

Carlson-Gerri-2019-06-06.mp4

Gerri Carlson [00:00:06] Okay. I met Tom [Morgan] in 1993, and I was a broker for Edward Jones, and he had sold Winston, I believe, in, at least two years before that, so '91? I'm not positive about that. But I think he had sold Winston, and he, he had a shop set up in, he had built a, an addition on to his garage and, and it was a shop. And so, he intended to start a small fly rod company that would be creating perfect rods. And I'm sure he did have a non-compete clause with David Ondaatje from when he sold Winston. And so, so he told me, he asked me oh, maybe, towards the end of '93 if I would ever consider stopping being a broker and starting a rod company with him. And I went, because he made these wonderful promises, he said, "you won't have to work that hard, you'd only have to wrap rods." And I said, "Well, that sounds kind of interesting," and I didn't love sales. So, and before that, I was a teacher. And so in the Peace Corps, and I thought I had to earn money, so I became a broker, which I thought would be a good career for, a good transition. And so I, I agreed that I thought that would be a really kind of an interesting new career for me. So yes, I did. And so, I believe it was 1996. Well, no, let me see. We, well, we couldn't stay in that house anymore because Tom's health had gotten so bad. It was tri-level. He couldn't get up to the bedroom very easily. I mean, it was really stressful and really hard and he'd fall. And so, we, he had bought this property out on Norris Road, where we live now, and where I live now. And, and so, we started making plans for a house there, with a shop. And so we, that was in, we moved in there in '96. We did the catalog in '95, and it was really fun. I was thinking on the way here that the best part of, the most fun part of the business was designing like the bag and the tube and he had already worked on designs at the Sacajawea House when he could still cast from a wheelchair. And they also did a lot of casting in Livingston at the, at the center there, the, the old hall that they have there. It's not a hall. It's like an old gym that is, on by the river there. And so the rods were fairly well designed, the two piece rods, graphite. And so that was sort of ready to go. But I'd never built a rod. I had no idea how to wrap a rod. I had no idea things were measured to the thousandths. So I sort of jumped in thinking, 'Oh, well, I, I can, I'm pretty smart. I can I can learn this.' And I did. But by that time, Tom couldn't show me anything because by the time we actually started, his, he was pretty much paralyzed from, his hands weren't working. He couldn't move his hands voluntarily. And I believe we started, I started feeding him in '95, the end of '95. But we went ahead because we had to work. Someone had to work and it looked like it'd be better if we worked from home than if I had to go out and [unintelligible] to something like that. It was a surprise. We didn't expect the MS to go that fast. And we kept saying, "Oh, if it could just stop here, we'd be okay," you know? But of course it didn't, and we're still okay. So when we moved in, we worked on the catalog in the end of '95, and I believe it was printed then. And I think actually, Sylvester Nemes wrote the first ad in Fly Fisherman, and it was, and then there was an essay written and we had, we got 100 deposits before I ever built a rod. I mean, I had no idea what I was doing, really. And so, once our shop was, I started to learn to wrap rods from Jerry Kustich from Winston, and he came over and he also turned handles for me for the first maybe, year even. Because I couldn't, I just couldn't do it all. I just was, still really, I really had a high learning curve. And to get them to the level that we wanted them to be at, they had to be, you know, pretty much perfect. And so I, so I think then I learned from him how to, how to turn handles. I learned, so I was doing everything. So I, I have a funny story to tell about this. We were making a jig to drill cork because cork is individually drilled for every rod. And so, we don't, we didn't buy pre-formed handles. We wanted to form our own handles. So we, we created a jig and we were looking for a boring head tool, which I had no, I don't think I could even pick it out today, but we had to drill a hole this way to hold the cork. But I had no idea what it would look like. Once I found it, after pulling every tool out of the toolbox and Tom saying, "nope, nope," "is this it?" "Nope, nope." And then

when I found it, it was like, 'Oh, my God, how am I, how is this supposed to work?' Because I just couldn't conceptualize it. So, we finally got it drilled, but it really took us all day, which was really an hour project if someone, you know, knew what they were doing. And, and that was the day we both cried. It was like, so frustrating for both of us. The other thing I learned, that I didn't realize at the time when Tom and I started this company, was that Tom is, Tom was a very, he loved to micromanage. And I, and I think he probably did his whole life. But, but it was, I don't know if it got more exaggerated or not. But I didn't know anything, of course, so I needed a lot of micromanaging. But I didn't, I don't function with micromanaging very well. And so, he would start with one small step, and another small step, and the next, and then you do this, then you do this, then you do this, then you do this. Finally I, I read, I was reading a book. I can't remember what the name of it was. Anyway, a guy was telling his, it was a, teaching about teaching your kids how to ride a bicycle, and his first child, he did what Tom would do, explain every step. And then the next child came around, and he just said, "Give me the bike." And I really, it was like, 'oh, yes!' That's, it wasn't about either of us so much. It was our styles of learning and not feeling controlled. And so, we worked that out, which then once we did that, it was it really worked. Otherwise, I think we would have killed each other. We would have driven each other really crazy. Oh, dear.

James Thull [00:07:14] That's OK.

Gerri Carlson [00:07:16] I'll just set it here, if that's okay. So.

James Thull [00:07:19] And this was, you started with graphite rods? Is that correct?

Gerri Carlson [00:07:21] We started only with graphite. And I had no intention of doing more, actually. It's, I'm sure people think that when you charge the most for a rod, you're also making the most money. But that really isn't necessarily the truth. So we really had to look at other options to improve our bottom line. And everything is really hand-done, so everything takes a lot of time. And everything was done in our shop, other than the blanks were made by G. Loomis. With Tom's patterns, and kind of our color and stuff like that. So, so we started building rods, and the first 100 rods. Let's see, we had the ad in '96 and we got 100 that year and I believe I got 100 rods out that year which, and taking care of Tom, and all of everything else. So it was really intense, and a high learning curve, and it's stressful, but also kind of our first year of marriage. So there was a lot of honeymoon time. In fact, I think the article I wrote about that was the honeymoon period because, you know, it was so. So that was good. That, that helped. All of that helped. And then, we, we kept, we just. Oh is that turned over?

James Thull [00:08:43] There you go.

Gerri Carlson [00:08:44] Oh, okay. We, we, we just started getting a lot of orders and sometimes we were out three years, and then I'm not exactly sure what year, but I just said, you know, "I just can't function at this level." I mean, the house was just a wreck and feeding us was really hard. And I just said, you know, "we've got to figure out something else because I can't perform at this level all the time, and take care of you, and take care of the house. And myself." So, I think I went down to 50 rods a year, and then that meant we had to find other ways to bring in income. And so, what we did is, Tom, I think in the intermittent time, he designed the hand mill? And so that, but that also meant we had an employee. And so, we had, we had a couple employees drilling hand mill beds. But that ended up going to a metal manufacturer, which was much better. And then Bill Blackburn started with us to build bamboo rods. And I, one time, I thought I would like to do that, but

it was like, it's, I couldn't. I mean, there's, there was no time to, it's, it takes a lot of hours to build a bamboo rod. So I stuck with finishing all the rods. So I would get a bamboo blank that was already ferruled. And then I would do the same thing I would with a graphite rod. More, took more time to do a bamboo because you're matching tips. And that takes quite a bit of time. And that, that was good because that added, and then having the hand mill and the bamboo rods, added enough income even with an employee, a full-time employee, that we could stick with. You know, we got more money for bamboo so we could stick with doing less graphite.

James Thull [00:10:31] Did you find it was a different clientele that went for the bamboo versus the g-, versus the graphite? Or would the same people order both?

Gerri Carlson [00:10:40] A lot of the same people ordered both. But then there were, there are those bamboo aficionados that really only want to fish bamboo. Yeah, yeah. And then we started, so this, I don't know, when did we do the...? So then, Tom thought we ought to do the fiberglass. And that took forever to get developed, partly because we had, were working with Kerry Burkheimer, who had his own plate full, but he was willing to do the blanks. And so that just took a long time getting, you know, to get the patterns and everything developed. It took a lot of back and forth, so it took years, and then we had trouble coating them because it's really hard to coat a bamboo, I mean, a fiberglass rod. They're usually white. And so they get streaks and specks and, and to get to the perfect coating, that took several years, actually, to get those out. But they've been, they were really good and well-received. And then we decided that, I think it was around 2012, maybe a little bit before that, we decided we would start a four-piece rod.

James Thull [00:11:53] Was this bamboo or graphite?

Gerri Carlson [00:11:54] Graphite, just graphite. And that's been, I think, the new owners, that's been their best, that's what they sell mostly, our four-piece.

James Thull [00:12:04] Do you remember what you started selling those first hundred rods for?

Gerri Carlson [00:12:09] \$975.

James Thull [00:12:10] \$975.

Gerri Carlson [00:12:11] Which was the top of the line. I mean, that was, but our, but all of our, our bag and tube were very expensive. I think our tube was \$100, just with everything. Plus we had a coin minted and, yeah, so.

James Thull [00:12:25] I've certainly never, I've, I've never been in that income bracket where I can afford a really pricy rod.

Gerri Carlson [00:12:31] Yeah.

James Thull [00:12:31] What type of, I mean, do those, I've always been curious about this myself. Is that something that comes with, I mean, if it breaks in ten years or five years, is that something that comes with kind of a warranty, or can you get it repaired? Is that.

Gerri Carlson [00:12:43] Yeah, you can get it repaired.

James Thull [00:12:43] Is that a rod meant for, to last somebody's life?

Gerri Carlson [00:12:46] It's meant to last forever.

James Thull [00:12:47] Okay.

Gerri Carlson [00:12:47] Yeah. It's meant to be a heritage rod. Yes, and you can get them repaired. And they may not look exactly the same because, like, colors are not perfectly matched, every batch you do. So, yeah, but it'll be close.

James Thull [00:13:02] How does graphite age? Does it, so I know fiberglass, okay, well, over time sometimes can get brittle. Is that the same with graphite?

Gerri Carlson [00:13:11] I don't think that's the same, no, because Tom has rods he had from Winston and, yeah, no, I think they're okay. I think they last. I don't think, if it's a good coating, I think the coating should last really well. Yeah.

James Thull [00:13:21] Is there care and maintenance that goes in, that's involved with, I know there is with bamboo. Is there as well with, graphite or?

Gerri Carlson [00:13:27] You shouldn't put them away wet.

James Thull [00:13:29] OK.

Gerri Carlson [00:13:29] That's the main thing, you know wipe them off. Yeah, that's about it, and polish your, your silver. Nickel silver. And then also the wood on your, you might have to refinish the wood on your reel seat because that can, you know, that's just a varnish on there, so several coats, but yeah.

James Thull [00:13:50] That's great. So what kind of feedback did you get on those first hundred rods?

Gerri Carlson [00:13:55] Well, we got lots more orders, so I think they got a really good feedback. Yeah, and the action, that action that Tom designed, it's just not many people are doing it, anymore. That was like the old original Winstons, which you really felt the rod, you felt the line you felt, it really is a feeling rod. He would call it a thought rod, that was what he called it. But, you know, it goes where you want it to go. So it has a really delicate tip. So you don't break off fish very often, delicate presentation. You know, that was his, I only, I know all this because I heard him talking, over and over and over on conversations. I've never fished it, but that is the key, I think, to his designs.

James Thull [00:14:41] So when you say delicate action, is that the phrase you use? Can you define that for me, or is that what you just did?

Gerri Carlson [00:14:48] Well, yeah, I think it's, you can put the, you can put the line and the fly where you want it, easily. Well, not easily. You have to be a good caster. That's the other thing, is, it's, I think we had a lot of discussions about the, the stiff rods. Because the stiff rods are good for casting, but they're not great for fishing, you know, because you don't normally fish long distances. Like that's what they do. And also, you break off because you don't feel. You break off a lot of, a lot of fish. And so, he always fished with a really delicate presentation, and didn't break off many fish. So that's, that's the action that

he wanted. And it's not for everybody. And it's probably, my understanding is it's probably a little harder because you have to be a relatively decent caster. To be able- otherwise, I think these might be, they don't feel like, I don't, I don't know that I should even say that because I don't know this really. It appears to me that when you fish a stiff rod, you, you actually can get, get the line way out there, but not necessarily where you want it.

James Thull [00:16:00] Okay, that makes sense.

Gerri Carlson [00:16:02] Yeah.

James Thull [00:16:04] So.

Gerri Carlson [00:16:04] Less control, maybe.

James Thull [00:16:06] So. I know. Just based on the cost of the rods, obviously. You sold to kind of a, a select group of customers. How did you market to them?

Gerri Carlson [00:16:19] You know, Tom had such a great reputation. And people were looking for that action. And a lot of our customers, especially at the beginning, were, owned a Tom Morgan's Favorite. The TMF.

James Thull [00:16:32] Okay.

Gerri Carlson [00:16:33] Rod, the two-piece, four-weight, eight-foot, four-weight. And they love that rod. and they fish, a lot of people still fish that rod.

James Thull [00:16:39] And that was something Tom developed at Winston, is that correct?

Gerri Carlson [00:16:42] Yep. And so that's what they were looking for, was that action. And I think they were looking for maybe, to own something of Tom's? Because, you know, Winston, if you didn't know Winston and you weren't in the industry, you wouldn't know that was Tom Morgan's. For a long, you know, people didn't know who owned Winston. In fact, probably a lot of people don't know David Ondaatje owned Winston, you know, now. So. I think he wanted a rod that had his name on it, and I was the S in Rodsmiths.

James Thull [00:17:16] Wonderful. So initially, you guys just put out a catalog. Did you have?

Gerri Carlson [00:17:25] And that one ad in Fly Fisherman.

James Thull [00:17:26] And that one ad that Syl wrote in Fly Fisherman was, did you have, already kind of an established mailing list of contacts?

Gerri Carlson [00:17:33] No, we didn't mail out anything other than that. And we got a lot of requests for catalogs. And we also, Tom was well known in Japan, so we also had a big following in Japan. So we sold a lot of rods to the Japanese market. And Sansui became a dealer for us. So, that was really great, so they were sometimes half of our production for the year because they were selling rods. We didn't have shops other than Sansui, in Japan, and George Anderson, and then we had Mark Reynolds in Denver. And those were the only shops we sold to at a discount. Because we really couldn't make it selling these rods wholesale. We just, we couldn't make it.

James Thull [00:18:21] Did you, outside of Japan, did you get many international orders?

Gerri Carlson [00:18:26] Yep. We have a lot from all over the world, actually. Germany, and Norway, and we sold a lot of hand mills in Germany and Norway, and in Italy, and, and, let me see, oh, I think Romania? Were some of the places, the hand mills have gone. A lot in Sweden.

James Thull [00:18:45] Tell me a bit about the hand mill, how that developed, and what it does.

Gerri Carlson [00:18:51] Okay. The hand mill was a project of Tom's and he had a friend, Bob Clay, who builds rods up in British Columbia, and he wanted to build bamboo rods. And so, Tom said, "well, I have a really great idea. Do you want to try it?" And so they built the first, I think they had a man in, I wonder if I can remember his name, Sheridan. Oh, Tom, he had a, he had a machine shop in Sheridan. Can't remember his last name, right this minute. Anyway, he built the first hand mill, by Tom's design. Very rustic, kind of, and the beauty of that is, so most people plane when they build a bamboo rod, they plane in a planing form, which is a groove in a piece of metal, the length of your whatever, the length of your rod is going to be. And you, you, you plane one side with the hand plane, and you flip it over, and plane the other side, and you have to do six perfectly planed strips in order not to get glue seams. That is the most difficult thing about building a bamboo rod, actually. Well, there's a lot of difficult things, but that is the most difficult thing. So a lot of people got stopped because they couldn't do six, because you have to stop to sharpen your blade. Then, you have a different angle and just, it's minute. But that's all this, we're talking minutiae here. And so, Tom he uh, invented a hand mill that has blades that are like this. So there is a V blade, and you interchange the head so you can do a five-strip, four-strip, six-strip. I think he even did one for a seven and an eight strip. So the heads are just the angles change in the head, and you just take that out and put it in. So that was, that was really ingenious that. Because when you do a planing form, you have to buy a new set of forms for a four-weight, a five-weight, a six-weight. And so, then, then it kind of developed, Per Brandin got, became part of this because he came and tried it out and said, "oh, this will never work." And Tom kept working at it and working at it, which, this is kind of crazy because I don't know if I really believe in astrology, but Tom had like five major houses in Taurus. The Bull. He was never the bull in the sense of how we think about the bull. But his persistence really amazed me, totally amazed me. When I would have said, "oh, let's start, let's find a different route for this," oh no, we're going to, you know. That's how that got developed was because of his persistence, really. There was lots of ways, places along the way that it could have just said, 'Oh, I don't think we'll get there. It's not worth the energy to get there.' And we didn't expect to sell very many of them. But, you know, people, our generation or my generation anyway, they want something that's meaningful to do when they retire. And bamboo rod building has become quite, quite an exquisite hobby to do. And it's not all that expensive compared to flying or, you know, other hobbies people do. So we ended up selling quite a few, so it ended up getting finally designed and I think there was one, after we'd gotten about maybe a hundred out, there was one major change that they did. And so they, so Tom designed a way to alter the old hand mills. And then his cousin ended up producing these, who lives in, he makes medical equipment, so he's really fanatical about, about everything. And so they're really beautiful, and so, he ended up making the handles for us, and the beds are made at the machine shop in, in Belgrade. And then the anvils are still done in the shop. And the anvils are the plastic piece that the bamboo that, that hooks on to the bed and then the bamboo rides on that.

James Thull [00:22:37] I see.

Gerri Carlson [00:22:38] Yeah.

James Thull [00:22:39] And what about selecting the bamboo? Was that something, how was that done?

Gerri Carlson [00:22:46] Very important. Right now, there's a, fortunately, there's a guy in Livingston, David Serafin, is importing bamboo and he goes to China, Tonkin China, I think, is the place where they go? And he selects all the bamboo. And has it imported into Seattle and then he trucks it to, to Livingston actually. And before that, another man did that, and he really improved the quality of bamboo. Originally, bamboo came with marks on them that were the, the growers mark. So there was a big slash on it and often, they burned them to straighten them, which you know, means you really don't use a lot of the bamboo, but now none of that is done. And they can go and choose the pieces that they want. And David also is a bamboo rod builder. So he understands the quality that we're, that bamboo rod builders are looking for. So actually, bamboo is, is easy to get, easier to get now than probably ever for people here anyway.

James Thull [00:23:46] In terms of, so in terms of the profit margin, you guys did better with the bamboo than you did with graphite?

Gerri Carlson [00:23:53] Well. I don't know, probably about the same, but I didn't have to do... Well, I did about the same amount of work on it. So I think, you know how cash flow works. I think we needed all of it. We needed the hand mill, we needed the bamboo rods, we needed the graphite rods, and we needed the fiberglass blanks. To be a really financially feasible company. Yeah.

James Thull [00:24:20] Sure.

Gerri Carlson [00:24:20] Yeah.

James Thull [00:24:21] Do you have a preference between them? Which, was there a preference between the rods you worked on? Did you find one more beautiful or elegant than the other?

Gerri Carlson [00:24:31] Oh, you know, they were like babies when you sent them out. They were all these, they're really beautiful when you package them up, I'd go, I'd kiss them goodbye and yeah, no, it was, that was fun. There's a lot of steps I didn't enjoy doing, in building a rod. And it wasn't my passion. Paper is my passion. So it was for me, to get it done well, to be efficient, and then leave the shop. Where, Tom, if he would have been out there, he would have been out monkeying around all the time, where I wanted to get my rods done, done well, as perfectly as I could, and then stop. Do something I really enjoy doing.

James Thull [00:25:06] Do you feel that your skills progressed over time? Were the rods you made in later years, in your opinion, better than the ones you made first?

Gerri Carlson [00:25:13] I think maybe the first 25 were okay. They were, you know, they were probably as good as what's out there, but I got much, much better and could see it better. I couldn't always see what was, what wasn't fine about, you know, what, like the

edges of, yeah, so no, I improved, I'm sure. And I got faster. And more efficient. That was the main thing for me too. Is to become efficient.

James Thull [00:25:38] How does that work with the, I guess I'm always curious about that. I've never, I've never ordered something, then had to wait months or years, years for it. Are people just prepared for that? Would people get anxious? Did you get, "where's my rod?"

Gerri Carlson [00:25:55] The only bad people, the only people we had were ministers. They were the worst, I hate to say that, but they were really difficult to deal with. No, people were really generous. And I think part of it was our situation. They, you know, well, some people would call and say, "well, I don't want to bother Tom," which I always, we always thought was kind of funny because, well, he was also very busy. He was, he was so productive, amazingly productive, for someone who couldn't move. He got more done than the rest of us combined, I think. Anyway, yeah, so, no, people understood and we would, we never, I really learned not to promise, you know? And I did try my best to get things out within the year, but we said it'll be year and we don't know when. Partly that was because I batched rods by what blanks came in and we always, we didn't always have all of the blanks available at that moment. But we, you know, we always had orders in for blanks and stuff like that. And then what happened was, I can't remember exactly. G. Loomis decided that they did not want to do our blanks anymore, and Gary had already quit the company, so he was going to do our blanks then. So he started a new company. There was a lot of problems with all of that, and they just couldn't get our blanks to us. And so, then we, we moved to Kerry Burkhiemer and again, he has his full plate, but he did a good job getting our graphite to us. Yeah, so that was, I guess that was problematic. But people were, I think, generally really kind, and they really wanted the rod and they knew they had to wait. One lawyer in town who I think we bartered a rod for some work said, "oh, you build character," you help people learn how to delay gratification.

James Thull [00:27:37] That's a nice statement.

Gerri Carlson [00:27:37] And when they got the rod, I mean it, because it was packaged beautifully. So they had a round an outer tube, and a really pretty black tube, and then there's a bag around the tube, and then there's the, you know, and it looks, it's, the presentation was really, really pretty.

James Thull [00:27:52] Nice.

Gerri Carlson [00:27:53] And so, I think they really appreciated getting something done really well.

James Thull [00:27:57] So you started with putting an ad in Fly Fisher, sending out catalogs? Obviously, I would, I would assume that changed over time with the, with the, with the birth of the Internet.

Gerri Carlson [00:28:09] Yeah.

James Thull [00:28:12] How did that, how did the Internet change your business model?

Gerri Carlson [00:28:14] A lot. Tom's really good friend [unintelligible] Anyway, he got us in the Internet, with Tom Morgan Rodsmiths as our web page name, in '96. Really early. We thought, 'oh, well this is crazy, let's do it. But, you know, because he knows and, you

know, but it's really crazy.' It was really early and our first Web page wasn't great. We didn't, it was okay, but it was really, so we paid, I don't know, \$5,000 to have a company, media company in Bozeman do the Web page. And we really liked it, and that, and the one thing that I think people came back a lot because Tom kept putting stories on, and he wrote, it's, there's like, it was a whole history of Tom and rod building and, you know? And, and it was a crowded page, but it was really pretty and easy to navigate. And so, I think that, that then we never sent another catalog out. Or very rarely. I saw one of our original catalogs was like \$300 and some, in maybe Adams's catalog. I was going, woah, good retirement here.

James Thull [00:29:25] Yeah, yeah, yeah, should've saved some.

Gerri Carlson [00:29:27] Yeah, I think I have a few.

James Thull [00:29:29] There you go.

Gerri Carlson [00:29:30] Not a lot, but a few.

Gerri Carlson [00:29:32] And then the next catalog, that was second, I think we've done, we did three catalogs, the third catalog, we hardly send any out, and I split those with the new owner. So they may be valuable at some point, but they may not be either.

James Thull [00:29:50] How was it selling the business?

Gerri Carlson [00:29:52] You know, I was ready in 2012, to sell. But we hadn't, we didn't have the four-piece rods totally finished. And so, Tom said, "we really, we need to finish these four-piece" and also make sure the fiberglass rods are moving smoothly. So, I was ready. And I wanted to retire and I wanted Tom to have retirement time. He wasn't quite ready, so we started advertising it, the sale in 2000-, maybe end of 15? And we've, we'd wrote up this big note, or Tom wrote up this big notebook, and about the business and, you know, inventory and everything that you write up in a book about selling a business. And then we got, we did have one person who was really interested from Denver and, but, you know, people wanted to not put a lot of money down. And we really needed to be, we didn't want to carry the, we didn't want to be the banker, for the most part. And that took longer, so we had, I think, three really good offers and then we took the last one. So yeah. And they're great men.

James Thull [00:31:00] Excellent. So now, if I recall from, from when I visited out at your place and visited Tom out there and did the interview with him, the shop was right there attached to the house, right?

Gerri Carlson [00:31:09] It was, right.

James Thull [00:31:10] Is that still the case? Have you freed up that space now?

Gerri Carlson [00:31:13] That's now an art gallery, an art studio.

James Thull [00:31:14] Oh, wonderful.

Gerri Carlson [00:31:15] That's the, the shop is, and the garage is the, now a garage again, which was the bamboo shop, and the pat, no Pat, Matt and Joel moved the business to Griffin? Off of Griffin.

James Thull [00:31:27] Okay.

Gerri Carlson [00:31:28] And it's a nice place, and, and they're doing fine. I mean, I think it's not easy, but it's, it's good. They were learning a lot about owning a business, which is never easy.

James Thull [00:31:38] And had they been affiliated with the company before, or they just came in and bought?

Gerri Carlson [00:31:42] No, no, they just came in, both really avid fly fishermen. Really liked the idea of owning a fly rod company, and Tom Morgan Rodsmiths and, yeah. And they moved their families, and bought the business and are working really hard and doing a good job.

James Thull [00:31:59] Interesting. So, so they kept the same patterns?

Gerri Carlson [00:32:03] Yep. That, that's what they bought, really. They bought the reputation. And I spent a year, it was about a year, yeah... Maybe not quite a year. Nine months, ten months, 11 months. I worked from, I think Joel came on board in February of 2017 and I think I worked through January of 2018. So I had a month off when Tom died, and then I kept working for them, teaching them what they needed to know about rod building, because they never built rods before. Yeah, and then they set up their shop and I didn't help much with that, but I could give feedback on, you know, ideas of how it worked best for me. But, and yeah.

James Thull [00:32:48] I'm always curious about the changeover, you know, because, at this point, it's, it's sort of just the name there, right? I mean, it's, it's the patterns, but without you and Tom.

Gerri Carlson [00:32:59] It's the process. Yeah, and it's the process. And I was there to teach them the process, and they got that down really quick. I mean, they were, they're really quick studies and they're really smart.

James Thull [00:33:06] That's wonderful.

Gerri Carlson [00:33:06] They felt, they felt that Tom's death, unexpectedly, of course, put them behind. Because they were expecting his support, which he would have been happily, you know, he was happy to, to give that, but yeah, you can't predict that.

James Thull [00:33:28] No, no. I mean, things happen, yeah.

Gerri Carlson [00:33:29] So that, but they went on ahead and, you know, figured it out and, and I help 'em as much as I can.

James Thull [00:33:35] Anything you miss about it?

Gerri Carlson [00:33:40] [laughs] I miss Tom, of course.

James Thull [00:33:42] About the business, in general?

Gerri Carlson [00:33:43] About the business? Well, you know, I've learned a lot since I've been home alone. Tom loved uproar. Although I don't know that he would say that, he loved action, things moving all the time. And I'm really, and I'm really an introvert. And I, I mean, I don't always look that way, but, boy, I'm pretty happy having no one in the house. We had people in the house in our bedroom and, you know, and nice people, you know, great people, almost every day of our married life.

James Thull [00:34:22] So it's nice to have your own home?

Gerri Carlson [00:34:23] So it's really nice to have my own space again. I really loved our customers. They were generally really fine people. So if I miss that, you know?