: Now what do you fish—what fish likes to bite that? I mean, that's big!

HH: Largemouth black bass and pike. In times I've taken those flies to the shows, people have asked me that question, and—

TB: Because that is big.

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HH: This Randy Stonebreaker, from Wyoming, caught this bass, and he had his daughter take this picture. And if you look close—this light’s not too good over here—but, you can see a toenail there and one here on what we’d call the thumb, and there’s probably another one there, another one over here, and the feathers. So that was some kind of black bird that bass had swallowed, so he gave me that picture so when people ask I show them this picture. And this is something else I did, I got the case-- I’ve been wanting to get time to do this again. I tied a full size one like this, which is actually smaller than what a blackbird is, but there’s a limit to how big you can go. So anyway, I tied two small ones. I bought a bird’s nest from a craft shop, put the two small ones in the nest, put the mother with the damsel in its mouth like it’s trying to feed them, and then they auctioned that off at the conclave.

TB: Wow. Wow, that’s amazing. Now where is Randall Kaufmann? Did he go to Wyoming or Montana, or somebody said he left Oregon?

HH: Yes, in fact, their business just went bankrupt. I never thought that would happen. But they went bankrupt. Fly shops are having kind of a tough time.

TB: Yes, I know the Tacoma one has closed down. So did they go to Montana, then? Or do you know where they went? It doesn’t matter. Someone thought they went to—

HH: This is a fly I used to catch the sharks on and stingrays.

TB: Is that—it’s a soft hackle. What’s the name of that one?

HH: Oh, that’s a soft hackle. There’s no Chickabou. The Chickabou would be down lower on the feather. This is soft hackle tipped. If you’re not familiar with the Chickabou-- Well, here’s that article—

TB: Oh, by McClane, okay.

HH: Yes, I’ve kept that all these years.

TB: *Field & Stream*, 1955, “Feather Merchant,” by A.J. McClane.

HH: That was an interesting article. He talks about Harry Darbee raising the birds, and then getting the feathers. See this Murray McMurray Hatchery ad from the *Field & Stream* magazine, this is how I got my start, I’d buy their stuff. Like I said, sight unseen.

I had only enough feathers for one or two shops in each state. I kind of picked what I thought was the best ones. I sold to Ned Gray who had Sierra Tackle in Montrose, California. When he died from cancer Bob Mariott kept after me, he wanted to buy my hackle for that Southern California market. And I said, “I don’t have enough. I’m always running out.”

I was telling my wife every week when somebody would write from their shop and say, “can we get on your list?” And then I’d have to say, “No,” and I’d tell my wife to write the letter. I could hardly stand to do it anymore. And Dr. Whiting with the bigger operation sells to all these people I turned down.

My wife and I did all this work ourselves and didn’t have hired help, so we were just about working us all to death.

But you can see the saddles get down here.

TB: Oh, man.

HH: And they’ll step on those ends. And since when the feathers become non-molting, there’s not that little button up there to hold the feathers in. They’re just that fine quill. I bred them for a fine quill, and that would just pull out. You had to be very careful when you caught the birds that you didn’t end up with a handful of loose hackle in your

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hands. And these are the knee hackles I tie with, and I might tie a Knee Hackle Special while you're here. I'll see what I've got in the front here. And this is another one. And this is the breast feathers here. And the Chickabou, between the legs here—I'll show you in the patch where that comes from when I work with that. Joe Warren wrote an article about the Chickabou in—

TB: Oh, *Fly Tying*.

HH: --in the *Fly Tying* magazine.

TB: And what year is that, what date is that? Fall 1997.

HH: Yes. And then he showed some of the steps there I used, showing the different feathers. Like this is part of a turkey marabou, and this is the same thing. This is blood marabou, and this is what it looks like on the chicken. So one of the ties I'll probably tie are going to demonstrate how you get the nice, thin body with that. And this is hackle, this is a knee hackle, and this is off the breast here. This is off the tail, the . . . uses Chickabou in there. And this is off the side of the breast, under the wings here. So this whole thing—it's patches off the breast, and this is showing the different areas the feathers come off. So he did a good job illustrating that. And some more of the patterns—this is showing how I clipped the body to make these dragonflies and crab patterns. He's showing how I sheared off one side, and I shear off the other side. I used to do the whole thing, but then it's hard to tell where the hook is, and you end up lopsided, so I pre-trim it, and then wrap 'em, and then trim 'em some more until I get that actual shape I want.

Then Dave Hughes wrote an article for *Angler* magazine—I think this is a couple years earlier.

TB: Oh, yes, it's January/February 1995.

HH: So anyway, he wrote this article. It shows a damsel fly I fish with a lot. And this is a, I think, oh, this was the Federation magazine where I'm doing the crayfish, showing step-by-step how to do it. Darrel Martin did this one here in 1998 on steps—I don't have all of it here. It's gotten misplaced. This is a 31-inch Lehontan cutthroat trout I caught at Lenore Lake on a size 10 chironomid, one of the patterns I invented. And up at Omak Lake, I caught them at 31, 30, 28, and 27. I never caught a 29-inch—that's the only size I haven't caught on at Omak Lake.

And then here's the article--Whiting's talking about he's breeding for longer legs—didn't mention I was the one that started that. So people tell me, "Oh yes, Whiting's breeding for longer legs on his chickens now. Isn't that something?" And here's Dave Hughes in 1986 quoting me for saying, "Well, I'm going to have to start raising birds with longer legs to get longer saddles."

TB: So did Whiting approach you when he wanted to buy, I mean, when he wanted to start doing it, or you just met him and seemed like a good deal, or how did--?

HH: How all this business of selling the birds kind of evolved was that Dave Inks introduced me to Carey Quarles, who had what was called Colorado Hackle, who wanted to buy my business. A tentative deal with Carey fell through, but Tom Whiting, who had been a student of Carey at a college in Denver, where Carey taught classes about poultry, heard about the business and contacted me.

In February 1989 Tom, who was getting a doctorate degree in poultry science and genetics, worked out a deal where I would ship him 23,000 hatching eggs. In this deal I was able to continue raising birds here in Oregon for another five years.

During these five years Dr. Whiting paid me to do consulting for him and to spend 1 to 4 weeks each year helping select the roosters to use as breeders at his place.

TB: Okay.

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HH: Let me bring you a chair.

TB: Oh, I'll be okay. I'm going to kind of play with this stuff. I just want to figure out a place to put this.

HH: If you want—well, see—

TB: You know what—

HH: You could see more from the back side.

TB: Okay.

HH: I've got too much stored here.

TB: You know what, this is the time I am going to quick grab that bigger thing.

(Interruption, equipment change)

TB: Seems like such a big thing to—

HH: Did you want something to drink? We've got Diet Pepsi...

TB: Oh, I'm fine. I stopped at Fred Meyer's and got a water and a coffee before I came. I came from Lacey this morning.

HH: I've heard of Lacey—

TB: It's by Olympia.

HH: Oh, yes.

TB: It's an easy drive from Bellingham to kind of get out of town, otherwise I tend to hem and haw in the morning.

HH: I'm trying to get my foot rest over there.

(Long pause in recording)

TB: Oh, this is a two-hour one. I thought the other one was a two-hour one. Oh well.

HH: You running out of time on it?

TB: No, I've got plenty of time.

HH: Oh, good. Something I tie with I evolved is these third-hand tools that go on a vice to hold materials. See what I've got here. (Inaudible) I might get some material over here (inaudible). Got ties there. My son goes up and gets steamer clams, and I found a useful use for those.

TB: Oh, the little tray for your stuff?

HH: Well, I developed the system of putting base wraps of polyester 100% spun sewing thread that creates a rough surface, where I tie in monofilament shims to hold dumbbell eyes so they don't work loose when you're fishing them. I put the Zap CA (super glue), that is the thin form of Zap-A Gap, into one of the clam shells. Then spread a

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thin coat of that over the Polyester thread wraps. On small hooks I use a flat sided tooth pick, on larger hooks I use a coffee stirring stick to dip out a little from the clam shell. If you try to put the glue on directly from the tube it will drip on your pants or you will get too much on the fly, or whatever, or it drips on your spool of thread and ruining it, so I use the clam shells instead. I first started using the shells to mix epoxy in. Now I go to buffet restaurants and save steamer clam shells from my dinner. After washing and drying the shells I sort them by size and glue the larger half shell onto a piece of card board.

The alligator clips of a third hand tool hold this shell on to the vise or the third hand tool can be mounted on a separate piece of wood with a section of 3/8th doweling to attach the third hand to, and have this set-up next to the vice. I like to put a smaller loose shell into the larger one and use a smaller size alligator clip to hold this second shell in place. A small piece of aluminum foil folded over the two shells keeps the super glue from drying out. The sharpened end of a flat tooth pick can be dipped into the clam shell and a drop of the super glue applied as head cement to finish the fly. The inter-one of the two shells can be thrown away or wiped clean with a piece of paper towel after each tying sessions.

The clam shells also make good receptacles for beads or small hooks. Sometimes when I'm tying just one or two small flies I'll use a Pistachio nut shell instead of the clam shell to hold the glue.

These are some of the techniques that I've worked on. That's what I call tying innovations. I try to invent things to make fly tying easier. Frank Amato Publications put 31 of my fly tying tips in our Rainland Fly Caster's club book, *Northwest Fly Pattern's & Tying Guide*.

See this is off the breast of the rooster, these are the flank feathers, kind of like what you have on a wood duck, except these are off the chicken. The tip of these feathers can be used for soft hackle on Steelhead, Bass and larger Trout flies. The lower part of these has what I call the flank chickabou. Sections of this can be used for tails on nymphs like on the damsel nymph I'm going to tie for you.

In fly shops they sell what is called blood marabou that comes from Turkeys. A much smaller version of this comes off the chickens belly, I call this the small chickabou plumes. We'll be using one of those in a little bit to tie the body of the fly. Here is a swimming nymph hook see where I have the eyes tied in.

TB: Oh, okay.

HH: You can buy the green or black eyes from like Spirit River, packaged up they come in about 10¢ apiece when you buy them. But if I want to imitate an insect that has the amber eyes or brown eyes, then I make my own out of monofilament. Let's see what I've got here. These hooks here are pretty much at random-- Oh, I know. Excuse me a minute, I've got a thing with hooks, let me show you what I have over here.

People who go to shows or take materials with them when they go on fishing trips might try this system. You can use quart size bags to put small groups of feathers, or you can organize your hooks, like this is 18-20's, and 16's, 14's, 12's after that, 10's, 8's, 6's, 4's and 2's, and have separate slide lock re-sealable bags for each size of hook, staple each bag to a narrow piece of cardboard, punch 3 1/4 inch hinge holes in the cardboard and connect the bags together to make a spiral bound book with cable ties. Use gallon size bags to make a set to hold larger items, like rooster neck or the soft hackle patches.

So to create a base so those eyes don't work loose, take this rough, it's almost furry-like, this sewing thread that's 100% spun polyester. Some of it's cotton covered. I avoid that and try and get this rough type. Put a base of this down. If I'm doing large dumbbell eyes, I run a piece of monofilament down each side for a shim, and then I've got squared off shoulders to hold those eyes. Instead of having something like this, which is round in the center. Sitting on something else that's round, it's going to want to rock. By having those monofilament shims, that's why I have different size monofilament spools over here for different size flies.

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For the damsel, the thread itself will create enough, and I'll take a pair of needle nose pliers and flatten that out to create a flat surface for the eyes to sit on. Well, here's some Super Glue. And I usually use Zap, the thin form—there's Zap-A-Gap, which is kind of thick, and then I use the thin because I want this to soak in without leaving a smooth surface to it. So I squeeze a little bit into a clam shell, just enough in this case to do one fly. Normally, I do 12 hooks at a time, and so when I go to tie, it's already then like part of them, and I don't waste as much cement. And then I take a flat sided toothpick-- On big flies, I use a swizzle stick, which is wider than this, but for this, this little toothpick will do it, and I just pick up a little of that, put it on the thread wraps, turn it over, hit the other side. And I usually have a paper towel here handy.

Yes, here's one, wick up any extra, and that way, like I said, I avoid having the glue create a smooth surface itself. I want that to stay rough to help hold those eyes in place. And normally, like I said, I would have the hooks up here on these magnets, go from there to here, lock them in and put the thread on, and then line them all up, and then glue 12 at a time. And that way, you don't have the glue drying out and having to reopen the glue and close it, and reopen and close it all the time, especially if you know you're going to tie a dozen flies of a certain size.

Now that that's had time to dry out, I'll get some regular tying thread here. I like to have 8-0 for this. Capture that, cut that off close. Tying the eyes, I like to tie them at a little bit of an angle, and then when you twist them, that torque will help tighten that thread even more. And we leave room to make a nice looking head. And then I still have the Zap handy, so I'll use a toothpick to put some around those eyes. Just a little shorter shank hook than I usually do this on, but it should work okay. And then for the tail, I get this very soft material off the side of the flank feather here, what I call the flank Chickabou, take a pinch of that. As long as you keep these ends here even, squeeze it together, your tips are going to be even. If you try to do this with the big marabou, a lot of times the ends are all over the place, and then you break them off. You lose a lot of that fine action because you're stiffening up the feather by taking off those fine tips.

Then I go down to this part of the patch and get what I call the small Chickabou plume. I look at these to see if there's broken fibers. Sometimes against cages, they'll break some of these finer fibers. And if they're broken-- when I'm selling these I check to see how good it is. If there are very many, I grade them down to a 2 or 3. Most the time, these feathers in here are about the same, but these here vary according to that. There's what they call a filoplume on here, sometimes also known as an after shaft. I tie little size 20 up to size 12, depending on how big they are. Two turns of filoplume makes a marabou collar on the really small nymphs—very effective fly. To keep from having excess bulk at the tie in point here, I break out this tip. In fact, I use part of that tip to make the tail on the filoplume nymphs. I stick that in the third-hand tool so it doesn't get blown away or lost. Then to make a section to tie in to make the hurl-like body, you take and run your fingers down the feather, keep going, until you got just the tip sticking out, like that. Then you capture those tips with the thread. Then if you have your ribbing wire on revolving spools like this set up here—I use Tinker Toys.

TB: I saw that.

HH: Back in the '60s, my daughter got too old for them. I kind of confiscated them and made my own setup. In fact, when I used to tie commercially, I used to have this up higher. I had a whole table made out of peg board, and I had different materials coming out, and I had one of these come up higher, and I'd have straws and have the materials feeding out of these straws. I could just reach out there to the straws and pick out what I needed and chop it off as I needed it. Anyway, with this coming off from a revolving spool, you never have to cut the wire or throw any of it away. When I used to tie commercially, I used to throw away as much wire as I put on the fly.

I take my thumb and forefinger and fold the tip of the wire over, so that can't pull out. A lot of times when you first make that first rib, it'll suck out of there, and then you don't have a rib on the fly. Or sometimes the fish will, especially the Lehontan cutthroat with their big teeth, it'll rip that ribbing loose, and this prevents that. Now I have a rope of Chickabou to wind to make the body. I just wind that up and it makes a tapered body. If I had a longer shanked hook, it would show it even better. This is only about 1 or 2x long, and I usually go about 3x long. Clip that off, and then there's the filoplume. I put that in the third-hand tool either there or over here. I've got bead chain eyes in it now. I put that in there.

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So I'm going to do a *Filoplume nymph*, which is about a 2-minute fly, just the tail, the body and the hackle. Then when I get to there, I bring my bobbin rest up, make a little whip finish so it doesn't fall over the end, add in that, hold this steady and revolve this. This gives you your counter rib through it, and it gives a segmented look, and helps strengthen it. Then I take one turn around the eye, and then go back that way. Now I've got the rib and the thread both going in the same direction, so you don't loosen that rib by having to go against it.

And the book we were talking about shows cutting the wire with scissors. I actually, myself, never ever do that. I just pull tight on the thread, tight on the wire and twist the wire around in a circle and it breaks off cleanly at the tipoff point.

TB: Oh, okay.

HH: Now I tie some soft hackle fibers from a rooster breast feather onto each side of the damsel nymph. You want to have those placed just behind and under the eyes.

You can put chickabou down each side, but I find the fish usually break it off, or maybe it's the angler when releasing the fish. And once you break it off from one side of your fly, it's out of balance. The soft hackle gives the fly more durability.

Having the feather in a third hand tool makes it easier to pluck or cut off the soft hackle fibers you need from the quill. Take fibers from one side of the quill, then turn the feather around in the third-hand tool and take fibers straight across from where you got that first clump. Because the feather will change contours and stiffness as you work down the quill, you will always want to go straight across as you go.

I only use one or two turns of thread at first to hold down the second clump of hackle fibers until I'm sure their even in length on each side of the hook.

Sometimes I hold a white business card or something behind the fly to judge if I've got the hackle the same length on each side. Yes, that looks even on each side for length.

I like to use beaver or muskrat for dubbing. But if you don't happen to have it handy at the time or some that matches what the rest of the fly looks like, I've learned that I can take the actual chickabou for dubbing. I take out no more than about two stands at a time and lay them on the thread, keep this thin because I'm just making a head and covering up the thread wraps. That should probably do it. And then wrap in between, crossover, cover everything up that's showing through, around the eyes, finish up at the head. Turn the hook over so the whip finish can't slide off over the eye when you're doing this. I learned the whip finish by hand before they invented the whip finish tool. I never have learned to use one of those. Put an extra one in case this wears out.

TB: Now did any of your children end up getting into fly fishing?

HH: No. When we had the chickens, we were so busy, I couldn't hardly take them fishing. I did teach my next to oldest to fly fish a little bit, and we're thinking about going out to Lake Lenore in about three weeks. I've had good luck up there, and get him away from the spinning outfit and back into fly fishing.

And then, when I was doing commercial tying, I invented this system of using wine corks with three different sizes of wire going through them. With a fine wire, it's picking up a small drop of head cement, and I use a bamboo skewer and drill hole, and so this can be slid up and down to adjust to whatever depth the head cements is, and I usually fill the bottle only about a third full of head cement. If I want a bigger drop for a bigger fly, I've got M marked on the cork for medium, of course with a medium wire. Then the heavy wire for big flies, where I want to pick up a bigger drop of head cement.

The standard bodkin has tapered wire, and usually the head cement will want to go up this thicker part, but the piano wire I use isn't tapered, so the cement stays right at the tip where you want to keep it. Especially like in a dry fly, you don't want to glue up into the hackle, so you have better control with a straight wire.

And if you have about two more minutes, I can make a fly with the filoplume.

TB: Sure.

HH: I just have to get a smaller hook, see what size this filoplume will tie. Looks like a 16 to me. For when I'm traveling, where I'm going to be tying several flies, I put these hooks and beads together on a thin piece of fine straw. So they don't get separated. I find a lot of the fish have seen so many gold and silver beads pass them that they kind of get weary of them, so I've been using these either purple, black or green iris beads. See, there's some of several colors in there. This one happens to be green, which will match the feather we're using. This is thin enough straw I can just pull that out of there without having dulled the hook or anything. This very fine straw I got at the food warehouse place.

TB: Oh, okay.

HH: This might be an 18. Boy, I'd probably better go with 18. That's a pretty narrow feather here. That's one of the few that doesn't have a good filoplume. That's pretty weak there. Usually they're bigger on the flank feather than they are on the small Chickabou one. Yes, let me get an 18 out of here. Yes, 18's, other one's 20's. And I keep a pair of stamp tongs here. They are very good for fishing stuff like this out of the bag. One thing I found handy is go to Rite-Aid. Instead of using metal threaders that you buy from fly shops for \$2.00, \$3.00 or \$4.00, or whatever they cost, for about \$3.00, you can get 20 of these nylon butler gum floss threaders. They're like 15¢ apiece, and they work much better, and they don't scratch the inside of your bobbin tube.

To use one of these, put your spool in and get your thread hanging on the outside, run this right up the thread, take the small end, poke it in, it comes out, pull it, and quick you're threaded. When I tie with beads, I like to do a base wrap just where the bead is going to go, run the thread right up behind the eye, kick the bead forward, and take a turn over the beads, secure the thread behind it. Now the bead crosses over on top, and the bead's kind of closing some of your gap. On these small ones, you have less room to hook the fish. A lot of times you can turn this over because the bead is sitting down on the hook, and if you turn it over a lot of times the thread tension will push it up against the bottom side of the hook and give you more clearance to hook the fish. I like to turn the hook about 45 degree angle so I can see if I'm hitting that thread on the hook.

One time I went to go fishing and I had the thread wrapped right around the point like that, and I had never realized that I'd done that. Now take the feather I saved here in the third-hand tool. This is way too much for a tail for that small a hook, so I take and cut that quill in here again. And that part in the center would make a tail, or I can take this remaining part here. On a bigger one I would squeeze those together and use that for a tail. For this small a one I cut it off of one side and use what's left. That gives me a nice soft tail that's going to have lots of action. Now if this was a bigger hook, I would take one of these small Chickabou plumes again and wrap it up to make the body. When I go this small, I go back to using loose stands of Chickabou for dubbing, and these three strands here will be enough to make that whole body. I just take two of them, wrap them together. I've got four, okay, I'll wrap those other two here. There's my dubbing. And just wrap that on up.

On bigger hooks I'll use a wire rib here. I just got the thread wrapped in there. And my filoplume is over here, pluck that off of there. The quills have quite a bit of taper. That's one of the things I tried to breed out of the neck and saddle hackle, but there's still some in these. This tip's going to break anyway, so I'll go ahead and break that off ahead of time. This is going to want to twist here—it's a little too heavy, cut some of that out. Then I cut on each side. Rather than strip those barbs off of there, I cut them. That leaves a little stubble—what I call a railroad track. That takes less turns of thread to secure that. A lot of the flies you see, even in the better fly shops, they use a whole bunch of thread behind the bead to hold it there, and that creates bulk where you least want to have it. So by having that area that's almost no bigger than what that original hook size was, I can tie that quill down, get that

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secured down close to the hook, use hackle pliers. I leave them in the open position. If you leave them closed all the time, that constant spring tension will ruin that rubber pretty fast. It'll compress it and make it hard. So I only put that together on days I'm using it. And one or two turns will make this-- That looks pretty bushy, but when that's wet that'll slim down and look more like individual hackle fibers, more like legs. Cut that quill. And now I can put the whip finish between the hackle and the bead. And like I said, being down tight to the hook and behind the bead, both the feather and the thread are protected. You try to put head cement in there, the soft material will wick that up and completely ruin it. So by having it this way, you don't need the head cement. And I usually like to get a close finish. I just use a razor blade and pull tight, to cut the thread.

TB: Cool.

HH: So that's your *Filoplume nymph*.

When I do these big feathers like this, instead of throwing this part away like I used to for years, I put 'em in a jar. And then if I ever want to just tie filoplume nymphs, I can just fish the color I need out of the jar, and I've got the material I need.

TB: Very cool. Well, thank you.

HH: Hooked those two flies on a business card for you for samples.

TB: Thank you.

HH: This works with bigger hooks. Hope I can get that past the barb. Yeah, there you go. Yeah, that's that one.

TB: Oh, excellent.

What did your parents think of you switching from raising chickens for eggs or chickens to making them into hackle, breeding them for hackle?

HH: Yes, when I was in the army, I thought when my dad was about ready to retire, I'd take over the business he had, which was actually small compared to what this was—600 laying hens each year, and it only took like an hour a day to feed 'em and gather the eggs. And I'd have another 7 or 8 hours to tie flies and make an extra income, and then be able to afford to go on some fishing trips. So when I was in the army, like I said, the big corporations, especially like—

TB: Oh, they took that over.

HH: --back in Georgia and places where labor was cheap, they started raising big huge amounts. And all the places in California where I was, like Petaluma used to be the "egg basket of the world." All those places went out of business. So by the time I got home, it was just empty chicken houses. And then I moved to Oregon. I tied a few flies. I was all alone and my parents were still trying to sell their place in California, so I was up here alone occupying their place. I found it very boring, tedious to tie flies, especially when the Japanese were selling them for 9¢ a fly over here. But then I started logging. This other guy got me back interested in it, and I was teaching him how to tie flies, so then I got selling his flies and some of mine to Poulson, and then I started getting into the feathers, and made a small amount of money on the flies.

At first my parents thought I was wasting my time because I wasn't making any money on the feathers and getting divorced over it and everything else. Then when I showed them that ad from Orvis where they were selling back east, I was only at that time getting \$6.00 a neck from Dennis Black. I didn't realize that they were retailing for \$15.00 up to \$25.00 like that. And then I renegotiated the contract, got the price up some. And then the Russians started buying our grain, and then the price of feed doubled, and I still wasn't making money. So I paid Dennis

Black \$8,000 to get out of that exclusive sales contract, and then started selling to the people he was selling to and getting 60% of their retail. Then we started making money on it.

TB: So then your parents thought it was okay?

HH: Then they thought it was okay.

TB: Great, thank you. Okay, well this has been great. Thank you very much, and I guess we'll call it a wrap here. Yeah, okay, and we're done here too.