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Val Atkinson [00:00:10] Yeah sure. So I'll start off by giving you a little poem that I wrote about this.

James Thull [00:00:14] Wonderful.

Val Atkinson [00:00:15] This is the book that I, I have several books out, this is called Distant Waters. It's my first fly fishing coffee table book. Maybe 15 years old. But I wrote something that I thought was really epitomizing my love of fly fishing. And it says, 'Happiness for me is a dusty lonely road in summer, with a full tank of gas and a tank, in a truck, full of fishing tackle. Escaping the crowds of the city for the wonderful solitude of the river and its inhabitants. To breathe crisp, clean air and to feel the sun on your back as you wade the water.' So I grew up in a family that... We had a lot of arguing in our family and I used to escape from the house and I was maybe 5 or 6 years old and I discovered fishing. And it was a place to be quiet in solitude and enjoy nature. And at first I never caught any fish. But I kept, for some reason, I just kept wanting to pursue it, pursue it and pursue it. Probably five or seven years went by and I never caught a fish. And then one day I went out and got some fish bait oil from a local store and put it on my worm because I was using worms at this point, at that point, before fly fishing, and I caught, like, twelve blue gills. So that cemented my passionate desire to go fishing. I used to skip school in the ninth period to go out and fish for bass. I didn't have trout in Ohio. So I spent a lot of time growing up in the outdoors, just where it was quiet and peaceful as I said. And I just grew to love it. And then as I got older I started reading magazines about fishing in the West. Montana and Yellowstone and Idaho and so forth. And when you get out of school everybody says you know 'Go West young man go West.' So California was about as far as I could go West but I did stop in Montana and spent, you know, a couple years working there and enjoying it. I don't know what my life would be like if I didn't, if I wasn't enjoying fishing. It's just everything to me, totally. My wife often says 'I think you like fishing more than me.' And I say 'Well you can't really say that because they're two separate things.' You know it's like, 'I still love you very much but I love fishing too.' And as my father was a photographer I grew up in the world of photography.

Val Atkinson [00:02:57] So I started taking a camera with me and trying to capture some of what I was enjoying. So for the first few years it was sort of fishing was the most important, catching fish. But then as I got older and now up into my middle age and older, photography's started to transfer, you know, go further than the fishing. It's just more important now. It's more challenging and I know what it's like to catch fish. So, it's more challenging to try to get a picture of you, or my friends, or your friends having a wonderful moment.

Val Atkinson [00:03:44] I would say being observant, really observing what's going on. Like for fishing to find out what the fish are feeding on. For photography finding and recognizing the, the optimum moment when the action is going to happen. And I think patience is a required, a requirement for anybody doing either one either fishing or photography just to be patient and to see, you know, observe what's going on. Sometimes I sit on the riverbank for an hour just watching things and thoughts start to come into your mind and you start drifting away and then maybe a fish will rise and bring you back to the moment. Or somebody, an angler, will walk down the stream and you go 'Oh that's a good picture,' so you take your camera out and maybe try to capture a picture of them enjoying life. Photography and fishing work really well together. I mean, I used to say you could do both you just have to know what to do when. When to put the rod down and pick up the

camera. But in the last 10 years, you know I'm 72 now, and the last 10, 12 years I've found that you can be a better, either a better fisherman or a better photographer if you check, if you concentrate on doing one thing. I hated to say that when it finally came around because I was always saying 'I can do both.' But if you want to be as good as you possibly can, you can't really do both. So you have to concentrate on one or the other. So I try to do both, and I mean I try to do either one to the fullest extent that I can just by concentrating on the very, very thing you know the photography or the fishing. They're both technical. Rods and lines and flies, cameras and lenses and F-stops. And I've always been sort of technically inclined. So it sort of comes natural to me. But I think the biggest thing of all is just the patience. Too many people just rush right in and scare the fish, scare the moment away, scare the bird, scare the deer, whatever they're trying to photograph. You just need to sit down and just relax and breathe and be quiet.

Val Atkinson [00:06:18] Well in the old days with photography, as it relates to photography, was film, obviously, and that required a darkroom to get your images on print. And now it's digital which is a whole, wholly different, and I for one didn't want to make the transition. You know, I was stuck in my film for years and years and years. Of the last 40 years or so I've been a photographer I would say two thirds of those, probably 30 years, I was with film and probably been with digital now maybe 10 or 12 years. And first, it just requires your mind to stay open and try to accomplish something new, digital. It is easier to take photographs digitally, much easier. That's more and more people are doing it now. But it's also very rewarding to take it to a new level because it's all on a computer with, with you know sliders and bars and graphs and charts and you don't have Dectal and, and you know fixer and all the chemicals that you have to go through, to stain your fingers and breathe. I remember Annie Liebowitz, who's a photographer that I really admire a lot, and she was with film for years and years and years and she said 'When I got into digital and I finally decided to make the transition I was overwhelmed. It was just amazing. And the further I get into it the more I get into it the more I'm enamored with it, it's just fabulous.' And it is. And that's why you know, like a lot of people that are, used to be, selling vacuum cleaners are now making, you know, photos because it's so easy and it's so seductive. They quit their job. I know half a dozen people that work for the same fly shop that I work for have quit and become either videographers or freelance photographers everybody's that now. So it's changed so drastically.

Val Atkinson [00:08:22] They say that there are more photographs posted on Facebook in a single day than previously in the history of photography the day before, from the day before all the way from when it started. That many pictures, images are being posted on Facebook. That's astounding. And I'm, you know you go through the website or the Facebook or Instagram and there's just constantly new, new photographers that I'm just enamored with. They're just like, wow these guys are really good. So it's just a matter of like I say having patience and observing and it's, it's all... You don't even need to know F-stops and apertures now, pretty much, because cameras are so automatic. You could just put it on an automatic and go for it. And I give workshops occasionally and people constantly want to know about the technical stuff. You know HDR photography and and ISOs and, and it's not so much about that for me as it is about the creativity about it. Less is more. I want to just capture the moment. I remember that Ernest Hemingway said too, "a good story makes you feel like you're in the moment. You can feel it. You can feel it." and I know, I know that's the way photos are. You can feel it. It's not about whether it's correct whether your horizon line's straight or your, you know, everything is perfect. It's about the emotion of the moment I think.

Val Atkinson [00:10:06] Yeah. More, definitely more people right now. You know I remember when I was in school our teacher said 'Oh you know in 19, you know 30 years from now, there's gonna be twice as many people in America as there are now' and we all thought 'oh who cares.' But boy it's sure true now. They're everywhere and especially in California where we have a lot of good waters and we have a lot of different kinds of species of fish but there's a lot, they're loved to death practically. The public water is just overfished. It's everywhere. I mean people are everywhere. So then that sort of gave rise to pay-to-fish which at first I didn't think I was very much in favor of. But now I think it has its place because you can pay an amount, a nominal fee or whatever, to, to get the water to yourself for a day or with a limited amount of people. And I guess that's OK. I don't mind it now, you know? And some of the best fishing that I have been able to experience is all private. Having said that, I still fish on Fall River which is where I have a country house and it's public and it gets pounded. But if you're really paying, paying attention and you're really at the top of your game you can still catch fish, you know. But it's changed enormously and I'm sure when you talk to people like Russ Chatham who's very, you know, he's from an older generation than I am, and back in those days it was Steelhead. He quit fishing because the steelhead runs were diminished to such a degree that it became depressing. And, and I, I too feel that way to a lesser degree than him. But I see the quality of many of the public rivers going downhill from andromonous fish like salmon and steelhead which are on their way out. California Trout says that in 50 years if we don't do something we'll lose 50 percent of the andromonous fish that we have left which is staggering. I mean what's going to happen in 100 years or 200 years? So I don't know. It's kind of depressing.

Val Atkinson [00:12:16] But there are good things happening too, right now. Well, you know, like California Trout is experimenting with releasing salmonoids, little salmon fingerlings in rice fields. I think I have this kind of right. In the delta where they flood the rice fields with water to grow the rice plants, they're releasing these little fingerlings and they're growing on agricultural land. And I guess somehow they work their way back into the river. So there's a lot of science based technology that's happening right now to try to compensate for, you know, the detrimental levels of the fish going down. But one of my favorite things to do is to go to Montana and I try to spend half my time on pay to fish waters like Armstrong and DePuy's which are still pretty much hard hit these days. You know, used to be 50 dollars that's probably 150 now, but it's still relatively better because there's less people pounding the water. I went a few years ago to one of my favorite stretches on the Madison River and I was fishing a big old Bitch Creek fly and I met this guide and he says 'What are you using?' And I showed him and he said 'Oh, mister we haven't used those for 20 years we're now using number 22 Pseudocloeons or some special a little tiny thing' you know, he said 'Mr you're outdated,' you know. So, you know, it changes the fish get on smaller stuff the big stuff has gone away. We used to use number twelve humpies which was the fly that this club made famous. It was a humpy fly. And they came in yellow and green, different colors and that's all you needed in the old days back in the 50s and 60s. And number twelves, maybe a fourteen. Now they're like everything's 18s and 20s. The fish are, you know, less fish and they're harder to catch because they don't like being caught. Susan says 'you know fish would be happier if you just left them alone.' She likes fishing. She's not as fanatical as I am and I say, 'I, Susan I understand your point. I, I do think these fish would like it if we, they weren't caught' I think, I do think the reason they jump is because they feel pain. I personally feel that. You know, it would be better. But I am a fisherman so I'm a hypocrite in that respect.

Val Atkinson [00:14:46] But I try to be as gentle as, as I can. I killed a fish this summer by mistake. He swallowed the fly and I tried to revive him and his gills started bleeding and he

died and I just quit fishing for the day, I just felt so bad. And that's another reason why I like photography is I don't have to manhandle the fish. You know even trying to be gentle sometimes, you know, something happens and I do think they they get smarter the more they get caught you know.

Val Atkinson [00:15:23] Well I just like, like our coastal rivers right here in San Francisco. When I lean back am I still ok?

James Thull [00:15:30] Oh yeah.

Val Atkinson [00:15:33] Yeah. The coastal rivers here in California. Fish and Game which is, doesn't have a very good reputation. California Fish and Game does not have a very good reputation right now in the state. Most people, and including people that work there, said it's because their budgets are slashed and it's all gotten political and they're kind of a disaster. But, they've closed a lot of rivers when the, and we've had a drought here too for a few years. So when the rivers are really low and it's hard on the fish they close the rivers and that's probably a good thing. You know, I'm sure it is a good thing.

Val Atkinson [00:16:08] But they kind of go overboard and they make it harder on fishermen trying to fish in the coastal rivers of California. So they're pretty hard. You have to schedule, you have to consult a chart that tells you times and days that the river is open. They made it a lot more difficult to catch the few fish that there are left. And they're supplementing them with hatchery fish which is you know, not like the wild fish. You know they're just not as good. You know, they're smaller. We had a river called the Gualala. It's north of San Francisco about 50 miles. And the average size steelhead was like 12 to 15 pounds when I first came here in the 70s. They were beautiful wild fish and everybody just killed them. They were, you know, you didn't even think about putting them back, myself included. And so the runs just plummeted to the point where now, my friends go up there and fish when they can, when the rivers are open and they're legally allowed to fish. And mostly they don't catch anything. So that's frustrating and I can see why people like Russ Chatham, who's older than I am, have just stopped fishing because it's been so frustrating. Now, I try to travel to countries that are a little bit...um... A little less populated and maybe there aren't as many fishermen around, like Argentina or Chile or New Zealand or, many places. And so that's sort of, if you can afford to travel you can experience better fishing than here in California.

Val Atkinson [00:17:56] I think that's common with a lot of things. You know, when you first see somebody in your territory just like the Indigenous Americans, you know, the Indians, you know, they didn't recognize you. 'Let's shoot them.' A little story that I can relate to that with is a few years ago in New Zealand I was fishing up a remote river with a guide and you fish upstream. And we went around the bend and in the distance was two other anglers; another fisherman and a guide. And we went 'oh my God somebody is cutting into our territory! This is terrible. This is really bad. So the guide says we're gonna march right up there and just talk to those guys. Give them a piece of our mind. They cut in front of us.' So we walk up there. And, lo and behold, it's my next door neighbor. That I didn't even know was in New Zealand! So, we got together we had lunch and then we spent the afternoon fishing together. So, to your point, you know, when you first, you recognize people as a threat perhaps, but after you start to talk to them, you realize that they're not so different from you and you know, you kind of create a common bond, I think. You know? Because you're after the same quarry whether you're photography, doing photos or fishing or whatever, you know, just hiking you know? I mean I hiked the Inca Trail in Machu Picchu you know, Mach- the Inca Trail, yeah. And, you know, hooked up

with some people that, we became best friends. So just spending a little time with people sort of breaks down the barrier I think.

Val Atkinson [00:19:36] With Argentina it's the lifestyle. In my old age, lifestyle is really important. There's so many things that are more important than the fish. In the old days it was about fish, but now it's lifestyle and fishing and photography.

Val Atkinson [00:19:50] But Argentina is mostly a culture of descendants of France and Italy and Spain and Germany and so they have a European culture so they have big lunches that are, last for a long time. They live in, they're very civilized, I guess that's the word. They have a lot of culture. And I enjoy that very much. And the scenery is very much like our Montana, Wyoming, California. And you can go there in the winter when it's cold here you go down there and it's summer. And it's just a plane ride away. So if you can afford it you can be in a different lifestyle and, and everybody that I've gone down there with, my wife, she said, Susan says 'God this is great. People are so friendly and they're just, they're just friendly, they're just nicer people.' Yeah the lifestyle and the culture. Argentina has a culture of fly fishing it's not as old as America. You know the British started the tradition of of, of, sports.

Val Atkinson [00:20:59] Fishing and hunting started in England with the old wealthy kings and princes that had more time and money than they had, you know, knew what to do with. So they they coined the word 'sporting.' And then it sort of came over to America and then when, expanded from there. I mean the culture like Jorge Trucco that we talked about earlier, you know he's my age.

Val Atkinson [00:21:24] But when he, you know, he didn't learn about catch and release and fly fishing until he was much older than, than I was as a, as a North American. So: culture and lifestyle, I would say, in every country is slightly different. And I have been to India and, I mean, a lot of different places. New Zealand and Russia and Iceland and, you know, and they all have a wonderful, wonderful if you take the time to meet the people, and the culture is great. Food's great. And the fishing is often better, depending on what you're fishing for. Trout. It's usually better places. Salmon and Atlantic salmon and steelhead are sort of on their way out everywhere except Kamchatka and very really remote places.

Val Atkinson [00:22:19] Well basically, the long and short of it is: just go do it. Less is more. You don't need everything just go out and enjoy it. Be patient, breathe and just go do it. Years ago, I was out with Lefty Kreh and and we were in a boat and Lefty, I love the man. He's a, he's an icon. He's a legend. He's also very technical and he knows a lot about the technical aspects of things. So we were in a boat. We're fishing, and we saw some...event happen off the side of the boat and we said 'Oh look at that.' And I only had one camera and one lens and I was over the side of the boat and I went over and I photographed the event, captured it, came back to the boat, and Lefty, he was still trying to figure out what lens to put on what camera body, he had a big old pelican body box with all kinds of gadgets and stuff and it was too confusing. And I think a lot of people today think they need to have all the latest gear whether it's camera or fishing and you don't need all that stuff. And I think people like Yvon Chouinard is coming around to say 'less is more.' And I truly believe that. You know, you don't need all the latest stuff. You just need a passion to get out there and enjoy it. And, my Susan who'd never been fishing in her life, and I took her to Montana the first time years ago. And....

Val Atkinson [00:23:43] We drove out there and I thought we were going to overnight in this motel and it was full. So we didn't have a place to stay. So we had to go, we ended up in the middle of the night, throwing our sleeping bag out on the side of the Yellowstone River and sleeping in the campground. And she was really upset with me. She was cold and hungry. And she said she woke up the next morning, she still tells this story, and it was the most beautiful place she'd ever been. She hadn't been to Montana before. And she woke up and we're right there and there were mountains and the birds were singing and it was summer and she went, 'Oh my God this is great.' So, it just, it takes you to some beautiful places. Around the world. And now, like I say, as a photographer, I spend more time taking pictures than I do fishing. But I do like to hang out with fishermen. And I go out with young guys now because they sometimes help me out, and getting around, like, guys like George. And he'll carry a couple lenses for me or something, and they just walk and they fish. And I live gratuitously through them. You know? I just, they're, they're catching the fish and I'm happy for them and I get a picture and maybe I can sell it. So. So that's pretty cool.

Val Atkinson [00:25:02] Yeah. No, I think, I would just say to young people just go do it you know? And they could come here to the club and learn casting. I just talked to some young people today who wanted to learn how to cast, and the city of San Francisco puts on a free casting lesson second Saturday of every month at the club. So you can come here and learn how to cast from instructors. Every Saturday, every second Saturday we get like 100, 150 people that come from the city. You get a free lunch and free casting lessons, learn how to cast a little bit and just go do it. You know? It's just, it's an amazing world what's left and, and even though I say that you know things have gone downhill it's not like it used to be, which is true. It's still damn nice. It's still great. I still enjoy it. And Susan and I bought a house up on Fall River and that's my home river now. It's a large spring creek, second largest spring creek in the- I think in the world, but safely I can say in the U.S. after the Henry's Fork. And it just flows out of a big hole in the ground and it's crystal clear and it's got big rainbow trout. It's public, it gets a lot of pressure and a lot of people come up and they expect to catch a bunch of fish and they're not...talented enough. They don't know the rules to the game so they don't get a lot of fish. But they always have a good time anyway because it's a nice place. But, if you learn the rules to the game and you have patience, patience is, patience is really important. You can you catch fish, you can do ok.

Val Atkinson [00:26:43] Well often we talk about, you know, I think shared interests other than a fishing partner is great, shared interests. Whether it's going to movies or culinary desires or fishing or whatever. I would say similar, a similar desire and ability in a, in an ability, you know. Like for instance, sometimes for me it's frustrating if I go out with somebody...who's less, how do I say this in a polite way? Who's more of a novice. And it's really hard and you have to constantly untangle their line and it's just one problem right after another. My tax guy wanted me to take him fishing for a long time. My tax accountant. I took him fishing one day and we planned it, we went up to Northern Coast River and I gave him some lessons and at lunch he said, 'You know, Val, I'm going to give you your rod and your line back because I just really, I'm not into this. I just I thought it was gonna be more fun. It's just not fun for me.' And I appreciated his honesty. But, I mean for years he'd been trying to, he wanted me to take him and then when we did it he just didn't enjoy it that much, so. You can't force it on people you know? I think too many like husbands and wives, their husbands are always trying to tell their wife what to do. And you just gotta. Let them learn on their own skill level and if they're not really interested in doing it don't push them. If they are they'll do it. They'll, they'll learn on their own. But I'd say, you know, similar, similar desires. I mean that's a tough question. What makes somebody a good

partner? You know, I mean I guess it has to be somebody you like, to start with. Similar values. But I think it would be great, I think it'd be fabulous, to take somebody fishing that hadn't gone before and discover that they're really passionate about it and pretty soon they've taken it to a new level. I mean that would be very rewarding to think that you had some hand in helping them desire, develop that passion. A couple of my best fishing friends the enjoyment that I get from them is enhanced because we don't have to, we're both on similar skill levels. So it's not a matter of my having to have him tie on my fly or vice versa. I mean we're just we're both decent at what we do. So we get along pretty good. You know. John Gierach has a saying that I like it's in my book. It says 'in the,' uh, 'Among old friends...' How does it go? 'In, in the heat when the fat is in the fire. There's no need for conversation among old friends.' In other words, if you're, you're with your old friend and tent catches on fire you just do what you need to do. You don't need to talk about it.

Val Atkinson [00:30:09] I did a few books, this is my first book Distant Waters. And, you know I went, I worked for a travel agency called Frontiers Travel for almost 20 years as their staff photographer. And I went to a lot of different places through the world and I took pictures from Argentina to New Zealand and India all these places, and so I had a big library and finally met a publisher and said let's do a travel book. So this book is about different destinations around the world.

Val Atkinson [00:30:40] And so I found different writers like John Gierach and other people to write the stories and it was a pretty good success. I got six of these books out now. Yeah, it was wonderful. It was great. You know? It's changed my life, changed my life.

Val Atkinson [00:31:02] Well, they say that no photographer is truly reached his apex or a professional until you do your own book. That's just sort of "what they say." You know, it's probably a crock but. You just want to do your own book. You know you, I've been a magazine photographer for years, but a book is a different. It's a higher level. Because it's a permanent thing. You don't throw books away like you might a newsp- a magazine. And I've got six books out now and I'm very proud of them, want to do another one eventually. Yeah. It's terrific. This is the cover of this book is a picture in New Zealand. And this is a picture of Jim Adams who I would think that you need to go interview at some point because he's a wealth of information. He's 20 years older than I am and he's probably more fit than I am. But um, yeah there's a lot of good guys out there. And another point: we need to get more women in fly fishing. This is a new magazine that came out called Dun. I don't know if you've heard of it but it's published in Tennessee. And this is their first in print magazine, they were online for many years, and it's about women in, that enjoy fly fishing, and it's a lifestyle magazine it's about more than just fishing. Anyway, that's my Susan on the cover and we have a nice photo essay in there in, in the first issue so I'm very proud of it. But Dun magazine. That's good. That's my little advertisement to push the magazine, it's a good one.

Val Atkinson [00:32:43] It's...Most of the people that fly fish are like old white guys. I hate to say that, sort of embarrassing, but it's true. And I guess that sort of comes from. I don't know, maybe it comes from the old English tradition because like I say the English guys started the world of sport because it was you know lots of time and lots of money. So they were hunters and shooters and so it sort of became, uh, a thing that fathers taught their sons to do go fishing and hunting. And now those people are sort of dying out like, people that are older than I am and I don't, I don't quite understand, maybe it's because kids like videogames or, I've heard that they just don't get out in the field outside very much

anymore, and people aren't promoting it. But I think that there just aren't as many kids and young people out there enjoying any kind of sport. I don't know maybe with snowboarding, maybe it's different. I don't know. Things like that. But we need more kids. There's a few youngsters that come out here and fly cast. Some really good ones, but not many. There's a few more women right now. More women than kids. I think maybe in Montana there are more kids and women. Montana's the place that all us California people look up to because that's where the real stuff is. People are really nice out here but I don't know maybe Californians are too interested in making money but we definitely need more young people out here. You know? I mean, if you look around and the old pictures of these old timers that started this club there were no women out here. They didn't allow women to come to the club. They were, they were taboo. And I guess there's still a lot of clubs in America that are still that way. They're probably dying left, right and center but they're still out there. And it's changed over the years but I don't know I'm, I'm worried for the future of fly fishing. Not so much as a sport. I mean it's fun. But more important than the fly fishing is just the outdoors and the fish and the wildlife. You know deer, you know birds and all that stuff. There's more, there's more to the world of fishing than just fish. It's the outdoors and the rivers. You know? I mean. That's where it's really at and in my old age, you know, there's just so much more. You know, so I mean if, if I had to go through the rest of my life without fishing? I could do that as long as I had a camera. You know, a good camera, because I really enjoy going out and photographing the world now.

Val Atkinson [00:35:29] You know doing landscapes. I love landscapes. But I've sort of made my name in fly fishing. So I got to keep that up to pay the bills. But if I were starting out all over again I'd still be a fisherman but I would probably just do landscapes. I love landscapes. It's great.

Val Atkinson [00:35:48] And like in places like New Zealand and Argentina, Tierra del Fuego and just really rugged places. Iceland with big mountains and fjords and glaciers and it just begs for photography and good light. You know?

Val Atkinson [00:36:07] Well, Zane Grey was my first one. I thought about that. That was easy for me. I grew up a little, I was born in, a little town called Zanesville, Ohio. In the Midwest. And Zanesville, Ohio--with a Z--was named after Zane Ebenezer Grey and his great-great-grandfather was one of the pioneers that surveyed route 40. They came from, I guess, Philadelphia or New York. It was Philadelphia I think, through Ohio. And anyway his great-great-grandfather, grandson, was Zane Grey who was the largest publisher of western novels. And if you've ever heard of Zane Grey but he's, they say he's sold as many copies as the Gutenberg Bible. I don't know if that's true or not. But I never read any of his western novels, but he was a fisherman. And he was very good about describing the emotion of the place where he was. The feeling of it. Like Ernest Hemingway said, you know, to make a good story you have to convince your, your readership what it was, what it felt like to be there. And Zane Grey was great with descriptive and I would urge anybody to look at, he, Zane Gray did maybe a dozen fishing books and they're quite valuable now, while he was writing these cheap trashy western novels. He was also traveling and fishing around the world. He pioneered New Zealand. And he would write journals and those journals became books.

Val Atkinson [00:37:40] And the first one I ever read was called 'A Day on the Delaware,' in Pennsylvania, and it was about trying, he's spending a summer as a teenager trying to catch this big black bass that lived in the Delaware River and he'd seen it several times but he'd never been able to catch it. And he finally hooked it on a moody day and I'll never forget the description was this the sky glance, the sky, 'the sky glanced dark under a

cloudy sky and I knew it was the day to catch the old bronze back at the Delaware. I chose two Bullhead sculpins and put them in my bait box,' and he walked out there and he caught this big small mouth that was six or eight pounds and the fish went under a rock and he had to swim out and he tried to pull the fish out.

Val Atkinson [00:38:24] He wedged, fish wedged under the rock, and he couldn't do it and he had to come up for air, broke the fish off. It was a beautiful story. And so I got into Zane Grey and he was wonderful and while I'm out there trying to catch bluegills I'm reading about Zane Grey. I was always a good reader. And I just said 'jeez one of these days I'm going to do fishing on a bigger grander scale.' And so Zane Grey was good. And then I read, you know, Big Heart, Two-Hearted River with Hemingway and, and, and Nick Lyons. As as I got older and more mature I started finding, reading different authors and I have a fantastic library in my house, it's just, I collect good books about lifestyle fishing around the world and, and I, and I love books. You know it's great. And Nick was one of the best. One of my favorite books is Nick Lyons' books called Spring Creek. Have you ever read that book?

James Thull [00:39:22] Yes.

Val Atkinson [00:39:23] It's a classic. It's just great. It's about his summer with Herb Wellington on the, on O'Dell Spring Creek which I've never been to, I'd give anything to go there. And he's a great writer, and there's some great writers. I mean there's a lot of them and they're, they're wonderful and they take you there and you feel like you're there when you read.

Val Atkinson [00:39:48] Well, that's like saying, you know, the history of the world. You know? I mean, we've got to have this information that... Although when you look at the other side of it maybe a lot of young kids just don't even care but I care. And like we're talking about earlier the anthology of this place is riveting. I mean there some stuff that little episodes that if they weren't written down or recorded somewhere would be lost forever. I'm reading a book about indigenous people which is something that I'm very interested in. It's about um, uh, Quanah Parker. One of the last Comanche people and, and any number of books that they're little episodes that happened. That are gone forever ever ever ever. And it's just wonderful to know that. They're recorded somewhere.

Val Atkinson [00:40:43] I mean like I can't wait to go to some of these places that you've recorded, and to read about some of this stuff. I mean, you know, and you said you went to India and Pakistan places like that and that would be fascinating to me. I mean I, I'd run don't walk to the nearest episode just to read about it.

Val Atkinson [00:41:07] Just go do it. That's what I'd say.

James Thull [00:41:10] Fair enough.

Val Atkinson [00:41:11] Buy one of my books. Distant Waters.