This oral history was conducted with Bill McMillan on December 7, 2010 at Skagit Valley College in Mount Vernon, Washington. The interviewers are Danny Beatty and Tamara Belts.

TB: It's December 7th, 2010. We're down at Skagit Valley College: Danny Beatty, Bill McMillan, and Jack de Younge [are] here also. We are here to do [their] oral histories and the first one we're going to do is Bill McMillan. Danny really asks the questions, so here we go!

DB: Thank you. Well Bill, we want to get into your fly fishing experiences and when it all started way back when and where you lived. Then we'll work up, as best we can, to the present.

BM: I suppose [as] with a lot of boys in my generation, I learned from my father. He was born in Oregon City and was raised on the Clackamas River. I was born there as well, and when I was two we moved to the little town of Camas, Washington, on the opposite side of the Columbia River in Washington. My father had a tailor shop. We lived quite close to the banks of the Columbia, just downstream of where the Washougal River meets the Columbia River. [Washougal is of historic importance] where Lewis and Clark spent some time, on both their downstream and upstream journeys.

I began fishing with my father, both my brother and me. My brother was a year younger; we began fishing with my father probably when I was around five. Of course I wasn't allowed to even come close to his bamboo fly rod for the first few years. But gradually I gained trust, or maybe it was the perpetual whining, to use that treasured rod. Little by little I weaseled my way in to be able to use it now and then. I probably didn't actually start casting with that rod until maybe I was six or seven. I increasingly got more and more time with it, until it was taking away too much from my father's time and he had to buy me my own. My early fly rod was just a tubular steel rod that had a silk line on it.

We fished primarily small creeks because my mom and dad (they didn't have my brother and me until they were a little older in life so I didn't come along until my father was in his forties) were quite protective of both my brother and me. [They] were un-inclined, I think, to let us near larger rivers so we always went to creeks. That's where most of my early fly fishing experiences I remember were; on small creeks in Southwest Washington, like the Little White Salmon River.

DB: I've read where you became interested in designing your own flies when you were about twelve or fourteen years old, is that right? And then explain how that happened and the results of that?

BM: I didn't really understand I don't think that people actually tied flies. My father didn't tie flies. I just assumed that flies were mysteriously made things that he bought at the Montgomery Ward store at that time. I would look through the bins and would see a pretty Atlantic salmon pattern and say, ~~–~~Gee!" I'd whine for the thirty-five or forty cents for that fly. And sure enough maybe somewhere [along the way] he'd have a little extra money at the tailor shop and we could buy a couple of flies. It seemed to me just some mystery … that they came out of nowhere

someplace … that some machine must make these flies. It wasn't until I was about eleven years old that a neighbor boy who didn't fish at all, happened to take some sort of class, at a church he belonged to that showed him how to tie a fly. He showed me one day that he was beginning to try and tie flies. So that immediately opened up a whole new vista for me regarding possibilities.

I then started picking up some of the outdoor magazines and realized there was this Herter's Company back in the Midwest that sold all sorts of things. So naturally, like probably so many boys, rather than sticking my nose in the Sears and Roebuck catalog every Christmas, mine was in the Herter's catalog. And I finally got a Thompson Model ~~–A~~" vice, which I still use to this day. I've never preferred a more complicated vice, just a simple thing that will hold your hook. *If it ain't broke, don't fix it*, so I still use the same Thompson Model ~~–A~~" I got when I was eleven.

I can't say I was much of a fly tier initially. I was impatient. I think fly fishing is a good sport for impatient people. But fly tying is not always the best occupation for impatient people. It definitely takes a certain amount of patience to be a fly tier. If anything provided me with the gradual assimilation of patience, it was probably forcing myself, to learn to tie flies. I can't say I really tied a decent fly until I got into my, probably my—like I actually became aware of the fact that there is a certain amount of beauty to a fly when you tie it, until I was in my late twenties. And I suddenly came on this inner-hubris that I wanted to have flies that looked as good as anybody else's. And I began to put a lot of effort into prettying them up, more or less.

Then coming up with my own patterns at about that same period of time—well I take that back, I always had to come up with my own patterns. I always had a vague idea of what a pattern should look like, but I never had the right materials it seemed like. You're always limited as a boy on being able to buy what materials your parents would provide you or you made on your paper route, or whatever. That's typically why my mother always took our money immediately after we got off our paper route and would put it in the bank for us. So my brother and I rarely had an opportunity to cash in on our own profits. We pretty much had to rely on our parents for buying fly tying materials or anything like that. So I was always limited by the materials at hand. I never really found that as a limitation. I suppose in its own way that stimulates creativity.

So I began to recognize, well that feather looks pretty similar to that, or close enough. So that's kind of the way, really [I started]. My fly tying after I got into my latter twenties and started really getting serious about steelhead fly fishing, in particular at that time, I began to realize that there were many generations before me that dealt with the same problems of catching large fish on flies under inclement river conditions like the folks in Europe, fishing for Atlantic salmon in the months of January and February in the River Spey, or someplace like that. Realizing, why reinvent the wheel? So I'd kind of look at those Atlantic salmon patterns [for ideas]. Of course, I never had all of those fancy materials they used, so I would just take the vague representation of the colors that those patterns put together and would use the simpler materials that I had to represent those sorts of color patterns in those [more] complex Atlantic salmon patterns.

DB: Well you somewhat discussed my next question, which was the various flies you've developed for steelhead. But do you fish for other species than steelhead?

BM: My first real love, of course, was trout, although as a boy, we caught everything from blue-gill to bass to carp. There was a period of time when I was very much interested in bass when I was around ten to twelve years old; I thought they were the cat's meow.

When I was nine years old, we used to often go the Meier and Frank store in Portland; that was always a big [family] event, every second or third week, or maybe it was only once a month. My parents always went to what they called the ~~–F~~riday Surprise Sales" at Meier and Frank's. While my parents shopped downstairs where all the things were on sale in the bargain department, my brother and I were told to go upstairs to the sixth floor which was the sporting goods department. My brother would go pound the pocket of a Stan Musial baseball glove and I'd go over to the fly tying department where Audrey Joy was tying flies by the dozens, to sell. I'd watch her by the hour. And we'd kill our time for a couple of hours while my parents were below.

During that period of time, why right next to the sporting goods department was the book department. At the book department, well I was absolutely enamored one time as I passed through; here was this book with this black cover with yellow letters with a steelhead leaping across the cover of it. And I said, "My god, that's a beautiful fish!" So I stopped, and this would have been 1954 when this book first came out. It was Clark Van Fleet's *Steelhead to a Fly*. So over the next year, on a sort of monthly installment plan of going to Meier and Frank and going upstairs, I read it chapter by chapter. And it instilled the desire in me that someday, I'm going to catch a steelhead on a fly.

One of the rivers it emphasized as being one of the better ones in Southwest Washington, lo and behold, was only about 25 miles upstream from our house, [it] was Wind River. So sure enough, when I got my driver's license when I was sixteen years old, that first summer, the one place I made sure and go to was Wind River. So when I was sixteen, I made three or four trips and hooked my first steelhead on the first time up. And on my second time up I landed my first steelhead on a fly in Wind River canyon. So that sort of started my great interest in steelhead, it began when I was about nine when I read *Steelhead to a Fly*.

DB: Meier and Frank's sounds to me like the sixth floor of the old Frederick and Nelson's building in Seattle.

BM: Very much, very similar type store.

DB: You developed a number of flies for steelhead: Steelhead Caddis, Winter's Hope, Paintbrush, and Washougal Olive. Are there others that I've missed?

BM: Oh, my memory gets lost now as regards to what all [patterns I tied] but that's a pretty good list [of better known ones].

DB: Those are the ones that make the books and so forth, right?

BM: Right.

DB: But do you follow any sort of pattern on the sort of material that you use? In other words, do you prefer a natural set of materials over the man-made materials? And as the years have gone by, has that changed in any respect?

BM: Certainly, you know, there was a long period of time where I was just adamant that I would never use any of the synthetic materials. But over time, as a few of those [more preferred] materials [became harder to find]—not [that] many of my flies ever used anything very exotic in them -- but nevertheless, over the years, if I can't find exactly the right material I've increasingly realized [use what is available]. It's undoubtedly a wave of the future. As [natural] materials become less available, then we'll probably increasingly need to use synthetics. So I've learned in the last ten years to gradually make that evolution along which a lot of other fly tiers have done as well … to increasingly use artificial and synthetic materials. I even incorporate [them] in some of my surface flies. I started experimenting last year with putting foam on them. And I thought *Oh my, I've reduced to that level… I can't even spin deer hair anymore. What am I doing?* But anyway, it's still kind of fun to keep your mind active and use what's new.

DB: Discuss how you view the various parts of the fly and the importance of these parts. I've read where you thought the hook, sometimes, might be the most important part.

BM: Yes, that's very much the case, particularly in steelhead fishing.

My first experience of traveling any place fairly exotic to go fish for steelhead was when I graduated from high school in 1963. My father gave me the offer, he said, "Bill, before you go to college I just would like to take you someplace where the two of us can sort of celebrate together your graduation from high school." So he said, "Anyplace that you would like to go, that's where we'll go." It didn't take me more than a few seconds to say, "I want to go to the Kispiox River." And my father said, "Where in the hell is the Kispiox River?" and I said, "Well

you know, I read it in the outdoor magazines all the time. It's where these record size steelhead are being caught up in northern British Columbia." —Northern British Columbia?" he said, —How far is that?" I said, —I don't know, it's up near Alaska." —Well by god," he says —I haven't been to Alaska since 1920. We'll do it."

Sure enough—the only way I could get to college was by working all that summer. And after the end of the summer, we put away ten days to go north up to northern British Columbia. So there we were, going on gravel roads through Fraser Canyon. We had to spend a lot of time with the car stopped as they were blasting for the road in Fraser Canyon. We got up to Cache Creek and we pulled into a store for gas. And the fella asks, —Where are you boys going?" —To the Kispiox River." And he says, —Why [in] the hell are you going there? We've got rainbow, six-seven pounds, right here in the Thompson. They're biting like crazy on grasshoppers." Well that created quite a dilemma for my father, he didn't give a dam about steelhead, but he sure liked big trout. And so did I.

So we were headed north and a long, long ways of gravel roads, of course, in those days. On the way … well my dad made a bargain with me, something to get his interest in. As a tailor he had done tent repair for a party of moose hunters in our little town of Camas that went up to Babine Lake each year. They would make their base camp where the Fulton River came in to Babine Lake. It was called Topley Landing. So he said, —Would you mind if we stopped there first, it's kind of en route and I could fish for the big trout they said are in the Fulton River?" And I said, —No that's great, let's do it."

On the road down to the Fulton River, at Topley Landing on Babine [Lake], why, it was a road that had been freshly base-rocked with these big four or five inch rocks on the road. We had a little 1963 Dodge Dart station-wagon; it was low to the ground. We were driving down there over all that base rock; there was about thirty miles of that going down to Topley Landing from the main road. Sure enough when we got down to the bottom, we didn't have any gas left and there was a 3-inch split in our gas tank. So we got down there and we're kind of trapped there. My dad said, —You go ahead and fish. I was the one that told us to come down here, I'll deal with it."

Anyway, he puttered around for three days and he couldn't figure it out. He tried wood screws and everything else with pine pitch, shoving it up into the big long slit in the tank. Nothing would work. Finally a gentleman [came along] who had been an RAF pilot in World War II, he said, —By golly boys, I think I got the solution for you. When we flew our old Hawker Hurricanes during the war, the Battle of Britain, we had self-sealing gas tanks. And we were told that those self-sealing gas tanks had nothing more than chewing gum [liners]." He said, —I'll bet if you guys go down to the landing there and buy up whatever they've got in chewing gum, shove it up in that hole, it will do it." Sure enough, we did. I chewed up about twenty packs of Juicy Fruit and we shoved it up in that hole. My dad sold the car three years later with the tank still holding.

Anyway, a lot of rain came down that same week, a big deluge. We went down and talked to the Indian that ran the marina. —How's the prospect of the Kispiox River still being in shape with all this rain?" The Indian said, —Well with all that rain, everything's going to be blown out." He said, —The only place that you're going to be able to find still fishable is right where the Babine comes out of the lake." It won't be affected. He said, —You can go down to the weir, where they count fish at the weir." I said, —How far is that?" And he said, —Well it's about sixty-five miles down the lake. You've got to go through Babine Lake and [then] you've got to go through another lake." And he said, —I've got just the rig for you, here. I've got a boat; she's all lined up with gas. I'll charge you—" oh, I forget what it was, twenty or twenty-five bucks a day. So my dad looked at it and said, —Let's do it."

So anyway, we took off one morning and there were six foot swells, big heavy swells in the lake and we decided to wait a bit before we went out. It calmed down a little bit to three or four foot swells and we took off. After that it was perfectly clear for three straight, beautiful days. We motored maybe 55 miles down to Fort Babine, which was truly a fort in those days, an old Hudson's Bay post. We filled her up with gas and went on down where the weir was across the Babine River. We caught lots of steelhead, caught lots of Chinook [and some coho, pinks, cutthroat, and char].

My dad, true to his word, kept with the dry fly the whole time, just fishing for trout. Here are all the salmon and everything else and he's just fishing with a dry fly. And I'd rigged up—going up to the Kispiox—with, what all the

literature said. I had a sinking line and I had a fifteen-pound leader, and the biggest fly reel at the time I could buy was a 1498 fly reel—Pflueger Medalist 1498, and a big rod. Boy, I was geared up to catch big steelhead. I fished my heart out. And the only steelhead I hooked—well I hooked several steelhead on a fly, [but] I didn't land any of them. The only place that we could fish, where the steelhead were – there were so many salmon at the weir that the steelhead weren't coming up to the weir – was after we'd hike downstream to where a little glacial creek came in and the coho and the steelhead were both intermixed.

Particularly one steelhead was memorable to me, not because of the satisfaction, but because of my frustration. This fish shot off down river with my sinking line and it all disappeared and it made one big final leap and there it was, snagged in the back in the dorsal fin. I thought to myself, *~~–~~My god, I've come up all the way up here, the only thing I'm doing apparently with these steelhead and this sinking line where they're stacked into this water is to snag them? What fun is that*?" So I was very disappointed. I caught lots of steelhead there on gear—we fished spoons and spinners, caught huge Chinook. We caught every species of fish. But I didn't land what we'd come up there for on a fly, other than snag one in the back, a huge fish.

In the meantime my dad had the time of his life, catching two and three pound rainbow. The one that I watched him hook—to his dying day he remembered seeing his fly floating down the current and seeing this big hole sucked down into the water and watching his fly disappear into this white mouth whose head was just underneath the water. He had this fish on, it was six or seven pounds, went racing downstream and finally broke him off [as he tried to trap it on the gravel]. And I began to realize, well he's the only one that really, legitimately hooked a steelhead the way you're supposed to catch one, and he didn't even know it, he thought it was a trout.

After that I began to tell myself, *~~–~~I'm going to fish a different way for steelhead than that. I'm not going to go through life fishing for steelhead where the most likely way you're going to catch him is foul-hooked in the back. I want to make sure that fish is caught fair."* So that began my gradual transition in the way that I fished for steelhead, gradually weaning myself, even during the winter months, away from using a sinking line. I finally brought myself to the point where I could use a floating line year round, the way I still fish for steelhead, whether winter or no matter what conditions. I can still catch steelhead reasonably well. But the only way you can do that is to make sure that your fly gets down deep enough during the winter time, which means your fly had to be tied on a heavy hook. So hooks, for me, became a very important and integral part of designing my flies around.

In order to fish deep, I needed fairly heavy hooks in order to get away from the proximity of my floating line on the surface. I needed a long leader, similarly, to get away from the floating line. And so, that's the way I evolved in steelhead fly fishing, to just really specialize in fishing all the time with a floating line. And for surface flies, why just the opposite, I wanted the lightest hooks I could find that still had sufficient temper in them, to not bend out. And for surface flies and for medium weight flies to fish greased line, or just under the surface, to carefully pick the style of hook.

Fortunately the tradition for fly fishing has been there long enough to accommodate yokels like me that make up your mind that you want to fish only a certain way. The English hook companies, in particular, made a full range of hooks where you could find just exactly what you're looking for. The English hook companies in particular, like Partridge [of Reddich] had a great array of hooks that you could choose from, with different wire weights that you could design your fly around. So yes, hooks had a very central importance for me with regards to designing a fly pattern around. My flies are actually designed around the hook and the concept of at what level in the water I want to fish that fly.

DB: So did this lead up—you wrote the book *Dry Line Steelhead and Other Subjects*. Did this story of being at the Kispiox and all this lead up to your writing the book? Or did that come later? How did that process begin?

BM: I met Frank Amato in the early 1970's when he came along with another writer at that time, Bill Bakke. The two of them came to the Camas-Washougal Wildlife League in Camas, and gave us a program on steelhead fly fishing. After the meeting [we chatted], it was just shortly after I had moved up onto the Washougal River.

When my wife and I married I wanted to make sure I lived on a river, pretty much following the lifestyle of my favorite author that I read over and over again—which was Roderick Haig-Brown. Ever since I was the age of twelve I'd read him repeatedly and had made up my mind that that's the life I wanted, was to live on a river. So my wife and I had moved up on the Washougal River.

By the time I met Frank Amato and Bill [Bakke], I had been catching steelhead in pretty remarkable numbers in those early years because I lived right on the river. So after the meeting we compared notes and talked about this and that and I much enjoyed the conversations with both Bill and Frank. We discussed a lot about steelhead conservation as well as fly fishing and Frank said, "How would you like to write an article for me about your steelhead fly fishing?"

So I began writing about steelhead fly fishing for Frank in the early 1970's. I can't remember now if it was 1971 or 1972, one of those two years. Anyway, my first article he published was actually a letter to the Department of Game at that time, very critical of their hatchery programs which Frank published as my first article. So my first article was not really on fly fishing, but on conservation. Then after that, I asked him if he would mind—steelhead fly fishing was pretty difficult to try and describe in one article—how about if he would allow me to write a four-part article, covering each season of the year: spring, summer, fall, winter. So that's what I did. That was my early start in writing, which Frank gave me. I subsequently wrote a number of articles over the years.

Frank had kept trying to stimulate me to write a book and I could just never seem to get around to it. Finally he got frustrated with it and after quite a number of years he said, "You know," and my father also told me, "Bill, you know, you're getting to be forty years old now. If you're going to write a book, at some point you've got to sit down and do it." And Frank essentially told me the same thing. Finally he said, "Why don't we just take all the articles you've written and let's put them in a book?" And I said, "Sure that sounds great to me." So I went through the articles and that's essentially what that book was, a collection of my articles over about a fifteen or sixteen year period of time. It came out in 1988 [and was the] writings I had accumulated over the years on steelhead fly fishing, some on trout fishing, and some on fisheries conservation.

DB: I think you've already answered the next question, beside your book, you've written numerous articles for magazines and journals. And my question is: How have these articles changed over the years? Do you want to elaborate on that anymore? Or have you pretty well covered that?

BM: Frank really wanted me to do another book and I took off a number of months one year over in Eastern Oregon and isolated myself in the bottom of the Grande Ronde Canyon one winter in 1991 and was going to write a second book, specifically on surface fishing for steelhead which is my favorite way to fish for steelhead, surface flies. I've probably had as much experience doing that as anyone, because of the good fortune I had of living on rivers all my adult life. But as I began writing the book, [I] increasingly realized it had become less important [for] me to write about fishing than it did to write about conservation, which increasingly came to dominate my concerns in life, rather than fishing. So that book still remains sort of a quarter-finished, in a file drawer somewhere. And in my own way I'm glad I left it the way it is, for a while at least. I may still do a book about it someday. But at this point, I'm not much interested in going back and rewriting it. My fishing methods haven't changed all that much over the years, and if you've written it once, I'm not much interested in writing the same thing over again in a somewhat different nuance. I would rather go on and write about something that's more vital and of my own interest at this point in time. So I've kind of gone past that. [Although I subsequently wrote a manuscript about that winter alone in the Grande Ronde Canyon entitled, *Window at Courtney Creek* for which I have yet to find a publisher.]

My son and I are now doing a book together, which Frank again is going to publish. I'm not sure exactly when [presently planned for September 2011]. A [book] in which my son and I provide our mutual recognition of the place Roderick Haig-Brown has played in our lives. The title of the book is going to be *May the Rivers Never Sleep*. My son is a fisheries biologist. Essentially our book focuses on looking at rivers throughout the North Pacific Rim. I've had the good fortune of experiencing a lot of rivers around the Pacific Rim, from [Kamchatka] down to Southern Oregon. So to provide our breadth of view, my son has specialized in underwater photography as a snorkeler, who has snorkeled hundreds of miles of rivers over the years on the Olympic Peninsula. So our book will

be, more or less, our genuflection to Roderick Haig-Brown as the father of Northwest fish conservation and river conservation. This is our [expression of] gratitude to Roderick Haig-Brown.

TB: Can I ask—did you ever meet him?

BM: I never did. I twice walked by his house and did not have the courage to drop in. [I did] take a quick snapshot [of his house once] and went back to my camp.

DB: In the 1970's you were instrumental in forming the Clark-Skamania Fly Fishers. Tell us about that club and continue on with other organizations you were involved with that focused on fish and fishing.

BM: I began steelhead fishing with gear, not flies, on the Washougal River in about 1955. 1956 was when Skamania Hatchery was built on the [North Folk of the] Washougal River, which was the first hatchery in the state to specifically focus on capturing wild summer-run steelhead and creating a hatchery program around summer-run steelhead for the entire state. The Washougal River was the initial grounds for the success of that type of program. It really took off, if you consider hatcheries a success.

A few years later, in 1958, was when the Washougal salmon hatchery was built. So this little river down in the Lower Columbia was ~~"b~~lessed"—and I put ~~"b~~lessed" in very large quote marks at each end—with two major fish hatcheries. I had the distinct [comparative] advantage of starting out fishing for anadromous fish on our little river that had nothing but wild fish populations as the hatcheries came into production, and the elimination of the diversity of those wild fish that I so enjoyed when I was a boy.

I moved up on the Washougal River first—then my wife after marriage in 1970. Actually living on the Washougal beginning in 1970, I began fishing the river virtually on a daily basis for ten years, before work and/or after work. I then began to realize the tremendous changes that had occurred over the years from the 1956 [and 1958] hatcheries with the first large returns around 1959-1960 of hatchery fish into the Washougal and I began to see such dramatic changes in both steelhead and salmon increasing run timings that had once occurred and sizes, distinctive sizes, of fish virtually disappeared. To lose that diversity was really heart-breaking, being replaced with, more or less a cattle-breeding program of fish coming back.

In that frustration it seemed like we really needed, in the Camas-Washougal area, if at all possible, a group of people who were not only interested in fly fishing but were also interested in conservation. So in 1974 I drafted a flyer while working in my father's clothing store at that time—([actually my brother's by then], he'd gone from tailoring to clothing and had retired a year of two before). I put the notice up in our clothing store window indicating that anyone interested in a fly fishing conservation club could come in and sign up. Well, Camas-Washougal was a small town, only five or six thousand people at that time. So I got a list of about eleven or twelve people. Well, that's not really enough for a club, it didn't seem like. Anyway, one of the fellows that signed up was a gentleman named Bill Kindler and he worked down at the paper mill. Well that year was one of the first years for a Federation [of Fly Fishers] conclave down in Eugene, I believe. Bill went down to the conclave, and while there, he met a gentleman from Vancouver, Washington. He was also interested starting a fly club. So anyway, Bill came back and reported to me, ~~"W~~What do you think? What's the potential if we take the two outfits and put them together? This guy said he had eight or nine people in Vancouver he had interested in a fly club." And we had twelve or so—why, ~~"~~Sure enough," I said, ~~"I~~f we had twenty people that sounds like it's enough to start a club" That gentleman's name was Jim Unterwegner.

The three of us got together and decided to rent the downstairs of a bank building and get together. So in the summer of 1975 we got together in the bank building basement in Camas. I think we had about eighteen or nineteen guys there that were interested in fly fishing. And that was the beginning of what we subsequently called the Clark-Skamania Flyfishers, because these were the areas we were most interested in—Clark and Skamania counties.

Jim was employed by the Forest Service and was really [uninterested in controversy]. It was pretty much his daily job, dealing with conservation issues, and he wanted a relief from that. He just wanted a group of guys that got

together to talk about fly fishing. He enjoyed the companionship. My interest was strictly limited to conservation. And I said, "You know, I'm not a very public person. I'm not much of a club kind of a guy, but I see that these sorts of things are needed in order to get public unity behind certain conservation needs and so if I'm going to be a part of this group we're going to have to have some component of it which is going to be a conservation group." So we made that [gentlemen's] agreement.

We had our difficulties at times folks who'd have sort of butting heads. Every few years, there'd be this butting of the heads – some thinking conservation created too much controversy within the club and not enough agreement; whereas others of us interested in conservation said, "Well, we'll just split off then if you guys want and you can have your club where you enjoy doing what you want and we'll do what we want." Well, over the years we had the wisdom for all of us to give enough to accommodate each other. So we became a club that well-represented both [conservation activism and social affairs such as outings and fly fishing education] and I think we did a good job of both.

We had a very dedicated small core group of conservation folks. We ended up initiating the first snorkel surveys in Wind River in 1983. And the other half of the club focused more on creating fly tying classes, stimulating public interest in fly fishing and [fly] casting classes. So we had a very well-rounded club, I think for that period of time. We did very well [with membership] and I think other clubs followed some of our example after that. We won some awards related to our conservation involvement through the Federation of Fly Fishermen [including the prestigious McKenzie Cup] and Oregon Trout at that time. So I've always been proud to have been a part of that organization for a good number of years.

DB: So that explains how it evolved over time and then to other organizations you got involved with: Washington Trout?

BM: Yes.

DB: Is that still—or has that name changed? How does that fit? There are a couple of other ones I wanted to bring up eventually, but Washington Trout is one.

BM: Yes, Washington Trout. There was a group up in Bellingham, a small core of fellows, four or five folks up in Bellingham, who were very interested in the concept of Oregon Trout that occurred in Oregon, which had been preceded by Cal Trout in California. This had all started in the late 1960's I think in California, maybe early 1970's. Then it progressed to Oregon Trout in Oregon around 1983 or 1984. Bill Bakke, in Oregon became more or less the new generation—the new Roderick Haig-Brown. He came to fulfill the Lower 48 [fish conservation] vision on the West Coast, more than anyone, Bill Bakke, down in Oregon. With Oregon Trout, he began to fulfill that vision of a very conservation-focused organization, primarily by folks who were also fly fisherman. But conservation was the real focus of Oregon Trout.

Some of us in Washington, particularly those just across the border of the Columbia River were very much involved in Oregon Trout. But we really hoped to have an organization of our own at some point in time to represent [fish conservation] in Washington. That stimulus came from Bellingham, from a group of fellas up there in 1988. They met up on the Upper Skagit River in British Columbia, and over a campfire one night came the bright idea for a Washington Trout, following a few rounds of scotch – and where a lot of good ideas probably occur that are likely best forgotten by morning. But this one actually matured to become a worthwhile idea.

It came to fruition in 1989, when a number of us, about twenty-five or thirty [maybe more] met over in Ellensburg, Washington, to form Washington Trout. Oregon Trout folks came to help us, as did Cal Trout. An Oregon Trout representative and a Cal Trout representative came to describe the development of their successful programs. So that was the beginning of Washington Trout in the State of Washington. I was one of those initial folks and was on the initial board. Eventually, as we grew, we became increasingly successful [in fish conservation].

Through Washington Trout the first snorkel surveys of the Tolt River began to occur led by Kurt Beardslee documenting a great decline in wild summer-run steelhead. Subsequently, it didn't take much more than about a year or year and a half after those snorkel surveys that the findings resulted in catch and release regulations for wild summer-run steelhead throughout the state; so that was quite a successful beginning. We grew from there and eventually felt somewhat constrained by the limitations to the State of Washington; around 2006 or 2007 we discussed it amongst our board and shifted our name—which really more reflected our work anyway—to Wild Fish Conservancy. So Washington Trout then became Wild Fish Conservancy, which freed us up to do science research work in British Columbia as well as in Washington, which we have been doing for the past three years.

DB: You gave the eulogy for Bill Barnett on the Wenatchee River. I understand there was quite a story around that whole day. I think it would be worthwhile for you to describe that.

BM: Bill Barnett and I did not meet until I was in my mid-forties; Bill at that time was in his early-seventies. It was shortly after my book had come out, which I guess would have been around 1988 or 1989. I got a call from a gentleman in Eastern Washington with a remarkably deep voice over the telephone; and such a polite man on the phone, great dignity. He wanted to know if I would come give them a program at the Wenatchee [Valley] Fly [Fishers] Club. I said, "Sure." And he said, "Make sure and bring a bunch of books along, we want to promote your book." He was always quite the businessman; he was a very successful realtor in Eastern Washington. Bill was actually the person who built the first mall on the West Coast, in Wenatchee; it even preceded the Lloyd Center mall in Portland.

Anyway, Bill was a very successful businessman but also very dedicated to conservation. He wrote a wonderful column for the *Wenatchee World* newspaper on fishing and hunting. [And subsequently a self-published book of the collected articles, *Mostly reel memories*.] So anyway, when Bill and I met each other, we had breakfast [at a favorite restaurant of his]. He had said, "You've got to come over a day early and we've got to fish. I want to see how you catch these fish on surface flies." So I met Bill, this was like November 17th and there was snow in the hills and [it was] still lightly snowing. I said, "Bill, there's no way I'm going to catch a fish on the surface [in these cold conditions]." He said, "I don't care if you catch one, I want to see how you fish." So anyway, as we talked that morning at breakfast the both of us had the oddest feeling that we had known each other all our lives. It was one of the most marvelous moments; I can only call it something quite spiritual. I think it's the only time I've been with a human being, rather than the outdoors, and had a spiritual sort of experience -- feeling that at some point in time we had known each other. We developed the most wonderful relationship – [despite the significant difference in ages, not father and son, but that of brothers].

Subsequently, just from Bill's asking me, there we were, November 17th, the upper Wenatchee, near the little town of Plain, his secret fishing area, which he protected for so many years by making sure not to sell any real estate in that area. He kept it very private. Unfortunately it's all changed now, which only could have occurred after Bill died.

So I went down through this beautiful piece of water [Bill took me to]. I kept insisting, "Bill I want you to fish first." He kept insisting, "You fish first." We argued over this for about twenty minutes. Finally, I drew the short end of the straw and I had to fish first. He always claimed that it was he that fished first. But anyway, we always had this argument over who actually fished first. Whichever it was, I happened to go down the run and five or six times steelhead came up for the surface fly. All of them perfectly visible, the water was so cold it did not seem possible. It was forty-one degree water, and I generally do not even fish surface flies in anything under about forty-four. I've always found over the years that water temperature, particularly in our median-range of steelhead along the coast is pretty much determined by water temperature in regard to the expected response to a surface fly, and not much is going to happen below the mid-forties. Well, those fish certainly proved me a liar. As I fished down the run, I had those rises; I even hooked one or two [briefly]. The fish were very lethargic in the cold water, very difficult to hook, because their mouth just stayed open forever. Fish are like snakes, very cold weather means slow metabolism, so their mouth remains open even as they go down [with the fly]. They're very difficult to hook. Anyway, Bill was very stimulated to try surface fishing and thought it was a great show.

Nevertheless, over the remaining years that we knew each other, he still couldn't bring himself to fish a surface fly.

A few years later, Bill was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Bill confided in me for three years. At the same period of time I was having a lot of my own personal issues after a divorce. Bill and I came to comfort each other and developed a bond of friendship that few men ever really have in life, where we bared our souls to each other, and probably very much helped one another. As time for Bill was fading, I went to the Kamchatka Peninsula to do steelhead research work there for two months. Bill was not sure he was going to be alive when I came home, so before I went, we met on his favorite Wenatchee. And that's my last real vision of Bill, fishing in that autumn sunlight on his favorite run, which he called the Orchard Run. There was always such a pure grace when he fished; seeing his white hair belied the younger man within. But he shortly waded to shore to watch me fish with thoughts only he could know.

END OF TAPE ONE SIDE A

BM: That Wenatchee vision of Bill, there, in that sort of golden cottonwood light in early September was to be my last vision of Bill.

Bill was still alive when I got home two months later. I wrote him a long letter describing what my experiences had been in Kamchatka. I was about to send it in mid-November when I decided to call him and arrange a date to come and visit and read him the letter. He said, "Why don't we wait until just after Thanksgiving? We've got so much going on at the house here with family." He didn't let on how much he had deteriorated. I mistakenly thought maybe he was better than what I could previously hope.

Bill McMillan and Danny Beatty

But, I never talked to Bill again. His daughter called me around Thanksgiving and said Bill had to cancel because he had been taken to the hospital and was deteriorating rapidly. I couldn't believe he had been failing, his voice sounded so strong on the phone. And I said, "Well when he gets back home, then I'll come up and talk to him." Then his daughter called in early December and let me know that Bill had died. Of course it wasn't unanticipated, but when you lose a friendship like that it's always very difficult. I subsequently wrote a eulogy for Bill for the Washington Trout newsletter at that time.

Bill had made me promise that when he died, I would spread his ashes. Initially he wanted me to take them up onto one of his favorite mountains in the head waters of Peshastin Creek; I can't remember what that mountain range is called. But anyways, I said, "Sure Bill." He said, "You know if you take me up in those snow fields, put me there, you know I'll eventually become part of the headwaters of the Wenatchee." I said, "Okay Bill, I'll do that." Then he thought about it several months and said, "The problem with that is that my family, my grandchildren, they wouldn't be able to be there." He said, "How about if you do it at my favorite old Orchard Run on the Wenatchee." I said, "Okay." So that had been a promise made a couple of years before.

Initially the family could not face the sorrow of his ashes. They had a group of Bill's friends gather for a memorial at Bill's house. This was shortly after his death and we all shared memories of him. It was clear that the family at that point in time was not ready to have any kind of memorial that had to do with distributing Bill's ashes. So it didn't occur until the following year, once again; (this time a year later), just before I went to Kamchatka.

At this time I had met my wife, and actually, she was the one who recorded my eulogy for Bill. I was way over in Eastern Oregon and for the Washington Trout newsletter I read her the eulogy (who was to be my future wife who I had never seen before) over the phone. She burst into tears over the phone as I was reading it and she was typing it.

So sort of our bond was Bill and so we were together with Bill's ashes on the Wenatchee. When I got home from that second trip to Kamchatka she and I married. And she was with me when we went to have—when Bill's family was finally ready for the ceremony to put Bill's ashes into Wenatchee.

Everything was sort of going according to plan as Bill had foreseen it. Lynn, my wife-to-be at that point, carried Bill's ashes to the river for us as I gave a preliminary talk about Bill and our relationship and the importance that wild fish had for Bill in his life and wild rivers. What Bill had requested was to have a number of his fishing friends there and that we would all fish through the run together in his memory, each of us using our favorite fly. So after the words to the family and all about the importance of this [riverside ceremony] to Bill—I didn't realize it at the time but I happened to have a Ray Troll t-shirt on; it had the yin yang circular image of one salmon curved in one direction and another salmon curved the other direction. It was the perfect representation of what salmon are-- the continual regeneration of life through death. And it fit in perfectly with the message I wanted to try and convey about Bill's remaining importance to his family and grandchildren.

Then we walked out to the river and started to fish down through the run. I was going to have one of the other fellows lead and they said, "No, no, no. Bill would have wanted you to lead this down." So we all got in a long Congo line and there were about six of us, I believe, maybe seven. We were all in a long Congo line fishing our way, traditionally, down the run. I had on my favorite Moose Turd fly which is a variation of the Bomber, fishing on the surface. Everybody else had their favorite fly on. And we [fished] down through the run.

This was in early September; it was 1996. Steelhead runs were at their lowest point, particularly wild steelhead runs, with very few in the Wenatchee. We fished down through it. I hadn't fished for five or six months. This was a period of time when I was really letting go of fishing and was much enjoying actually living a life of some solitude in Eastern Oregon and not thinking about fishing much. So I was just getting in the groove of my casting, about one-third of the way down the run, and getting into the really sweet water. And there just came a feeling, a feeling that sometimes happens when you're fishing; a premonition that you're going to have a take. There was also a premonition that somehow Bill was guiding all of this.

I'm not a religious person; I have no interest in religion. At the same time, I do have some fairly deep spiritual feelings. And I felt very much like that first morning when Bill and I met. At the same time, here comes this mouth out of the water, over the fly. Uncharacteristically, rather than screwing it up and pulling the fly out of its mouth, I dropped the rod, [and] got it solidly hooked. In my mind, I realized that even though I lose 60% of my fish and only land 40%, I'm probably going to land this one. Bill is still waving the baton up there, as the maestro up in the sky. He's controlling this whole thing because certainly it's not me.

Here's this fish [on]. I knew in my heart, although this river has 90% hatchery fish and there was almost no wild fish that year, I'm sure it's going to be a wild fish. Sure enough, I'm straight across from the family. I pull it into the beach in front of the family and here it is a wild six-pound steelhead. Immediately, I ask Jo, Bill's wife, if she would like to throw the first ashes. She said, "No, let the grandchildren." So the grandchildren initially took out the first handfulls of Bill's ashes and we put them in the water around the steelhead as I held it in the water and worked it back and forth. Each of the family members did the same and we released the steelhead with Bill's ashes floating around it. And it went back to the river [life and death together]. Then I took the rest of Bill's ashes and worked back and forth across the river [distributing them]. It was, I think, about as moving an experience for everyone involved [as is possible to have] and is, the way probably each of us would like to be remembered; that the yin and yang of death and life was fulfilled. It was a pretty magical moment.

DB: You moved from the Southwest Washington and the fish of the Columbia River system to Northwest Washington and the Skagit River. Why did you make that change?

BM: Love. My wife lived in Duvall. I had a cabin that I had up for sale on the Washougal River. I had already planned on moving but my idea of moving was to the Grande Ronde River area in Northeastern Oregon. The Washougal River had become pretty much a bedroom community of Portland and had become so overgrown with houses…. I was so heartbroken of spirit with what happened to the Washougal River …: the minimal access to it

anymore…, the constant arguments with people snagging hatchery salmon. It became more pain each day to go out to the river and drive the river road than it became joy. I figured that life is short enough as it is, and you may as well have more joy in life than pain. So I determined to move to Northeastern Oregon. I met my wife and decided that was no longer realistic because she still had a daughter that had a year or two of high school remaining so I moved to Duvall and we lived there for a year or two.

It was still under that period of time when capital gains tax was in place and I needed to reinvest my cabin property on the Washougal that I had sold or else take a thirty percent hit. I was willing to do that, it didn't make any difference to me. I've never had any money in my life anyways, so what's the difference? [My wife] said, "No. You've got to live on a river again." I said, "You don't know what you're getting into. If I live on a river again, then that's going to embroil me all over again into conservation because you can't live on a river without having a conscience perpetually bothered every day by what's being taken away from the river." She said, "You've got to live on a river. That's been your whole life."

So I accommodated her and we looked and looked for some place to live. I tried to persuade her that a creek was plenty enough; in fact I would prefer a creek. Well we couldn't find any place that we could even begin to afford in the circle that was close to Duvall. So we gradually expanded our circle. One day, it was in the spring, we only had a few months left if we were going to get out of the tax situation, I need to reinvest. We only had a few weeks left [actually]. I happened to be fishing on the Skagit. I had never been on the South Skagit Highway before. So I decided to drive on down to the lower South Skagit. I had never seen that area. It was St. Patrick's Day and it was an early spring. Anyway, I saw this sign driving down the South Skagit Highway, [pointing] down this gravel road toward the river: "House for Sale." And I thought, "Oh that's interesting." I continued downstream. I wanted to see where Day Creek came in, because I always particularly enjoyed meeting Ralph Wahl in his latter years and [had] encouraged him to publish his series of articles into a book, which he did, and Steve Raymond similarly had encouraged him to do so.

As I [drove to] Day Creek I realized the important place that Day Creek played in Ralph's life. Why, it suddenly struck me that maybe Ralph's sending me a message here, maybe I better go up and look where that sign went down that road. So I went back up to that place where I saw the realty sign and I drove down this gravel road along the river. And here is a little green house, a little old 1930-size house. And I said, "Well, that's probably in a price range that we could buy." Then I looked down toward the area around it and it's all kind of flat and I said, "Well the river should be fairly flat here." I couldn't really see the river from the house.

Anyway, I went to the house and a young fellow came out who was the son of the owner. Her husband had died some years earlier and this was the son. And I said, "Would you mind if I go down and take a look at the river? I'm interested in your house but it depends on what the river looks like." So I walked down to the beach of the river and I said, "Oh my god," here was this beautiful, big long fly run. I looked at the conformation of it; I could see the high banks on the other side. I've lived on rivers all my life, I knew that I would never want to live on the high bank side having been through too many floods, but this was the low bank side. No matter what, if the river came up we wouldn't be on the current side. We might get wet once in a while but at least the house wouldn't be torn out.

I went back home and I told my wife. I said, "You know, I guess if we were going to live in a river house, this meets the criteria. You didn't want to have any houses for two acres around you. This is that. And it's got this unbelievable piece of fly fishing water in front of it." So anyway, we went up the next day, [and] my wife took one look at it, "Fine with me." We put earnest money down [the same day] and we bought it.

DB: You're not far from the Shangri-La then.

BM: Not far; no.

DB: Okay.

BM: About eight or nine miles upstream.

DB: This just came to me; I don't have it written down. I have a print on the wall of a Washougal steelhead by Grant Linn. He did a painting—did you know Grant or did you know anything about that? That's more for myself I think than the tape.

BM: Grant and I were very good friends. Grant was about ten years older than me. When I moved up onto the Washougal River in 1970 and was fishing it virtually daily, Grant was fishing it regularly as well. He worked in the paper mill in Camas. He was the graphics artist for the paper mill. But Grant was not a fly fisherman; he fished gear, but a very, very fine fisherman, a very fine sportsman. He fished with very light line in the most sporting ways and used gear fishing for steelhead, and caught lots of steelhead.

Grant became increasingly interested in watching me fish and enjoying our discussions on the river and he'd want to see my flies and I'd bring a fly wallet out. At that time I was making all my own things. I was making my own fly wallets, making my own vest, and making all of my accessories that went with my fly fishing. Grant was fascinated by all of this. Then I became involved in working in a fly fishing shop in Vancouver at that time, called the Greased Line Shoppe, which specialized more or less in fly tying materials and in gear for steelhead fly fishing.

Grant came in one day and said, "I want to take up fly fishing." So Grant became, as with everything in his life, a master of it in a remarkable [short] period of time. In an embarrassingly quick period of time he was catching more fish than me, bigger fish. I was just fascinated with how a human being could have those kinds of talents. Anyway, Grant, out of a love for the sport and of love for fish, began to get into painting along with the fly fishing. So he began to paint a number of the fish that he caught, [and a painting of me releasing a Wind River steelhead that I still cherish for our friendship.]

DB: Okay. There are many organizations that focused on fish in the environment. These organizations include the Federation of Fly Fishers, which Clark-Skamania is a part of, Wild Trout, Native Fish Society, and Washington Trout which you explained has changed. What is your viewpoint on the possibility of bringing some of these groups together and trying to even the focus? Wild fish are having a real problem and—I guess I'm asking you for your projections to the future for all of this.

BM: Well, I'm seeing increasing attempts by fishing groups to unify on certain issues in particular. There are always issues where groups are going to have differences of opinion. But there're too many issues where a lot of us are in basic agreement, where we can work together. So a lot of times it's difficult to let go of those things that you can't agree on [and] to come to agree on the things you can. I see increasingly this is happening, particularly in Washington. Another one of the important groups that have come up in recent years has been the Wild Steelhead Coalition in Washington, too. Over the last two or three years, I'm increasingly seeing several groups, Federation folks, Wild Fish Conservancy, Wild Steelhead Coalition, Wild Rivers (Pete Soverel's group), where we're seeing some definite issues that we can all agree on. So we're increasingly coming to sign mutual letters that we all sign together to send to the director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife in Washington. I'm seeing this increasingly happening, I think it's a natural condition of seeing wild fish increasingly disappear.

For instance, the year before last the Skagit River had the lowest steelhead return in history; an estimated 2000 fish escapement and total run size only 2500 steelhead. I just recently, with two other authors, we are having a paper published in *the Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences*, and that's going to be coming out in March [2011], on the historic numbers of Puget Sound Steelhead at the time of 1895. The Skagit River at that time had about 100,000 steelhead. At this point in time we've got about 2000 to 2500? I mean that's an unbelievably small fraction. We're well en route to extinction. It's not a case anymore of whether we've got declining runs or not, we're facing extinction.

We are facing what the East Coast already went through with Atlantic salmon. And we're still lying to ourselves—at least our fish agencies are lying to themselves about where we're at with these fish. If we didn't have the Endangered Species Act at this point in time, we'd still be making ridiculous arguments that we're only seeing a little blip in the radar. It's been a continuous trend ever since 1895 regarding the depletion of Puget Sound. So I

think as people increasingly realize this, we're coming to the real hard decisions. We're facing global warming [too]. It's not going to get better; it's going to get worse in regards to environmental conditions for our fish. I think people are really getting down to the real basics, of maybe we can no longer fish as much. We're probably going to have to learn to savor more the briefer time periods we have to go out fishing. And we're going to have to let go more of the amount of time we spend fishing, there's no way around it. If we're going to expect the tribes to quit fishing, we're going to have to quit fishing. We're going to all have to do it together. Catch and release can be a viable solution, but only if you have sufficient numbers of fish as a buffer. Even though it sounds like it's a minor problem of 10% mortality related to catch and release, there is more to it. If our fish populations were in healthy conditions, that'd be no problem. But if you're down to a few hundred like in the Stillaguamish River, with only got a few hundred wild fish left, 10% is a problem. So I think we're all realizing that it's really down to that last final straw where we've got to make some serious decisions, make some serious sacrifices and truly enjoy and savor those periods of time when we can still get out on rivers and still catch fish and welcome the sacrifices necessary to provide that opportunity to the next generation that follows us. I'm sixty-six years old now, Danny how old are you?

DB: Seventy-seven.

BM: Seventy-seven. So we're reaching that period of time where it's time for us to hand off to the next crew something that we came to love and enjoy and build our lives around. And if we don't have anything to hand off—what was the purpose of our lives? To me, this is the vital part. We have to give something, there has to be something to pass on, that's what humanity is all about. We're supposed to provide something—that's what human beings are supposed to do. To have the foresight to give what you had to the next generation. Not to eliminate it for the next generation, that's the spiral of death.

Anyway, I'm seeing people increasingly recognize that we've got our back against the wall and are willing to unite on agreements such as that of hatcheries as a big problem. Where has the Puget Sound direction for fish gone? In a steep decline ever since 1895. Hatcheries have been a part of that history all along, always with the lie that we can tinker with hatcheries that we can fine tune them with science to make them work. But after 130 years all we do now is reinvent the wheel. We're now going back and reusing the same old hatchery methods that we used 130 years ago and now we're calling them something new. We call it ~~–s~~upplementation," just give them a new terminology and go back and use the same, old, worn-out idea. That's all you can do after a 130 years, dress up the naked king in new clothes.

DB: Well that concludes all the questions I have. Do you have anything that I may have missed as we went along? Would you like to talk more about actual fly fishing? Maybe we got more into other things. Jack? Did anything come to your mind as we went along that you might touch on?

JD: No, I think though, as usual, you've done a good job covering the subject in detail and it makes it very clear what we're talking about. I'd say it's an excellent interview.

TB: I want to know his connection to Ralph Wahl. How did you first meet Ralph Wahl or get to know him?

BM: I was asked by the Fourth Corner Fly Fishers to come up and give them a program on steelhead fly fishing. I had recently gone to the Skeena River system and they wanted to see a program on the Skeena River system. Ralph at that time was—I think that was around 1985, so Ralph was in his late seventies or early eighties. Anyway, Ralph was at the meeting and he invited me after the meeting to come down and visit with him, to come over and have a cup of coffee or something at his house. So I went to Ralph's house with him and I had a friend with me from Portland who had gone with me to the Skeena River that previous fall. We went down to Ralph's basement. Ralph at that time … well, it was obvious that he had become a very lonely man. He sort of isolated himself down in his basement; his wife had died some years before. His basement was a place where he built this whole world of his fishing past all around him. He could stay there and feel in company with deceased friends. He had his recordings of his old fishing friends and important people he'd met in his life.

Lord, I came to appreciate Ralph so much in that few hours down in his basement with him, looking at those photographs on the wall, of listening to his recordings that he so treasured. Subsequently, Ralph began to send me his articles that he was writing at that point in time, for the Fourth Corner newsletter. He then wrote me a letter—he was such a humble sort of man. He wondered if anything that he wrote would really have enough importance to put into a book. And lord, I thought, ―Oh my god, the man doesn't recognize what he's written here." And I certainly encouraged him, of course. That was really the only time I personally talked with Ralph. But it was one of those experiences that you don't forget.

I suppose maybe that what I've discussed so far is maybe biased toward one side in regards to what the pain of fly fishing has become. Because it has had a lot of pain, because of seeing places that you love disappear, or in Ralph's case, seeing people that you love disappear as well, as well as the fishing. Of course one of his great pains was watching Steelhead Shangri-La become largely inaccessible and not many fish in it anymore, but largely it had altered because of the natural river blowing out the log jam that created it. So we have to learn to let go of things in life.

But nevertheless, for me, my memories are not so much of anger or pain, they are more of joy. The joy in my life that I have felt over the years has basically provided me a relationship with nature … and my window into nature was fly fishing. Nature was my real love, it didn't matter if it was birds or animals or fish. But one of the three has to provide you the opportunity … most provide the window, the attraction that drags you out of the house, rather than the cave that we used to be in, in order to go experience it. So my life has been filled with the joys of fishing, and it's because of those joys that—if it had not been for those joys, if that wasn't the driving force behind my activism and conservation, there would be no activism. It was only that joy behind it that provides the fuel for activism and conservation.

Fishing—I was very good at moving fish, to methods of fishing—I was never very good at landing fish. I get too excited. My heart just leaps into my throat, heart pounding, and fingers no longer remember how to work, making foolish decisions. My life has been plagued with never being able to land a really big steelhead. I've never really landed a steelhead that I've been sure is over twenty pounds, always that big goal that everybody aims for. I've had a lot of fish near that range [but] I never weighed them. Well a few hatchery fish. I did have one nineteen and a half pound hatchery fish. Well anyway, I've had a number of fish that might have been twenty or twenty-one [pounds], or they could have been nineteen. But I never knew. But over the years it hasn't really been important to me anymore. I reconciled myself with not being able to be very good at landing fish because I keep very meticulous records, as Ralph Wahl did. I know that I lose about 60% of the fish I hook. Most people do much better than that. It's just part of my excitable nature.

Nor do I have the patience to play fish for a long time. After I play a fish for about a half hour, I get very bored with it. It's no longer interesting to me. I start to make decisions where what I'm doing is actually going to end up purposefully breaking the fish off, because I get tired of it. The thrill is over. I mean, what fun is there? This has become work.

I could never understand Zane Grey playing a nine-hundred pound tuna [for long hours], this is nuts! That's not fun [to me].

I worked in a paper mill [in my late teens] where you [sometimes] had to pull shafts for sixteen hours a day on two shifts; you have to pull out a long heavy shaft [from the paper rolls]. I had a hernia until I got it fixed [in my early Forties]. That to me is not fun. What's fun is joy, not work. So that's why I love fly fishing and smaller fish. You know, once you reach a point where you've got a really big fish [on] and you've got to face the work of it …, well sure, I'd like to catch a thirty pound steelhead, but given my impatient aptitude, that's probably never going to happen. You've got to have the patience to play the thing for an hour or two. But nevertheless, I learned to appreciate [something else]. Rather than landing fish, my great joy became seeing fish come up to the surface and slash at the fly. For me, that's what the sport is all about. If you can see that fish slash at your fly, feel your heart leap into your throat, that's the ultimate. Dragging it up on the beach, taking a photograph, well that's fun in its own way. But the real thrill, that is when your heart's pounding out of your throat, it's when you see that slash and you

feel that pull through the big rod to your hand. That to me is the thrill. So I've reconciled my inability to land fish by strictly focusing on how many fish I raise rather than how many fish I land.

DB: Anything else? Okay.

TB: That's it? Okay. Thank you very much!