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This interview was conducted with Alec Jackson, on December 7, 2007, at his home in Kenmore, Washington. The interviewers are Steve Raymond accompanied by Tamara Belts.



SR: We're talking with Alec Jackson today. Alec has been a very well-known fly tier and steelhead fly fisher for many years in the Northwest; he has a pretty interesting background. I'd like to start by asking you about your childhood, where were you born, where you grew up, and your early fishing experiences.

AJ: I was born at home, not in a hospital, in a town called Selby, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. There was really no trout fishing or anything like that handy, but there was a lot of coarse fishing and so I started coarse fishing at a very, very early age, before I was ten years old.

SR: Maybe you should explain what coarse fishing is to people who may not be familiar with the term.

AJ: Well, this is equivalent to drowning worms. Only the fishing I was doing was with single maggots and very, very small hooks, primarily eighteens and twenties on 8X silkworm gut and we used silk lines which had a breaking strength of about one pound, and you would use a float. I used about a four-inch porcupine quill and two or three dust shot and you'd have a kind of an apron with a big pocket in front of you, and you could put, oh, maybe half a gallon of maggots in there and you would feed chum with those. The fish were very small, probably five to the pound, or something like that.

SR: These were roach or dace, or?

AJ: Roach, dace, gudgeon, which were even smaller, bleak, maybe perch, if you were lucky maybe a barbell. If you were fishing in some of the ponds, maybe the odd bream. I never got into a tench or a carp, and I used live bait-fish for pike, but I never had anything over about ten pounds. The biggest one that was ever recorded in our area was around 25, 26 pounds.

SR: Did someone start you fishing, or teach you fishing, or was it your own interest?

AJ: It was my own interest that led me there and there was no one, well, my father died when I was five, so he wasn't there, and neither of my grandfathers had any interest in fishing, but my Grandfather Jackson, he knew one of the old poachers in the area, and he got him to start taking me out. Hemingbrough was his name, and he was also a commercial salmon fisherman. It was on the River Ouse, and he had one of the last licenses to net fish on the Ouse for salmon. My grandfather, to introduce me to him, he took me down where he knew he was fishing, and I saw him get this salmon in his net about twelve pounds, and he had me then, for the rest of my life.

SR: So you learned to fish from a poacher?

AJ: Yes, really. Then I got more and more interested in it and at the age of fourteen, I was the secretary-treasurer for the local working man's club, Angler's Club, and because I wasn't twenty-one, I couldn't go into the working man's club. So they used to move their fishing meetings to another pub called the Griffin, which one of the member's parents owned and operated. We used to meet in the back room there and stay out of the licensed premises. But I operated that with a leather-bound cash book and a tin cash box. My mother was fantastic with numbers, and she insisted I balance everything to the penny, and so I got a real good grounding in that, and I held that position until I left England in November of 1949, to go to New Zealand.

I got interested in steelhead, well, I know I was a prep former (I was in boarding school), which meant I was nine years or younger. [At the school I went to] everybody went into the prep form, until they were ten, at age ten you went into the first form. We had a geography master by the name of Mousy Mitchell, and as prep formers, we actually drove him crazy. He was hauled straight out of the classroom into the lunatic asylum. I won't tell you how we did that, but that's something I'm not very proud of. Then we got a Canadian, as the geography master, and he had malaria, so his skin was quite yellow, and of course this was during the Second World War, so we immediately christened him Jap Harrison, because of the malaria color. He brought all this tourist propaganda from Canada, and there was a big oak cabinet, must have been four feet wide, and four feet deep and six or seven feet tall, and there was this one piece of literature in there, which was about the size of the original *Times Magazines*, and there was this photograph in there and it said, "Two Iron heads, two Steelheads." I said, "That's the most beautiful fish I've ever seen in my life." I can remember picking the lock of that cabinet to steal that piece of literature, and I had that until the day I left for New Zealand. When my parents sold up and came out to New Zealand, I guess that went with a lot of my other treasures to the sale, they didn't haul it off to New Zealand with them.

I caught steelhead in New Zealand without knowing they were steelhead. I didn't know then that they had been carried over to New Zealand in the late 1800s and introduced then.

SR: What drew you to New Zealand?

AJ: Sheer luck. What happened was, when my father died, my mother went to work for a long-distance road haulage company, and it immediately went bankrupt. There was an old gentleman who started hauling people's luggage to the railroad station with a pony and a cart. He progressed from that into taxis, and then into buses, and he decided here was his opportunity to get into long-distance road haulage. He said to my mother, "Stay with us, and we'll make it right," and she did. During the Second World War, there wasn't a long-distance truck in the North of England that could role without her permission, because she knew where every load was and such like. It was to save fuel. Anyhow, after the Second World War, the Labor government came in and nationalized long-distance road haulage along with everything else, and my mother said she wouldn't continue to work for the government. She said if we are going to have to go into our capital to maintain our standard of living, we sure as hell are not spending it in England. She was remarried again by this time, and we were actually going to go out to, I don't know if it was Kenya or Tanganyika, it was where the Mau Mau Uprisings were going on, and low and behold, that turned us off that. I was working for the Forestry Commission and one day the guy who I was working for, he came to me and he says, "Alec, do you want to go to New Zealand? The New Zealand Forest Service [is] looking for people," and I said, "Yes." And within six weeks, I was on my way. My parents said, "We'll wait and see if you like it and if you like it, we'll follow you." And that's how it happened.

SR: Did you learn to fly fish in New Zealand?

AJ: Yes. I had fly fished a little bit in England, because a boy that I was in high school with, by the name of Mitch-Parvin, I forget his first name, his parents had the local tobacconist in the town we lived in and he got into fly fishing, and we used to fish together. I never owned a fly rod or anything like that, but we used to go up to the Nid Valley (we had to take one bus into York, and then we had to change buses again, it was a real struggle to get there and back) [and] I'd dabble around with it. It was all wet-fly fishing though, with the leader, the fly, and two droppers. I don't think I ever caught a trout fly fishing but I got dace and things like that out of some of the runs. But then when I got to New Zealand, I went to a place called Karioi, it was a forty-man single men's camp in the central North Island, at the foot of Mount Ruapehu. There was this Billy Wood, who was a fly fisherman, and I met

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him; I arrived at Karioi sometime in January of 1950, and by February of 1950, I had the fly rod and reel and line, and was hooked for life. There's a down payment on a million dollars with that really.



SR: Is that also where you learned to tie flies?

AJ: No, I learned to tie flies here. Do you remember Ron Hicks?

SR: Oh yes.

AJ: He was the one that taught me. He was going to the University of Washington, I think, at the time, taking fisheries, and he was kind of subsidizing his existence by tying flies and teaching classes. He taught a class over in Redmond, somewhere, and my oldest son, Robert was interested, he was about nine or ten, and I had to drive him over for the classes, and so I says I may as well take them.

SR: So that was after you had been here for some time?

AJ: Yes, well Robert is 50 now so it would be forty years...

SR: And what brought you here from New Zealand, originally?

AJ: I came to go to graduate school.

SR: At the University of Washington?

AJ: Yes. I had the opportunity, I could have gone to Oxford, I could have gone to Nancy in France, and I could have gone to the one in Switzerland. I didn't want to learn a foreign language, which I would have had to if I'd gone somewhere like that. Then I had the choice, here, of the University of Washington, North Carolina, Syracuse, [and] there was another one.

SR: So you were looking for a forestry program?

AJ: Yes, well, principally forest products. I chose the University of Washington because it was on the west coast, and the species in the exotic forest we were trying to manage in New Zealand, and convert eventually into lumber and paper and things like that were from the west coast. This was at the time when Alec Entrican was director general of the New Zealand Forest Service, and he actually got the money through the New Zealand Parliament to get me over here. I was the first one to come from New Zealand. (Oh, I had the chance to go to Australia, too, to Canberra, but that was the bottom of the pile, really.)

I should probably tell you why I was one of the anointed sons very young in the New Zealand Forest Service. In Christchurch, we had a forester by the name of Ray Martin, and he had two assistant foresters working for him, Alan Familton and myself. Alec Entrican, who was the director general, came up with this idea for a compartment history on the man-made forests, that was loose-leaf, that you could put in your pocket and have everything with you, where the compartment histories we kept in the office, you know, they're in log books this size and this thick. Ray Martin said to Alan Familton and myself, "Why don't you do that?" And so we did it. Entrican came to visit Canterbury Conservancy, and he was over the moon when he could walk out [with one], we were the first in the country [to do it]. Alan Familton and myself were anointed sons after that because Ray Martin said, "I didn't do it, they did it." He gave us the credit and so Entrican really went to bat. But the guy that was my angel, so to speak, in the New Zealand Forest Service was a guy by the name of Tom Birch, who was director of staff development. I met him very early on and I told him what I wanted to do, and he backed me. Low and behold, I came over here and while I was over here, he had a nervous breakdown, and they didn't recognize it back in Wellington, and I didn't recognize it. I got into a horrible rhubarb with him and I got a wire which said, "Come home immediately." I sent one back

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saying, "I resign." Alex Entrican, after he retired, he toured the U.S. lecturing. He came to the U of W, and he wouldn't even look at me, let alone shake hands with me.

SR: And that's how you happened to end up here?

AJ: Yes. Yes, it was a kind of a sad thing to part with the New Zealand Forest Service. By this time, A.P. Thompson, who had been the conservator in Canterbury, the number one man, who I had a very good relationship with, he was director general. All the time he was alive, every time he came over here, he would call me and he would take me out to the old Olympic for breakfast, and try to persuade me to go back. We had a good enough relationship, I said, "Hey, you guarantee me I get the job I was supposed to get, when I came here, and I'll be back in a heartbeat." And he says, "No, I'm not guaranteeing you anything, but I'll tell you will use that six years you put in at the University of Washington." I never went back, and I really don't have any regrets now, because it's been very kind to us here.

SR: I know that you spent many years as a forestry consultant here; I assume there must have been something between graduate school and your entry into that business.

AJ: No, what happened was, do you remember the Hungarian Revolution?

SR: Oh sure.

AJ: Okay, well the whole forestry school from Hungary moved to the University of British Columbia, and finished their degrees there. Well, one individual, by the name of Joseph Bodek, he came to the University of Washington to do graduate work after he had done his undergraduate degree. He went to work for this consulting firm, part-time, and then he worked with them one summer and when he was going to go back to part-time, he says, hey, they need somebody to pick up the twenty hours that he wouldn't be able to give them, and he said, "Are you interested?" And I said, "Yes," because we were as poor as church mice. I went to work for them, and by this time I had designed my education to be a university professor. I went to work for them, and as soon as I finished graduate school, they said, "Hey, we'll give you a five percent stock option to come to work for us," and when I had been there a year, it was up to twenty percent.

Then [on] October 2nd of 1966, my partner, Bill Works, we had a company plane, it was a Sunday, and he was out flying and the aileron cable on the plane snapped and he was killed, his fifteen-year-old son was killed, and two other young people. We had key man insurance and we had double indemnity for accidental death, and so we were able to buy his stock, I was up to fifty percent by that time, and with the insurance, we were able to buy his fifty percent back from his widow into the company, and so by, oh, I would say late 1967, I really was in control of the thing.

When I came here, they were running *Keep Washington Green* out of the College of Forestry, this was in 1956, and in 1957, the guy that was running it, he left to form a consulting firm. I'd had a good relationship with him; we were subcontracting with each other, both ways when we were consulting. We talked about putting his company together and the one I had, and forming a third entity, but his company was traded over the counter in Seattle. He sold a big block of stock to King Resources, and [that] put two million dollars in cash into his company, and so I said to him, "Well, why don't you buy me?" Because I was forty at the time, and so in March of 1969, we made the deal, and he said, "Will you stay on for nine months to get the takeover done?" And I stayed on.

Low and behold, the first thing I did, I brought in a management consultant. They didn't [have] an accounts receivable or anything like this, you know, and they were using far, far more working capital than they should have, so I got this cleaned up. Then I was going to leave at the end of 1969 and move to the coast of Oregon, and he made me an offer that I couldn't refuse. Low and behold, then they were the victim of a hostile takeover, and I had a ninety day contract cancelable each way. I had two rhubarbs with the president of the holding company, and finally I just exercised the option to leave.

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The first year they owned us, we made four hundred thousand dollars for them, and I mean, that was cash money, [no] Chinese money involved. The first run-in I had with him, we were retained by Australian paper manufacturers and when their people came over here, we had the agreement that we paid all their expenses while they were here, and we just added it to our bill at the end of the quarter, because there were limits as to the amount of cash they could bring. One of them, he had a two hundred bar bill over a period of a week in Seattle, and I got called on the carpet because the president of the holding company didn't even know. I said, "Hey, it makes no difference, we're going to get it back." Then there was an executive vice president of one of the industry trading associations, I had probably thirty, thirty-five clients as a result of my relationship with him. We put on a one-week seminar here, and so I invited him and his wife to come at our expense, and Rose and myself, we knew that they liked Greek food, so we took them out to a Greek restaurant, and I can still remember the bill for the four of us was only sixty bucks. I got called onto the carpet to account for that, and was asked, is this necessary, and I said, "No, if it's a problem, I'll pay for it myself." And that's when I told him, "I'm through, ninety days and I'm gone."

SR: Meanwhile you'd managed to catch some of those fish like the ones in the picture in the Canadian tourist thing?

AJ: Oh, yes. I just, I followed Strobel around.

SR: Bob Strobel?

AJ: Yes.

SR: How did you get acquainted with him?

AJ: Well, Ron Hicks; even though I wasn't a founding member of the Washington Steelhead Fly Fishers, I was kind of grandfathered in. I wasn't there at the pre-formation meetings, but I was there at the first meeting they had, and there [were] two of us that were kind of grandfathered in, Bob DeVito, and myself. And that was through the grace of [Greg] Hicks.

SR: I see.

AJ: Yes, and I met Strobel there, and I quickly came to the conclusion he's the best of the bunch, when it comes to knowing how to catch them, so I followed him around like a lap dog for close to two years.

SR: Where did you go?

AJ: Oh, anywhere and everywhere. I got my first fish in the Sauk, in March, and I'll never forget this, that was the same day I met Whittier Johnson, believe it or not. It was the Slide Hole on the Sauk, do you know it?

SR: I know what it used to be like.

AJ: Okay, he was there fishing when Bob Strobel and myself went in and the snow was that bad, even with the Strobel's jeep, we had to walk a substantial way. The logging road we wanted to be down, we couldn't, there was that much snow, and we couldn't do it. Anyhow, Strobel fished through and he says there's a Dolly Varden out holding there behind that rock. He tried and he didn't get it, and I tried, and I got it. It turned out it was a steelhead about five pounds and it actually swam through my legs while I was playing it too, the first one. I got it on a Skykomish Sunrise, and I still have the fly. Low and behold, Strobel is watching this and all of a sudden he says, "It's a steelhead!" The next words out of his mouth [were], "It's a hatchery kelt."

SR: Didn't matter though.

AJ: No, it didn't matter to me. And that was long before the days of graphite, I was fishing with one of those old brown Fenwick glass rods.

SR: What year was the Washington Steelhead Fly Fishers organized, when was it started, do you remember?

AJ: Well, the newsletters for 2007 were volume thirty-five.

SR: So 1972?

AJ: Yes, somewhere around there. There's a funny story here with the newsletters, and here again, Ron Hicks is involved. He was the first editor of the newsletter and his wife worked for the telephone company, so it was printed on recycled telephone company paper, they'd used it [on] one side, we used the plain backside to print the newsletters on.

SR: How many people, approximately, were involved at that time, do you remember?

AJ: I can't tell you how many founding members there were. I have a list of them somewhere.

SR: There were some pretty notable anglers in that group.

AJ: Oh yes. We used to have the meetings at the Hungry Turtle, down on Lake Union, and I would say, typically, twenty people would be there. The Christmas parties were huge, compared with what they are now. We're having our Christmas party on Sunday, and I think we've got thirty-four or thirty-five people signed up for it, and that's with the guys going and the wives or significant others. But here again, this was Tom Darling. Tom Darling used to organize the raffle and such like, and he strong-armed all the supplies and so we'd get a tremendous number of guests coming in.

SR: Was he operating the *Avid Angler* at that time, or was he still working up at...

AJ: He was still working for two bucks an hour for Mrs. Patrick.

SR: *Patrick's Fly Shop*.

AJ: Yes. As a matter of fact, we have to do something with the Washington Steelhead Fly Fishers. In the December newsletter the main article was about a need for a direction, we've got to get back.

SR: So it's kind of fallen on hard times?

AJ: I wouldn't say the club's fallen on hard times; they're in better financial shape now than they have ever been all the time I've been there. I'm not saying they have a lot of money, but they probably have a couple of thousand dollars, you know. We've normally had to scratch for the annual fly plate, which in recent times; it's cost about six hundred bucks for Steve Brocco to mount. But at the November meeting, there wasn't a single officer present.

SR: That's not necessarily a good sign is it?

AJ: It's not a good sign and we've had some very, very poor leadership. I think what we need is to attract an entirely different type of individual in some respects, and I don't want to sound snobbish, but we have got to try to attract the type of people that have had some success in their life, and been in a position of responsibility and leadership. With the club, now, we will have a good president next year, that I know, because, do you know Warren Ballard?

SR: Just by name.

AJ: Yes, Warren, he's thrown his hat into the ring to be president.

SR: As you probably know, Paul Schullery, the angling historian--well, you've met Paul.

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AJ: Oh yes.

SR: He has written that most of the pioneer steelhead fly fishers, and those who wrote about it came from a blue-collar background, rather than an aristocratic background like so many of the Atlantic salmon fisherman on the east coast. Do you see that in the membership of that club?

AJ: Oh yes, most definitely, I mean, well, Wes Drain, for a start; there may have been some money in the early days, in their family, because they were silver mining in Montana when he was a young man. They sold out their interest in the silver mine to one of the big New York family names, I forget which one. And Syd Glasso, of course, he was a school teacher, but, you know, Syd was an alcoholic, well, let me back up even further, Syd was a basketball star at UCLA when the centers were six feet tall.

End of Tape One, Side One

.... [He] got into the parking-lot business in Hollywood, and you know, this game with some parking lots where you have an out-of-state license plate and they'll do something to the car, might be puncture one of the hoses that circulates [fluids]. Syd was one of the originators of that! Anyhow, he got to drinking, and he was completely estranged from his wife and his family. I don't know how he got out to Forks, but anyhow, for a time there he was hooked up with a gal that inherited a farm. The pair of them drank it up. And I mean Syd told me this himself, he sat upstairs at the dining room table, they were in a tavern in Tacoma one day, and he said I'm going to kill myself if I keep this up, and he just quit cold-turkey. Then he was school teaching in Forks and he was trying to develop the sinking lines by rubbing red lead into them and things like that. He started splicing them with lead core in them, and [using] the Spey flies and the slim flies, to get down quickly in the fast water.

Al Knudsen, and there's a story with Al Knudsen, he came from Kansas, and I guess he got into a rhubarb before the depression with the Game Department, and he says to hell with the lot of you, and he moved to Gold River, I think it was, in Oregon. Then the depression hit and so, he sat in some store front room window there tying flies for a living. He eventually came back.

Let's see, who else was there, Bob Strobel, of course, Bob Strobel was a refrigeration maintenance man and he worked for every damn refrigeration outfit in Seattle. When the fish were running, if they wouldn't let him have time off, he'd quit. He went to work for them all about three times, and it got to the point where they wouldn't hire him, so he went to work up on the pipeline the one they were building it in Alaska. Then he came back and worked at WPPSS until that fell down. Then he called me one day, because I knew Vickery when he was the fire chief, here.

SR: Gordon Vickery?

AJ: Gordon Vickery; and low and behold, I don't know if it was the city of Seattle, or if it was the King County that were looking for a new refrigeration/air conditioning inspector. There was a three-man committee, the union [representative], Gordon Vickery, and the man that he would be working for. He knew he had the union [representative] in his pocket, and he asked me, would I talk to Gordon Vickery, and so I talked to Gordon Vickery, and he got the job. And until he was retired, he was working for the guy, the third one on the committee that absolutely hated his guts. So Strobel, he wouldn't go out of range of his cell phone because he knew the guy was looking for the chance to fire him.

SR: Having taught you how to steelhead fish, I guess that was payback.

AJ: Oh yes, I think the world of Bob Strobel and his wife, Joanne, too.

SR: Now you fished the North Fork of the Stilly, quite a bit, did you not?

AJ: Yes; when I stopped fishing it was a Sunday afternoon, I was driving up there with Strobel, and I saw what the logging was doing, the side hill logging roads and such like, and my answer to it, at that point was that if I don't see it, it doesn't exist. I quit fishing the Stilly for a long, long time. And I've never really fished the Stilly since then, but Bob Arnold finally put the gun up to the side of my head and powder burned me on Deer Creek, he said you enjoyed it for so long, you know, you better start putting something back.

SR: So explain that a little bit, what you mean by the Deer Creek situation?

AJ: Well, let me back off now, do you know, he teaches environmental law at the University of Washington, now.

SR: Greg Hicks?

AJ: Greg Hicks.

SR: Yes, he's actually now the acting dean of the law school.

AJ: He is?

SR: Yes.

AJ: Oh. Well, anyhow, he went to that meeting at Oso when things were coming unraveled many, many years ago after...

SR: I was at that meeting too.

AJ: Yes, he went to it, and he talked to me and said, "Would I do something?" And I really didn't. Then it was Bob Arnold that said, "Hey, you are a forester and we need somebody with that type of background to help us out, you've enjoyed it for a long, long time." (Even though I fished above Oso, I liked the upper river the best).

SR: That meeting you're talking about was the one where they were discussing the big slide up in the ...

AJ: Yes, and it was the, oh, the young guy with the Forest Service that stuck his neck out.

SR: I think his name was Doyle if I remember right.

AJ: Jim Doyle, that's right. He had a lot of courage he did, that guy, and so did Al Zander; did you know him?

SR: Yes, I talked to him.

AJ: Yes, and the chap that was in charge at Sedro Woolley, when they did the forty year plan, he used to sit on the policy committee there too, I forget his name, but he had a lot of courage. When they did that forty-year plan there was a draft that came to me to review. He went out of his way to make sure I was aware that they were still planning on doing some logging in Deer Creek, but it was so little, considering they had twenty-five percent of the ownership. At that point in time, I could count, and there was no funny money involved, but I could count about four million dollars that the Forest Service had put into Deer Creek drainage, in fixing culverts, and roads and things like that without taking a stick of timber out.

SR: Well, they declared a moratorium on cutting up there, didn't they, for a while?

AJ: Yes, but in that forty-year plan, they had it back in. But as I recall, they were going to review it very, very carefully and I think there was only, in the whole forty-year plan, if my memory is correct, there was only going to be about eighty acres cut or something like that, it was virtually nothing.

SR: Who all was involved in that Deer Creek policy group that was working to try to restore the watershed?

AJ: Well, there was the Trout Unlimited, and I forget the name of the guy, but they never did a damn thing, never put a penny in. Then there was Marcie Goldie, from Washington Environmental Council, and she sold us down the river when it became time to fish or cut bait. Scott Paper Company had a timber sale on the lower river, it was an eighty acre sale, and it was bordering Deer Creek. I knew the head of forestry for Scott Paper Company at the time, and we went out and did the review, and I [said] to him, "Tell me what the timber in this riparian zone is worth?" He told me before we did the review, "About fifteen hundred dollars, Alec." He came to me immediately afterwards, [and] said, "It's not fifteen hundred, it's a lot less."

I had some people that were ready to put up the money to buy the timber in the riparian zone, and Marcie Goldie said, "We are not setting a policy of paying people not to cut timber in the riparian zone." This was at the time they were trying to get Fish & Wildlife through the state Legislature, so I got really ugly, and I said, "I'll take that whole deal down with the state if I have to, to protect the fish in Deer Creek." And so Marcie Goldie's answer to that was to get Scott Paper Company to pull the timber sale off the market until that was through, because there was money in the whole deal for Washington Environmental Council, and that's what they were looking for. Then there was Curt Kraemer from sports fisheries [the Washington Game Department], the sports and commercial were separate at the time, and Curt did a very, very good job and he had the ability to bring some of the discussions back to center when they got off center.

SR: He was a biologist?

AJ: Yes, and he was responsible for the North Fork of the Stilly. Then there was a young guy there from commercial fisheries, who was worse than useless. He always complained if we weren't out of the meetings in time for him to drive home before quitting time. I went in there and I said, "You know the one thing we should do, we've got all the pieces here, is to build an economic model of the entire Stillaguamish Valley, and have some hard numbers as to what the steelhead fishery is really worth and what it contributes." He pooh-poohed that idea real quick. He said, "We've done these things before, and we always come out on the short end of the stick." I said, "Hey, we can do the forest model, and nobody will be able to argue with us because this has been done time and time before and we can have something on that that we can defend. But from the point of view of what the fisheries are contributing, to the best of my knowledge, nobody has ever done this before, and we can sway it to some extent, and nobody's going to be in a position to argue with us, because we will be the first that's really built an economic model of a whole drainage." He wouldn't buy that. The idea never flew.

Then there was the guy from the Tulalips.

SR: Tulalip Tribe?

AJ: Yes, the head of the fisheries there. He behaved like he was a foreign ambassador or something, I forget his name now. They had a meeting up at the Tulalip board room, I used to love to go in there and stomp all over him. He would get really upset. I had a real good relationship with Bernie Gobin, and Bernie would come to me after the meeting and say, "I don't know why the hell they want me here," he says, "but they paid me on hundred and fifty bucks for coming, so I'm coming." The Tulalips came to me through Steve Gobin and Bernie, and said, "Hey don't try and force anything on us, but we care as much about those Deer Creek steelhead as you do. And if you don't do anything to try and upset our fishing rights, we are more than willing to give up." And they did, they were only fishing for the winter run.

SR: What about the Stillaguamish tribe?

AJ: They had a chap there, and oh, there're more Norwegians in that Stillaguamish tribe than there are Indians. The head of fisheries there, he was getting close to being blind, and so he used to have to have somebody bring him. He fired the whole biology section in one fell swoop, one time, I don't know what went wrong, but he got rid of the whole lot of them. The guy that's now guiding that lives up there, used to be a biologist for him. I forget his name.

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SR: You don't mean Dickson, do you?

AJ: Dickson, yes, Dickson used to be their biologist.

SR: I didn't know that.

AJ: Yes, he was the number one biologist.

He was as awkward as a pig's hair he was, that guy, but they had another Indian and his wife, that were really, really trying. He wasn't a Stillaguamish, she was, but they were really trying to save the fish and they were very, very amenable, and generally I think everybody on the policy committee had a good relationship with him, but there was no way he could override this old Norwegian.

SR: What was the final result of all that? How do you see it? Do you think it made a difference?

AJ: I think it was good. Yes, I think it was good because people that hadn't been talking to each other got to talking to each other. The Forest Service [was] there, and DNR, and we had a general sense of direction. I caused three policy meetings to be devoted to whether we should be looking at threatened and endangered status. We decided no, and for very good reasons, because if we had wanted to do something, and we had threatened and endangered status, before we could do it, we had to prove what we were going to do wouldn't hurt them. So we figured that we could do more for the fish without the threatened and endangered status, and low and behold...

SR: Why was that, because of all the regulations?

AJ: Yes, yes; the guy that was head of Marine Fisheries at the time, I can't remember his name, but he was born of all places in, I want to say Cashmere, not, what's that little place before you get to Cashmere?

SR: Peshastin?

AJ: Peshastin! And he had steelhead fly fished donkey's years ago in the Wenatchee. I talked to him about it, and he told me in Tom Darling's shop after the *Avid Angler*, because he was a customer of Tom's, he said, "You're better off not doing it, not applying for it."

But low and behold, Washington Trout came up on the scene about this time and Kurt Beardslee started going to some of the meetings. Then the first year of Washington Trout, Bruce McNae and myself, we took on the fundraising for Washington Trout. They were having a board meeting to decide what we'd done right and what we'd done wrong about that, and low and behold, the board meeting was supposed to be at the Sierra Club and I showed there and there's nobody else there. I came home, and I was that mad, I was spitting blood, and it didn't get any better because I found out the location of the meeting had been changed, and I had never even been told.

Kurt Beardslee then proposed to the board that they go after threatened and endangered listing, and I don't know who it was, somebody said to him, "Alec will go ape if we do this." And I did. I sat down and talked to Kurt Beardslee for half a day and I couldn't get him to go any other way. But low and behold, the reason he did it was, every time he tried to talk to get Washington Trout involved in the Puget Sound fishery, the fisheries people pushed him out. What he wanted to do was start with Deer Creek and work his way down the North Fork of the Stillaguamish into the Puget Sound fishery.

Then the other thing was he wanted a memorandum of understanding between all the people on the Deer Creek Policy Committee. DNR, for legal reasons, couldn't sign it, and the people that acquired Louisiana Pacific's land, the insurance company, they couldn't. They had a young guy there that was a real hero too, they matched the money that the Federation put in dollar for dollar to pay for the work that was done. There was a young guy from

Scott Paper Company too that was quite a hero, but he just didn't have the pull with Scott to get them to move like the guy did from Louisiana Pacific, I forget the name of the insurance company that acquired it.

It was a punitive thing with Kurt Beardslee because he'd been rebuffed on the Puget Sound fishery and couldn't get his memorandum of understanding. I don't know if I should say this, but I will, they went after it and the marine fisheries turned it down for the wrong reasons, they said the Deer Creek fish are not a distinct race of steelhead. Well, what had happened was the Washington State Fish and Wildlife had had the money to do the genetic work but it was going to run out in July of this particular year, and Curt Kraemer said to me, "Hey, if we do the work now, we'd have to sacrifice probably two hundred adults to get the genetic information, but if we put it off until we do the electric shocking in September, we'd get the same information and we only have to kill two hundred zero-aged juveniles." He said, "If we let this money go back, can you get the money out of the Deer Creek Restoration Fund to pay for it?" And I said, "Consider it done." So we did that. When it comes up that they're not a different race, we had had all that work done and we had the genetic information to show it was a different race, but we just sat on it. Now it's there, but we've turned the corner, I think, now.

SR: For Deer Creek?

AJ: Yes. Incidentally, Curt Kraemer, the only problem I had with Curt was he didn't have as much confidence in the resilience of steelhead as I did. I don't know why I had the confidence, but I said, "You know, I still think it is possible to turn it around." I had him do some projections, and I'd have to dig in my files, now, but I think it was something like if it had kept going the way it was, something like 2002, 2003, they would be extinct and I had him figure out the density of juveniles we had to get to per cubic meter of water in the drainage to get the Deer Creek run back up to 1500 or 2000 adult fish, and Curt did this. I said, "Well, we can't start all over the drainage doing it, but you know, let's pick the best places and start doing restoration and rehab there," and we did. The Forest Service participated in a very big way, and Louisiana Pacific matched the Deer Creek Restoration Fund dollar for dollar.

SR: That, as I recall, involved placing large pieces of woody material and boulders and things back in the...

AJ: Yes, and securing them.

SR: Securing them.

AJ: Yes. The other thing that was done too was, where there had been kind of local slides that had been caused by road problems, we addressed the road problems, particularly at culverts, and some of the slides. We put fencing in to hold them -- drove in steel stakes and fencing -- and did a series of them, so as the material would pile up behind them and more or less form terraces rather than shooting all the way down into the stream.

SR: So how many years did you spend working with that group?

AJ: Well, I said I'd go two years, and it was at least three or four times that.

SR: Yes, that's what I thought.

AJ: Of course I'm the kind of guy that keeps count of things like that. If I had been billing the time I spent with it, I had over a hundred thousand dollars in professional fees in it. I had ten thousand dollars of my own money that I could count in it, and that wasn't donations that was just expenses, driving around and this type of stuff.

SR: But meanwhile, even while you were doing that, you got a little time to go fishing.

AJ: Oh yes, but I wasn't fishing the Stilly.

SR: I can understand why. When did you start developing your own steelhead fly patterns?

AJ: I can't say when, specifically, I would say it would be after 1985. Yes, 1985 was an absolutely spectacular season on the Wenatchee. There was over ten thousand fish in the Wenatchee.

SR: I remember that.

AJ: Yes, and what happened was, I had invited Bill Elliot, the wildlife artist, to come and spend two weeks with us (that painting there is his, and that pencil drawing is his), and go and fish the Wenatchee. The first week, I had absolutely spectacular fishing, and he didn't touch anything (well, the first time we went over there). It was before Syd died, because we came home after that short spell on the Wenatchee, and Syd and myself took him to the Green. We got him into fish on the Green and then we went back [to the Wenatchee], and he dusted me off royally. He was fishing with these little Charlie DeFeo Atlantic salmon nymphs with a peacock body. I said, "There's got to be something magic about peacock, I got to try this." So then I started playing with it, and then went from the twisted peacock along with the tinsel, to doing the same with ostrich. I was tying principally spades and skunks like that for the Wenatchee. Then there's some good fishing too in March and April on the Sauk and Skagit around those times; it could be good at times on the Skykomish. I know many a trip to the Wenatchee we saved by coming home to the Skykomish as late as September, October (and it could be absolutely dynamite in July). I started playing with the bigger, brighter flies, using the same techniques, and so say it would be, at the earliest, in the first half of the 1980s.

SR: That style of tying is that pretty much yours originally, or would you say that somebody influenced you?

AJ: Well, I came up with it independently, but I didn't know what I was doing. If you go back into some of the old English literature, two to three hundred years, they're talking about peacock and ostrich rope. I finally realized that's what they were talking about, so I was a long way from being the first. I think in fly fishing, it is tough, these days, to be first with anything.

SR: I think you're right.

AJ: I will give you an example this was when Mike Fong was editor of the Federation magazine. Somebody wrote an article on using dental latex for the bodies of flies, and claimed he was the first, and then somebody else in Sweden got very upset about this and wrote in and said he'd been doing it before the Second World War and claimed he was first. I pulled out the 1855 Blacker, where you know these gum Arabic erasers, he was telling you how to slice off very thin slices of them with a cutthroat razor and use them for tying the flies' bodies and he even had a hand-colored illustration of the flies. I sent this to Michael Fong, and that was the end of the discussion. It was over a hundred years before the article that Blacker had been telling people how to do it, and he had to learn it from someone because by what I understand, he was just a drunken Irishman.

SR: So you obviously have a great familiarity with fly-fishing literature going back to some of the early British writers.

AJ: Yes.

SR: And you've collected books, have you not?

AJ: Oh yes, and here again, in some respects, that was a big mistake on my part. I was looking for books about steelhead, and they just didn't exist, compared to what was available for Atlantic salmon. I figured Atlantic salmon and steelhead were similar enough that if I started collecting and reading the Atlantic salmon literature, I would be bound to learn something. It got to the point where it just got thoroughly out of control, and I had about three thousand hardbound books with Atlantic salmon content. I had this wall in this room and that big long wall in the other room full, and another one floor-to-ceiling. Did you ever know John Thompson?

SR: I knew a John Thompson; it's a pretty common name.

AJ: This guy, he used to fish the East Lewis, the East Lewis nymph is a fly of his. He was married to a Pakistani lady and I think they're in the Aberdeen area now, but he was a displaced Yorkshire man like myself. He was the one that convinced me that steelhead are not like Atlantic salmon in any way, shape, or form. He has some pretty potent arguments that they're more like sea trout than Atlantic salmon, and of course I had never caught a sea trout, and so I couldn't argue with him at all, but he convinced me. Then we had a flood down here, the carpets are still not back in the other place because of that, and the adjuster that came in from Safeco.....

End of Tape One, Side Two

...I had in the collection and I wound up fighting with Safeco to get a settlement on that for seven or eight months. She was trying to make the case too that the water had come in from outside. We have that hill down there, and there's a cut at the other side, seventeen feet. What had happened was Steven was just a youngster at the time, and he'd washed his own baseball uniform, and the motor on the sump pump failed, and it was still under warranty, as it turned out. I'd bought the sump pump at Sears and I still had the paperwork and such like, and Sears agreed to pick up half of our cost, and then I had to threaten Safeco with a fate worse than death. Here again, Whit Johnson, at the time, he was public outreach man for the state insurance commissioner.

SR: I remember that.

AJ: He got me together with the attorneys at the State Insurance Commissioner's Office; [I] went to Olympia and had lunch with them. They [said], "We can make a ruling, we can't make them pay, but if they don't pay, we sure as hell can make their lives miserable." Safeco settled within two weeks then.

SR: Did the flood damage some of your books then?

AJ: No. A neighbor's grandson, who was forty years old and died recently from a drug overdose, was living with his grandmother, and he came over and he, myself and Rose, carried the books upstairs ahead of the flood. As a matter of fact, when the flood started I was over at Wes Drain's, I don't know what I was doing, and Wes came over. It was a power outage that had really started it and the pump for some reason crapped out, and even though we got a generator, we couldn't get the sump pump going. The fire department came and pumped us out once, but you know, they had bigger problems helping other people and so we lost the carpets and such like, but I didn't lose a single book, except I had that salmon portfolio that was done by the Canadian Government for the Law of the Sea Conference in Caracas, I had one of those. I don't know how much it was worth at the time, but I had bought it from an old doctor in Eastern Canada for six hundred and fifty dollars and he was looking for a good home for it, and then, I don't know if you ever saw Alfred Jardine's work, he published twelve plates individually of different species of salmon and I had the full collection of the twelve plates bound, and both were large folios and she ground the spines on a corner of the concrete foundations in the...

SR: The woman from Safeco?

AJ: Yes, the adjuster. The president of the Antiquarian Bookman's Society in Seattle came over and he shot her in the foot, he said, "Book collectors are like porcelain collectors, if the porcelain is chipped, it's no good. If the spine on a leather bound book is rubbed, it's lost its value, they want pristine."

SR: Was it your book collecting that kind of got you into the business of being an antiquarian broker in fishing tackle?

AJ: Well, when I wanted to get rid of it, yes.

SR: So you sold out the collection?

AJ: I sold out, yes. I had over a quarter of a million dollars in books, and it would have caused trouble between my three boys, my oldest son, he wanted all of them. I figured I've had one bad scare, and I'm going to have more

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trouble down the road, [and it] would probably cause some trouble between the boys, and so I said, cash is easier to divvy up than the books. I sold too soon because boy they've gone crazy since. The other thing too was I was buying reading copies rather than pristine copies, or copies with real good provenance like Taverner's book on salmon ([Eric Taverner, *Salmon fishing*, 1931]). I could have got Attlee's copy, who was of course prime minister in England when we went to war with Germany. I had the chance of that, and it wasn't unreasonable, and incidentally, a friend of mine just bought the manuscript copy for Taverner.

SR: Really?

AJ: Yes. I don't know how it got over here, but John Simpson had it. He had all the working papers for every fishing book that Seeley Service did. He was looking after angling books at Thomas Thorp in London, and one day this damn truck loaded with all this stuff pulls up at this door, [the driver] was on his way to the dump with them, and [asked] would he consider buying them. The truck driver made his own private deal with John Simpson, and so he bought the lot for his own collection. When I saw his collection in, let me see, it would be 1979 or 1980, I figured it was over two million dollars, he had twenty-six copies of the 1855 edition of Blacker ([William Blacker, *Art of Angling*]), and no two of them were alike.

SR: Different flies?

AJ: Different plates colored, different quality of the coloring of the plates, different ordering of the plates, and things like that. The only reason I know that was because I bought a copy of 1855 Blacker, I had two copies, and I got the chance of one that was bound in full black roan. I wrote an article about the Blacker for the museum, and he got that article, and he said, "Alec, I think you've got one of the very original bindings, that black leather roan." So I took a lot of photographs of it, and I may have even sent it to him, and then he told me he had twenty-[six]. Because I had three copies, and I had the museum's copy and I had Anson Brook's, so I had five, and those five were all different, he said, "That's nothing, I've got twenty-six and there's no two alike."

SR: As I recall, you studied book binding yourself, didn't you?

AJ: Yes, with Don Guyot, I spent half a day a week with him for a year, Colophon Books. He was an interesting character, Don Guyot. He was a chemist and I think he was working for an Idaho mining company, and he decided he'd go back to school and do graduate work, and he did it in librarianship. And low and behold, when he got out of school, he got a job looking after the special collections with some big university. He wanted to start restoring some of the books, and he couldn't buy the marbled paper for matching the period, so he taught himself how to marble paper and he was good at it. Then Harcourt Bindery in Boston made a deal with him, they said you come over to Boston for a year and teach us how to marble paper and we'll teach you how to do the book binding. So he did, so it was after he came back. The guy too that was the King County resident poet, can't remember his name now, he was a Vietnam vet, he was a character, that guy, and he was there at the same time as myself. I don't have anything left that I did in leather, myself; I gave the last one to Stan Bogden.

SR: What did you do? How did you apply what you learned there?

AJ: I didn't attempt to restore any of my books or bind anything like that, it was just the interest. I always had this feeling that if you were able to find some book that was important, in some area, particularly an old book; you had a responsibility to pass it on in a little better condition than you got it. I had a lot of work done by Aquarius, who were the people that bound the Honeydun books. Then I found another guy in England through David Grayling, who worked for about a quarter of the money they did and did fairly nice work. (When we go upstairs I can show you some of his work, and we'll be able to answer when the Washington Steelhead Fly Fishers were formed, because I copied the first ten years' newsletter onto acid-free paper and had them bound). Here again, some of the books I didn't sell, I wound up giving them to people that I knew would really appreciate them. The oldest book I had, I think, was published in 1700, it had been rebound and it had been re-trimmed. It was a very, very poor copy of the book and the one fold-out plate that should have been in it was missing. That was one I didn't attempt to sell, I gave it to somebody I knew who was interested in the old English books.

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SR: As I recall, you also wrote a column for *Fly Tyer* magazine for a while, did you not?

AJ: Yes, that was really on steelheading that was when Dick Surette, I think it was, that was before, oh, who was the guy that was the ex-banker that bought him out? I forget his name, Dick Stewart; yes it was before Dick Stewart bought him out.

SR: How did you get involved in doing that?

AJ: I really don't know, I couldn't answer that one. I probably was talking to him on the phone sometime about it, and he probably suggested it. He was an interesting guy and he was very, very sincere. I had a lot of respect for him; I think his biggest problem was he had no business sense.

SR: This is Dick Surette you're talking about?

AJ: No. The other guy (Syrette) who I first contacted he was in North Conway, which, is in New Hampshire?

SR: Yes.

AJ: Okay. Well, when I was in the consulting game, we hired a guy by the name of George Shed and we brought him out here from Nashua in New Hampshire; he had six children. He had won open exhibition scholarships to Harvard when he was seventeen, he was absolutely brilliant. But at the time we hired him, I didn't know he was an alcoholic (and I was an alcoholic and I mean still am, but I was still drinking then), and my solution to the problem was to fire him, which is ridiculous when I think about it.

But anyhow, when they were doing that first large rework on Sea-Tac Airport, he went to work for one of the architectural firms, he was an electrical engineer, and he did all the air conditioning and air circulation and that type of stuff for Sea-Tac, and he was very unhappy in that job. He called me one day and he said, "Can you meet me? Will you go into the office [on] Saturday and meet me?" So I met him, and he wanted to come back to work for me [but] he was still drinking and so I didn't. The outcome of it was he went home and tried to commit suicide, and he was so screwed up he made a bad job of it. They got him into the hospital and they got him dried out, and he formed a company called Cedar River, which was the forerunner, I think of Milam, but it was an engineering firm. I got him a job in Minnesota on one of the first flake-wood plants and he walked away from it after three weeks because it was being mismanaged.

His father had been a doctor, and he said, "You know, I broke my dad's heart," (because he was sober by this time), "I broke my dad's heart by not going into medicine, [it's] time I made it back to him so, I'm going to go into business helping people that have the same problem I have." He put me on the board of directors of Cedar River and he turned it into a treatment facility.

Anyhow, after he had died, my loan officer at Seafirst Bank called me and said, "Are you the Alec Jackson that's on the board of directors of Cedar River?" And I said, "Yes." She says, "Well we have a safety deposit box here that belongs to them and it's getting to the date where we'll have to drill it and it goes to the state, do you know where any of his family are?" He had a big piece of property in North Conway, and his family, all of his six children had moved back there, and were farming it and such like, and had built their homes there. And so I said, "Yes," [and I] went and I signed all the paperwork, and then I tracked them down in North Conway so that they could get the contents of the safety deposit box, which were considerable. There was over sixty thousand dollars in bonds and things like this, and low and behold, that may have been when I was tracking them down in North Conway how I ran across Dick Surette, but there, all his six children, there was three boys and three girls and they all got married and built homes on the property and were working it.

SR: Tell me the story of the Alec Jackson hooks.

AJ: Oh, I don't know whether that's a disaster or a success story. I wanted gooder hooks for myself, well, let me back off. I mentioned this Mitch-Parvin, who fly fished when I was a kid, and the chap that got him into fly fishing was a gentleman by the name of Vitty, I don't know what his first name was, but he gave him a 1929 Hardy Angler's Guide, and Mitch-Parvin gave that to me. In that catalog I saw these hooks which were the most beautiful hooks I had ever seen in my life, they were salmon fly hooks. I can remember getting a hell of a whipping from my step-dad when I was quite young because the guy that had the local tackle shop in Selby, Cyril Hardwick lived in Alma Terrace which was where my step-dad lived before him and my mother got married, so they were the same age and friends, and I went in there as a kid, and I said to this Cyril Hardwick, I said, "When are you going to get some decent hooks in instead of this crap you've got?" The first thing he did was tell my step-dad so I got a thorough whipping for that.

But anyhow, the 1929 Hardy catalog, they were made from oval wire, and it was tapered, oval wire, and it tapered both to the eye and then, you know, the swell was in the bend, and oh, they were gorgeous. If they could make hooks then like that then, why can't [they] make them like that now, I don't know. I was used to Mustads and even after I'd seen, some of the Veniards and hooks like that that Syd was using, and Pat Crane, they wouldn't satisfy me. So I started talking to Alan [Bramley] at Partridge and he said, "Yes, we'll make whatever you want but you have got to take thirty thousand of a size and a finish." I said, "Oh, my God." I wanted them bad enough, I talked to Rose and we said, "Well, we'll roll the dice for twenty thousand dollars, see if I can get it turned around, if the twenty thousand dollars is gone, and I have a basement full of hooks, that's the end of the hook business."

Anyhow, I was with Partridge for eight or nine years and I was actually seventeen thousand in the hole when I parted company with Partridge. Then Daiichi made a quarter of a million size-three hooks on spec, they wanted the business. I met with Kishimoto Sr. and Kishimoto Jr. in Los Angeles, and we had a translator to make sure there was no misunderstanding. Paul Betters was there, the sole owner of Angler Sport Group, and had the sole right to the use of the Daiichi name in the U.S.A. I said to him, "They're better hooks than I ever got from Partridge, in fact they're the best hooks I've ever seen to this point but they're not exactly what I want." So Kishimoto Sr., through the interpreter, he says, "Work with us to get rid of this quarter of a million, and we'll take fifteen percent off the price we're quoting you." Well, that was a no-brainer to do that, and low and behold, within a year I was in the black.

Then with the benefit of hindsight, I realized that Partridge were controlling my share of the market by what they sent me. I entered into an advertising program one year for a full year of advertising on the basis of the number of hooks I'd ordered from Partridge, and I never got anywhere near that number of hooks. I had budgeted two dollars a hundred for promotion and by the time I got that thing stopped, I was thirteen dollars a hundred into it, for those I got, and I really took it on the chin.

I made some stupid mistakes too. They had a hook that they were making for the reservoir fisherman, which they called the SEB, it was a limerick-bend, down-eye, and I said can you re-label that hook for me as an SEB Steelhead hook, and I brought in two hundred and forty thousand, that was four sizes and two finishes; thirty thousand times eight, two hundred and forty thousand, and my cost was eighty dollars a thousand, and I was happy to sell them for forty. I even tried, I said, with the Spey fly hooks if you buy a hundred of those, I'll give you a hundred of the SEB's and I didn't have takers. Half of them were in zinc-plated, and it was just like galvanized wire, the finish was so terrible. I have a friend, or did have a friend, now he's gone, who was a consultant to plating plants and he put unfinished hooks from Partridge in a number of plating plants for me, and I saw the job the plants over here could do with zinc plating, and I was looking at them really as a saltwater hook because with the hooks, if there are any imperfections in a finish, like nickel, you set up a very strong electrolytic cell, and the high carbon steel underneath is gone, they're a one-trip hook. It's a much weaker electrolytic cell with zinc and that's what I was looking at, but oh, they didn't work at all. The funny thing is now, some of the old-time steelheaders that got some of those hooks would like to get them again because a lot of them have come to the same realization I have that for the maximum hooking and holding ability, the down-eye hook is the best. But I'm not going into down-eye hooks again; I've taken one whipping. I nearly got involved with Partridge, [they] too produced a hook which was an up-eye limerick bend, heavy wire and I was seriously thinking about taking them on when a friend of mine on Vancouver Island, Gary Stewart, he said, "You know, Alec, how stupid are you? Do you have to learn the same lesson twice?" He said,

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“Remember the SEB’s? Do you want to take another battle like that?” So I didn’t do that, and then with Daiichi, things just grew like a cancer, really.

SR: So those hooks have become quite popular have they?

AJ: Oh yes, you can’t buy a new book on salmon flies or steelhead flies without seeing half the flies that are in them on my hooks.

SR: The design is similar to that one in the 1929 Hardy catalog.

AJ: That was the starting point, but there was some very, very nice hooks in Tavener’s book, I drew heavily on them. Then, oh, there was the guy in Dallas that tied salmon flies. I’m having trouble thinking of his name, he’s gone now, but he used to be in the oil business, and I think he was with Atlantic Richfield or something, but he used to raise money for wildcat oil work, and then once they started the casino business, back east outside New York, they hired him as the guy that was finding the front money for a lot of those casinos. But he was a lint picker’s lint picker and when he was learning to tie salmon flies, he used to correspond with me, and even though I couldn’t help him, I was able to put him in touch with people that did help him. I asked his advice on the Spey fly hooks, and I still have the letter, four hand pages on the yellow legal pads, and what I was talking about, every original that I gave him, everything was wrong with it. Then Syd Glasso too, I drew on Syd, and I still have the letter from Syd in my desk drawer, and he wrote to me as Isaac Walton, and somebody had told him I had an interest in hooks and he’s telling me what to do, so it was a combination. I would have called them Syd Glasso hooks if Syd hadn’t died, and low and behold, some of my friends [said] you can’t really use his name to advantage of him now [that] he’s gone.

SR: So now, in addition to the Spey fly hooks, you’ve also got salt water and trout hooks?

AJ: Yes, and I have all the steelhead and salmon hooks. What happened was Bob Ververk, you know, came up with those classic salmon fly hooks with Angler Sport Group, and they weren’t selling. They approached me and said, “Would I be interested in doing something.” I [said], “If I can call them whatever I want to call them, size them whichever way I want to size them, and buy them at a very favorable rate, I’ll work with you.” And they said, “Yes.” I’m having trouble selling those, but then, do you know who Bob Johns was?

SR: No.

AJ: Well, he was a guy, claimed he had a patent on the up-eye salmon hook and he got into bed with Angler Sport Group and he was going to have all these hooks made for off-shore factories that he was going to be controlling. It turned out he was a blowhard. And I worked with Angler Sport Group to, as a matter of fact I got a copy of the patent, it was a straight ring-eye hook and he had the patent on a little clip that could fit on with a cross in the back but a lip, so you could put it on to cause a fly to skate in any way you wanted, somewhat like Lee Wulff. I got the patent and it was obvious it wasn’t for the up-eye hook, and then I did the research to show that the up-eye hook well predated him by over a hundred years. He never ever bought a hook from Angler Sport Group and Paul Betters had rolled his own money to get those, and that’s what made it difficult for me, I had to put up the money for the machines what with Angler Sport Group to get the sizes I wanted.

SR: You’ve always marketed hooks in odd numbered sizes. Why is that?

AJ: Well, I keep my watch at a different time than other people too. I wanted to stay away, and I’ve done other things too, that to a lot of people seem foolish. Like for example...

SR: I’m not sure that’s foolish because nobody else is doing it so you’ve got

AJ: No, but I mean I’ve done other things too. For example, you know the fly shops are short of peg space on the wall, but if you notice my packaging is twice the size of most other people’s, and the reason for that is because once I got them in, I wanted more space to be more obvious. I took on the one line of the Bob Johns’ Hooks which are

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marketed as steelhead irons, and they are doing extremely well, and I was able to crack the Atlantic salmon market with them. I had a hell of a time with my Spey fly hooks, we're starting to get them in now, but it was only after the steelhead irons opened the market. And then, you know, I talked about the fishing with... the tiny hooks and the snelled hooks and such like, I thought that these would make a beautiful soft-hackle hook, and so I worked with Daiichi to get those made with a ring eye in two wire weights. I sell the lightest as soft-hackle hooks and the heavier wire is North Country. Oh, and the blue-water hooks, those were another one of Bob Johns' that were not selling, and so I said, I'm not really interested in selling them as a salmon or a steelhead hook but for flies like Joe Butrick's *Fancy Lady*. To my way of thinking, they had the limerick bend and the return loop and the straight eye, that was the ideal hook, and so I made arrangements to get those finished in a saltwater finish. That's not worked out as well as I'd hoped for. Then my last step was into the tube fly hooks and I have not really been out promoting those at this point. Hareline took them back to the fly tackle dealer show, and they were extremely well received and I have got to get out pushing them a little harder because it looks like that's going to be another good one.

SR: You do all of the distributions out of your home, here?

AJ: No, I have a co-distribution with Angler Sport Group for world-wide basis, and they pay me ten percent of their take or a minimum of 2.2 cents a hook. I have changed my business too, I have set up distributorships. I've never done much retail because I didn't want to be collecting tax for the state (sales tax). I've backed away from the shops. I don't do anything to the offshore factories, I pushed that over to Angler Sport Group because the Dingle-Johnson is ten percent and the import duty is nine percent, so that's nineteen percent which they take care of, everything I get comes through them with the taxes paid. If you re-export to an offshore factory, you can do the paperwork and get that nineteen percent back, so they have a lot sharper pencil than I do for dealing with the offshore factories, because they've got nineteen percent up their cuff that I don't have. So I just send it to them. The business with the offshore factories is getting bigger and bigger and bigger all the time, it was tough to get into them at first, but people come into Angler Sport Group now, rather than them having to go to people.

SR: Now tell me about the Japanese silk.

AJ: Well, Mike McCoy founded that, Mike McCoy had a brother that was teaching in Japan, and through his brother he found Japanese silk. Mike McCoy is the kind of guy that will stick with something so long, then he wants to be doing something else, and I was aware of this, and I tried to buy the business from him a couple of times and he really wasn't interested, he wanted to give it to his daughter and his son-in-law, and he did. That didn't work at all and so he came to me and he sold it to me and I have no regrets about that. I have one major problem which absolutely drives me crazy because I have the exclusive with the factory for Canada and the U.S. and...

SR: Before you go any further, for the benefit of those listening to the tape, maybe you should explain what we're talking about here.

AJ: It's a silk floss that's manufactured in Japan, it's an embroidery floss, and it's a product of genetic engineering. The silk worms produce strands from either side of the head that they call brins and these can be up to three or four thousand meters long and the Japanese are. But the brins with most silk worms are approximately round, but the silk that I have, the brins that are produced by genetic engineered silk worms are approximately triangular. They reflect, refract, and transmit light like a prism. There's a brilliance and an iridescence and a translucence in the floss that there isn't in any other silk floss. The full dress salmon fly tiers, I mean, the real serious ones, once they've tried it, they won't use anything else. It's hellacious expensive. It retails at close to nine dollars for eighteen meters, and so it's not a product for everybody, by any stretch of the imagination. I bought it from Mike and that's been very, very good, really.

Oh, and the one problem I have though, is, do you know Phil Castleman (Castle Arms)?

SR: [No].

AJ: He was a customer. He sells salmon fly tying material and such like, he's an old New York Jew, and I am quarter Jewish, so we have some real head-knocking sessions. He's pulled stuff on me and I've pulled stuff on him. Anyhow, he's found an end run around me, and it's not the factory, I think he has somebody in Japan that's buying it from the factory and then supplying it to him. I think he may have a little better numbers than I do because I know somebody went into Hareline Dubbin and offered Bob Borden the silk for pennies a tube less than I was selling it to him for, and Bob ran him off. I can't say enough good things about Bob Borden when it comes to loyalty, he's incredible. He just said, "Hey, I'm buying it from Alec, and I have been and that's where I'm going to keep on buying it."

And then at that of course, somehow Pearsall's found out about that and they found me through Kaufman's of all people, and low and behold they approached me. I said, "Well, I'd want an exclusive, at least for Canada and the U.S." They were real nervous about this, and finally they said, "Well, we'll give you three years with an exclusive but you've got to write a marketing plan each year." I wrote the marketing plan for the first year and I said, "We'll try and crack the market on the basis of soft hackles," because that's where I knew it had been used traditionally, and as an afterthought, I said, "We can't forget the bamboo rod builders." I had it backwards. I'm their biggest customer now; I never had to write another marketing plan, after the first one. It's only been in the last eighteen months, two years [that it's] really been getting into the fly tying. But the bamboo rod builders are crazy. I have two individuals, because I had some colors manufactured specifically for rod building, the old Payne java beige, which I call improved java brown, and the antique gold, which I call antique gold, and I have two individual fly tiers, they bought twenty dozen of each color.

SR: Fly tiers or rod builders?

AJ: Rod builders, I mean, rod builders. They have enough silk to build a thousand rods and they're only building a half a dozen a year, and I get it all the time from the bamboo rod builders, if something is good, they're not going to keep on making it, and so they buy it and hide it away.

SR: They have reason to think that.

AJ: Yes; but I had it backwards, now the Pearsall silk is the biggest end of my business, by a long way. It's incredible! It's at the point now, where I am absolutely positive that the quantity Hareline is buying, they're starting to move it into some other factories, offshore factories. I am still nervous about trying to move it into some of the people that are making a large number of rods. I'm hoping that there's one graphite rod maker that also has a business making bamboo rods and they have bought it for their bamboo rods and they are seriously thinking of making a premium grade of graphite rods and using it on them, and I'm hoping to be able to move some to them and gain some experience, but I wouldn't want to move it into the likes of a Sage or somebody like that right now, because if something went wrong, I could be stuck with two or three hundred rods I wouldn't know what to do with, because those people, in a heartbeat, they'd back charge if they lost a number of rods because of a problem with the silk.

SR: What haven't I asked you that I should have asked you?

AJ: I don't know I could sit here all night.

SR: Tamara, did you have any questions that you wanted to ask?

TB: I think it's going great.

SR: Well let me ask you one final question. This is a tough one: It's fifty years from now and you're a historian writing a history of Northwest fly fishing. What would you say about Alec Jackson and his contribution to the history of Northwest fly fishing?

AJ: I would say, really in total, it had been very little, and it...

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SR: You're being modest.

AJ: No, and it had been, in some respects, really selfish trying to satisfy himself rather than give something back.

SR: Yes, but you're ignoring Deer Creek.

AJ: Yes, but there again, that didn't come voluntary. Bob Arnold, he didn't just do it once, he had to put the gun up to the side of my head a second time, and pulled the trigger, because the first time I just shut him out.

There are things that I've been involved with, not in fly fishing, that I am more proud of, though, for example, the last expansion to the Redwood National Park. Going back to my consulting days, I knew a guy by the name of Norm Baker, who was in the U.S. Department of Commerce. When Jimmy Carter was president, he made Cecil B. Andrus the Secretary of the Interior, and they were trying to expand the Redwood National Park, and it was going nowhere. The National Park Service spent over a million dollars, and didn't have anything they could go to Congress with and so Cecil B. Andrus tapped Norm Baker. He pulled together an interdepartmental group which was Interior, Labor, Agriculture, and Commerce, and he tapped this Norm Baker to head up that group. As soon as Norm Baker got on it and he saw the mess they were in, he called me, and he said, would I consider writing the report that would go to Congress for a half a billion dollars to pull [it] off and that I did. I did it in a week while we were up at Lake Chappaqua because [it was] Memorial weekend. It was funny because the job should have been put out for competitive bids and Norm Baker said to me, "I'll give you a purchase order for three thousand dollars, then when you need another one, we'll give you another one, and he just backed up the purchase orders." A newspaper in San Francisco got onto this and so Norm was on the carpet, and low and behold he showed them the report, and then he showed them what it had cost, and that was the end of it. But the thing he didn't tell them was that the National Park Service had spent a million dollars and I had all their information and the Forest Service had spent a lot of money, and all I had to do was put together something that was readable, that Congress could understand. I'm very, very proud of that one.

Here again, when they did the economic redevelopment of coastal Washington study, this was when, oh, the guy that was the adopted son of the Chairman of the Board of Weyerhaeuser, who was governor here, came out...

SR: Booth Gardner?

AJ: Booth Gardner, yes. This was Wahkiakum, Pacific, Grays Harbor, Clallam, Jefferson [Counties], Norm Baker was ramrodding that and he tapped me. I did the forestry and the fisheries on that. Norm Baker, too, he knew where all of the bodies were buried in Washington, too, and he really made that work for the state. For example, there was some commerce money, I forget what, Title XI or something like that, and there was sixteen million dollars of it for the whole of the country and he wound up bringing eleven million dollars back to those five counties. Then when they did the economic redevelopment planning for the Columbia Basin scenic area, after Mount St. Helens, he tapped me for that, to help him out with the forestry and the fisheries. I don't know how much that brought into that Columbia River deal, but those are things I think of being bigger contributions than what I've done for fishing.

SR: Putting yourself again in the role of that future historian, in addition to Deer Creek, there's your fly patterns, the articles you've written, the people you've taught fly tying to, your hooks, your silk...

AJ: Yes, but...

SR: Wouldn't you say all of those were legitimate contributions? I think those were...

AJ: I don't think the contributions are what I really could have done or should have done. Let me start out by saying that I thought the world of the likes of Wes Drain and Syd Glasso, but deep down in my heart, I am very bitter about what they took to the grave with them.

SR: Their knowledge?

AJ: Yes, Syd Glasso only ever wrote one thing and it was for *Creel*. Bob Wethern got him to write it, and I have his pencil handwritten manuscript. I'm going down that same path. As a matter of fact, two of my friends have put the gun up to my head because I started working on a book, probably in 1980, in the hope that I would have it out in 1985, and it's still not ready for publication. But less than a month ago, two of my friends, one an artist, and one a photographer, put the gun to my head and said they'll never do anything else for me until I get that book finished. One of them has expressed the willingness to do the photography, a professional photographer [who] does absolutely spectacular work and the other guy is a, actually is a commercial artist, but I've never seen anybody that can draw hooks and flies like he can, and he has said the same to me. So I have given them the commitment that I will get [back to it], because I have the manuscript that's been reviewed by about twenty people, but I'm still not satisfied with it.

SR: As someone who has written a few books, let me offer you a piece of advice: You'll never be satisfied with it.

AJ: Well, you know...

SR: You have to part company with it at some point.

AJ: Yes, but I learned that as a consultant, though. I learned to ship a report with a prayer because I authored over four hundred reports as a consultant, and I didn't want to wind up six months after I'd sent it off and the first page I opened it up to what I'd find a mistake. That's good advice though Steve. I've got to detach myself emotionally, from the book.

SR: That's the hardest part.

AJ: Yes.

SR: But that gives us all something to look forward to.

AJ: Yes. As a matter of fact, I want to write a book on soft-hackles too, not a book in the vein of Sylvester Nemes or any of those people, but mainly in the style of tying. Because my style of tying is a North Country style, really, it's a blue-collar style of tying, the average stiff that could only get the readily available materials in the early days. It was not the type of tying that involves exotic materials or anything fancy. I have a program which I've put on which I call the "Reasonable Fly" and one of the key attributes to my way of thinking is (to a reasonable fly), is it's got to be easy to tie from readily available materials.

SR: Makes sense to me.

AJ: Yes, like everybody else, I can get awfully lazy at times and I am a procrastinator too.

SR: But you've only been working on that book for what, 27 years?

AJ: Yes. And the other thing too is I went, I shouldn't say I went back to school, but I took creative writing; when I graduated from Canterbury, my major professor wouldn't take me on as a graduate student, because he said, "Your writing is not good enough." I said to myself, under my breath, "You so and so, I'll show you someday." So I went up to the Senior Center here in Bothell, and there was this old gal, she's gone now, Sylvia Tacker, but she taught creative writing, and her whole thesis was write for the joy of it. I have done a handful of little books for the benefit of my family, and I have shared these with very, very few people, but everybody I've shared with have said, you should publish some of this stuff. But I will never do that because I'm able to reveal myself in some ways to my family that I am not at all comfortable revealing to the whole world.

SR: I understand that.

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AJ: Yes.

SR: Well thank you, I think maybe we should wind this up so that you can get back to work on that book.

AJ: Thank you. I hope it's of some value.

TB: Okay, thank you.

AJ: Yes.