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This interview with Paul Schullery was conducted at his home in Bozeman, Montana, on July 24, 2008. The interviewer is Tamara Belts.

TB: How did you happen to become a park ranger in Yellowstone National Park?

PS: On a trip from Ohio around the West in 1969 with a friend, we visited another friend. We had all been high school buddies, and this happened when we were between our junior and senior years in college. This friend had a summer job as a South Entrance gate ranger in Yellowstone National Park. His job was to sit there in the kiosk, wearing his ranger uniform and handing out maps and information. That sounded to me like a fun way to spend a summer, so in 1972 I applied and was given a job.

By 1972, I'd already dropped out of graduate school for the first time (I had been a history major in graduate school and I eventually did finish a master's degree). I didn't really anticipate staying in Yellowstone for a long time. After four or five years of college, I realized that I had no idea what I was going to do if and when I grew up, so I thought I would just do stuff that sounded interesting. I spent a year digging ditches and then decided it was time to do something else. I only knew that I would try it for a while. It was a seasonal job. After the summer, I would look for something else.

But as it happened, I fell in love with Yellowstone. I was hooked and I stayed. Even when I left the Yellowstone area for a few years now and then, Yellowstone was still the center of my world and that led to a whole bunch of interests—natural history, photography, writing, history, and, of course, fly fishing.

TB: Did you always know that you wanted to be a writer?

PS: I think I knew it for a long time before it became conscious because I can remember when I was just a kid, thinking up stories, and occasionally writing them down. When I first decided to drop out of graduate school, maybe a year before I went to Yellowstone for the first time, my graduate advisor asked me if I'd ever thought about writing for a living. He said, "You know, you're a pretty good writer, you might consider that." That was the first time, I think, that it had become real in my mind so that I seriously considered it.

It had always been something I thought I would enjoy, but it had never really occurred to me that I could go ahead and do something like that. I don't know why not. I think it was because nothing permanent had occurred to me. I had no idea what I should do next, or how to go about finding something. But once my professor suggested it to me, I started thinking more about it and within a few years I started to publish things. I suppose I was kind of slow getting started, but it takes me a while to think about things.

Yellowstone provided so many opportunities, so much practice in everything to do with writing and researching. And Yellowstone eventually re-engaged me with American history, and I went back to my master's program. It took me six years to get through a two-year master's program, because I had discovered life, and Yellowstone. I was busy. But every now and then I would go back to school for a little while. When I wrote my master's thesis, it was a study of the Yellowstone Archives. Yellowstone has its administrative record collection dating back to the beginning, back to the 1870s. It's fabulous; it's now an official branch of the National Archives.

So there were all these things about Yellowstone that activated interests I had had all along, and presented me with wonderful opportunities to make much more of them than they had amounted to up to that time. Fly fishing was one of them.

TB: So you'd been a bait fisherman then, growing up?

PS: Spin fishing, bait fishing, yes, lures, whatever.

TB: Well, can you expand a little bit? What was it about fly fishing that attracted you?

PS: Probably the most important thing was that I could do it in Yellowstone. It was another way to be out there exploring. It was obvious to me that fly fishing opened a lot of windows into the magic of the place. All those interesting, beautiful things about nature—fly fishing was a way in.

TB: That was actually my question. Did fly fishing drive you to explore the park, or did exploring the park drive you to fly fish?

PS: Yes, it really was kind of inseparable. That's the right question, and the right answer. It was the same with photography. All these things can be a distraction or each can be an end in itself. But you kind of hope that if you practice them right they will serve each other and enrich the whole process. In my case it always felt like they did.

TB: Okay. So was love with Yellowstone instantaneous and passionate? It sounds like it was.

PS: Yes.

TB: Did you immediately start researching in the archives? Is that what led you to become an archivist there?

PS: That was; I got there and I was just a blank sheet. I knew nothing about anything I saw in Yellowstone. But it was all very exciting, and unbelievably interesting. Among other things I learned about myself right away was how much I wanted to do justice to this work.

I had always been an avid reader and Yellowstone gave that enthusiasm a lot of new focus too. I became a voracious reader of everything to do with Yellowstone, with nature, with conservation and conservation history, and with fly fishing.

There was a stupendous amount of luck involved in my becoming involved in all this. I suppose none of it would ever have happened if I had not been so politically naive. To explain this, I have to go back to 1969, and my friend who worked as a gate ranger at the South Entrance. When we visited him for a few days in 1969, I looked around and said, "Gee, Jim, this looks like fun. How'd you get this job?" This might have been the first time in my whole life I'd even shown interest in a job. I'd had jobs, as an unskilled laborer, but they were just something you had to do because you were expected to make money. This Yellowstone work seemed novel, because of where it took me and what I would get to do.

Anyway, Jim said it was really easy to get a job like his. I know that should be embarrassed by this story, but now it's so long ago now that mostly it's just funny. Jim said, "It's really easy. I my dad just called Congressman Miller." He explained that as if it was just customary for the congressman to give out jobs to the kids of anyone who asked.

I said, "Oh! My dad knows Congressman Miller too." I just assumed he could call the congressman and it would happen. I was so ignorant of the way the world actually worked that I thought this must be how people got jobs; they just had their dads call Congressman Miller.

Well as it turns out, back then the political patronage system was pretty out front as far as congressmen dispensing jobs like this. I understand it doesn't work that that any more. But back then, the political patronage system in

Congress somehow or other awarded key congressmen with a certain number of jobs that they could dispense to their constituents. Congressman Miller happened to have a fair amount of influence, so he had these jobs to spread around.

So I found myself with a seasonal job as a Yellowstone Ranger, which of course was very exciting even if I didn't know what all it might really mean. The first big surprise was when my paperwork arrived in the mail in the spring of 1972, and I discovered that I wasn't going to be a gate ranger. I was to be what at the time was called a naturalist, and what today is known as an interpreter. I would be giving camp fire programs, nature walks, and history walks. I would spend a lot of time at a Visitor Center answering visitor's questions.

Anyway, somewhere on my original paperwork, I was described as a ranger-historian. So after I'd been working for a while and learned my way around, I went to my supervisor and said, "I see that on my position description I'm called a ranger-historian." Does that mean that I'll get to do some research or something?"

See, by this time, I'd already learned where the Archives were, and how exciting they were. I might even have had a key to the room they were stored in. These wonderful administrative records were just sitting there. They were used now and then by researchers, but there was no administrative plan for them, and nobody was really trying to organize or manage them.

Well, this fine, patient supervisor, appreciating my sincere if ignorant interest, was the one who explained how the political appointment system really worked. In answer to my question, he said, "No, Paul, actually, that was the only way we could hire you. See, you were so completely unqualified for any of the jobs that we have here, that when the word came down to hire you"—I think those were his exact words, "when the word came down to hire you"—we had to activate this old historian position that we had."

I was just devastated, in part because I realized that I had had an unfair advantage. From conversations with co-workers, I was starting to realize that there were huge numbers of young people who wanted to work for the National Park Service. These were people who had slaved away in college to get the right education and qualifications. Some of them had dreamed of being a ranger since they were children. Many would have taken whatever sort of awful job they could get, just to get in. And here I was, having just waltzed in on the coat-tails of my congressman. I was what was known as a "political," which was short for "political appointee."

I felt really bad about this, besides being embarrassed. I talked about resigning and leaving, but my supervisors told me that they didn't want me to leave. They said that I had proven myself already, and I was doing a good job. They explained that congressmen were typically pretty conscientious about only giving these appointments to fairly deserving young people who had some chance of doing okay. Apparently, they even checked us out before giving us the jobs. Of course I hadn't known any of this, either. But I was apparently doing well enough that they not only wanted me to stay, they wanted to rehire me for the following summer. I eventually worked six consecutive summers, and had a special additional assignment working in the archives during the three winters that came between the last three of those summers.

Once this was all settled, I felt free to really start looking hard at the Yellowstone Archives. We were giving visitors a history walk at the time, around historic Fort Yellowstone, and I became the researcher for background information on this walk.

The Army ran the park from 1886 to 1918. They built a classic late frontier period army post, Fort Yellowstone. When I arrived, the National Park Service was already giving an evening one-hour walk for visitors, among those buildings, explaining what they were. And we were about to turn it into a living history program in which we would give the walk in the first-person, dressed in period costume, speaking as non-commissioned officers of the cavalry, from the year 1915. We would, for an hour, take the people back to 1915. Because of this change in the walk, there was a need for someone to get into the archives where the Army records were, to find things to say about the daily life and work of the soldiers at that time. This was my first professional assignment in doing history. I couldn't have asked for a nicer way to start a career.

I felt so lucky because so many people who study history, and eventually even teach history, never get an opportunity like that to deal with such significant original documents of the era that they're studying. There were letters from Theodore Roosevelt, George Bird Grinnell, and many other notable conservationists, besides every National Park Service director and park superintendent. It is an amazing collection. There have been a series of historians since me, and they have expanded the collection hugely, locating additional records that had been separated from the park for one reason or another. It's a documentary treasure.

TB: Then you left; was there anything more about that period of time in Yellowstone?

PS: It was more of the same stuff. I started reading fishing books at the same time. There weren't nearly as many in print right then. It was just as well, because I couldn't afford them. In the mid-70s, there was a really big boom in fishing book publishing, fly fishing books especially. All sorts of new ideas were being considered, and lots of traditional work was being rediscovered. A lot was going on and Yellowstone was one of the most visible and important centers of fly-fishing thinking and experimenting.

The early Federation of Fly Fishers (they were called the Federation of Fly Fishermen then) conclaves were usually in West Yellowstone, or maybe Jackson or Sun Valley. The Federation had identified Yellowstone as a sort of spiritual center for them, in part because of Jack Anderson, Yellowstone's superintendent in the early 1970s. Jack and the researchers in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service overhauled the fishing regulations and pioneered special regulations with a heightened appreciation for ecological realities and the need to maintain healthy fish populations for the sake of the rest of the natural system, rather than just for the fishermen. He turned around some traditions of management that hadn't really taken good enough care of the aquatic resources. So the park was a hotbed of exciting thinking for fisheries managers, fisheries biologists, and fishermen. I happened to come along at just the right time to be in the middle of that.

But the 1970s were very exciting in Yellowstone for a number of reasons. Bear management, ungulate management, fire policy, and other programs were being dramatically reshaped. People were starting to talk about wolf reintroduction, though that wouldn't occur for another twenty years. There was a lot of political turmoil associated with the changes. There was tremendous intellectual stimulation all the time, and I lucked into it and learned constantly for six years. And then in 1977 I went to Manchester.

TB: So do you want to tell me how that opportunity came up?

PS: Somehow or another, I got to know that there was this museum for fly fishing. At the time it was called the Museum of American Fly Fishing. There was a fishing writer, Charlie Brooks, who spent his summers in West Yellowstone. Bud Lilly introduced us in his shop one day, and Charlie might have been the one to tell me that the museum was looking for a director. I can't really remember for sure quite how that worked out, but I applied.

To that point, their staff had been all-volunteer. The museum had been established in 1968, but by 1977 they decided that they had to have someone full-time. They'd grown enough, and some of their key volunteers weren't able to help as much anymore. I was told later that they had dozens of applicants for the job, but apparently most of them were seen as people who really just wanted to retire to Vermont and have a pleasant office. I came in, young and full of energy and not very knowledgeable about anything but a little knowledgeable about everything. By then, thanks to Yellowstone, I'd even had a little museum experience, working with the curator in the park. Because I'd been studying conservation history, I was acquainted with some of the key literature of sporting history, especially *Forest & Stream* magazine. The early sporting periodicals paid a lot of attention to Yellowstone. So by doing Yellowstone research in those periodicals, I had a framework. But I think what they liked was that I was really excited about the opportunity for the museum to be an educational force—in conservation history, of course, but also in the history of the sport's culture, and even in explaining how fly fishing related to nature appreciation. So they hired me, and I was there for five years.

TB: What were your biggest achievements? There had to have been a lot.

PS: I don't know about a lot, but with so many opportunities and so much that needed doing, no matter what I chose to work on I could hardly go wrong. Almost anything I did would act like an accomplishment. Luckily, early on, I

talked to some other museum directors in the region, who gave me some really good advice. The professionals sort of framed what I was up to for me. They said, “You know, you’re not going to be here as long as it will take get this place accredited, but you can start it on the way. And you’re not going to turn these museum exhibits into the most professional ever, but you can move all these things along.” They gave me that view of incremental progress that allowed me to picture what it was that I was trying to do. Thanks to the good advice from some friends in the magazine business who explained design to me, we were able to professionalize the journal *The American Fly Fisher*.

At the time it seemed like we were making big progress, but of course compared to now, everything I did looks terribly amateur. The folks there now have advanced all the programs so far that it's hardly recognizable compared to what we were able to do thirty years ago.

TB: So part of that job included being the editor for the journal?

PS: After about a year, I became the editor, yes. The previous guy, who had been a volunteer, I’m not even sure what his title was, though he was usually referred to as the curator. His name was Austin Hogan. Austin was a passionate amateur historian of fishing and he edited the journal for, I think, its first four years or so. But his health was just getting too bad to continue.

I always felt like my biggest failure was that I was never able to make enough use of all those wonderful volunteers, including Austin. I knew what needed doing, but most of those folks were twice my age and even though I was comfortable around them, I didn’t know how to finesse a new system that would allow them to feel engaged and continue to be productive in ways they had been productive before. It wasn’t that I had any doubts about the work they had been doing. I think all of us were just unsure of ourselves with this new arrangement, which was a waste of energy.

TB: At that point in time had the museum become national in scope, or was it kind of a regional emphasis?

PS: Thanks to Steve Raymond and a couple of other people, including George Grant and Charlie Brooks, they had had some excellent western representation in the journal. There was also some very fine material in the collection, especially flies and rods. I know that Steve arranged for some wonderful material from the west coast to come to the museum, like the Letcher Lambuth collection. But it's true that the museum collection was predominantly eastern. That’s where most of the well-documented history was, and that’s where the really celebrated names in American fly fishing all were. It was always kind of an ingrown and somewhat clubby sport that was inclined to be comfortable with its icons and not particularly interested in broadening its horizons by learning any new history. But the West had a lot of fly-fishing history that was being ignored, and I did try to pay more attention to that. We once devoted a whole issue of the journal to western fly fishing history.

That’s one of the reasons I eventually wrote not just my history of fly fishing but, more recently, *Cowboy Trout*, to suggest that there’s a long, and complex social, economic, and technological history out here in the West that really deserves some academic attention.

So when I got to the museum, I started trying to recruit more people from the West, just to have a better balance. We were so lucky to have Steve, George, and Charlie, and then to add so many more other serious western fly fishers. Just the exciting material that the museum has accumulated over the years relating to steelhead fly fishing is a great treasure in the sport's history.

TB: Anything else about your fly fishing background? I know you’ve talked about fishing the Batten kill, very difficult—

PS: Yes, it was a wonderful education, because my friends mostly worked either for Orvis or for *Fly Fisherman Magazine* and they were all very skilled and accustomed to this kind of fishing. I had experienced a little of that difficult fishing in the West and in the Midwest before I went to Vermont. But these people were so many levels beyond me in their abilities.

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PS:—Just by watching really, really good fishermen (and that's been one of the great things of having jobs like I've had) is that I've been exposed to unbelievably skillful people. It's just great to hang around with people like that.

TB: Very cool. So why did you decide to leave and then come back to the Yellowstone area?

PS: Oh, I had never intended to stay away. I had assumed that I would stay a few years, because I thought it would be wonderful to live in New England. And it was. It was a great place, the people were so kind to me, and it was just a whole different world for me. The landscapes were exciting, and the nature, all those differences. But I'd always figured that in a few years I'd go back out west. Eventually, after five years, I just decided that I would move back to Livingston, and see if I could make a living as a writer. By then I'd met the woman who would become my first wife, Dianne Rusell, and she was game to make a move like that and try something new. She was working as an editorial assistant at *Fly Fisherman*, and then at the local bookstore in Manchester, when we met.

So in 1982 we moved to Livingston and lived there for four years. I did a variety of writing, she got a fairly unsatisfying job with a local office services business, and we scraped along. I published several books, most of them about nature, and I wrote my history of fly fishing. Eventually Dianne began to get work as an editor of manuscripts, working for both Nick Lyons and Stackpole.

But I continued to luck into chances to fish with great fishermen. Bud Lilly and I had gotten to know each other in the 1970s when I'd drop into the Trout Shop in West Yellowstone. In about 1984 he was approached by Nick Lyons to write a book. He asked me to be his co-author and eventually we wrote three. It was 1985 or 1986 that we spent a whole summer fishing, all around this region. I'd take a tape recorder, and we'd pick a subject to discuss driving to and from the river. We'd talk about whatever it was until we'd exhausted the subject, then I'd transcribe it and turn it into manuscript. Bud's such a great story teller and such a clear thinker that most of the time it really required very little rewriting; I'm sure that's why so many who read the books told me that I'd captured Bud's voice so well. I didn't have to do much; his voice just came right through.

In fact, that's how the second book happened. What Nick wanted from Bud was a manual, a guide to fly fishing the West. But in the process of getting that kind of basic instructional information on tape, I also kept getting all these great stories. Bud's a fourth-generation Montanan, and he has wonderful stories—about the rivers, the fish, growing up in the West, running a world-famous tackle shop, and all the fishermen that he's known. As I was transcribing (by then I had my first word processor), I was just dumping those stories into a separate folder. After a while it became clear that that very well could be another book, so I organized it into his autobiography, *A Trout's Best Friend*. The title came from one of Arnold Gingrich's books. Arnold, the founder of *Esquire* magazine, was a passionate fly fisher who wrote some really fun books about the sport, and in one of them he praised Bud's conservation work and said "Bud Lilly is a trout's best friend." So we just used that as the title.

Then, more than ten years later we combined those two books and updated them with a lot of new information and called it *Bud Lilly's Guide to Fly Fishing the New West*. It was the prettiest of the three books, and certainly one of the most comprehensive books on fly fishing around this part of the West.

TB: Oh, okay. I've read the autobiography one that you wrote with him.

PS: Yes, *Trout's Best Friend*. That was fun. Yes, that's the one that just sort of happened, because of the first one.

TB: I was kind of wondering how that happened, because you're both listed as the joint authors and yet it reads very much in the first-person.

PS: It was—I think he insisted we do it that way. Other approaches just seemed more contrived, to do an "as told to" or something like that. He just insisted that I have equal billing. He always said that I wrote the books, and that's not true. He's a great story teller. Often, you could just transcribe whole paragraphs he said verbatim—we were talking about that earlier. He's one of those people who transcribes pretty well. It's almost all his as far as the

words you read—all I was doing was organizing it. Every now and then I'd want to add an opinion or impression of my own, so in the text Bud would say, "Now, Paul disagrees with me about this, so here's what he thinks."

TB: Very fun.

PS: It was. It was a wonderful experience. I feel so lucky, getting to know such unique individuals; Bud's been honored as a great citizen of Montana, not just for his fly-fishing but for his contribution to regional business and for his work as a conservationist.

TB: When you were out here at that point in time, you also did get involved in the Federation of Fly Fishers. You were its senior vice president for 1982-83.

PS: Yes, something like that. I'm not sure what those years are, but that's about right. And that was because of my involvement in the museum. I'd gotten to know those folks. The Federation is set up with a group of vice presidents and I had a term as senior vice president for communications. There for a while the museum and the Federation tried, and failed, to build a common home in West Yellowstone. That would've fallen through about 1982, I think. I know there were hard feelings in some circles but I guess I didn't have many. I was still involved with both organizations, and stayed involved with the Federation for a while and then after that, I was a senior advisor for a few years. I think that was the title. Eventually though, as my interests and my job changed, I didn't have time to stay involved at that level. Eventually I was made a trustee emeritus of the museum, and I believe I still am. That's a nice honorific with no real duties, and I always appreciated their kindness in giving me that title. There are several of us with that title.

TB: Oh, okay. Any other thoughts about that time? Working with the Federation? The initiatives, your achievements [during] that time? Or mainly it was because of the museum and you were kind of acting as the go-between to see if those two [organizations] could [merge]?

PS: The museum and the Federation had launched a fundraising campaign in about 1981 or 1982, to raise money to build the new combined operation in West Yellowstone. The Federation hired some high-powered fundraising outfit from, I think, San Francisco, and for some reason it didn't work out. I wasn't involved in that end of things, and I really don't know the details, but it just all fell apart. I think they were past a million dollars in pledges that largely evaporated after a while. They'd even had a ground breaking in anticipation of building the facility. Jimmy Carter, the Wulffs, and several other people had participated in the ceremony in West Yellowstone. It all seemed so promising. Then it didn't happen.

Other people know this history of the Federation much better than I do. I'm sure you can find some folks around who could give you a more meaningful interview on the subject. Marty Seldon, or Bud, or Gardner Grant, or any of quite a few others would have the story much more completely than I do.

Anyway, that all fell apart, but the Federation decided that they still wanted their headquarters in West Yellowstone. At that point, I believe they were in California. They moved to West Yellowstone and made an arrangement with the town to occupy the old Union Pacific dining hall. There are two big buildings there. One of them now is a museum and the other one is a—I don't know what all they do in there now, but it's an events building. There's a wonderful, wonderful rustic space for big banquets, weddings, and other events. That was the space that the Federation took over, and called the International Fly Fishing Center.

Bud was the first, whatever he was called – chairman -- president? I don't know. And, at the same time, Esther Simon, that was her name at the time, was the manager of the Federation facility. Her title may have been executive director. Esther was a full-time professional conservationist, and had held a similar position some years earlier at Trout Unlimited and had also been involved with a conservation organization in Colorado. Again, other people would certainly know the details of all this better than I.

Bud and Esther put together the new facility in this building. I assume that the details of it were reported at length in the Federation magazine, so I won't try to go into it. And at that point, Bud involved me. Again, I just don't remember the details; this is more than twenty years ago. I was living in Livingston at the time, and I went down to

West Yellowstone and helped them put together some exhibits of their collection of historic flies and other tackle. They had a whole team of hard-working volunteers, including Buck Goodrich from Idaho, who did great work building exhibit panels and cases. It was the Federation at its grass-roots best.

TB: Okay. And then, let's see, you came back to Yellowstone, became a naturalist again from 1988 to 1993, became a technical writer, and had a whole series of kind of involvements again with [the park].

PS: Yes, the titles changed but actually the work didn't. I think my paperwork said I was something like –Environmental Protection Specialist,” but I think I was called a –Resource Naturalist.” Over the twenty years between 1988 and 2008, I also held positions as writer-editor and Senior Editor in the Yellowstone Center for Resources, and for a year and a half I was Acting Chief of Cultural Resources.

But that leaves out a couple of years that also have to do with fly fishing. In 1986, after four years in Livingston, my first wife, Dianne Russell, and I were burned out trying to make a living in Livingston. I had actually reached the point where I was doing well enough with my writing that it looked like it might work, but we needed a change. Our marriage was falling apart, for one thing. So I lucked into a job in Pennsylvania and for two years, 1986-1988, I was an associate editor of *Country Journal Magazine* in Harrisburg.

Country Journal was a really fine magazine that had been founded in Manchester, Vermont and had been there for years. It was there the whole time I was there in the late Seventies and early Eighties, and I'd gotten to be friends with some of the editors there. And right down the road in Dorset, Vermont, five miles away, was *Fly Fisherman*. Well, by 1986, both had been sold to a magazine company called Historical Times. Most of the staff of *Country Journal* decided that they didn't want to leave Vermont, but the magazine was moved to the Historical Times headquarters in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The company also owned *British Heritage*, *Early American Life*, *Civil War Times*, and one or two others, I think.

It was a good thing that the editor of *Fly Fisherman*, John Randolph, was in charge of both *Fly Fisherman* and *Country Journal*. Somehow or other, John found out I was looking for work in the Hershey area, where Dianne and I had decided we'd like to live for a while. So he hired me as one of his associate editors and we moved to Hershey. It was a short commute from Hershey into Harrisburg.

As I said, Dianne had already been getting established as an editor and very quickly she had a job at Stackpole Books, also in Harrisburg. We separated in 1988, and I came back to Yellowstone, right at the conclusion of the famous fire season that year. The National Park Service hired me to help write about the fires. My job was in part to "translate" the scientific background of the fires. It was a wonderful assignment and put me in the middle of some very important scientific and policy issues. Yellowstone now had the largest scientific program in the National Park Service, which meant it probably had the largest scientific program in any national park in the world. There were as many as 300 different research projects going on in a given year.

It has been an amazing time to work in Yellowstone. In the early 1990s, we created a quarterly journal, *Yellowstone Science*. I was the first editor, and each editor after me did a better job and now it's a terrific publication, in its sixteenth year, I think. It's a fabulous accumulation of authoritative articles that is now like an encyclopedic reference work on research in Yellowstone. Anyway, it allowed me to talk to many scientists; we tried to include an interview with a researcher in each issue. So I was constantly involved with really interesting research topics, learning things all the time. And I had time now and then to pursue my own historical research interests, especially in wildlife history.

About the same time, we also launched a biennial scientific conference series. This was just as exciting, because each conference would be focused on some important regional topic, whether it was fire, predators, vegetation, cultural resources, or whatever. At each conference we would attract 150 to 200 people and have two or three days of fascinating presentations. Again, as with *Yellowstone Science*, we were especially concerned to reach as wide an audience as possible with all this information, so we always published a proceedings, with as many papers from the conference as we could include, and now that we are getting ready for the ninth conference in the series, we have nice shelf of these book-sized volumes covering these important topics.

Just to suggest the place of Yellowstone in the science of conservation, I might use the example of the conference we did about Yellowstone and the Serengeti. It was a wonderful opportunity to get researchers together from two of the most famous and scientifically significant nature reserves in the world, to compare notes on how research and conservation worked in such different settings. Richard Leakey came and gave the keynote address, and Marsha Karle (my wife by this time) and I interviewed him for *Yellowstone Science*. Getting to participate in events like that was not just exciting, it was an honor.

TB: Did you see a lot of changes in the environment between when you'd been here in the Seventies in your first job, and when you came back in 1982?

PS: If you mean the political environment, yes, there have been changes. The consensus among the people I work with is that everything is more complicated. Everybody involved in the park's management issues has become more sophisticated. Public awareness is higher and higher and higher. The latest science still often outruns a portion of the public, and any more there is more information than many of us can absorb. When I started working in Yellowstone in 1972, it was a lot like starting in fly fishing at that same time, in that there were relatively few books available on the subjects at hand. Now it's the opposite. You're just swamped with huge amounts of information and for managers, it's still not enough. Today's management and ecological issues are so complex that you never really know enough to be positive you're deciding the right thing. Luckily I've never had to be a manager, but I've gotten to watch them in action, and watch how they work their way through that challenge. Does that answer your question?

TB: Yes; I was just looking for what kind of changes you might have seen, and that is a good answer.

PS: I think most of us believe that 1988 changed everything. 1988 was when the international media discovered that a place like Yellowstone could be big news. And since 1988, there are any number of journalists, just in this region, who make a significant part if not all of their income writing about Yellowstone. Suddenly, all this stuff that environmentalists had been waving their arms about for decades, has crossed some threshold of public interest, and the media are eager to pay attention.

My wife Marsha was Chief of Public Affairs in Yellowstone from about 1993 to 2004. There were occasions when I would be in her office and in quick succession she would receive calls from *Time*, *New York Times*, *CNN*, *Newsweek*, one right after another. They paid attention to Yellowstone because it was a world-famous national park and people cared. They were calling the park because of whatever the issue was: wolves, fire, grizzly bears, bison; doesn't matter, that's the level of attention that it just routinely gets now.

TB: Excellent. I mean, that is good.

PS: Doesn't have anything to do with fly fishing, but...

TB: That's okay. How did you happen to become involved at MSU and also the University of Wyoming? Was that just an extension of...?

PS: It was part of the policy for many of us in the research and resource management operation that we should maintain affiliate status with nearby universities. My supervisor, John Varley, was a real believer in that kind of connection; the park and the universities had so much to offer each other that it was just the logical thing for us to keep good relationships with whatever department was relevant to our specialties. I've continued to maintain that involvement, especially by speaking to a variety of classes at Montana State University over the years. It might be history, or English composition, or environmental ethics. I used to have a similar affiliation in the American Studies Department at the University of Wyoming. There were great folks there who were very hospitable to me. But it's pretty far away for me to have any meaningful role. Laramie's a long day's drive, so I haven't had that involvement for quite a while now.

University of Wyoming also maintains a wonderful facility—it's called the University of Wyoming National Park Service Research Center. They have a permanent station at the northern end of the Grand Teton Park. Every summer, they host many scientists and students there, doing all manner of research. They have a great lecture series

all summer long; I've spoken there a couple times, once on my little study of rising trout that I published in my book *The Rise*.

As far as my own involvement with M.S.U., I co-taught a course on the history of greater Yellowstone some years ago, and then a few years later I taught a course on the history of Yellowstone National Park. My friend Lee Whittlesey, who is the official park historian in Yellowstone, now teaches that class and gets a much better turnout than I did. I think I prefer just showing up and being a guest lecturer at specific classes to teaching the whole course.

In the past few years, my involvement has shifted to the library. I'm part of their informal advisory group for the Trout and Salmonid Collection, and help in other ways if I can. Sometimes I've been able to play a role in facilitating a donation of documents or books. I was able to help when the library received Robert Behnke's papers. Bob's been such an important influence in salmonid taxonomy and conservation.

TB: You mentioned—so this is going back to fly fishing. You talked about the difficulties fishing the Battenkill, and I've been reading *Cowboy Trout* and you talked about how the fish here were more passive, they didn't seem to fight as much—I'm not a fly fisherman, but...?

PS: There've been a number of studies that demonstrate that some species are easier to catch than others. These studies indicate that cutthroat trout are the easiest to catch. The Brook trout, the Eastern native fish, are also famous for being easy to catch, but as the Battenkill brook trout demonstrate, even they can be very difficult to catch. Just as out here, in certain circumstances our native cutthroats can also be very difficult to catch, especially later in the season.

End of Tape One Side Two

TB: You must have fished in the Northwest, is there was some specific character that you found when you came out to the Northwest fishing?

PS: I'm really not a good person to ask those questions of; you would expect someone who's really skilled to be able to discriminate between things like that, but I've never even tried to get to be that good. I'm reasonably skilled, but I'm not the sort of expert fisherman who is qualified to pass judgment on really interesting questions like that. There are these long debates—for example, whether or not Atlantic salmon on the East Coast and all around the Atlantic Basin, are harder or easier to catch than steelhead, around the Pacific Basin. There aren't that many people who have a huge experience with both, that would qualify them to comment. They're both large and anadromous fish, with huge amounts of energy. They're very close genetically. So you get this tremendous individual variation in the fish. It's hard to generalize, but of course, being fishermen, they're willing to. Fishermen are happy to make sweeping statements.

TB: Okay. This is kind of a question from Danny that he thought you could develop a little bit more (I might not be getting the question exactly right), but the development of fly fishing in the east, and then (my addition) did what happen in the east really influence the rest of the country, or does the climate and the environment in each place dictate how fly fishing evolves?

PS: Yes. Usually, in my impression of that process, whether it's Europeans coming over here for the first time, or Easterners going west, or whatever, Westerners going north...they can't help taking a lot of perceptual, technological baggage with them. That's where you almost have to start. They bring skills that worked; skills and tools that worked the last place they were and then they adapt them.

Danny's right, it's a really interesting question because fly fishing got to the West very early. The problem is that not as much study of history has been done out there. Those first sport fishers didn't become famous, and so nobody's even bothered to do enough homework to find out when they did first show up. But we know that people were fly fishing Washington, Oregon and California in 1850s or soon after, using fly gear they brought with them.

Before 1960 or so, wherever you lived and whatever sort of skill you'd inherited you could pretty easily operate in isolation from the rest of the fly fishing world. You could just settle down in your river and have a nice long conversation with it, figuring out what works and what doesn't. Since then, there has been a spectacular intensification of communication. Webs and blogs, and books and magazines. Every region has its own fly fishing magazine. There are several good national fly-fishing magazines. Most rivers have whole books written about them now. I'm sure there are still people who just set all that aside, or ignore it, or avoid it, and go their own way, because that's what they want from the sport, but I think that there has been a change in the culture; fewer and fewer people seem to define fly fishing that way, as a solitary pursuit.

I'd be curious what Danny thinks about this, because I don't have any way of measuring how many people there are who still prefer isolation. Fifty years ago, you didn't have much choice. You could subscribe to *Outdoor Life* and maybe every once in a while there would be an article that mentioned something of interest to you. But if you lived somewhere in rural western Montana, you were pretty much on your own. But, I think it's a lot harder now, to operate independently of all the other fly fishers, and I don't think it occurs to that many people to do it.

TB: I think you're right, it's probably almost impossible.

Well, how about some other things that you're proud of, in regards to your fly fishing, and writing, that we haven't talked about.

PS: Oh, gosh, I don't know what I'm entitled to be very proud of. I'm pleased that I've gotten to write this whole series of books about the history and culture of the sport. If people are interested, these books provide an opportunity to look at how fly fishing has evolved over the years, and what it might mean for today's fly fishers.

I'm really surprised at how well the history book did, *American Fly Fishing: a History*. When the museum decided to sponsor that book, and fund me to write it, it was one of those things museums do in their specialty, because it needs to be done. I wrote it in 1985-86, it was published in 1987. Nick Lyons published it—the director at the museum at the time was John Merwin, and I'm sure John, and Nick didn't imagine that it would sell very well. It was just one of those things that needs to exist, as a reference. But considering how few people care to read about fly-fishing history, it did amazingly well. It's still in print and there have been at least four trade printings. So far, I've also located three different special editions besides.

TB: Well, how about some of the greats that you've fished with. You talked about Bud Lilly, there must have been some others, Charlie Brooks, others?

PS: No, I never fished with Charlie. Fishing with Bud has been a treat, of course; my learning curve is pretty much straight up when I get to fish with someone like that. I talk about some of the other people in *Royal Coachman*. Ed Koch has been one of the great modern masters of the spring creeks, and I got to know him and fish with him when I lived in Hershey in the 1980s.

Getting to watch someone who's really skilled, whether it's fly fishing or some other pursuit, is rewarding in ways you can't really articulate. It isn't just that they're teaching you to be better at catching fish. They're introducing you to a bigger world, just sort of tuning you in to a bigger way to see whatever it is.

TB: What is your favorite way to fish? I mean, there's always a time and place for everything, but a lot of times do you go out by yourself and just go fish in the streams that you're...?

PS: Mostly by myself, yes, and I think that's a disadvantage. When I can find someone—finding someone who you have fun fishing with isn't necessarily easy.

If you read the literature, there's a stereotype that sort of runs through the last, at least, hundred, maybe couple hundred years of fishing writing, about how anglers go through stages. The most popular version of it has it that you start out wanting to catch anything and everything, and then you want to catch the most fish, and then you want to catch the most difficult fish. A number of writers have pretty much defined the sport in those terms, as if those are

the stages through which we are all supposed to go. I doubt that it works that way for many of us. It's a little too linear for someone who enjoys all kinds of fishing.

Maybe I'm a good example of the people who don't progress that simply. After more than thirty years fishing, I still love going out someplace where I can catch a whole bunch of fish. There's something really exciting about being out on a back country stream, here in the West somewhere. Fish far from the road aren't fished as often and can be pretty naïve. There is a lot to be said for all that action, all of that energy, all of those fish that you're making contact with, one right after another. In its own special way, this kind of fishing can be as exciting as spending an hour or two trying to make the perfect cast over one inordinately difficult trout on a spring creek.

TB: Any thoughts about the future of fly fishing? Oh, one question that I have is actually about Yellowstone Lake. How is that recovering from the, is that cutthroat...?

PS: Non-native lake trout were illegally introduced in Yellowstone Lake, probably in the 1980s. It's still a serious crisis. The lake trout threaten to destroy the native Yellowstone cutthroat trout population. The lake trout and the native cutthroat trout are very different, in no way interchangeable. The National Park Service has developed an aggressive program to kill off as many of the lake trout as they can, without killing the native fish. And that work has to go on forever until someone comes up with a better way of doing it.

TB: How do they even do that?

PS: They do it with gill nets. Big, long nets, miles of nets, that they string at certain seasons, and at certain places, where they know there are lots of fish. They've experimented with electro-shocking in different places. They've identified places that the lake trout, who are a deep-living fish much of the year, come up into shallower water to spawn, and they've been able to pinpoint some of those, and I think they've had some success with electro-shocking too.

It's not just the lake trout. Whirling disease has also made its way to the lake. In recent years, the second biggest tributary to Yellowstone Lake, Pelican Creek, a stream that only a few decades ago hosted a spawning run of as many as 30,000 trout, is essentially empty. There are virtually no trout left in that entire system, and it's a big system. It's miles and miles of water in the main stream and in the tributaries.

TB: How did the lake trout get introduced? I mean, was it a malicious?

PS: Yes, it was. Actually, the story involves a really interesting piece of scientific detective work. It hasn't allowed us to find out who was responsible, but we know a great deal about the source of the fish. Here's the story. Trout have a little bone in their cheek called an otolith. As it grows, it registers important things about the trout's environment, including significant features of the water chemistry. In short, if you catch a fish and study its otolith, you can learn not just its age but its habitat history. A number of the largest lake trout that have been caught have been identified, through studies of the otolith, as having been hatched in another lake in the park, Lewis Lake. It is even possible to determine which year they were caught and transferred from Lewis Lake to Yellowstone Lake. It turns out that at least three different years, someone caught lake trout in Lewis Lake and transferred them to Yellowstone Lake. This wasn't a casual attempt to put some lake trout where they didn't belong. This was a determined effort to establish lake trout in Yellowstone Lake, and it threatens to largely destroy the native ecosystem of the lake. The largest fish they've caught, that is to say the oldest ones, are known as "founder fish" because they are the ones that when they were caught in Lewis Lake (at a much smaller size) and moved to Yellowstone Lake, they became the original generation of lake trout to spawn in Yellowstone Lake and begin the population irruption that threatens to replace the cutthroat trout. Lake trout are not native to Yellowstone; they were also introduced to Lewis Lake, long ago.

TB: About how long was it between when those founding fish, or whatever, got introduced and when they realized what had happened?

PS: Not too many years before, I think, I'd have to look. We published an article in *Yellowstone Science* about that, actually. The first known transplants were in the 1980s, and the lake trout were officially identified in the mid-1990s. By that time the original fish had spawned and their offspring were beginning to proliferate.

But what we have going on now is the result of this series of clandestine introductions. It's a horrible thing. I mean the changes, the effects it's had, because lake trout biologically don't replace cutthroat trout. They live too deep for the diving birds to capture and eat them, and they don't spawn in the streams, so the bears and the otters and all the other critters that have been able to prey on the native cutthroat trout that do spawn in streams can't get at the lake trout. There's no replacement value for the system in having big lake trout a hundred feet down in Yellowstone Lake.

TB: So, has that affected the bears then and some of the locations where they reside?

PS: In the 1980s, grizzly bears were routinely documented using dozens of Yellowstone Lake tributary streams when the cutthroat trout came into the streams to spawn. Now, I don't know if you could find any bears doing that. It's dramatic. It's a spectacular decline in bear use of that food source. Grizzly bears are pretty flexible; they can often find other foods, but there are dozens of other species that rely on the fish—otters, osprey, pelicans, and others—that also suffer from the loss of the native fish; they can't eat lake trout instead because they can't get to them.

TB: It is sad. Any thoughts about the future of fly fishing?

PS: I don't know what the future will be, but I know there are a lot of questions that we should be asking ourselves. I've tried to suggest some of those questions in a book I have coming out soon, called *If Fish Could Scream: An Angler's Search for the Future of Fly Fishing*. It's an attempt to consider some of the things that seem to be almost like identity crisis issues. Fly fishing involves all sorts of fascinating issues and ideas that are good to think about.

Competition is a good example. The rise of competitive fly fishing in the past thirty years is really interesting. That's a big cultural change in the sport. There is even a world championship of fly fishing, and a lot of other regional and local tournaments. In the book, I consider what the old-time famous fishermen, the graybeards of the sport who we now revere for their wisdom, said about it.

End of Tape Two, Side One (didn't record on Tape Two, Side Two)

TB: You're on.

PS: Oh! Okay, the book also has a chapter about dams, the relationship that fly fishermen have with dams. The rise of tail-water fisheries in the past fifty years has been a big change in our relationship with rivers, and asks some interesting questions about the fly fisher as a conservationist. There's also a chapter about travel. For the first 1800 years that we know that fly fishing has been around, almost everybody who fished never fished more than twenty-five miles from home. And now, fly fishing is this global enterprise, and how does that change your relationship to the resource? How does that change your relationship to other fishermen?

The longest chapter is about the history of cruelty in fishing. That's the one that's entitled "If Fish Could Scream." Generally, fly fishermen have often been notorious snobs. For at least 200 years they have thought that they were the best kind of fishermen, and that fly fishing was the best kind of fishing. Especially in the 19th century, this sense of superiority was all through the literature.

Well it turns out that that sense of superiority mostly arose when fly fishermen began to perceive themselves as a distinct group from bait fishermen, because they perceived themselves as less cruel. In the chapter, I track that idea in the literature. It starts to show up in the 1700s. Fly fishing writers begin to say that because they don't torture bait (worms, frogs, small fish, even insects), they are aesthetically and even morally superior to other fishermen. Much of the origin of this concern with cruelty among fly fishers had to do with cruelty to bait, not cruelty to the fish you're trying to catch.

So fly fishing had this self-perception of the sport as a superior form of angling, the best of all. But then they discovered catch and release, which at first glance seems like such a great idea because it allows them to conserve fish population, and it has been the salvation of many fisheries, including those in Yellowstone. But from the viewpoint of an animal-rights advocate, catch and release fishing is just torturing fish for fun, because the fisherman can't even justify fishing on the grounds that he will eat the fish he catches. Suddenly, fly fishermen, who had been so proud of their high moral standards, are widely perceived as the least moral of all because they fish just "for fun." Of course that criticism is a terrible oversimplification of the sport, but it has placed fly fishers on the defensive to an extent they hadn't experienced before.

So I suppose that this book, *If Fish Could Scream*, is in a way my answer to your question about the future of fly fishing. The book makes it clear that fly fishing, and fly fishing's place in society, is just going to get more complicated.

TB: Yes, probably so. What about yourself then, do you go to a lot of foreign countries and a lot of those hot spots to fish, or are you a strictly local fisherman?

PS: I'm not sure I would if I could afford it. If Marsha and I make a trip somewhere I manage to stop in some places on the way and fish. A couple of times of year I'll splurge and fish one of the private spring creeks around here, the really famous and private spring creeks. But mostly, it's just the public water in the region. I'd love to go to England sometime, that's a big goal for both of us. Marsha for art, and me for history and fishing.

TB: Yes, that'd be a whole different ball game over there. Is it still a very different way of fishing—

PS: Their historic trout streams are still famous, and I'd very much like to see them and experience fishing those streams where so much fly-fishing theory was developed. And they look like beautiful places.

TB: Okay. My last couple questions are kind of just related to your writing. One of the differences or one of the emphases in our program is the emphasis on the literature, and so I decided to ask some writing questions. Would you mind sharing some of your writing habits and practices? Do you keep a journal? Do you write first thing in the day, end of the day? Things like that.

PS: I guess I seem to do better earlier in the day but when I write is mostly a matter of when I have time. Most of what I write involves so much research that the actual writing time is a relatively, comparatively small percentage of the time spent—compared to how much time I've spent at the library, or reading, or whatever I'm doing in order to get the information together.

TB: How do you take notes? Do you use a laptop computer? Or do you write out note cards?

PS: I use a lot of photocopies that I mark up. If my source is a cheap or relatively new book that I own, I'm merciless and mark the book up however much I need to. I know that bothers a lot of serious book lovers, but I love books for what they say and how they help me. I have many books I would never dream of writing in, but books are tools, and under the right circumstances I take extensive notes in books. I also use lots of little sticky notes to find my way back to whatever it is. Lately I also use a digital camera, because often libraries won't allow you to photocopy rare old books, but I don't think that digital cameras are all that great for research; people who think they're just the best thing must really enjoy messing around with computer programs and playing with cameras. Having pictures of the document I need in a camera is a lot less convenient than having a nice clean paper photocopy that doesn't have to be unloaded into a computer, or adjusted for exposure and sharpness in the computer before it's printed out. It's a lot more bother than real paper. But I think that's a good summary of computers anyway.

TB: How has writing shaped your life?

PS: I like to think that it's taught me how to think more clearly about whatever sort of issue I'm hearing about, whether it's something to write about or not. We're all so susceptible to casual or careless thinking, so vulnerable to our emotions in whatever the issue is. A professor I know once said, "Writing is thinking." And if you sit down and write a big long essay or a book on a subject you have to think your way through it. And the real test is how open

you are to learning as you do that, as opposed to just looking for ways to re-enforce the opinions you had when you started.

I've reached the point where when I give talks to student groups about, say about, Greater Yellowstone management issues, I actually tell them this: When you listen to people talk about an issue, whatever the issue is, and you read the different perspectives, you should be most suspicious of the opinions and viewpoints that you find most attractive. You should be most cautious around the viewpoints that you find most comforting and reassuring. Watch out for that feeling of relief you get when you hear something that reinforces what you already want to believe. Because when you're that comforted, you are also least likely to think critically, or test the viewpoint critically. You're happy to be agreed with, and it makes you lazy.

I think writing is really good for testing viewpoints. If you're trying to be really honest with yourself, and if you have to confront evidence and opinions that challenge you, you're probably on the right track. It's hard work to learn that way, but it's the most rewarding too. And it's a great way to approach writing.

TB: You've already talked about what you're currently working on; do have your next project picked out?

PS: Oh, there's usually a lot of stuff going on at once. I've done three editions of a book about the bears of Yellowstone and I'm starting on another one. I seem to put a lot of effort into keeping books in print. Several of my books are in their second or third editions. I hate to see them disappear.

TB: Yes, I noticed that you just had your Yellowstone, or the memoir book reprinted.

PS: Yes, *Mountain Time*.

TB: *Mountain Time*. And, *Royal Coachman* was a new edition. And the fly fishing history came out a couple different times.

PS: My agent just shakes his head, because there's really very little money in new editions, especially of the kinds of books that I write. He tells me I'm his only author who bothers.

TB: Are there still any big holes in the literature? Something that really needs to be researched, or written about?

PS: You mean fly fishing?

TB: Yes.

PS: I'm not really sure where the literature should go. I'd like to see more intellectual penetration. There are some very probing writers out there. Ted Leeson always comes to mind in that regard, and a few others I greatly admire. And there are some writers coming along who are capable of taking these historical and cultural inquiries a lot further than I have, and that's exciting. It's what I've tried to do in books like *Cowboy Trout* and *If Fish Could Scream*. I often find myself wondering about some element of fly fishing, and I assume I will write more about it, but I don't have some single compelling topic in mind for a whole book. Actually, my recent emphasis on writing about fly fishing is kind of running its course in the next year or so. I hope to retire from the National Park Service later this year, and I intend to write more about nature and conservation and a lot less about fly fishing. Maybe that is an indication that I'm running out of fly fishing topics that interest me as much as some have in the past.

TB: Well, anything else that I haven't asked you that you'd like to comment on?

PS: No, that's certainly more than enough talking about myself.

TB: I don't know if there's a way to ask this question, but it does seem like you've had either a lucky life, or, I mean everything kind of fits together. Do you have any thoughts on that, or do you just take it all as it comes?

PS: I feel really, really lucky, especially to have been in the places I was, at the times I was. Looking back, that good fortune is still unbelievable to me, perhaps because I had no expectations at all. I rarely had any long-term plan. I suppose there was a fundamental sense of direction, but I don't think I could ever have articulated it in a way that would convince anyone that I had some notion of what I would do next. I'm amazed at the things that I got to be a part of, and the people I got to know, and all the people who have been kind to me for no reason that I could discern at the time. If that's luck, then I've certainly had my share.

TB: That's fine. Well, thank you very much.