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This interview was conducted with Carol Ferrera Johnson at her home in Stanwood, Washington, on Sunday, March 24, 2019. The interviewer is Tamara Belts.

TB: Today is Sunday, March 24, 2019, and I'm here with Carol Ferrera Johnson. We are going to do an oral history with Carol, and then a little bit about her husband, Les.

So our first question is: How did you get started fly fishing?

CFJ: I used to go on vacation with my sister and brother-in-law. This was after I was divorced. They affectionately referred to me as their third kid. They lived in Post Falls, Idaho and vacations were always spent camping on a river. My brother-in-law was a self-taught fly fisherman. He had done it all of his life. He wasn't a big joiner into clubs or anything like that but he just loved to fish. So after being on vacation with them many, many times, I was thinking, gosh, that looks really, really

cool.

After being on vacation with them (I think it was sometime in the late 1980's), I came back home to Seattle and saw an ad in the paper for a UW Experimental College class on fly fishing. So I said, okay, I'm going to take that class. I did and I loved it!! There was only one other woman in the class. The class was taught by Dana Botcher, who I've known over the years since. Dana was a member of a fly fishing club Les and I joined years later. He did a really good job teaching the class. I know several others who took his fly fishing class. I think it was a six-week course, and he tried to cover as much as he could about fly fishing, which is basically nothing when you think about it. I realized from the start that I would never know it all, that it was something that would always be challenging and something that would never be boring. That was something I really liked about it. As part of the six week class, Dana took us to Rocky Ford Creek for a weekend outing and we actually got to give fly fishing a try.

But that being said, I didn't feel comfortable with knowing anything much about fly fishing. And I didn't know anybody in Seattle who went fly fishing. I only get to practice when I'd go on vacation with my sister and brother-in-law. And that's not a good way to learn fly fishing!! I felt intimidated when I'd go into a fly shop to buy something because I really didn't know what I needed. In those days, women were

either ignored as customers or would be asked what you were there to buy for your husband/brother/father/boyfriend. It was really intimidating.

Then, one summer I came back from vacationing with my sister and saw an ad in the paper for the Northwest Women Fly Fishers. I thought, oh my gosh! There are other ladies that like to fly fish! I think the Northwest Women Fly Fishers started in 1989 and I joined in 1990.

But by the time I joined NWF, they were meeting at a restaurant on 45th in Seattle, kind of down at the end of 45th. I don't remember the name of the restaurant. There weren't too many members. But it was just so great to run into this group of ladies. First, many of these ladies were really good fly fishers. But then there were other ladies like me that [were] just getting started. We knew that we liked fly fishing and here were a group of very knowledgeable fly fishing ladies we could ask fly fishing questions without feeling intimidated. The club had outings, really great outings! We had so much fun. We'd bring a pot luck dish to share for dinner on Saturday night. So it was a good sisterhood too. We were all doing something we loved which was fly fishing. I can tell you that it doesn't matter if you're male or female, when the fly fishing bug hits you, it really hits hard, and gender doesn't matter (laughing).

I think part of what was accomplished by the Northwest Women Fly Fishers was that it helped the fly fishing community recognize that women were another marketing population. When I first started fly fishing, we didn't have waders, boots, vests or any fly fishing apparel that fit. We had to buy products made for men. I remember that we liked shopping at the Swallow's Nest because they carried fishing apparel in women's sizes. The owner of the Swallow's Nest and those employed there (Les, Mike KInney and Dan Lemaish), were very supportive of women in fly fishing. They never ignored us and were always helpful answering our questions.

TB: Oh nice, nice.

CFJ: Yes. [As] a matter fact, I still have the vest that I bought there. So that was a good place for us to go when we needed anything for fly fishing.

But back to the Northwest Women Fly Fishers. We started having our Christmas celebration, at a place called the Fish Café or something like that. It was located in Kirkland and a really nice place! And of course as part of the party we would have a raffle. The fly shops were very supportive with their donations so we got a lot of stuff (laughing). These events just kept getting bigger and bigger and bigger, and of course we invited the guys, and they enjoyed themselves.

Then we moved the event to a different location. One of the girl's, mom belonged to the College Club in Seattle and through her we were able to hold our gala at the College Club. By that time, we added an auction to the gala and we had an auctioneer. What was his name? **[Jerry Toner?]** It's really crazy because the church I belong to now just had an auction and Jerry Toner was the auctioneer (laughing). So he's made this his profession, and he's done really well at it. I remember the lapels on his tuxedo. They would light up and flash when the bidding really got going good. It was a lot of fun.

So we had our galas at this really nice place. And of course we didn't wear our waders to the party. We got all gussied up in our long black dresses and our rhinestone earrings. There was always a nice dinner. The guys dressed up too but not in tuxedos. And being women, we knew how to put on a gala like that.

We put a lot of time and effort into it. We got a lot of fly fishing stuff from the fly shops, dealers and other organizations. I remember we would group items together and make baskets and that kind of thing.



Pictures of NWF gala / auction/ raffle at Collage Club in Seattle

We had a raffle and then the live auction. We did really well, and all the proceeds went to conservation projects. That was a good part of it as well.

TB: So did you have some special conservation projects? Or did you support other organizations that were doing that?

CFJ: We would let different conservation groups know about our desire to support conservation projects. The conservation groups could ask for our support by submitting to us information about what they did. Very similar to what NFA (Northwest Fly Anglers) is doing right now. They give money to support conservation projects. The membership votes on the project after reviewing a choice of three projects. That's kind of how that happened. But obviously all of the fly fishing groups were supportive of that of our conservation goals.

TB: So did you meet monthly, every other month, or?

CFJ: We met monthly.

TB: Okay. And then you probably had a speaker.

CFJ: Yes, we had a speaker.

TB: So were a lot of them women, men, or a little mix of everything?

CFJ: Everything, everything. It didn't matter. We had good speakers. About a year ago, I rejoined the Northwest Fly Anglers. Les and I had belonged years before but we didn't always attend the meetings. After rejoining, I noted how different our meetings (NWF) were. The first NFA meeting I attended had a speaker I really wanted to hear. I was so disappointed that the speaker was scheduled to speak after the club business issues and then various members gave fishing reports. There were quite a number of fishing reports and by the time we got to the speaker he only had 20 minutes to speak. He had prepared an hour's presentation. I thought that was just awful. Our NWF meetings were organized differently. Speakers were first. They gave their talk, there was a short social break and the speaker left the meeting. Then we would have business meeting.

So I'm missing the club (laughing). One of the reasons why the club dissolved was because women are now accepted into any of the fly fishing clubs that are members of the FFI (Fly Fishing International). FFI will not recognize a club if they don't allow women. So okay, yes, I get it, but it's not the same. It's just not.

TB: So it was a real intentional decision to disband?

CFJ: [Yes]. What happened was the same members always got stuck doing all the work and it was just getting hard. Everybody was getting older and we were seeing that we were finally accepted in the fly fishing community and other fly fishing clubs. Industry (fly fishing) saw that we would spend money on fly fishing gear. Not all of them have gotten that message yet, but some of them have, so it's not impossible to find [gear] that fits.

TB: Did you fly fish year round when you were fly fishing, or did you pretty much stick to summer?

CFJ: For the most part with the girls (NWF), it was spring, summer, and early fall. I do remember times when Les and I fished in the winter, especially when he was working in Jackson Hole. (Laughing) I remember how our fly lines would ice up and it was very, very cold (laughing)!

TB: Were you mainly freshwater? Did you get into the saltwater? Or did you do a little bit of a mix of everything or?

CFJ: At first the club did mostly just freshwater, lakes and a lot of rivers. Les gave some talks on beach fishing and we had a few beach fishing local outings.

TB: And so did you get into the fly tying piece of it?

CFJ: Oh yes. I took numerous fly tying classes. As a matter of fact, it was the Washington Fly [Fishing] Club that gave really good lessons. And the guys were very supportive. I took fly tying classes from others as well, Alec Jackson being one of them. But anyway, yes, we got into fly tying.

Les and I would usually go to the FFI Fly Tying Expos in Ellensburg and/or Eugene. He was usually tying at the Expos. I had a lot of fly tying material and of course, Les had a lot of fly tying material. Would you like to see our fly tying cabinet?

TB: Yes. Let's finish [first with the talking part].

CFJ: Okay, we'll finish this.

TB: Yes. The next question might be then: How did you and Les meet? Because you were already fly fishing before you met Les.

CFJ: Right. I had been fishing quite a few years before we met. Les came as a guest of another member to one of our galas. I don't remember exactly the occasion. I think it was our Christmas party but maybe it was some other function. Les sat at the same table I was at. And I'll never forget afterwards. I was cleaning up, clearing off the tables and everything, and he was right behind me trying to start up a conversation. And I just didn't want to talk to him (laughing). So I think he kind of thought, well, she's a real snob (laughing).

TB: You were busy. You were trying to –

CFJ: That was how it started anyway. But then, we would run into each other. I would see him at other club's functions and I attended presentations he gave. Then, one day he called and asked if I would do an article for one of the magazines. He was the editor of *Fly Fishing and Tying* magazine at the time.

TB: Okay.

CFJ: I just said, Oh, I'm too busy. And I really was. I mean, not only was I involved with the Northwest Women Fly Fishers, I also belonged to another group. It was a singles activities group, not a dating group, but it was called Queen Anne Singles. Plus my work and my kids, and I was busy (laughing). So I said, I have too much on my plate right now. Call me back in a year. So he did. Almost

to the day. Oh my gosh! I thought, 'this guy is like fly paper'. I'm just going to have to do it and get it over with. So I said okay.

TB: So what was your article on? Just women's experience with fly fishing or?

CFJ: No, I don't remember exactly what it was. It wasn't anything great, let me tell you (laughing). I think it was something maybe about women being interested in -- I don't know. Anyway, Les suggested that we meet someplace to discuss the article? I lived by Green Lake at the time. So we did. We had lunch and did that a couple of times. Then one day he said, well, do you want to go fishing? And I thought, yes (laughing). So the first place we went fishing was at Lincoln Park. We fished off the beach for salmon. And I just had a fabulous time, every time I went with Les. He was just so much fun, and so, you know, we became friends. He got on my friends list -- and it just went from there (laughing).

TB: Well then, why don't you tell me a little bit more about Les, kind of while we're talking about him, I mean, I just know he wrote quite a few books.

CFJ: Yes.

TB: And I know that he was very into the gear kind of thing.

CFJ: Yes. But Les was also known, I think, more for his conservation efforts. I think the community kind of credits him with protecting sea-run cutthroat. He did that by being kind of an activist. He was the one that went down to Olympia, when they had those hearings and did a lot of screaming and yelling and that kind of thing. I didn't know him in those days, but I think that's how he became kind of the cutthroat guy. They do credit him with having saved the sea-run cutthroat because we got the regulations put on, catch-and-release.

TB: So that's probably when he met Bruce Ferguson? Because I think Bruce Ferguson was very much into going to all the gaming commission meetings and --

CFJ: You know, I never asked him how those two got together, but they were very good friends. As a matter fact, Bruce was best man at our wedding.

You know, they wrote -- the book together.¹ And both very adamant about that. Bruce and Les were about as different as they came, but they were still the best of friends. Les was a Democrat, Bruce was a Republican. They took politics off the table. Bruce was very well-to-do. He was successful himself but he also had family money. Les was not rich (laughing). Bruce was very tall, Les was very short (laughing). But they both loved fishing and both were very concerned about conservation issues.

TB: And I'm really sorry I missed [doing an oral history with Les] -- because we did an oral history with Bruce Ferguson, and one with Pat Trotter --

CFJ: Oh you did?

¹ Bruce Ferguson, Les Johnson and Pat Trotter. *Fly fishing for Pacific salmon*. Portland, Oregon: Frank Amato Publications, 1985-2008. 2 volumes.

TB: And after I did Pat Trotter was when I was going to go do Les, when I couldn't find your house, that same day.

CFJ: Had Les had his stroke?

TB: Yes, he had had a stroke. I re-read both Bruce's and Pat's before I came, for what things they talked about.

CFJ: Oh good, then you could tell me something about that.

TB: Well only that they really, at least the Pat Trotter one especially talks about Les being, in terms of that book especially, doing more of the [gear and equipment] pieces and stuff. I've kind of forgotten who wrote what.

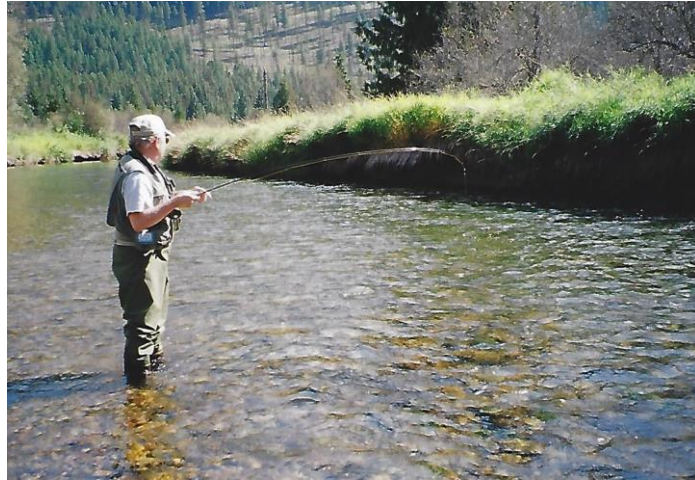
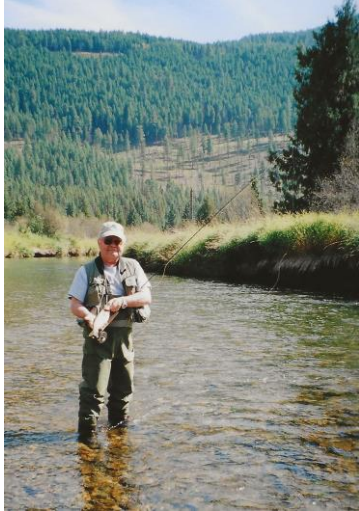
CFJ: Well, I'll tell you more about that. Les did know a lot about gear. He became well acquainted with lots of different gear when he was editor of *Fly Fishing and Tying Journal*. He worked with TFO and helped evaluate their rods before they got to market. I remember that Dick Sagara, who was a TFO rep, would send new rods to Les to try out and evaluate. He knew that Les and I fished together so he always sent two of the same rod – one for Les (the evaluator) and one for me. We have quite a collection of fly rods!! Also reels, fly lines, fly tying material etc.

TB: I think he's also very much a freshwater guy, even though it sounds like you also went fishing on –

CFJ: Les was the freshwater guy?

TB: I think so.

CFJ: He definitely fished fresh water but I think he is better known as a beach guy. Of course, he is best known for fishing for sea-run cutthroat – they live in fresh water but also spend part of their lives in saltwater. I don't know how much trout fishing (other than cutthroat) he did before we meet. But I do know he has fished most / many of the rivers in California, Oregon, Washington and BC. He fished for cutthroat, salmon and steelhead. After we got married, we did spend most of our summers fishing the Coeur d'Alene River and other rivers in that area like the St. Joe and Clearwater in Montana. We spent a lot of time fishing with my sister and brother-in-law, Tom. Tom knew the Coeur d'Alene River like the back of his hand and loved it. We had a trailer and we would leave it all summer at the river. I had a lot of PTO (paid time off), and so every other weekend, I'd take a Friday and a Monday off. Work was done at 3:30 on Thursday and we would go over to the Coeur d'Alene River for a long weekend. We'd get there very late Thursday night, at 10, 11 o'clock, but we'd spend the whole weekend there and then come back on Monday.



Les fishing the Coeur D' Alene River

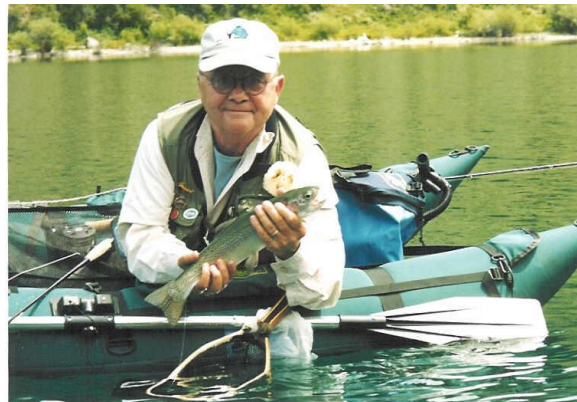


Picture of our trailer

So that's where we did a lot of our trout fishing. But over the years, we also fished many other places for trout. Here are some pictures from other trout fishing adventures.



Henry's Fork



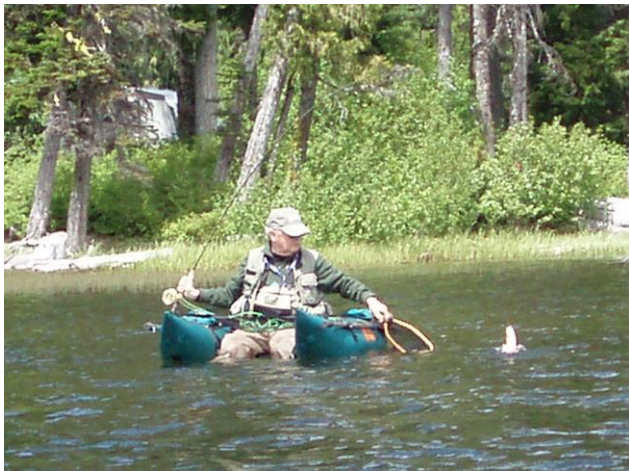
Wade Lake Montana



Trinity River California



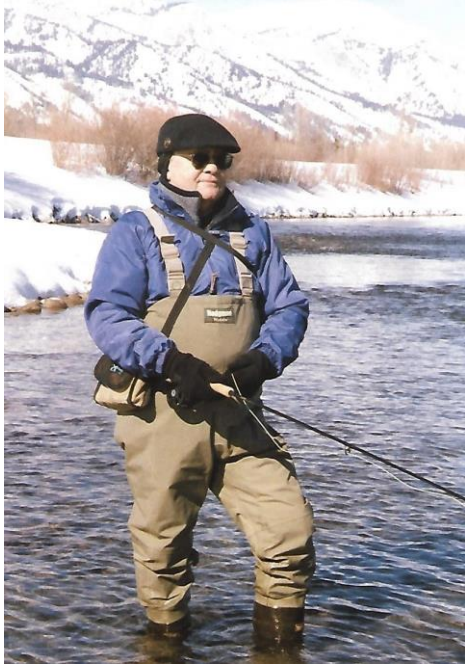
Sol Duc River with Doug Rose



Leech Lake



Deschutes River with Doug Sagara (TFO rep)

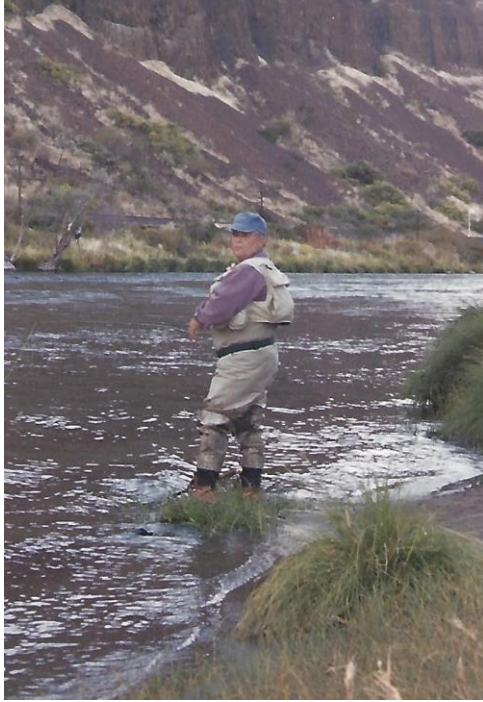


A River near Jackson Hole



Rogue River Oregon





Umpqua River Oregon



Stilly River with Preston Singletary



Hefley Lake



Fortson Hole on the Stilly River

But still I think Les was more into the beach fishing. I would not classify him as a trout guy. I'd classify him as a beach (saltwater) [guy] (laughing) Here are pictures of some of saltwater fishing trips.



Puget Sound Beach Gig Harbor



Loreto Mexico



Cluxewe Resort Beach – Vancouver Island



Inlet on Vancouver Island



Tofino – Vancouver Island



West Coast Fishing Club - Queen Charlotte Islands, BC,

Les also did a lot of steelhead fishing earlier in his life. There is a chapter about Les in Trey Coombs book – “Steelhead Fly Fishing”. It’s in a part of the book titled ‘The Anglers and Their Fly Patterns’. Les also went steelhead fishing with Harry Lemire. I found pictures of Harry from one of their fishing trips in Les’ collection of photos. He and Harry became friends when they worked at Boeing and went on fishing trips together.

I remember going on only one steelhead fishing trip with Les after we were married. Frank Amato, publisher of Les’ books, invited us to spend a weekend at his cabin on the Naselle River. I caught my one and only steelhead on that trip. We had fished all day and right about dusk, I had a hookup. These are not easy fish to land and I remember it was dark before I finally got it in and took a picture.



TB: I could have gotten my notes wrong, and/or -- in the book, a lot of that came out of the fly fishing salmon book, so obviously that’s a saltwater.

CFJ: Yes.

TB: And I think where Pat and Les got to know each other, I think is they both worked at Weyerhaeuser.

CFJ: That’s probably true.

TB: Les was actually the commercial artist, so he’s also an artist, an editor, and writer, so he got Pat started writing. Helped Pat, anyway, with his writing, because Frank Amato would ask him to write some articles, and he just made some reference to Les. So all three of those men had worked at Weyerhaeuser at some point in time.

CFJ: Oh okay. See, you're giving me information (laughing).

TB: Well, and Bruce was, I think, the oldest. And Pat refers to him as the most affluent, so that fits into what you've just said too.

CFJ: Yes. (Laughing)

TB: I think Pat didn't really know how Les and Bruce knew each other, but it was interesting that they had all worked at Weyerhaeuser. So even though there are different parts of it [and they are] doing different things, at least having that corporate culture [connected them].

CFJ: Yes, it's all networking, you know. It's all relationship and networking, and I think that's how that happened. But Les and Bruce were very, very good friends. I think I only met Pat once, and I've never -- I never knew that much about him. And for the salmon book, it was basically Les that did most of the work on that.

TB: For the second edition, then?

CFJ: Yes, for the second one. Bruce had his expertise area, and he was very specific and very regiment about it. Les wasn't quite like that. But I think Les wrote the majority of the book. The other thing was that Bruce didn't work on a computer. He would write everything out longhand, and then he would hire somebody to type it up and put it on a disk. Then he would mail the disk to Les, and Les would open it up and put it in the computer..

TB: Oh, and format it and everything.

CFJ: Yes.

TB: So Les really put the book together?

CFJ: Yes. Les would send back edits to Bruce to review. If he edited anything, well, we'd go through the same process (laughing). Bruce would do it longhand and give it to this lady that typed it out for him.

TB: Well, Les was a commercial artist, so was that all artistic work for fly fishing or he did -- well he must have for Weyerhaeuser, or he would have been doing other stuff.

CFJ: Les worked for a time at Boeing and then joined Weyerhaeuser where he worked in wood products and became Manager of the Graphic Arts and Visuals Department. Les also worked in a number of retail sporting goods stores including Shoff Fishing Tackle Co. in Kent WA and The Swallows Nest in Seattle (both are no longer in existence), as well as Patrick's Fly Shop in Seattle, WA and Orvis in Bellevue, WA Jack Berryman wrote a tribute to Les and included this information. Did you read that?

TB: No, I didn't. I know about Jack Berryman's book, and he came and spoke at Western the summer before. I think you came [when we had Art Lingren (2018)]. But we had Jack Berryman [in 2017].

CFJ: Jack wrote an article, ["Remembering an early conservationist, author, and friend of Anadromous fish: Les Johnson (1933-2017," *The Adipose* 16.4 (July 2017): cover story]. This was a tribute to Les

when he passed away. I put it in my book, because it was so comprehensive of the things that Les had done, except it didn't have everything.

TB: Oh, you made a whole book of him?

CFJ: Yes, I did. It's a photo memory book.

TB: Nice.

CFJ: Well, you know what, -- these are all my favorite memories, and it was fun to work on it. Let's see, where is this? Here we go. Well, it lists all the different places where he worked. But yes, at Weyerhaeuser he was Manager of the Graphic Arts and Visuals Department before he retired. But I also just recently found out that he worked at Boeing.



TB: Oh really?

CFJ: Yes. I have no idea when or what he did, but he worked at Boeing. I found this out after he passed away because he had a small pension from the Boeing Company.

TB: Oh, a pension coming.

CFJ: -- pension, yes. I also learned a little more about him working at Boeing recently. I was going through all his slides and found some of Harry Lemire fishing (among many others). I took the slides to Costco and they put them on a DVD. I had the pictures of Harry printed and sent them to Marlene Lemire. She sent me back a nice note saying that Les and Harry worked at Boeing and became friends there. They went on fishing trips together.

TB: Yes. So how long did he work at Weyerhaeuser?

CFJ: I have no idea. But it was a significant amount of time, because he told me about some of the things that they did. And he traveled some. So it would have been a significant amount of time.

TB: And what did he do after Weyerhaeuser? Did he move into being almost like a full-time [fly-fishing career]?

CFJ: Yes. I think that's what he did, got out of corporate anything and kind of became -- the focus became editing those magazines and -- He not only edited fly fishing magazines, he was editor of a canoe magazine -- not canoe, kayak magazine at some point in his life.

TB: Oh really? Okay, so was he a kayaker?

CFJ: I think he was at one point. He was also a distance runner at one point. So he did a lot of stuff. He lived in San Francisco for a while, and he worked at Eddie Bauer.

TB: We did another guy that worked at Eddie Bauer, Cam Sigler?

CFJ: Sigler.

TB: Yes. Do you think they knew each other?

CFJ: I'm sure they did (laughing). Les was co-host on a television fly fishing show - Prime Sports '*Fly Fishing Northwest*'. Cam was in at least one of the videos. I remember seeing him featured in the cutthroat video that was done on the Stilly River.

TB: Because he worked at REI, and then he worked -- no, at Eddie Bauer, and then I think Eddie Bauer in Seattle too, yes.

CFJ: Les never worked at REI. You know, it was interesting because the Swallow's Nest kind of went out of business when REI came in, because they were kind of --

TB: Oh, same thing?

CFJ: -- yes, the same thing.

TB: So that was in Seattle?

CFJ: Yes. Yes, it was down on, I think, down at the end of 5th or 6th Avenue, kind of towards the Seattle Center, and it was wonderful. Gosh, that was a great store!

TB: Interesting. Yes, that's kind of interesting when you talk about all the big box stores, and you don't think about that REI in a way as a big box store, at least it's become that.

CFJ: Well, it is.

TB: It beats out the smaller ones. Bruce Ferguson's favorite one was, oh, something about the morning.

CFJ: Oh Morning Hatch, yes. The Morning Hatch was a fly fishing shop. I don't think they carried all the items that the Swallows Nest did so I wouldn't think of them as a big box store before REI.

TB: Yes, in Tacoma, that was going out right about the time we did his oral history, after 28 years.

CFJ: Yes, I remember that.

TB: Yes, so, it's kind of sad to see those [go].

CFJ: Yes.

TB: But I think Patrick's is still there on Green Lake, isn't it?

CFJ: Yes, it is.

TB: But somebody else has bought it. I mean, it's not the Patrick Family anymore.

CFJ: Yes, and I've heard it's really changed. Bob Young, who was a good friend of Les', he rents the little house that Patrick and his wife used to live in. And it's really kind of a dilapidated little house, but it's -- you have to go back behind the shop, you know, no yard, totally surrounded. I don't know why anybody would want to live there, but if you knew Bob, you'd understand (laughing)

But Bob for a while when -- what was his name, LeMert? What was his first name? I can't remember -- Jimmy LeMert² and he sold it. And Bob was telling me they've really changed it. They found an old antique, what do you call those? Not benches but glass cases that has curved glass in it, but it's real old. And they brought that up. I'll be interested in going and take a look some time (laughing).

TB: Yes. I want to go there. I've never been to Patrick's. We did Jack Hutchinson's [oral history], and he gave us a lot of stuff. Jack had worked there back when the Patricks' had it -- and then he worked after Mr. Patrick had died. He worked with Mrs. Patrick. So I heard a lot about Patrick's, but I've never been there.

CFJ: Well, Les told me a lot about them too. The things that they did. Of course I don't remember it all. You know, there was also -- Les worked at Shoff's, and I think -- that might have been in [Kent]. But about six months before he died, I found a box when I was out in the garage cleaning out things or trying to clean them up. It's like one of those cardboard boxes that's a drawer. Holy cow! I opened it up and it had all of these little manila envelopes, yay by about yay [Ed. Note: 2 1/2 x 3 inches], of flies. In every single one of them. I'm still going through them. I'll take you upstairs and I'll show you. It's just unreal.

TB: Wow.

CFJ: And I have no idea why Les had them, why he kept them, what they were for, because they don't have anybody's name on them.

TB: And you don't think he tied them.

CFJ: Oh no. (Laughing) I'm sure Les did not tie all of these, and there would be no reason for him to put them in these -- I'll show you.

TB: Okay. No, no, that's great.

CFJ: It's really, really weird. I'm trying to think here. Is there anything else? Well, did I tell you about working at Greatlodge.com? Les did an online fly fishing magazine for Greatlodge.com the year before we got married. Greatlodge was located in Jackson Hole. He relocated to Jackson Hole and I would go over about once a month.

And Les was part of the first trustees of the Washington Steelhead Coalition, and then it was a year later that Jack [Berryman] became president.

² Jimmy LeMert owned *Patrick's Fly Shop* from 1976-2018, and sold it to Peter Lemman in April 2018).

TB: Oh, Jack Berryman?

CFJ: Yes. But he said, he wrote, “Les provided regular advice, participated in our summits, and contributed to *The Adipose*, which was the newsletter. At one meeting in my home, Les telephoned one of us his fishing friends, Bob Young, and basically told him that he was the new Wild Steelhead Coalition treasurer.”

TB: We always know you don’t want to miss a meeting because that’s when you get volunteered.

CFJ: Yes (laughing). But one thing that I remember about Les -- You know, at this point, after we got married, he worked at Patrick’s for a little while.

TB: Patrick’s.?

CFJ: Yes, at Patrick’s Fly Shop, -- The shop was doing poorly and Jimmy LeMert asked Les to help out -- and so he worked there part time with Jimmy. He basically helped him save it. Jimmy was very (laughing) happy about that. Les told him how to make it succeed, that kind of thing. Les was also working on his books at the same time. I was working at Bio-Rad Laboratories and we were always busy doing things on the weekends. So he was trying to limit some of the things he was involved with. That’s why he didn’t stay with the Wild Steelhead Coalition, although he supported them. He was a trustee. But I remember when there was something of a conservative nature that was being discussed down in Olympia he got very involved. I remember one time he had put together an email tree and he cut it loose. They got so many emails, it shut their system down. And boy the guy that was in charge of the Washington Department of Fish and Game, knew Les was responsible and he was not pleased (laughing). And Les was just very enthusiastic about all of this that had been going on. But you know, that’s the kind of thing that would really excite him (laughing).

TB: So before we go upstairs or we move away from that, especially from the recording, let’s go back to your story in the [Northwest] Women’s Fly Fishers. Is there anything else we didn’t really talk about? About when did they kind of disband?

CFJ: Nancy [Messmer] can probably tell you more about that.

TB: Because for a while kind of kept having outings, just not meetings, maybe; is that right?

CFJ: Yes, I think for a while NWF went to ‘fishing buddies’ kind of thing. That was the other thing I didn’t mention - why the NWF was good – on our fishing outings we fished with a fishing buddy. It was safer that way, and it was a good way to mentor, that kind of thing. The specifics, I bet you Nancy can probably give you more information about that.

TB: I know it will probably come out in the minutes, or I mean not the minutes, like the newsletters and stuff -- and what period of time they all covered. I was just going to see if there’s anything else we should’ve talked about in terms of your -- So it sounds like you must have fly fished for 20-30 years?

CFJ: Oh at least that long, yes. It doesn’t mean I’m a good fly fisherman (laughing), but I still love it.

TB: It's a challenge, as long as you still love it, yes, yes. What is it you like best about it? Is it the challenge, or is it being out in nature or –

CFJ: Oh, I think it is a bit of both. I really love being out and enjoying the outdoors. You can be fishing by yourself or fishing with somebody nearby, but yet it is your time for peace and quiet, that kind of thing. Yet it is always challenging. Learning where the fish might be is challenging. What fly to use? Learning more about entomology, that kind of thing.

CFJ: Oh, the other thing I've not talked about is the Derelicts -- that was another important part of Les' life.

TB: Now what is that? He was a Derelict?

CFJ: Okay. I'll tell you about the Derelicts. He went to Weatherwax High School -- that was Aberdeen High School. I think the graduating class was 1951. Years after that, when Les and I got married, the class was still getting together annually. Every year they got together for luncheons. Well, there's a group of eight guys that somehow they met up in their 40s, and they started this little club of their own. They called themselves 'The Lake Quinault Derelicts'. So they would get together twice a year. One of the guys had a cabin on Lake Quinault [Ed. Ken LeRoy Johnson], and they would get together there in the summer. Another one of the guys had a cabin at Salmon La Sac [Andy Ballasiotes], so they'd meet up there for a weekend – usually in the winter. Snow would be on the ground.

TB: So they were fishermen too?

CFJ: No. This was a group of good friends from his high school. None of them were fishermen (except Les). They all had different professions. One was a lawyer. One owned all of the Hallmark shops, 'Andy's Hallmarks' (Andy Ballasiotes). Of course, all these guys except for two have passed away. There's only two Derelicts left - Leo [Gormley] is one. Leo was one of Les' very best friends. The Derelicts had sweatshirts and jackets made with Lake Quinault Derelicts logo on it, and then their initials in the middle. So I've kept Les' sweatshirt but he also had a jacket with the Derelict logo as well.



CFJ: And they were very committed, you know. They'd get together and drink beer or go down to the local bar and play pool or whatever. They just had a good time.

These are pictures of the Derelicts and some of the things that they did.



Les with Leo.



This is Les singing. He loved to sing. He used to sing to me all the time.

CFJ: I love these pictures of the Derelicts taken at a class reunion after Les had his stroke. I took the picture of them like this,



and then they decided they were going to turnaround (laughing), because they're just crazy guys.



CFJ: Oh, the one thing I was going to tell you about Les is that he was not born Les Johnson. He was born Lester Brett. I don't think that people know that.

TB: Yes, oh nice. And did you spell Brett, just B-R-E-T-T?

CFJ: Yes, I think it is Brett. Oh, Lester Ellsworth Brett, B-R-E-T-T.

TB: Yes. Ellsworth, okay.

CFJ: Yes. And these are pictures of his dad. I only have these two pictures of his real dad. Of course his dad was very young in these pictures. In the first picture, Les' dad is kneeling on the beach, Les' grandfather is standing with a clam digging shovel slightly behind and Les (probably about 3 at the time) is in background looking at them. It was strange how I came across this picture. Les had had his stroke, and he was telling me about going clamming with his real dad and his grandfather, and he described it to me. I looked through his old photos and I found it from his description.



TB: Oh wow!

CFJ: Then this is the other picture of him and his dad.



But those are the only two pictures of his dad. His mother divorced his dad and kind of took Les out of his life. And it was at that time that Les went to live with his grandparents in Aberdeen.

TB: Oh, Aberdeen.

CFJ: Yes, she was a single mother and went to work. Way back when, you know, I guess women didn't think that they could raise a child by themselves. So Les went and lived with his grandparents. That's where Les learned to fish and hunt and to do all that kind of thing, because he had aunts and uncles. His grandfather in particular had a strong influence on Les' life.

TB: So when did he take the Johnson name?

CFJ: Well, then his mother remarried - a Lester Johnson, and he adopted Les, so that's how he became Lester Fred Johnson, Jr.

TB: Oh, Lester Fred, even. Okay.

CFJ: Yes.

TB: Oh, because his new dad was named with the same name as him, Lester.

CFJ: Yes. I don't know how that worked out, but (laughing).

TB: Yes, it just happened to work out.

CFJ: You know, it did, and certain things I -- everything is just kind of muddled up there.

TB: Well, just a coincidence, but okay, interesting.

CFJ: Yes. So, this is a picture of his grandfather.



Picture of Les' grandfather – Ed Knight

And this is a picture of his mom. It's when he took her out fishing.



Picture of Annite Mae Knight – Les' mother

Then this is just random pictures of Les when he was younger.



TB: He obviously took right to fishing.

CFJ: Oh yes. That's been a big part of his life.

TB: Awesome. So even as a kid, and that was his grandparents' kind of influence. Lovely. What a lovely book.

CFJ: And then this when he was in the service. He was a Marine. He fought in Korea. Look at how young he is.



TB: Yes.

CFJ: Isn't that amazing?

TB: But he looks like he's got an attitude there (laughing).

CFJ: Yes, oh I'm sure. And then this is him in high school. See, there's Les, and there's Leo –

TB: His best friend.

CFJ: His good friend, yes.



Left – Les; Middle – Leo (Les' good friend)

TB: Okay. Wow.

CFJ: Yes. Looks so young (laughing).

TB: That is a lovely book you did. Was it kind of, like, healing for you when you did it?

CFJ: Exactly. That's exactly what it did. I'm really glad that I did it because, you know, these are all my favorite pictures. This is our story that I told you about.

TB: Oh nice.

CFJ: And this –

TB: Ah, "She said yes."

CFJ: Yes, "She said yes." According to Les, and this he used to say all the time. According to Les, the courtship was a long one. He explained, "I pursued Carol's affections for a number of years before she finally hooked me."

CFJ: And it was just so typical Les.

TB: Yes. So how long were you guys married? Because you're really young. You were married a long time, 25 years?



CFJ: Uh no, unfortunately. Only about 17 years.

TB: 17, okay.

CFJ: You know, and he was sick about seven of those years. But gosh, we had such a great time, you know, before he got [sick] –

TB: [You were going every weekend to Idaho] I mean – during the summer.

CFJ: All the time. Of course I was working then. But he was home working on his book and being involved in Steelhead and all that other stuff, or working at Patrick's, or --

TB: That's terrific. So did he have more than one stroke, or he just had one stroke that was pretty debilitating or?

CFJ: Yes, he had one *really* big stroke. But he had a TIA the night before. We were in bed watching TV, and all of a sudden he started talking gibberish, and I looked over and I noticed, his mouth was drooping. So I knew exactly what was happening, and I called 911 immediately. They got there really quick, got him to Evergreen Hospital. By the time I got dressed and followed them and got there, he was perfectly fine. Everything had stopped. But they kept him overnight in ICU, and I guess they did some tests and that kind of thing. So we waited all day. And of course he wanted to go home. We knew that they were going to send him home, and they told him, yes, you need to go see this specialist or whatever. It was at seven o'clock at night, we just kept waiting and waiting and waiting to get the doctor to sign off on this stuff, and we were just joking around. He was up walking around, and we were pretending like

we were two little hobos waiting for a train, you know, just goofing off, like we always did. And they didn't even take him down to the car in a wheelchair. He walked down himself. So we got home, and he went to his office to check his email, and I went down to mine. Then all of a sudden, I hear something, and I go in and on the floor - he had a [stroke].

TB: Oh, a massive.

CFJ: Yes. And he was laying on the floor. So within an hour, we were back at the hospital.

TB: Wow!

CFJ: That was the big one. And you know, it just irks me that they sent him home and didn't keep him in the hospital. They knew that he was a risk. And I've heard that this has happened so many times. They'll send people home. They say, well, we can't keep them because nothing is happening. Well, but you know something's wrong.

CFJ (Looking at the article Jack Berryman wrote in Memory Book) Let's see. Oh here's something else that Jack wrote: "Les' extensive group of fly fishing friends paid big dividends in the fight to save wild steelhead. Van Gytenbeek was key WDFW commissioner between 2000 and 2004 and a valued ally of the Washington Steel Coalition. Bill Redman from the Washington Fly Fishing Club was also president of the Federation of Fly Fishers Steelhead Committee, WFFC member and author Steve Raymond wrote passionately about wild steelhead and Doug Schaad, the important WFFC conservation chair, was an avid Steelheader and supporter of the Washington Steelhead Coalition. Les' ability to bring people together for the conservation "cause" did not go unnoticed. He was given the Dawn Holbrook Award (2002)."

So anyway, that just lists some Fly fishing awards he got.

TB: So some from the Washington Fly Fishing Club.

CFJ: Yes. Yes, Les got the Dawn Holbrook Award in 2002, and the FFF's Arnold Gingrich Literary Award in 2010, and Washington Fly Club's Letcher Lambuth Award in 2015, and then the week before he died he got the Washington Council of the FFF Fly Tying Hall of Fame.

TB: Oh wow. So what was the Lambuth [award for]? Would it be his fly tying?

CFJ: Yes, The Letcher Lambuth Angling Craftsman Award is the Washington Fly Fishing Club's most prestigious award. "The award is presented to "outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to the knowledge, art, philosophy and techniques of fly fishing, and to encourage and recognize significant similar contributions by others. One who has made original, significant and lasting contributions to angling. Les originated and developed a number of saltwater fly patterns. These include the Johnson's Beach Fly, the Johnson's Partridge Spider, the McCullough, a Chironomid pattern, the Disco Sand Lance, and the Williams Point Sand Lance as well as co-originator of the FJ Pink and the Thorne River Emerger.



Les – Letcher Lambuth Award

CFJ: I do remember when the Arnold Gingrich [was awarded]. We went to West Yellowstone because that's where the FFF gave the award. And by then he was in a wheelchair. It was a year after he had had his stroke.



Carl Johnson (president of FFF) awarding Les the Arnold Gingrich Award

CFJ: You know, Les, worked at Orvis as well

TB: Oh okay.

TB: So he worked at the one in Bellevue?

CFJ: Yes.



Les and the crew he worked with at Orvis

TB: Oh okay, right. Les did work in a lot of places, didn't he?

CFJ: He did (laughing).

TB: They had that book signing there.

CFJ: Yes, yes. That was after he'd quit working there.



The three authors of '*Fly Fishing for Pacific Salmon*' – Pat Trotter, Bruce Ferguson, Les Johnson
Book signing at Orvis in Bellevue

TB: Okay.

CFJ: But Les was really responsible for getting -- come on, brain, kick in (laughing), Miyawaki. Les was responsible for getting him hired as manager of Orvis. And after that, you know, Les quit. Of course Leland, he did a whole lot for that shop. He got tired of it, gave up the manager. He works there part time now.

TB: Okay.

CFJ: Yes, so Les, like I said, it's all about networking and relationships.

TB: Yes, and you can just always find another gig, I mean, I always think it's exciting when people are able to kind of just keep finding their next job, or however they do it, so.

CFJ: Yes. You know, he really didn't want the job, that's why he didn't stay. But you know, he works long enough, gets them settled, gets Leland in and that kind of thing.

TB: Cool.

CFJ: But yes, it was cool. I loved to go shopping there. I'm still in touch with some of the people that worked there at the time.

TB: I think I only went there once, and that was to pick up the book. Because I didn't go to the book signing but I wanted to get a signed copy of the book, so I went on the weekend after that. I think that was some kind of midweek thing. And I went on the weekend after that and got it, because I just don't go to Bellevue that much.

CFJ: Yes. Well they're actually in a different store [now], because they sold that and there's a big high rise there. But they're in a shop right behind, about a block behind there now.

TB: Okay, nice. Darn, yes, I am really sorry I never met Les.

CFJ: Yes. He was so funny. Everybody liked Les. Even when he was sick and I started taking him to his doctors, the staff would be in stitches by the time we left. Les was just that kind of guy.

TB: So where did you get married at?

CFJ: We were married in the Maltby Church but our reception was at the Echo Glen Country Club.

TB: Okay. Snohomish.

CFJ: Yes.

TB: Beautiful.

TB: (Looking at the memory book) Oh, okay. Oh boy, yes, there you see how short Les is compared to Bruce.



Bruce Ferguson – Best Man



CFJ: Yes. This is just wedding pictures. Oh, and then this was at our reception. You know, we both belonged to so many different organizations, we started calling the groups up. So here's a picture of us with the Derelicts, then we called up the Queen Anne Singles. Once Les and I started dating, he became part of the Queen Anne Singles too. (Laughing)



Derelicts



Queen Anne Singles

TB: Oh, okay, okay.

CFJ: So this is Northwest Women Fly Fishers. And friends from Loreto. I don't know if you know that Les led a fishing group in the summer for about seventeen years to Loreto, Mexico. We fished for Dorado. Then this was my coworkers at Bio-Rad. And then all of these were Carol's cousins. (Laughing)



Northwest Women Fly Fishers



Fishabout friends going to Loreto, Mexico



Carol's co-workers from Bio-Rad Laboratories Carol's cousins

TB: Oh, wow! You had a good turnout.

CFJ: Yes. So that was fun, you know, having all the groups come up and have our pictures taken.

TB: Oh, very nice.

CFJ: This was pictures from our rehearsal dinner. Bob Young, a good friend, had these shirts made for the bridal party. On the back of the shirts it says 'Johnson-Ferrera Wedding'. And then on the front it said 'Bride's Maid', or 'Maid of Honor', 'Groom', 'Bride', that kind of thing.



TB: Oh, sweet.

Stopped transcribing on Audio 1 from 1:11-1:46 (end), 35 minutes more of going through photos
Resumed transcribing with Audio 2 below

CFJ: These are some of my favorite pictures. In 2002, Les had gone up to give a talk at the Mid-Island Castaway Fly Fishing Club on Vancouver Island. That was a picture painted by Loucus Raptis. The title is 'General Noel Money's No. 2. Do you know who Loucus Raptis is? He was president of the FFF chapter up there at the time. He did that specifically for Les and gave him that picture to him for coming up to speak at the fly fishing club. Les was well known in British Columbia.

There is one very special time I remember in our marriage. We were camping and fishing on the Coeur D'Alene River in Idaho with my sister and brother-in-law when Pope John Paul II died. The news coverage of his funeral was nonstop for about a week and Les was glued to the TV. We could hardly get him out to go fishing. Several weeks after we returned home, Les announced to me that he was going to become a Catholic. I had been raised Catholic but did not practice my faith after my divorce which was frowned on by the Catholic Church. Oddly we never discussed religion before we got married. So when Les made this pronouncement, I knew our lives were going to change significantly. Les thought he just had to "sign up" until he talked to Fr. Dave at St. Jude's in Redmond. He learned he was facing a 9 month program about the church called RCIA. Les was undaunted and enthusiastically completed the program, never missing a meeting or activity. He was baptized the following year at Easter vigil as is customary for newcomers to the Catholic faith. To me, this was truly miraculous – a miracle I attribute to Pope John Paul II, now Pope St. John Paul. Not only did he bring Les into the Church but he brought me back to the practice of a faith I grew up with from birth. I remember something my sister wrote in a card to Les. She said "I prayed for years that my sister would find a loving relationship and that she would return to her faith. But never did I imagine that it would be one and the same person".



So these are pictures from his baptism. Father Dave also remarried us in the church.



After this, Les and I sought out the nearest Catholic Church on our fishing trips so we could attend Sunday mass. This practice became just another part of our adventures. And it was like that with Les, everything was an adventure. A good adventure! He made it a good adventure! Many of the churches we attended were in small communities and they would have potlucks afterward the service. We were always invited and welcomed. No matter where we went it was an adventure!

These are some pictures from our fishing trips in Loreto Mexico. Les led a fishing group for 'Fishabout' for about 17 years. We fished for Dorado, very big fish!! When you order Mahi Mahi in a restaurant, you are eating a Dorado fish.



We always stayed at the Oasis Hotel. This was before Loreto had westernized hotels. Loreto was a little sleepy Mexican town. Les took the Fishabout group there for 17 years so the hotel staff was familiar with who he was. The first day of the trip, Les would take up a collection to give to the cooks in back so they would make the group fresh salsa for every meal. Our lunch and evening meals were always on the patio with a lovely view of the water.





Besides Dorado, other big fish were caught.



The trips were in July which is terribly hot in Mexico but this was the best time for Dorado fishing. So our days would start very early in the morning before sunrise. We would go out early with our guide to get bait fish. They used big round nets to gather Sardinia. Really interesting to watch them throw the nets out.



The guide would go many miles out in the Sea of Cortez to fish for the Dorado.



It was too hot to fish in the afternoon. On the way back to the hotel, the guide would take us to Coronado Island for a swim before lunch. Coronado Island had a lovely white sand beach and many pelicans. So we would go swimming with the pelicans. It was fun!



And there were always porpoises to escort our panga (a type of modest-sized, open, outboard-powered, fishing **boat** common throughout much of the developing world), back to the hotel.



Since it was too hot to fish in the afternoon, people would take siestas (fortunately, the rooms were air conditioned) or they would swim in the pool. Many times, we would go into the little town of Loreto to shop in the little Mexican shops. There was also an ice cream shop where we would get ice cream cones. Very laid back and fun!



Town of Loreto



Les by the pool at the Oasis Hotel

One year I organized a site seeing trip to the San Javier Mission, located outside of Loreto and up a mountain. We rented a couple of vans and drivers to take us up the mountain to see this mission. The road was a narrow curvy dirt road up the side of the mountain and most of the area was desert. Occasionally we would come to area that were an oasis with water. In these areas we would see little farms and really nice houses. At the top of the mountain, there was a brick cobble-stone street. It was lined with lemon trees on both sides of the street. The mission church was at the end of the street.



We also spent a lot of time fishing on Vancouver Island. Our favorite place to stay was at Cluxewe Resort. It was by accident that we found this place but it became a favorite. The best time to go was late August and September when the Coho were coming in. Cluxewe had miles of beach water and was a beautiful resort! Cruise ships on their way to Alaska sailed right in front of the beach.

We usually stayed in the cabins at Cluxewe rather than taking our trailer. The cabins were really nice and right on the water. We figured that by the time we paid for the trips on the ferries and the extra gas etc. the cost of renting a cabin came out about the same as taking the trailer.



Cabins at Cluxewe



Frequently, friends and family members would join us on our trips to Cluxewe. We also had friends who lived in Campbell River (Don and Marsha McDermott) who would join us.

Sometimes we fished in other places besides the Cluxewe Beach. I remember one time when we found an inlet where salmon were jumping everywhere. It was an incredible sight and so much fun.



Another fun trip we took while at Cluxewe, was a trip to Holberg. Holberg, was on the other side of Vancouver Island (26 miles west of Port Hardy, near the northwestern tip of Vancouver Island) and we were told the Scarlet Ibis Pub had the greatest fish and chips on the island. So of course we had to go to the Scarlet Ibis Pub for fish and chips. It was a 30 mile drive on a rutted gravel road. The road was used

by huge logging trucks with ten foot high tires. Stop signs were way high up so that the truck drivers could see them.



It was a terrible trip. But on the way over we came across several interesting things. One was this old car with a big tree on top of it, and this sign that said '*be prepared for the unexpected*'. I mean these people had a sense of humor. Then there was the tree with hundreds of shoes and a sign that said '*Jesus saves soles*' (or souls).



Big tree on top of car



Tree with hundreds of shoes

These are pictures from when Les worked at Greatlodge.com. That was outside the art museum in Jackson Hole that I told you about. This is a picture of the elk preserve and sleigh ride. That was so much fun!



Art Museum in Jackson Hole (on hill)



Sleigh ride into Elk Preserve



Elk on the Elk Preserve



Les sitting on Bronze statues outside the Art Museum

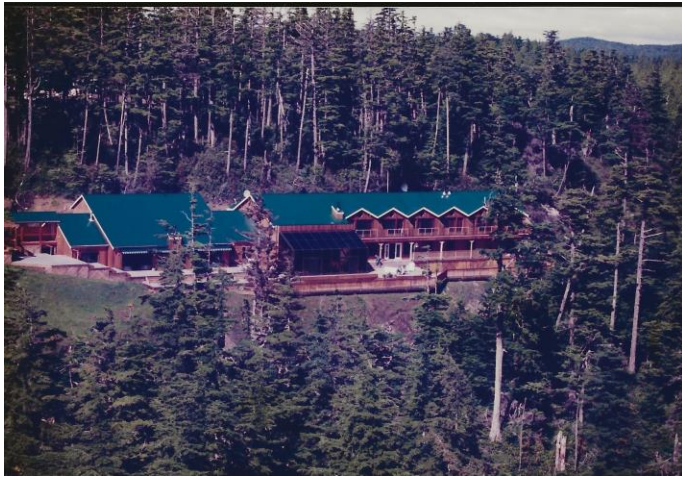
These are pictures of the Grand Tetons. We were at Jackson Lake. That's where I took this picture too. We had gone there because Les had wanted to show me some sort of vehicle that they used on the ice at

Jackson Lake and good lord, when we get to Jackson Lake it was totally thawed, no ice there. And we were the only people at Jackson Lake. Les always brought his tripod and I had a little camera. Of course no one had cell phones then. So we took pictures. It was such a phenomenal day. It was such a great day. Nice spring weather, it wasn't cold. We had such a great time. And we were the only two people there.

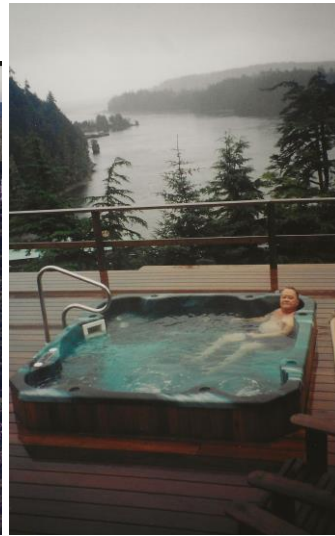


These are picture from another trip we took because Les was a writer and editor of a magazine. He was comped a trip to the West Coast Fishing Club in the Queen Charlotte Islands, BC (just south of Alaska). It was one of those fancy lodges where you had to fly in and then take a helicopter to the lodge. They had an excellent chef and we always chose what we wanted to eat for lunch or dinner from a menu. Wine was served with dinner. When we went out in a boat to go fishing, we had to wear one of these red life suits. We were required to wear the suits because if we fell in the water we would die from hypothermia without one. When we came in from fishing, we would take our red suit off and leave it in a room just for drying those suits. While we were fishing I thought it was really something when a boat come out with sandwiches, candy, coffee, etc. to offer to us. When we saw this boat coming, we called it 'The Candy

Man'. The lodge had all kinds of amenities and yet it was on an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean surrounded by wilderness.



West Coast Fishing Club Lodge



Les in hot tub



Red suits worn while fishing from boats



Dining room in lodge



Helicopter at lodge

1:29 These are pictures from places we went on our honeymoon.

These pictures were taken at Camp Sherman and the Metolius River.



In front of Post Office at Camp Sherman



Les on bridge on Metolius River

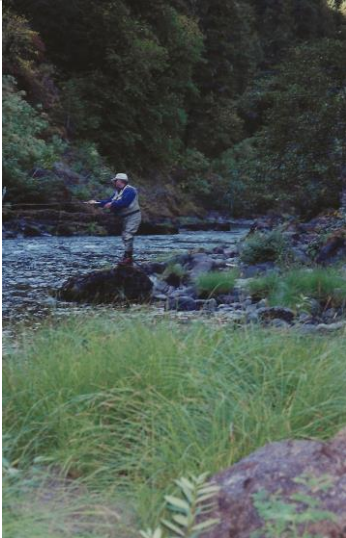


Cabin we stayed in on the Metolius River

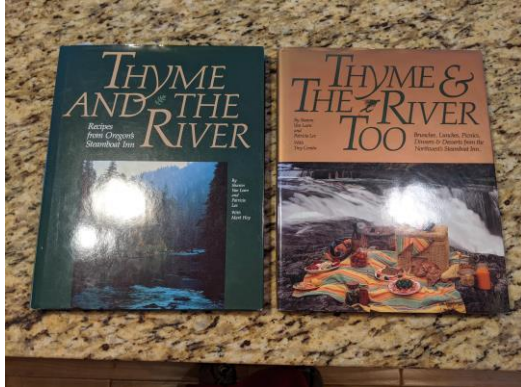


Cabins at Camp Sherman on Metolius River

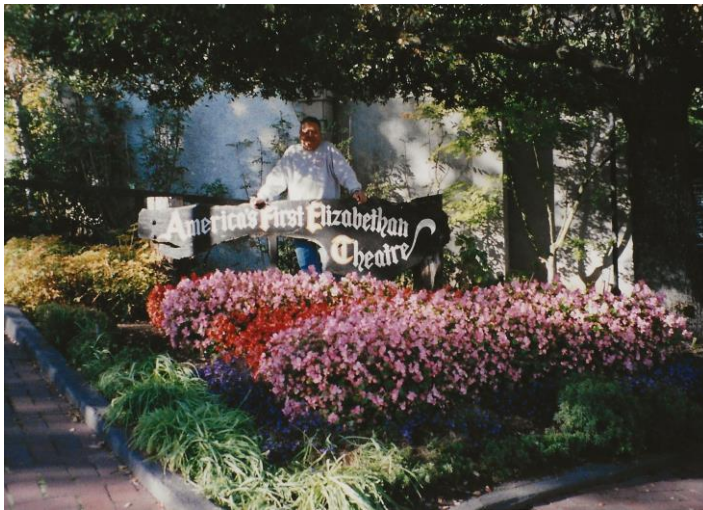
These were taken on the Rogue River. I loved this trip down the Rogue. We fished with a guide. The guide brought lunch and set up the table for lunch on a gravel bar in the middle of the river that had an inch or two of river flowing over it. It was like we were having lunch in the middle of the river.



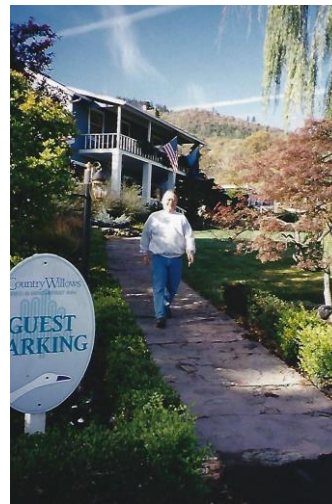
We also fished on the Umpqua River. We ate at Steamboat Inn too. As a matter of fact I have two of their cookbooks, 'Thyme and the river: Recipes from Oregon's Steamboat Inn' and 'Thyme and the river too: brunches, lunches, picnics, dinners and desserts from the Northwest's Steamboat Inn'.



We also went to Ashland and saw a couple of plays there. We stayed at the 'Country Willows' bed and breakfast.



In Ashland



Country Willows Inn

TB: So what about Les originally, did he go to college? Did he major in English?

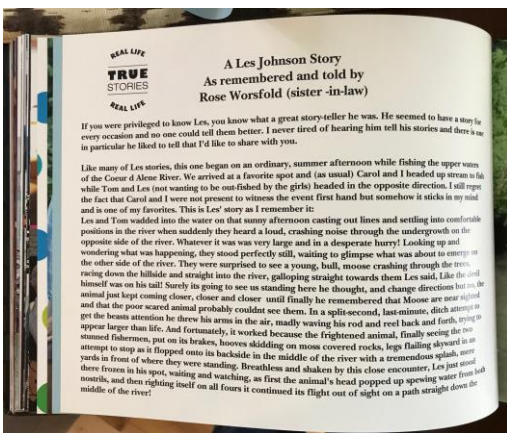
CFJ: Yes, When Les returned from the war (Les joined the US Marines and served in Korea (1953 - 1955), he attended Grays Harbor College earning a degree in Arts and Science.

Random pictures

This is a picture of Jimmy Chang. Jimmy was photographer at our wedding.



This is Les with his physical therapist. He went twice a week to physical therapy for 4-5 years.



This is one of Les Johnson's favorite stories to tell [and my sister wrote it up for the book].

Rose Worsfold (sister-in-law): *If you were privileged to know Les, you know what a great story-teller he was. He seemed to have a story for every occasion and not one could tell them better. I never tired of hearing him tell his stories and there is one in particular he liked to tell that I'd like to share with you.*

Like many of Les stories, this one began on an ordinary, summer afternoon while fishing the upper waters of the Coeur d'Alene River. We arrived at a favorite place and (as usual) Carol and I headed up stream to fish while Tom and

Les (not wanting to be out-fished by the girls) headed in the opposite direction. I still regret the fact that Carol and I were not present to witness the event first hand but somehow it sticks in my mind and is one of my favorites. This is Les' story as I remember it:

Carol Ferrera Johnson Edited Transcript – March 24, 2019
Fly Fishing Collection

Les and Tom waded into the water on that sunny afternoon casting out lines and settling into comfortable positions in the river when suddenly they heard a loud, crashing noise through the undergrowth on the opposite side of the river. Whatever it was, was very large and in a desperate hurry! Looking up and wondering what was happening, they stood perfectly still, waiting to glimpse what was about to emerge on the other side of the river. They were surprised to see a young, bull, moose crashing through the trees, racing down the hillside and straight into the river, galloping straight towards them. Les said, like the devil himself was on his tail! Surely its going to see us standing here he thought, and change directions but no, the animal kept coming closer, closer and closer until finally he remembered that Moose are near sighted and that the poor scared animal probably couldn't see them. In a split-second, last-minute ditch attempt to get the beasts attention he threw his arms in the air, madly waving his rod and reel back and forth, trying to appear larger than life. And fortunately, it worked because the frightened animal, finally seeing the two stunned fisherman, put on its brakes, hooves skidding on moss covered rocks, legs flailing skyward in an attempt to stop as it flopped onto its backside in the middle of the river with a tremendous splash, mere yards in front of where they were standing. Breathless and shaken by this close encounter, Les just stood there frozen in his spot, waiting and watching, as first the animal's head popped up spewing water from both nostrils, and righting itself on all fours it continued its flight out of sight on a path straight down the middle of the river!

CFJ: This is another picture that taken at Orvis but later and in the new Orvis store.

Top row from left to right: Bob Triggs, Richard Stole, Preston Singletary. Bottom row from left to right: Les Johnson, Leland Miyawaki, and Doug Rose



TB: And Doug Rose is the guy over on the peninsula that wrote some books.

CFJ: Yes, Doug wrote many books on fishing on the Peninsula and fishing for Steelhead. He passed away.

TB: Yes, not too long ago right, the last couple of years.

CFJ: It was longer than that. Les had actually had his stroke when he passed away.

TB: He had cancer, right?

CFJ: Yes, it was very sudden. He went in to have chemo and they sent him home. They said there was no point as the cancer was so advanced. He died within a couple of days. It was really sad. I think it was because he was a guide, a writer, and probably didn't have a lot of money and probably couldn't afford health insurance so he put it off as long as he could. They identified the illness too late.

Random pictures

Photos from trips with Project Healing Waters;



Another trip I told you about was fishing with Don Mills on the Methow River. This trip was a wedding gift from Donn.

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Les and Carol fishing on the Methow
Chironomid he tied.



Les with white fish



Donn Mills with Steelhead caught with a

Random photos of places, some of my favorite spots

This was our cabin on the Skykomish River. I bought this just so that we could be close to the river. This was after Les had his stroke. Les would spend hours sitting and watching the river.



This is Carl Johnson giving Les the Arnold Gingrich Literary Award in West Yellowstone (2010).



This is Maggie Merriman, she's a fly fisher, a famous fly fisher, not as famous as Joan Wulff, but right up there, maybe number two.



These are the guys that came out to give Les the Washington Fly Fishing Club award, the Letcher Lambuth Award in 2015.



Random pictures

Oh this little tree. This was funny. Les lived in apartment in West Seattle and he had this little Christmas tree. You'd go by it and the eyes would start moving and follow you. It was the first thing I got rid of when we got married. Now I wish I had it.



This a picture of one of our trips on ‘Santa Train’. We took the grandkids on Snoqualmie’s ‘Santa Train’ ‘when they were young. The tradition grew over the years and this particular year, the whole family (including my sister and her grandkids and Les’ kids) went on ‘Santa Train’. This is a picture I took at the train depot in North Bend before boarding the train for the trip to Snoqualmie Falls to visit with Santa.



The end!

CFJ: But I also found some pictures of the Northwest Women Fly Fishers.

Here’s a photo of a party for Connie Stelter.



This picture is of one of our auctions at the College Club. Raffles.



Every year we had a fly plate in the Auction (1998). It was a raffle item. Only a NWF member who tied a fly on the plate was eligible to win. It had to be a fly that had been hand tied by a member. It was the most prized item in the whole club! A real treasure!



Okay I'll show you the fly tying stuff!

TB: Oh my, gosh, no! Wow! Awesome! You have a lifetime supply.

CFJ: Of everything! Do you know anybody who has this much polar bear hair?

TB: Well, you say you tied. But did any of Les' children do it?

CFJ: No, but I think *Ariella, Les'* granddaughter might be interested. She loves to go fishing. I got her a pair of waders for Christmas.

Yes, you talked about the equipment. Les got a lot of everything from the manufactures. They wanted him to promote it for them. Nature Sprit dubbing, this was all stuff they sent to him. So a lot of it came that way.

TB: So after he had a stroke was he able to tie at all? Because he only had one good hand.

CFJ: No, he couldn't tie. He only had one hand and one eye after his stroke. He could feed himself, but it was difficult. We had special bowls for him and stuff like that. Life just totally changed. He couldn't take

care of himself at all. He couldn't do anything on the computer. He couldn't do anything with this stuff (fly tying material), or the telephone.

But when he was tying this is what we had. And it was so un-organized. He had it in these Rubbermaid bins, bigger ones. One year I bought this [cabinet] specifically for this fly tying material. I organized all the material and put them in these little boxes, and labeled them.

TB: Now do your sons fly fish?

CFJ: My son, Mark likes to fish and Les taught him and helped him catch his first fish. That was something Les was just so good at, he would help anybody learn. We were on the Coeur d'Alene River, and fishing under a bridge. Fish were jumping everywhere. So Les worked with Mark the better part of the afternoon until he caught some fish.

I remember when we were fishing on the beach one time, somebody recognized him and came up to talk to him. Les give him flies out of his fly box. Even Jack Berryman told me about the time he was going fishing in Alaska somewhere. Les gave him his whole box of saltwater flies and said, here, take it with you.

Jimmy Chang said the same thing. Les helped him get started in fly fishing when he was just a young kid. Basically Les would give him fly tying and anything else he needed to help him get started. That's just who Les was. He was very humble about everything. Matter of fact, when he got the award for being inducted into the Fly Tying Hall of Fame, I videotaped him thanking everyone. The very last thing that he said was "I hope I deserve it." None of it ever went to his head. He was just always trying to help people.



Okay, I'll take you upstairs and I'll show you the rest of the fly tying material. Les never tied flies here in this house as we moved here after he had his stroke. But I have tried to organize all the fly tying material. And I still try to tie flies once in a while. This is the fly tying room and [quitting room]!

TB: And you mentioned Alec Jackson before, so did he get some of this stuff from Alec? Alec was very into a certain type of hook.

CFJ: Yes, and I've got those too. And I've also got some flies that Alec tied for Les after he had his stroke. I can show those to you, because I saved those, I won't ever use them.

TB: We have a couple Alec Jackson flies. He was also a great book guy and he would include in the catalogues that he sent out would have a fly in the back of his catalogues.

CFJ: So anyway here are some of the hooks that I organized. Les knew what all these hooks were for and half the time he didn't label them. So I would just find hooks that I didn't know what size or kind they

were. I just tried to put them all together by size the best tI could. I found these containers. There's three of these all full of hooks!

TB: Boy, you have a lifetime supply.

Part II

TB: Okay, Les hosted a televisions show.

CFJ: Yes, he co-hosted it.

TB: Co-hosted it.

CFJ: Yes, with Pete Van Gytenbeek.

TB: Okay, okay.

CFJ: I have the episodes on VSH tape. I'm going to take them to Costco to be put on CDs.

TB: Okay, video (VHS), yes, yes.

CFJ: But they're -- oh, *Fly Fishing Northwest Prime Sports*. And the one that is the best loved, I'd say, was a sea-run cutthroat one filmed on the Stilly. Have you ever seen that?

TB: No.

CFJ: Because I do have that on CD.

TB: So what year was that? 1998.

CFJ: Yes, this was before Les and I got together. But it is a wonderful one, and Cam Sigler is on it.

TB: Oh, okay, okay.

CFJ: And Mike Kinney was the rower, and Van Gytenbeek was on it.

TB: Because I think we haven't done Mike Kinney. He's someone that we talk about doing an oral history with, because I did Cam Sigler, I did Van Gytenbeek.

CFJ: Oh you did? Is he still alive?

TB: You know what, I keep wondering that too, and I'm not sure. But nobody seems to know that he died, and I think we would have, although, of course you know that he kind of, everything kind of blew up at the FFF at some point. [*Ed. Note: Richard Peter Van Gytenbeek died February 11, 2019*).

CFJ: Yes. Oh yes, I heard that.

TB: I think he might have went to Colorado. Nobody seems to really know what happened.

CFJ: He just disappeared.

TB: But I still think we would've heard if he died, because I just think that would have drifted out.

CFJ: Yes, I would think. I think I have two of *Fly Fishing Northwest* CDs that was filmed on the Stilly. Why don't I give you this one?

TB: Okay, we'd love one.

CFJ: Yes.

TB: Awesome.

CFJ: I don't want to part with the one I have, but if I find another one and have another one made, then I'll make sure that you get it.

TB: Excellent. It would be really fun to see because I have heard a lot about this show. Van Gytenbeek was another guy who did a lot of different things. Because he was a furniture guy apparently, sold furniture, and then he worked for a couple magazines too, so. Was it Saltwater Fishing?
(Inaudible, multiple speakers)

CFJ: -- a lot of networking.

TB: Yes, yes, yes. Wow, awesome. Okay, I will shut this off. This has been wonderful!

CFJ: Oh, good.

End of Audio 2