



ATTENTION: © Copyright Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. The following materials can be used for educational and other noncommercial purposes without the written permission of Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections. These materials are not to be used for resale or commercial purposes without written authorization from Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections. All materials cited must be attributed to Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections.



This interview was conducted with Danny Beatty on March 25, 2009, in Special Collections, WWU Libraries. The interviewer is Tamara Belts.

TB: Today is Wednesday, March 25, 2009; I am Tamara Belts and I am here with Danny Beatty. We're going to do an oral history and talk a little bit about his involvement in fly fishing. You know the drill Danny, our first question as always is: how did you get started fly fishing?

DB: How did I get started fly fishing? Well if I really go way back, it's kind of an interesting story because as a child growing up I had no idea what fly fishing was about. I probably read some stories in *Outdoor Life* or *Field and Stream* about fly fishing. But I really didn't understand it until I was in the army and was about 23 years old I suppose. One of the fellows in our unit was a fly fisher and he was from Hood River, Oregon and he fished the Deschutes and the Umpqua Rivers and he'd tell me these fabulous stories about catching steelhead on these rivers with a fly. It got me so excited I even went to the PX (I was in Germany at the time, [this was about 1957]) and bought a fly rod and I have no idea why because there was no chance for us to fish over there. But I did and I put it in my hold baggage and shipped it back to the states. So there were a number of years, at least I knew what fly fishing was about.

I [had] gotten back to being a civilian, got married and was raising a family. I did do some fishing, which I had always before, some saltwater fishing, and basic fishing out in the sound for salmon. But in the back of my mind the fly fishing kind of went along. One of my fellow teachers was a fly fisher. We got to dealing with it more towards the middle of the Sixties. I got this old fly rod out and got a reel for it and my friend helped me with getting lines. I might as well give you his name because he was very important through this time. His name is Dale Elliott, he grew up in Sedro-Woolley and he was a teacher at the junior high school in Anacortes.

Along about the middle Sixties we made our first trip to Canada on a Memorial Day weekend and it was one of these quick up and back type trips. He took me to a couple of lakes where he thought there would be fish. Unfortunately this one lake, I'll never forget, very clear water, you could see to the bottom, and here were all these skeletons of fish. The winter killed them; the ice had gotten so deep, it was a shallow lake, its name was Beaver Dam and the fish had died. So we packed up and came back.

Then there was another bit of a gap in the late Sixties, but we got involved with Louie Corbin who you already have an interview of. Louie was a fly-tier and we'd go out to his shop and learn—Dale was already doing some fly-tying—and I got involved with fly-tying. It was about that time we started an outdoor club in the school and it was very popular. We bought a big kit of materials and small inexpensive vices and by the way, I probably should bring one, they were very different. We started kids tying flies, and then as a result of that—now this was in the late Sixties and in the Seventies—I did outdoor classes in the school, and they were part of the school curriculum. And so part of that was, we did some fly tying and rod building and the kids just really enjoyed that along with the typical outdoor education, environmental education things. We combined that. I did that for a couple of years and then I did more fly fishing through

this time. We were also doing conventional fishing from a boat out in the bay. But we started doing more fly fishing, I started going to Canada almost on an annual basis with friends. More and more I just got into it, gradually over time.

Then about 1974, now we're leading up to our involvement with the club, the forming of Fidalgo Fly Fishers. A man named Dan Coleman lived just a block away from me and he knew about Dale and my involvement with students and so forth. He also went to Canada with his family. He met a man up there from the Washington Fly Fishing Club and they got to talking over a campfire one evening, Oral Dudder was his name. He asked Dan if he was interested in starting a fly club in Skagit County. Dan came back and there was some communication with him and other people in the Washington Fly Fishing Club. December of 1974 three men from the Washington Fly Fishing Club came to Dan's house and Dan invited Dale and I and a couple other people from Anacortes to his house. We sat down and discussed the idea of forming a fly club. By then I was pretty much into, through this gradual process, fly fishing, not exclusively yet, but mostly. We decided at that time to pursue the idea of a fly club in Anacortes and so in January 1975 we had a formation meeting. We elected officers and Dan was elected president and Dale was elected vice-president and I was elected secretary. From then on, our club continued to function and grow and more and more of my fishing was fly fishing. So that's kind of a nutshell explanation. But I really, as a youngster, I had no idea what fly fishing was all about. It wasn't something our family did.

If you want to turn this off, I'll tell you a funny story.

TB: Why don't you want to tell it on the tape?

DB: Well okay! When I was about, I don't know, eight, nine, ten years old, I was down at my aunt and uncles place—they had a big farm—and occasionally they had a hired man. Now this would be in the late Thirties, early Forties, and they had a room, a bunk house sort of room for him—and one time when one of them left, he left a fly rod, a bamboo fly rod in the corner. My cousin took my brother and me in to see this fly rod. I looked at it and it was, you know, very limber and much different than anything we knew about fishing. And I thought (it was in my mind I remember it lasted for a long time), how do you bait a fly onto a hook? That's what my thought of fly fishing was when I was about eight to ten years old. How in the world can you impale a fly on a hook? That stayed with me for a few years until probably I figured it out from reading the magazines.

TB: That's great; so early on too, you got very involved in regulations on Pass Lake.

DB: When we formed the fly club that first year in 1975, the Washington Fly Club asked if we would do a survey and get involved with Pass Lake, so we did the survey; we wanted to change the regulations. Most of the fly fishers at that time wanted to get away from the "put and take" idea of the game department planting the fish one year and you harvest them the next. Change the regulations to try to get some larger fish in the lake. At that time, Pass Lake was like most other lowland lakes, quite a large limit; the fish would get to be 10-12 inches long. We did a survey of both the anglers on the lake and a creel census in which we measured the fish and kept track of it. That was the first year and Ken Jacot and I went to what at that time was a game commission meeting; it was in Alderbrook and we presented our case. We were pretty naïve, we found out that you don't just do it that way; you don't just go and present something at their meetings like that, you need to do your groundwork, work with the local biologists and so forth. We learned that was important so then through the next year we did some of our groundwork, we did another survey of the fishermen and we did another creel census. That year I did quite an elaborate histographic analysis of the creel census, and I had it on a big cardboard framework I could put up. It showed a rather interesting situation—most of the fish were 10-12 inches long, and very, very, very few were over that, it was just an odd one. We wanted to change that, so we went again to the department of game commission, I keep changing that—it eventually became the fish and wildlife—but the game commission, and presented our case again. This time we had the biologists behind us so then gradually they changed the regulations from when maybe it was like ten fish? I don't know what we started out with, quite a large number limit, to reduce it to fewer fish, like to five, then three, to one, and then also to try to have a minimum size. We tried to develop what the survey showed the fishermen would like to have, maybe they wouldn't catch as many

fish, but they wanted that chance of catching bigger fish. So our club, Ken and I and a couple others mostly, for a number of years, worked the game department and eventually the department of fish and wildlife into changing the regulations. One of the biologists that were involved in that after he came to this area was Jim Johnston, and Jim was interested in that also. So we kept changing it—finally now it's strictly catch and release; some might like it changed back, I don't know. I don't know if that's a factor or not, but it was a gradual thing through from 1975 and I don't know exactly what year, now, it became totally catch and release, but it was a gradual change. Our club along with the support of the state, of the fly fishers of the area, and the state council and other local fly fishing clubs were behind this effort, especially the Washington Fly Fishing Club.

TB: I know that you have a big interest in Pass Lake and is that when it started?

DB: Yes; though I fished Pass Lake for many years before. I even fished Pass Lake back in the Fifties when I first started teaching in Anacortes and at that time it was not fly fishing only, and I didn't know about fly fishing at that time. Then we just went out and fished just like you would at any of the lowland lakes. There was about a ten-year interval from middle Fifties to the middle Sixties that was, I guess, general regulations and then it went back to fly fishing only. You have some documents somewhere in your collection now, I think, about a group from Seattle and Everett clubs down that way that worked to get it back to being fly fishing only in the Sixties.

TB: Do you want to talk a little about how you got involved with the Federation of Fly Fishers?

DB: Well, yes. Things started, I would say, sort of on a parallel situation. I became more [interested in] fly fishing as my main way of fishing through the Seventies. Previous to my presentation to the game commission, I made the presentation to the Northwest Council of Federation of Fly Fishers meeting in Seattle. A man named Errol Champion was the president. As a result of that, I guess, I would say that somehow I got their attention, so to speak. In 1978 or through that time period, Errol was going to become the treasurer of the Federation of Fly Fishers and they needed someone to be the president of the Northwest Council. I got a call from Errol, I had gotten to know him a bit in that two or three years because he was one of the three members of the WFFC that helped form our club. I don't remember the exact date, but it was in the winter 1977-78 or the spring of 1978: Errol Champion, Ed Foss, and Steve Raymond met Ken Jacot and me at Ted's Sporting Goods in Edmonds. They had already asked us, but they wanted to meet with us with the idea of us becoming the officers for the Northwest Council. They asked me if I'd be president, if they could put my name on the ballot for president and Ken for secretary-treasurer. We agreed to it.

I don't know if this is important, but maybe its interesting to you—they came up in Ed Foss's [van]—[he] had recently bought a little camper van, they were just becoming popular then, a conversion of a van into a camper—so we all were in this and it had a little sofa on the side or a couch or a bed type. And we were all in this little van—all five of us—and we were talking about this. Well Ed used that, he had it so he could put his boat on top and he traveled in that to his fishing. Years later he sold that van to Chuck Gold's (Gold was a good friend of Ralph Wahl) son-in-law, Jim Poore, who lives in Anacortes. I saw this van one day and Jim had it, he bought that from Ed Foss and he just got rid of it himself here a year or so ago. And that van's been around ever since 1978.

I have just endless stories about all sorts of connections and things like that; it's almost octopus tentacles going in all directions. But we met in this van, we agreed to be the council president and secretary-treasurer so we took over and Errol then became the treasurer of the Federation of Fly Fishers. So for, I think it was three years I was president of the Northwest Council, which extended from Alaska to the Oregon-California border; all of Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, Yukon Territory and Alaska. But the basic area was British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon, where most the clubs were. There were two or three clubs [in Alaska but] we never got to Alaska; it was just too far away. But I met with groups as far south as Roseburg, Oregon and as far north as Williams Lake or Kamloops; their British Columbia group met annually in Vancouver. I went up there more than once to their meetings; and from Aberdeen to Spokane going east and west in the state. So we did some traveling, met with a lot of clubs and a lot of people at that

time. We'd have pretty big meetings, too, in Seattle and people would come. I remember a fellow who would come—mostly men at that time, the women hadn't gotten involved as much—from Kelowna, B.C. and Kamloops and from as far south as Ashland, Oregon and Bend, Oregon. It was a really active, interested group of people from the clubs that came to meet as a group, usually in Seattle. [It] was about as central as you could get. I remember Ken one year set up a wonderful dinner meeting at a nice big restaurant in Seattle. But we had some pretty active programs at that time, a lot of interest.

TB: So what were the main programs?

DB: Regulations was one; things like Pass Lake, environmental [issues], improving fisheries [by the use] of the Vibert Box. The Whitlock-Vibert box was coming on as an idea (you have other information on that), clubs were trying that, utilizing that. Unfortunately, maybe not unfortunately, it's something that hasn't really continued in this area and for what reasons I'm not sure. I thought it was a good idea, anyway, it hasn't continued to catch on. But there were just basic environmental fisheries ideas and programs. A club in southern Oregon built a fish ladder around a dam on a tributary of the Rogue River.

Oh there was one other part of it though that we thought was important and that was Jack Hutchinson's audio-visual program. He handled audio-visual for the whole council and he had the whole set of films and slideshows and of course there was always the publications and stuff from the Federation that was dealt with.

TB: So how did you happen to get involved in the Federation itself?

DB: I guess I keep going back—Errol Champion went from treasurer to president of the Federation and I guess he was satisfied with the way we handled the council so he asked me if I'd be secretary of the Federation in 1980 when they met in Spokane. By then I was already traveling and going to lots of meetings and I had already been to, as the president of the council, I'd been to some of the meetings of the Federation, of the executive branches. I had gotten to know a number of the people so I agreed to do that, and so I was elected secretary in 1980, the summer of 1980.

Along with this involvement with the Federation, I was also doing a lot more fly fishing. We made an annual trip to British Columbia, our club even held outings at Lac Le Jeune. I'd take my family on outings up to the lakes with our camping trailer and even my folks would go. Through this time Dale Elliot, who I mentioned previously, and I did lots and lots of fishing in northwest Washington and British Columbia. We went up and camped together. We went and his brother and his family and even my parents went up. We did a number of fishing trips and the fishing we enjoyed so much because he knew the lakes up there, he had lots of contacts, and we had some wonderful fishing in different places. I told myself before I came today that I was going to make a list of all the lakes I've fished in British Columbia. I never have done it, but it's a long list, I tell you, over the years. We'd camp at Lac Le Jeune and we'd get a bright idea—well let's go to so-and-so lake—let's say Black Lake, which is over by Roche Lake. We heard there was decent brook trout fishing there. So we'd make a day trip over there, just run over there for the day.

Through this time the well known biologist in British Columbia was Brian Chann. I didn't know him well, but I knew him well enough to call him up or write him a note and ask him where to go fishing. He'd mention a lake or two and we'd go try that. We fished some wonderful lakes and caught lots of nice fish. So along with being with the fly club and the Federation, my fly fishing dramatically increased in the amount of time I spent and tying flies. Through this time, when I was teaching, before I retired, I had classes after school with kids teaching fly tying and it just became part of what I did.

TB: Okay, then you also became vice-president for membership of the Federation and president—

DB: Well yes, the Federation of Fly Fishers, my involvement there just went on. It went for almost ten years. Yes, I was secretary and they wanted me to be president and I was still teaching and I thought that as long as I was teaching I just wouldn't really have the time to spend. So I accepted being a vice president for a year and then the next year I retired from teaching and then I agreed to take [it]. At that time the president

generally took a two-year [term], accepted it for one year, you generally went for two years. There were others that did only one and some did it for more than two. But it was two years, from the summer of 1985 to the summer of 1987. Now during that time, when I became vice president of the Federation our membership had dropped and we really needed to increase the membership. We had very, very few funds to operate membership drives, so we did kind of a one-on-one: try to get people to get somebody else to join. We did increase a slight amount; we reversed the trend from fewer members to increased members. I became president and a man named Skip Hosfield, who you've heard about, became our vice president of membership. He really turned it around; he put out a major effort for membership and probably did one of the best membership draws that the Federation has ever done. Then the next three years our membership went up at least fifty percent if not more.

TB: Can you identify what it was that he did?

DB: Yes, he called it his kitchen table operation. He got mailing lists from organizations that would have people interested in fly fishing. He utilized those, he put out incentives, and he followed through—he followed through on a very step-by-step procedure. If someone showed interest he followed through, and he always had back up, to whatever he did, there was always a back-up to it; following through and making sure the contacts were made and if people did something special, he made sure it was noted. A very detailed-type operation, which worked and yes, he did it from his home in Eugene. Our membership went from I think it was about 8,000 maybe 8,100 in 1985, summer of 1985 to about 12,500 in three years. He put really a lot of effort into it. It's been noted, and I certainly noted it during my time. I couldn't praise him enough for his efforts and how well it worked.

TB: Do you want to talk a little bit about what you've done as a senior adviser? You've been a senior adviser since 1987.

End of Tape One, Side One

DB: I get the FFF's board of directors mailings and so forth, and if I have an opinion about something, I do let them know and I keep in touch with the state officers. Of course I know a few of the people that are still involved so yes, I try to let them know if I have an opinion about things, that's more of what it is. I haven't been that involved. During my presidency, going back a bit behind that, we had our IFFC, International Fly Fishing Center in West Yellowstone, Montana. Our office was in West Yellowstone and computers were just starting to come in use during the middle Eighties and we were finding there were problems in getting technical help. It had to come from Bozeman, they had to come quite a way in winter weather; there were lots of problems. So we could see there were problems being in West Yellowstone but the nice thing about West Yellowstone was it was a wonderful place to hold our conclaves: hold our big summer gatherings. People wanted to go there; it's just a wonderful place to do that. We had the fly fishing center to hold banquets and meetings and so forth. It was really a great place to go and people liked it. But others in other parts of the country would say, "Well why don't you come here or why don't you go there?" And so sometime in the early Eighties, one of our Federation members talked the board of directors into going to Penn State University in Pennsylvania for a conclave. That was set up prior to my being president, so in 1986 we held our conclave at Penn State University. It is probably best not to make comments about it, but it didn't work out.

TB: Like was the physical campus not set up for it? Or was it that you didn't have—

DB: No, it was a combination of the person that was the chairman quit being chairman and it just didn't work; and we came back to Montana.

TB: Have pretty much all of them been in Montana since then?

DB: One was in Calgary in the Eighties or early Nineties and they had one in Eugene. The original [one] was in Eugene, it came back there for some anniversary. They had it well organized, they had a good group. That's big part of all this, who really takes the lead on it. While I was president,

another thing that I enjoyed was of course, the people. You meet so many wonderful people in all these various places in the United States. I went to a conclave that's almost as big as the major one; it was in Mountain Home, Arkansas, it was wonderfully organized. It's also a place where people could go and go fishing. And of course, that's always a nice side line—that's why West Yellowstone was so well liked because there was lots of opportunities close by [so] they could go fishing. Another place that had a big conclave but had no fishing was in Los Angeles. The Southwest Council held a big conclave, a big meeting in the Amfax Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. It was right next to the airport and we went to that. I went to Alabama to a smaller conclave. And of course our executive board would meet in various places. Through those years I was an officer I had a chance to meet and go to meetings, often Denver or a place in the central part of the country. I met so many just great people that I think about a lot over the years.

TB: You probably won't give me an honest answer to this, but you got the Federator of the Year Award in 1983?

DB: That was correct, 1983 I was presented Man of the Year, which they've now changed to Federator of the Year. They went from Man of the Year to Man of the Year/Woman of the Year, and now they've changed, which I think is probably a good way to do it, don't put a man or woman on it, don't genderize it, just put it as (Federator) of the Year. That gives everybody a chance.

Why do I think I got it or why—? Well I suspect of course I was available to go and travel to some the meetings and be involved. As secretary I tried to get out as much information as I could. At that time we were required to make an annual report and I had a fellow in Seattle that worked for—I don't know which—one of the big banks down there. That was his job, to do all the printing, all the publications for the bank. So I got all the reports together all typed and all that part of it done, and he put it together in a nice booklet. It really was professionally done, it looked great. We'd make 100 or 150 for all the directors. We did that for two or three years. But that previous year, the president asked if I would review the constitution and by-laws of the Federation, so I spent a lot of time reviewing and some rewriting. I drove down to Salem, Oregon and spent a day with Dan Callaghan, our FFF attorney and went through it section by section and part by part, and checked to make sure that everything fit—what we were doing at that time; because it had been about twenty years that the Federation had been in existence. Making sure that everything was up-to-date. So I suppose that would be something they would look at and consider. That was for my Federator of the Year Award.

TB: Do you want to talk a little bit more about some of your favorite fly fishing places?

DB: Yes, well, Canada. As I say, I probably, in the early Seventies, started going and I've—well last year we missed going—but over the years it's been basically an annual trip, somewhere up into British Columbia to go fishing in the lakes. Lac Le Jeune became our favorite for two things: it has a wonderful place to camp and my wife likes it. The fishing is good too. So a combination of—you put the things together like that and it was great for my family, they liked to go there. If they didn't want to fish, there was a swimming beach and other things they could do there. And we'd catch some nice fish there.

My friend Dale and his wife liked to go and an interesting story—one year we were up there and another—I'll go back a bit. There was another family, a fellow I met through the Federation from Vancouver, Washington, his name was Jim Unterwegner, and he also wanted to come up and wanted to find some good places to camp and fish so he and his wife would come up and they got to coming every year too. It became just an annual thing to go up there and have fun.

This one time we were camped up at Lac Le Jeune and I went out fishing. It was a windy day and it wasn't a very good day to be out bouncing around in your little boat. But I got up around a little bit in lieu of the wind and just off from the boat there was quite a large *PLOP*. I knew it was a pretty good sized fish, and I hadn't even anchored the boat or anything—I was just getting ready. I put the anchor down as quietly and carefully as I could. I picked up my fly rod and just flipped the fly over to about where I thought this *PLOP* was. I got probably one of the biggest fish I've ever caught in a lake, and it took me a bit of time to land it, but I did. I will say, I'm not a total catch and release fisherman, we enjoy eating fish and we don't take lots

of them but—this was a nice fish and I was going to take it, barbeque it and eat it. I got it into shore and Dale always had an ice chest, our RVs have refrigerators but he had an ice chest where we kept the fish. He'd go down and buy ice through the week to keep it nice and cold. Well along in the afternoon the park manager brought a couple of fellows by to see Dale because they wanted to fly fish and they wanted to get some information about how to fly fish the lake. So Dale was talking to them and he said to them, "Here's an example of what you could get." And he went and opened the cooler and pulled out my fish and I guess they thought that was really a nice fish!

We usually measured fish in inches, but this one we thought about in pounds. They went on, and the next morning, Dale got up and went outside and noticed one of his coolers was missing. He looked around camp and up on the edge of the camp, the camp had been leveled so there was kind of a little hill where it had been leveled out, and here was the cooler up there at the edge of the woods, so he went up and got it. Well, what he had done after they left, during the evening meal I suppose, he had switched coolers, he had two, and the one that had been on top was on the bottom. So whoever grabbed this, had taken the one without the fish and obviously they had gone through it. We never did know who it was but we really suspected these two guys because they didn't stay long and they had come over from the central part of British Columbia. They wanted to catch a big fish to take back to show off and we think they were probably after this fish.

TB: But they didn't get it, right?

DB: No, we ate the fish that night for supper.

TB: Excellent.

DB: I can tell lots of stories about our fishing trips up there.

TB: Well talk a little bit too about, you said you like the Skagit River.

DB: Oh yes; after I retired I wanted to get a boat, a versatile boat, that I could fish the Skagit and also to go out in the bay. I bought a 14-foot River Runner and a 20-horse outboard and I started fishing the lower Skagit for sea-runs. It just really got to be something I enjoyed very much, just every chance I have in the fall, when the river's in condition. For the most part, you can just about always catch some fish. They're from the first of September, even a little earlier, clear into late October, into November. There's two months that the fishing is very enjoyable and especially from this boat because it works out just great. I can have three in the boat and two can fish and the third can maneuver the boat if you're moving. We enjoy that fishing very much. I can also use it in the upper river, but I never have much. A couple times I've gone up but I never really got into steelhead fishing as some have. I've only caught a couple in my life on a fly. It just never was something I did—I've had a few chances.

After I bought this boat, Bruce Ferguson would see me and he'd say, "Have you tried saltwater fishing up there? There must be places you can do saltwater fly fishing up around Anacortes." Every time I'd see him almost, he'd ask me about fishing in the saltwater. And I kept saying, "Well I really don't know where they concentrate." But finally, about twenty years ago, just after I bought this boat, I decided that the pink salmon, the humpies, they come inside Whidbey Island and they concentrate. So I decided that I was going to focus on that. I went out, and that also was about Labor Day, similar to when the cutthroat are in the river. I started focusing on those pinks, and by gosh they came to the fly, they readily came to the fly. I was very successful with it and have continued to fish for them, odd years of course, but every year since, except last year they were such a poor run, we weren't allowed to focus on them.

I was one of the first, as far as I can remember around the eastern side of Whidbey Island, just below Deception Pass in that whole area and through there, to fish for them with a fly. Now quite a few people are doing it, so it's caught on. But twenty years ago I don't remember seeing anybody casting a fly from there; they were all using other types of equipment. So Bruce was right, but I've never caught the coho (silvers)

or the kings, the Chinook, on a fly. There probably are places but the runs are so poor now that it's hard too. The pinks on a good year there's enough fish that you can really focus and they're there.

You mentioned Scott Christianson a bit ago and he does fishing up at the Neptune Beach area here in Whatcom County, but that's a long ways to go from Anacortes and find a place to launch and run up there. I've just never put that effort into going somewhere like that to do it. I might admit that one of the things I like about Canada, going to the lakes up there, is we'd go up, we'd set our R.V. up, we take a boat, we plan to stay for a few days; you don't just run in and out. Then we leave the boat tied up along the shore and once you get everything unloaded and once camp is set up, then you can go fishing whenever you feel like it. If you want to fish for an hour, you fish for an hour. If you want to fish more, [you do], and if you don't want to go fishing you read a book or just enjoy the campfires in the evening. It becomes more than just a high ball fishing trip. You take your family with you. To me, that's the way to go fishing.

I can go to the river, just drive over. That's a twenty minute deal, that's no problem. Especially as the years go by, less and less of this trying to get some more fish for a day or two. We did that when we were younger, and if you miss it you don't. One big trip we made, I mentioned early on, the first trip I ever went with Dale, we missed it, you know. We drove all that way, spent a long Memorial Day weekend and there were no fish. So if you go and try to plan to spend ten days, a week or ten days, during that time you're going to find something that's going to give you some fun. That's what I've found.

TB: Anything more about Pass Lake?

DB: Well, Pass Lake. Our club has stayed involved. Quite a few years ago our club put up a kiosk. We try to maintain it and put up a self creel census. When the cards get filled out, one of our members (now Frank Barcott) collects them every month and organizes the results which are posted in the club newsletter. The information is made available to the department, and the fish and wildlife biologists appreciate that. Club members do an annual clean-up. Club members go out and collect trash and stuff on an annual basis. My involvement has decreased since about the middle Nineties. Louie Corbin did the creel census for many years in the Eighties. After Louie died I did some of the creel census, took care of some of that. But I've done my part and somebody else is doing that now.

TB: So how did you get to know Louie Corbin?

DB: He worked for the school district. He was the school carpenter. He had been a bus driver and maybe a custodian, I don't know. But he bid on the carpenter's job for the school district and I knew him there. I'd see him at school and I knew he liked to fish so when I would see him around the school we would have a brief conversation. But I want to do more for Louie, because I want to write more of a background for him when we put the next oral history interview up. But that was it, and I knew Louie had been a professional fly-tier, had a business—a professional business. He was interested in Pass Lake. Jim Johnston would come and Jim got to know Louie very well and appreciated Louie's efforts in going out to the lake and taking care of meeting people and talking to them about fly fishing and taking care of our creel census data and so forth. He and Jim developed a bit of a relationship and then I just knew Louie through seeing him on a fairly regular basis. He had many different jobs. They owned a kennel for a while, that's where we'd go out and do our fly-tying, he had an office in the kennel for the kennel. We'd go out and he taught Dale and me, Dale mostly, and from Dale I got it, fly-tying.

TB: What about Cascade Lake?

DB: Oh, Cascade Lake. Well why I mentioned that, in the Seventies, well maybe about 1970, I started taking a group of boys over to Orcas Island on a weekend camping trip. I kind of hand-picked them so that I knew I wouldn't have problems. By then I was doing the fly tying and we even had rod building, taking and putting together a rod, fly rods mostly. We'd usually go in the middle of May. One year we were over there, I'll never forget this, it was in the evening and the boys were out fishing. Most of them fly fishing. We'd get as many boats as we could and get as many kids out on the lake as we could. The boys were out fishing and there was a mayfly hatch and there were so many bugs coming off the water that the dimples of

the fish rising to eat the insects was almost like it was a heavy rain. The sky was so full of swallows, they must have come from all over the island, and it was just like a swarm of bees above the lake where these swallows were getting these bugs. And those kids were catching fish, and it was the neatest [thing].

End of Tape One Side Two

The boys out fishing and the swallows overhead and the rings on the water and the boys were just really getting strikes, maybe not on every cast, but certainly it was steady. They were having a ball—I don't think I've ever seen a group of kids enjoy themselves anymore than they were at that time. We'd go over on Friday after school and come back on Sunday. We did this for a number of years but finally, it got to be such a hassle getting back on Sunday afternoon with how long we had to wait at the ferry down at Orcas. The logistics got to be more than the trip was worth, unfortunately. But it was a great place to go, a wonderful place to camp, a neat place to fish. And during that time over the years; we caught some nice fish at times. Mostly they were small rainbow, but there were also cutthroat. Occasionally kids would catch a nice decent sized fish, and it was really neat.

TB: I've heard you lots of times talk about having attended some of the parties of the Washington Fly Fishing Club.

DB: Well, yes, years ago.

TB: Were all the clubs invited or were you a special guest?

DB: Well they'd invite some of us to come to their parties [and] a few times we'd go down; this was their Christmas party that we'd go to. They always had a big party with interesting Goofus Awards. They always had a nice dinner and a wonderful raffle and of course, we got, over the years, we got to know a number of the members. And especially after I was involved with the council because they were a very strong club, both the council and the Federation, they still are, which I'm very pleased with, that's another story.

They're a very strong club, one of the first clubs in the nation, started way back 1940-41, [devoted to] fly fishing. They also would have Wednesday luncheons and I went a few times when they were at the Camlin Hotel. I'd go down once in a while, a couple times a year, just to visit with them. Gordy Young was a good friend and very much involved with the Federation. I think people like him were responsible, and Steve Raymond and others, were responsible for our close ties and the fact that they sponsored our club. There were a number of reasons probably that there was [a close relationship]; and they were interested in Pass Lake, so yes, a combination of things.

TB: The other person you talked a lot about or have some relationship with is Russ Willis; how did you get to know Russ Willis?

DB: Well Russ is from Anacortes and his children were in my class. Also I knew, somehow, I just knew [him] through people, before I first met him, I honestly don't remember but I just knew him for years, since [the] early Sixties. When Russ retired he bought a motor home and Russ would go to Arizona in the winter and come back and stay around Anacortes in the summer. He towed a little car behind which he put his little car top boat on. He'd travel up to Canada and go fishing with us. He was on some of these outings, that we called them, trips up there.

Then when I became an officer in the Federation and went to West Yellowstone, he had met a friend, a fellow down in Arizona that lived about halfway between West Yellowstone and Idaho Falls, one of those towns along there. So they got to be friends and this couple invited them up and he showed Russ a few places to go fishing in that Targhee Pass, West Yellowstone area. Russ would come up when we were there for the conclave and Russ would take me fishing. He'd have things pretty well figured out, where to go; we went on the Madison, we went on Henry's Fork. I was never much of a stream fisher, and he took me into the Henry's Fork into an area where evidently few people go and it was just the best fishing I've ever had anywhere. Russ was very good about helping people, working with them on fly fishing.

He was a good caster, a wonderful caster. He would help us with our teaching of that when he was in Anacortes. But after he retired, of course, he moved on. But I always thought he was very supportive of me when he would come to West Yellowstone when I was an officer, I always appreciated that.

Warren Erholm I got to know through his family. His son invited me to come up to their house and tie flies in the basement. Warren and Russ were neighbors; they lived on the same block on the same street.

TB: What about Bruce Ferguson?

DB: Also through the Federation. He was very involved in the saltwater fly fishing. I believe it was when I was president of the council; he put on a saltwater seminar, or fly fishing show in Tacoma. At that time, it was the first one ever done on saltwater, as far as I know and I don't think much of that has happened since. But he brought together people that had been successful fly fishing and set up a seminar and a dinner and it was a nice program in Tacoma. Then I'd see Bruce a couple times a year at least at meetings, he was very much involved with the salmon. He was on committees, on commissions, he was very involved in the Federation, and he always went to the conclaves. He was always at council meetings. He was a person that had interest, and was willing to put forth a lot of effort along with the interest.

TB: Since 2003, you've still been involved in teaching fly fishing a lot. Do you want to tell me anything more about that?

DB: Mostly the fly tying, yes. I had started that as a teacher and then after I retired I've continued to teach fly tying, one or two sessions a year, at senior centers, at the library, at schools. I enjoy it, and I've got together enough equipment so that people don't even have to have vices or the other tools, I furnish everything. They can come and sit down and we can start in. It's always the very basic, the introduction to fly tying. I've done that now for a lot of years. I started when I was teaching school.

TB: And do you have a favorite fly?

DB: Well, I've changed it slightly, but the Knudson Spider is my go-to fly. Dale Elliot taught me that fly back in the early Seventies to fish for eastern brook trout in Dugan Lake in British Columbia. We almost exclusively used it; it was a successful fly, an attractor fly. Then when we went to fishing cutthroat in the Skagit, it is basically a cutthroat, a well known cutthroat fly. But we used it in other places. You can use it for just about anything. But it was one of our focus flies for eastern brook trout in British Columbia. So yes, that's probably the one and that's one I use for demonstration now. I'll be going over to Ellensburg again in another month and I'll be demonstrating over there for the third time since it started. I enjoy meeting people and talking to them. And if I can teach them a little bit, that's good or just having a visit with somebody. You always meet somebody that's interested in what you're doing.

TB: So what do you think about the future of fly fishing?

DB: The future of fly fishing: well I think it will continue, naturally. There are always new approaches. Sometimes—there's a way I should say this, but some times it's a new theme on an old idea. I'm not sure if I said that exactly right. Fly fishing has evolved over the years, the equipment has changed, the fly rod has changed. We saw, we heard, and now we can read about it, Darrell Martin's comments about his background and learning about how [it came over] from England and how the fly rods and stuff have changed over the years. And they're continuing to change some.

But as far as people being involved, some of the changes I don't like in fishing, I hope fly fishing doesn't get into this competition thing that's like some of what we see on television with other fishing. I would hate to see that, I don't think that should be part of it. I hope, I hope, that the people that get very involved in the fly fishing get equally involved in the environment or the protection or in the enhancement, or however you want to put those ideas together in the future of fish. We got some problems down the road for that. Wild fish are important. It's not only our government; it's a combination of things that have to deal with that. So

as I look forward, I can only hope that that will at least not get worse or go down at all, and hold its own. But it'd be nice if it could get better.

Fly fishing is different than other fishing yet it's similar. The focus is to catch a fish; it's just the method that is different. But the focus is basically, when you're fishing, to present a fly that will catch a fish. The presentation is important. I've certainly found that over the years. I take people fishing and I've learned a bit about presentation. I'm certainly not an authority or wonderful at it, but I notice that it helps to be able to present the fly properly. And that takes time, some time to learn it or to practice it. You don't just grab a fly rod—sort of like the two guys that came and got into Dale's cooler up in British Columbia. [You] just don't go to the shop and buy a fly rod and go out and catch a fish, it doesn't work that way.

TB: Well one other question is: how did you get interested in the history of fly fishing and doing the oral histories that you did? And/or what motivated you to do that?

DB: By meeting all these people. I think, you know, and every chance I had to meet somebody I would try to learn something. Gordy Young introduced my wife and me to Lee and Joan Wolfe in West Yellowstone. I had seen a film that Lee had done years and years before and I knew who he was; historically, in our county, he's one that has done some pretty neat things in fly fishing and that was important. Others in the northwest: Enos Bradner; I met Enos maybe once or twice just in passing almost, never really knew him. But I knew he was involved with Pass Lake and that he and his group had changed Pass Lake from a conventional lowland lake to fly fishing only back in the early Forties. I knew that and that was of interest and important to me. Walt Johnson is another person who had some fly fishing history. When I had a chance to meet him with Russ Willis and Warren Erholm they talked about all the great times they had fishing the Skagit and Stilly for steelhead. There was just lots of people like that that I got to know through other people and it just—I've met lots of so-called names but also just lots of other people too that sparked.

We started out in West Yellowstone to make a fly fishing museum and that fell through. Then we went to the International Fly Fishing Center and we didn't have the funds to bring in key people. But Ralph Moon volunteered hours and hours, just endless amount of time and miles to go there from his home to take care of it. Buck Goodrich is another former FFF officer and conclave chairman. You know you just have to admire people like that. And of course, it's bound to rub off on you a little bit if you're involved with it. You have to rub off, or otherwise you shouldn't be involved. Buck Goodrich and Ralph Moon, they just took care of that, and they were volunteers; they put all their time in to do it.

TB: Ok anything else I haven't asked you for today that you'd like to get on tape?

DB: No I guess we pretty much covered it, I hope. I can't come up with anything. Just to tell you I hope I've said enough about my friend Dale and our over forty years of fishing together and we'll see when we get this finished, but I think so. Now there are other members of our club such as John, Robin and others that I enjoy going fishing with. Not just fishing either. I guess the importance of people to me that have been involved that went ahead of me and asked me to get involved and move forward. Then hopefully I've done a bit towards continuing that, I hope. I guess it has.

TB: Oh yes, you bet. Ok I'll say thank you very much then and we'll shut it off.