



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



This interview was conducted with Bill and Audrey Nelson on May 7, 2007, at their home, in Eugene, Oregon. The interviewer was Tamara Belts.

TB: Today is Monday, May 7th, 2007 and I am here with Bill Nelson, and his wife Audrey. We're going to do an oral history. He did just sign the Informed Consent Agreement. Our first question is: How did you get started fly fishing?

BN: My father was a fisherman and he dallied with the fly fishing system. When I got into high school, one of the shop teachers was a fly fisherman and helped me build a vice, that's when I started tying flies. Then as time went on, my father would take me up and drop me off on a stream on his way to work, and then picked me back up again after work in the evening as I came down the river.

TB: Now which river are you talking about?

BN: Stillaguamish, and also, the Skykomish, because it was close and had good fish.

TB: Pilchuck?

BN: Yes, I fished the Pilchuck once in a while and the Snohomish. There were fish in the Snohomish that you could take on a fly. But that's about it. I didn't journey to a lot of places when I was still a youngster. Fishing was good in those days.

TB: Now what was that shop teacher's name?

BN: His last name was Jones, first name Casey -- Casey Jones.

TB: Where did your father work?

BN: He had his own business for a while; he was in the tire business, Nelson Tire and Recapping.

TB: So he traveled? That's why he could drop you off at the rivers and you would fish down?

BN: Well, no, he'd just drive up there, drop me off and then go back to go to work, and when he was through work, he'd come up and pick me up. Usually, on those forays we'd be fairly close to town anyway, on one of the rivers. Pigeon Creek was another one, Rock Creek; there are others that I just can't recall all at once. We would pick out a stream and a time and place for him to pick me up.

TB: So what was it about fly fishing that attracted you?

BN: Well, mostly to be able to do it. We did a lot of things that were near to where my folks lived on Puget Sound, right on the beach practically. Just out of the Indian Reservation, they were down on the beach. It's called Tulare Beach and I'd go out and fish in the salt chuck, trying to catch fish.

I was tying flies when the war got going and I was still too young to enlist in the service. I sold quite a few flies to Sears, the local Sears store, and they liked them. I got, I think it was twenty cents each for those flies that I tied. Then they sold them, I forget what they sold them for and I didn't want to look.

We had a zoo there and I would go up to the zoo when I was short of feathers of some kind. I'd take some peanuts with me and I could get a peacock to come over, show it to him, and then you'd throw it just a little ways [behind] him and he'd turn around and you could get a [tail] feather. The guy that was up there running that thing decided that he was going to save some skins for me if one of their exotic birds died. Then I'd run around and see who was raising chickens and I'd get some chicken feathers. There was a feather pillow in the house, it was kind of worn out, and the feathers would come out of it and I'd use every one of them. So I just monkey-ed around mostly.

But I did catch fish on the fly when I was in high school. Fresh water fishing mostly, but my parents lived on Puget Sound, which is salt water fishing. I'd walk around on the beach and cast for cutthroat or whatever, there's a lot of things you can catch out there on a fly. Bottom fish, as we called them, mostly cod, and things like that. They would come up and grab it, sometimes, so it was fun to do.

Phone rings

BN: I went into the Navy right out of high school.

TB: Did you fly fish when you were in the Navy?

BN: Whenever I had a chance, yes.

When I was kind of through with schooling and the war was over, actually, I was at Clearfield, Utah. (I could tell you a crazy story, but I better not). Anyway, we fished on several of the streams down there in Utah, and they were fun. I've got some pictures of that someplace. Pretty soon we had about three or four guys that would go with us; I mean that all of us would go together. One of my shipmates was a native of Salt Lake City, which is just south of Clearfield. We had a lot of fun doing things, but we'd also fish a lot. It was like still being in school, you got Saturday and Sunday off. And that's what we'd do, whenever we got a chance, we'd go fishing when we weren't working.

They have a funny schedule when the war's over and the Navy's doing this and that. I was sent off to find a filter for the pool so we could kind of redo the pool. We had a swimming pool there at Clearfield, and I'd use that as an excuse to go hunting for that filter and we'd fish along the way. It was fun to do that; we'd have a jeep, the Navy jeep and go down to Salt Lake City, and try to find out what we could do there. On the way, if we could do something good, well, we'd do it, and get the filter and go back and install it, but on the way we would probably get a few casts in. That was fun.

I had a bamboo rod (glass wasn't really used in those days). I still may have part of those bamboo rods that were made in the years past. You put them in kind of a case and try and save them, and pretty soon you loose track of where they are. But I still have a couple of fishing rods and stuff like that.

TB: So you got out of the Navy and then you came back to Everett?

BN: Yes, I came back to Everett then. I enrolled right away at Washington State College. It's called Washington State University now, and that's where I met Audrey.

TB: So you went to school, and what did you study to be?

BN: I was studying things like math. I was thinking of becoming an engineer and I kind of switched and got out with a business education. I felt that it would be great to be an engineer, but the way things worked out was better.

TB: So then you after you graduated from college, what did you do? Or how did you get back to Everett?

BN: I was still in Everett in the summer time. I went to work at U.S. Rubber Company. That was kind of a strange thing too. I didn't have a real, full education in business, but had some engineering background in it. I didn't really graduate, but that was the four years counting the credit I got for the things that I had completed at Montana School of Mines.

AN: Bill was stationed at Montana School of Mines (Butte, Montana) where he earned some college credits. He later transferred to Clearfield, Utah.

BN: In the V-5 program which is a Naval Aviators training thing. They gave me full credit. They taught us engineering and things of this nature. Also we had Naval Organization, *Naval Org* they called it, they didn't give you any college credit for it but it was supposed to be done before you were able to continue with the program. We would have football, baseball, and basketball teams from Montana School of Mines and that was still in the Navy. As soon as I got back, I registered at Washington State University. I had credits that I could use there and that was helpful. I knew a lot of the people at Washington State, and we re-established old friendships and went fly fishing there.

TB: So where did you go fly fishing at Pullman?

BN: The Grande Ronde. We didn't really know what we had at that time. We'd go there and go fishing and try to catch a trout. I wasn't there in the real summer time. The late summer and fall steelhead fishing is just outrageous, it's so good.

We married and settled in the Seattle area. The district manager for U.S. Rubber Company in Seattle came in and grabbed me, says, "We have a desk for you over in the U.S. Rubber Company," (because my father had been in the tire business). That's the way I started with the U.S. Rubber Company. It was my first job after leaving WSU. I was an order-clerk (I think is what you would call me). Then I got to be a salesman on the road, and calling on all of the U.S. Rubber Companies' accounts, in various areas.

AN: When you worked for U.S. Rubber, you were only in Seattle a short time (mid-1949-1950). Then he was transferred to Portland first (1950-1953), then Grants Pass (1953-1955), and finally Eugene (1955-1957). You did a lot of fishing in Oregon.

BN: The Sandy River and the Willamette. We'd go down and fish there too, just below the falls.

AN: He'd bring home all kinds of big fish. There was a little grocery store across the street that had a freezer, and they would put them in their freezer, and keep them for us and for themselves. You did a lot of fishing there; we were there for two years, in the Portland area.

BN: It wasn't all totally fly fishing there below the falls, but another good thing we'd catch was Jack Salmon, and catch them on the fly better than a spooner could or anybody else. We'd fish with a fly beneath the falls there for quite a long time. Then when it was tough, we'd have a casting rod and pitch it somewhere out there and try to catch some fish there. It could be wonderful fishing there and they'd let us go through the mill and down to the rocks right there at the bottom part of the falls, so I got hooked on that too.

AN: You ought to tell them about when you were in Grant's Pass and Eugene, how you had this little boat on top of [your] vehicle. He just went everywhere – down to the coast and over to Klamath Falls.

TB: How did you get involved in the Evergreen Fly Fishing Club?

BN: In 1958 I accepted a job with Armstrong Rubber Company and moved to Lynnwood, Washington (1958-1962). One of my best friends, Lew Bell, was president of the Evergreen Fly Fishing Club and I knew a lot of guys that were in the club because I was raised in Everett. I was living in Lynnwood but I would drive down to the meetings in Everett. There were a lot of nice guys in there.

TB: How did you come to know Lew Bell?

BN: I went fishing with him a lot and things like that. We just became dear friends; he's my closest friend ever. We did other things besides fishing; we did potlucks for the club and stuff like that.

But that's a close-knit club; everybody is familiar with everybody else. It was a small enough group you got to know everybody in the club. They'd switch around to have lunch in various places. We'd go to lunch on Fridays, I think it was. Anyway, they'd have a weekly luncheon at the Elk's Club or someplace else. (My father used to have the tire business right across from the Elk's Club in Everett). It's hard to recall those things in sequence. I wish I could do better for you.

TB: You're doing great. So how did you first start talking about forming the Federation of Fly Fishing?

BN: We were on the Grande Ronde River, Lew Bell, Dick Denman, Dick Padovan and Dub Price and quite a group went there, it was kind of an exclusive group. At that time that was the best steelhead fishing in the world. We tried to get days off together, so we would all have the same week off, or two weeks off. Rick Miller would go down and fish with us in the Grande Ronde too. And we just started talking about it.

We actually started talking about it when I was still up in Lynnwood working for Armstrong Rubber Company. We would have coffee at the Alpine Café (Everett, WA) and there would be about six or eight of us around this table and we'd just start talking about it. We all got together there at least once a week and maybe a couple days in a row, you know if I was around for a little while. We had discussions there when we were having coffee. But most of the planning and the ideas were thrown together up on the Grande Ronde when we were fishing. When we got back, everything was pretty much in our minds. We didn't get it to a point where we got the Federation of Fly Fishermen through in thought but we all knew exactly, how it would go and where it would go.

Then we bought the business in Eugene (1962) and moved here.

TB: What business did you buy?

BN: Eugene Tire Patch Company.

The guy just said, "Well, you're the only guy I'm going to sell it to and I'm going to make you a good deal. We'll sell your home up in Lynnwood." He took the job of selling the house we had in Lynnwood along with letting me buy his business. Then he spent about a month or two following me around. He worked with me for a month anyway.

I got used to driving this panel [truck], and then I put some racks on the top. I had a light aluminum boat and I could put it up there on top. Everybody got a kick out of that and so half of my accounts became fisherman. That was fun.

When I got down here to Eugene I found out they didn't even have a fly-fishing club, and I thought, well, we must do something about this, we're going to get a fly club, so I put an ad in the paper to find guys that would be interested, and we had six guys, I think it was, to begin with, set for the first meeting of people.

AN: Oh, you had more than that, you had about a dozen the first night, I think you had about ten or twelve guys.

BN: Yes, okay. Anyway, we formed the McKenzie Fly Fishers.

TB: Now, let's back up a minute, when you guys were talking on the Grande Ronde, what were the things that you thought needed to happen? Why were you interested in forming the federation?

BN: Well, we worried about people doing things. We wanted to preserve as much of the water like the Grande Ronde and several other rivers, if we could possibly do it. Then we got to be friendly with people from various other places. I think I took two or three guys from the East Coast fishing here and there and that was when I was still up in Lynnwood. Then my travels around Washington, Oregon, Northern California, and Western Idaho, to sell patches to fix tires and tubes; while I was doing that, I met a whole bunch of different guys that were interested in fly fishing, so I thought, what the heck!

We formed a club here and I laid it on them, and they went ahead with it. It was quite an affair really, by the time we got through starting that thing. People came from a long ways away and some of them were well known in those days and it kind of turned all of us on to what we wanted to do, and that was to help preserve fly fishing as a sport. We felt that we were more concerned about the fish than anyone else was, as far as preserving a run of fish in this river or that river. Anyway the whole thing was just a great experience for everybody involved, really.

Some of them aren't with us anymore, but you sure think of them with great respect. Lew Bell was my closest friend, he was an attorney in Everett, and actually, he was asked to serve in the U.S. Senate! He said, "No, I just don't want to get mixed up with that."

TB: The other thing is why did you feel that there needed to be something beyond Trout Unlimited? I read where Trout Unlimited had formed in the Fifties, and it was geared towards preservation of fishing.

BN: Oh, yes, and Martin Bovey who was the president of Trout Unlimited, came to our first meeting in Eugene when we were going to build a Federation of Fly Fishing.

TB: So, the Trout Unlimited wasn't going far enough?

BN: No, it was just a different system.

End of Side One, Tape One

BN: Trout Unlimited was a good organization, don't get me wrong. Martin Bovey asked for a list of the folks that were going to be in the Federation and then he, in turn, gave one of our members a list of the fellows that he thought would be very interested in the Federation and in the fly fishing system. There was also fly fishing clubs on the East Coast that he gave us information about. Martin Bovey was really good; he gave us a lot of information. We even had guys like Lee Wulff.

TB: Now how did you get the idea to ask him?

AN: He was a famous guy. Bill wrote to a lot of people that were prominent in that business or that liked to fly fish like...

TB: Bing Crosby?

AN: ... yes like Bing Crosby, and Bill received a really nice letter that we can't find.

TB: I've seen a copy of that.

AN: I think somebody published it at some time, but I can't find it, but it was a nice letter of regret, but he had a lot of positives too.

BN: Oh and we flew to Jackson Hole. One of the guys had an airplane, Bill Hilton, who was another close friend, and I'd fish with him a lot. We took four guys all together, including Bill, and went to an outdoor writer's convention in Jackson Hole. We went around and met a lot of the guys and we got a lot of support out of just that meeting of the outdoors writers. That was one routine we went through, and it worked out very well. Also, we had folks that didn't really want to belong to something, but yet they thought that our idea as far as conservation and everything like that was concerned was good and they came along and went to it. It wasn't an easy program having the first conclave. But everybody really pitched in and did the best they could.

TB: So you were a new club, that had just been formed, and right away you were trying to have this big conclave, so how did that go over with your club? And did everybody stay with you?

BN: Oh, no, in the beginning there were guys that just didn't think it would go, and they even quit the club, so to speak. But then in the interim period the guys that stayed and talked about it, the next thing you knew we had a run of people that wanted to be in the club and to help with this conclave we were going to put on to form a federation.

The word conclave came from me in the fact that when I was going to Washington State, the fraternity went down to Las Vegas. The University of Nevada was going to have a new charter down there, so we went down there and we kind of got everybody else that we could to go to this thing and it worked out really well. It was a conclave they put on there, and that's where I got the word conclave.

TB: The conclave was in 1965.

BN: The first one.

TB: And I think you had just formed the club in 1964, didn't you?

BN: That's correct.

AN: Yes.

TB: So it's like the first thing your club did was to have this national conclave the next year!

AN: It scared the guys. But they were all young and enthusiastic and ambitious, and full of it -- they had confidence.

BN: We had the cream of the crop. We had the cream of the crop of everything.

AN: The ones that dropped out though, a lot of them came back in, too.

BN: Yes, that's right, after we did the work. But it was a good club too -- it was just outstanding as far as I was concerned. But the Evergreen Club is still part of it too, they helped so much.

AN: And his friend Lew, who was an attorney; he helped do so much of the work, in that line. He was from Everett and he was a wonderful speaker, too.

BN: I think I've got a little tape on that someplace, haven't I?

AN: Well, you've got all the beginning.

TB: Oh, all of those speakers are on tape?

BN: Yes, some of them are.

AN: I don't know all of them, but some of them are on that *Never Name the River?*

TB: Oh, sure, that's where the footage came from.

BN: Have you seen that?

TB: I did; that was invaluable. Tell me a little more about you then, I know you are well known for being a salt-water fly fisherman; you were a guide up in B.C., right?

BN: Yes.

TB: How did you get into that?

BN: Well, I belonged to the McKenzie River Guides Association here, and some of us would go up to B.C. on our vacations to a place called April Point. We were friends with a couple – Marsh and Stephanie Webster – and we shared a cabin at April Point for quite a few years. We'd each take our own boat and have a great time. It was a fantastic setting. We were fly fishing on salt water. Sometimes we would use up about everything.

TB: Now that was kind of a new thing, wasn't it?

BN: I think so, yes. But we'd wade along the inside edge of the kelp, and cast ahead of us, and try and catch fish that way, and we did! It was amazing how many fish are inside the kelp and nobody can go in there and troll for them. We'd fish the mouths of the rivers in the fall, and just fly fish it, and it was just absolutely outstanding.

I met a guy, his name was Bob Hurst, and he was with the Canada Fisheries, in the area there at Parksville. That's south of where we were on Quadra Island. We got to be good friends. Then we started trying to use flies and by golly we sure did use them, and they worked out pretty good. Two or three fly fishermen in the fisheries and then there were guys that were just fly-tiers and they started tying salt water flies.

Short Break

TB: Now which fly is this?

BN: I guess you'd call that The Mrs. Nelson. But this is a better example that kind of does the work, there, that's a herring. Then they come out in different sizes.



TB: Now how did you happen to name this Mrs. Nelson? How's it like to have a fly named after you?

AN: It's great, it has a great story.

BN: I was fishing with a guy from South Africa, William Vander Byl, who came to the lodge, and he was kind of excited about casting for salmon in the salt chuck. We took him down to the south end of the island and he'd cast and catch fish here and there, and he did really well, in comparison to some of the people that we were trying to help catch fish. We were coming back from the south edge of the island and we had two or three fish that he caught. He lost a few fish and then he had very few strikes down there.

I had a net float on my console (I had a compass in there but then the compass went haywire and the hole that held the compass was just right to hold the net float). When I wasn't using the flies I'd put them in this net float. And he said, "What's that fly there in that net float?"

And I said, "Well, that's a fly I tied for my wife." He said, "I sure like the looks of it." And I said, "Well, I think it's a good one, I like it." And he said, "I'd just love to try it. Do you suppose that your wife would mind if I tried it?" And I said, "No, she'd be delighted." So we put in at Quathiaski Cove and the second cast he hooked a nice Coho that was swimming around in there and we got him in, and released it. (He was a good releaser he couldn't take fish back to South Africa anyway). He kept casting and about every other cast, he'd hook another fish on the fly. He was all excited.

I'd left it (the fly) on the rod (he was going to go out again the next day). He went back into the lodge for lunch. (I didn't eat in the lodge because I thought it was too expensive and I went home for lunch). While I was at home, why he sat down at the table where there were several guides and other guests, and he started talking about Mrs. Nelson's fly. The guides and the guests went down to the boat to look at it, and he said, "That's it right there, that's Mrs. Nelson's fly." The people that went down to look at it, they picked it up and brought it back to the lunch table and talked about it, called it the Mrs. Nelson. And it's been "The Mrs. Nelson" ever since that.

I was going to explain to you that there are a few things that are different. I tie a lot of Mrs. Nelsons because it is a very good fly. Here's a reasonable example of the Mrs. Nelson fly. It generally has a good eye, and here's another one, bigger. I got the idea, and maybe it's right or maybe it's wrong, but it seemed to work for me, that you want to match the size of the bait more than you do any other part of it. Some guys just put a great big one on and it scares the rest of the bait away. But the one that's the same size as the bait that's in there generally doesn't seem to bother them. So I go from this to this, and all the way in between.

TB: Wow, so these are all Mrs. Nelson's over here (referring to some flies)?

BN: Yes; and then there's another one, you know what a candle fish is?

TB: I don't.

BN: Well, it's a very thin, minnow type thing, and people call them candle fish or needle fish. Up there in Canada, they call them needle fish, because they're thin and long. The candle fish have enough oil in them that Eskimos can dry them and light them and they'll work -- they have that much oil in them. At least that's the story I get, I never tried it myself. But here's an imitation of a candle fish, they're darker on the back and they have a green and a pink in the sides.

TB: Wow! Now did we really settle how it was that you started going up there to Quadra Island? How did you decide to retire and become a guide up there?

BN: Well, we went up there many times. The guide whose family owned the lodge would come around and we'd talk to him. I was out on the dock, there, casting for perch, really, and we got pretty well acquainted. He even came down to visit us once when we were still living in the States. The Websters and the Nelsons would have a standing reservation for a cabin a certain time of the year (the first week in September). It was a big time. We'd go up there and fish and got to know quite a few people that were of course at the lodge there, and the guides.

We were fishing with flies, and the guides would get a pretty big kick out of that, especially a guy named Rob Bell-Irving. He was one of the fine, fine guides. His father was Lieutenant Governor of B.C. and the background of his family was mostly medical people, but we became fast friends. He gave me the idea about keeping the boat running, and run the fish and the fly behind the boat. Up to that time we had really only cast. Then we started having so much fun doing that that it was just great fun for us.

The lodge owners actually gave me an invitation to come and build a house there or lease something, but we'd already gone on the main island, Vancouver Island, with the Websters and bought a piece of property, because they were going to retire too. Warren Peterson, who was the head person there at the lodge, said,

“Oh, gosh, don’t go there, come over here, you’ll like it, and we’ll lease you a piece of property to build a house on.” The lease was very reasonable, as far as I was concerned, so we talked the Websters into that too. I went out and built the first house, in this little cove, and then the next year the Websters retired, and they built a home there. The two of us settled in behind this cute little island, like you saw in the picture there. It was just like it was all supposed to happen. Then I became a guide there (1978). I was guiding while we were building the house too. It was kind of a fun thing to do, and it helped take care of a lot of our expenses. It was just a great idea, and a great thing that I enjoyed very much. It was just a part of my life that I’ll always remember. It was fun to be there.

TB: Now, were there some celebrities that came up there to go fly fishing?

BN: Oh yes.

TB: Anybody special that you might have guided?

BN: Well, let’s see, actually, I guided Julie Andrews and John Wayne.

Her husband had a yacht, and I only had her one day and then we found a girl guide. That’s a little tough out in the boat when we were going out for a long time, but it was fun. She’d come up and fish for a month sometimes, stayed there. One time they were taking the yacht out and two of the guides that were very familiar with her because they were kind of the back up boat for this girl guide, and as her husband’s yacht went by the dock, one of the guides wearing his clothes, ran down the ramp, and jumped off the end of the dock, singing, “The hills are alive...” It was funnier than heck, it was kind of at lunch time, and we were up there and I thought I’d fall down laughing. You remember that?

AN: No, I was home.

TB: And John Wayne came up there?

BN: Yes, he did. I only guided him a few times up there, but we hit it off pretty well. He had his yacht parked in the dock area there. And one time I dropped somebody else off, and I was going back and he was sitting on the fantail of his boat (it was a converted torpedo boat, that’s what his yacht was). And he says, “Hey Bill! I’ve got a problem here.” And I said, “What’s up?” And he says, “Well, I’ll show you.” I climbed the ladder, got back to the fantail there and there was another chair, and I was standing there, and he says, “You see that bottle over there? I’ve been working on that for two hours, and I only got it down that far. Now I need some help.” So I had to sit and have a drink with him...and that was fun.

Now where am I? Ted Williams, did you know who Ted Williams was?

TB: That’s a baseball player right?

BN: Yes. That’s a picture of him there on the console and then Norman Schwarzkopf. I have nice letters from him (we kind of lost track as far as keeping in communication).

AN: Bill, you should remind her you were a senior guide. There were only two of you, and Warren, the owner of the lodge, that was in your age group, which was fifty when he moved up there. The rest of them were all young kids, they were in their twenties and a few, a very few in their thirties, I think. They were young, Bill was an old guy. But he taught a lot too. The owner up there had Bill give classes to the guides on deportment, and what do you do if you don’t catch any fish, and all these different things -- look at the eagles and this and that. He knew all this other stuff. He provided entertainment out there on the water; it’s not just all fishing.

TB: Oh, yes, very cool. Wow! (looking at photo)

BN: That’s Norman Schwarzkopf and that’s his son, Christian.

TB: And that's you?

BN: Yes. And see what Christian is holding in his hand? It's a sling-shot. I kept the sling-shot on the boat and a can of marbles. And if the seals or sea lions became too aggressive (they would come in and grab a fish while you had it on), why you could kind of drive them off with a slingshot. That kid kept the seals off of that -- that was twenty-eight and a half pounds. Norman caught that fish on a number six fly rod, and that's Audrey's fly rod.

AN: My fly too. I took it away from Bill right when he came in from that excursion; I put that fly and hid it so he'd never use it again. Bill gave both Norman and his son Chris a copy of the fly as a keepsake.

TB: Is that what's framed here then?

AN: Yes.

TB: Nice! Very cool!

AN: At that time Norman was so famous it was just right after the war. He had security all over the place, flying around.

TB: Oh that's right, 1993 was after you had retired.

BN: Yes, we had moved back here. We had a camper and took it to B.C. to fish and to see his old friends.

End of Side Two, Tape One

TB: So why don't you tell me about taking Norman Schwarzkopf fly fishing?

BN: Didn't I tell you how they got in there and everything?

TB: Well, we weren't on tape, though.

BN: Oh I see, okay. I think Ted Williams talked to Norman. They were up in that area and I'd been guiding Ted Williams a bit and he knew we were up there on a vacation. And so they got on the radio at the lodge and called me to stop, they wanted to talk to me.

There was some concern about something happening to Norman, so they didn't talk about him on the radio or anything. When I got to the lodge, why, they asked me if I would take time to guide Norman Schwarzkopf, and I said, "Well, I sure will." So I said the tide is right at ten o'clock, and we should get on the water before ten, if we can. He was going to be in the following day so I was supposed to pick him up. He was going to be there by ten and we'd take off. I had to make sure they had everything they needed.

But the chopper was late coming in. The guides would walk by me and they'd say, "Hey, what are you doing? That's the second time you've washed that boat!" I said, "Well, I have to do something here, I'm waiting for a guy." And they said, "Well, do you want us to help you?" "No," I said, "I kind of want to stay here and keep track of it." (I'm just washing the boat to make people think I'm busy). They got quite a kick out of that.

Those guides were just wonderful at April Point. I still hear from quite a few of them. Two, three of them have their own lodges now, up on Vancouver Island, the north end of the island. We hear from them, we get Christmas cards exchanged. There are a couple of them that moved to New Zealand, we hear from them now and then. Anyway, I don't know how I got off on that tangent.

TB: Back to Schwarzkopf.

BN: Okay, we're back to Norman now. He came in on a chopper with his son and another guy that wasn't there to fish. They took the chopper back out of there after that and took it someplace else.

In a little while, here comes an Otter (DeHavilland Twin Otter two-engined) floatplane, and it pulls up by the dock. I can't remember how many there were, at least five, maybe six guys get out of there. They had vests and sport coats, and they got off that Otter, and you could see the bulge because I know they had arms to protect in case something happened. They were the people that were going to take care of the security. They kind of grilled me and then they said, "You're not to mention his name." And I said, "Well, I'll just say, the position and this is *Kisser One*." The name of my boat was *Kisser One*. (Stan Stanton named it; he said, "That boat just kisses the water." It was his first look at a Boston Whaler, and he says, "That's just fine." We were talking on his radio and mine, and it just ended up with *Kisser One*. It was kind of funny too.)

When I took off from the dock, I would say, "*Kisser One*, now leaving the dock, all free and clear here," so that they knew where I was. If there was any problem at all, they had a boat there to come. "*Kisser One*, south end of the island, we're going to go out." "*Kisser One* to the south end of the Marina" (that's another island). So we went across and went to another island. We caught fish at the south end of Quadra Island, four or five of them, and released them. He was great for releasing and so was his son Christian.

We went back over to Marina (we had to get him back in by four, he said) and we were over there and we were catching Coho here and there. There was a big rock pile and you had to know where the rocks were before you drove in there, and I kind of mapped it in my mind so I could drive through. There was a little kelp bed and we were releasing a fish and I looked up, and there was a big fin and tail that had come to the surface and went back down again. *It was big!* So, I said, "I know you want to get back, but let's take one more shot, I saw a good rise over here. I was quite impressed with the size of the fish."

So we went by there, and he got his fly on the surface and was kind of making it move a little bit and it went right through the place where that fish had come up. And it came up, and came down on that fly just like a mako shark! It didn't really do much for a little bit there, and then all of a sudden the fish decided, *I'm not going to have anymore of this*, and it takes off. *Man oh man*, I knew then that we had that big one.

One of the other guides was in another boat and saw us over there and he tried to cut in front of the seals (when you see a fish in trouble why those seals are coming). He cut in between the seals and the fish and kind of scared them away a bit, which was a great move on his part. Norman's son Christian was up there, I gave him the slingshot and a can of marbles, and he was good with it. I thought he hit one seal right in the middle of the head, but I don't know for sure, I was doing a lot of other things. But he was coming so close to those seals that I think he just kept them away. He didn't hurt any of them, I don't think, but between the other guide running across, we got that fish up on the boat.

Norman says, "Well, let's release it." I said, "No way! We release it guess whose going to get eaten? That fish will be eaten by seals, and I just as soon not turn it over to them. Let's just bring it back into the lodge and get an ink print made direct from the fish (not with a camera), so that you have an idea how big it was."

It was a big fish (Chinook), caught on a number six fly rod, Audrey's number six fly rod. Schwarzkopf just did a wonderful job playing that fish. He was a good fisherman, and I think his son, Christian, just did a wonderful job too with that slingshot. They both did well, on every fish that we hooked.

TB: So it was just the three of you out on the boat? None of the security detail actually came out on the boat with you?

BN: No, they had a different boat. If they thought we were in trouble in any way, why they'd come swinging around there. But they stayed half way down the island. They were in radio contact with us, and it worked out fine. I said, "*Kisser One*, I'm having a little trouble with a fish here, trying to get it close to the boat." Of course that worked for them, but when they saw that fish, then they smiled and waved.

TB: Any other of your own personal stories of a great fish you caught, or any other great fishing story?

AN: You rowed for Tyee, or somebody rowed you because they wanted you to catch a Tyee, and you did. Everybody has to do that, or give it a try, you know. Tyee are great big, fat fish and somebody has to row a boat – no motors.

BN: When they are 30 pounds or better they're a Tyee. You can't use a motor with them or anything; you have to row the boat. You can't use bait so we threw out a fly.

TB: And where was this?

BN: This was right out in front of Painter's Lodge on Vancouver Island, it's right across from April Point, just about a mile and a half, across the passage. One of the guides there that I was friends with rowed me for a Tyee and I got a Tyee pin (maybe I'd better show you that). Anyway, took it on a fly, and it was quite good. It was a lot heavier rod than Norman had, a heavy weight, I think it was a number ten. We were going to catch a big fish. It's quite a thing to be in the Tyee Club.

AN: It's an annual event up there, every season they have a big rowing contest, well, it's not really a contest, men go out and they have just a whole bunch of rowers out there trying to get these big fish and see who can get the biggest fish.

BN: That's kind of at the mouth of the Campbell River, itself. They say it was great fun to live there.

TB: Then you came back to Eugene in 1989. You must have rejoined the McKenzie Fly Fishers. Do you want to tell me a little bit about what you've been doing since 1989? And especially I want to know about your Lapis Lazuli Award.

AN: Well they only give one of those every year. I don't know how long they've been giving those, actually. Not every year since it started. It's one of the nicest awards given at the conclaves.

BN: Well, I think they gave that to me in 1990. My guides and I started a fly club up in Canada.

TB: Oh, up in Canada too!

BN: The April Point Fly Fishing Club.

AN: They didn't have anything to do with that award, though, honey, by the time you came here ...

BN: Well, what I'm driving for is because I kind of got three clubs started and whatever else, they decided they were going to make an award, so that's how it got there.

AN: I think you were Master of Ceremonies for that event weren't you?

BN: I think so, yes.

TB: For the 1990 Conclave in Eugene?

BN: Yes.

TB: It's hard to get you to brag about yourself! The three clubs you started were: the McKenzie Fly Fishers, the one up in Canada (April Point Fly Fishing Club), what is the third club?

BN: I was instrumental in helping the Klamath Country Fly Fishing Club. They recognized us, so I'm an honorary member, and then the same thing at Reedsport -- the Reedsport Club.

TB: Well, how about Lew Bell? What were some of his great accomplishments? You can't tell me his story, but what do you think are significant things I should know about Lew Bell?

BN: I miss him! He was a great conservationist, a good fisherman, and a wonderful friend! I think, individually, he did as much for other people as anyone I've ever known, and an attorney at that! You don't think attorneys are going to be that great, but he was, he was the greatest. He sent me a couple of things, you know. (To Audrey) -- go get one of those glasses, would you, with a fly in it? Oh, here it is! He sent me this set of [glasses].

AN: Oh, that's why you won't let me throw them away! They're all beat up. I almost threw them out.

BN: Well it's kind of that Lew gave them to me. And then there's Dick Padovan.

TB: Yes, so tell me about him.

BN: Well, he's been on the Grande Ronde with us and been a very fine friend also. He was a banker, a manager of a bank in Everett, and you wouldn't think that those attributes that he has, of kindness and straight-forwardness with his friends would come from a guy that has been in the bank business! Anyway, he's still up there, he lives on Puget Sound, and we phone each other pretty often. He's a good friend.

TB: What about Walt Johnson? You've got his flies over there.

BN: Yes, Walt Johnson, yes, I knew him quite well, took me a minute for my brain to wake up. He tied some flies and sent them to Audrey and me that she used for pins, you know, they're just gorgeous. He's one of the great fly tiers of all time, as far as I'm concerned, and he lived right on the Stilly in his later life. I imagine Jack Hutchinson had a few things to say about Walt.

TB: He's mentioned his name. Did you know Ralph Wahl? You've got his flies up there.

BN: Yes, quite well.

TB: Did you ever go fishing up at Deer Creek? Or that was probably already gone by the time you were fishing?

BN: No, I fished there, a lot of guys just had a summer home right there, right where Deer Creek comes in to the Stilly and Lew and I would fish it. Gosh I started thinking about that now. Things are just flooding down into my mind here about being with Lew on the river.

One time he handed me his rod, I had reeled mine in and he wanted to light a cigarette, so he handed me his rod. He had already cast it, and I just kind of made a little move like this (demonstrating), made the fly move a little bit, and a steelhead took it. And I handed him my rod, and he says "Oh, no, you can't get away with that!" He says, "You're just trying to make me feel bad." So I handed him the rod with the fish on it, and he says "No way! No way!" He's just something else, just wonderful to be with.

AN: Gordy Swanson. You fish with him a lot too, didn't you? Or did you?

BN: We all went to Davis Lake; more people went to Davis Lake than I think were on the Stilly. The whole club would come down and we'd fish at Davis Lake.

AN: The two clubs would go and hold an annual thing, I think, maybe they still do.

BN: Well they do it on the rivers now, they have a steelhead outing. What we started was a Davis Lake thing and the guys would bring their whole family, and camp there. Then we just had great things happen. We'd have frog races.

TB: Frog races!

BN: Yes, there were a couple of kids, one of the kids, I think Gordy Swanson's son, would go and catch frogs. There are frogs all around in the reeds at Davis Lake and then we would have frog races. Monty Rounds was there, he became our frog master, or whatever you want to call him, so that was for McKenzie, and then the Evergreen had somebody else going this way, we'd have two or three frogs on the same eating table, you know, with the benches on it, and they'd put a little stick at one end there and they would start them behind the stick. Monty was our frog keeper and he'd get his mouth full of gin (only he wouldn't let anybody know anything), and he could go like that with his teeth (demonstrating), and the minute he set the frog down and then says, "Go", why he'd (demonstrating) and the frog would just *jump!* We won more frog races with gin than we did with the regular training, it was wild! I don't understand how we could have so much fun, having frog races, but we did, it was fun.

TB: Okay, well, anything else I haven't asked you that you'd like to make sure we get on the record.

BN: I can't figure out where we are now, let's see. Lee Wulff was a lot of help in doing the Federation stuff; he just was a wonderful guy. He stayed with us in Eugene a few times when it had nothing to do with the Federation or anything else. I took him fishing on the Alsea for cutthroat. The way I caught cutthroat there was I would pitch in underneath the brush and stuff and try to get one to come out of there, I thought they were hiding in there all the time, but Lee, he knew what was going on, and he out-fished me about eight to one. He'd even use my fly, and he'd fish the various places he thought the fish were and he had a propensity for knowing that. Did you know that he wrote a book about wading?

TB: No.

BN: Yes, wading on the rivers. We were fishing on the Grande Ronde and Lew would go down this one point where the water would turn and churn and he'd get out of the water and go back up again because he couldn't get across the other side there. He'd go back up again to get across the other side and then he'd fish the other side of the river. Lee was backing up to get back up, and he waded the river. He was serious, he wasn't fooling anybody when he said this is how you are supposed to wade, and he did it, he waded. He did a wonderful job of wading. He was a good guy too, he wasn't pulling anybody's leg or anything -- he just was a good guy.

TB: He still has some kind of line of I think.

BN: Yes, he's got a company his wife runs and they sell rods and different things and they ship it everywhere. My son visited there, and he had a fly rod that I got for some reason or another, it was awarded to me, remember that rod, that little bamboo rod?

AN: Yes. He died a long time ago (1991). His wife married another fellow then later and she's still teaching fly fishing and things like that.

BN: He was getting a recheck on his pilot's license, and something went wrong with the airplane and it crashed. He was killed.

I was awarded a Lee Wulff designed rod, and it was Lee Wulff *by* Lee Wulff and I gave it to my son. He has a friend that's a wholesale salesman for fishing tackle, and he said that this is the original Lee Wulff rod.

AN: Craig (our son) just happened to bring out that rod to show him and he said, "Oh, you've seen this?" The guy almost fainted because it was a real Lee Wulff original. That's kind of nice.

BN: The wholesale tackle salesman told him it's worth about five thousand dollars now. So, you know, that's kind of scary. I don't think Craig uses it anymore.

AN: He probably doesn't! He's probably got it on display.

TB: Why don't you tell me a little bit about how you see the future of fly fishing?

BN: Well, I think it's gaining and I think there's more people concerned about being able to fly fish than any other thing. I mean there are guides now that live off of fly fishing.

TB: But is that hurting the sport?

BN: No, I don't think so. I think if anything, it helps it and most of the guys that I know that guide are very happy to release the fish. We've made a tool to be able to release those fish. Should I show her that?

AN: Sure, yes, that would be good.

TB: Wait, not right now, lets finish the tape part of the interview. I've heard some people not being happy with the current etiquette, feeling like there's getting to be too many people and some of them are pretty rude.

AN: I think in all sports and all of society, it's just much more casual and not very nice sometimes.

BN: Well, I know Gordy Swanson says, "It's too political, the Federation's getting too political." There are too many guys that just want to run for office or something. I agree with him, to some extent, but I don't agree totally. He's got a good mind and he's a good guy and everybody isn't going to be as good as he is, and he's got to figure that out.

End of Side One, Tape Two

BN: Gordy has property up on the Stilly. When we have an outing there he just takes care of everybody and does a great job. We have a McKenzie Cup; the McKenzie Cup goes between the two clubs, between the McKenzie Fly Fishers and the Evergreen Fly Fishers. Whoever catches the biggest fish, or I think it's the biggest steelhead; they get to take the trophy home. I think the Everett guys have really done awfully well and have retained their possession of that trophy. Sometimes we get some pretty good guys here too, don't get me wrong, there's some awfully good guys here, good fisherman.

Of course that's not all there is in life, there's more to association with people that you respect and like and they are easier to find in the fly clubs than they are anywhere else in the country. It seems like these people that are in a fly fishing club have more ability to be semi-polite. You very seldom hear bad language with the guys that are fly fisherman, I'm not sure, but they may be hoping The Lord will forgive them. If they pay attention it comes out that way. It just seems to be that way.

I've gone to church for a long time and I believe in the Christian way of life, and I try to keep my language reasonable, and some guys, they just, *man*, it embarrasses me. I didn't use to be that like before I went to college and was in the Navy, why I heard some strange speaking and I think I responded (but I'm not positive) in some way. There are some good guys in the Navy too, but in the fly club, you'll find an awful lot of them. There's something that turns them on to fly fishing, and I think it has something to do with character. It's hard to find a real jerk in the fly clubs. Most of them are really good people, and its fun to know them.

You don't just talk about fly fishing every moment, you have some other conversations. We hope that we get enough guys with the right attitudes that will be able to present ourselves to other organizations to help save, what we consider to be a wonderful resource, and that's the fish and the sport. We're getting to the point now where you have to buy so many licenses and do so many strange things -- like if you want to go crabbing when you're down there on the bay; you have to have a license for that. And if you want to take ... I'm going to get this so I can show you.

I've gotten to a point where I stuff my licenses into one thing here, and I'll take them out for you, it's amazing what's here. That kind of bothers me but if it's going to save the sport, why then that's great!

I'll just read them off to you here. Now this is a boating card, and it says "has successfully completed the boating safety course, which meets the standards set by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators." I have to keep that with me. And here's a shellfish license so you can get things like clams and crabs, when you're down there fishing in the salt chuck. Senior citizen permanent license number, hunting/angling license, that's all well and good, but by the time you're through adding the other things on here, the cost of this punch card, you think that you're saving something by being a senior citizen, let's hope that we are sometime -- no charge down at the bottom, no charge, so you're getting the hunting and fishing license basically for being an old guy. And all these things, you know, it's a darn nuisance -- because we are tested. Now this has something to do with the guiding, but pretty soon you wonder what's going to happen. You carry all of this so you'll be able to fish. I hope it helps them but I wonder how helpful some of this stuff is. I hope it helps all of the agencies that do take care of the fish. And watch out for real bubble heads out there in the water. Anyway, I thought we'd bring that in.

Well let's see, what else can I confuse you with?

TB: No, no, I think that's good. Maybe the only other thing I have a question about is you said you went fishing in New Zealand. Where else have you gone that's kind of exotic? Have you been to Christmas Island?

BN: Yes, I've been to Christmas Island several times and also to Mexico, Belize, and to Los Rogues. That's an island just north of Venezuela. It's kind of fun to go there and see it. Bone fish is the big thing there. I've also fished in Argentina at the south end where the rivers run into the sea. I flew down there with Marty Rathje a long time ago.

AN: And Alaska. You've been to Alaska several times. I remember fishing "Yes Bay" near Anchorage with a group of friends.

BN: Oh yes, we go to Alaska and British Columbia. In fact, every fall for many years, I think back twenty years that we'd go to Tofino, B.C. and there'd be, Dick Padovan and let's see ... John Fabian went with us once. My son and grandson went with us a couple times and others. It was a wonderful group.

TB: Well, I think that's it for my questions. Then maybe you can also show me the release tool.

BN: Oh the release tool, yes!

AN: You should demonstrate how that works.

BN: Oh yes, I've got a demonstrator too.

TB: Okay.

End of Recording

