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Dave Brackett [00:00:10] I think, I think adventure, for me. Every watershed is adventure. Every watershed is different. And that's what creates the interest for me. And my fly tying, I tie flies for the watershed of the day. I usually tie six or seven different flies that I think that might work in a particular watershed. And that's what I really enjoy about fishing.

James Thull [00:00:33] kind of the challenge?

Dave Brackett [00:00:35] The challenge. The exploring. And of course, in where I live in Wyoming, I'm out, I'm out in the boondocks. It's different. I get to see a lot of unique things.

Dave Brackett [00:00:52] I think it's good. I have to say this, though there's always danger that it may go to the bad. But we've seen: cleaner water. We've seen people, now, catching fish where they're just not catching them for numbers because they think that life is all about harvesting and reaping whatever they can off the planet. I think that's important. I actually have to tip my hat to the people in the bass contest, because they were the ones who started realizing that they could come in with competition and wipe out a lake. So then they started keeping their fish, to return their fish. Well that spilled over to that section of the public that was always keeping their fish. I have a friend that fishes in Pennsylvania, and he just called me on the phone to tell me that, for the first time--in the last couple of years--he's seen people return fish that were put in there by the Fish and Game. But at one time they wouldn't return A Fish. Now they do. So they can catch them again and enjoy it.

James Thull [00:01:47] Yeah, that's great. I know Bud Lilly once said a fish is too valuable to be caught just once, right?

Dave Brackett [00:01:52] Oh I have my friends in the, of fish, that I've caught a number of times. And it's fun. You know, to try something different on them. You know, once I know one thing works, 'well let's see if I can fool 'em on something else.'

Dave Brackett [00:02:13] Well yeah, there is. It's, it's, it's figuring out what the fish is feeding on. I mean, you could have, in some of the drainages, you can have multiple hatches going on at once. Now, I've gotta figure out what stage of the hatch is feeding, and what size is the fly? What species of fly? And then it gets down to presentation. And I also love that. The fly is special but if I don't present it properly and it has what's called drag on it, then I'm in trouble. Because that's not natural. So the casting skill comes into play. The fly comes through the water with a natural spin to it. And then with the microcurrents. The fish comes up and calmly takes it. And that's when you know you really fool the fish.

Dave Brackett [00:03:02] I really like our our fine-spotted Snake River Cutthroats. And since they stopped stocking a number of years ago, the wild genetic strain has, has strengthened the fish and it's just a wonderful fish that comes to the surface readily for the flies. And to hunt them, to find them, is, is an immense challenge. Cutthroat likes to get into just little ripples of water that are just enough to give them cover, and they come up very, very slowly. Take your fly. And, of course, once they're on there it's a great fight. But it's that, that challenge to find them. I enjoy it.

Dave Brackett [00:03:43] It's special because its genetics is set up to where it lives. Everything is grouped to that watershed. That's what makes that fish special. I can catch a

Cutthroat in one watershed, and the behavior of the next watershed is completely different. Because the mineral content's different, the food source is different, their survival is different. If I go fishing at, in Jackson I'm using probably darker streamers. If I go to the other side of the mountains, on the other side of the divide and in the Dubois Riverton area on the back side of the Wind Rivers, there's pumice in the water from ancient volcanoes. Well, it's a white creamy color. Well, the insects are light in color, the fish are light in color. It's a different drainage.

Dave Brackett [00:04:34] They've had, they've had to actually fight to come back because the Yellowstone was originally stocked with some fish, and drove out the West Coast, West Slope Cutthroats, and drove, uh, the Yellowstone Cutthroats in some areas. I think it's critical for them because those, like I just said before, those fish were genetically set up for that area. And then you introduce a species like a Brook Trout that comes in and competes with them. And takes over. And then the Brook Trout overpopulates and you get these stunt headed Brook Trout that are pretty much, uh, four or five inches and that's, that's what you get out of it. And they're, they're, they overpopulate.

Dave Brackett [00:05:16] I just try to point out that they're not, they're not supposed to be there. And that's the fish, if you want to keep a fish for dinner, that's the fish to keep. Please do keep it. Otherwise feed your favorite raptor.

James Thull [00:05:30] My argument is always. ..

Dave Brackett [00:05:32] But see, I would, I would throw away that fish before I'd throw away a native Sucker, a native White fish. Because I think those fish are beautiful too.

Dave Brackett [00:05:45] Oh, I've taught lots of women. Women are easier. They listen. They understand the rhythm a little clearer. They don't try and overdo it. And basically, running a fly rod is basically understanding the principles of the physics of releasing energy, then accelerating to a stop. Men have to over accelerate sometimes and then it, and then it just doesn't work that way. So with men I'm usually trying to get them to slow down.

James Thull [00:06:12] So were you a guide as well?

Dave Brackett [00:06:14] Never been a guide. No. I've only taught classes. And I do take people out on charity float trips and stuff. But I was never interested because it would wreck my hobby.

Dave Brackett [00:06:30] Well first place, I don't really have any secrets because you have to go to the body of water and figure it out. I have the Upper Grovant which is out in the high, high area and you can see the Tetons from it, way down the valley. And it's crystal blue water and the meadows I fish are just so slow moving. And to attract a fish, you could almost count to 15 or 20 before it comes. It's coming up from seven to eight feet. It just moseys its way up so slow. That's one of my favorite places. The Upper Green River, I love to fish that because it's hard to catch, and it's a Brown Trout fishery, but it's just hard to, harder to catch Brown Trout on flies. Unfortunately the Colorado Cutthroat though in there is... There might be a few remnant populations but I don't think we'll ever get rid of the other fish, so that's hopeless. But it's a beautiful fishery, and that's at 7300 feet. It's wide open. I go there in the fall and there's nobody there, and I have hatches that I'm aware of, and I just have a great time. And then there's the Upper Wind Rivers, up in the mountains, there's two thousand lakes up there and I, when was younger I would go

up there for seven or eight days, by myself--with a dog, with my dog--set up a base camp, and every day go off to a different little lake within the area. It was great entertainment, you caught all different species of fish including Golden Trout, which is a beautiful fish.

Dave Brackett [00:07:59] I. I fish everything. I, at one time I fished a lot of nymphs, I caught an awful lot of fish, because it was something new to me back many years ago. And we did that. Especially winter fishing. But uh, and streamer fishing is fun because you've got to pin point presentation in the areas and give it action. But I fish a lot of small streamers. But dry fly fishing is all about microdrag and presentation and getting it out there and finding the proper angle, to the fish, to present to it. And they can be small fish, medium fish, big fish. It doesn't matter is just, it's the casting that's fun.

Dave Brackett [00:08:45] Well, I uh. My dad took me fishing and he liked the fish and I actually was, we had a summer home--a you know, family thing, my grandfather had it--on the banks of the Au Sable River, where it goes out in the Lake Huron. Well the Au Sable River is where Trout Unlimited started.

James Thull [00:09:00] And this is Michigan?

Dave Brackett [00:09:01] Michigan. Yes. And so. But I was, you know, my dad was pretty much a spin fisherman. He did do some trout fishing with a friend of his and caught brookies. And I remember us going up a couple of places. But I think those were... And he had a box of flies, which I still have, that his friend tied which are very unique. But we were up there and, you know, basically spin fishing so I'm catching small mouth bass. The trout were up further on Au Sable. But I went to school in northern Michigan. Which is on the shores of Lake Superior. And a friend of mine that I met, his father owned the Holiday Inn, uh, took us to, tried to talk me into fly fishing. Said "sure I'll try it." I actually caught a couple fish and I remember and I said "man this is great." So I had a fire sale on my, my, uh, spin rod equipment and got some fly fishing equipment. Said 'the only way I learn this stuff is if I dedicate myself to it.' I got rid of all my stuff, my dad thought I was crazy, and I did that. And then, to extend the story, I remember us going out to his, this lake where his dad was fishing with a friend--the fellow that wrote Anatomy Of A Murder--who was a, I can't remember the name right now. I can't remember his name. But anyways, they give us some flies and we go off fishing and I had no idea who the guy was.

Dave Brackett [00:10:25] Oh I, you know I have a number of books, I got a little library. I read, and of course I have a stack of magazines plus I get uh, Fly Fishing and Fly Tying from England which I've subscribed to because I love the different perspective. And last year I actually went to England and got to fish with a fellow named Charles Dardene who was one of the best fishermen in the world and that was, that was quite the treat. And we caught Browns and Graylings. On the River Avon. And I was fishing below a castle. [laughs]. It was kind of a hoot. I enjoyed it.

James Thull [00:10:59] That's great.

Dave Brackett [00:10:59] And then I caught a huge Rainbow. It wasn't supposed to be there, and I walked back down the stream. I put the fish into a bank with a net on it and I walked back. I said "Charles? Are Rainbows supposed to be here?" He says "no club it." Apparently was an escapee from one of the hatcheries. You know, it was a [unintelligible] and lived in the river. Because they want, they want their pure stock to remain. Which is the Browns and the Graylings.

Dave Brackett [00:11:32] If I were to go right now and somebody asked me? I would love to catch the pure genetic strain of Brown Trout that are in Iceland. And they, and they're in some of the real shallows, shallower rivers and and they, uh, they're kind of whitish and their they're spotting is more like, like diagonal checkers. I'd love to do that. I'd love to fish Cuba, because that's just opened up to us. And, uh, I'd like to go back to South America and do some fishing on some water that I didn't get enough time on. Those would be the three places.

Dave Brackett [00:12:13] It's a brotherhood. It's a brotherhood. Yeah we're, we're in the brotherhood. We're all, we're all together. And we all share common goals. We definitely share on the environment. I mean, we all know that we suffer if we don't take care of it. Other countries do a pretty good job of that too besides us, probably better.

Dave Brackett [00:12:36] I think, I think you don't have to declare yourself to the left or the right. I like, I'm a registered Independent. Why? Because I do believe in those things. I don't believe in wasting money left and right. But I think those are important to give back to future generations. It's critical. It's critical. and it's not just fishing. It's everything. I, uh, I grew up in this suburbs of Detroit, and out, out north of Detroit was kind of a glacial driftland. And my uncle had a beautiful farm on it. And it was just- I thought it was just a wonderful place. And sprawl took it over and now it's just big houses, destroyed. Should have never happened that way. There's some areas that just shouldn't be built on, and that was one of them. Definitely prettier than the flat swamp lands of the Detroit area. Gone. Forever.

Dave Brackett [00:13:34] I think I agree with you in some respects, but we also know that climate runs in long cycles. So we don't know if it's exactly mankind. But I have to support the science too. I'm saying some of it could be long term effects. I mean, yeah I remember white Christmases and white Thanksgivings in Michigan, where I lived. And obviously, when you put a lot of buildings down things, you can actually see, if you watch, like in the mountains, you watch a snow line up above on the hill it stops snowing. Well Michigan, what happens is all this heat happening, and then 100 feet above it, instead of getting snow anywhere you're getting rain. Especially in that temperature zone of, you know, 32, 33 degrees.

Dave Brackett [00:14:25] Well number one because of the, because of the invasive species they're cleaner they don't have as much algae in them. And that's changed the feeding habit and the fish and what they feed on. So that's more of a long term effect, and we'll see what happens. LAUGHTER yield control was a tremendous, tremendous change. Because when I was growing up, the Lake Trout population had diminished to almost nothing. And it's made a marvelous comeback. Commercially, putting fish into the, into, stocking other species of fish. I have a gray area with that, although it's tremendous for the economies of the surrounding states. But putting salmon and steelhead in there when the native species were, were the Brown Trout and were the, and were the Lake Trout. And so on. So. The pluses and minuses and the Coasters Brook Trout, that almost died out? They've made a comeback, so that's good. I actually caught those when I was in college on one of the few runs, and I thought all, I thought all Brook Trout could get up to the eighteen, nineteen inches. I didn't know.

Dave Brackett [00:15:39] First, please learn to cast. And don't get frustrated. Learn to cast. And I, I say, and even if you don't get instruction directly, you can go on the Internet, on youTube. And watch videos. Go out in your backyard and learn to cast. And then, there's other things you've- books you can buy, and once again, videos you can watch on

your computer. Get some knowledge in what it's about and understand that it's not just going out and putting a line out in the water. The rivers and streams are like a map. And you have to learn to read them. And to go out and observe. Just observe. Take walks along, take walks along the stream, take walks along the river. You'll start to see fish. You'll start to see fish where they gather where they feed. And then go fishing. And then you're out by yourself instead of, instead of being with a guide that's holding your hand. And then it's an experience and it's, it's amazing. When you do it yourself.

Dave Brackett [00:16:48] Well, I have to enjoy it. And, you know, for me I like guys, fellows that like to explore. And women, that like to explore things. And observe. And just they aren't so interested in just catching a fish to show a picture. I very seldom take a picture of fish. There's thousands of them on every magazine, every, every, thing in the Internet. It's the idea of fooling the fish and then I can release him pretty fast. And what I like to do is is just bring their snot up. Take my [unintelligible] a stance. Flip it off, and say goodbye to the fish. It's all right. I fooled him. I had a good time. He had a good time, and he's still alive.

Dave Brackett [00:17:36] I think, well, I think women like the sport. And if you can get them involved. I know I taught a class for Central Wyoming College. A number of years ago. When I started off, it was mostly men. In my last year that taught it--then I had some issues with my son I had to get out of it--but, I had 18 women. And it made it fun, enjoyable, rewarding. And trying to make, the, the least intimidating I could make it. And I still teach for the American Wilderness Leadership School, which is part of the Safari Club, where they take teachers to this camp in south of Jackson. And I, we'll work with them for two days on fly tying and entomology. Show them the life that's in the river, and how the rivers operate, and they get a lot of other things besides, especially, the area I'm teaching. But it seems to me, that I've gotten back cards just thanking me so much for the new adventure in life because I tell them, 'you can go back to a city and you can still fly fish in these parks and things.' There's fish to be caught on a fly that are so easy, so rewarding. It's so much more interesting than just chucking out some bait and sitting there.

Dave Brackett [00:18:53] Well. Enjoy what you have because it's special. And get out there and enjoy the outside life. Get out of the city. And see what it's like. See what it's like to be around nature. I mean, I'll see more things when I'm on a stream than any hunter ever will, because I'm around the animals. I get to know them. And I hunted bass, in my, my youth, but. I see more more, more wildlife, more things around me. I appreciate it more. The spirit of life. That's what it is. I see the spirit of life. With the insects, the fish, and the animals around.

James Thull [00:19:25] That's great.