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This interview was conducted with Frank Amato at his home in Naselle, Washington. The interviewers are Hugh Lewis and Art Lingren.

MR. LEWIS: Okay. This is a recording that is being made today, uh, in Estancia Amato in Naselle, Washington, where Art Lingren and I, Hugh Lewis, are conducting an oral history interview of Frank Amato. And today is February 15th of 2023. Frank has signed the standard oral history agreement on the WWU-approved form. We are going to conduct this interview. It's about -- what time is it? It's about 3:30 or thereabouts?

MR.LINGREN: Yeah. It's 3:00 -- it's 3:20.

MR. LEWIS: -- 3:20 --

MR.LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: -- in the afternoon. And I'm gonna set this, uh, here so that the recorder can pick it up.

MR.LINGREN: Okay.

MR. LEWIS: It's very obvious that it is recording and that -- yeah. It is recording. It's doing a wonderful job too. So --

MR. AMATO: Oops.

MR. LEWIS: Oops.

MR. AMATO: No water.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: Okay. And the flowers just fell over, but --

MR. AMATO: You can just leave 'em there. That's okay.

MR. LEWIS: Fell on the snake.

MR. AMATO: They don't need water.

MR. LEWIS: I -- I hope this is not inauspicious for the interview, but --

MR. AMATO: No problem.

MR. LEWIS: Art, take it away. And I may just ask a question every now and then myself.

MR. AMATO: Well, the snake is dead too. So I -- it reminds me of eastern Oregon.

MR. LINGREN: Uh, again, first part's where you grew up, Frank. But one thing you and I were talking about -- how long has your family been in Oregon anyway? Did, uh --

MR. AMATO: My -- my -- on my mother's side, their maiden name was Wells, English, and also Werner, or Werner, German. And -- or German and Dutch. My mother's family came here in about 1852 on the Oregon Trail. And they settled in not -- on -- on the north fork of the Santiam River in Jefferson, Oregon; got a land claim, which is still in the family. And the little cemetery that -- you know, go down and see about 20 or 30 of my dead relatives and marvel at the fact that they died when they were often -- a lot of them when they were, you know, two to five years old. And on my, uh, mother's side as well, on the German side -- the English side settled in, uh, in -- along the north fork Santiam. When my -- the German side they settled in about 1890 or 1870 in Baker, Oregon.

MR. LEWIS: Oh, yeah.

MR. AMATO: And they prospected for gold. They raised cattle. And, uh, they stayed there until the '30s when farming, I guess, got bad. And they moved and -- sold the ranch and moved to Portland. When I was a kid in Sellwood, I used to play with all of the ribbons that they won at fairs for their, uh, steers. And I wondered where -- all these pretty ribbons with gold and blue and white, what they meant. Unfortunately, in the moves, they must have been thrown away, but, man, they had a hundred or a thousand of 'em. It was fun to play with. So that's where they came on -- and on the Sicilian side, my first -- the first Amato to come to Portland was Frank Amato. And that was about 1890. Came directly from Sicily. Never have been able to determine why he came to Portland. But he was -- sold produce door to door. And he also had a store, started a store. And first -- it's just -- just downtown Portland, actually, kind of a Italian grocery store. He brought his two sons -- my direct grandfather -- and his brother. And, uh, they stayed here, and he went back. He sold the store. He went back to Sicily and spent the rest of his life with his wife there. But, essentially, they stuck it out in Portland from the Italian side.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah.

MR. LINGREN: Okay. And you grew up in Portland; right?

MR. AMATO: Yeah.

MR. LINGREN: Your whole life has been --

MR. AMATO: My whole --

MR. LINGREN: -- in Portland?

MR. AMATO: -- life was Portland.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: Yes.

MR. LINGREN: So who got you interested in fishing, and at what age?

MR. AMATO: Well, my father liked to fish. And he fished mainly for trout. After seeing some of the pictures from the late '40s and early '50s, I would say many of the trout he was capturing were smolts in creeks that were tributary to the Willamette River --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- and tributary to the Clackamas River, Tualatin, Dairy Creek. And he would come home with these trout caught on bait. He had, like, a three-piece, steel rod that kind of was a telescoping rod. And I don't know what he used for bait because he -- he was hesitant to take me fishing because my mother told me later that he was afraid that I might fall in and drown. My dad was kind of a very careful person. But, anyway, going to picnics to Eagle Creek on the Columbia and on the Clackamas and other places around Portland, I just was attracted to water and to the fish. And that's how I got interested.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: I started fishing off of the porch of our house in Portland with my cousin Charles. He's the same age as I. And we've fished together now for, you know, 70, 75 years. We would take a wash tub, fill it with leaves, and take a -- a, uh -- safety pins and a string and a pole; get up on the top of the porch and have the wash tub below us and hook leaves.

MR. LINGREN: Oh, yeah.

MR. AMATO: And that's how we started. Yeah.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

MR. AMATO: And, finally, my dad took me a couple times. And the most amazing thing that happened was his boss -- my father was working in the grocery store in the produce department. And his boss, a very demonstrative fellow, went fishing with us. And his boss looked at the rod that -- and reel that my dad had given me to fish with. And he took the reel, and he took it off the rod, and he threw it into the Clackamas. And, of course, my dad and I were astounded. And then he said, "Here, Frank. Use this one." And it worked. My first fish that I ever caught was a warm-water bass at the confluence of the Clackamas and Willamette Rivers at Oregon City.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: And from then ever after, it's been pretty much salmonids.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. You're known as a steelhead fisherman. When did you start steelhead fishing, and what got you into fly fishing for steelhead?

MR. AMATO: Well, my dad definitely started me fishing for steelhead. Because when I was in probably the second grade, I came home, and I -- my father had on display in a big tub about a, oh, 7- or 8-pound steelhead. And I'd never seen a steelhead. You know, I'd seen a few trout, but I -- but seeing a steelhead was, you know, a fish compared to a trout. And so my cousin Charles and I saw that steelhead. And we have, to this day -- you know, 80 -- or 75 years later, still rabid steelhead fishermen. But I personally caught my first -- or hooked my first steelhead in the creek that ran by our house, tributary of the Willamette called Kellogg Creek. And I was in the sixth -- sixth grade. And I had grown up in Portland till fifth grade. My parents moved to Milwaukie, kind of a little community south of Portland. And I was fishing. It was early on Sunday morning. I'd gone to church with my dad, 6:00 o'clock mass, and family. I took my rod -- and I think it was just a simple, uh -- just a simple, old cast-down that my dad had -- went down to the creek and -- in probably March or April. And I was used to hooking the searun cutthroat in the creek on a little night crawler. And this time I hooked a fish that was, you know, probably about 25 to 28 inches, and it looked like a huge rainbow trout. And that was the first steelhead. And that immediately captivated me, and it's been a chase ever since. And up until that time, we'd be hooking a few searun cutthroats in Kellogg Creek because

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the cutthroats would come up 125 miles from the Pacific to spawn in Kellogg Creek, which is on -- comes out of Mount Scott. And up until about a few years ago, there were still some searun cutthroats in that creek. But now the suburban building in Happy Valley and -- it's just obliterated the creek as a spawning sanctuary.

MR. LINGREN: Oh, too bad. And steelhead fly fishing, when -- what got you into that?

MR. AMATO: And steelhead fly fishing is -- is a little different. When we were kids, we would fish Kellogg Creek in the summertime for trout. And what we were catching were probably cutthroat and steelhead smolts. And each time we'd fish, we might hook one or two or three. And we'd walk maybe a mile to two miles of creek. And they weren't plentiful, but they were there. And this was -- started -- this was from about 1954 on to about 1960 when I was in -- in -- doing this in grade school, essentially. And then one day -- you know, we would read *Field & Stream*. And one day we saw the, you know, picture of a fly. And so we went down to Dick's Sporting Goods in Milwaukie -- a little, tiny shop -- and bought a couple flies. And so we tied 'em onto our -- our -- our leaders and dapped the fly in the water because Kellogg -- we didn't have fly-casting equipment. And every once in a while, we'd have a trout come up and -- you know, hook a trout. And so that's where the fly fishing started. I didn't actually have a fly rod and a fly line until I found one in -- when -- while I was snorkeling in high school in the Clackamas. And I came up with a rod, a line, and a reel that somebody somehow had lost. And that's when I started fly fishing for trout. And then as far as steelhead were concerned, I had hooked steelhead through high school in Kellogg Creek but -- generally hooking them on, you know, a worm or night crawler or a crawfish tail. But the first steelhead that I caught fly fishing-wise was in the -- have to stop and think about this. Summer steelhead's really easy. The first winter steelhead -- Oh, the -- the -- the first steelhead that I caught on a fly was in the Nestucca River. And the Nestucca is on the Oregon Coast. And the year would have been about 1962. I was on our -- my honeymoon with my wife, second week of the honeymoon. First week we spent in Victoria and Campbell River, kind of the grounds of Haig-Brown. And I was casting a swift fly for cutthroat. And as the fly was swinging across the low-water Nestucca, I saw this big fish come after the fly, grabbed it, and it turned out to be about a 7-pound summer steelhead. And so that got me very interested in catching steelhead on the fly, immediately. And so I became somewhat rabid about it and -- and started reading everything I could read about steelhead. And almost all of it was books that Haig-Brown had written with the exception of maybe a couple of Atlantic salmon, you know, books that I found in the library. But the high school that I attended in Portland, Central Catholic, had a good library and had several Haig-Brown books. And so that was -- that was a start. And the first --

MR. LINGREN: How do you spell that river? Uh, the Nestucca?

MR. AMATO: Nestucca is N-E-S-T-U-C-C-A.

MR. LINGREN: Oh.

MR. AMATO: Nestucca. They call it the -- The Old Nestucca or The Tuck or -- but, yeah, Nestucca, good, ol' --

MR. LINGREN: Oh, yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- Indian name.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Okay. You've fished many waters. What rivers stand out above all the others for fly fishing for steelhead? The Deschutes? John Day? Morice? Kispiox? Thompson? Others? You know, like --

MR. AMATO: Yeah. For -- for me, the favor- -- my favorite river is -- without comparison, actually, is the Deschutes because it had these long, beautiful runs just perfect for wading and swinging the fly. And the fish were aggressive, and there were quite a few of them at one time. And it was difficult at times to wade, but you could always count on the Deschutes for summer steelhead from the middle of July until about the end of November. And they were fish that would rise to the surface or near the surface to take, essentially, a -- a fly that was swimming across in -- in the surface. And most of the fish -- probably average size was 6 or 7 pounds. And I think the largest I ever hooked was probably around 20 pounds, but it was probably a Snake River fish that had ducked into the

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Deschutes. As far as other rivers are concerned, had, you know, favorite rivers for -- in -- in Canada, of course, I think the river that I fished the most was the, uh -- the Morice and -- probably because it was drivable, plus it didn't have that many people fishing it. And you could walk along the bear path going up and down from the provincial park, I think By-Mac Park --

MR. LINGREN: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- the provincial park.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: You could walk up and down from it. And it was just wonderful. And every so often, you know, you could hook a fish on a fly. It was -- it was great. Other British Columbia rivers were -- one was very obscure that was only accessible by flight, and I -- Blackwater or Damdochax. And that was a great river, but timing was really important because it had little water at times during the good part of the year or the good part of the -- the run. The fish might not show up, or the water might be too high. It was tricky to hit at the right time. And other favorite rivers that -- I've got probably about 20 of 'em, but it's too long a list.

MR. LINGREN: Right. Yeah. Well, you spent a lot of years fishing in --

MR. AMATO: Oh, oh, one -- one that was really incredible, though. It was a river on -- on the southern tip of -- let's see. It was on an island. It was in southern Chile on the sea of Otway, a tributary of the -- of the Magellan passage by the city of Punta Arenas. And the river is called the Rio Grande. Went down there after talking to some biologists in Punta Arenas, and they said that they had rainbow in this one stream. So my friend and I, in the '80s, flew down to Santiago, and we got a rental vehicle. Then -- or excuse me. Then we flew to Punta Arenas, got a rental vehicle, went out to the island of Riesco, which is the second-largest island after Tierra del Fuego in that general area of --

MR. LEWIS: And --

MR. AMATO: -- of the Magellan area.

MR. LEWIS: And how do you spell that?

MR. AMATO: R-E-I-S-C-O [sic], Riesco, I think.

MR. LEWIS: Riesco. Okay.

MR. AMATO: Riesco.

MR. LEWIS: Thanks.

MR. AMATO: So Ken and I -- Ken and I -- I started swinging the fly through this river, and -- little river, about the same size as probably the Naselle, maybe 30 feet across, 40 feet across. Easy to wade, kind of a sandy bottom. Beautiful, again, to swing a fly. And I had a strike. And I felt something. And I thought, Wow, you know, that was kind of neat. I was fishing just like you would steelhead in the Deschutes, just a floating line. And the next cast I hooked about a 7- or 8-pound, very heavy-bodied rainbow. And grabbed the fly, attack it just like a Deschutes steelhead. And -- and so I was in love with the Rio Grande and the Riesco and Chile. And so I went down there quite a few times after. And at times, the fishing would be really good. And, mainly, the fish weren't steelhead, but they were searun brown trout. They were -- occasionally, you'd catch a trout. But they were -- excuse me. No. They were -- they were rainbows. And, occasionally, you'd catch a searun brown trout as well in the same run. And that held up really well. And I thought, Well, I'm gonna go down and -- but I could hear commercial boats just off of the mouth of that river at night while I'd be camping. I could hear 'em puttering out there. And they were putting nets in and catching these rainbows and selling 'em in Punta Arenas. And so I made noise one night, and I had, you know,

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kind of a light going and -- to let people know that I was there. And no one else was there. It was just a desolate place, totally at the end of the world. I was even concerned maybe a commercial fisherman would come in and strangle me because I was, uh -- because they were -- it was illegal for them to be fishing.

MR. LINGREN: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: So I continued fishing it for quite a few years. And I was -- it was a wonderful, wonderful place. I don't know what -- what's happened to it now. I -- I would imagine it's probably about as good as it ever was.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Okay. Well, that's good. You spent years fishing the Deschutes. So how many years? Okay.

MR. AMATO: Uh-huh. Yeah.

MR. LINGREN: And, yeah, I think you talked about how special it is with the steelhead and the aggressive thing. But how many years were you -- fished that river?

MR. AMATO: Well, when I was in college, I worked in a grocery store part-time. And I remember some people coming into the grocery store, regular customers, and talking about how great the Deschutes was. And they started talking about trout. And my ears picked up, and all -- I -- I asked them where they were fishing, and they said a place called Dry Creek. So as soon as I got to be 16 and got a car, I drove over to Dry Creek on the Deschutes. And that's how I first discovered the Deschutes and -- and its trout. And after that was a love affair. What was the rest of the question on that one?

MR. LINGREN: Oh, just tell me how many years -- how many years you were -- were you fishing it then. You talked about how special the fish were, okay, already, Frank. Okay.

MR. AMATO: Well, I started fishing the Deschutes about 19- -- 1958, 1958, in Dry Creek on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation.

MR. LINGREN: Oh, yeah. Yeah. So you had a lot of years there on that river. Okay. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: That is my home stream --

MR. LEWIS: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- other than for Kellogg Creek where I grew up. But the Deschutes, I knew it -- the hundred miles from --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- the free-flowing stretch from Pelton Dam to the mouth -- I knew it all by the back of my hand. I boated it all in drift boat, lower part, you know, jet boat. And I put in, I figure, probably, uh, 25,000 miles on that river, at least, over the years. And just love it. No other river like the Deschutes. I found myself in Alaska wishing I was on the Deschutes. I found myself in Montana and Idaho wishing I was on the Deschutes. And now I wish I was on the Deschutes.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Well, it's -- it's good.

MR. AMATO: Yeah.

MR. LINGREN: Nice to -- nice to have a -- a love affair with a river that's reasonably close to you. Okay. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: It -- it really is. And it was only two hours away.

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MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: And there are places on the Deschutes where I know -- I'm almost positive that my early ancestors who came out on the Oregon Trail had to have crossed their wagon with -- in a couple of the tailouts where --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- the canyon has an old road coming down from one side and the other side --

MR. LEWIS: Yep.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- and -- where they -- they would have gone across. But that river is in my blood.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. That's good. What's your educational background? Master's in European history. You taught school after university.

MR. AMATO: Uh-huh.

MR. LINGREN: You've become a well-known publisher. What got you into publishing magazines?

MR. AMATO: Well --

MR. LINGREN: Haig-Brown inspired. Okay. So there's --

MR. AMATO: It -- yeah.

MR. LINGREN: -- a number of things in that -- that question there, Frank. So your educational background first, I guess.

MR. AMATO: The educational background is -- is kind of interesting. My mother sent me to a parochial school. My father wouldn't have minded if I went anyplace, just as long as I went to school. But my Mom -- I had to go to parochial school. So that was fine. So Charles and I, my cousin, started off in the first grade together. And in the sixth grade, I had a nun named Sister Crescencia. And she had two things that really interested me. And one was her United States stamp collection, which she invited me to the convent to look at. And I was kind of collecting stamps from the time I was probably fourth or fifth grade. And in the sixth grade, I saw her collection and I just couldn't believe it. I just couldn't believe it. I'm sure she'd had many students or friends who had given her stamps. I mean old, classic American stamps. And it was immaculate. The other thing neat about her was that she liked history. And that's when I discovered a love for history and pretty much decided I want to be a teacher, in the sixth grade. And those two interests, stamps and history, have followed me through, along with fishing.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. So what year did you get your master's?

MR. AMATO: And then I went on to the University of Portland taught by the Holy Cross brothers -- the Holy Cross brothers at the time. And I -- I got a degree in European history. And then I went on to get a master's in European history as well. Then I taught two years in a Catholic high school in Portland called Central Catholic. My goal was to get a doctorate in Italian history and church history. I wanted to, if -- if possible, you know, follow my interests in history. It's actually Italian history and church history. And I spent two years teaching in a Catholic high school. But at the end of the first year, I had decided that I wanted to start a fishing magazine. While I had been working in -- at Pino's grocery store through high school and through college, they would give us 15-minute breaks every so often; and I would go to the newsstand and grab whatever magazine I could find that was -- that had some Northwest

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fishing articles in it. At that time, there was the big three: Field & Stream, Sports Afield, Outdoor Life. There was Western Outdoors. And on occasion, a paper called Fishing & Hunting News. And that's all there was. And out of all those magazines every month, there might be one article that might touch on the Northwest. So I thought if I ever got a chance, I would like to start a magazine. And it's kind of strange because how does -- you know, where does all that come from? And I was, of course, interested in fishing, and I liked to read about it. I was kind of interested in fly tying and interested in -- in reading. And I -- and my interest in printing started when I was a wee boy of -- probably in the third or fourth grade. My mother bought me a little printing press. It was a little, metal printing press with a rubber removable type that you could set by hand. And I would set this type and run the little spool, ink it up and make printed sheets. And -- and, also, my grandparents -- my Grandpa Frank and my grandmother -- lived next to a printing shop in Portland; in fact, the printing shop that made a lot of the Beautiful Oregon, Beautiful Washington, Beautiful -- you know, state books over the years called -- became known as Graphic Arts, one of the biggest printers and best-quality printers in the United States. Well, that was right across the street from where my grandparents were. So, occasionally, my grandfather would go over there. And my grandfather, from Sicily, had never learned to read, but he loved to look at pictures. And my grandmother learned to read. She'd read the paper. My grandfather would spend, you know, couple hours just looking at the paper and amazed at it and the pictures. But the printers took a liking to him. And anytime they did a beautiful America book, they'd always give him a copy or two. And -- and -- and so they had a separate little building to the print shop where they would melt the slugs down, melt the old lead that they had used. And I happened to notice that there was a broken window. And so I reached in and grabbed a couple pieces of lead slugs, Linotype stuff, and -- and stole it, essentially, just two or three pieces. And my interest in printing was pretty deep. And there was also a guy that did bookbinding, an old, old fellow by the railroad tracks, by the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. And he invited me in, and I went through his -- through his house in his basement, he was -- would bind books, bind Bibles or bind people's books that were falling apart. And so I saw it from the binding, and I saw it from the printing. I loved to read about it. I loved to fish and I liked to write. And I thought, Well, gee, maybe there is a niche for a magazine that would be just about fishing for Oregon and Washington and -- originally, and then also Northern California. And so -- I don't know how I came up with the name of Salmon Trout Steelheader, but -- it was kind of a mouthful, but that's how it started. In 1967, the first issue came out. And I think the high point in that first issue is when Gayle and I, my wife, went up to Seattle to the -- to Seattle policemen's ball, or something -- they -- the Seattle policemen had an annual get-together and a big convention and kind of a sports show. And I remember Gayle and I put copies of Salmon Trout Steelheader out on the table, and they sold for 50 cents apiece. And we had people throwing us 50-cent pieces and dollar bills. And we couldn't believe that people were throwing money at us like this because I was used to working in the grocery store, you know, member of retail clerks Local 1092, getting paid a buck 75 an hour, two bucks an hour. And all of a sudden at the end of the day to have a pile of cash, uh -- Gayle and I, you know, embarrassingly almost -- we counted the money at the end of each night, and -- and the magazine was off. People loved it. They started subscribing and -- and, you know -- and then 50 years later, the, uh -- the -- electronics came -- came back and the computer, and it changed the newspaper and magazine business forever.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Haig-Brown had a little part in your getting into magazine, though, too, didn't he?

MR. AMATO: Haig-Brown was -- when I started the magazine, the first thing I had to do was get some articles. So I thought, Well, who is my, you know, favorite guy to read? And that was Haig-Brown. So I sent him a letter. And I said, you know, "I'm twenty-" -- would have been about 23 years old, 24. "Would you consider writing an article for the magazine?" And by then, I knew that taking steelhead on a fly was -- you know, was -- people were doing that regularly. But I was curious about taking a Chinook on a fly. So I asked him if he would write an article about will the Chinook take a fly. And he -- he graciously said yes and how long do I want the article and when. And so I got him to write for it. And I also was able to get Enos Bradner, the outdoor editor --

MR. LINGREN: Oh, right. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- of the Seattle Times. And then a guy in Portland named Fred Goetz. And nobody knew of Fred except maybe two to five million people that read his outdoors column in the labor presses across the United States. He wrote things for, like, the electrical unions and for retail clerks. And he was the widest read outdoor writer in the United States. And he was in Portland. And so I asked Fred if he would write an article on, you know, what his

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favorite fish was to fish for in the Northwest. And it was a sturgeon. So he wrote a great article on sturgeon. So then I got a guy named Tom McAllister, who was a long-esteemed outdoor editor of the Oregon Journal newspaper in Portland and came to be a good friend. And he wrote also an article. And then there were, you know, a couple of other people too. But those were kind of -- and then I got a fellow named Larry Green, who was an outdoor writer in California. So I kind of had California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. And that was -- that was the -- the first issue.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. That's -- that's good. You know, Salmon Trout Steelheader was a real success. But what prompted you to go into the actual book publishing --

MR. AMATO: Oh, this is -- this is a great story. The book publishing was amazing because I got a -- I -- I went to a steelhead clinic in Portland about 1969. And there was a fellow -- there was an organization started called the Northwest Steelheaders, and they had started about 1965, couple years before me. And I was at their clinic. And there were probably a couple hundred attendees at least. And there was a man who was giving a talk on how to catch a steelhead. And his name was Bill Luch, and he was the president of the organization. And Bill was a longshoreman, burly guy. He could have wrestled a bear. A really nice fellow. He went on to become -- become one of the siting commissioners for nuclear -- appointed by the governor of Oregon to the nuclear siting board for nuclear power. But he was the president of Northwest Steelheaders for, like, five or 10 years. And I got to know him really well. And he helped to really change the face of Oregon fishing because although he wasn't on the Fish and Game board because he was on the nuclear siting commission, he had a big voice. And so I -- Bill was up there giving his talk on how to catch a steelhead. He didn't fly fish. He was a gear fisherman, and he really loved to fish for steelhead. And so he would take a big chalkboard and draw a garden hackle up there, and that was a -- a night crawler. Then he'd explain to the guys, "You know, this isn't about fly fishing. This is about how you catch steelhead on -- you know, on bait." And he was a very, very funny guy, very exuberant. He went on to become actually, if -- I think a one-year president of Trout Unlimited, national president, maybe even two years. But excellent speaker, just wonderful guy. And so I -- at the end of his talk, which took about maybe half hour, 45 minutes, I walked up to him, and I said, "Bill, you know, my name is Frank Amato. I started this magazine." "Oh, yeah. You know, I've seen it, Frank." And I said, "What would you think of writing up your speech, just write it up longhand?" And he said, "You know, I don't know how to type." And I said, "Don't worry about it. Just write it longhand, and let me know when it's finished." So couple months go by. He gives me a call. I go out to north Portland. He was a longshoreman. So he was out in north Portland by the river. And he gave me this, oh, probably 50- or 100-page manuscript that he had handwritten. And I had forgotten stupidly to tell him to skip every other space at least. So I -- I stuck somebody with having to transcribe it and to type it up. So it was, I think, about 25-, maybe 35,000 words long. And so then I went to a printer and got -- I got a printing quote on it. And -- and I decided, well, I'm going to put this together as a book. So took about half a year, and the book came out in 1970. And I started the magazine in 1967. And I had been struggling from '67 to '70 still -- still teaching a little bit and working again a little bit in the grocery store just to make ends meet. My wife had got -- I had gotten married in 1962. She was still working a little bit all the way till we had our first son. And so all of a sudden, you know, this book came out called Steelhead Drift Fishing and Fly Fishing. And the steelhead drift fishing Bill wrote. And then while I was in the hospital recuperating from a bad case of eczema, I wrote maybe 5,000, 10,000 words on fly fishing for steelhead using the knowledge that I had gained up to that point. And not much had been written about fly fishing for steelhead as far as having been printed, although there were quite a few fishermen doing it then. So I published the book, and we probably sold 100,000 copies in the -- in the next few years. And that actually helped to provide a substance or a base for the magazine to help things along. So during this period of time, a guy down in California named Trey Combs --

MR. LINGREN: Oh, yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- whom I didn't know at that time, he wrote me a letter. And he said, "Mr. Amato, you know, I have a manuscript I'm working on on steelhead fly fishing." And I said, "Gee --" And he said, "Would you be interested in publishing it?" And I said, "Yeah. Absolutely. You know, let me know how it's coming along." So I got the manuscript, and I went and decided that, you know, I can't publish this because this -- this would take a lot of money to do a real, full book. So I went to Binford & Mort. They were the big printer in Portland at the time and did a lot of history books. They probably published 500 books over the years on Northwest history. And they also published and

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-- they had the contract for doing all the news- -- all of the phone books for the Northwest. It was a really big company, a couple 300 people. So I walked in and I -- and I -- and I met a guy named -- named Binford. And he was an old guy, a little, curmudgeonly guy. And I was, like, probably 25 or 26. He must have been, like, 70. And I said, "You know, I've got this incredible manuscript that I think would make a, you know, wonderful, wonderful book. You know, what would you think about publishing that?" He looked at it, you know. He said, "You know, Frank, this is really, really nice. It would make a good book." He said, "But you have the audience, you know. I don't. You've got the market to the magazine." So he said, "I suggest that, you know, you kind of scrape the money together to do the book." And so I scraped the money together to do the book. And so out came the first book, which was *The Steelhead Trout*.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah. Yeah. I have that book.

MR. AMATO: And that was the first one. And so Trey -- Trey's ultimate goal was to do *Steelhead Fly Fishing and Flies*, you know --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- the classic one. So Trey said -- so we -- I published *The Steelhead Trout*, and it sold pretty well, and people really liked it, liked his writing and everything. And so couple years later, I get the manuscript for *Steelhead Fly Fishing and Flies*. And that's when, you know, things really took off, with *Steelhead Fly Fishing and Flies*.

MR. LINGREN: Uh-huh. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: And about the same time, I did Randall Kaufmann's book on nymph fishing. And that one took off too. People were waiting for that. So that changed everything. And -- and all of a sudden, you know, I found myself publishing books.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah.

MR. LINGREN: You did that cutthroat book too, Les Johnson.

MR. AMATO: Yeah. Les Johnson.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. That was one of your really early books too, wasn't it?

MR. AMATO: Yeah. It was a really early book, and it was well received.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: Yeah. That was a great one.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Well, that's good. I guess -- was anyone else publishing works featuring Northwest authors at the time, okay, when you were doing this?

MR. AMATO: There was a book on steelhead fishing that the outdoor editor Enos Bradner --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- I think, did. And there was Francis Ames, Fishing the Oregon Country. The people up in the fly fishing club in Spokane had their Flies of the Northwest. That was in the '70s too.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: And after a while, they came to us and asked if we would do it because we could do color more. And so we took over that book. But I really weren't hardly -- I can't really think of any other books, really.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Do you know how many authors you have actually published over your --

MR. AMATO: Well, I know that I've published close to 300 books. Not all on fishing, but --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: And as far as the number of authors, I would say it's probably between 100 and 150 --

MR. LINGREN: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- and some.

MR. LINGREN: Well, that's a big contribution just to the sport as it is. Okay.

MR. AMATO: It's really a lot.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: I pretty much have a copy of every book we ever did, and some of them I have a lot of copies of that didn't sell.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: By the way, we talked about Salmon Trout Steelheader, but I know you've published some other periodicals --

MR. AMATO: About --

MR. LEWIS: -- some other magazines. Could you --

MR. AMATO: About --

MR. LEWIS: -- give us the names of those.

MR. AMATO: This is important. Yeah. Because about 1972, an -- an attorney from -- from Bellingham or -- I think he was from Bellingham or Everett -- named Lou Bell --

MR. LEWIS: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: Does that name ring a bell for you?

MR. LEWIS: Yes.

MR. AMATO: Lew Bell.

MR. LEWIS: He was actually -- he was from Everett, as I recall.

MR. AMATO: Everett.

MR. LEWIS: And he ended up representing the Indian tribes in their successful efforts to, you know, obtain validation of their treaty rights.

MR. AMATO: He was a wonderful man.

MR. LEWIS: He represented the tribes. He was really quite a bright --

MR. AMATO: He was really busy with the Federation and just --

MR. LEWIS: Yes.

MR. AMATO: -- really was a wonderful man. And -- and I got a letter -- I didn't know him at the time, but I got a letter from him. And -- because I had been active a little bit with the Federation of Fly Fishers, and I had helped to start a club in Portland called Anglers Club of Portland. And that would have been with Bill Bakke and a few other -- other people at that time. And it -- really, its members grew into Oregon Trout. And then --

MR. LEWIS: Yes.

MR. AMATO: -- you know, we all have kind of been in the same boat for a long time.

MR. LEWIS: Yes.

MR. AMATO: And so Lew Bell said, "Well, Frank," he said, "You know, we're having trouble keeping the Federation of Fly Fisherman magazine going. It's costing too much having it done in New York." And they had an editorial board in New York that was made up of people from Field & Stream and, you know, the big publications, the big money, and all that stuff. So he said -- Lew said, "You know, Frank, I'm president now of the -- of -- of the Federation of Fly Fishing, national president." He said, "What would you think of giving me a bid on you producing the magazine for, you know, a couple of years?" So I gave him the bid. And this would have been -- that probably would have been about '73 -- well, it would have been '73 or '74 at the time. And I gave him a bid. And it was much better than what they had been paying back East. And I remember the guys that were producing it back East -- oh, and they said, "Oh, and we're going to have Steve Raymond, he will edit it, and you will produce it. I will sell the advertising. I will see the slate out that it's printed, that it's distributed." And so I worked really well with Steve. Steve was just a perfect guy to work with. He had worked for The Seattle Times and was a great writer, a great editor, and on time and everything. So I produced the magazine. He -- at least the physical aspect of it. And he selected the articles and did all the editing and everything. And so it saved the Federation -- well, it made it possible for the Federation to keep this magazine because it saved them substantial money. And I remember when the guys that came out who had been producing the magazine in New York -- they were all about probably 30 years older than me. We were in a -- in a hotel in Seattle going up in the elevator, the Cambridge Hotel or something, where they used to meet for their club get-togethers. And one of the guys, who was about 50, 55, was the art director of Field & Stream magazine, he looked at me and said -- he said, "Frank, you know, are you independently wealthy?" Because they couldn't understand how some kid, you know, 25 or 26 years old was gonna produce this magazine that they had been losing money on in New York. And -- and, you know, they found out that I wasn't. But I produced it for, like, seven or eight years. And then Steve came to me and said, "Frank, you know, I think I want to write some more and, you know, not do the editing." And so at that point, Salmon Trout Steelheader was on its way. And I said, "Well, you know, fine. I think if you're going to submit your resignation, I'll do the same thing." So they got somebody else to produce it. And -- and I happened to buy a book called Magazine Management, a book that had just come out, Magazine Management, at the same time this is all happening, thinking in terms of how to manage Salmon Trout Steelheader better. And it had -- it had everything about how you start a magazine in it, everything that I'd learned the hard way. It was all the -- in the book. So I started reading it, and I thought, Shoot,

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you know, I -- what I've always wanted to do is -- wanted fly fishing. That was my first love. So I thought I'm gonna make a fly fishing magazine. And I didn't do it because I had done the Flyfisher for the Federation, but I did it because I just wanted to do it. And so it worked quite well, but we just had to discontinue publishing it and -- just recently. But it's too much competition, not enough support from advertisers and, you know, just the old story. But yeah. So --

MR. LINGREN: The next question --

MR. AMATO: Sure.

MR. LINGREN: -- gets into that.

MR. AMATO: Sure.

MR. LINGREN: The book business and the magazine business is not very good.

MR. AMATO: Right. Right.

MR. LINGREN: Okay. You know, there's been a big turndown. What were the things that most affected your book business? Internet? Young generation not buying books? Readers, book readers? Other things?

MR. AMATO: I would say, you know, when it comes to magazine publishing, like Salmon Trout Steelheader, Salmon Trout Steelheader started off with a strong fly fishing -- well, it was probably about 30 percent fly fishing, maybe 60 percent/70 percent gear fishing. And over the years, as everything became more specialized, there were more fly fishing magazines that started coming out and more fly fishing books. And so there was no need, in a way, to have the Salmon Trout Steelheader. And so over the years, it kind of gravitated more towards gear fishing. The thing is -- and I named it too because my son started editing it too probably about 30 years ago now, and -- and his inclination was more towards gear fishing and not as much towards fly fishing. But it's -- it -- Salmon Trout Steelheader always had a problem getting advertisers because it never had the huge circulation and, also, I think partially because I was never a good salesman. And when we did have a good salesman, it did fairly well. But it's always been just a -- a tough -- tough road. That's all.

MR. LEWIS: But the -- just in terms of publications of books and stuff generally --

MR. AMATO: Uh-huh.

MR. LEWIS: -- and magazines, do you think the Internet has had a hand in that?

MR. AMATO: Yeah. I -- I think there's just absolutely no doubt about it. And, you know, we could probably break it down into, you know, the -- its component parts, but, essentially, you know, our business, book business, was built on fly tying mainly and fly fishing. And people loved to see flies, and they loved to learn how to tie them. And now when you have the web and you have essentially thousands of fly patterns available at the touch of a button and that are in color and with people demonstrating piece by piece and knot by knot and hook by hook and just showing all of the different aspects on a screen, you can't compete with that with print. You can from the point of view if you have something that's, I think, kind of -- of a historical nature and something that people want to have quality, like the books that Art prints about some of the fly -- the -- the leading people of the steelhead fly realm. But, yeah, the computer has made everything -- I -- I won't say much easier, but it's revealed so many different aspects. It's -- it's allowed people to become much more knowledgeable about the finer points, which just can't be shown on print, in print.

MR. LINGREN: Okay. Anyway, you fly fished a lot for steelhead, Frank. What are your favorite fly patterns and techniques? You know, sinking line? Greased line? Dry fly? Okay.

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MR. AMATO: Yeah. My -- my -- my favorite -- I'm -- I'm a lazy fisherman. I like to cast, and I like to just hold onto the rod and wait for the big grab.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: And that's the magic to me, the big grab. And I -- I just -- I just love that. And I think, you know, when I fish for steelhead with a wobbler if the water is high, I prefer to use a wobbler too to see the big grab. The one thing about steelhead fishing, like, with a jig and a bobber that's fun is it's -- it's almost like dry-fly fishing for steelhead, casting a bobber out and watching it go down through 200 feet of water until you can't see that bobber almost anymore. And it's -- it's -- you don't need a boat anymore. You just stand on the bank, cast out, and as long as you can see it and it's going along and it's a sharp hook, when the fish takes it, he swims forward, pulls the bobber. Then the bobber snugs the fly in the corner of his mouth, and you've got him. But -- but that -- that's fun too, especially the older you get and the harder it is to cast and to work the water.

MR. LINGREN: Uh-huh. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: But by far, just -- you know, I started with a -- a 9-foot fly rod and a floating line. And two old-time friends of mine that are both deceased now, they had a -- they had a fly shop in Portland. And it was a husband and a wife team. And it was Don and Lola McClain.

MR. LINGREN: Oh, yeah.

MR. AMATO: And I remember about the second or third issue of Salmon Trout Steelheader I was in their shop -- and they were all excited about -- about the fly fishing magazine because they sold flies and Lola tied them and Don made the rods. And they said, "Frank, you know, why don't you go fishing with us up to the Deschutes, and we'll help you catch a steelhead on a fly up there." And to that point, I'd been mainly -- mainly fishing the Washougal and the Kalama and the Nestucca Rivers in Oregon and Washington on the west side. This was my first chance at a steelhead on an east-side river, my favorite, the Deschutes. So I went over there towards the end of October, above Maupin. And they had a little two-man rubber boat. And they said, "Frank, you just sit your butt right here in the middle, and we're going to row you across the river." So we rowed across the Deschutes in the -- just the early morning light. And I didn't know, you know, what to expect. And so we got to the other side. And Don said, "Well, I'm going to go down here and fish, Frank. And -- and I'll fish in front of you a little ways. And Lola's going to go up and fish her favorite spot, and you're going to fish in between us." And this -- there was Don's run, and then there was Lola's run. And so I was kind of in between. Beautiful water. So that day, we hooked at least 10 steelhead on a floating line and Lola's flies. And she had several different flies she tied especially for the Deschutes. And they hooked all 10 of 'em. I didn't hook one fish. And -- and, of course, I was -- I had published the magazine now for about four years, or something, and seemed to know what I was talking about about steelhead. And Lola, she just loved -- she was about, you know, 30 years older than me, kind of a smart Alec. And Don was kind of a smart Alec too. He had grown up as a lumber- -- lumberman in Grand Ronde, Oregon, fishing in Nawot (phonetic), places like that. And Lola was just a sweetheart fly tyer and all that. They had me sit between them all the way back to Portland that night. And, you know, here was Lola and -- I don't know why they, you know -- I -- might have been because it was a pickup and Lola didn't want to sit in the middle with her legs around the stick shift or something. But, anyway, Don -- Don and Lola were chiding me all the way back. You know, that number ten just kept popping up. "How did you do, Frank?" And -- and I -- you know, they fished just this dry line. And their fly -- one was, I think, the Deschutes Demon. That fly was always just, you know, wriggling across the surface or near the surface. And they -- they hooked ten fish. And I was using a sink tip like I had been using on the Washougal and the Kalama and these other places. And so they taught me. "Okay, Frank. This is how it's done." And sure enough then, I went back a -- about a week or couple weeks later, and I fished just a floating line, and I hooked two fish in Don's run, which still fishes pretty much kind of like it did years ago, 50 years ago now almost. And, uh, yeah, they -- they started me on the Deschutes. And it was great.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: I would have -- there was a guy named Lenox Dick, Dr. Dick. And -- a doctor in Portland, who is a member of the Oregon Fly Fishers and kind of a historic doctor. He had a cabin up on the Deschutes and all that. And Len would -- when he'd be driving up to go to the private water on the Deschutes, he'd stop his car and yell across and -- "Frank, how's it going out there? You hooking any?" And Len was always amazed when I'd tell him I hooked a couple on flies and all that. And, jeez, he thought that was just, you know, a miraculous thing. And -- but, yeah, Don and Lola, they were -- they were great.

MR. LINGREN: Anyway, your favorite fly patterns, one is the Night Dancer, isn't it? Oh, I -- one of them. I --

MR. AMATO: Yeah. I had, you know, several -- several flies that were really favorites. But early on, you know, I realized that the steelhead seemed to like the presentation rather than necessarily the fly.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: But one of the first flies I ever bought was in Foster's Sporting Goods in Portland. And I was -- I -- I might -- at that point, I don't think I had hardly hooked any steelhead. And I bought a fly called a Gibson Girl. It was kind of a brown fly. And I remember taking it over to the Washougal. And this is right about the time when the hatchery run going up the Washougal had been -- uh, summer run, had started. And we'd fish by what was called the bowling alley. And -- right by the highway bridge. And, gosh, you know, that was just wonderful because the fish would come in in June, late June when the Columbia would be backed up. And depending on how far or how low the Columbia backed up and what the water flow was, you'd see these schools of summer steelhead that would be sometime in the -- 25 of 'em in a school. And you just cast out that floating line with the Gibson Girl on it, would sink a little in that slow water. And all of a sudden, it would come up tight, and you'd get one of these screamers, hatchery summer steelhead. And, yeah, that was -- that was just wonderful. And that lasted a long time. And still a decent run of steelhead in the Washougal. I skip all over. So sorry about that.

MR. LEWIS: That's -- that's okay. I -- I actually had a question about the kind of -- the kind of rod and reel you were using at that time and how -- how your preferences evolved.

MR. AMATO: Yeah. Very interesting. The reel that I was using was a Pflueger. And I don't know if it was a 1492. It was a small Pflueger. And I was using a -- I think it was a Phillipson glass rod, like, an 8- or 9-foot -- you know, like, a 9-foot Phillipson.

MR. LEWIS: Yep.

MR. AMATO: And that served me for quite a few years. And then I had worked a bit at Norm Thompson Outfitters. And I was given a couple of Farlow reels by the owner of the place that were designed by, uh -- not Lee Wolf but -- well, anyway, they were made by Hardy or something. But the -- the reel I just really fell in love with was the -- oh, golly, I got 'em from Streamborn Flies when they first came out -- CFO. And -- and like -- like Art's got all of these Hardys and Perfects. I -- I must have about ten CFOs.

MR. LEWIS: Made by Orvis --

MR. AMATO: Yeah. Made by Orvis.

MR. LEWIS: -- right?

MR. AMATO: The little ones.

MR. LEWIS: Yes.

MR. AMATO: And every -- every year or two, I have to send one of 'em back to a guy named Art Gilletta (phonetic) to have him put new gears in because they would -- they would wear down. And some of 'em got to the

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point where there was no sound at all, you know, just "zzzzz" and -- but that's still -- I still have those reels, and I still actually use 'em. I have had some nice reels, but -- or I should say probably more expensive ones. But I always liked 'em because for a -- for the Deschutes, they were a light reel. They had a nice sound. And they just were a perfect, you know --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- palming reel.

MR. LINGREN: I guess most of -- most of this fishing would be a 9-foot rod, -- seven-weight and --

MR. AMATO: I was --

MR. LINGREN: I think you got into switch rods too, didn't you, at some time?

MR. AMATO: Well, I was using a 9-foot rod all along. Then I asked Skip Morris back in maybe the '80s -- I said, "Skip, would you make me a four-piece, 10-foot rod?" Because on the Deschutes, normally, a lot of the runs you have to wade about to about here and then cast maybe another 50 to 70 feet out further to get a really nice sweep. But there was a lot of brush behind you. And so I asked him to make that longer rod. And he -- he -- he wouldn't put his name on it because he hadn't designed it, but he made the rod for me. I still have the rod. It's caught innumerable numbers of fish. And I don't know if it was a Lamiglass blank originally or some other blank. But I don't have it here. I keep it at home now. And, uh -- but -- but it worked great for distance casting. And it was light, and it never -- never had any trouble with it. It never broke. It was just a great, great rod. And I had him just put two copper rings on it. I didn't want to even have a reel seat, just a cork handle and -- not the big, huge, long cork handle because it would sometimes get into the rain jacket and all that. So I wanted just long enough so that I had enough -- oh, enough leverage, you know, to handle a fish. But -- but, otherwise, I used a lot of Fenwick rods. My fishing partner was a guy named Bill Stinson, who was a state -- or United States representative from Seattle. And he got defeated when -- he was a conservative Republican. And he was a part of Hugh Riley reps. And they repped Fenwick up and down the coast. This was before Sage.

MR. LINGREN: Uh-huh.

MR. AMATO: And they were really the dominant rod company. So I have a lot of -- and -- and -- and Bill and I became fishing partners. And we did a lot of stuff together. In fact, we fished this river together back in probably the early '70s or late '60s.

MR. LEWIS: And that's the Naselle?

MR. AMATO: The Naselle. Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: We put our -- his drift boat in up at the hatchery, drifted down to the takeout and -- he had this great van -- threw all of his, you know, Fenwick stuff in. And we drank half a bottle of wine each at the takeout. And he is a great guy, just a great, great guy. And first time I ever went up the Deschutes, he was in my jet boat in the front. And I told him, "Look, Bill, if something happens, you know, going up these rapids, your job is to get up there on -- on the oars and pull us over to the side." And he was -- he operated his drift boat on the East Fork Lewis. And they have some bad rapids where he was, and he was a good drift-boat handler. And sure enough we -- I hit a -- I hit a rock, and -- and -- and -- in some of the rapids, and -- the very first time going up, just glanced -- barely -- barely touched it, but, man, it made all kinds of noise, and I thought it had maybe ruined the engine. But then it kept going. We went up a little farther. And then all of a sudden, it was in the middle of a rapids right above Colorado rapids, and I lost power. And so I said, "Bill, you know, grab the oars and pull us over." So Bill got -- got the two oars and

pulled us over to the side. And we tilted the engine up, and I looked up into the impeller, and here was the -- my line rope from the bow. I had been dragging it 20 feet behind my -- my intake --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- all the way up the Deschutes. I had gone through -- through about five major rapids. And, finally, I got to the top one, and that's when it wrapped around there. I looked up, and it looked like it was a coiled rattlesnake, a brown line, you know, in there. And I thought, God, I can't believe this. I was so lucky. And I'm not a mechanical guy, but I got off the stuff and took off the foot and -- and took the rope out. And off we went for, you know, a four- or five-day camping trip and good steelhead.

MR. LINGREN: Talking about flies and techniques and stuff --

MR. AMATO: Oh, yeah.

MR. LINGREN: -- I'm just a little bit interested in -- in that Greased Line Fishing for -- for Salmon, okay, that Bill McMillan did for you. What prompted that -- again, it was a technique that was -- you know, many people adopted and --

MR. AMATO: Oh, you mean the greased line for steelhead? Or --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Greased Line Fishing for --

MR. AMATO: Yeah.

MR. LINGREN: -- for Steelhead, that -- Arthur Wood's book, okay --

MR. AMATO: Yeah. That book -- that book was rediscovered by, I guess, Anglos or Americans --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- because that was originally done -- the book was done in England, wasn't it?

MR. LINGREN: Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: And I -- I've forgotten the name of it.

MR. LINGREN: Arthur Wood. Jock Scott.

MR. AMATO: Yeah. Jock Scott.

MR. LEWIS: Jock Scott, yes.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: I'm trying to think. I wonder if I even republished that book.

MR. LINGREN: You did. You did. Bill McMillan did the foreword, with cable flies --

MR. AMATO: Yeah. That's right.

MR. LINGREN: -- and stuff like that.

MR. AMATO: That's right.

MR. LINGREN: That was in the '80s that you did that.

MR. AMATO: Yeah. And then it kind -- it kind of -- everybody just caught on like fire.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: Well, Bill, you know, he had his -- he's experimented a lot with the muddler --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- in the Washougal. And -- and the Washougal would get low; and the steelhead, looking for oxygen, would get in that low water. And he'd dance his muddler around in there, and he'd notice that the fish would, you know, come right up to it and take it. So then he just kind of kept working at that. And then Bill Bakke, uh, you know, a good friend of his, uh, Bakke, he started fishing the Deschutes that way. And then quite a few other people did too. And just -- yeah. Just caught on.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: Did -- did you ever try that?

MR. AMATO: Uh-huh. Yeah. I -- I personally felt that I -- I missed too many fish that way. They'd come up and miss it. And I just wanted a solid hookup, and I was happy for the -- the bing. And as long as I could see where it was -- because sometimes you could see, you know, the mouth kind of come up behind it and -- it was just great. The best time, you know, I ever had that way was on -- I went to Alaska -- or I was on my way to Alaska. And Dec Hogan was at our house in Milwaukie, and my son might have been there too. I'm not sure. But Dec had just come back from Alaska. And he said, "Frank," he said, "I got some really cool flies that work great on Cohos on the surface and the pink polliwog." So he gave me about half a dozen of 'em. And I took 'em up to Kodiak Island to Karluk Lake -- or -- or -- yeah. It was, I think, Karluk Lake on the Karluk River, kind of the saltwater area of -- before it went into the ocean. And so up there, people were catching silvers on, like, black, woolly worm with a red butt and just -- you know, sink-tip lines. They were sinking 'em and catching silvers out of anchored boats. And the water was pretty shallow, like, maybe 4, 5, 6 feet. And the idea was that you'd -- you'd drop the anchor, and then you fish in a circle. And nothing -- and you'd cast here, maybe take about 10 casts in a circle. If nothing happened, well (indiscernible) --

MR. LINGREN: It's still going. It's still going. Okay.

MR. LEWIS: It's still going. Yeah. It's -- it's quaking a little bit, but --

MR. AMATO: Yeah. You moved, like, maybe -- maybe a hundred feet this way and then keep to -- and, invariably, there were so many Coho in there -- and so my friend Ken and I -- I had a Sage rod that had a beautiful tigerwood handle that a fella gave me. And -- and it was casting just beautifully. And the lady that owned Karluk Lodge at the time, she was kind of, like, a -- oh, a really tough gal. And, you know, if she had to take a leak or something, she'd just hang her butt over the boat and take a leak. I mean, she was a strange woman. But she owned the lodge. And so we were out there fishing, and she -- the first year we went up there, and she was catching Coho one after another. And my friend and I couldn't understand why. So we finally rowed over there. And she said, "Well, you know, you boys need a motor on your fly." And we said, "What -- what the heck are you talking about, a motor?" So she showed us a fly. She had this fly with a little spinner on the end of it. And so that was it. So the next year we went up there, and we had this -- this pink polliwog. And so on about the third or fourth cast, this -- it was a Sage rod, 9-foot, and it was a floating, weight-forward line in no wind. Just cast that thing out there. And as soon as it hit the water, of course, the pink polliwog was clearly visible, floated. And you just -- I just started stripping. And almost the first cast something swirled behind it. And I -- I couldn't believe it. You know, it's a pink polliwog with a --

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Coho come up to the surface for a dry fly? That was nuts. So I did a couple more casts, and, man, all of a sudden, I was into one. I couldn't believe it. And then Ken Mitchell, my partner on that trip, he started casting. And we were catching fish like crazy, and she was doing really poorly. And she could not believe what was going on. The bad thing about the pink polliwog, though, was that about every third or fourth fish would have it in its throat.

MR. LINGREN: Oh, yeah.

MR. AMATO: So Skip Morris was with us on that trip. And -- and we were just catching all these fish, but there was too much damage being done. So we decided to try to make a fly -- to -- to cut the point off of the hook so that it was just -- just the blunt end.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: And -- and that worked. That worked. And then we ran out of pink polliwogs. And so Skip took a wine cork and cut a -- cut a little hole down it, put -- laid the hook in, kind of glued it in. Then he put some feathers on it. And it looked like a pink polliwog, but -- but -- you know, that's what it was. And I still have -- on my desk at work, I have a -- have one or two of those pink polliwogs in there to remind me of that trip because that was incredible dry-fly fishing for big fish.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: And those fish, you know, they averaged, gee, probably 10 to 12, 13 pounds. And, man, they were just incredibly beautiful fish.

MR. LINGREN: Well, actually, the next question is memorable days on the water. And we've just gone through some of this --

MR. AMATO: Yeah.

MR. LINGREN: -- stuff, but --

MR. AMATO: Sure.

MR. LINGREN: Uh, fish numbers. Okay. Lots of fish caught in a day. A big fish. Okay. Any --

MR. AMATO: Well, for me --

MR. LINGREN: -- big memories of big fish?

MR. AMATO: -- the -- the neatest big-fish story I have happened on the Lake Creek, tributary of the Susitna River in Alaska. It was about 1:00 o'clock, maybe 12:00 o'clock at night, 1:00 o'clock at night. And we were fishing the Lake Creek, and we weren't fly fishing. And, uh -- we were casting spinners or something out there for these big Chinook. And some of these Chinook would get up to, like, 45 pounds. So I was standing next to this young kid, 18-year-old kid, from University of Oregon. And he said that he was guiding for one of the lodges there. And he said, "You know, Mister, do you have an extra tadpole (phonetic) or Hot Shot or something that I can cast out? Because I forgot my tackle." And I said, "Sure," you know. And I gave it to him. And he hooked a fish that turned out to be -- I think it was, like, 52 pounds on a 12-pound leader. He played it for, like, half an hour or more. But because the slope of the sand was so gentle, he just kept the pressure on until finally that fish turned on its side, and it couldn't flop anymore, or every time it flopped, it just kind of inched its way up.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: He took it back to -- to the lodge at 1:00 in the morning. All these Germans who were standing at the lodge -- there were Germans and Italians that we were staying with -- they all came out. They wanted to buy the fish from the kid to take it back to Germany to mount it. They took pictures of it. It turned out to be -- I think it was maybe 64 pounds because it turned out to be the largest fish caught in the Susitna or in -- at least at Lake Creek that that -- you know, that they had ever heard of. But that was funny, one of my most memorable experiences --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- because it was my lure that he caught it on --

MR. LINGREN: Oh, yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- standing right next to me.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: But, no, I -- I never caught really what I call, you know, the big -- I've hooked two 30-pound steelhead that I'm sure were 30 pounds, actually in this river. And --

MR. LEWIS: The Naselle?

MR. AMATO: In the Naselle.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: Wow.

MR. AMATO: And I remember back in, uh -- early on with Salmon Trout Steelheader, the early '70s, I got an article from a guy on the coast. And he said, "You know, I have an article I have written about a guy catching a 30-pound steelhead." And I said, "Yeah." I said, "You know, send it in. I'd love to see it." And he had mentioned the name of the river and everything. And I said, "No. I'm sorry, but -- you know, I'll run the article, but we're going to take out the name of the river because it would just bring too much attention to it." So we ran the article. And a few people guessed it was the Naselle, and that's where it was. And I -- I'm aware of, like, at least two 30-pounders that have come out of here but nothing in the last -- fortunately, nothing in the last 10 or 15 years. But I -- I know I've lost one in this river and one in the -- well, the river that -- that Art got a 20-pound winter steelhead in a few years ago, the, uh --

MR. LINGREN: Oh, Greys.

MR. AMATO: The Greys.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: Yeah. I hooked one in there too. But, no, I -- I catch the average-sized fish. I haven't killed a steelhead in so long. I can't -- I can't remember. Even a hatchery fish is hard for me to kill.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah.

MR. LINGREN: Okay. Any fond memories of people that you've fished with, okay, you know --

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MR. AMATO: Yeah. There's been --

MR. LINGREN: -- a lot --

MR. AMATO: There's been so many of them. Probably the most unusual one was the fly fisherman from northern Italy, from Milano, a guy named Silvio Michaudere (phonetic). And I -- when I -- about 1974, when the magazine was still new, I got a letter from Canada. And the letter was -- had been postmarked in Lugano, Switzerland. And it said, "Mr. Amato, you know, I -- I want to subscribe to your magazine." And I sent him a letter back saying -- I sent -- I sent some copies back to him, but I said, "You know, we can't really send it overseas because of the postal costs and all the rest of it." So I -- but I said, "You know, if you ever happen to come to Portland, I'd love to meet an Italian fly fisherman. I didn't know they existed." So a few weeks go by and I get this letter, and it says, I'll be on United such and such in Portland at such and such time. And I didn't know if he could speak English. I didn't know what he did. I didn't know how old he was. I didn't know anything about him except he was an Italian fly fisherman. So Silvio gets off the plane, and he's carrying a couple bottles of Lauder's Scotch and a couple of kerchiefs for my wife. And he turns out to be this rich businessman from -- from Milano. And he has this summer place in Bolzano -- or in -- uh, can't tell you the name. But, anyway -- there is a picture of it in -- over in -- in the toilet, above the toilet, of the -- the summerhouse. It's a castle that his family owned. So I took him to the Deschutes, and he fell in love with it. And we fished together for -- we fished in British Columbia, in -- in -- in Chile quite a few times, and then lots in -- in the Deschutes over the years. And he died about 15 years ago. He -- if he were still alive now, he'd be about five years older than me, probably about 88. But he was -- he was a great -- great fisherman and fun to talk to. Kind of a right-wing, conservative type, but, yeah, fun.

MR. LINGREN: Okay. The -- the steelhead runs on -- on the rivers have deteriorated a lot. Okay.

MR. AMATO: Yeah.

MR. LINGREN: Can you tell us what you think. Is it environmental conditions or other things that would cause the decline? What's your opinion there?

MR. AMATO: Well, I -- I personally am convinced that it's the global warming --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- that seems to have destroyed the balance in the ocean that for, you know, centuries existed with cooler water and food for migrating steelhead out in the center part of the Pacific. The strange thing is that the salmon seem -- Chinook and Coho seem to be doing okay, at least off the Oregon/Washington coasts. But steelhead on the entire Pacific Coast, which migrate to different pastures than do the Chinook and the Coho -- steelhead have really suffered. And I think it's probably because a lot of warm-water species, that are faster than salmonids, have migrated up into the waters that the steelhead have traditionally gone out to find the little shrimp and the animals they like to eat. It's just sad. But it's just definitely happened. So I -- I think just carbon --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: Global warming.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Okay. Anyway, you built your Estancia Amato place on the Naselle River. What prompted the move to fishing this area?

MR. AMATO: That's interesting. First time I fished the Naselle was with Bill Stinson. And, of course, being the -- the rep for Fenwick, he traveled all over the Northwest and the West Coast. And he purposely bought a house, or built a house, on the East Fork Lewis so he could have an opportunity at catching the biggest steelhead in Washington. The East Lewis had a large run of winter steelhead -- or big -- big -- big-sized winter steelhead, native

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fish. So he got to know southwest Washington really well. And he invited me down to fish the Naselle. And so that's about 1970, something like that. I came down. I kind of really liked it. But then I forgot about it for quite a few years. Then my son Nick, he fished the Naselle with a friend. And he came back to Portland, and he said, "Dad, you know, I found a really neat river. And would you like to fish it with me?" And Nick had fished it higher up. When -- when I was with Bill, we just fished the lower part down here. And I drifted the river with Nick, and we hooked a few steelhead, and I fell in love with the river. And so that's how I ended up here. And it was, you know, within two hours of Portland. So it was reasonable --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- distance.

MR. LEWIS: Well, when did -- when did you buy the -- the house that's the Estancia?

MR. AMATO: The house itself was built in -- built about 25 years ago. So I think about 19- -- about the year 2000 I took occupancy.

MR. LEWIS: Okay.

MR. AMATO: But I had bought the property about five years previous to that. I just put up a tent. You know, I'd come down and camp on it, and that was it.

MR. LEWIS: So you -- you had somebody build the house for you, though? Great.

MR. AMATO: Yeah. There was somebody that -- they built it actually in Longview. They hauled it down on -- many parts of it already erected, on the truck and then assembled it, like, with a crane and -- and made it look pretty substantial. Interesting thing was that this hole, the old-timers told me -- they called it the itombooty (phonetic) hole, which meant, in Finnish, supposedly the old bitch hole. So there was a farmhouse here in the old days. And when they were pushing the dirt around here, I noticed shards of plates and cups and stuff. And according to, you know, the old-timers, the lady of the original owner of the house, she was walking around out in the yard -- and they were burning stumps at that time to kind of clear it up for pasture -- and she fell -- or her leg, at least, fell into a hole where a piece of wood had been burning under the ground. She burned herself. Didn't die but burned herself. And so had kind of a side history -- sad history. But -- so when I got it, there was an incredibly beautiful hold here that was just perfect for fishing a fly. It was about, you know, 4 to 6 feet deep and about probably 70 to 80 feet, even 100 feet, maybe longer. And you could spend a lot of time just working down it. And it was just a steelhead hotel. When the fish would come in from saltwater, which is just a mile below here, this would be a major stop. And every morning, every evening, you know, if the water was in the -- right, there were fish. And then about probably 10 or 15 years ago, there was a flood and never been the same. You know, the -- the hole is gone. There is a little bit of a little eddy where Coho kind of hang up and mill around in it, but nothing like it was with the fly. So --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. It's kind of --

MR. AMATO: Kind of paradise.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Kind of sad, but that stuff happens. Okay. I know it's happened a lot of rivers I've fished too. Okay.

MR. AMATO: It's paradise lost.

MR. LINGREN: You have this favorite place, and it's --

MR. LEWIS: Gone.

MR. LINGREN: -- gone.

MR. AMATO: The -- I think, you know, the one thing that I've noticed -- besides the fact of, you know, how -- how rough the computer industry has been on magazine publishing and book publishing, the saddest thing I've seen is the way the rivers in their lower stretches have broadened and shallowed. And the banks have gotten wider and wider, and the water is more and more dispersed. It's just -- just doesn't look good.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah. You need flushing flows out of major rivers --

MR. AMATO: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: -- to -- to bust those --

MR. AMATO: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: -- estuary areas open.

MR. AMATO: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: And you need new channels to --

MR. AMATO: And -- and, you know, the other thing, I think, is the lack of beavers. And -- and -- the beaver -- I -- I see these statistics that at one time in the United States, before the -- you know, before the Europeans came, there were, like, 400 million beavers in America. Now, I used to always wonder, well, you know, Hudson Bay Company and beavers and all that. There were actually a hell of a lot of beavers, and Hudson Bay Company made a hell of a lot of money selling beavers and other skins to -- to --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- the Orient. And now in Oregon -- I think they figure there's still a million beavers in Oregon. But just being around here and seeing the beaver -- beavers trying to hold on -- in -- in Milwaukie, in the little stream I live on, we -- my wife has a war with beavers. They -- you know, we're six miles from downtown Portland, 20 minutes to Portland. And we have beavers that are insistent upon trying to build a dam right in our backyard. And I tell Gayle, "You know, leave 'em alone. You know, leave 'em alone." But she's -- she's lost a lot of trees to the beavers. So she's got wire around all the trees. And the poor beavers.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: I -- I mean, the beavers -- they made those great pools and high water. The salmon could get -- and steelhead could get above 'em and up into dead waters to have their --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- babies. And then they'd have those nice pools to live in through the summer.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: The beaver was a huge, huge loss.

MR. LEWIS: And it was the Northwest Company, sister organization to the Hudson's Bay Company --

MR. AMATO: The Northwest. Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: -- that was -- that was responsible for extirpating beaver throughout the state. They were the architects of fish habitat --

MR. AMATO: They really were.

MR. LEWIS: -- across -- across the country.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: That's the one thing with Tierra del Fuego that's unbelievable and really, really sad. Maybe you've seen some of these pictures on how the trees have been ruined by beavers in southern part of Chile and Argentina. And the beavers have just decimated their birch forests. And then -- the trees die, and then the water comes up and washes the soil. And streams get wider and wider and shallower --

MR. LEWIS: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: -- and shallower. And it's just absolutely -- it's like a bomb has gone off down there.

MR. LEWIS: Were they invasives? Did somebody introduce them?

MR. AMATO: They -- they -- they weren't there by nature.

MR. LEWIS: Ah.

MR. AMATO: And the -- the Argentines and the Chileans brought beavers down there for an industry, fur industry.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: I see.

MR. AMATO: And instead, you know, it destroyed their forest. And it -- it's like -- it's like a nuclear explosion went off. At first when the Spanish went in to -- in down there, they purposely -- the settlers purposely burned the forest off. They'd just start a fire and let it burn, kind of like some of the circumstances that happened around here. But down there it happened really big-time, and the fire might burn all summer long. Then they put sheep out. And you'd see the -- a lot of places you'd see these dead trees and green grass and stuff and the sheep. But now the beavers, you -- you -- like -- like, I seen canals farther than from here to the river that go through the -- the dirt or the pasture land. They're dug out about 3 feet deep and, you know, like, 6 inches wide. And these beavers, they -- they just go for hundreds of yards to get a tree. And it's just -- ah, it's horrible.

MR. LINGREN: Do you have any insight regarding steelhead management issues in Oregon and Washington?

MR. AMATO: Well, my feeling is that we -- the little rainbows in our streams are, for the most part, steelhead or they're migratory. If they don't find enough food, they seem to -- many of 'em, you know, go -- keep going downstream until they get to the ocean. And so my feeling is that no one should be allowed to fish for those little presmolts with any kind of bait. All bait should be completely done away with. And that possibly -- possibly all trout fishing for little resident rainbow trout should somehow be really watched. That's kind of, you know -- like, I fished this river yesterday -- or two days ago. I fished, like, 25 -- 20 places where I've hooked steelhead before. I use a little silver wobbler. And I hooked one fish in two miles, only one fish. And it was about a 12-inch rainbow smolt, I'm sure. It was coming down from up above and on his way out. And he probably had, like, a 30 or 40 percent chance of making it back maybe as -- as a -- as an adult because of all of his -- as an adult steelhead because of all of his stream experience. And that was it, you know. Just sad. Amazing thing is that there is plenty of eggs, because of all the salmon spawning that goes on in the stream, to produce a fair number of steelhead smolts. But, man, it's just tough.

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MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: Yeah.

MR. LINGREN: All right. You're 80 years old and have fished many decades, experienced some fine fly fishing, and have encouraged others to write about their experience and are responsible for much of our Pacific Northwest angler literature. Any closing comments on your experiences of life and thoughts of what the future holds for future generations of fly fishers?

MR. AMATO: Well, you know, I can attempt to be positive, or I can be negative. And, gosh, we just don't know what's around the corner. But one thing for a fact, I think, is that we've got to protect the earth's environment if we all want any kinds of hope for any of us, including steelhead or just humans. And, you know, I -- I -- carbon has got to be done away with. You know, I -- I see a future maybe with more nuclear plants or with -- is it fission where you create --

MR. LINGREN: Fission, yes.

MR. AMATO: The fission?

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. They haven't --

MR. LEWIS: No.

MR. LINGREN: -- got -- they haven't got it yet.

MR. LEWIS: Fusion. Fusion.

MR. LINGREN: Fusion. Fusion. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: Fusion.

MR. LEWIS: Fission is the --

MR. LINGREN: Fission is the atomic bomb.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah. Atomic bomb.

MR. LINGREN: Fusion.

MR. AMATO: Okay. Fusion.

MR. LEWIS: Fusion is where --

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: That's --

MR. LEWIS: -- is the sun.

MR. AMATO: The sun.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah. Two hydrogen atoms merge to form helium.

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MR. AMATO: And it seems, you know, like if you took whatever energy there is that holds a rock together and you could get that energy out of that rock some way, then maybe -- that -- that didn't damage the environment, maybe we could get someplace. But it's like the hydrogen, I guess, that's in water. And, apparently, they are coming -- are working on -- attempting to get the hydrogen out of the water. And maybe they can do that. But it's definitely science-based. Yeah. Yeah. I feel really sad for anybody that loves steelhead or --

MR. LINGREN: Well, you know, we're -- we're -- actually, we've been kind of fortunate that we've probably seen the best of --

MR. AMATO: That's really true.

MR. LINGREN: Our access has been -- you know, we've got into a lot of places that weren't accessible to just the people before us.

MR. AMATO: That's really true.

MR. LINGREN: Okay. So, you know, we've -- we've enjoyed --

MR. AMATO: Yeah.

MR. LINGREN: -- the best and --

MR. AMATO: The fishery was much more delicate than we thought.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. AMATO: The -- the amazing thing -- like, this little river, this -- this bay, there were about -- I think the commercial catch in Willapa Bay of Coho salmon is 40,000. And those 40,000 fish were aimed at a hatchery on this stream and a hatchery on -- on North River -- or not North River -- the Willapa River and the Nemah River. And for some reason, the Cohos are doing okay in the ocean, as are the Chinooks. But the steelhead is just a specialty species. Yeah.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah. Well, that's all we got there, Frank. So --

MR. AMATO: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: Well, Frank, thank you very much.

MR. LINGREN: Yeah.

MR. AMATO: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: This is really -- really nice.

MR. AMATO: You're welcome.

MR. LINGREN: Let's make sure we got it all.

MR. LEWIS: Yeah. Yeah. This time. Okay. So I'm gonna pull this here and I'll stop it. (End of recorded interview.)
* * *