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Charlie Craven [00:00:10] You know I've read these questions earlier and I don't know that I had one single story.

Charlie Craven [00:00:15] There's there's lots of you in a lot of years. Your question sort of kind of. You know. Who's a good person to fish with and. Kind of all built into this same sort of answer I guess I'm going to give you. I don't fish with a lot of people. I fish my whole life with a lot of people, so these days I don't fish with a lot of people so. It's not any particular story I would say but. I enjoy fishing with my kids, my family. And a very few close friends these days. So I don't have per se a story but from what it's about for me these days is not it's not about fishing. It's not. I've caught enough fish. You know I'd still go fishing if all the fish in the world died tomorrow I'd still tie flies if all the, all the fish in the world died tomorrow I'd still be there. So it's sort of beyond that it's spending time with the people that you like doing the thing that you like. And and that's, you know that's what it means to me more than anything it's not so much.

Charlie Craven [00:01:12] That I'm super hard core going out to have an epic time and stuff like that just drives me bananas. It's I'd rather not go fishing with a bunch of strangers then, then.

Charlie Craven [00:01:22] You know I'd rather not go fishing versus go fishing with a bunch of strangers I guess. So. You know the thing that that it is for me is who I'm with in and kind of a relationship that we have. However that is. And that's you know that's not a story but that's sort of the sort, you know where, where I feel about that. You know obviously I tried to start my kids pretty early and they're not by any means super hardcore about it. I've got boys and some of them. Some of them we'd love to do it and some of them could care less about it. You know I started them when they were five or six and when they are little they want to please the dad and stuff like that. As they get to be teenagers they seems kind of starting to come back around to it. So it just depends on the kid. And I've seen that a lot. You know in years of guiding you know the father son trip sometimes the kid's really into it. A lot of times the kids not so it's really when they have the attention span with it when they have the true interest in it. And I'd say that's not usually starts to show up around 10 or 12.

Charlie Craven [00:02:26] Is what a realistic answer I would say.

Charlie Craven [00:02:33] Yes I do. That's I think that's the way to do it, honestly. You know I was at a disadvantage in my case because I haven't been bait fishing in so long. Yeah. I remember my my father in law and I took my younger son or my oldest son fishing. One of his first times. Fishing with worms and like I didn't really remember how to do it. So. So yeah it is a disadvantage. You know? I knew the fly game pretty well but you know that's harder for a little kid to do.

Charlie Craven [00:02:58] And there's so much that you pick up you know all of us that didn't start that way. That transfer is this is going to fit really well at the end of this. You've got a question that fits right in. There's so much that you pick up from starting with real simple stuff like that. That builds into fly fishing fly fishing is not an.

Charlie Craven [00:03:15] And it's you know it sounds arrogant this fly fishing is not really something that I think you start with. I think it's something that you finish with that you

evolve to rather than from. And that was probably a mistake you know starting my kids that way early. And now they're kind of you know.

Charlie Craven [00:03:29] Coming back around to it propably why they didn't stick to it meantime. So yeah I would say absolutely bait fishing would be the way to start. You know that just builds the foundation for where you go.

Charlie Craven [00:03:45] You know. Yes I do have some favorite spots for sure. I mean they're not going to see I fish the Colorado River and the Eagle River and the Platte, I fish the Platte i guided the Platte for years You know I don't fish as much as I used to just because fishing so much before. Although the Hayman fire years ago kind of really changed the whole character of the river so it's not the same river that I used to guide. But yeah I mean I have I have definitely spots that I fish a lot. But again I'm not too terribly picky about it either. I'll fish just about anywhere. I mean I have a good time fishing. Anywhere particularly if I'm with somebody that I really enjoy being with. Lots of places. Patagonia. You know I've always said for years that I grew up here in Colorado and I've always said I don't travel to go trout fishing. We have great trout fishing.

Charlie Craven [00:04:33] 20 minutes from here. Sure. But that is intriguing to me just because it's sort of unspoiled. So. You know Chile, Argentina, that kind of thing. I've done a fair bit of saltwater fish and I love that. You know one of the reasons I love that is that I don't get to do it as much. You know, just seeing different spots. But I mean there's yeah I mean I'm. I'm not nearly as well traveled as I probably should be for for trout and stuff. I've fished out of the west but not, not worldwide by any stretch. So. That's yeah I'd say trout fishing wise probably. Probably Argentina. Jay and I were just talking about this earlier in the shop and that's kind of going over the questions you know. It's not that it's so special to us. It is. This is what fishing is. It's special to everyone else because they're from somewhere else. We live here. So it's not we don't think of it as special. It's it's just part of our life. It's just part of what we do is what part of what we've done since we were kids. You know Jay's from Ohio. So it's you know he's a little different perspective but. You know I lately here in the past few months last several years I go around during the winter and I do demos in different parts of the country and I've been to Iowa and Indiana and Minnesota. That's the whole Midwestern state from Texas et cetera. And I take for granted how easy and convenient our fishing is here. Yeah. Those those folks have to plan like they get to go fish for a week a year. You know they have some little good fisheries there. But I mean this is where fishing happens is in the Mountain West. So I guess that is what special it is. You know we take it for granted cause we're here but there's know there's so much within two hours of where we sit right here there's 50 different spots of fish. You know Montana or even even worse or better. You know as as it is I mean you know I do think one of the things here.

Charlie Craven [00:06:20] Versus Montana like when it's that convenient to you to go you know to go out for half an hour kind of thing it's maybe not as special as it could be. You know this is I think a nice sort of happy medium between the two that you know you plan for a day trip you know very rarely to fish for half a day kind of thing. Just cause they're just far enough away where you got to kind of commit to it for the day. So I'd say that's what it is. You know what makes it special is there's so much of it around but it's not so readily convenient that you take it for granted. That's actually I get asked a lot of questions. That's a great question.

Charlie Craven [00:06:57] You know from my point of view. One of the biggest things is you've got to keep up. You don't. And this probably just isn't for me. But you don't see like

an expert angler and a beginning angler fishing together very often. You do tend to see people that are pretty closely matched. And that definitely makes the day more interesting for both of you. Yeah I would say if you're looking for a fishing partner always look for somebody that's better than you are so you can learn from them. But I don't particularly enjoy going out with beginners these days, I guided for a long time so I'm a bit jaded with that. But. You know I don't want to feel bad if I catch a bunch of fish and they're not I feel like I'm not gonna get to fish. You know because I'm helping them. It's not that I don't enjoy helping them. But it's a different thing as far as a fishing trip versus a "guided" trip. Or even just kind of showing somebody the ropes. So. Somebody that can keep up. You know and and from my point of view it's it's got to be somebody that I have something in common with beyond fishing right. You know I work in a fly shop all day the last thing I want to talk about in my day off is more fishing. I want to go do it. One of my best friends and I fish with all the time. Actually both of the guys I fish with all the time, we hardly ever talked about fishing or fishing. You know a few of these short little snaps here and there about try this or this. You know. Little bits like that but it's always a different conversation. So it's just sort of more relaxing and less business like. You know it's not as technical at the point that we're at now. It's not. You know we're not talking technical stuff. We're enjoying our day together. And then the technical stuff kind of gets fit in you know. And that's. I think that's one of the things too with Colorado. From my perspective as a fly tyer. That little drive that I have on little or big drive at either end of the trip gives me a lot of time to think about the technical aspects of what I can change what fly patterns I want to change this way or that I do a lot of that on the drive to and from. So so you know a lot of this might have come up in chats with whoever I'm fishing with on the way home but very rarely on the water. So. Somebody that I can spend you know spend the day with and not not feel like I'm giving a lesson or working in the shopping every day. Something beyond that. That's that's what I look for anyway. And that was sort of like thinking back about who who I do fish with and why I like to fish with them. And it's because I'm not, we're not answering basic questions we're not going through, you know, how many [unintelligible] are you using.

Charlie Craven [00:09:23] Yea. there's more sort of just regular banter. The best advice I can give to anybody that started fishing of any sort is to go. Go often go as much as you can. Even you don't know anything about it. You know I my I started fishing when I was a little kid and you know bait fishing lure fishing. My parents and sisters and you know the going camping trips and.

Charlie Craven [00:09:49] Every time you go even when you're not doing it right, you learn something. You pick something up. And still to this day every time I go I pick something up. So that's that's the biggest thing. You can't go fish two times a summer and be a fly fisherman you can't go golf two times a summer and hope to be any better you know five years from now. So it's something that you have to commit to. You have to go do it. You have to do it a lot and you might suck at it for a long time but you'll get better at it and there's no there's not really a shortcut to it. You take a class it'll kind of give you the lowdown on it but it's not going to give you the little pieces little intricacies that that make it so appealing and you gotta to figure that out as you go. And that's that's one of the things I think that keeps it so interesting to people for so long as you're never great at it. You know no matter how good you get there's always pieces you don't know there's always pieces something you learn. You know. That that's what I think about it.

Charlie Craven [00:10:43] Temper this just a little bit. These days you know, I imagine you're probably somewhere around my same age. in the day there like you would go and get you. You might run into somebody else you wouldn't ask the question. These days there are so many experts out there in the world that are not experts. So it's really and the

Internet is the best place in the world. for it You're almost at a disadvantage not knowing who you always consider the source. I wish that were still true that you could go you know you bump into a guy on the river and can say this this and this and I'll give you a couple little tidbits you can kind of work with that. And there's still probably some of that. But there's less and less of that there's a for for the volume of anglers out there there's not nearly as many really good ones as it seemed to be as I used to be it seems. You know when I was a kid. Maybe it was just cause I was a kid but. You know seem like there were a lot more better anglers out in the world than there are these days. There's a whole, a whole range. Trying to figure out how to word this. You know the mass of the anglers that you see out there are. You know are advanced beginners so it's you know that that only works to a point and that's why I say.

Charlie Craven [00:12:01] When you start if you go a lot you'll figure things out for you and that's how learned you know I didn't I didn't have somebody teach me to do it I kind of went figured it out on my own. And same thing with fly tying what you learn that way is you don't learn. Somebody didn't give you the answer you figure out the why. And how. Instead of just the how. Which transfers over in a lot of other places down the road. So yes asking questions is a you know it's a good idea but you've got to consider the source of who you're asking you know and how much how much a value to put on that.

Charlie Craven [00:12:37] Then there's you know again that's one of those things you have to consider the source. Yeah. There is there is. These days, I mean I tied for 3-4 years when I was a kid before I ever saw another person tie a fly. These days in 10 minutes you've got you know all the all the YouTube videos you want. And some of it is very good. I mean. Excellent quality stuff there's some of it that is just fantastic and there's a whole lot of it that it's just garbage. And as a beginner you don't know. So. So yes there's lots more out there these days. The Internet sort of with fly tying seems to me you know, I'm the cynical old man here, but it seems to me that there's, again there's that whole expertise thing you know that you know everybody with the cameras an expert everybody whos got a YouTube account is an expert. And that sort of limits where you know people say I tie as well as that guy does. Well that guys not that great. And know he's good. But he's not that great. Like you could be much better. You know I think beyond that. And there's so much you know with the social media stuff I mean everyday I'm like my social feed I see you know 10000 different new fies to. Nothing and none of that's new. If people just don't realize that there's stuff beyond. They'll copy each other. You know they all do. And that's what fly fying is. I mean. You know copy and adapt and change and make it yours. But there's so much of that I can go beyond that. There's not an end to it. You know there's there's not a I tie as good as that guy so I'm really good. There's lots lots more beyond that.

Charlie Craven [00:14:09] You know one of the things here in Colorado is that just the population boom. I don't know if you're seeing as much of it in Montana.

James Thull [00:14:17] No. We just hit a million people.

Charlie Craven [00:14:21] So I mean you're you're good. In Colorado there's a lot more people. And one of the things that I think is and this is this is a double edged sword because I own a fly shop. I mean I, I'm in this industry. I've been in this industry for 25 30 years now. The limitless pursuit of growth. Of the industry of trying to get it out there. I think that's going to be one of the biggest threats. Is not everybody is meant to go fly fishing. Not everybody. This is a finite resource. You know if everybody in the world decided to fly fish tomorrow would be great for business for one year and then we'd all

starve to death. Because resources can't handle it. So I think that's one of the biggest things and we're doing it to ourselves. It's the whole industry that this relentless growth it's got to be bigger it's got ot be better got to sell more Rods sell more waders. You know beginning fly fishing classes. Theres you know so much that a lot of that kind of stuff kind of tapers off but I do think you know. Long term that's not a sustainable thing. There's not they're not making any new rivers you know it's not like golf where they could build out 20 more golf courses next year. There's a finite amount of water to do this on. And. You know even with all those people you know even with all that water that Colorado has that Montana has. At some point when it's no longer enjoyable to go out and do because everybody's out there doing. It, that' going to be back down again. So it's it's somewhat self limiting but. It'll get to a point where it hurts itself. Just just by doing that. So that's that's one of the biggest threats that I see. You know certainly. The sharing, you know, with the Internet et cetera. Where to where to go how to get started things like that. Like like when I was a kid I tyed for several years before I saw anybody. So it's it is much more accessible these days. You know it's not nearly so mysterious as it used to be so there's a lot. Of you know when I was a kid trying to get someone to show you how to tie flies. That was a big thing. I mean nobody ever really had their little secret stuff. So there's a lot more sharing going on. So I think that part's good. You know that's, the crowding is a different issue so I mean I think I see some of that kind of go the other way. I certainly see more of a, You know more of it being done somewhat as a status symbol. I, you know rather than going into putting in the time to learn to fish become a good angler.

Charlie Craven [00:16:48] In Colorado we're getting a lot of these little private water places that are stocked fish. You know you make your appointment and go fish with a guide for a day and you catch twenty thousand rainbow trout because that's what they put in there. You know, it would be much more uncommon with catch a 12 inch brown trout, because that wasn't put in there. So I think you're kind of losing a little bit on that, and you know it takes some of the pressure off of the wild rivers I guess. But. It's not enough, you know it's not the real thing, you know. Nobody, it's like the golf course and saying, you know I want my hole this big. It's easier it's easier. I only got so much time to do this I want to be successfull at it, so the holes have to be bigger. Doesn't you know fly fishing is a learning thing. So I think it's something that you gotta kind of learn to do and you suffer along the way as you do.

Charlie Craven [00:17:27] Yes that's that's you got to pay your dues. So I do think there's some some loss there. To me it's a neat idea. It's like I'm not like a brown trout. And I was thinking about this this morning. I mean they're very like the American immigrant. They came here and they work hard. They do well they're durable they're tough. You know. They're much more suited to most of the water around here than the fish that are indiginous, paticularly cutthroats you know you know how delicate they are. And that's one of the things that's always sort of pissed me off about cutthroats is they're beautiful fish, they're dumb as posts.

Charlie Craven [00:18:05] And they're so delicate. You know you just you feel bad catching them. It's not that I don't like them they're beautiful and they're just awesome, they live in beautiful places but they're just not a sustainable thing. You know to go out and specifically target them doesn't seem to me to be terribly challenging or maybe the right thing to do. Browns are tough. There's lots of them. I always call them durable. You know I had clients drag a brown trout up on the bank and roll it through the sand and I run over and grab and rinse it off off and it swims directly away as fast as it can. You know cut cutthroats where I hooked them and pulled them in, never taking them out of water take the hook out of them and they roll over. So. You know it's like I appreciate the idea of the

native stuff. But. You know I don't think they are as cool as cool fish to fish for. Absolutely yeah. And I wouldn't even say it. You know I don't know that you could have anything at the expense of brown because I don't I don't think they'd allow it. You know they you know they adapt so well.

James Thull [00:19:13] A lot of places will kill out a river.

Charlie Craven [00:19:14] Sure sure. And you know I think I think there are places for that. I don't think, I don't think it should ever be everything goes back to the way it was at the beginning of time. Because it, because I don't think this fish populations now would ever sustain themselves. Obviously. So yes I like the idea of going into the park and seeing cutthroats. I like going into Rocky Mountian National Park and catching cutthroats that kind of stuff. In those native ranges and they're what belongs there I understand that. And I know. I understand that they might need to kill off a population of fish in a certian area to do that. Yeah I think there's room for both for sure but I mean the sustainability of a fishable population of hardy durable fish, particularly with the population growth that we have is as important as maintaining those those native stocks. I see, I'm going to the bahamas in a week and we went there last year. You know there's a lot of the bonefish and tarpon trust study and work they're doing down there. You know it's amazing. You know this has kind of branching off the trout stuff but it's amazing how little they know about these fish. I mean it's astonishing. They know nothing about it they are just figuring out where they spawn. Some really amazing works. You know that that I am aware of there. I don't know exactly. I can't even lie to you tell you I know exactly who's doing the most hard work on this. Theres alot of local TU chapters that i see as I travel around these are mostly fishing clubs and TU chapters that bring me in. And every one of them has their little pet project that they're sort of working on. They're kind of preserving their little piece of the world. And that I think is as important as. And maybe again taking more for granted here in Colorado lots of pieces of the world here. In Iowa, there's just a few little pieces. And they're very passionate about it. So. I don't know that there's any one single, you know, Trout Unlimited comes to mind, but I don't know that theres any one single organization thats doing a big huge thing. It's all the little pieces that kind of put it all together. There's little little pieces and little steps in there. You know collectively they can fight things like the pebble mine and things like that. Yeah. But. I do see it's astonishing how, how adamant and passionate some of these groups in non-fishing areas you know in the Midwest kind thing that you wouldn't think of this as trout country are about their, their local fisheries. So I see a lot of it.

James Thull [00:21:42] You mentioned bonefish.

James Thull [00:21:43] I know a lot of bonefishing areas are preserved because of the economic impact. Do you think that's one of the things that will save trout habitats as well?

Charlie Craven [00:21:50] Certainly can yeah yeah absolutely. I mean you know the outdoor industry in Colorado is gigantic. You know I think they lump skiing into that with the outdoor industry. Right. I mean there's. I don't know how many Fly shops these days to open down for a range. There's a pile of them.

James Thull [00:22:04] It's a billion dollar [unintelligible] in Colorado.

Charlie Craven [00:22:05] It is you know the.

Charlie Craven [00:22:07] You know the fly shop industry itself is relatively small but I mean all the pieces that go into it. But yes certainly. I mean that that has got to be as far as an economic thing something that is considered. In the overall economy of a state for sure. Absolutely.

Charlie Craven [00:22:26] You know I say my parents. You know they didn't they didn't fly fish. You know what they always go camping and go fishing. Spend time outdoors. And I started fishing when I was little cause I was bored. There was only so much I could only sit and watch a bobber for so long. I remember my dad. I gad lost all his lures, I went out and I threw his lures and I lost every one of them. And he said you know if you tie flies you can you can make your own. I mean I had no idea what that was or what that entailed and then I was like fly tying kit. So here I am today. You know I'm 40 some years later. So yeah I would definetly say its my parents. I didn't really have mentor growing up. Somebody that taught me along the way. I figured a lot of it out of my own and then kind of as I got into a I became a commercial tier kind of got into the industry and that's where I kind of started to pick up more of it. But. Yeah. Definitely be my folks.

Charlie Craven [00:23:22] No. No. I was a little.

James Thull [00:23:24] You remember the first one that kind of jumps out at you.

Charlie Craven [00:23:26] I remember the first fish I caught on a fly rod. Absolutely I do. Yeah. Yeah a little front range Creek by Loveland. Caught it on an Adams with my cousin.

James Thull [00:23:32] Brookie, rainbow?

Charlie Craven [00:23:33] Rainbow. Yeah about eight or nine inches long. I've no idea how it got itself attached to the end of my line it was just there.

James Thull [00:23:39] Now was it a fly you tied?

Charlie Craven [00:23:41] It was a fly I tied.

James Thull [00:23:41] So that's going to be pretty special.

Charlie Craven [00:23:43] It was. I remember fish and my cousin. He tied flies and he was catching fish and I wasn't. I really wanted one of his flies and I really thought that made a difference. But I remember I had a cast up in this rod and like I say all of a suddent there was a fish on my line. I had no idea how he got there and I was just astonished that like my stuff works to. That that was a pretty cool moment for sure.

Charlie Craven [00:24:17] You know the best thing I've read lately I'll tell you is Erin Block. Erin Block is Jay Zimmerman's wife. Jay works with me at the shop. Erin is his wife she writes for Gray Sporting Journal. She's thirty I think. I think she just turned 30 and she is a wonderful writer. I really enjoyed her stuff. Who else. Russel Chatham. Thomas McGuane. Well that's. All that. You know of course Geirach, I grew up reading that that was. You know kind of being local here. Yeah. So it's like you have stories about your hometown. He actually has a story I won't say where but about the stream that I caught that fish that first fish in. Well it's not the Saint Vrain. So trying to think who else. Yeah I've I've got just about everybody's everything right. I love to read so. I've got books from from all of them and some of them are you know the real (unintelligible) stuff.

Charlie Craven [00:25:12] I don't love. How To stuff doesn't really do it for me. But there's some really great writers out these days. Tom McGuane my favorite out of the bunch. The best thing about being a guide was seeing people. See that they could do it. You know whether it was and you know I guided in the the 90s and early 2000s. So that was sort of, you know before during and and shortly thereafter The River Runs Through It thing. And so there was a lot of people that had never done it never even, never had any background in it. Didn't know anything about it. Go out and see that they could do it also. You know or just somebody that had, had fished and tried to go out on their own and just kind of needed some some of those little questions. You know those little details from a reliable source. You know where they could put it into action. So seeing that and seeing you particularly not just go out and just be the entertainment for the day. But where you went out and taught somebody something and a they you know understood. Oh now I get what you mean by drag for drift. Now I know what this means or how to adjust this and. So seeing that sort of epiphany moment. You know that's that's one of the most rewarding things. It's not always about a big fish it's up you know you know it usually is something about a fish. But it's not always about the biggest fish. You know it's kind of putting it together and you know kind of figure it out on their own. And do it on their own. The most frustrating part of that is, during that same time period and this is probably less true these days although there's still some around theirs is being the entertainment for the day. You know you get you get it was really tiresome at some point to, you know that guy wouldn't get off his phone, or they're having a business meeting and you're standing there. Waiting while they're. You're just the entertainment for the day so that part can get very frustrating. There's not too many. I didn't run into too many you know true anglers that were out that didn't want to be there. Yeah but there was some of that inbetween there. You know the guys that wanted to be there really wanted to learn. They were Great fun. You know. As men in general we never want to listen to somebody else or someone that can get frustrating you as you say over and over like. You make the same cast all day and I tell you mend exactly the same time every day like when you going to mend by yourself. Yes so parts of that get frustrating. It's just it's just human nature.

Charlie Craven [00:27:38] Absolutely. Women are are infinitely easier to teach. No holds barred. No two ways about it both in fly tying and fishing. I've seen it way too many times. Women listen really well. Men do not. Men, and I said I said this in my fly tying class the other night. When you when you tell a woman you're going make or you're gonna cast up here going to Mend as he hits you're going to lift your line. And keep your arm close to your body. She does exactly that. When you tell a man that he says in his head, and I am guilty of it as anybody else in the world I find myself doing it all the time especially now that I'm aware of it. Well that's the way you do it. But I'm going to find out a better way. And then you do your thing and. Long term you know like if you've got 20 years to learn how to do it that figuring out the why. On your own is a good answer but short term it's very frustrating for the person teaching you for sure. Yeah. Yeah. Women definitely learn, learn and listen better than men do.

James Thull [00:28:32] What people often say too is men when in doubt they try to muscle it in.

James Thull [00:28:36] and it just doesn't work for fly fishing.

Charlie Craven [00:28:38] Yeah. That's that's absolutely the case. And that I mean that's easy enough to get around but it's the the mental part that is the difference. And I got, fly tying in particular. Very much see it in fly tying. I'll tell a class of six people there's one woman and theres five men and the woman is, you know in 20 minutes of class, tying way

better than anybody else. You know starting from the same point. Just because I'm very specific with my directions and I taught classes for a long time and know how to do it. And she hears it and they don't.

Charlie Craven [00:29:12] OK so this is the part where I said where you start with bait fishing and you don't evolve to it. Not that having a fly on the end is, having a fly on the end is no different. Well we all all us old guys started with a stick and a string. I got 80 billion bluegills when I was a kid with a stick and a string. One of the things that attracts me. And I really do believe most other people to fly fishing is that it is complex. It is complicated. To some degree and even attractive because it's expensive it's hard. It's it's something to attain something that you have to work at. Simplifying it. You know that they say tenkara is a simplified method of fly fishing. Which it is. But that's not why people do it for twenty five years. That's a spinning rod. That's a stick and a string. I understand the aspect of it but from my point of view that is something you evolve from not to. I don't think it's. I love to cast. I love to put the fly underneath that bush you know 62 feet out exact and it unrolls exactly where I want it. I like that control and that precise aspect of it. Not that you couldn't do that with a tenkara rod and a much shorter length. But there's all those little aspects that are hard and complicated and difficult to learn, I think are what makes fly fishing appealing. Certainly to me. Sure. You know simplification of it. I understand from a from a beginners perspective I don't think that's I don't think they're a bad idea for beginners. I think it's a good way to kind of get started to sort of limit yourself to kind of the game that you can play for the time being. But at some point there should be more to that. That's that's what keeps this keeps us all coming back and doing it more and more. You never you never have all of this. You know. I'm not saying that I do either. But there's always something a little more complicated. You know it's it's not that I went bonefishing for the first time said that it's really windy down there and it's you know it's hard. I'll just go back to the spinning rod. You'll never get any better at it. You know that.

Charlie Craven [00:31:09] It's supposed to be hard.

James Thull [00:31:11] Yeah yeah. Bob Jacklin I was talking with him the the other day. He's like Jim I got no interest. I spent 60 years learning to be a caster.

Charlie Craven [00:31:19] And that's exactly its the cast. Particularly the casting aspect and it's so beautiful and graceful. And so rewarding when you do it well and. You know it's it's hard to do. You have to you have to put your time into it. You know I guess I guess it doesn't appeal to me as much as. You know sort of the same thing going to a trout farm they stock fish of course you had 25 incher. Of course you did. There's something to it. You gotta earn it.

James Thull [00:31:46] It's different that catching a wild trout.

Charlie Craven [00:31:54] I'll bring that back to the obsessive growth. Why's it got to be bigger? Why's it have to be more diverse. What, there's nothing keeping any any any other man woman race anything from fly fishing. I don't know that we need this relentless pursuit of making it available to every not every middle aged white guy should fly fish either. You know. I don't. You know when I fishing if I hike back 10 miles I'd be just as mad if it was a middle aged white guy or a black woman. Standing where I wanted to fish. So I don't. I don't know that trying to force the diversification or encourage, if encourage is a word. I mean there's. There's plenty of middle aged white guys that suck at this. I see it all the time. It's just you know it's just it's something that appeals to them within their social group. I guess. I'm not against it by any means. You know several know young girls to women

that come in the shop. Jay and I talked about this this morning our friend Phyllis. African-American woman. Is the rarest of the rare in the fly fishing industry and she is a consummate angler. She is a fantastic I fished with her in the Bahamas. She's a wonderful angler wonderful person fun to be with which is something big for me and not by any stretch someone you'd look at and say I bet she flies fishes. She went out decided she wanted to do it and became very good at it and does it. I don't think theres anything keeping anybody who wants to do it. And particularly women for an industry so stuffed with men. You know the few women that are in it have this. I won't say an easier way but if they have a great opportunity I mean everybody is looking to to bring that to bring more women into it. So I don't think anybody's being held back by it.

James Thull [00:33:46] I think it's fair to say that guys like you and me probably had more opportunity in that you know we had families that maybe introduced us to it certainly maybe coming up in the age that we did it was more common to take men fishing then women. And in many ways I'd say that angling, fly fishing, it's almost a sport of I don't want to say it was off limits but in some ways opportunity. One of the things that I've got to travel a bit so I've been fishing Africa in Asia and other places, and most of the places in the world it's not about angling. It's about catching fish. And I think that that we've almost evolved the sport in something that it wasn't.

Charlie Craven [00:34:25] I couldn't agree more. Absolutely. That's absolutely right. It is a sport of affluence. Absolutely. No two ways about it. so I would guess I would say that might be more a question rather than that of a man or woman. But. But. The opportunity and availability.

James Thull [00:34:42] Kind of economic.

Charlie Craven [00:34:44] Yes. Yes absolutely more so than you know any any woman that you know works here in Denver's probably got enough disposable income to go do whatever it is that she wanted, if she if she wanted wanted to do. There's plenty of great women skiers there's plenty of great women golfers and there's. I don't think there's any old boys club that's keeping anybody out but you're you're right. It's this game is for sport purely. I mean there's not it's you know I don't do demos and then somebody asked me during my tying why I put eyes on my flies and I put the eyes on my flies cause I like it. Because it makes me happy. And then I follow that up and I say you like none of you guys got up early on a Saturday morning and came here at eight o'clock through the snow to watch me tie because you wanted to learn how to catch fish. You know that's. You could use a net to catch fish if it's about catching fish. It's that's not why you're here. You know you want a little fine aspects of it. And there's you know that's the same thing with fly fishing it's not about going out come home with the string full of fish. Its about learning. And. I think that's what the whole thing is about is about learning. You know if you're driven to kind of pick up a new thing and and stick with that thing. Have the attention span the long term attention span maybe 20 30 40 50 year attention span. You know some people are are prone to that. And some people aren't. And sometimes they're men and sometimes they're women. I don't I don't know that there's a divide there. You know you bring up a good point about. You know when when we were kids you know your girls stay home and the boys and the boys go fishing kinds of things.

Charlie Craven [00:36:11] I don't know that I see that these days.

James Thull [00:36:14] I think you're right. I think it's certainly changing.

Charlie Craven [00:36:14] I think I seen much more of that. I mean I see tons of guys bring their young daughters into the shop. Yeah. Little girls you know five six year old girls that are fishing. That's a valid, I think that was a valid point at one time but I don't know that I see it these days as much.

Charlie Craven [00:36:34] The thing is I don't think. You know fly fishing is more available to everyone these days than it ever has. Both from the equipment, the instruction, the available access to water knowing where you can find an outlet to go. I remember when we were kids like nobody talked about it. Trying to find something where you went fishing last night like, we went to the spot. Nobody would give you anything. These days it's so much more accessible and that's that's somewhat the reason that the other popular places are crowded because they're very easy to find. But I mean it's all out there it's not you don't have to work for it near like you like you used to. So. I don't see the inhibitors that everybody talks about is keeping people from doing it. There's you know, what keeps people from doing it is that it's hard. It's hard. You know I suck at golf. I'm terrible. I play golf once a year. But that's why I suck at it. You know. And I know that's why I suck at it. If I went I did it more. And it's you know from as I, as I understand it it's there's just as little as many little intricacies to it and little detail stuff. You know if I had the time and effort and money to go do it you know four days a week I'd get a lot better at it also. It's just you know you have to decide what it is you're going to do and. These days people have so many things. You know there's golf and especially Colorado and golf, skiing, biking, and rock climbing. There's 8 million different things. It's hard to be, hard to be very good at any of it if you do all of them. You know you very rarely find some. And there's a few guys in the world that are but we very rarely find somebody thats a, expert fly fisherman, expert Hunter, and expert rock climber, expert. And you know you've got your thing. And then you might do some other stuff to kind of. You know. Mix it up a little bit. It takes a pretty concentrated effort over a long time to get good at it. There are no hard flies to tie. No flies are difficult to tie there are difficult techniques. Once you've got the techniques down all flies are easy to tie. But that being said trout flies. This is my old school, old guy thing. I still think a humpy is one of the coolest flies ever. It's because it's hard to tie. It's hard to tie well. It takes some planning, it takes some, some forethought about how you're going to do it you never get it right on the first try. A humpy is still a fly. It's one of the very first flies I learned to tied when I was a kid from Jack Dennis Volume 1. You know since then I've sort of changed the way the fly is tied. Up. And now my way is kind of becoming the way which I think is cool. You know that was a book that I got when I was a kid when I was eight or nine years old I got that book and like that was the coolest thing ever. Now my book is. This sort of kind of taking that spot and I just think that's the coolest thing. But that's a fly that's been around for 50 years. Maybe more. And I don't know six or eight guys that tie it well. So I think that's cool one. Well humpy be right in there. You know all flies tied well are beautiful to me. I'm a fly guy so I mean anything that's tied well. I, I know what goes into it. I could tell when it's done right or when it's done. I love being surprised. I love looking at seeing a fly for the first time and, when I say to myself "how'd they do that?" That's a pretty cool thing for me. So there's. You know it doesn't have to be a. Know you think of the beautiful flies like classic Atlantic salmon or wet flies. Yeah. Cool stuff like that. That's that stuff is cool but it's pretty standard technique wise. You know some of the new stuff coming out streamer wise. A lot of the guys in the Midwest Blane Chocklett (unintelligible) was super cool new game changers. And came up with the gummie minnow. Like different different ways to go about it. So. That stuff is beautiful to me. It's different it's new it's not what has been around. It's, it's doing things a different way kind of looking at it with fresh eyes. So. There's lots of good stuff in the world if you know. You know if you know what you're looking at and anything that's really well tied by any good tier has technique wired is always impressive to me. Parachute Adams I mean you know I'm I'm a world famous fly

tier these days I fish Parachute Adams as much as anything. I tie mine a little different of course but yeah I guess if you had to have one summertime fly anyway, the range of sizes you do a lot with a parachute adams. That's. You know everybody wants some secret answer but the thing is is the generics as far as a sweeping generalization generic flies like that work pretty well most of the time.

Charlie Craven [00:41:20] I mean there's clearly a lot more synthetics these days. Tons and tons of different stuff all kinds of different things but. They're generally used as a substitute or in addition to to flies that already exist. Little changes little tweaks. Using a new material. You know I mentioned a Blane Chocklett's Game Changer, an entirely synthetic fly. A cool thing about that fly is he invented, developed, and made available all the pieces for it. That wasn't a fly that he was like You know it's like this fly. But I did it. I added this I added some flash and you know it's not like anything else you've ever seen. It's unlike anything I've ever seen and it's completely all the shanks and he invented and.

Charlie Craven [00:42:02] Produced to make that fly and then the material and the technique he came up with so that's like up from scratch. I haven't seen that in years from scratch like didn't nothing else like it in the world kind of thing. You know there's there's more and more of that kind of stuff comes around. From a pretty select little group of guys that kind of think outside the box or really on the box and kind of are are able to do that kind of thing. You know fly tying. You know synthetic and natural there's there's tons of great stuff on both ends of it. Just knowing where to use it and there's you know the actual where it's put to use is the part that's interesting. More often than not. No you can't really explain where it comes. More often than not. Like from my point of view coming up with a new fly. I always say it has to have has to do something has to be an improvement over what existed. It has to do whatever it is you wanted to do better than what was before. Otherwise it's just another way of doing it. So. Like I say driving back from fishing I'll think you know like I skating that caddis into the bushes I need a fly that skates a little better what can I do to make it a better Skating fly. Or. You know. What, when I bead head nymphs don't seem to I need to be heavier but I don't want them fatter. How do I get around that.

Charlie Craven [00:43:20] You know, a two bit hooker with a two tungsten beads is the answer to the second one and the screaming banshee is the answer to the first. My answer to them anyway. So there's little pieces that fit into practical application. Where you can make a fly better. What, what you can make it do better. So that's what I always think is. As far as the new fly, has to be an improvement over what already exists. Not just a different way to do it. I'll answer the second part first. Yes I think there is. You know and that's that's one of the cool things about. I'm gonna go all over on this one. One of the cool things the Colorado's fly fishing industry is very big, probably bigger than it should be. The actual industry part people that actually work in the industry.

Charlie Craven [00:44:09] Or that purport to work in the industry. But that being said there's so many guides so many anglers out there who are aware of that kind of thing. I think the policing part of it and take, you know I see very often and you know I love it. But I'll see a guy at the put in picking up trash. I never saw that when I was a kid. I used to do that all the time when I guided because you're walking around carrying a net you know you're you've got free hands. I see a lot more of that. And I think that's one of the cool things these days particularly with you know the younger crowd I see it a lot more with the younger crowd than I do with the older middle aged white guy crowd. And there's there's a. You know somebody asked me at one of my programs you know how do we get ...go off on a tagent. How do we get more young people in to fly fishing.

Charlie Craven [00:44:52] There's plenty of young people into fly fishing. You don't see them. You don't see him at Saturday demos you don't always see him at the sport shows although you do these days with the film festivals. There's lots of twentysomething young guys out there who are about the resources and about taking care of it and protecting it. And there is the most vociferous about a lot of it. So those guys are out there and I see I see much more of that just because. There's so many. It's just a bigger pool we're working from it's not the same hundred guys. So that's the other half of that double edged sword. You know there's a ton of guys out there but a lot of them are doing some really good stuff. You know they may not be the best anglers in the world but they're taking care of what they're doing and they and they care about that. Yeah. So that is it, that is impressive. You know I. That warms my heart when I see it when I see somebody going out of their way to kind of you know pick up after themselves or take care of things. Yeah. You know that part about what are the challenges of owning a fly shop. There's all there's all sorts of them I mean it's like any other business. in the world. The industry as I alluded to earlier about this obsessive thing for growth that everybody's you know it used to be that. Sage made rods, Ross made reels.

Charlie Craven [00:46:00] Fishbob made luggage. Now everybody makes everything. Everybody's got to have a piece of everything. And it is a finite thing. There's not. You know I talked with my reps all the time and the reps are a great go between. There's not any. We don't want it to be as big as the guy in the office as he wants it to be. It's not sustainable. So that is one of the big frustrations that I have is trying to get it out to just where everybody in the world can do it. So that. It's not limited in any way. You know it's not like we say you know what, we've got a hundred and twelve customers today. That's our cap. Nobody else can come in. We'll help everybody that comes in as will every other shop should ever in every area. So it's not like you know we're limiting it, but putting it out there where where theres uncontrolled growth, and there's, you know everybody kind of pushing for more and more and more. In every one of those aspects. You know it seemed to me it used to be gear was better. More well thought out more thought through rather than just copied. You know we've got a certain chest pack in the shop that's been around for 15 years that five or six different companies make pretty much the exact same one now. They just copied each other. Nobody made anything new. There was no need for that. There was no. But you know that I can say with a fly. It's got to be something new and better what's what's new better what what does it do better than the old thing. And there's so much knockoff stuff these days. Anybody thinks they want a little piece of it. I would like to see more slow moving innovation but better innovation in the industry as far as products and gear. You know Sims came out with gore tex waders 15 20 20 some years ago now. And that was like a groundbreaking super cool. You know I remember hearing about them before they came out and I was like How is that going to work? And now it's an everyday thing. You know that was a big thing. I can't think of the last thing that was a big a real big thing like that that's a viable advancement in the industry. You know there's there's there's too much copying and not enough.

Charlie Craven [00:48:13] Passion driven, on the water figuring it out what make it better thing rod reel. Whatever theres just so many copies of it. You know that that's just concerning to me that nobody is really innovating anymore these days. Very few people are anyway. There is a difference. There's a difference between a hundred dollar rod to five hundred dollar rod. Pretty big difference. But between a five hundred dollar rod and a eight hundred dollar rod, especially if you know how to cast. You know and guys have said this for years you know don't don't spend seven hundred dollars on a fly rod spend a hundred dollars on a casting lesson and that's the best advice I can give anybody in the

world. You know is take take your one hundred and fifty dollar rod and go take fly casting lessons and learn to cast it and then you'll appreciate what a five hundred dollar rod is. [unintelligible] maybe a little more or you'll be perfectly happy with your hundred and fifty dollar rod because it will do it. It will get the job done for sure. You know there's certainly status symbol to it. And that's sort of the inhernet. I was going to say greed I don't know that even greed is a word. You know everything, everything costs more these days so the rod companies have higher expenses also. So the rods can't stay five hundred bucks forever. But rods are getting you know eight hundred fifty dollar rod, we say this all the time like six fifty six hundred fifty dollar rod is a pretty good price point. That was a that was a you know a chunk that a person could save up over a reasonable period of time and have the thing that they coveted eight hundred and fifty bucks with tax that's a thousand dollar rod. You know that's that's a big chunk that takes away from your kids and takes away from you know something in your life that you you know that's a that's a big chunk and I definitely see rod sales slowing down on that. You know the guys with with Uber money you know it can't be too expensive but there's less and less of that these days and the rods these days are fantastic they're wonderfully made they're light and beautiful. Whether they justify it, and I'm saying this as a shop owner, whether they justify eight hundred and fifty dollars. I get a pretty good deal on stuff and it's hard for me to justify some of that stuff. You know I've got a pile of rods and one of my favorite rods is ten years old. I mean if I had to fish the rest my days and pick one, that'd be it, 10 years old. You know not to say that next year rod might not be the one that replaces it. I try every year.I try every year I get a couple of different new rods. And sometimes they're really good. And most of the time they're not, you know. They're not what I thought they were. So. You know certainly there's there's that aspect of trying to you know everybodys covering their payroll, and on one end the rod manufacturers. But the development it seems like they're just chasing, every year there's new new rods new rods new rods. It used to be every four or five years, and it'd be a pretty significant difference when it came out. These days I think it's rushed too much. There's not as much innovation in between models. You know it you know it's like me sitting down and tying a dozen flies in the first one has some sparkle on it and the second one doesn't. And that's a new fly. And then I add some sparkle and some dubbing and that's a new fly. Wait for the 12th one where I got it all wired in. That's the one that you know it should have been that I kind of worked up to. You can't have a model for every one of those little tweaks that you did to it. And I'm sure somebody who knows more about it would probably argue that point. But. I tell you what I see at the shop everyday. The expense of the rods these days is getting pretty crazy.

Charlie Craven [00:51:38] For sure the you know these days, I've taught fly tying classes since I was twelve years old so I always kind of approach things when even when I'm just tying for myself how I would teach it. And I guess that would be my biggest my claim to fame is that I'm a good teacher. And whether it was as a guide or as a fly tyer a guy who writes fly tying books.

Charlie Craven [00:52:03] Being able to teach it and how I go about that. So it definitely makes me think of how do you know the reasoning behind it. Like I say the why. I try to teach the why. So I guess that just circle back in and cut myself off about how it takes a long time to learn why. I try to teach the why along the way so that you understand the whole piece of it. So, certainly as, and I think that's one of the things that's made my business successful and my my book successful is that it gives it's not just you know, here's the answer. But it's here's why. Or at least maybe some different ways to think about it. So yeah definitely. It kind of taints I guess the way you think about things and the way you look at things. For sure long term.

James Thull [00:52:43] Like in school when you're required to show your work.

Charlie Craven [00:52:46] Absolutely. And that's it. It's like I say my wife and I between the two us we have six kids. They're all teenagers and they run the gamut. You know we've got hellions we've got great kids we've got, they're they're all over and they're all different. They all learn differently. My wife's a teacher so she really teaches me a lot about this. But you know there's so many little pieces about different ways people learn things and that's one of the I think one of the interesting things is you know. I remember back when I first started seeing we had just tons of engineers that got into fly fishing becuase its so technical. They love that technical aspect of it. Now you see a lot more sort of workman like attitude toward it. Guys throwing big streamers and just kind of getting it done. You know just just blue collar. You know blue collar fishermen just go out and get it done. So it's it's interesting the different perspectives from different walks of life. And I see that same kind of thing about how people work. Know some some guys are more hands on I didn't know anything about this until I met my wife. As she was going through her master's degree program about how people learn differently.

Charlie Craven [00:53:44] There's some well this makes perfect sense to you. Yeah visual learners, audible learners.

Charlie Craven [00:53:48] So I mean there's so many little pieces of that and that's made me as I was just helping her with her homework proofread stuff but like as I as I read through that stuff I can kind of apply some of that and it makes perfect sense. Now you know why it's worked so well over the years. So yeah. Yeah that part is very interesting to me as far as the teaching part of it and. I don't enjoy teaching fly fishing as much as I used to. But I sure love teaching fly tying. That's that's something that I you know I feel that like I'm good enough at and I have enough answers to that I can kind of figure out you know I understand the subject well enough that I can figure out a way to teach you.

Charlie Craven [00:54:22] For whoever needs to learn. So that that part has been very interesting to me just learn, learning to teach.

Charlie Craven [00:54:34] Again like do just ask you on the way up I don't understand exactly what all of it is. But. But from my perspective anyway I think that's a wonderful thing. A collection of the history of it. And this will sort of. All going to wrap together. That you know that that's one of the things that I think is sort of missing in fly fishing these days with the Internet is it's very easy to get started pretty quickly and get right into it without kind of seeing where it all came from. Now I'll circle back to Tenkara you know where it all like. We all, like what are you talking about a stick and a stream? We all did a stick in a stream and you probably hear that as you ask that question. I feel the old guys are all like yeah I did that when I was seven. Like it doesn't have any appeal to me. There's there's so much history in the whole game and every aspect of it. That until you understand all of those pieces like it really doesn't all seem to fit together. You know it's like picking up a book and opening chapter 12 and starting there there's you don't know what happened in the beginning and. I see it in fly tying all the time guys still came up with something new. No you didn't. Thats been around for 25 years guys did that 50 years ago. Having that history there and available I think is something that's a). not taken advantage of much. You know people don't look backwards much these days. But it's incredibly valuable thing you know. That as valuable as it is I don't, I don't know that we'll ever see people looking for it as much as they should. You know the very, I don't want to say the top guys but the most interested most into it guys will. You know you can only look so far forward. But there's lots of stuff behind you. And that determines where you go forward. So. I think having that that

history aspect of it is you know you were telling me that all these guys love to hear you know the answers that everybody had these questions. And I you know honestly when I read those questions I was like you know these questions sound boring to me. But as I kind of get rambling hopefully everybody else did to I would love to hear opinions from guys that came before me. You know from different parts of the country where what they think. There's so much to it. And that's one of the cool things about fly fishing. There's tons and tons to it. You know, probably way more in the past than there is in the future. I don't know how much further forward we can go. You know and kind of keep it true and pure to what it is but there's so much you know. Kind of going back comes back around. You know old flies you guys these days guys all the time I don't fish a hare's ear anymore. Fish don't know, fish are seven years old. They don't live that long. You know there's no such thing as an old fly to a fish, there's only old flies of us. You know all that stuff still works. So. Yeah I'm actually kind of excited about coming to see what I can see.

Charlie Craven [00:57:23] I don't know. Just keep doing it you know that's the that's that's all that you know. There's not there's nothing making you or keeping you from from fishing. You know if you want to go do it go do it. And. You know every time you go you'll get better. Every time you go. I still, like I say I pick up something know where my good friends is John Boehner. He's he's old enough to be my dad. Just about he's just about my dad's age. And every time I fish with him he says yes. So I learned that today. I learned that today. And I've always kind of tried to take that little take away as well. That's there's always something to learn and I'm always on the lookout for that. There's never you know took me a long time in my life to get to where I could say you know I don't know and feel ok about it. It's okay not to know you know. And that's what kind of keeps you coming back for the next times.