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Peter Brigg [00:00:11] Look, I've had a fascination of the outdoors from a very early age. My parents were extremely supportive as, growing up, as a youngster. And probably my mother was the one who taught me to explore as much as possible. And in that exploration I grew into interests within that natural environment. And one of those were, in fact, the rivers and streams of our country. And I took up fly fishing. And from there it's just developed into a passion of mine that I've done for well over 50 years now. It enables me to appreciate those places that I love so much, but also explore my other interests of photography and art. And I think that's really what fly fishing encapsulates for me.

Peter Brigg [00:01:04] Well I've been, I've been a freelance writer for some time, writing for local, and a number of overseas, magazines over the years. But it was in about 2005 that I decided that I had a lot of material on hand and decided that I should put it down in some sort of book form. And then in 2008 I published what is titled, Call of the Stream. It largely expresses my interest in small stream mountain fishing, the headwaters of our streams. It's a very visual book in terms of the imagery and the photography that I've done, which was as I mentioned, an interest of mine. And it's now 2017 and I've, together with Ed Herbst, who in fact was a South African Broadcasting journalist, subsequently retired. He and I co-authoring a new book which is titled The South African Fishing Flies. It's an anthology of milestone patterns. It's not an exhaustive list of all South African flies, but it has a little, a little bit of our history in terms of the fly-tying styles that have developed in this country. Separate from the English and the American styles that initially guided our fly-tying and our patterns that we used in this country.

Peter Brigg [00:02:32] I think it, I think it does. I think it's just- it's a natural progression of the interest and what, what you get out of it. I mean it's the, the immense rewards. When I did the book, when I did my my first book, Call of the Stream; it was no intention to get anything much more out of it than a satisfaction for myself, in having achieved something and being able to put material that I collected over many years into some sort of record which would remain there for, for posterity. But the rewards that have come out of that have been immense in terms of the places it's taken me to, the people that I've met, a huge number of- many of them that have gone on to be lifelong friends. So, I think it's those sort of rewards that have been terribly satisfying as far as I'm concerned.

Peter Brigg [00:03:25] Well if you're talking about my personal fly- I have a couple of flies that I'm perhaps known for. One is a little hopper pattern which has become known as Pete's Hopper. The other one is a wolf spider, we have a lot of wolf spider, as a natural insect in our small streams, and I, I've created a variation from quite a complicated pattern that was tied by the chap by the name of Leonard Fleming in the Cape. I've simplified it. And I think it's a very effective fly and just looking at the expo now I see a lot of people that are busy tying the same pattern so it's, it's growing in popularity. Others of course, you know the more, the more common flies, for example like the CDC and Elk. The Adams of course, I'm never, I'm never left without an Adams in my, in my fly box. It's one of those patterns that has a historical value and it just continues to be a good fly. I'm not a, I'm not a terribly good nymph fisherman although I do fish nymphs. I prefer dry flies, especially on the small streams. And Tom Sackler, who I think you're going to be interviewing later, developed a little nymph fly which imitates a baetis nymph perfectly, and in fact imitates all the nymphs we find in our stream, called the zack nymph. He'll no doubt explain that more to you when you talk to him. But I feel no need to carry any other nymphs, other than a zack nymph.

Peter Brigg [00:05:00] Well Tom, and Ed Herbst who is the co-author of my new book. Are two people that inspired me when I was growing up and developing my own fishing interests. They are both creative fly-tyers. I wouldn't say, and don't tell Tom or Ed this, I wouldn't say the neatest or best fly tyers that we have around, but they're certainly creative in their, in their style and have come up with some really interesting patterns over the years.

James Thull [00:05:34] Excellent.

Peter Brigg [00:05:35] Gordon Fundaspade, let me say, if you, if you're looking at somebody that is a really good fly tyer, and there are a number of them, perhaps I shouldn't name him alone, but Gordon Fundaspade--to me--is one of our, our outstanding fly tyers in South Africa.

James Thull [00:05:50] Are there any international folks? Americans, British?

Peter Brigg [00:05:54] Are you talking about fly tyers?

James Thull [00:05:56] Yeah, fly tyers.

Peter Brigg [00:05:59] Okay best? I don't know the Americans, perhaps as well, and I'd-it'd be remiss of me to try and name somebody who is not- of course I admire and find huge inspiration from some of the American authors.

Peter Brigg [00:06:21] Well John Gierach, I have a huge amount of respect for, I just enjoy his writing, his style of writing. Very easy and I like the subtle humor in there, but not only that, but what you can learn from it almost in a technical way but in a informal technical way. Thomas McGuane, outstanding. Yeah, I think, you know, just to name two I think those are the ones that stand out for me.

Peter Brigg [00:06:51] Okay let's just start with what's changed in terms of when I started, of course, there was little in the way of literature in this country. We had no magazines. Hardcover, hard copy magazines. There was no internet at that stage, so our learning curve was, in fact, very slow and I had a mentor, so it was simply by watching and listening to him and practicing, by being on the water, that I learned. Today, you have a vast change that's happened. You have the internet, you have clubs that have developed all over the parts of the country. You have magazines that are available. You have magazines from overseas countries that are available to us. So the learning curve for the youngsters today has been- is immense, I mean they learn within a couple of years what it's all about. It took us years to achieve that same degree of proficiency in fly fishing. So that's a, that's a bonus. I have noticed a difference in the fishing. When I first started; back then there was very little pressure on our waters, not that we have a huge amount even these days compared to what perhaps happens in England and in certain places in America. But the size of fish has, seems to have, decreased. The population of small fish in some of our prime areas like the Northeastern Cape around Rhodes, [unintelligible] east area has actually almost become a problem at times. This recent drought we've been through has helped, in a sense. I look at a drought rather as being bad, but rather as a new beginning. Because these cycles occur, naturally, over a period. We've been through a very bad drought. The trout population has been depleted, there's no question about that. But it's beginning to come back as our rains are getting better and the flows are becoming better again. And I was in the Rhodes area which was devastated in 2016. I was there, and it was it was terrible to even witness the state of some of those rivers. One or two had

simply dried up. And the fishing was almost non-existent. This year, in March, when I was down there the fish population was coming back. The fish were in full perfect condition, they were fat. Obviously fewer fish, more food to go around, so their condition had improved and I think that within a season- now season and perhaps two, we will be back to the position we were, provided of course the rains come. As far as climate is concerned my experience, and I try to get out at the beginning of our season as much as possible, which is, our season opens for the rivers in first of September. I've found for the last seven years...? That I haven't really been able to fish seriously until late October, maybe even the middle of November. Our spring rains that used to come in September have shifted. We now are getting them late in October, sometimes even early November. I mean, the part of the world that I come from, generally those spring rains came in the form of soft, soaking rain over an extended period of days. That's not occurring anymore. We get intermittent showers in certain locations, but other areas just down the road are completely dry. So there definitely seems to have been some sort of shift in the conditions that we have. Our summers seem to be drier than their norm- and we get whe- we get summer rainfall down in KwaZulu-Natal. The cape is the opposite, they're more Mediterranean they are now having, during their winter is their rainy period. We've had above average in odd places. But below average in others, so it hasn't happened consistently across KwaZulu-Natal. Using that as an example, as we've had in the past. But there are signs that that is changing slightly and I'm interested to see whether we have, during our winter now, good snowfalls. Which we haven't had on the mountains for some years. We've had very patchy snow and that of course adds considerably to how those flows of the rivers are at the beginning of each season. Excuse me. So I think that's quite a significant shift that I've seen as far as climate is concerned. Maybe part of this, which indicates climatic change as well in our areas, is that certain bird species that, the most southernly range recorded, was north of us in the Zululand area. I'm talking about the coastal areas, now. Those birds are now occurring in the area that I live, which is far further south. And it's not the odd specimen that's got lost along the way somewhere. These are consistently- consistent sightings and almost in nesting sightings of these, [species of] vulture is one bird in case that I can, I can mention. I think that's an indicator too that these changes that are happening- our sardine run along the- along on our Natal coast that occurs now during our winter months. For years now it has not reached the proportions that it has in the past.

Peter Brigg [00:12:42] I think there's a- I think there's a move- let me just- let me just start by perhaps, as an aside, but I think it's- I think it's connected. What Gordon is- what Gordon Fundaspade is doing with this expo, and this is the second of its kind. He might have mentioned to you, the second of its kind that we've had now, one previously last year in the Cape. Up until that point, we effectively operated, although we have a body FOSAFF which is the Federation of South African Fly Fishers, that is our national body but it's terribly badly supported by our local fly fishing. And I'll come to the reason why I think that is the case. But we opera- we've operated in silos effectively. We've had the Cape, we've had the Natal or KwaZulu-Natal, and you've had the Pumulanda fly fishers and there's some interconnectivity, but very, very minimal. What is happening with these, it's bringing people together, and a mingling of people from these different silos, and a sharing of ideas and, and getting to know one another, which didn't happen in the past, so there's a huge benefit to it. Now, the thing that concerns me about FOSAFF is that we probably... I don't know, I might be wrong on this but there may be others that can give you a better idea of how many fly fishers- I think Ian Lax who you might have spoken to, I don't know if he spoke about it, but we tried to determine how many regular fly fishers--I'm not talking about the chap that buys a fishing rod and fishes once a year or maybe sells his tackle after he's fished once. I'm talking about people that are regular fly fishers. There was an estimate that we were a hundred thousand in this country perhaps. But, correct- that might need

correction. FOSAFF has 500 members. Now they're our national body that are supposed to be representing all fly fishers in this country. I hope they don't take it the wrong way, but perhaps I'm going to be derogative and I feel I must say it. If you go now to the FOSAFF exhibition and see who's manning the exhibition with the exception of one or two people, they are old, they're my age. There's no young blood at the head of that thing, so the ideas and the growth of the federation is stuck in a rut. There's a need to look at things differently and the way you're going to do that is bring new blood into that organization. Headed by a chap like Elan who has a huge amount of energy and I have tremendous respect for him. But, for the balance of it, I think you need, you need a change. We had it with our with our local fly fishing club. We had- we had the old guard that had been there for 30 years and nothing happened. They were afraid to take subscriptions for our club via the Internet, thorough electronic payments, for fear of losing control on the record of things. They've now got new people on their committee, young- young people, I'm talking in their 30s and maybe 40s, couple maybe even younger than that. And all of a sudden the club is a new thing. It's vibrant. There's a lot of energy happening. And what is happening here today, I think, which will go on I think, into future years as well, is going to revitalize a lot of this old stuff that we've had that has kept fly fishing at a certain, at a certain level in this country.

Peter Brigg [00:16:23] It's- we've got a diversity, I think, in South Africa that is little known beyond the borders of South Africa. If you- if you take my passion from the headwaters of these mountains to the lower reaches where they- that flows through farming areas where the rivers are bigger, where you begin to get more warm water species, indigenous species like the yellow fish species that we have in this country. You've got Tiger Fishing, you've got Catfish or Barbel. Along our coast you've got, huge coastline here, that provides very exciting saltwater fishing. Mainly from the rock and surf for fairly small, small varieties of fish but a very wide variety. And then, if you can get offshore to some of the reefs higher up in Zulu land, the more tropical reefs, subtropical reefs. Then of course you've got many, many game fish on offer. So I think what we need is greater exposure to South Africa and the diversity, and there's some very talented people in terms of guides; even, you can see for example, our craftsmen that we have that are crafting nets and rods and things around the fly fishing community, I believe could compete equally on the world stage, but they're not well known.

Peter Brigg [00:17:58] Well I would, I would say the first thing they need to do, and we're very lucky in this country that we've got really, and it's getting better as I mentioned, the dynamic clubs that we've got in different locations in this country. I would say to people that one of the first things that they should do is to get involved with one of the local clubs. They'll meet people that are experienced, who can give them advice, and there's a free sharing of information and knowledge amongst most fly fishers, not only here, I'm sure it's worldwide, but that's a way to learn fairly quickly as to where to go, how to do it, what you will be needing, and so on.

Peter Brigg [00:18:41] James, you know one thing, I don't know if I answered your one question fully, but I think, and I've been, I've been trying, in fact I communicated with Joan Wolf a while back, which is quite a while back now, and we ran with Sheena Carney, who is editor of The Fly Fishing magazine here, a series on, what we term, Women in Waders. Where we interviewed women that were involved in some way in fly fishing and enjoyed the sport. And they wrote a little story about their experiences and what they got out of it and so on, in the hope that we would attract more women into- ladies and women into the sport. And we've tried to do the same thing with youngsters. And there are a couple of the clubs up here that are doing good work with the youngsters, and a few of them around

here today. I think that we should be placing greater emphasis on bringing people like that into our sport, because they, at the end of the day, are the future.