

gierach-john-2014-12-05.mp4

John Gierach [00:00:12] Well I have, I have 17 books full of stories, but uh... there was- there's a story told about me when I was about five years old, I don't- I remember this, I think only because I've heard the story. You know how you put, you put visual memories with things you've heard. But supposedly the first fish I caught was a blue gill about like this and I wanted it mounted and threw a fit when, when dad wouldn't keep it and have it mounted. And I think the... I think the point was that at five years old I knew what mounted fish were.

James Thull [00:00:53] Sure. And this was, where was this at?

John Gierach [00:00:57] Gosh this would have been in... I'll bet you this would have been in Wisconsin.

James Thull [00:01:03] Oh, really?

John Gierach [00:01:04] Because we'd go up there for family vacations.

James Thull [00:01:07] Oh okay, what part of Wisconsin?

John Gierach [00:01:09] Oh God, I don't remember.

James Thull [00:01:11] All right.

John Gierach [00:01:12] I mean I was five.

James Thull [00:01:13] Sure, yeah yeah yeah yeah.

John Gierach [00:01:15] That's my first fish.

James Thull [00:01:16] Where'd you grow up then, John?

John Gierach [00:01:17] I grew up in um, I was born in a little town called Glenwood, Illinois. Dad worked for Sears, and then we moved from, I was, I lived there till I was uh, must've been about six, and then we moved to Minnesota, which was great, y'know. Grew up in Minnesota. And then for my last two years in high school we went to Ohio, near Cleveland. It sucked, after Minnesota.

John Gierach [00:01:54] Well that's a big question. It seems to me the, the, the question with museums and libraries is what's worth saving because you can't save everything. Especially now. So I think you, I think you try to put together just a good picture of things as they are, so in 50 or 100 years people can come back and look at it, right?

James Thull [00:02:22] Mhmm.

John Gierach [00:02:25] And um, and that's important because we need to, we need to look back and see what we've done wrong, so we don't repeat the mistakes as we're doing right as we speak. We're making all the same mistakes again. And at least in something like fisheries science you've got people who are smart enough to go back and say "well let's look at earlier stocking efforts or let's look at earlier reintroduction efforts and see what's going wrong and what went right" or whatever. So that's I think that's the main

value. At least on the scientific end and on the, on the literature end... I don't know, literature and science both tend to sort of circle back on themselves constantly. I'm trying to read Thoreau, *The Maine Woods*, right now.

James Thull [00:03:24] Okay.

John Gierach [00:03:25] Because I just came back from the west branch of the Penobscot up in Maine, where he was, you know like 150 years ago. And just in terms of, of, from a writer standpoint it's really interesting to look at it, look at how it was 150 years ago. Not as wild as you'd like to think, actually. I mean there were towns in logging and boat builders and all that stuff going on, and it was pretty wild country then, but uh, yeah I mean went up to Bangor in a buggy for Pete's sake, so it wasn't exactly howling wilderness.

James Thull [00:04:13] Yeah.

John Gierach [00:04:18] Yeah that would be my father and my uncle, Leonard. And interestingly, they were about as different as you can get. Dad was, was white collar, um, worked his way up from the from the loading dock but was white collared by then. *coughs*, excuse me. And was sort of the gentlemen's sportsman type, didn't like um, didn't like bait, preferred lures over bait because he said, you know, you didn't- you're not really fooling a fish with bait, it really is a worm. But with a lure you have to fool the fish. And he had all kinds of ideas like that and my uncle Leonard was a pure subsistence guy who was a farmer. And it was just, get the fish, any way you could. The joke about Leonard was the only reason he didn't use dynamite was that it was too loud. But he was not above anything and he didn't care about tackle, he had the rattiest tackle and his lines were always breaking because he wouldn't replace his lines. So those were my two malg(@#*.

James Thull [00:05:38] Sure. Were there any lessons or any pieces of wisdom that you walked away with from them that you'd like to share?

John Gierach [00:05:48] Well just, just that idea of my dad's that, the idea is you're sort of matching wits with the fish, you're not... The problem with bait, the sort of philosophical problem with bait is you're not fooling them. You know, you're just getting fish, but if you're fishing lures, he wasn't a fly fishing. But if you're fishing lures, then you're fooling the fish into thinking a hula popper is really a frog or whatever it is. And I think that's, that's probably what attracted me to fly fishing, much later on.

John Gierach [00:06:35] Well my favorite tends to be whatever I'm doing at the moment. I really, I really like spay rods.

James Thull [00:06:43] Yeah.

John Gierach [00:06:43] I really like swinging spay rods for trout and salmon. But, I guess the bread and butter is dry flies in small streams where, 14 or 15 inch trout is a really nice fish and where, you know, I don't see anybody else all day. Not super challenging but just quiet and peaceful and lonely. That's, that's what I like, that's what I really like and luckily I still do it. Well it gets harder. Gets harder and harder. There were- when I moved to Colorado in the 60s, I think there were about two million people here and now there are five million.

James Thull [00:07:35] Yeah.

John Gierach [00:07:35] And all those 3 million new people are fly fisherman as far as I can see.

James Thull [00:07:44] Yeah, no I it's- it's one of my issues has always been with fishing like in Yellowstone, 'cuz we're real close to there. I mean there's another guy in the water every 50 feet, you know.

John Gierach [00:07:53] Exactly.

James Thull [00:07:54] And uh, we can go out on the West Boulder not see a guy all day, which is wonderful, you know.

John Gierach [00:07:57] That could be what I like about the little creeks because it just- they just don't draw crowds. People want to go to the tail waters where they can catch a 20 inch fish.

James Thull [00:08:12] Sure.

John Gierach [00:08:13] And there are more people fishin' in the little creeks than there used to be. But um, and I'm respon- partly responsible for that. As someone pointed out, you know, I wax poetic on them. Dry flies and little creeks every chance I get, I've written a couple of books about it so I can't complain if uh, if there are more people doing it but...

James Thull [00:08:36] Kind of made your bed on it, so to speak.

John Gierach [00:08:38] Yeah. Yeah and I mean, you know, I can't, I can't really complain about the 3 million new people because I'm one of them.

James Thull [00:08:45] Sure, yeah. Now, when I was growing up fishing creeks like that in Wisconsin for brookies, some of the best memories I have- and the fishing was great, but it was also coming up on a, a newborn fawn that was so young that it would still drop. Do you have any stories like that from walkin' the creeks that you'd like to share?

John Gierach [00:09:05] You know, I can't think of anything offhand and I've ended up doing it for almost 40 years and it's, it all runs together over time. I mean I've seen some great stuff, but I just- I mean if I stop and think about it I have these pictures of coming around abandoned- I haven't taken my eyes off the water for 45 minutes because I'm fishin' and I come around a bend and I notice things are lighter and I look up and, you know, there's the snow-capped, 14,000 foot peak up there and I haven't seen another person in the last three hours and... You know all that and fields of wildflowers and I carried a- I carried a wildflye- flower book for- in my backpack for years and never quite could bring myself to look at it. I decided I was going to learn the wildflowers. Now, I learned the mushrooms because I can eat 'em. But the wildflowers, I just look at them and then... I know hand- you know, I know columbine and Indian paint brush and a few others but...

John Gierach [00:10:23] I think there was a time... I think there was a time when, you know, Lee Wulff kind of introduced the idea of catch and release. Trout is too valuable to be caught only once and, I think in those days there was, I think now there are some good conservation efforts going and a lot of them are, are either led by or backed by fly

fisherman but in general I see, I see this sort of macho, competitive, who can catch the biggest and most fish kind of thing, and I think people understand in general that that's not the foregone conclusion that it once was. But I don't I actually don't see the sort of deep environmental consciousness among, kind of, at least the, the younger bunch that's coming up now. I see it more as- I don't, I don't know how they see it, but it seems more- it seems faster and more competitive and a lot of fist pumping and hooting and...

John Gierach [00:11:41] Well I like cutthroats because, you know, we all live out here in the West and that's our native fish and uh... I don't, I don't mind as much as some that some of the native fish are reintroduced. That's OK with me, they're back where they belong. I would just step on the Snake River in August, catching Snake River cutthroats and, you know, something about catching a native fish in the river it was named for, that's just hard to beat.

James Thull [00:12:16] Mhmm.

John Gierach [00:12:17] But I like, I like native fish wherever they are, I go to Labrador a lot and catch brook trout, because they're Native there. You know, I like Atlantic salmon, steelhead for the same reason. I just, there's something about the fish that evolved where you're catching it.

John Gierach [00:12:49] Gary La Fontaine was, was an interesting guy to fish with because he was a really good fisherman. He really knew a lot of stuff. He was really, really deeply invested in coming up with new patterns and coming up with new ideas, even to the point where some of his ideas were a little bit of a stretch at times. But he just loved being out there and if he didn't catch fish, if he couldn't catch fish, he thought it was just a delightfully interesting problem and that- that always impressed me about him. He just thought, "well isn't that interesting?" "Well I wonder what that means" and he was ju- it was almost like a scientist whose theory has been proven wrong, and he goes "wow, I can get another grant off of this!" Yeah, I miss him, I miss him. It was, it was sad that he died, but... And Mike Lawson was- is a great, a great fisherman, I fished with him a few times and he's, he's another one of those- he's just a big bear of a guy and he's really easygoing. I remember years and years ago, and must have been in the 70s, a kid came in to Mike Lawson's shop on the Henry's Fork and he killed like a 25 inch rainbow, which is- which was legal at the time, I don't know what the regs are now, but at the time you could kill of one fish over something and there was like a trophy, a trophy regulation. And a kid, I mean, like 14 or 15, with his dad and he killed this big beautiful fish and came in the shop and people were giving him shit about killing the fish. And Mike was back in his office listenin' to this and, you know Mike, right?

James Thull [00:14:57] Mhmm.

John Gierach [00:14:58] Big, slow talking guy. And he finally walked out slowly and he said, "well if I'da caught that fish, I'da killed it." Turned around, went back in his office.

James Thull [00:15:13] That's a great story.

John Gierach [00:15:16] Lefty, talkin' about Lefty, he uh, he and Mike were talking about slide shows. Mike was just startin' at the time, just startin' to go around doin' a slide show and he said, he asked Lefty, he said "how many slides should there be in a slide show?" And lefty said "slow as you talk, about four."

John Gierach [00:15:47] Well I always think... I always liked the most recent one, because I think I should. Every once in a while I'll be doing a signing or something and someone will come up and say "Trout Bum is still my favorite book of yours" and God knows, I mean that thing's been in print for almost 30 years and I'm happy to hear it, but no writer wants to hear that his- he did his best work 30 years ago, right.

James Thull [00:16:21] Sure.

John Gierach [00:16:22] And I don't... I want to say I don't, I should say I try not to publish anything that isn't my best effort and I still feel like I'm getting better. I still feel like my masterpiece is in front of me somewhere. So it tends- it just always tends to be the last book and maybe it's just because the effort is fresher.

James Thull [00:16:50] Sure.

John Gierach [00:16:53] I do remember liking, uh, enjoying writing *At the Grave of the Unknown Fisherman* because it was a continuous book. And that was, that was fun. And I, and I remember some, some writings and books that were- where the writing itself was just agony. But that's just writing.

James Thull [00:17:20] Sure.

John Gierach [00:17:21] I mean it's, it's, it's wonderful when it's going well and there's nothing worse when it's going poorly and writer's block is inexplicable. My, my cure for writer's block, I live with Susan McCann who's also a writer, a journalist. I've been wit- you know newspaper, newspaper writer. And I'll say to her- well, she'll say "How's it going?" I'll say, "well, I've got writer's block" and she'll say, "just, you know, just do the work, just quit whining and do the work" and that's, that's tremendously helpful because usually you've just, you've just gone down some rathole of your own making.

James Thull [00:18:08] Mhmm

John Gierach [00:18:09] And, you know, it's, it's nonfiction, I mean you can also always- if you- if you can't think of anything else you can always refer back to the facts, right?

James Thull [00:18:19] Sure, yeah.

John Gierach [00:18:20] And just what happened next.

James Thull [00:18:23] Yeah.

John Gierach [00:18:24] So...

James Thull [00:18:25] One of the- the advice I've heard, I don't remember where I read it, was uh, yeah, basically just that. Simply start writing, you know, just start the- and the very motion of it will often carry you through.

John Gierach [00:18:36] It's true, it's true, and I have this tendency- kind of anal retentive and I have this tendency where I don't like to type a sentence until I know how it's going to end and I thought maybe computers would cure me of that. When you write on a typewriter there's real value to that, because if you can- if you can write a clean first draft, I wrote a newspaper column for 28 years and, and probably the first half of that was on a typewriter.

If you can write an 800 word, clean first draft you don't have to retype it before you submit it.

James Thull [00:19:17] That's a huge advantage.

John Gierach [00:19:18] And it's a huge advantage and- but, but suddenly with computers, I mean, you can move paragraphs around and change this and change that and run through the spell checker. You know it's great, but I never got over that, "I'm not gonna start this sentence until I know what it says".

James Thull [00:19:40] And I think some of those tools are wonderful. I think spellcheck is one of those things that, that can hurt us in the long run because it makes us lazy, you know.

John Gierach [00:19:49] It does, it may- I don't know if you noticed but there is a dictionary open on my desk and I really try to use the dictionary.

James Thull [00:19:56] Uh huh.

John Gierach [00:19:57] Because spell checker will just tell you it's wrong, but it won't tell you it's the wrong word.

James Thull [00:20:03] Yeah that is correct. Yeah, and I've been caught on that one before too.

John Gierach [00:20:07] John McPhee is a- he's, he's written some great things about choosing the right word. He said, he said "go to a thesaurus if you want to" but he said "don't choose some 2 dollar 50 cent word" and he said "don't- never choose a word you don't- you're not familiar with". And he said it's much better to go and go to the dictionary, look up the definition of the word, and he said that's where you find "that wasn't exactly what I meant to say". And so you start looking up the words that are used to define the word you used and he said pretty soon you'll find, "yeah that's what I meant to say".

James Thull [00:20:57] Sure.

John Gierach [00:20:58] And nine times out of ten it's a it's- the word itself is common as dirt. It just wasn't quite the right word.

John Gierach [00:21:13] Yeah. Yeah, because it's made me curious about things that I might not have tried. I might, I mean you know, you might not try a new fly pattern because the Adams is working for you. But when you're always kind of sniffing around for what's new, what's different then... and it makes me- the other thing it does is it makes me go places I wouldn't go. If I, if I weren't a fishing writer I would probably fish, you know, two dozen places within driving distance of home. But since I'm a writer and since I can write off the expense of travel, then all of a sudden Alaska, Canada, you know wherever different species of fish. I would never, if I weren't a writer I would never have gone to southeastern Kansas to try and catch longnose gar on the fly rod. What I heard about it and I thought "there's a story".

James Thull [00:22:28] Yeah, yeah that sounds like something.

John Gierach [00:22:31] Yeah and I know a guy outside of Wichita I can stay with and I can drive there and you know it's cheap. So it makes me do things like that and I probably never would have started fishing with a spay rod if I weren't a writer because you know the nearest steelhead is a long way from the Rocky Mountains, but, but it was something I could get curious about and go try. I actually came at that backwards because I got interested in spay rods, because I watch people do it and I go "wow that's pretty". Same thing with fly fishing, I mean it wasn't trout that got me into fly fishing, it was watching people cast and going "that looks pretty". And so I got a fly rod, I got a spare rod, I figured out kind of how to cast it and it was like "OK what are you going to do with this thing". Better go out to Oregon and try to catch a steelhead. So yeah, and if I was, if I was a rich fisherman, independently wealthy fisherman I would have done all that. But as a, as a working stiff I probably wouldn't have.

John Gierach [00:23:52] The book. With the exception of um, with the exception of the few sort of... oh, the monographs I've written about fly, fly patterns and bamb rods and stuff. Then, you know, you just think "well I'll call it Fishing Bamboo". But that's more of a label than a title. With any luck, the title grows out of the book. Every once in a while, I mean Trout Bum. People think I invented the term trout bum but it was like a found object. It was a beach bum, ski bum, trout bum, it was there, I just picked it up and used it. But I used it in book and I thought "Okay that'll work, that's a good title". And at the time, I mean that was at the mid 80s. That was pretty um, that was pretty self consciously hip sort of thing to say. It's common now, you know when you have flies called the sex dungeon and the pink no-ass. But, but back then, to call yourself a trout bum was you know it was kind of "yeah, check me out". Sex, Death and Fly Fishing came right out of the... right out of the text. But then other, other... Another Lousy Day in Paradise came out of the story except it was Another Shitty Day in Paradise and Simon and Schuster said "you can say whatever you want between covers but on the cover, no swearing". Okay ma. Actually, the most recent one, All Fishermen Are Liars; There was some guy, I don't even know who this is, but my editor said "well we had a guy in one of the corner offices who decided..." There was a, there was a survey went around recently. "Recently", a couple of years ago that said people google books more by subject than by title or by author in general. Somebody had worked this out and so this guy in his corner office had decreed that all nonfiction books have their subject in the title, right.

James Thull [00:26:46] Mokay.

John Gierach [00:26:47] And so that was my limitation. Had to say fishing, fly fishing, trout fishing, something like that in the title. And none of my ideas did that so... and I just, I always take, you know, I always chafe at that, I always chafe at anybody telling me what to do. But um still, I'm still 17 years old in that regard. But at the same time it's like, you know, some of the great religious art was done at a time when the church handed down all these rules. If Jesus is in the picture his head has to be higher and everybody else. Okay. But you know, like El Greco did some great stuff. And so I, you know, we finally came up with it wou- I finally came up with All Fishermen Are Liars from the old "all fishermen are liars except you and me and sometimes I wonder about you" which I could not find attribution for anywhere, it's anonymous. So that's how that happened. It's not my favorite title, but it sort of fits. I don't know, once you write Trout Bum and then you write The View from Rat Lake and then you write Sex, Death and Fly Fishing then you're kind of stuck.

James Thull [00:28:25] Yeah.

John Gierach [00:28:26] Right? I mean, you got a brand now to live up to. So you know Bob Dylan is not going to play classical music.

John Gierach [00:28:44] I think Sex Death and Fly Fishing was a great title. It was a great found object title that just fell out of the minute I wrote it, I thought "well there you go". Yeah there's the title. And my, my agent at the time when I, when I was working on my next book he said, "So how are you going to come up with a title as good as Sex Death and Fly Fishing" and I said "I don't know" and he said "well, try".

James Thull [00:29:15] I will say when I give tours of our collection, which I often do, that is one of the books that people often point to or look to pull off of the shelf just solely based on the title I'd argue, but you know that's great.

John Gierach [00:29:26] It's also, it's also my best selling book.

James Thull [00:29:29] Oh, ok.

John Gierach [00:29:30] And I, I swear.

James Thull [00:29:32] I would not have guessed that.

John Gierach [00:29:34] Yeah I wouldn't have guessed it either except I think a lot of people just see that and go, "I've gotta get that for dad".

James Thull [00:29:41] Mhmm.

John Gierach [00:29:51] I've really always been, really always been curious about the Atlantic Salmon fishing in Russia. But, I don't wanna like go to Russia, you know what I mean. I, I like travel less and less. I still love the places I end up, I love being there but travel used to be a lot more fun than it is now. Now you present yourself as a suspect and you get searched and photographed and x-rayed and you know if you leave the country now you're going to get your temperature taken when you come back, Jesus. And I you know I won't say it isn't necessary but it sure is annoying and demeaning. And so I just thought of, you know, its days and days to get to Russia and it's hugely expensive. And you know I fish on my own dime plenty but big trips like that I ca- I have to get comped somehow. Because I just can't, you know I can't spend eight thousand dollars on a trip and sell a story for two thousand. You know what I mean. I can't even make that up in volume right. So- and nobody's gonna- the places that have the best fishing in the world are not gonna, and they don't need to comp me. They had a waiting list.

James Thull [00:31:30] Sure.

John Gierach [00:31:31] They don't need, they don't need to comp me for coverage. So the chances of me actually doing that are kind of slim. In terms of going back to places um, I'm actually beginning to think the opposite. I'm beginning to think in terms of going. I, I've, I've gone back to a lot of places, I'm thinking of the Elk River drainage of British Columbia, I'm think of at least parts of Labrador. Where... There's always that trip where you think, you know, this isn't as good as it used to be. And I got, I already got the best out of this and I don't want to be part of beating it to death. It's going to get beat to death and in some cases I had something to do with that because you know we'll say "hey this is the best brook trout fishing in the world". I can't be surprised when people came. But I'm, I'm beginning to think there's a moment where you, you pull the plug on stuff like that. And I'm

also I've also gotten more sensitive about about naming stuff and only talking about how good it is and not talking about how, well- look it's really good but you're not going to catch a lot of fish because it's hard and let me, let me catalog the biting insects you're going to encounter. And when we talk about what it's going to cost you just to get there and sort of drawing a little more realistic picture instead of just saying "this is a great place you should go fish there".

James Thull [00:33:35] Yeah.

John Gierach [00:33:36] Well if you're willing to go through all these steps and then accept that you aren't going to catch 60 fish a day like you will in a silver salmon run in Alaska and then you should go.

James Thull [00:33:52] Sure. I think it was not to, not to bring up [unintelligible] but I think it was Tom McGuane that we were talking to that talked about fish in Russia, fishing in Russia like that that was just spectacular.

John Gierach [00:34:05] He has fished in Russia, yes that's where I first heard about it was from Tom. And yeah he said it's the best salmon fishing in the world. It couldn't possibly, there couldn't possibly be any place better, there could be some places good.

James Thull [00:34:24] Yeah that sounds like an amazing trip so-.

John Gierach [00:34:27] Well I mean Tom, Tom has written movies and he can, he can go to Russia.

James Thull [00:34:30] Yeah yeah yeah yeah. So, so I guess I kind of related on that note but, but with a little bit of bias. You talked about one of the first places you caught a probably first place you caught a fish was Wisconsin.

John Gierach [00:34:44] Yeah I, I'm guess- I'm guessing that's where it was because we would go there for family vacations when I was a little kid.

James Thull [00:34:52] Have you been back there to fish at all over the years or is there a place you'd like to go.

John Gierach [00:34:56] Yeah no, I've been to Hayward a couple of times, Hayward, Wisconsin. And I like the, I like the four tor- four story tall musky.

James Thull [00:35:08] Oh yeah yeah yeah.

John Gierach [00:35:09] You drive around town and you see this giant musky head sticking up. I mean that's my kind of town. And yeah, yeah I've floated the, oh gosh the chippawa and the flambeau, you know on the spot I forget but I've fished a lot of those rivers up there with the guys at the Hayward fly shop and muskie and small mouth.

James Thull [00:35:39] Sure.

John Gierach [00:35:39] Never fished it for trout.

James Thull [00:35:41] Yeah.

John Gierach [00:35:42] Yeah, because I have, I have trout...

James Thull [00:35:44] Sure.

John Gierach [00:35:45] right out my front door so um...

James Thull [00:35:47] Probably best trout in Wisconsin is Brookies in my opinion. There's some good [unintelligible].

John Gierach [00:35:51] You know I'll take it back, I fished a hex hatch on the White River for trout.

James Thull [00:35:55] OK yeah. Yeah. Yeah, there's some good fishing opportunities but of course there's good beer and cheese as well so, you know.

John Gierach [00:36:05] Oh yeah, cheese, *pft*. Yeah actually I almost, I almost hit the wall on that trip because I would, I would fish, I would fish with these guides for small mouth all day and I come back and I'd have dinner and I'd meet these other two guys and go and fish all night for brown trout out on the White River, hex hatch. I did that for two nights running and, and I didn't sleep for 48 hours and I was a mess. If I remember right, I just, they said "Well tomorrow we're gonna-" and I said "you know what tomorrow I'm gonna- um, we'll go fishing when I get up". "I'll come down to the shop, I'll get you and then we'll go and I think we went [at] noon or something.

John Gierach [00:37:02] Well the history of it I suppose and just the same thing that makes it so special to people who drive out there from New Jersey and, and get in a- get in a traffic jam over a, over a mule deer you know nobody's ever seen anything like that. I've never seen anything like it. And it's it's big and it's gorgeous. And because of that it's now crowded and the fishing isn't as good as it used to be. But you can always- the great thing about the Rocky Mountains is you can always get off the beaten path. And I don't know if that will always be the case but it sort of always has been. I mean if you want to if you want to fish the Henry's Fork and everybody should, it's a great river. Fine, but, you know if, if you get tired of the crowd you can go find some little creeks and fish in Idaho especially, it's just hundreds of miles probably thousands of miles, I never bothered to count them up, of little trout streams and some of them are pretty good and people just don't... you know, you can pick one you never heard of. And anymore you can get you know every, every region has a good guidebook. And you know the thing if the stream flows into a river you have heard of and doesn't have a dam on it somewhere its probably full of trout. Even if it does have a dam on it. It's probably in stock. So you can always do that. But you know I started going to up on the Elk River gosh, 30 years ago because Montana, Yellowstone area had gotten too crowded and you go up around Fernie, British Columbia and it was like Montana used to be. And then Fernie turned into one of the 10 hot new places to go. It got all gentrified and fishermen flocked there and so then you have to go somewhere else and I never did write about that. I was very careful because by then I understood what was going on. You know, I mean I- there's- you have some responsibility. My friend Ed Angle says he won't write about any stream he can roll cast across and he says "I can roll cast a hell of a long way".

James Thull [00:40:02] That's a good story.

John Gierach [00:40:04] So you, I- you hav- you just have to think about that stuff and everybody who does this has made that mistake and it isn't like it's all our fault. People are

going to find out about it in-. I had a guide, [guide's name], who first time we went over there he said "don't, don't write about this". You don't write about it by name. And we said OK. I wrote a story and then, god it wasn't a year later he said you know what, he came out on his website and said "You know that story Gierach wrote, that was here". "I'm the guide, why don't you come up". So I mean you can't... the only way you can totally avoid the dilemma is just quit fishing.

James Thull [00:40:56] Yeah.

John Gierach [00:40:57] Or don't write at all. Just go and fish and don't write. But I can't afford to do that and most of the people I know can't.

James Thull [00:41:07] Yeah. Now I, well I know like, for instance, Carmen McLain had some, had some concerns about, about A River Runs Through It, Robert Redford, one of the first things I did when he, when he screened it in Montana was apologize and- but yet it was it was a boon for a lot of the guide shops, you know, I know, I know I have friends in [place] said after the movie came out that the students at their school just increased for about the next decade pretty considerably. So I mean, I think there's always give and take on that, you know, and good and bad that comes out of it.

[00:41:41] Well the good part, part of the good part is all these guides are making some money. And so yeah I don't know it's- but that's back to an earlier question and that's what's happening with fly fishing. That's why I'm not, you know, I'm hard pressed to find advantages. You know, what's better than it used to be, well not much.

James Thull [00:42:10] I mean do you think where, like for instance in Montana where we've started- well I guess quite a while now. We won't stock on top of native populations. Do you see things like that as an advantage.

John Gierach [00:42:24] I think it's a great idea. I mean yeah, I think there, there are some good things happening here and there. But overall the fisheries, you know, the number of good fisheries are declining because they're too crowded.

James Thull [00:42:40] Sure.

John Gierach [00:42:42] And, you know I see it here, I've fished here for 40 years. You just watch this stuff. I mean it's still good it's still good it's still worth, it's still worth people coming out here and fish. But you know it's not like it was. And only part of that is nostalgia. I mean you always inflate things.

James Thull [00:43:02] Sure.

John Gierach [00:43:03] In your mind these things were always better in the old days. But even allowing for that it's just not quite as good as it used to be. And I don't know why, I could say there's a, you know there's always a little element of sadness when you, when you go fishing now. You just think this isn't, this isn't always- you know when I was 20 I thought this will always be here. Now pushing 70 I think this probably won't always be here.