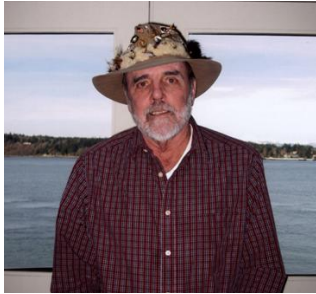




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This interview was conducted with Cam Sigler, Sr., on March 23, 2011, at his home on Vashon Island, near Seattle, Washington. The interviewers are Danny Beatty and Tamara Belts.

**TB:** Today is Wednesday, March 23, 2011. I am Tamara Belts and I am here with Danny Beatty and we are down here with Cam Sigler. We are going to do an oral history and he did just sign the Informed Consent Agreement. So here we go, Danny.

**DB:** Well Cam it is nice meeting you. We would like you to start way back when you were a youngster. I know you liked to do outdoor things when you were growing up. I don't know if you were fly fishing but just start with your remembrance when you lived in the south and going forward to the time that you spent in Richmond, Virginia.

**CS:** I'm originally from Plaquemine, Louisiana, which is just across the river from Baton Rouge. Cam is a nick name for Camile. My grandfather was French and of course my dad's family was German that's the combination. I'm a typical Louisianan I guess, I'm French-Irish and German-Dutch. I can remember when I was a little guy the first fishing I did was with a cane pole and a bobber. My dad used to catch grass shrimp with a net and we'd fish for Bream and Bass... He used a bait casting rod. So I grew up fishing with a bobber and a cane pole with grass shrimp or worms or crickets in the bayous and bar pits of Louisiana.

The bar pits were little lakes along the Mississippi that were overflows from the river. They were dug out to make a levy and we'd fish between the levy and the river. It was full of bass, primarily [marsh bass], bluegills, crappie, catfish that kind of thing. The first fishing outfit I ever had it was a Heddon pal fishing rod, solid fiberglass, bait casting rod and a Langley lure-cast reel, and I still have those today.

Then we left Louisiana we lived in Texas for a while. I don't remember much about [it]. I don't know if we fished much in Texas because we'd always go back to Louisiana. We were just on the border of Texas and Louisiana. Then we moved from there to Ohio and my dad built a coal power plant, he worked for a construction company and we moved about every year and a half to two years. He built hydro-electric and coal powered plants. In Ohio the only thing I remember fishing for were bass, Carp and sunfish. We fished in the Ohio River and had a neighbor, who taught my brother and I, how to make dough balls, so we fished for carp. We always fished wherever we went and I can remember there were some pay-to-fish lakes in Ohio that had bass and stuff in them.

Then from Ohio -- we'd go back to Louisiana in between jobs, we had an apartment there.

**DB:** That was sort of a home-base.

**CS:** Yes, home-base, because my dad might work and then be two or three months between jobs. I remember being in three schools in one year.

***Interruption***

**CS:** I had uncles that fished, I think everyone in Louisiana hunts and fishes. We were hunters too. Then from there we went to upstate New York. We lived in Schenectady and then Scotia. My brother and I used to go and catch night-crawlers with the neighborhood kids. They had really good smallmouth bass fishing in the Mohawk River. (My dad built the power plant in Schenectady.)

Then one Christmas my brother and I both got fly rods (because there was trout fishing up there in some of the smaller streams). They were Shakespeare Wonderods that were yellow and a Shakespeare Single Action Fly Reel. (I probably still have that in a box; I don't have the fishing rod anymore). You couldn't call it fly fishing because what we were doing was floating night-crawlers. Some of the streams were small (I can't remember the name of them). The one we primarily fished in had trout in it; it wasn't too far out of town so we could walk or ride our bikes there.

We would wade it in the summertime, and in the spring just wet wading and drifting night-crawlers down in front of us. We may have had some kind of streamer fly, I'm not sure.

Then when we left New York we moved to Southern California and we lived in Redondo Beach. We went up into the Sierra's a couple of times. I watched people fly fish but we didn't fish, it was mostly a family vacation. We lived two blocks from the beach and so I surf fished. My brother and I and some friends of ours would fish before we went to school in the morning for corvina and surf perch and occasionally catch a small halibut off the beach.

**DB:** Now were you fly fishing?

**CS:** No; still not fly fishing.

We moved from there to Richmond, [Virginia] and I still had my fly outfit.



***Interruption***

**DB:** .... About what age were you at that time?

**CS:** 15; when we moved. I didn't really like it because I'd come from southern California and missed the beaches. It was a big change for me. We started fishing and there was good fishing in Virginia. We fished in the James River which had really good small mouth fishing right in town. I went to work the summer I was 17 in a sporting goods store. Actually we had two stores; it was The Sportsman Shop in Richmond, Virginia. And that's when I met Joe Brooks.

We had expensive fly rods and I'm thinking *Wow!* Up to that point I can remember my dad fishing for bass in Louisiana with a fly rod, but it was just a level line and an automatic reel and a popper. But I was a little guy when we there so he never handed me the fly rod. I remember a guy came in to see a fly rod and gosh, it was a \$100 and something dollars, and I thought, a fishing rod for a \$100 and something dollars, It was an Orvis bamboo rod. That was back in the summer of 1959.

**DB:** Now was this sporting goods store primarily a fishing and hunting type store, or did it have other?

**CS:** It was general sporting goods. It included everything. It was fishing and hunting, and actually when I worked down at the main store, I was going to Richmond Professional Institute and would go in on Saturday morning and open the store at 5:00 am. We sold live bait, it was live shiners; we sold everything. I can't tell you how many kids I outfitted in football, baseball uniforms, and tennis rackets I strung .

**DB:** So it was multiple sporting goods.

**CS:** Yes. I had bowling leagues coming in; it was everything in the sporting goods business. I usually spent most of my time hanging around the fishing and hunting departments, but I did a little bit of everything.

**DB:** So that was when you were ogling the Orvis rods?

**CS:** Yes. I was there about a month and I sold one. I couldn't believe that someone was going to pay that for a fishing rod. We also had other rods that were really expensive, they were Browning Silaflex, I don't know if you remember those or not. Very expensive! They were the first fly rod that I know of with a really drastic taper to them, and they sold for like \$80 bucks, which was unbelievable then.

**DB:** Were these fiberglass or were you into graphite yet?

**CS:** Fiberglass. It was before graphite, the ones we sold the most and used in the south, was again, one of my first rods that I started fishing with which was a Shakespeare Wonderod. The blank was not sanded they still had the rough tape finish on them.

**DB:** I'm trying to remember where Browning was located. It was in Utah.

**CS:** It was in Morgan, Utah.

I met Joe [Brooks] the first year I worked at The Sportsmans Shop when I was 17. I was a pretty shy kid so I didn't talk to him that much. But I started bass fishing in the James River, fly fishing for bass and I salt water fly fished then too. The owner of the store Bill Rothert used to stay at a place on Gwynn's Island, Virginia. I started fly fishing around 1960, I would go down there with him. We wouldn't just fly fish we would throw a plug, on spinning rods, the plug was called the "Old Joe" and it was a popper for striped bass. Bill always had a fly rod, and that comes from his association with Joe. If there were really a lot of fish around, we would fish a skipping bug or one of the Brooks blond series flies. Joe had a whole series of blonde flies like the Honey Blond, the Platinum Blond, Strawberry Blond, Argentine Blond, Black Blond, it was a streamer fly.

**DB:** About how far from Richmond did you have to travel to do this sort of [fishing]?

**CS:** Gwynn's Island as I remember, there wasn't a whole lot of traffic then, and it was mostly two-lane highway, it would take us about an hour and a half maybe.

**DB:** Sixty miles?

**CS:** Maybe sixty miles, yes.

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**DB:** And you were at the south end of Chesapeake Bay.

**CS:** Yes. Actually we were on, it would have been the south end of Chesapeake South; it would have been the southwest end of Chesapeake Bay. Then actually sometimes on the way there, we would fish a place called Chickahominy Lake which was only about 30 miles out of Richmond. I fished mostly a level fly line and popping bugs and of course being in the retail business I didn't have weekends off, so I fished by myself a lot. I would just scull the boat with my left hand, with a little paddle, little Jon boat and fish for bass along the lily pads and reed lines.

**DB:** Well at this time, about 1960, you were finding during that time that there was quite an improvement in the fly lines. They were starting to develop the saltwater lines.

**CS:** Yes, the saltwater lines, because I finally got to the point in the late sixties, early seventies, where I would only take a fly rod, this forced me to learn to fly fish under all conditions. I fished a lot with my brother and other friends; we fished a lot for blue fish and striped bass in the salt water. That's when they developed the fly lines. I started fishing like most people in the south with the level line, and then I went to tapered lines and then if we fished trout, we used double taper lines. One of the nice things about Richmond was, I could drive a 100 miles in each direction and, east or west and catch anything from a White Marlin to a Rainbow Trout. We fished and we fished. I fished the upper James, which was great smallmouth bass fishing. We used a little blue popper; it was called a [Gerbubble] bug, and different kinds of insect patterns. Then if we trout fished we fished the Rapidan, which was on the edge of the edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. But then I could go to the coast and I could fish striped bass, blue fish. I hooked a white marlin on a fly basically by accident.

**DB:** Were you adding to your fly rod [collection]?

**CS:** I had. My biggest fly rod was a 12 weight.

**DB:** You were getting up that big by then.

**CS:** Yes. It was 12 weight and that was a Shakespeare Wonderod and a #1298 Pflueger Medalist reel. That was the biggest reel we had. Unless you had a [Fin-Nor] because they were making Fin-Nor reels. Joe had a Fin-Nor and he had the Zwarg's and stuff. But I couldn't afford those.

**DB:** Why did Joe Brooks patronize this store in Richmond?

**CS:** It was mainly because of Bill Rothert and the other owner Moses Nunnally. Moses fished with Joe quite a bit, and they were the ones that actually started The Virginia Anglers Club. You see Joe grew up in Baltimore, and then he moved to Richmond; he lived in not too far from the James River, where the Nickel Bridge was [Boulevard Bridge]. I think it was because of the friends that he had in Richmond.

**DB:** I thought this would come later, but did Lefty Kreh ever accompany him?

**CS:** Not with me. Lefty met him long before I did. Lefty met Joe in 1947 or 1948.

**DB:** Long before this then. You said he came from Baltimore, so that's why I was sure .... Did Lefty come down to Richmond with him?

**CS:** The first time that I met Lefty was in Barnegat Bay. I was 19, and I drove Joe up there to Barnegat Bay, New Jersey. They were starting a new fly fishing club called The Salt Water Fly Rodders of America and that's where I first met Lefty. Then Mark Sosin was the secretary, so that's where I met Mark. Actually I had met Mark before that because he and Susan had come to Joe's house and Joe and Mary invited me over to have dinner with them. I think I was 19 then, 19 or 20, something like that.

**DB:** That was one of the really [big clubs] of the Federation.

**CS:** Exactly. That was in Barnegat Bay, New Jersey. And the fishing wasn't very good, it was cold and nasty, but for a kid it was like you walked around "goggle" eyed all day, because all these famous fly fishermen were there, Joe, Mark, Lefty, John Alden Knight (Jack) who published the solunar tables.

**DB:** Did you join that club?

**CS:** I'm sure I did then because everyone there did.

**DB:** So you were 19 years old and at that point you were very good friends with Joe Brooks and let's continue that .... Now you are really into fly fishing ... and primarily now with salt water fly fishing?

**CS:** Both. Every time I went bass fishing I took a fly rod because I had made up my mind that I was going to learn how to fly fish. A lot of times you take the easy way out so when I went down to Gwynn's Island, Virginia, and I'd fish under the bridge there, I was determined that I was going to learn to fly fish, particularly for striped bass and blue fish. So when I would only take a fly rod, I got to the point, if I was by myself (of course when I went with other guys they took spinning gear and other things), I only took a fly rod, because I knew that if the fish were there, and if I wasn't catching them on a fly then I was going to pick up the spinning rod, and I thought I've got to figure this out. So I just [took the fly rod], I wouldn't have anything in the boat but a fly rod.



**DB:** About this time your association with Brooks, you actually travelled with him to some of these places he went to fish and to write articles and so forth, is that right?

**CS:** Actually I didn't, until I came out West. I used to take care of his fishing tackle. He would go somewhere and he would call me on the phone, or send me a note from somewhere, and he would say, "Cam, I'm going here next," (I learned a lot about fly fishing from him because he had rods and reels for everything), "would you go over and put this stuff together." He's in the [Florida] Keys and then he's going to Scotland or something .

**DB:** You were like a caddy I guess.

**CS:** Yes, kind of. Then in 1964 I thought well I want to salt water fly fish so I dropped out of school and he got me a job at Cheeca Lodge in the Florida Keys. I went down to Cheeca and worked as a bell hop, and the reason I did was, I was a young guy, I worked at night until one in the morning, but then I could fish all day. I used to take the overflow from Abel's Tackle Box; the guys fishing that didn't have guides. But I was around the guys that ran the

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boats for Cheeca who were Jimmy Albright and Cecil Keith, and that's also where I met Ted Williams. He used to come to Cheeca and hit golf balls and I'd see him out on the flats and of course he knew I was a friend of Joe's and they were really good friends, they'd fish together all the time.

**DB:** For us Northwesterners you've reached the point where I'd like you to make some comparisons and some explanations. You use the [phrase] "fishing from boats" and you had your captains on these boats that would take people out to fish; and then you mentioned the words "flats," and so I'd like you to see if we could come up with the transition or how the flat fishing got started or if that had been going on a long time and focus on fly fishing.

**CS:** It had been going on a long time. Matter of fact, I think they were caught prior to that but Joe caught the first, the story goes, tailing bonefish on a fly. There was a guide before him that fished with a fly rod that fished them with a spoon. In the Florida Keys, Jimmy Albright who was a real famous guide, and when I worked for Cheeca we had two off-shore boats and the guides there, Jimmy and Cecil Keith, depending on where you wanted to go they would run big off-shore boats for sailfish and for marlin and deep-water fishing. But then at the same time the guides also ran skiffs for fishing the shallow water flats. There were sand flats all through the Keys and that's where you fished, the bonefish would come up to feed on the flats and you could use spinning rods with live bait or jigs, or fly fish not everybody did it, but all of the guys that I knew, fly fished ( I never knew Ted to do anything but fly fish). And there was another guy, he used to fish for jewfish he caught the world record on a fly, which is like a big grouper. He was from Pennsylvania. His name was Bart Foth, and you'd look in his boat and he would have five fly rods rigged with different things. It was kind of like today's professional bass fishermen. I know Ted always had a bunch of fly rods in the boat and he'd pick up a rod, he wouldn't necessarily change a fly all of the time.

**DB:** Are you 19, 20 years old at this time and did you realize who you got to know and did you understand ...

**CS:** I just thought I was just very fortunate to know those people. But I was determined that that's the way I was going to fish and that I enjoyed fishing. I would fish other ways too.

**DB:** Okay, this flats thing, one thing that we got on the ferry and we went up the ramp and when we go back we'll be going down the ramp because of tide changes here our 12-15 feet. On these flats, what do you find there?

**CS:** Two to three feet, max.

**DB:** Two or three?

**CS:** Yes.

**DB:** So just waders you can pretty much stay out all day.

**CS:** Well you wet wade.

**DB:** Oh wet wade.

**CS:** You could fish from a skiff, or you just wade the flats. You're not in the deep water. In the Keys the bonefish, permit will feed right up in the real shallow stuff and then you'll see their tails. Their little heads are down and their "tailing" on the flats.

**DB:** So how long were you in Florida at this time?

**CS:** I was there only from January – April, now they fish the Keys all the way into June and July and the tarpon fishing is great in June in that area. When I was down there the tourist would leave either just before Easter or just after Easter and there wasn't much to do.

**DB:** So you went back to Richmond?

**CS:** Went back to Richmond, went back to work for The Sportsman's Shop.

**DB:** I see.

**CS:** I had a radio show, advertising the store; it was called The Dixie Fisherman. And I would get fishing reports once a week, like on Thursdays and I would contact all the offshore skippers down in the Carolinas and Virginia Beach and like Ed Allen that ran a camp on the Chickahominy River and some of the captains in Chesapeake Bay. I'd give fishing reports and fishing tips, the program was a half hour.

**DB:** A bit ago you mentioned that early on, on the east coast you were up to size 12 rods, big rods. Were you involved with fly fishing for these much larger fish? Was that during the time that they actually went out for the big sailfish and so forth? Or was that really a transition before you?

**CS:** That was just in the transition, that's what was interesting about the Salt Water Fly Rodders of America, we wrote the rules and kept the records for fly fishing the salt. IGFA took over later, but the heaviest line class was 16 pound tippet. (We had different line classes). No one ever thought that we would be catching the kind of fish we catch now using a fly rod. That's why the 16 pound was the heaviest line class.

**DB:** So that's what I'm getting at, you were sort of on the ground floor of this type of [fishing].

**CS:** And you know I don't know if I needed to but I used 16 pound for striped bass and blue fish; I caught a 19 pound blue fish off of Virginia Beach while fishing off the *Striper Three* and they thought I was nuts. I fished with guys, we were fishing for white marlin and sailfish and big blue fish because they were there. I had a red and white tarpon fly which was my favorite and of course the blue fish will eat anything. If they are feeding it doesn't make any difference what you throw out there they are going to bite it. They'd bite you if you jumped in the water I think. I caught the 19 pound blue fish in 1964. I think it was a world record, I don't know, I never bothered with it.

**DB:** At least at that time.

**CS:** At that time. It was when there were a lot of big blue fish around. And it was just the idea of throwing a fly at it to see if I could do it. I was lucky because he didn't cut the leader; their teeth are like razor blades.

**DB:** Was it while you were at Richmond that you met Eddie Bauer?

**CS:** No, I didn't.

**DB:** So coming back to Richmond, let's move from that point on to when you met Eddie Bauer. Would that be a time frame about right?

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**CS:** Actually I came back to Richmond when I left Florida and Sue and I got married. Then we had Cam Jr. so I was pretty much entrenched in the sporting goods business. The last time I was in Florida I came back to Richmond, and went to work for Dixie Sporting Goods in the hunting and fishing departments. Joe used to come in when he was in town and we'd have lunch probably once or twice a week, downtown. The store was right downtown. Joe signed a contract as a consultant with Eddie Bauer, not with Bauer but with Bill Neimi, who had just bought Bauer out basically (1968) and with young Bill. Well of course the history of Eddie Bauer, you know he was really in the fishing and hunting business, the old Bauer, when Eddie had it. He's the guy that designed the flasher.

**DB:** Oh is that right.

**CS:** Because I went and found a spoon vendor for him one time up in the old building, up on Pine Street. But the way I got to Bauer was that they were looking for somebody to put him back in the hunting and fishing business and Joe said, "Well I have [the young man for you]!" I almost didn't come out here because it was a long way, and I was really a southern boy, but it looked like there were so many opportunities. So I came out in September 1968 to get out of the retail business and go into product development and marketing and putting together hunting and fishing products for Bauer. Well they fired their store manager on the way out and when I got [out here] I was the only one that had any retail experience so they put me in the retail store at 615 East Pine. It was a little sixteen hundred square foot store and then a couple of years later we built the big store. But that's how I got here. I didn't meet Eddie Bauer until I think in the eighties.

**DB:** The person.

**CS:** Yes, the person.

**DB:** But you came to the downtown Seattle store?

**CS:** Yes, it was up on Pine Street.

**DB:** And then ... now we want to kind of keep things in sequence so was it between, I might have got ahead of ourselves with the Eddie Bauer, was there something more at Richmond to that time that should be included in the time frame?

**CS:** Not so much I think; well when I was in Richmond of course I was either fishing or hunting most of the time when I was off work. I was either fly fishing in the James River in the afternoons or early mornings before I went to work, or I was over on Virginia Beach or Chesapeake Bay fishing for saltwater fish or in the Carolinas. I remember [Mark] Sosin and I teaching fly fishing for the University of North Carolina, at a school in Hatteras. I remember going with guys from Richmond, clients, and we'd go out of Hatteras, North Carolina. We always fished, I'm trying to think of the name of the boat, but the captain's name was Tex Balance, I'll never forget that. I'd take my fly rods and the other guys, most of them were from the Virginia Anglers, and I remember sitting on the top of a wreck off of Hatteras with my big Shakespeare fly rod and catching amberjack and [the other guys] were just shaking their head. Mark and I harvested a lot of fish then, catching Dorado or dolphin fish.

**DB:** You went down to North Carolina to teach a class in fly fishing?

**CS:** Yes, for the university.

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**DB:** Did you develop your own curriculum?

**CS:** Yes, we did, Mark would take a group and I would tke a group and teach different things and the we would switch groups. We had a couple of guys, but it was primarily Mark , myself, and Karl Osborne from Florida, he was a really good fly fisherman . I'm a knot guy, so I taught knots and ... and then I taught a bunch of people, at the swimming pool how to roll cast and how to cast , and then the next day we went off-shore.

**DB:** Did you communicate with: is it Humphrey's at Pennsylvania?

**CS:** Joe Humphrey's?

**DB:** Yes.

**CS:** I met him.

**DB:** With this fly fishing at the college level thing?

**CS:** No.

**DB:** I wondered if for your curriculum you exchanged things with other colleges.

**CS:** No. We didn't. We made our own

**DB:** You made your own. Okay, that's fine.

**CS:** North Carolina wasn't that far for me. It was a few hours. It was just below Virginia Beach and a matter of fact my dad and my brother and I used to surf fish for Bluefish and Channel Bass down there before that time so I knew the area. And that was the biggest issue that I had with leaving Virginia, was the fishing. Because I really enjoyed the off-shore, the salt water fly fishing. That was the biggest issue I had, that I was going too far away from those fish. But fortunately over the years I've gotten to do it quite [a bit].

**DB:** So you arrived in Seattle in 1968.

**CS:** September 1968.

**DB:** Who were some of the people that you met here? Like the guys from the Washington Fly Fishing Club maybe?

**CS:** I met two guys, one of them worked for Eddie Bauer and he was a friend of Joe's. Joe would come out here and go fishing [with him], his name was Bill McGuire. I don't know if you remember that name or not.

**TB:** Oh, from Wenatchee!

**CS:** Yes.

**TB:** We're going to interview him.

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**CS:** I worked with Bill for a long time. Bill was head of fishing and hunting. He was a talented guy. *Wow!* Then Don Ives, they were my first sponsors in the Washington Fly Fisher's Club. Then I kind of dropped out and then I joined again, but I don't even know if many of the old Washington Fly Fishers remember that they were my original sponsors.

**DB:** What I'm trying to lead up to is your experiences here now, where did they take you?

**CS:** The first fly fishing I did here was on Vashon. Actually I fished on the little creek down on Vashon because I was working six days a week.

The first time I went fly fishing for trout here was in Lake Easton with Dr. Rex Palmer. I took the day off, I was working at the store, and it was opening day – it was during a week day, and he took me to Lake Easton. He had a little boat. He was a classic. He smoked a pipe all the time. Great guy; tied his own flies. I had never been up to Snoqualmie since I had come over the pass from Virginia to work in Seattle. It was really strange for me and it was cold because it was in April. We actually caught a lot of fish. So that's the first real fly fishing that I did when I came to Washington.

We lived on the other side of the Island just around the corner from Dolphin Point. I would walk down to a vacant lot with a bulk head that was the first salt water fly fishing I did here. (I forgot about that I haven't thought about that for years). I saw these fish down on the beach on high tide. I thought I don't know what kind of fish they were. I had some Atlantic salmon flies which are probably worth a lot today. I thought, hum? So I took my fly rod down on the bulkhead and sea-run cutthroat, I had no idea what they were until I caught like three of them and they were maybe, I don't know, 15-16 inches.

I brought them up and a neighbor said, "Wow, where do you catch those?" I said, "Down off the bulkhead." He said, "Off the bulkhead? Those are sea-run cutthroat trout, they are really good eating."

This would have been in 1968. He said, "You caught those on a fly?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well we usually catch a lot of them, but we use pop gear and worms." They didn't have any idea that you could fly fish for those fish.

Then the next time I fly fished I caught my first steelhead. I have a neighbor that grew up over on the Peninsula, and he went to visit his cousin and I went with him. The first steelhead I caught, it wasn't on a fly, was in the Queets River. I had taken my fly rod but I really didn't know what I was doing so he gave me a spinning rod with a hot shot on it. I hooked the fish; I didn't even know I had hooked it. The fish was jumping up the river and he said, "Hey Cam, that's your fish." But I had no idea that it was, it was probably a seven or eight pound fish. Then I took out the fly rod and tried fly fishing for them because I figured out where the fish was.

**DB:** So through the seventies you did do more and more fly fishing in this area?

**CS:** Yes; more and more fly fishing.

**DB:** You finally got into steelhead fishing?

**CS:** I have to tell you, that fish there (referring to a mounted fish in the room), Joe's fish. I caught one that was twenty-six and a half pounds on the Babine River [northern British Columbia]. We opened the new store, and Joe, Bill, and Don wanted to know if I wanted to go fishing. It was up on the Babine River and we drove up there. It

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was Joe, Bill McGuire, Don Ives, Leigh Perkins from the Orvis Company, Ed Reddy from Miami, Florida; Jack Albright [he] was a great fly fisherman. He was a ski rep from here in Seattle, and a friend of his, and, it was interesting because the fishing was tough. I remember I was fishing with Jack and Joe was in a cabin in the lower river on the Babine.

### ***End of Side One Tape One***

I caught the one steelhead on the Queets and the next two, one was an eighteen pound hen and one was a twenty pound hen.

Then we took these, and we were going to go have lunch with Joe, and I'll never forget, we came around the corner in the boat, and Joe was standing out on the deck on this little cabin, and Jack said, "Cam, hold up your fish." So I held one up in each hand and Joe started yelling and clapping.

Then we went back to the same place, where I had caught those two. (I'm telling fish stories now). I thought well I've caught two fish so I just sat on the boat. I think it was called the dead-man's drift. Joe fished it, Jack fished it, Ed fished it, there were two boats of us and I just sat in the boat because I thought I'd already caught two fish. Then they had fished it down and I thought it was getting late so I just went out and I made a couple of drifts and it's funny, they had all fished it and I cast and I saw the fish roll and I hooked it and it was the big buck. I had a nine foot Orvis rod; it would be equivalent to a nine weight now. It was a GAF line and a shooting head. I hooked the fish and it started across the river and it got on the backing and was throwing rocks around and stuff. Jack was standing there and he said, "Cam, that's a really big fish." (When I hooked it he came up, and then Joe came up and was standing off my left shoulder). Well I put pressure on the fish, I had a Farlow reel, it expanded the spool, and I couldn't reel. That's how much pressure I had on the fish. The fish was going down river and Joe said, "Strip line." So I started stripping line off the reel and he said, "Strip the line and give him slack." And this is something I'll remember forever because I never would have done that. "Strip the line and give him slack and it will take the pressure off, he'll turn and his head will be pointing up stream when you take the pressure off." There's a big rock and he said, "Cam, if he gets behind the rock, he's gone." I said, "Okay." And he said, "Okay, we are going to walk down," (and he walked with me). He said, "Just start stripping in line." And he said, "Jack, put your net in the water." *This is a true story.* He said, "Jack, just put the net in the water." He had a big salmon net. He said, "Now, when we get below the fish, when you hit him, you strike hard and you point the rod tip right at Jack's net." And I did and you know where the fish went? Right in the net!

**DB:** I'll be darned. And you had all of this line draped and ...

**CS:** He says, "When you hit it, the fish is going to panic. You can steer a fish just like riding a horse." He says, "When you hit the fish, you point the rod right at Jack's neck and I did." He knew where it was going; the fish ran right in the net.

**DB:** Through your business, Eddie Bauer, or through the fly line company, did you meet the McLeod's at this time?

**CS:** No, I never met them. We were actually at Norlakes Lodge and the guy that ran it was Ejnar Madsen. The lodge was just below the weir from Babine Lake. But that was my [lesson], I learned that and now I've done that so many times, just steering around. I've released steelhead using rods as small as one weight.

**DB:** And during this time you were with Eddie Bauer you continued to go back to Florida for some fishing?

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**CS:** Not very often. Not for years. No.

**DB:** You were focused on the Northwest.

**CS:** I'd go back to Louisiana to visit my relatives but other than that I was focused on the Northwest.

**DB:** And expanding the fly fishing department at Eddie Bauer, you must have expanded your fishing areas and in the area also.

**CS:** Just here in Washington. I used to fish the Yakima a lot. In the retail business I worked a lot, I didn't have a lot of time.

**DB:** Okay. So we are moving up to, and I'd like you to keep the sequence in time a bit here, when you went into your own business and then you started developing equipment?

**CS:** Well I did that also for Eddie Bauer. I was in charge when Eddie Bauer had their line of fly rods. Actually the original rods were built by Lamaglass. It was interesting Joe left about a year after I worked for Eddie Bauer and I thought, wow, now what's going to happen. Joe liked a soft action fly rod and Lamaglass made the first Eddie Bauer rods and they were very slow action fly rods. At one time, when I was managing the Third and Virginia store we had probably the best fly fishing department without question in Seattle. We also did at Fifth and Union when we moved from Third and Virginia to Fifth and Union, I may be out of line in saying it, but Eddie Bauer could have owned the fly fishing market in Seattle. In the transition of course in selling and stuff a lot of people lost interest but we had the finest. We had the finest fly shop and one of the finest gun shop on the west coast, the only one that may have been better was [Kurrs] on Rodeo Drive, but it was probably the finest hunting and fly fishing shop in Seattle for years; particularly at the Fifth and Union store.

**DB:** Was Frederick and Nelson's ...

**CS:** Yes, Frederick and Nelson's was there. They had a great outdoor department. They had a great gun department. I'm trying to think of the manager he was a super guy.

**DB:** So there was some competition?

**CS:** Absolutely, yes. But it was a different time, we were also friends. The idea was to take care of the customer. If I didn't have something I'd call them and if they were looking for something they would call me. Warshal's was the same way. I can remember, now I'm going back to my retail days, but I can remember one of the officer's at Eddie Bauer saying, „Why do you do that? You've given them business.” I said, “Yes, but I tell you what, I'm going to take care of that customer because when he's looking for something again, where is he going to come first?”

**DB:** Reciprocity.

**CS:** But I can remember kind of getting chewed out because I sent a customer somewhere else. And I thought this guy doesn't understand business. That was the whole idea. But Warshal's was a great sporting goods store also.

**DB:** So somewhere along here you became a member of the Order of the Junglecock.

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**CS:** Brotherhood of the Junglecock; that's when I lived in Richmond I used to drive up there with Joe, and we took three kids with us, Marvin Williams, now a doctor in Virginia, Robin Church, now with Oregon Fish & Wildlife, and Burt Lindler, a newspaper writer in Montana, I think I went three or four times. We took a bunch of kids fishing and it still exists. It was a great experience, teaching young kids to fish and about the outdoors.

**DB:** I remember at the conclave people from the east would talk about this group and I didn't know much about it. But it was evidently quite a prestigious group of people.

**CS:** It was, yes, from all over. We fished Big Hunting Creek in Pennsylvania.

### ***Interruption***

**CS:** Yes, I'm sorry I missed that. I should have picked that up.

**DB:** Well Lefty Kreh was part of that; it was one of kind of his things as I remember Lefty. I haven't seen him for a few years.

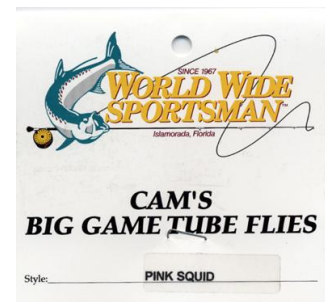
**CS:** I think so; I don't think I knew him the.

**DB:** He loved to teach.

**CS:** He always has.

**DB:** Now were you still with Eddie Bauer when you developed the tube fly? You developed certain types of clothing.

**CS:** When I was with Eddie Bauer I had the retail part of hunting and fishing, but at one time there was only a couple of us so I did not only the hardware in the fishing tackle and the hunting but I designed and developed their hunting clothing – private label stuff and the stuff that we made: hunting clothing, some down clothing, because that's what we were. I put in some of the first women's wear in the Eddie Bauer catalog that wasn't made by Eddie Bauer, at that time there were only three of us in the department. That's when I worked with Bill McGuire. Bill was one of the best product guys when it came to hunting and fishing and one of the most talented artists I've ever seen. I've watched Bill McGuire sit down and carve knives out of balsa wood, fixed blade knives that he sent to Gerber Knife Company, and they made knives off of the ones that he carved and it was a whole series of Eddie Bauer knives.



**DB:** But your mind and your heart was still back in the Florida Keys wasn't it? In terms of the designs of clothing and this flat shoe, a certain sandal that you developed.

**CS:** Actually that was after I left Bauer because Bauer wasn't really in that market. I was very fortunate; when I worked for Bauer I also had their commercial and international sales division. I set Eddie Bauer up in Japan and I got to fish all over Japan. When I'd go to Japan I would go for a week or ten days. That's back in the early eighties. I'd go to Japan like three times a year and they'd come here. They loved this spot. I'd go visit our dealers all over

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Japan, and at the same time I'd go fishing with the Japanese media. I'd fish with one magazine editor one day, another one the next day, and another one the next day. Most of the fishing was in the mountains. It was trout fishing for Yamamame, the Japanese trout. So I've been very fortunate to go fishing in a lot of places.

And then when I left Eddie Bauer when Spiegel bought them they wanted to do their one thing. So our distributor in Japan basically said, "Well we are going to close the Eddie Bauer stores." And then the Japanese asked me to sign a contract for the name for five years. The original Eddie Bauer stores became Cam Sigler stores.

**TB:** Really! Cool!

**CS:** Yes.

**DB:** You were kind of an ambassador for fly fishing if you were doing this.

**CS:** Yes. I fished with some of the best fly fishermen in Japan. I remember going with one of our vice presidents and we got to a hotel and all these people were waiting for me. I didn't know it but they were all the guys that I fished with. He couldn't figure that out. He wasn't a fisherman. He said, "You know these guys?" And I said, "Yes, I've fished with them." But I didn't know they were going to be in the hotel waiting for me in the lobby. So I guess I was kind of an ambassador. I never thought about it that way.

**DB:** What went through your mind that transpired in developing this tube fly? It has become quite the thing; not only for the saltwater fishing but even now with freshwater lake fishing and stuff.

**CS:** Actually it's an old, old, pattern. I really didn't develop it.

**DB:** You improved on it then. You're given credit for it.

**CS:** Actually the first ones I ever used: the guy that I caught the first steelhead with on the Queets, Bill Knox, gave me one. He tied a red and white tube fly he called a firecracker. We used it trolling for salmon out here. That was my first introduction to a tube fly. But tube flies are old patterns from primarily England and Scotland. They were used for Atlantic salmon for years. . . When I first started fishing for billfish in 1997, I went with Jack Sampson to Tropic Star Lodge. I always liked pink. My favorite pattern for striped bass was pink, pink and white. . . I came back from Tropic Starr fishing for these fish and I love the big fish, and I thought well I've got to come up with something. The hooks are all going to rust, you can rinse them off and stuff, and I thought everybody wants a big fly because we would tie a fly on one hook and then I tied two flies and then I'd wire one to another. I thought there's got to be a better way, so I thought well how about tube flies? So I started tying the patterns on tube flies and realized that I could make a fly this long (demonstrating how long), a foot long if I wanted to, or two feet long, just by stacking them up.

**DB:** Did you get involved with, in the local (Puget Sound or Northwest area) with the salmon, fly fishing for salmon out in the salt [water]? With your background in the Southeast, did that transfer up here to the Northwest any?

**CS:** Yes, the first salmon that I hooked on a fly was right over there (pointing) you can see it on the other side of the ferry.

**DB:** Was it a cast fly?

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**CS:** Oh yes. That would have been ... I was catching cutthroat on flies in the sixties. But I never hooked a salmon. We lived on Dolphin Point, in a little cabin for a year, and I think I hooked a salmon once out of the little dinghy but I'm not sure. But I went over there a I saw a fish moving on, I call it a flat, but it's on that north point north at Southworth. I cast a blue and white skipping bug to it, a top water fly, and that was the first silver I ever caught on a fly out here.

**DB:** Did you get involved in any way with Bruce Ferguson and Les Johnson and those that developed the book and so forth?

**CS:** Yes. Well, I fished with Bruce and Les, there's a picture of Bruce and me in the first book, *Fly fishing for [Pacific] salmon*, down in the south sound fishing from, they were the pen raised ones, and I had caught them out here prior to that. I can remember going right over to Southworth it was in March actually, years ago, and had my best day between cutthroat and black mouth and resident silvers. I caught seventeen on a fly by myself right over there at Southworth. I was fishing sinking lines. I fished them on the outgoing tide because that area is better on an outgoing tide. I'd cast down-tide and drift over the top of them so the line would sink and then strip it up from the bottom.

I have a tube fly that looks like a candlefish, they had a run of fish right out in front here; it's the only time it's ever really happened. I kept looking out the window (our office was in the little guest house) and I was watching these fish. There were cutthroat and then I saw some salmon and it was silvers and I caught one, and I thought well, he wasn't very big, and I threw it up on the beach. I wanted to cut it open and see what they were eating. (This is another fish story). I was down there and my youngest son was standing on the deck and he starts yelling at me and I'm looking to see if there's more fish coming (actually I could see their tails and the bump in the water). They were a school of fish. I turned around, and what happened was, an eagle was picking up my fish, that I had thrown on the beach. So the next one I caught I quit fishing, I came up, cleaned the fish and it had a candlefish in it. I put the candlefish on my desk, got that vice out and my materials and I sat there with this little candlefish on my desk and tied a tube fly that was the color of the candlefish. And they still work; then I tied a whole series of them.

**DB:** Were you involved in Van Gytenbeek and the magazine at all?

**CS:** Only to do an article out here, we did it with Steve Raymond, and Les Johnson.

**DB:** He was in Seattle when he started, I wondered if he ... the focus of the magazine seemed to be more what you were into, more what you had originally been into.

**CS:** The saltwater stuff, yes. Actually I was for a short time on the Board of Directors for *Salmon trout steelheader*, just as kind of an advisor.

**DB:** Have we done pretty good about keeping things in a sequence?

**CS:** Yes.

**DB:** Have we pretty much covered all of the areas that were fly fishing? We want to focus on your fly fishing of course.

**CS:** Yes.

**DB:** I really don't have anything else. Oh you did write two books.

**CS:** I wrote one: *Guide to fly fishing*, but the big thing right now is the salt water stuff, when I started telling you about t developing that fly and I think we got off the subject. But when I came to tub flies, and actually the one on the corner up there is the Original pattern.

**TB:** The pink one? Wow.

**CS:** That's the number one, right now that's probably the number one billfish fly in the world. You can pick it up off there; it shows up better, its hot pink, it shows up better if you shoot it from the side.

**TB:** That's amazing. I've got to take a picture of that.

**DB:** It is.

**CS:** Then not only did we do that, but we also rig them to international game fish specifications. We do five colors, pinks number one, and it's probably 70% of the sales. Most of these flies wind up in Central America, South America, Australia, New Zealand where there's a lot of big game, and south Florida.

**DB:** This is an example of your online business?

**CS:** Exactly. And this is the original head. The ones now have changed. I used to use glitter. The reason that I came up with this popper head is that I noticed that when I was in Panama we had, just a round EVA foam, popper and I watched a fish eat the fly like eight times before I hooked him – a singled fish. So I came back and went downstairs in the garage, put the EVA foam head on a drill and I trimmed the back down, left the front the original size, drilled three holes so water would go through, it still pops like it originally did, it has the same surface face, we fish them with sinking lines most of the time, believe it or not, because the line drag is less, so when this fly sinks, if you strip it, it sends bubbles over the back of the fly, hence the name Bubble Head.

**DB:** This leader is approximately what?

**CS:** IGFA rules, the front hook is right here (referring to one in front of him). It cannot be over twelve inches from the t the eye of the first hook to the top of the connecting knot and this is a Bimini Twist and this is a Huffnagle, matter of fact that 2 x 4 you see there ... that's my Bimini Twist machine.

**DB:** Yes, that's what I was getting at is that this leader is much heavier than your actual ...

**CS:** This is a 100 pound bite and this is IGF 20 pound tippet.

**DB:** And you were talking 16 a while back.

**CS:** But it was raised to 20 back in the late nineties, they raised the weight to 22 KG or 20 pound.





**DB:** You commented some time ago that you were a knot guy.

**CS:** I like knots, yes.

**DB:** But somewhere along the line you took up the tying, the fly tying part too then obviously.

**CS:** I've tied flies since I was in my teens; I used to tie bass flies all the time when I lived in Virginia. And streamers like the *Brooks Blondes*. You know what I should do, I should show you some of the original patterns. Do you want to get that box, there?

**DB:** Did you do anything in Montana with Brooks?

**CS:** I did once, just before he passed away. I go to Montana almost every year. We have an organization called the Axolotl Society and it started in the sixties, and there's a bunch of us from all over the country who get together once a year and go fishing for three days. We have rituals; I've been in charge now for quite a while but through attrition which isn't good, but we will be in Fernie, BC, this year on the Elk River.

Joe Brooks died in the seventies (1972). Here's some of the original Brook flies, the guy that tied these was Bill Gallasch. He tied all of Joe's, Joe developed the fly; Bill tied this, it is part of the blond series. That's the first sailfish popper. Bill Gallasch tied that one.

**DB:** I can't think of his name, the fellow from the Washington Fly Club that's into the beach fishing for salmon, using a modified popper head.

**CS:** Miyawaki [Beach Popper; designed by Leland Miyawaki]; yes, a modified popper. I've caught them on little poppers out here.

That's the original skipping bugs that were tied. These were tied by Bill Gallasch in Richmond, Virginia. If you notice the hooks are nice stainless steel hooks. And here's one ... this you never see ... this is an original Gerbubble Bug, it was used for bass fishing.

**TB:** Wow.

**CS:** And where was it? Here's the original [tarpon] flies. Here's some you'll recognize.

**DB:** I teach introductory fly tying up in Burlington and that's kind of fun to get people started. I've been doing it for many, many, many years. I'm a retired school teacher. I used to teach at the public school.

**CS:** That's a Phillips Pink Shrimp, one of the first commercial bonefish flies ever tied. And here's an original bonefish fly that you never see anymore.

**DB:** This has characteristics of Bruce's Euphausid.

**CS:** Exactly, yes. But this was tied specifically for bonefish.

**DB:** There's a little bit different, but like this part back here is similar.

**CS:** The big eye, yes. That's a bonefish fly that was tied by I think that pattern was done by Frankie Albright, Jimmy Albright's wife. She was one of the first women guides in the Keys.

**DB:** Did you ever fish with Billy Pate?

**CS:** Oh yes.

**DB:** He used to come to the conclaves and stuff. He was one of the really Southeastern salt water fly fishers that went around and promoted that type of fishing.

**CS:** Actually the one that got Billy really started in fly fishing was reading Joe's books. I think the first time that he met Joe was in Argentina. But yes, I've know him well. I used to fish his tournaments all the time. He's not doing really well now. It's interesting he doesn't know who I am even if I talk to him. But I've known him for a long time. Actually I almost went to work for him and didn't know it at the time.

**DB:** This may not be a fair question, so I'm not sure we should be .... But have you ever thought of being a snowbird like they call the people who go to the south for part of the year, like going back to Florida?

**CS:** Oh yes, I think about it all the time.

**DB:** You did that, or you think about it?

**CS:** I think about it but I don't do it.

**DB:** Stay for two or three months during the winter.

**CS:** I'd like too.

**DB:** I was telling Tamara as we came down the hill I'd hate to be down here with a big snow storm.

**CS:** You stay down here. And the powers out a lot. It's been out this winter for -- the longest was five days in November.

**DB:** Well Cam I appreciate your going through this, I think we've pretty much finished, but is there any windup, anything we might have missed, or something that you think is important? Certainly I don't know all the questions.

**CS:** No. I've been really fortunate to be able to fly fish everywhere. I mean, I've fished the Amazon; I fished a lot of different places. And what I really like to do is do this kind of stuff and create stuff that works, that's the fun part for me.

**DB:** Okay, I think is that a wrap-up.

**CS:** Sure

**TB:** Thanks, very much.

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