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This interview was conducted with George McLeod on December 18, 2006 at his home above Lake Campbell, near Anacortes, Washington. The interviewers are Danny Beatty and Tamara Belts.

TB: Today is Monday, December 18th, 2006 and I'm here with George McLeod and Danny Beatty. We're going to do an oral history which we're also videotaping. It regards Mr. McLeod's fly fishing experiences. Our first question is how did you get started fly fishing? I know your father was a well known fly-fisherman but how did that come down to you?

GM: Well, my dad was a good teacher. He started me fishing for trout when I was five years old and to fly cast at age six. Dad first took me trout fishing on North Creek near Bothell and Bear Creek near Woodinville,

Washington and to Oso at the mouth of Deer Creek. I also fished for perch at my grandparents cabin on Lake Retreat south east of Seattle at this early age.

In 1928, my dad, Ken McLeod, and two of his fishing partners, co-workers, Joe Husby and Harold Pemberton, bought the property at the mouth of Deer Creek on the North Fork of the Stillaguamish. Naturally, on the weekends and during the summertime we spent a lot of time on the river and I had the opportunity to fish for trout alongside the steelhead fishermen

When I was 8 years old, late one afternoon, below our camp in the fast riffle, by the huge boulder above the Elbow Hole, I hooked my first steelhead on a fly. Needless to say I had quite a battle; it took me down the river to the Elbow Hole and my dad slid it on the beach for me. I was hooked!

Then in 1933, he took me up on Deer Creek with Steve Morrissey from Seattle. We hiked in and stayed overnight. I fished downstream and kept going beyond Steve. I hooked a nice big steelhead, eight and three-quarter pounds and landed it. It was just getting dark and Dad came down the rugged stream looking for me—they were worried that maybe I'd fallen in and hit my head on a boulder and possibly drowned. He paddled me all the way back up to camp, about a mile and a half in the dark by flashlight. But it so happened that that was the largest summer steelhead taken on a fly in the Steelhead Trout Club that year and they gave me the gold medal for that fish. I still remember Steve kneeling by the campfire praying for my safe return as we came into view at the camp.

TB: Oh wow.

GM: There's a picture (referring to photo)—1933. That was my first steelhead in Deer Creek. Then I continued to fish the North Fork at Oso, below the mouth of Deer Creek, along with my dad and friends. It wasn't long before I was taking summer steelhead (Deer Creek fish) consistently in the North Fork of Stilly.

At age twelve I started to tie flies and was taught by E.B. George, who was the man that introduced bucktail steelhead flies to the Northwest. He was from California and settled in Seattle with a major company, and joined the Seattle Casting Club. He insisted on teaching me how to tie for a couple years, and finally I reneged and went down to his home, about a mile and a half from where we lived, and he taught me how to tie the Bucktail Royal Coachman. He made me promise that I wouldn't teach anybody else how to tie those flies. Also, he said, "I don't want you to sell flies George because you'll be competing with me. You can use them all you want on your own with your friends."

After about a year, I was tying flies for my friends, and I started to sell a few here and there. E.B. George moved up from where he had lived, to the corner house on our same block. He said, "Well George, go ahead and sell those flies, I don't care whether you sell them or not, but you owe me some bullfrogs from Lake Washington to plant at my summer cabin on Menzel Lake near Snohomish." So it wasn't but a few days later in August that I brought him four pair of bullfrogs for his own pleasure at his summer cabin.

As time went on, I started to sell flies to major sporting goods stores in Seattle and including the Oso store at the mouth of Deer Creek. By the late 30's, early 40's it was a major steelhead summer-run fishery. I also taught my younger sister Mary how to tie, and between us we developed quite a little business. When I was in high school I started to tie at Bill Lohrer's Sporting Goods Store in the University District which was a partnership of Eddie Bauer. I tied in the store between classes and after school, custom tied flies. I had to hire women on the side because I couldn't keep up with the demand. By 1941 the business was growing and I was attending the University of Washington, and also working in the shipyards just before the war and running a fly business to boot! So I kept pretty busy.

Being a student at the U, we were required to attend ROTC military training—officer's training—and by the end of 1942 you either had to join the service or be drafted. The week that school was out, June of 1942, three of us fellows that palled around together decided we wanted to fly, so we all joined the service; I went to the Army Air Force, another fellow went to the Marines, another went into the Navy. We all got our wings, but both of them were killed in the Pacific. I was the lone survivor after flying B-17s as a pilot over Germany, where I completed 27 bombing missions over Germany—and three relief food missions to the Netherlands.

While in the service my sister Mary maintained the fly business. After the service I returned home ([December] 1945). I got married February 22, 1946 (Washington's Birthday) to a beautiful wife; we had three children, two daughters and a son. I went back to school, but didn't stay long because I had duties at home and was running a business—primarily in fishing tackle and flies. I had developed a fly business so when I came back from the service I went back into that until the late 40's. Eventually the price of flies dropped drastically because of the Japanese imports (when flies retailed for five cents a piece). Also the advent of spinning tackle on the market momentarily killed the demand for flies and fly tackle as far as large volume was concerned in the Northwest. When I gave up the fly business I diversified into representing tackle manufacturers to the wholesalers and so started a career as a manufacturer's representative.

One major line that I started out with was Edgar Sealey and Sons fish hooks out of Redditch, England. During my leaves in the air force in England I would visit the tackle manufacturers in Scotland and England, and I became well-acquainted with Edgar Sealey and Sons. Eventually I represented them throughout the West. Also, by early 1950, I represented St. Croix fishing rods, out of Park Falls, Wisconsin. They were a young company that really took off and they had the most competitive line of fish rods in the country. I designed their fresh and salt water fiber glass rods for the Northwest covering a wide range of salmon, steelhead, trout and other models in fly, bait cast and troll rods. I was with them for twenty years and was their number one salesman throughout the nation, and four years in a row they were the largest rod manufacturers in the world. They had all of Sears-Roebuck's business, which amounted to 50% of their sales, and the other 50% were domestic sales throughout the country. I also represented a number of smaller companies to the wholesale trade.

In the early 50's I was associated with Scientific Anglers before they put their fly line on the market. They were the people that revolutionized the fly-line business. Where in the past all fly-lines were built on a tapered linen or silk braid, in which the taper was in the braid itself and then had a coated—oil-baked finish over the tapered core. Scientific Anglers developed a line on a level casting line with a plastic taper to the finish, which made a line that would float more readily than the old style by means of literally thousands of air bubbles in the plastic-coated finish, none of which broke the surface. The line was so buoyant that you could hardly sink it.

When I became acquainted and started to sell Scientific Anglers lines, I insisted that we needed a sinking line. They thought they wouldn't sell, because the Middle West and the East was all dry fly fishing. I finally convinced them that if they could make a line that floated with air bubbles in it, they could restrict those bubbles and somehow make a finish that would be heavier than the density of water and therefore sink. In the process of developing the line, we came up with the right material. When we were deciding what we should call the name of the line, I said, "Well, the air cell makes the line float, the wet cell makes it sink." So, I named the Wet Cell Fly Line, and was the one that developed that product, which revolutionized the sinking line business throughout the world. That's something I'm real proud of that hardly anyone knows.

We continued to experiment with the lines for a couple years before they were on the market. In 1955 I took the world record steelhead out of the Kispiox River: twenty-nine pounds and 2 ounces on that line.

In my travels to Vancouver, B.C. (1953) I used to do business with Harkley and Haywood which was the oldest known and best sporting goods store in Vancouver, B.C. There was a young fellow there named Stewart Wilson who was considered one of the top steelhead and salmon fishermen in British Columbia. I asked Stewart where the largest steelhead were in British Columbia, and he said, "Well, we hear that they're in the Skeena River tributaries near Hazelton, B.C. We're going up there this September; would you like to go along?" Unfortunately, I couldn't make the trip. But in the following year when I talked to him, he told me, it took him two days to get up there from Vancouver because the road was so bad. They fished three days, and the average weight of the fish they kept was 20 to 24 pounds. Of course, they were lure fishermen, so, that got me pretty excited. Again in 1954 he offered to take me along with him on their trip and I couldn't go—I had to go back east on business. I passed it up, but I sent my two fishing partners up on their own, and the first fish they caught was 26 pounds. They were bait fishermen so they had a great week up there landing fish to 28 pounds.

In late September 1955, four of us chartered a float plane out of Terrace, B.C. and they picked us up at Smithers, B.C. We flew into the headwaters of the Kispiox and spent six days floating in two seven man rubber rafts with camp gear from the head waters at Stevens Lake all the way down to the Seventeen Mile Bridge at the Rodeo Grounds. We spent about two and a half days portaging around rapids and falls that were impassable. The second day the river went out—the water was high—we caught scads of Dolly Varden, cutthroat, white fish, and a few Coho, but no steelhead until we got down to the lower river where our friends were camped. The first two days that they were there early in the week they had good fishing, with bait outfits. The third day after we got down to the camp, on the lower river at Seventeen Mile Bridge, the river started to drop and clear. The first afternoon that the river cleared, I caught an 18 pounder on a fly. Then the next day we had fabulous fishing in the morning, and again in the afternoon. The last day I was there, in the morning we hooked 13 fish in one riffle, and the 13th one was the 29 pounder. Then we quit, and I headed for Seattle with a world record!

In 1956 we had real good fishing, again on a week long trip. In 1957 I took my dad. In fact, four of us went up the last week of August to jumpstart the steelhead fishing, but we were too early. The river was full of Coho, lots of silvers, but no steelhead. I deliberately left my 12 by 14 wall tent at the Dundas farm so that I'd have to go back in October on another trip. I took my dad up and he had caught literally hundreds of steelhead in his lifetime, up until that time—on fly and bait—and he'd never caught a 19 pounder; the first day he fished he caught two over 20 pounds—one 23 and one almost 22. He was hooked.

The next day I caught two over 20 pounds. For almost the next 30 years we fished up there every fall, usually from the end of the first week in October until the last of October.

DB: These fish you were catching, they were called “summer-runs” up there?

GM: They were summer-run fish. They entered the Skeena in August and September, and they reached the Kispiox River in September/October/Early November and spawned in the spring during April-May.

DB: Would you explain how your development of the Wet Cell and the sinking fly line attributed—as I understand it—to your ability to catch these fish? Is that true?



GM: That’s right. In the old days the silk lines, when you wanted them to sink they would semi-float and when you wanted them to float they’d sink. This material in the Wet Cell line was heavier than the density of water, so therefore the weight could be regulated in the plastic finish and you could get the fly down. The heavier the line the faster it would sink. It proved to be really the answer because when you’re wet fly fishing for steelhead they’re relatively close to the bottom. They’re not suspended, as a rule, and you had to get the fly down in order to present it to them to get them to take it.

DB: I think it’d be nice for them to also know what flies you were using at that time, and how you developed your patterns, particularly for that type of fishing.

GM: The Skykomish Sunrise was the result of a trip. We used to fish the Skykomish religiously, in the Monroe area all the way up to Index and the North Fork, primarily bait fishing in the winter time and in the early ‘40s we started wet fly fishing for steelhead. We’d take a fish occasionally, but the problem was a lot of the water where the fish congregated was too fast and too heavy to get a fly down, but with the advent of a heavier line we could get the fly down.



On one particular trip we were headed over the Skykomish, [it was] one January morning, and as we approached Cottage Lake on the highway from Bothell to Duvall, there was the most beautiful sunrise you’d ever want to see. My dad pulled over on the shoulder by Norm’s Resort and we sat there watching the sunrise for about ten minutes. It was so beautiful. He remarked to me, —Gorge, if you can tie me a fly with those colors, it’ll really catch steelhead.”

We went to the river and fished. We didn’t have a fly of those colors at the time. When we came home and the next day or so, I sat down to my fly vise and tied what I thought would simulate the beauty of those colors that we had

observed that morning and I came up with the Skykomish Sunrise. My dad had mentioned, —You tie me a fly with those colors, and we’ll call it a Skykomish Sunrise.” I tied the pattern, and a day or two later, he went over to the river—it was during the week—and he used the new pattern, the Skykomish Sunrise. He hooked seven fish, and landed a thirteen pound, thirteen ounce chrome-bright buck that was the largest fly-caught steelhead up until that time for him. From then on, we really caught fish on that fly; it became real popular with everybody and is to this day!

DB: You might mention here what your dad’s work was at that time. If I remember he was the outdoor editor of *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

GM: Yes, up until 1950. For 19 years he wrote fishing and hunting conservation articles. His columns were known as “The Singing Reel,” “The Splatter Cast’s” for bait fishermen, and during the hunting season, he wrote a column called, “The Red Hat Brigade.”

DB: At the same then, Enos Bradner was the outdoor editor of *The Seattle Times* and they were friends, weren’t they?

GM: Oh yes, they were great friends! Dad used to kid him, because Dad’s articles came out in the morning edition on Monday and Bradner’s articles came out in the evening, so he could read Dad’s article and pick up some of the thoughts. Yes, they were great friends.

I actually met Enos before he became acquainted with Dad. I was fishing at Oso, just a youngster, and the folks had gone home. They were going to let me stay a couple days after Sunday—they were going to let me stay like Monday and Tuesday there--camped alone at our camp. Of course, when the summer-runs were in the river in July why Dad would come up during the week and fish in the evening and at daylight in the morning and then head back for Seattle. He was going to let me stay a couple of days extra since fishing was pretty good. The next morning (Monday) I met Enos Bradner in the riffle at the mouth of Deer Creek. I caught two fish, and Enos caught one. He was going to fish a couple of hours and go home. So I said, “Well, would you take me back home?” So he took me back home, and that was the way I got acquainted with Enos Bradner.

DB: Could you talk a little bit about how Enos Bradner formed the Washington Fly Fishing Club, and was your dad involved with that at all?

GM: Yes, oh yes. Dad was *very* much involved; he was one of the charter members, Dad and Bradner. They were members of the Steelhead Trout Club of Washington which was mainly bait fishermen, but a number of fly fishermen too. They tried to get the Steelhead Club to endorse a bill convincing the game commission to close the North Fork of the Stillaguamish to fly fishing only, and the Steelhead Club balked because there were too many bait fishermen, and they didn’t want to lose the bait fishing on the river. But they persisted, so what happened was that Dad and Bradner and a half a dozen other sportsmen got together and formed the Washington Fly Fishing Club; that was their main objective to close the North Fork of Stilly to fly fishing only, and also, Pass Lake for trout fishing—fly fishing only. Actually, the Steelhead Trout Club finally backed it, and that was the straw that helped us break the backbone of the bait fishermen and get fly fishing only—the first fly-only waters in the state. And it’s been that way ever since.

DB: And then now, the Washington Fly Fishing Club is one of the oldest fly fishing clubs in the nation at this time. There are some a little older, but ...

GM: Right, right, yes. The Steelhead Trout Club of Washington is the oldest fishing club in the state. It was formed in 1928 and the purpose was to make steelhead a game fish, which they did. They succeeded in doing that by initiative in 1932 when state game control went into effect.

DB: You mentioned now the first year you fished the Deer Creek area and the drift below it ...

GM: 1933 was the first time that I went up Deer Creek with my dad, and I was twelve years old.

DB: And at that time Deer Creek was open?

GM: Deer Creek was open.

DB: Yes.

GM: You were allowed ten pounds in one fish. The fish ran from four and half to seven pounds, and an eight pounder was a big one in those days . . . a ten pounder was giant. They were all wild fish; there were no hatchery summer-runs.

DB: Would you explain the transition of Deer Creek and how it finally had to be closed and then your fishing was all below it, and where your cabin was and so forth.

GM: Deer Creek was finally closed to protect the run in 1935. Therefore, when the fish got beyond the mouth into Deer Creek in they were safe as far as any organized fishery was concerned. There was some poaching around up there for years you know, but for all practical purposes the North Fork of the Stilly was closed to fly fishing only and Deer Creek was closed completely and that helped maintain the run.

DB: Do you have any knowledge about, prior to this time when Zane Grey came and supposedly, I guess he fished in Deer Creek? Did you and your dad have any knowledge of what his business was, or his writings up in that part of our country?

GM: Well Zane Grey packed in from Day Creek, from what they called the Finn Settlement. From Bryant on up to the Finn Settlement was accessible, and from there they had to hike about ten or eleven miles into the upper Deer Creek. It was virgin timber at the time, according to his writings. They fished it for two or three days, but only one time. He of course mentioned the beautiful stream and pools containing numerous summer steelhead. He was impressed with the stands of virgin timber and unspoiled natural surroundings.

Now when Dad started to fish Deer Creek, my dad and his friend hiked over the top of Mount Higgins, clear up over the top and down the other side to the headwaters of Deer Creek. They fished down from there but it was too rugged a trip. The next time they went in from Finn Settlement but they found out it was so far in there that there must be an easier way. So he pioneered the trail in from the mouth of Deer Creek—about a mile up stream the road ended on what they called East Deer Creek Road, it ended at the, let's see, it ended at Oat Allen's Farm and Dad just took off up over the hill until he hit the logging railroad that went into the Deer Creek logging camp, and he walked the logging railroad to where he thought it left the stream -- above the lower canyon. Then he made his own trail across logged off land and he dropped down into the stream above the canyon, which was approximately five miles above the mouth of the creek at Oso, and he fished up from there, approximately three to four miles of stream. That was the heart of the run in that section – that was beautiful, beautiful water.

DB: Now when you talk about the Finn Settlement, I know of a place east of Big Lake over here that they call the Finn Settlement, is that it?

GM: That was where it was, it was up in the hills there.

DB: Okay, so you were in the Lake Cavanaugh area when you're taking off on these trails?

GM: The creek is east of Lake Cavanaugh, its down over the mountain. But you're over on the other ridge, across, on the opposite side.

DB: At that time was there any interest in fishing on the other side of the mountain into the Skagit drainage, fishing the Finney Creek Drainage, and the Finney Creek itself.

GM: The Day Creek and Finney Creek and Illabot Creek all had summer-run. But the main run was in Finney Creek. However, there was a splash dam on the lower Finney Creek that blocked the runs—where in high water they floated the logs down. The only way they could get logs out of there was in the stream at high water and they'd flush them into the Skagit and then raft them below that. But they ruined the run in there until they blew it out. I don't know the exact date when they blew the splash dam out but they had to rebuild it after the floods all the time, you know. It was just a makeshift deal.

DB: I've heard from other steelheaders—it's kind of a theory that the Finney Creek, Day Creek Drainage is very much almost back to back up on that ridge.

GM: Day Creek the fish could not go very far, there was a canyon and the falls at the canyon, they couldn't get up above it, but there was a nice summer-run there. Interesting thing on Day Creek, you're probably familiar with Ralph Wahl's book *Shangri-La*, [*One man's steelhead Shangri-La*]? Well, when I was in high school in the mid thirties (1935), a friend of mine, Bob Dahlquist, was jump shooting mallards along the sloughs and pot holes on the Skagit. He was at the mouth of Day Creek, where Day Creek came into a small side channel that diverted from the Skagit. Both Day Creek and the side channel from the main Skagit were small shallow streams where they came together at a large log jam and big deep pool about 200 feet in diameter. Bob jumped some mallards and got two birds. He stood there looking around and saw trout swirling! The next week he said, "We got to go up there, and take the shot guns and the fishing rods and see what's in there." The next Saturday Bob Dahlquist, Park Johnston, and I drove to the Day Creek Bridge and waded down the creek to the mouth at the log jam pool. We started casting #6 and #4 Royal Coachman Bucktail flies, and low and behold this pool, it was almost like a small lake, it was full of sea-run cutthroat, Dolly Varden and Day Creek summer steelhead. We proceeded to catch limits of these fish—it was the only place that I ever fished where you could throw a long line, let it sink and strip the fly and steelhead would take it. They were about four or five, six pounds. Well sir, we fished that for about four years and then Ralph Wall found it, *Shangri-La*!

DB: Oh, he came *after* you!

GM: He came *after* us! Right.

DB: Oh, I've never heard that story before!

GM: We got a kick out of that. Ralph Wahl showed those pictures and here's this big pool, this big dead water, log dam you know.

DB: Okay, that's very interesting because I've read his book, of course, and I knew Ralph some. That kind of brings another question, going back to your comments about when you first started tying flies and how your mentor asked you not to sell them because he didn't want the competition, but in some cases he just may not have wanted other fishers to know certain patterns that you did.

GM: One of his secrets was the way he put the buck hair on.

DB: Yes, but talk about the secretiveness of fly fishers maybe in that time. Do you think it was more than it is now?

GM: No, I don't think so. There weren't that many fly fishermen.

DB: Oh, I see, okay.

GM: We were all pretty much buddy-buddy, the ones that I knew. Of course there was a nucleus in Seattle of fly fishermen that developed from the Seattle Casting Club which later became the Evergreen Casting Club. They would meet on Wednesday evenings, and Sunday mornings and they would cast, you know, from the spring until fall. They had lower Green Lake; they had a big circular pool there, a shallow concrete pool. They had a little shack where they kept all their targets and paraphernalia, their casting platform, and so on. They had fly events and they had bait casting, club casting events, and they had like 75, 80 members. When I was a kid I'd call targets, wear hip boots, they'd pay me a couple bucks. Then when I was sixteen, why I was casting right with the experts; among the professionals nobody broke like a hundred and ten feet—and I cast 116 feet and won the world record when I was 16! And that was with tackle like we used on the river.

DB: Did you know Letcher Lambeth?

GM: Oh, yes.

DB: Do you want to tell something about—

GM: No, I really didn't know him that well.

DB: You didn't?

GM: No

DB: You knew who he was.

GM: I knew who he was.

DB: . . . his development of some of the cane rods and stuff later.

GM: Dawn Holbrook was a great rod builder, bamboo builder. I used to buy the blanks and just make them up. When I was a kid I wrapped rods and guides.

DB: Going back to your development of the Wet Cell, did you know a man named Hedge?

GM: Oh yes, Marvin Hedge. He was a tournament caster and marketed the Hedge – 7 Tapered Torpedo Lines by Jones Line Company.

DB: Yes, Marvin Hedge. Wasn't he also involved in some of the development too? Or how did that fit in?

GM: In the tapers, the weight forward tapers, yes he had a Torpedo Taper. They were the braided silk though, the taper was in the braid—in my Wet Cell the taper is in the finish.

DB: Not in the finish, he did it a different way.

GM: Yes, they were standard silk lines. The best one that ever came out before Scientific Anglers, was the line called Ashaway Cradle American Finish. Ashaway Cradle American Finish was a brand line and it had some kind of a heavier coat, but the braided part of the line was still the taper. It was Ashaway Cradle American Finish line was the best line that came out, but it didn't last either.

DB: Could you tell us a little bit about how this has progressed now over the last 50 years?

GM: Well, I should have mentioned it when I got associated with Scientific Anglers, there's quite a bit of history there. Leon Martuch and his fishing partner Clare Harris (his fishing partner was one of the top men in Dow Chemical Company in Midland, Michigan); Martuch didn't finish high school, but he had a little research facility in Midland that he did research work for Dow Chemical Company on the side, and he was considered a top dry-fly fisherman in Michigan. He had a cabin on the Pine River, upper peninsula in northern Michigan. There was no Scientific Anglers then, but they developed this line just for their own use (Leon and Clare).

Then President B.F. Gladding of Otselic, New York, was up on the upper peninsula and he walked into this little old country store and asked, "Who's the best fly fisherman in the area?" They said, "Leon Martuch." "Well, where's he?" "He's got a cabin up here on the river." He went and looked him up, and introduced himself and said, "How about a day on the river with you?" So they went fishing the next day and this president of B.F. Gladding, you know they were big fly line manufacturers, from Otselic New York, and he couldn't keep his line floating, and Leon Martuch's line is floating like a duck's feather out there you

know? He asked him, “Where’d you get that line?” Leon said, “Well, I made it!” “You what?” “Yes, I made it.”

He was so impressed he stayed in the area for about a week trying to convince him that they’d like to get in on this—develop this line. Leon told him it was all just bubbles. The guy went home he couldn’t convince Martuch that they should do something about putting it on the market. They sent a man up there from Otselic, who stayed there for pretty near a month trying to convince him, and finally talked him into it. He said, “Why don’t you go ahead and we’ll back you, you process this line, and we’ll sell it.”

So they did. They developed the machinery and stuff to put the line out and they sent the coils to Gladding, and Gladding put their name on the line, and it was called the Gladding Bubble Line. They got a royalty off every line, plus \$50,000 a year retainer fee. So, Leon and his partner were in business, they named it Scientific Anglers.

The way I got acquainted, I went into my office one morning and was going through the mail and here’s a *Field and stream*. I sat there looking through it—and there was a little ad in one column, and it showed a diagram of this line, you know the process. I just picked up the phone and I called him. I was a manufacturer’s rep and I told him who I was, so he sent me some samples.

He said, “You can’t sell it, we’re in a lawsuit.” Meantime, they’d gone on I think about three years, selling the lines to Gladding and the fellow that they made the deal with and the contract, died, the president of the company. The woman that had controlling interest thought they could break the contract, that they didn’t have to deal with this little old company up in the sticks. So they went to court. When he put this ad in there, they weren’t yet in business, but he sent me some line and said, “You can’t sell them, but I want you to test them?” So I did—and Bradner and everybody did. I got enough lines and passed them around, free. I put them on the ground and walked all over them on cement, tied them to the bumper of the car and drove around town, come back, wipe them off. They’d never seen anything like it in their life, and once they started to use it, *man*, silk lines just went down the drain. These were all floating lines.

This went on for over a year. They went to court and they were [sued by] Scientific Anglers. They won the case, and as soon as they won the case Leon called me and he says, “Start selling lines.” I was the first one that sold their lines nationwide. They won the right to sell Scientific Lines to whoever they wanted and continued royalties from Gladding and the right to franchise other line manufacturers to produce line with their process. Then I said, “We’ve got to have sinking lines.”

DB: Did you get this part on the camera, this edge? That is of interest Tamara not only because it has his name on it, but the way it’s explained (referring to the Wet Cell line package), that GBF or whatever ... Well, George, you explain it, that’s what you’re here for?

GM: Yes, the designations of HCH, the old standard, was like HEH, HDH, HCH, GBG, GAG, and then the new system is DT8S, see, so they went to double taper, size 8, sinking. It completely wiped out the old designation here because this stands for certain weight line. This was more of a diameter. It went from the old letter system to a numeral system, from diameter, to weight.

DB: Were you involved in any of that change over?

GM: No. No, no I fought it. I fought it. I was one of the old timers. I fought it, it didn’t do any good. Then they also made a designation with the rods.

DB: Did you know the person that was directly involved in that?

GM: No, no it was a national sporting goods—not the National Sporting Goods Association, but American something.

Oh, I was going to tell you, when we worked with this, Dad then did the designations on the tapers. Clear back in the '30s he was making his own shooting heads and—

DB: Okay, that's the part that I wanted to make sure that we got—how they spliced lines and put things together so they would work better for steelhead fishing, so go ahead.

GM: As far as development of the tapered lines was concerned, before there were the Scientific Angler lines, Dad would take different sized level line and splice them together to make shooting head lines, for both sinking and dry fly lines. During the development of the Wet Cell, he worked up various tapers, both wet and dry, and sink tips, the first sink tips, for Scientific Anglers. He developed the different tapers that we desired, so they had all that information to work with. After the Wet Cell sinking lines and full tapers, weight forwards, we had quite a time convincing them they should come out with a sink tip. And actually, a couple other companies actually marketed the sink tip before Scientific Anglers did.

What happened when they won that lawsuit, they also won the right to franchise other companies. They franchised people like Cortland, Newton, and Gladding that lost the suit. They also franchised the machines to these companies to make the lines, and then they got a royalty off of every line they sold. They revolutionized it world-wide.

There was an interesting development; they were going to put a plant in New Zealand, because it's fly fishing only over there. They had it all blueprinted and I had tentatively agreed to go manage it for five years and then the deal fell through because it was a socialist country, and they couldn't get the profits out.

DB: Now, when you're catching these big steelhead, you said you got a gold button for them, was that through *Field and Stream*?

GM: No, *Field and Stream* had an annual contest, but the Steelhead Trout Club of Washington has a contest for the largest fish on bait and the largest fish on a fly, they have a gold button annually.

DB: That was the gold button?

GM: Yes.

DB: But didn't you also win some prizes through *Field and Stream*.

GM: Yes, it's in the *Kispiox River*, this one here (referring to book), Art sent me that.

DB: Oh, Art Lingren, yes. I met him about three years ago; we went up to his home.

GM: I forget the fellow's name, but when he came down I met him in Bellingham, the fellow with him used to rent one of the cabins back of the store at Oso every summer for years, the Canadians used to come down to fish the North Fork of the Stilly.

DB: Did you get to know quite a few of the fly fishers from Vancouver, or the Totem Fly Fishing Group that went up there on an annual basis?

GM: No, not really, I knew some of them, mostly from the Kispiox, when we were up there; and a few in Vancouver, when I used to travel up there.

DB: But, there's also the Babeen and other rivers that are pretty popular.

GM: Yes, there are a lot of them; the Kispiox has got the run with real big fish, larger than any other river percentage wise.

DB: That's why you like to focus on that then?

GM: Well, it was a nice one to fish, too; great water and beautiful scenery and friends.

TB: Could you tell us about the "McLeod's Catch Em Trout Flies—proven buck tail patterns?"

GM: These were on the market during the 30's and 40's. And of course the Royal Coachman Bucktail, that was pretty popular. And then Purple Peril, wet fly, and the Hoyts Killer forerunner to the McLeod Ugly was a good dark pattern. And in those days, these flies, in hook size six or four, sold for \$3.60 a dozen, retail, thirty cents apiece.

Kind of an interesting history on the Purple Peril, my Dad used to do a lot of dry fly fishing for summer-run in the North Fork of the Stilly, especially in late July, August, and into September. One of his favorite patterns was the Montreal, which was a claret color, sort of a wine color. I ordered the claret Montreal hackles from M. Schwartz and Sons in New York fly material suppliers and by mistake they sent me purple hackle. I tied up some purple, bucktail dry flies, and lo and behold they turned out to be really a killer on dark days especially for dry fly.

Most of the fishing being done was with wet patterns, I tied it in wet bucktail, Purple Peril, and it also turned out to be a real good taker. I remember Walt Johnson telling me one day on the river that the Purple Peril was the best pattern color that ever came out. That was a pretty good testimonial that Walt would say that. There are various patterns here (referring to his fly plates) that through the years proved really successful, mainly by trial and error. One conclusion that I came to through the years was that steelhead could tell colors. One rule we used to go by was: *bright days -- bright flies; dark days -- dark flies*. But there were exceptions to that too.

DB: Did you fish for trout in the Lakes of Kamloops area too?

GM: Oh yes.

DB: From my knowledge of this, these are pretty popular—actually from that area aren't they (referring to fly plates)?

GM: Yes. In 1937, we started—the day school was out, end of the first week of June, we would head for Kamloops. It would take us all day from four o'clock in the morning until four in the afternoon to get to the lakes in the Kamloops area. We'd drive up the canyon going, but after the first trip, the road was so bad, we'd always come back through the Okanogan and Eastern Washington because we didn't have to look at the cliffs. In the mid-30's trout fishing in the lakes for Kamloops rainbow, in primarily the Kamloops area, developed. When I was tying flies for the sporting goods stores in Seattle, I started to get calls in May and June for the Sedge, the Brown Sedge, the Green Sedge, Colonel Carey, Black O'Lindsay, Grizzly King, Alexandria, the Silver Sedge, Silver Doctor, and the Spruce Fly—all patterns that came out of British Columbia.

We started fishing up there. The first trip we went to Sussex and Surrey Lakes. It was a three and a half mile hike into the lake from the trail head and there was a resort with six boats, four cabins, owned by a Mr. Humphreys, he was an Englishman. The lake had been closed for five years and when it opened the average weight of the Kamloops were eight pounds. They ran from five to sixteen, seventeen pounds. The first fish I caught weighed ten and three-quarter pounds, 29 inches long. The second one weighed eight and three-quarter pounds.

In the evening or during midday, when there was a hatch of sedges, these fish would be breaking water and looked like Coho on the surface, just breaking all over you know. It was fabulous fishing. The adjoining Lake Sussex was long and narrow and fairly shallow, and it was loaded, absolutely loaded with eighteen to twenty-two inch rainbows. You could throw the fly out there and just start to strip it and there'd be half a

dozen fish come for it. Old man Humphreys that owned the resort -- there were four of us from the University of Washington that were in the party -- he taught me how to smoke trout. He dug a pit, put an old car door over it, then put four posts in, split gunny sacks all around it, and over the top, put two chicken wire racks, and all we had to do was fish and fillet the trout, steelhead size, and he took care of the smoking. He smoked with a green alder, and vine maple. And all we did was just put non-ionized salt on them, no spices or anything. Really good eating trout, oh they were excellent!

DB: Did I understand-- you say this was Surrey Lakes?

GM: Surrey, Sussex and Surrey.

DB: And is that group of lakes just a bit south of Lac Le Jeune?

GM: Yes, the road from Kamloops to Merritt, in between.

DB: Yes, that wasn't much of a road either then.

GM: No. No, the first trip in there we had to cut our way through the jack pines where the trail was washed out. We had to cut our way around through there and we were the first car through there that first trip.

DB: And even into the early 70's, when I first made a trip to Lac le Jeune it was just a rut, two tire tracks out through the bush and you were there 30 years ahead of that!

GM: Old age explains that, I'm eighty-five.

DB: And the road, you would go up the Fraser Canyon—

GM: You'd go up to Fraser Canyon—

DB: When the road when some of it, was actually built out over the river.

GM: It was out over space. The timbers were into the cliffs at an angle and it was filled. Rock walls like this (demonstrating angle with hands). The Canadians, you know, they'd drive right down the middle, there was no way they were going to get over here where it dropped off—you had to come right up and just ease by. Then coming out, you were on the outside.

DB: Was it known as the Trans-Canada highway then? Do you remember? It has now become that.

GM: That's what it became.

DB: Did you ever fish the Thompson River?

GM: Yes, we fished the Thompson for steelhead first at Spences Bridge. But that was in the 50's, never fished it for trout. I did fish for Kamloops at Adams River where it runs into Shuswap Lake and the little river between Big and Little Shuswap, you know, it's only about a mile long. That's what these pattern's (referring to a fly plate) are right here, for sockeye fry: the McLeod Minnow and the Silver Sedge. The silver body with the mallard wing, and silver body with peacock back; Sockeye, and humpies, chum, salmon fry which the Kamloops feed on heavily, and sea-run cutthroat in the Skagit and the Snohomish feed on heavily—on the fry. Then these were the same thing with the polar bear hair.

DB: Tamara do you want him to talk about any of these other plates?

TB: Sure, keep going!

GM: These are tied on size 12 hook and we used to make these in 16s, 14s, 12s, 10s and 8s, all those patterns on different sized hooks. The women tied these.

DB: Did you know Haig-Brown?

GM: Oh, yes.

DB: So this was his development wasn't it (referring to a plate)?

GM: I'm not sure.

DB: The Western Bee, isn't he known for that?

GM: I'm not sure. My dad caught his first Deer Creek fish on a Western Bee.

And then these are the original Coho flies, and these came originally from Cowichan Bay. They were developed up there for Coho. I developed the Coho Special, Red and white, and the Candle Fish Fly—which is this one here. These became very popular off the south end of Whidbey Island in the late '50s and '60s. There would be two hundred boats out there trolling flies in the day and then a lot of them put a little spinner in front of them.

This was when I was in the tackle business one day in Seattle; I took off and came up here, to Anacortes, Northern Whidbey, all the way down to Double Bluff. There was a resort at Double Bluff, Crawford Johnson's, and it was the first week in September and I was selling nylon leaders and line sinkers and hooks and flies, but none on Whidbey. And when I'd got down to Crawford Johnson's, the silver fishing was real good out there, but the afternoon I was there, there was nobody on the water. The wind was blowing about 35 from the southwest and I rented a row boat. I had my steelhead fly outfit. It was real shallow, Useless Bay is real shallow. I rowed out there and these fish were finning and chasing candle fish -- Coho.

For several years, we'd been fly fishing in Ballard and Elliot Bay, and we'd catch one once in a while, but we really worked—there were a lot of jumpers, and they were hard to catch. So I got out there and I cast to the fish and stripping the fly. I get out into the wind, the chop started picking up, like 1500 yards off-shore, and I threw the fly out and put the rod down in the boat, it was getting rough, and I started rowing to beat heck. I got a fish on and I didn't have a net, gilled it, 8-10 pounds. Threw the fly back out in rough water and started to row a couple hundred feet and I got another one. You were allowed six then, and I caught six fish, one after another, and I'd never even get back into the calm of water. I rowed in and it was dark, and Crawford Johnson was madder than heck, because I was coming in after dark.

I got the Clinton to Edmonds boat (ferry) home. Next morning I drove down to the University District to Bill Lohrer's Sport Shop and pulled up in front of the bus stop and ran in: "Hey Bill, come here, show you something." These were beautiful Coho, you know, biggest was about 13-14 pounds. Bill said, "Where'd you get those?" (Called me Cracker, you know). And I said, "Double Bluff. Unbelievable!" He said, "Et's go!" He had a ten horse Evenrude; I went home and got my gear, and we went over there and rented a boat and got out, just trolled the fly. We got two limits. He was the greatest salesman—and I've seen hundreds of them in sportsman shows and tackle stores. He was Eddie Bauer's partner.

DB: Did you know Bill Nelson from Everett?

GM: Yes.

DB: And a guy named Dick Padavon?

GM: No, I knew Padavon here.

DB: Bill eventually became a guide up at Quadra Island. He's a person I would like Tamara to be able to tape. Did he fish with you for Coho out in the south end of Whidbey Island and that area?

GM: No, he fished there but—

DB: Yes, did you ever fish with him?

GM: No, no, but he was there.

DB: Okay. Did you ever fly fish for salmon around Fidalgo Island or this end of Whidbey?

GM: No. C-Q and Neah Bay, you know, boy--we had a ball out there.

DB: You did out on the coastline, out that way.

GM: Anyway, Bill Lohrer started pushing people over there to Double Bluff, and the day after Labor Day we had a bad storm, the rivers all came up, and that was the end of it. The next year we took off, sold over 14,000 Coho flies at that one store alone the next season. Flies for Coho were finally successfully established in Puget Sound.

DB: You commercially tied these—these were also commercially tied?

GM: Oh yes.

DB: Okay

GM: Oh yes. We had bigger ones and ... But this was the original, right here.

DB: Silver . . .

GM: Silver Killer.

DB: Silver Killer. The reason I ask is if you've ever tried it around here, a few of us do try for salmon down along the inside of Deception Pass.

GM: Oh yes! Sure, it works. You bet it works. Especially if they're feeding on candle fish or herring, oh man.

DB: Yes, there's getting to be so few Coho that come through here unfortunately—

GM: Well, there used to be a resident population at Admiralty Inlet that never went to the ocean. Like Deer Creek had a summer-run of silvers start showing in the middle of July. They were chrome-bright, even in August, clear up the creek, there wasn't any color on them at all. They had them in the Snohomish, the Skagit, and then when they let the purse seiners inside, they couldn't come in until the end of October and they started letting them inside there in September, early October they wiped them out. They just cleaned them.

DB: How we doing, Tamara? Do you have any more things on your outline?

TB: Well, I've just not heard you mention Al Knudsen, have you?

GM: Yes.

TB: You did? Okay. I missed it then, must have been tending my machine. I just wanted your memories of him, and any other favorite fishing stories about your father?

GM: There were so many!

TB: Well how did he get started fly fishing?

GM: Well, of course he was born and raised in Seattle. He fished trout. In 1915, I guess he started fishing the Tolt and hooked a couple steelhead trout fishing and then he got interested in it. The first one I think he caught in Sultan on a fly, the Sultan Basin. Really, his fly fishing for steelhead I think started when he started fishing sea-run cutthroat in the lower Stillaguamish with Joe Husby. Joe's folks homesteaded in the Sylvana area and right there at island crossing the homestead is still there. He'd go up with Joe and stay there and he'd fish cutthroats in the lower Stilly, and then gradually found Deer Creek first, then the mouth of the creek on the North Fork of Stilly.

Dad was later the general manager of Western Wallboard, people who invented plaster wall board in Seattle. Joe was the book keeper/accountant, and Harold Pemberton was the millwright/carpenter for the plant. They fished together and decided to buy that property at the mouth of Deer Creek. They bought that ½ mile stretch, it was a tax title so they put a bid in with the county and they were the only ones that bid, and they got it, cheap.

TB: Had your grandfather fished? Are you the third generation of your family to fish?

GM: No, his older brother did, but his dad didn't fish. My dad's older brother Norman started Dad fishing at age 6 in Lake Union (Seattle) for perch off the log rafts. Then later Dad fished the creek near Seattle's north end for trout. He fished Keith, Ravenna, Devils, Maple Leaf, Macalear, Swamp, Lions, North, Little Bear and others further a field; then later the rivers.

His dad worked for Railway Express in Seattle. He was a gold miner in Alaska when World War I broke out. They had over 600 men working in the fields; they went bankrupt overnight because they all left to go to war. They were northeast of Fairbanks. My granddad was the guy that invented the clam shovel for moving earth.

Two different years—they would come out in September and he'd come home and go to work through the winter for Railway Express in Seattle and he'd walk seven miles both ways to work everyday. Two different years in Alaska they got snowed in early and it was two years before they got back home to Seattle. All the men would leave, but they had to stay. It was the second largest gold mine operation in Alaska at the time and it went bankrupt over night. Then he went to work for the Alaska railroad up there in Haines for three or four years in charge of freight and then came back home to Seattle. Back in Seattle he worked for Railway Express freight office at King Street Station until retirement.

Dad said that there wasn't a man in Seattle that could keep up with him walking back and forth every day. Six weeks before him and his partner would go north every year they'd soak their feet in salt water every night to toughen them up. Then they'd catch the first steamer north in April and they'd get off at either Cordova or Valdez, whichever one had the best routes snow-wise over the mountains. It took them three weeks to walk to the mines northeast of Fairbanks. All their equipment went up the Yukon, rivers beyond but they walked it between trail houses

DB: Your family was not only pioneers in steelhead fly fishing, but in other aspects of the world as well.

GM: I guess so; yes.

