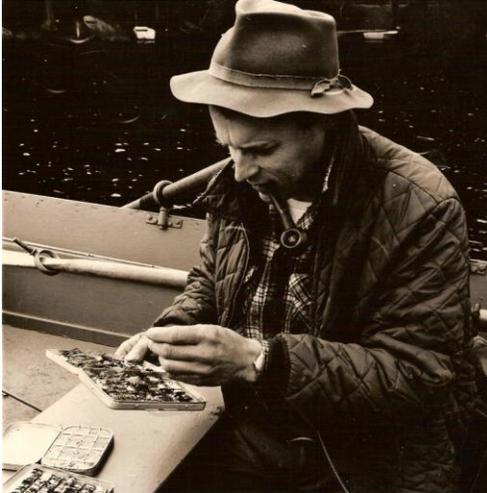




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This interview was conducted with Warren Erholm on March 29, 1993. The interviewer is Danny Beatty.

Warren Erholm 1924 – 2001

Warren was born in Bellingham, Washington and attended the Campus School. His family moved to Anacortes about 1938. He was in the Army Air Force during WWII. When he returned to Anacortes after the war he was employed as a shareholder in Anacortes Veneer until his retirement.

Warren and his wife Kathy lived only a few doors from his good friend Russ Willis. You will see from the interview that Warren was always interested in new fly fishing ideas and changes. Some of his original flies are listed in the early editions of *Steelhead Fly Fishing and Flies* by Trey

Combs.

DB: When did you start fishing at Pass Lake?

WE: Oh yes, that was many, many years ago. At that time it wasn't a fly lake.

DB: So you fished it before 1940-41?

WE: Yes, I fished it in about 1940, 1938 to 1940.

DB: Somewhere in that area, OK. Were you just a kid here in town?

WE: Yes, and then I fished it also just right after it became a fly lake. Dad and I used to go out on Sunday afternoons and we used to troll, mooch a fly. But at that time the good pattern was a Royal Coachman streamer; that was a good fly that would work out very, very well. Then we kind of left the lake until about the Fifties; [that] was when I started fishing it. 1950-51 was when I started fishing it heavy.

DB: That was when this great cutthroat fishery was going.

WE: Yes, it was full of cutthroat and we'd go out there and so many of the guys would be out casting dry flies to fish that were plopping all over the place. But actually the way to really take fish then was to mooch the fly down deep and get to the bottom. You could be out there at Pass Lake and fish all night if you wanted to. You would hardly get a thing on a dry fly, even though they were jumping and rising. But my friend, Russ Willis, and I, we'd be out there. He'd have his boat and I'd have mine, and we'd be fishing. A lot of other friends of ours from town would be out there.

DB: Who were some of these other fly fishers?

WE: Well I know Harvey Moen would be out there fishing. And another [was] John Barber, who was a tournament caster from California. He could take the same rod you were using and probably run out 40-50 more feet than what you were using. He had long arms, tall guy.

DB: I know him. He lives out on March's Point, right?

WE: He's passed away now. This is John, you're thinking of Bart. John and I used to go out there.

DB: Okay, I guess I didn't know John. But he was a relative?



WE: Yes, uncle. He had a Heddon fly rod, two-piece fly rod, bamboo. And John would throw, my gosh, he would throw a line two sizes heavier on that little rod. He threw a Hedge 16, that's a good size, see that's almost like a B, a GBF in those days. And he could throw out like 90 feet. I finally got that rod from John; I traded him a heavy back-boned glass fly rod for that pole because I really wanted that pole. John wanted a heavy glass pole. And John really wanted a rod that I had for sale. I had built up an Orvis Shooting Star rod with shooting star guides on it, beautiful rod. The wife gave it to the kids for Christmas. I built that rod but it was too heavy for me, my wrists just couldn't handle it. And we came out here in the front of the yard there at one time and John threw, oh gosh, he threw 130 feet with it. Oh, he had to have that pole. Well at that time, I wanted to sell the pole so darn bad because I wanted to buy a Winston. I wanted this 9 foot, 4 1/4 oz Winston. And boy, John just didn't have the bucks for it. So Emory Harrison said, "I know," because I had this pole down at Fred Johnson's sporting goods store for sale.

DB: The Shooting Star?

WE: Yes, and he said, "I'm going to go to Everett and see a friend of mine down there." Well I didn't know this fellow at the time, who in the world he was talking about. He was talking about Al Knudson. Oh Al Knudson would probably just love that pole. So we brought Al Knudson up and Al Knudson went in and looked at the pole and just fell in love with it and bought it. Well gosh, at that time I sold the pole for thirty dollars. And Al Knudson boy, in fact in almost all his pictures of Al Knudson he's using that particular pole. And every time I'd see Al Knudson at different lakes fishing, I'd ask him, "Gosh Al, how's that pole of yours doing?" "Oh, just wonderful."

[Al Knudson]: "But when I wanted to put some new guides on or put some new wrapping, how in the world do you get the color on the guides, or I mean, the thread? I put it on and put a preservative on it and varnish it and it doesn't turn the right color." Well I said, "The secret of that is, Al, you just go and get this Gudebrod thread, it's a silk thread. And you put that on and you don't use a preservative, you just varnish right on that. The varnish changes the color of the thread to the same color as the Orvis." "Olboy," he said, "that's great! Wow!"

So the next time I remember I saw him it was either on the Stilly or back at Pass Lake, I forget, either one of those places. He said, "Hey, I've got a present for you!" So he gave me two roles of thread that he'd found in a place at Everett and he said, "I bought about four roles for myself, but here, you take these and put these with your equipment at home. So when you want to thread up one of your other Orvis rods, why, you've got the thread." "Oh great, Al;" I thought that was neat.

But anyway, John Barber and I used to fish together at Pass Lake. And now Al Knudson came to me, and he told me you know, that he'd had this pole and he just loved it, this Shooting Star. But he'd closed the car door on it one time when he was getting ready to go fishing and he damn near sat down right there on the ground and cried, because that was his pet pole. And you know, it was such a heavy rod that I couldn't handle it, but Al could stand out there in that river, and he was just a little guy, small wrists, and could

throw that pole all day long and not be bothered, because he was in practice and he was all geared up. Well, what he'd done with the pole, he took the pole and he found a piece of fiberglass fish pole and he took the tip off of the first guide and he slipped this fiberglass piece right over that rod. Put all of the splinters and stuff that was busted all together with glue and he shoved this section of fiberglass rod over that, like a sleeve. Then he smoothed it down with papers and he wrapped each end of it so it came right up and he used the pole after that. Well I said, "My gosh, Al, didn't that wreck the action of the pole?" "Didn't hurt it a bit, I'm still using it and I still love it." So that was interesting. So there's a tip if you ever—we've done that on fiberglass poles, broke them and we've run an inside piece up them. But I've never heard of doing it reversed on a fly rod.

DB: You don't fish Pass Lake much anymore.

WE: No, no.

DB: When did you stop fishing it on a regular basis, approximately when?

WE: Oh gosh, twenty years ago.

DB: Okay, in the early Seventies or earlier.

WE: Yes, Middle Seventies. I hit that lake every opening day for years, and years, and years, and years. Sometimes, you would really have great success but other times it was just a wonderful opening to go and see a lot of your friends that had come up from Everett and Seattle. They'd all stay at Bowman Bay.

DB: They still do.

WE: Yes, they're still down there at Bowman Bay. Then one of my good friends, Holbrook, I'd see him there. Holbrook, I think—

DB: He died not too long ago.



WE: Yes, he's up there fishing that wonderful stream up above, right now. I met Holbrook in Seattle and Holbrook wanted me to come and tie flies for him when I was going to school down there for a part-time job. But I told him, I was just too busy doing school work and I really couldn't do that. I had a beautiful Orvis rod. It was a three-piece, 5 3/4 ounce. But I wanted to get another pole, so Holbrook, he said "Well I think I can sell that pole [for] you but you need a Powell rod, is what you need." "Oh, OK, well if you can get me a Powell rod." So we sold the fly rod to a very interesting older man from Seattle. He took it out and steelhead fished with it all the time. And Dawn ordered me a Powell but then the Powell Company went out of business and he couldn't get me my pole.

DB: They're back in now though.

WE: Oh yes, they're great; and so there went that. Then I sent back and I got another Orvis rod. What I remember about this rod was I had a bunch of old clothes and stuff and I took that out to the mill and hung them up by the dryer and sold them to the guys at the plywood. Two or three suits I sold and I finally got enough money saved up to be able to buy an 8-foot Orvis pole. They were around \$90.00 then.

DB: Yes, right. They still make that—I wrote to this company, to Orvis, about the Shooting Star and I asked them to give me an idea about what they're worth now. They're worth a lot of money.

WE: Oh sure.

DB: They said \$900 would be conservative.

WE: But you know now, it's hard to sell a heavy duty rod. These guys are not—

DB: Not for fishing, yes, they're collectors.

WE: Collectors are the only ones. But the fisherman, I've talked to three fellows back East, one guy's Lynn and then Dick in Colorado, I just talked to one guy back in Massachusetts here last week, his name was Martin. No people are going again for shorter rods and lighter rods; they don't want any of this great, big, heavy, bottom-dredging lines and poles. And he said, "I know the rods are worth lots of money, gosh I'd be lucky if I could even get \$350 for your Winston rods now."

DB: Unless you get a collector that's interested.

WE: Yes, and I said I've got three Winston's right here and a Spartan, right now. I've had an awful time trying to sell those big ones. And they're all going to graphite. I told him, "You know, it's too bad because everybody is all wound up on graphite and boron and all that, but the action between a good bamboo pole and a graphite, you'll never be able to compare. The bamboo will outdo it, it's more comfortable to fish, and much different, the action and everything." So all of the old timers and all of the fellows that have fished a long time, that all had bamboo poles, they all feel the same way. Our friend, Walt Johnson, gosh, he's got a nine-foot pole, probably weighs about 3 ounces. And he's gone to a two-weight line.

DB: And a one ounce rod, probably.

WE: Yes, the rod is about 2 ½ ounces, total.

DB: But I mean when the blanks comes out, it's probably one ounce.

WE: Oh yes, it's really light. Then there's a fellow in Everett that's making these poles. Gosh he's selling, for a pole, with a special engraved reel and all that stuff and a special case for it, a leather case and everything, it's running close to \$3000 bucks, just for that. Can you believe it? He gave Walt one of his rods. He said, "Here Walt, now you take this pole, and you take it out and try it out." He didn't give him the engraved one or anything; it was just a regular standard pole. It was running \$1600, around that, probably \$1500 or \$1600, close to \$2000. And Walt says, "Well gosh, I can't afford a pole like this. I'll take it and I'll try it out but right now, I couldn't afford to buy a pole." Well he said, "Walt, I'm giving this to you for a present." And Walt was just flabbergasted, he just couldn't believe it. But he showed me the pole when I was up there, it's a beautiful rod. In fact, he had it behind his chair with a reel and line and whenever he gets ready to go to the Stilly, he just grabs that and takes off.

DB: And is that the two-weight you're talking about?

WE: Yes, his two-weight line. And I said, "My gosh, some of the flies that I used to tie up, why a two-weight line wouldn't even throw it twenty feet." Let's see, I was using a G2AF.

DB: For steelhead?

WE: Yes, floating line. Actually I was one of the first ones in this area that ever started fishing steelhead with a floating line. Nobody else, I'd go with Russ and Russ was always down deep, hanging up on everything he could get a hold of on that bottom. And I could make my mend, you know, mend out forty feet of line, make a complete beautiful drift, getting down as deep as they were because I was picking up grass and stuff on my flies, but I was getting a longer drift than they were.

DB: Because you just had your line up on top.

WE: Yes, yes. See, the line was like a bubble, and it just floated right on down with it. So one time we went up, Walt Johnson, Russ, and I, we went up and fished the Stilly, the upper part of the Stilly. We hit

some other streams and stuff, the Sauk, and all that. He had his 3 3/8, 3 1/2 ounce Winston and normally he threw an HCF on it. And this time he took his floating line out and he was trying the floating line with that rod and bigger flies. But we didn't contact anything, we didn't have any luck but we sure had a hell of a good trip.

DB: When you fished Pass Lake, of course you said you hit opening days -- that was standard?

WE: Yes.

DB: Did you continue to fish it through the summer?

WE: Yes, well I would fish it up until June; yes I usually would finish it off at about June.

DB: So a couple of months?

WE: A couple of months.

DB: Okay.

WE: Then the lake would warm up and sometimes it would be full of bloom and then it wouldn't. Now I fished it quite often in the fall. I would say some of my best fishing was in the fall.

DB: And then again in like late September and October.

WE: Yes and just before it would quit in October. I could go down the Heilman Road and park my car down there and then I would walk down to the beach. Well Pass Lake in the fall there would be a lot of water out of it, so that whole end of the lake, see, would be all dry and you could walk along there. And if you had a pair of hip boots, I just used small sixteen-inch farm boots.

DB: So one of your favorite places to fish was from the shore?

WE: Oh yes, Russ Willis and I would go down there and my gosh, we'd live it up every time we went down there.

DB: Would that be somewhere in the neighborhood of the pump house, what we call the pump house?

WE: It would be west of the pump house, towards Heilman's house, that shoreline, that's all you had to do. I know I went down there one time I caught a 3-pounder and a 2 1/2-pounder and I finished out with a bunch of nine-inch frying pan trout.

DB: Were there other areas of the lake when you went in the boat that you enjoyed?

WE: Well yes, I had some other areas too. I would be on the same shoreline, only I'd be out a ways and I'd drop the anchor down. I had two places along there that I liked. And then I liked up by the highway, the first bay. It would be on the first bay as you're heading towards Oak Harbor, you come to the first bay, I'd put the car there and I would fish just down and then up the shoreline just a little ways and I'd drop my anchor, used to catch a lot of them there. I never fished much into the lower end of the lake.

DB: Where the ramp is now?

WE: Where the ramp and loading dock [are], a lot of people go in there and fish. Some people would go by the narrows and fish in there. I never fished there. I did get a 4 1/2-pounder out of that particular place once, on that point just using a fly, my own mixture. After you get finished tying a bunch of flies, you just take all the junk that you have left and you tie it together and you have a super, like a Jock Scott fly, black body, silver-ribbed tail, put a little bit of peacock hurl over it and maybe [tie in] a feather and maybe some white-buck tail. And the fish seemed to enjoy that bug real well, especially this guy.

DB: What were your favorite flies, overall?

WE: Well, I never went to flies that somebody else tied. I always wanted to tie my own so a lot of my patterns at Pass Lake [were] this one fly with a black body and a white fuzzy head.

DB: Do you have any examples of that, still?

WE: Yes, I got some of those still tied.

DB: Would you allow us to have one?

WE: Well I don't know; they're all beat up. We'll just have to see.

DB: Okay.

WE: My god, I would carry about 600 flies with me. I carried five fly books.

DB: When you were going fishing?

WE: Anyplace. I'll tell you, I put a lot of tippet on. I'd come to places where no matter if you have 600 flies or 700 flies with you, there isn't any of them that will work.

DB: I hear you.

WE: Then you really begin to scratch your head. Then there's been times when I'd go with the wife, and I'd put a fly on her outfit and it would be the only one that I have to duplicate and she'd catch all the fish. I'd take her up to this one lake by Mt. Baker, I even hated to take her in there because she'd always limit out and I would hardly have a thing.

DB: Are there any standard patterns, though, that you did?

WE: Well, yes, I used to catch a lot of trout out of Cranberry Lake with a very small Royal Coachman, tied real sparse. And that would be tied on a 14, 12 and 14, about a 14 hook. It was just a little tiny, and boy the fish just gobbled that.

DB: Was that a floater or a sinker?

WE: That would be semi-wet that would be under the surface. You would use a floating line, but the fly would be a wet fly.

DB: Did you use the polar wing or the buck tail?

WE: Buck-tail hair, real short.

DB: A hair wing instead of a—

WE: Right down over the back.

DB: A hair wing.

WE: [Yes].

DB: Okay.

WE: Then at Pass Lake one of my pet flies was the old Carey Special. But you got to tie that, see, a certain way. In the years of tying flies and fishing, you keep building more knowledge and more knowledge and when I first tried tying this particular pattern, everybody wanted to use peacock hurl for the body. I come to find out that that wasn't it, kind of an olive wool is what I would use, and then I would pluck it out with a needle and get it real fuzzy and then use the pheasant over wing tied in a streamer fashion, so it would go over, and not too thick.

DB: Oh, that's different than, most people think a Carey Special is a very heavy—

WE: Well a lot of them are so thick you can't see the body. I'd only make about, one feather would do it and that would be not too thick, that would work well. And that fly works good in any lake, even, god I used to catch some nice trout in Moccasin Lake over there in winter.

DB: Dave Hughes in his book on tying flies recommends the Carey Special with that pheasant rump feather; you get it extremely thick on the fly, that's the key to it.

WE: Action—

DB: You're saying almost the opposite.

WE: Yes. But see that represents the dragonfly nymph. Have you ever gone out and captured dragonfly nymphs? Russ and I did that several times. We've been out to Pass Lake and we'd been wading around in our hip boots and we got dragonflies. You lift up the rock and here's a big dragonfly nymph. Have you ever seen those guys shoot in the water? You can't see them. *CHOO* -- they're like a bullet.

DB: Oh really?

WE: From one rock to another.

DB: What size hook would you use for these Carey's, roughly, an eight long?

WE: Oh, yes. I was using an eight and a six limerick bend with about a 2x long hook. It's a big fly. But when you go and look at the nymph, boy, he moves there is no question about it. They're very difficult to catch. We've caught them, and I'd bring home and put them in formaldehyde and then we'd look at them and study them. I even tried using a black rib over the wool but I just found out that this yarn worked the best, as good as anything.

DB: Do you have any other tackle tips or other fly-tying tips?

WE: Yes there's one fly that I -- took a long time to find out who -- this guy from Bellingham would come down and fish, you know, and I'd been anchored not too far away from him and my gosh, every time he made a cast he had a fish on. I studied this guy for three different weekends. I should have gone over the first weekend and asked him, well you know, --What in the world are you using?" But a lot of times when you're fly fishing you just don't feel like going over to some guy's boat and butting right in asking, --Hey what kind of fly are you using?" A lot of times fly fishermen are funny because they won't tell you what they're using, they keep that pretty well to themselves. So I tried everything in the book this one time, and nothing worked like that. You know he would count about ten or fifteen counts and then he would start stripping in, so he was letting it go pretty close to the bottom. I was out there one time [and] my good friend Wendy Hildebrand comes paddling by in his boat, you know. And I pulled Wendy over and I told him you've got to stay here for a while and watch this guy over there in that boat. Wendy couldn't believe it. Wendy hadn't had a strike, and this guy was getting fish all the time. Well he said, --We will figure something out here." So Wendy left; Wendy figured he had something there. He never really came [even] close to what this guy had. Finally I got talking to this guy on one trip and I think you know him, because this guy was named Chuck Gold.

End of Tape One, Side One

DB: Whidbey Air Station, Air base, but prior to retirement.

WE: Yes, well this guy was from Bellingham.

DB: Yes, he was a good friend of Ralph Wahl.

WE: Oh, I'll be danged. Well he'd come out there you know and we got talking and he said, "You know, this fly only works for two weeks." [It was] the simplest in the world. It has a radiant pink body with a peacock hurl head. That's all it is. And he said, "I don't know what's in this water, or what's in this lake, these fish just gobble this thing up." Well, I said, "I've been watching you now for a couple weeks and I knew you had something and I couldn't figure out what in the devil you were using to be able to get the fish you were getting." He showed me the pattern, then we got talking, I was using a real short rod because I made up four fly rods then, all about 5 ¾ feet long, little light flea rods. It was really hard to find a good blank, I was using spinning rod blanks, but to get one to do what you wanted to do was very difficult. I had one out and I was casting, oh I could cast forty-fifty feet with it like nothing, you know.

DB: Did you get the idea for those from Lee Wulff?

WE: No, I got them out of an old *Outdoor Life* magazine. And also, I know that Lee Wulff was advertising them. And then Lee Wulff was advertising them in a catalogue from Portland, Norm Thompson catalog. And then Walt Johnson was using a short rod from Orvis, see Orvis gave him a rod, a little 6 ½ footer. In fact Orvis sent him one that was a two-piece and sent him one that was a single, all one piece.

DB: These were between 5 ½ and 6 ½ feet long, is that right?

WE: Johnson's were 6 ½.

DB: And yours were?

WE: Mine were under six feet.

DB: Yes, so that would be the range.

WE: Yes. And when I was out at Pass Lake this one time, I told this Gold, I said, "Hey! Try this rod out, I'm just trying it out." So he took it and he tried it for a while and [he said], "No, I wouldn't like this at all." He was having trouble with his back casts. Well, I said, "You got to work with it. You got to learn how to keep it up."

DB: Is it a quicker back cast?

WE: Yes.

DB: Where he has to come forward a little faster—

WE: Yes, and you have to not bring it straight over your shoulder either, because sometimes you carry a very low line behind and you have to stretch your arm up.

DB: Almost steeple casting.

WE: Yes.

DB: You're using your arm almost the full length.

WE: Yes and you stretch your arm a quarter out, and then bring it forward. It's not like the old days when you're supposed to have a newspaper under your elbow. That's the way I used to steelhead fish with my

big rod. Because I was using weighted flies and this big floating fly line and some of my flies were up into grains (weight), they were really heavy because I'd lead the body up. And my heavier ones, I would take them and *turn them upside down, and tie with the hook up. They don't hang up on the bottom as much. And that's a good thing to do.

DB: Do you have any other comments to make about changes in fishing methods and equipment?

WE: Well yes because when I fished steelhead a lot and I still do, I'm from the old school of—I use a stripping basket.

DB: Okay.

WE: And I was very fortunate, I went into an army/navy store and I bought this G.I. canvas water, it was—

DB: Kind of a water bag?

WE: No, it wasn't a bucket, it would be a water tub; the G.I.'s used it to wash their faces in. I took it and I put a belt on it and I varnished it with varnish and that made it nice and stiff. Well Russ, he was madder than a devil at me because I had never bought one for him. And what he used to use was a wire ledger tray.

DB: I saw that.

WE: Yes, and even another fly fisherman used to use that same method but the line would always fall out of it.

DB: It wasn't deep enough.

WE: It wasn't deep enough. So Russ got to where he was carrying his line in his fingers, and I would try that too and I would always get all screwed up, so I just said to heck with it. My stripping basket, to me, was easier because I could just put the rod under my arm and with left and right hand, boy you could just bring her right in and make another cast, and there was nothing holding and you weren't stepping on it, it wasn't dragging in the water and it would just pop and you could just cast and there was no drag, no friction on the line at all. So I would say the difference today is that most of your fly fishermen, whether steelhead or not, are all doing it with their hand held line. They coil it up.

DB: How about the lines themselves? Do you have any comments about changes over the years?

WE: The quality of the lines?

DB: [Yes].

WE: Yes, they've gone into some beautiful lines now. Orvis has got some dandies and they got one they call it the long belly. Another good one was with the triangle taper that Lee Wulff had come out with. [My choice] of the bunch though was, and they're not being made now, was your Hedge, Marvin Hedge's lines, because the balance was perfect on them. But his equipment has all been bought and went up to Canada and nobody seems to know where it's at now. I used to use Ashaway line; the Ashaway used to make a beautiful sinking steelhead line. And in fact, my G2AF was an Ashaway floating line and it was built for Florida for fishing bone fish in the saltwater, a variety of fish down there. It was a great, great line and I used to use a lot of Sunset lines. Then my first line that I used with my steelhead outfit was a Newton. I've had several Newton lines.

DB: I've never heard of that one.

WE: Oh, they made a beautiful line, a beautiful silk line. Then I had a GAF, take it out and you'd run it in the back yard, run varnish on it and then let it get tacky and then you'd take graphite—you buy a whole bottle or container of graphite and then you'd sprinkle that, you know, on a rag, or a piece of newspaper, a

rag was always better. And then you'd run that over this tacky varnished line and then that would make it just as slick as could be plus it would add weight to it and it would sink better.

DB: What would be a GAF compare to in the number system now? You have any idea?

WE: That's running around the ten weight.

DB: You talked about a double A weight, a double A line, you said that was what they used for bone fishing, so that's like a twelve then now or something

WE: Yes, that'd be about an 11.

DB: Heaviest lines they make now.

WE: They made that same line in a 4A. Walt Johnson had one in a 4A.

DB: Really?

WE: Yes; and he said it was as big around as his little finger, almost, as big as a pencil.

DB: And what would the taper be, quite a distinguished taper on those?

WE: Yes, the taper, the 4 would taper—it wasn't gone out too long, it was fairly short.

DB: And it would carry this heavy line for a long distance?

WE: Yes, and then the reverse taper was about the same, it wasn't chopped right off. Like some lines carry a very long forward taper and a long reverse taper, but yes, if you want to stop that for a minute I think I've got some.

PAUSE

DB: What weight line would you use in Pass Lake?

WE: A 7 weight worked just fine in that lake.

DB: So you liked to use a 7 weight?

WE: If I'm going to mooch down deep.

DB: With a sinking—about a 3 sink?

WE: Well this would be a high speed sinker, yes it was the—who the heck am I trying to--?

DB: Scientific Angler?

WE: Yes, Scientific Angler, their fastest sinking line. That would be the high D that would be fast sinker.

DB: Yes, I know that. Let's see if there's another—I have a question that I have not been able to find an answer to about Pass Lake.

WE: Yes.

DB: Do you have any knowledge about why the regulation was changed in the middle Fifties from fly fishing only to other methods?

WE: A regular lake.

DB: Yes.

WE: Pressure.

DB: OK, from just the bait fishermen, or just the fishermen in general?

WE: Yes, the only reason why whatever changed from a fly lake to a regular lake is pressure on the game department from other fishermen. They're figuring why in the world do the fly fishermen have to have a lake to themselves? Why can't this lake be made for everybody?

DB: Because they talk about that, there's about ten years, from the Fifties to Sixties, the middle Fifties to middle Sixties that it was taken away from the fly only. Then it went back on. Do you know how then it got back on to be a fly only? Was it again pressure from--?

WE: Well yes, I would say the Washington Fly Club had a lot to do with that, and not only the Washington Fly Club, but there was other fly clubs too that went into that and figured the lake should be brought back. Then it got to a point where, I think, the game department was beginning to find out that to keep that lake supplied with trout was beginning to go beyond their means of finance, they wanted to put it into a fly lake again to lessen their cost. Because there would be less fish taken and the lake wouldn't have to have as many trout put into it and the lake wouldn't receive the pressure.

DB: Because the early Fifties is what I hear a lot of people talk about as the golden years, from about 1949 or 1948 until they changed it. That was when they caught the big cutthroat, people from Anacortes; Russ Willis, all he wants to talk about are the big cutthroat at Pass Lake.

WE: Oh I've seen, I've seen Mel Payne, he came home one time and I hadn't gone out to Pass Lake, something came up and I couldn't make it and I saw him on the front yard with this big—he had a pasteboard box, a cardboard box. I went over there and said, Hey, hi Mel! Gosh you just came from Pass Lake?" He said, "Yes, boy come over and take a look at this!" and here he had two of the beautiful five-pound cutthroat you'd ever want to look at. And he took them at Pass Lake. I'd seen them myself when I had been paddling the side of the lake, I've seen great big four and five-pounders between me and the shore, just swimming along the lake, back in those days. Now the brown trout are coming up and taking over.

DB: And you were saying earlier that you'd caught them up to 3 ½ pounds out there?

WE: Four, yes.

DB: Four pounds. Well they're back almost [to that size]; well occasionally they even get a cutthroat [that big].

WE: Yes.

DB: In that 24-inch range.

WE: See what actually got me; what really burnt me up is because I fish a lot of other lakes. I go east of the mountains and there're a lot of lakes over there that I fish, and fly fish. And it really used to bug me that here I have some beautiful flies and I got to go and clip the barb on them. The lakes that I fish over in eastern Washington, I don't have to. And I would say now why should I take this nice tied fly and crimp all these barbs off these hooks? And then when I go up and hike into some highland lake, and want to catch a few fish and get out in a hurry, and have some fun. I have to take these good flies that I've crimped and use my barbless hooks up there and a lot of times they would be on for a while and then they'd be gone. That's what really burned me up. I know to be a true fly fishermen, that's the way you got to think nowadays of

conserving and then a lot of lakes, see, are put and take. I like to eat fish and when I went fishing, I wanted to catch something I could bring home and eat.

DB: Well, that's certainly a factor in—

WE: And a lot of guys go out and they just like playing a game of golf. They hit a golf ball all over and see how low of a score they can get; they like to go to a lake and put and take, catch and [release]. Get a fish that gives them a good thrill, that's fine then they've had their day. But then when you've got a bunch of kids at home, with a lot of empty mouths, I always like to have something to stuff in their little mouths.

DB: Why do you think Pass Lake is suited for fly fishing? Is there anything particular about that lake that makes it suited for fly fishing?

WE: Well, yes. I would say the surroundings of the lakes, for one thing; where it's at, it's in a beautiful area. You've got lots of traffic going by, people can see it, and tourists can see it. And there's something that if you're a fly fisherman, it seems like it's much nicer to be able to go into a lake and fly fish it rather than go to a bait lake where you used to have to, you take a bunch of angle worms and smelly fishermen. Then it seems like a bait lake every time you get out there early in the morning and you want to have something peaceful, it's much nicer to listen to the swish of a fly line through the air than some guy banging a can of single eggs on the side of his boat to loosen the jar up so he can get some eggs out. Have you ever heard that? You got *boom, boom, bang, bang, bang, bang*, you know.

DB: Years ago when I used to take the kids to Heart Lake on opening day, sure.

WE: And the lake itself is more of a natural because of the growth of insects and the marine life that the lake has, see it's got a beautiful supply of shrimp. Have you ever gone out and taken a netting on the shrimp that's in the lake? Well there's a lot of them, you go down to the pump house and we used to wade around in there. And I had special nets that I made, Russ and me both. They were on a couple short broomsticks and they were a plastic netting, screen door netting. And we'd go down there and shake up the rocks and junk and take a big scoop and here we'd have these shrimp just jumping all over and we'd dump them in a jar. And we'd bring them home and put them in formaldehyde and then we'd look at them.

DB: Was that the [Gammarus]? They're about this big?

WE: Well yes, they were about that big. They're the fresh water, well the other lake where they're bigger than that is Jameson Lake.

DB: Some call them scuds.

WE: Yes, Jameson Lake over there in eastern Washington, see that was a prime lake for shrimp. Well Pass Lake had its share of shrimp plus it had a good dragonfly hatch and also the damselfly was out there.

DB: Do you fish Jameson anymore?

WE: I've never fished it, never. I just listen to Walt Johnson. He tells me so much about Jameson Lake that I really don't need to fish it, I just listen to him.

DB: You live it through him.

WE: Oh, yes. He's an interesting fellow, a wonderful fellow to talk to.

DB: Since 1940 have you noticed any physical changes in Pass Lake, the water level, shoreline construction?

WE: Well I've seen it—it's always been a problem in Pass Lake with bloom on it, I can remember years when the bloom would be so terrible and so thick you only had a few hundred yards in the middle of the

lake where you could fish because towards the shore line would be all this dumb grass growing, and you couldn't do nothing with it. Because years ago Pass had a good stream life going through it. It had a creek coming in and it had a real good outlet, and that outlet was running water all the time. So the lake was being flushed out and cleaned. And we'd fish it early in the season and then let it go through the summer because the bloom would come, but then in the fall it would be all gone.

DB: So that hasn't changed over the years -- that's still there. That's still a problem for some. I thought that bloom might be something that just has come on in the last 10, 15, 20 years or so.

WE: The bloom has been on that lake as long as I've known it. Sometimes it's so bad when you put your boat in it, your canoe, and you pull it out, you've got a water line around your canoe.

DB: I'm curious about the quality of the fishing experience in your estimation. You quit fishing it about 20 years ago. Was it [that] you just felt the quality of going there had lessened for you?

WE: The quality of the fish?

DB: No, not the fish itself, the fishing. The aesthetics, the reason for going fishing, that may be the reason you--?

WE: Well, yes your life pattern changes.

DB: Oh, I see.

WE: See we took in skiing and did a lot of other things and so a lot of times—and then the children, they grew up and left. See we used to fish Heart Lake an awful lot.

DB: That explains why you stopped. It's not because of anything in the lake that's changed particularly—

WE: No.

DB: Just you're doing things different places or different ways.

WE: Yes.

DB: Do you have any other ideas that I didn't ask you about in the interview that would be useful for fly fishers planning to fish Pass Lake for the first time? Or just getting into fly fishing? I've asked you about ten or twelve questions but there may be something I overlooked that would help a new person just getting into fly fishing, or is going to Pass Lake for the first time.

WE: Well I think that if he's going to go to Pass Lake for the first, I think he should consider mooching a fly, trolling a fly, and try it at different speeds. Speed it up or slow it down. I think he would find that that is much better than trying to work the shoreline casting your fool arm off all afternoon. If you want to cast, you enjoy casting, you love to cast, there's lots of little nooks and little places in Pass [Lake] where you can throw and cast a fly. And sometimes, you'll find some places in there where the fish are hiding. But you can go down and anchor and then throw into shore. You know count 5 or 6 counts and then strip your line in. There's times when, boy, you can really have a field day. But a lot of times, in a lot of places I'd looked, the last time I was off at Pass Lake, about a month ago, some of the places where you couldn't anchor and cast into shore on account of this grass growing in there and it wouldn't let you get your fly in where the fish are. When we launched the boat at the boat launching it was so mucky and crappy and dirty that you couldn't even hardly cast from shore.

DB: Near the launch area?

WE: Yes, it was just too mucky. Big brown trout was in there, we saw his tail. Boy, the wake of his body and everything, he was a big guy. Steven was all ready; boy he wanted to do some casting right then and

there. And some guys and his son was getting in their boat and what they should have done was just stayed right there and cast to that guy but they shoved out and that disrupted his nipping activity and he left. But that's the only thing I can think of saying right now-- that they should pertain more to trolling or mooching. In the afternoon, or let's say about 10:30 in the morning, you have a floating line on and have a sinking fly and just troll that around with a floating line, and do a lot of S-turning. Don't just go like a lot of those guys go for the full length of the lake in a straight line. Do a lot of circling back and forth and a lot of s-turns; because you'll cover more ground and then every time you make a turn, your fly speeds up a little. Gosh I've had a lot of good luck on the needle nymph out there.

DB: Was that the Dawn Holbrook pattern?

WE: Well, I don't know if that's Dawn's or not. See, I tied this here with peacock hurl quill, you thread off all the fuzz then you can put a rib on it. Use a white quill for a rib and I used grey hackle on it. And that works real good with a floating line.

DB: But were you trying to imitate a nymph of a damselfly?

WE: I don't know what in the world because the damselfly nymph's so much different than that. The damselfly nymph normally is a peacock hurl body.

DB: But that's why I wondered if—

WE: Yes, the damselfly, their ribs are different than white. The needle nymph is another bug, and I really don't know what in the world—you tie it on about a ten hook. Now the damsel—

DB: A basic [hook]?

WE: Just a plain ordinary wet fly hook, Mustad. Or you could tie it on a short limerick bend, if you want. Now the damselfly, she's tied on a 2x.

DB: Well they were longer, right

WE: And they're a longer, bigger fly and actually, the damselfly should be fished different. You could fish the damselfly and sink it to the bottom and then pull it like straight up, because that's what the damselfly does, he usually comes from the bottom straight up.

DB: Like a chromonid.

WE: Yes, and everybody trolls the damselfly; well damselflies normally don't go through the water like a fish. They're from the bottom up. So I read one article, I think it was *Outdoor Life* where these guys up in Canada had it all worked out and fished for the trout with a damselfly nymph. What they did, they went out [and] they still-fished. Anchored their boat, dropped their fly lines out and their line went straight down and after it got down, then they would just jerk it like this, and just strip it straight up, because the damselfly comes wiggling up to the surface. And the dragon fly, now he's the one that goes darting. So if you're imitating him when you're sinking your line you want to use short fast strips and you bring it through the water quick, because then that gives the feathers time to collapse and then they open up, and then they collapse and they open up.

DB: Did you ever use a Doc Spratley much?

WE: Yes, Doc Spratley's a good early spring fly.

DB: Wasn't that supposed to represent a dragonfly?

WE: Yes, Doc Spratley; I think that was brought down here from Canada.

DB: It was designed in Mount Vernon.

WE: It was? I thought it was from Canada.

DB: By Dick Prankard for someone that was going to Canada. That was Dr. Spratley, a Mount Vernon dentist.

WE: Yes, well it's a good fly.

DB: I think I have my facts straight. The shop just past where Ed's is now and it was called Prankard's Sport Shop.

WE: Well Dick Prankard used to be downtown by a tavern—I knew him down there—

End of Tape One Side Two