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Nelson Ishiyama [00:00:11] Yeah I've been a fisherman for about oh 60 years, fly fisherman. And the thing I like about it the thing that involves me is there are so many aspects of it. There's not only the fishing but casting, the fly tying, the books, the history, the entomology, the fantastic places that it takes you. So all those things combined to make it a sport that's much more interesting to me than I don't know bowling or something like that. It's just so comprehensive. That it's.

Nelson Ishiyama [00:00:50] That It's just all engrossing and for me. That's the really interesting part and it involves not only doing stuff but thinking about it and reading about it and learning about it so it can occupy your entire life if you let it. And so the nice thing is you can sort of take as much of it as you choose. In my case I've taken it on pretty whole hog in the last 25 years. So as to a story, I guess I could just tell you how I got started doing this and that was when I was maybe eight or 10 years old my dad had a friend who was a really avid fly fisherman dentist and he was sort of my godfather and so for Christmas every year he'd send me a subscription to Field and Stream. So I started reading about it and reading some of the old writers like Al McClane and Ted True Blood and others. And then when fly fisherman magazine came into being he switched me over to fly fisherman magazine and that really got me interested but just the Field and Stream articles that I've read it got me really interested in trying this fly fishing thing and because Ted True Blood was a western writer as opposed to most of the other writers who were from the east like Al McClane, I really he became one of my my favorites and so I learned how to fly fish basically from magazines. And my dad had a fly rod that he was given but never used. And I dug it out of the basement and learned how to cast in the back yard sort of on my own and reading the.

Nelson Ishiyama [00:02:31] Few articles on casting in the magazine. And then. A bit later on quite a bit later on I joined this club the Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club where all the world's great casters hung out. And so that got me a lot farther along in casting when I got some real instruction instead trying to do it in the backyard on my own. So yeah I was an avid fisherman even before I started fly fishing. I used to around here there aren't a lot of places to fish close by but my mom used to take me to this lake on the backside of the Stanford campus up in the hills. And what she didn't know when she dropped me off in the morning was there was a men's fishing club there and I was sneaking in and they kicked me out so many times that eventually they invited me to join and so I was the only kid member of this men's Fishing Club. I was about 12 maybe. So that gave me a place to try out just fly rods that, fly rod that I had. Absolutely. I mean that's that's the thing. It's a very active thing it's not a passive sit on the bank and you know throw out a bait and sit there and wait. It's something that you you're trying to make it happen. And as a consequence you were trying to learn about how to make it happen. Learned about the bugs and the flies and everything casting. You can never never never master even one aspect of it no matter how avid you are and how long you're at it. I've read so many it's hard to pick them all out. But I like Ernie Schwiebert because he goes all over the world. It's a bit of an exaggerator. But the stories and the writing and some of the drawings are really compelling. Tom McGaune is one of my very favorites just because he's a fantastic writer and a friend of mine. Who else? Long ago I read Ted True Blood because he was a Western guy. He didn't seem... He was a regular guy. He was not going to exotic fancy places but he fished in places in ways that I thought I could do as well in California. He was from Idaho. And so he was one of my very favorites. Got to shake his hand one time and that was a great thrill for a little kid. Who else? Well those are the those are probably some of the main ones. Lots I'd say. Lots has changed. I mean it's gone through a surge I

think when you know the river A River Runs Through It came out and then now I think it's kind of slowing down not kind of it's definitely slowing down. There are fewer I think fewer younger people coming into the into the sport and some of the people who are my age and older are aging out of the fishing fly fishing population so that's been a change. Obviously climate change is having an effect and it's going to have a greater effect in my opinion. And so that's that's another change. I think that the equipment industry has changed, it's a lot more than it used to be. Well still is a small industry but it is a very very small cottage industry and now bigger firms have come into the business. It's become more professionalized sort of business. I'm in the lodging business the fishing lodge business and that's I think changed quite a bit. It used to be that most fishing lodges were pretty I don't want to say basic, but they were more down home. Now there are a lot more high end lodges, a lot more high service and high facility high quality facilities. I think also the world of fly fishing has changed. It used to be most people fish for trout and bass and salmon and now they're going for bonefish and Tarpon and milkfish and permit, trevally and all over the world. So there are a lot more choices of places to go. So for somebody like me who has a fishing lodge it used to be that people would come pretty much the same time every year. The same people would come the third week of June or whatever. Year after year after year but now they've got many many more choices and they may choose to go to saltwater fishing one year. Trout fishing one year. Some exotic jungle fishing another year. So I've noticed that although we have a really steady repeat business that people will come back every two or three years maybe instead of coming back customarily every single year at the same time. So that's that's been a change. Obviously tackle's changed a lot in that it's a lot more sophisticated than it used to be because when I started it was the time when fiberglass was taking over from bamboo and it wasn't long after that 20 years or less the graphite basically took over from from bamboo. And so that's been a huge change. I think probably another change is that the demographics have changed somewhat. Maybe there are. It's not just the sport of the sort of well-to-do well educated population anymore. I think it's that's a good thing. It's become a bit more democratic including this club. What used to be you know which is a very democratic club it has retired you know plumbers and bakers and as well as lawyers and doctors and other professionals. That's been a good thing. It wasn't that way when I first joined a long long time ago 40 50 years ago. I'm sure there've been a lot more changes as well. Some for the good some for the not so good. Obviously fishing pressure has increased, the number of fishable rivers have decreased because of development. So that's been one of the downsides of downsize sides of it all. So yeah I think it's increasingly necessary for us to protect what we have left and so I think people need to be conscious of that.

Nelson Ishiyama [00:09:46] In my opinion absolutely because otherwise you're just basically a taker. And I think almost all lodge owners feel the same way if for no other reason than to protect the resource that they're exploiting to begin with. But as an example, my lodge where members of a group called the Seafood Choices Alliance which is a group that tries to encourage chefs and restaurants to only serve sustainable fish. And so for example farmed Atlantic salmon are not acceptable in that. You know in that group, among that group of restaurants and chefs. And so it seems to me that we who preach catch and release in the rivers or streams and lakes that we fish would be hypocritical if then we serve fish that were otherwise you know important ecologically or even economically to other people. So. I've tried to encourage other lodge owners who I sometimes talk with to, you know, not join this group at least pay attention to what kind of fish they're serving so they're not unknowingly harming somebody else's backyard while protecting their own. So yeah I think it's extremely important. And I'm also a supporter of groups like Trout Unlimited and the Nature Conservancy and our local land trust and Henry's Fork Foundation which is our watershed protective organization in Idaho where my

lodge is and others because I think without that we're really going to lose a lot of what we are what we have left. So yeah I'd made some efforts also to protect the the landscape around the Henrys Fork to try and protect it from unwise and large scale development because it's where the lodge is, that's why people come because some of the nice environment also just happens to be right next to Yellowstone Park where all the animals migrate out in the winter in a subdivision would keep the elk from migrating out freely through through our area of Yellowstone Park which they have to do every winter. So yeah I think in general we, in the tackle and lodging fishing lodging industry need to be not and we need to do our part to protect what we have.

Nelson Ishiyama [00:12:36] Yeah. I started Henry's Fork Lodge in 1991 so about 27 years ago. The Henrys Fork had always been renowned as one of the great rivers of the world. But there hadn't been any decent places to stay or to eat and so there is a bit of a vacuum there and I was kind of looking around for something to do. I had been a lawyer for quite a number of years and I was looking for something new to do and I was hoping it would be in the fishing world. And but somebody told me that this lot was available on the Henrys Fork and when I went up and looked at it it was obviously a fantastic site for a fishing lodge. So without any previous plans to have a fishing lodge I decided it would be a good idea to try and build one. It actually wasn't a good idea, turned out to be a successful one but it was kind of a stupid idea in the beginning without any experience in doing something like that to just leap in. But I had been at the Henrys Fork for maybe twenty five years before that so I kind of knew my way around. So I built this lodge that was that is high end high service lodge that I tried to make as high quality as possible because at that time there were a few really nice lodges but for the most part the fishing world lagged behind golf courses and tennis clubs and ski resorts in terms of the amenities and the service and the food and all of that. There were more down home shall we say. And so I decided that some of the people who fly fish really wanted a high quality place. And so that's what I decided to build and since then I think many others have done the same thing and now there are lots of high end lodges all over the world. So. Anyway we're on the Henrys Fork, we fish the Henrys Fork fished all the rivers in Yellowstone Park. The Madison in Montana, the South Fork of the Snake in Idaho so we're in a place where they're pretty much great fishing waters in all directions. They basically 360 degrees around.

Nelson Ishiyama [00:15:16] Yeah I think Yellowstone Park is kind of an interesting mixed bag. I mean it's more of a sanctuary for wildlife, I would say, other than fish. Because even though the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says it has its mission to protect native fish, most of the fish that we all love in Yellowstone Park are non-native. There are rainbows and browns and I think there is a strong sentiment among anglers that they wouldn't like to see those non Natives removed in favor of the natives which were the the cutthroats and whitefish and some Grayling. So it is a real mixed bag. Obviously the Yellowstone River itself is a stronghold for the native fish but the places like the Madison, Firehole, the Gibbon, the Gallatin and some of the famous rivers are really famous now for rainbows and browns. So yeah it's important as a stronghold for the cutthroat in certain parts of the park, but in other parts you know it's it's not that and I don't think it's very likely that that's going to change.

Nelson Ishiyama [00:16:38] Yeah that's. Probably true if they can be re-established. I think that was true in places like I think Slough Creek and Soda Butte Creek where they've tried to... I guess it was at Soda Butte where they were trying to re-establish the grayling and the cutthroat and get rid of the Brookies and in certain other places. So where it's possible, which is a big if, I think that's a great idea. But in other ways the tradition is so

strong for fishing in places like a Firehole if they poison it out and tried to put back in whatever was there before, I'm not sure that would be a very popular move.

Nelson Ishiyama [00:17:33] Well I guess one of the things if they're around here they should join the Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club because there's free everything, casting lessons, fly tying lessons and so forth and people I think need to get into a group of some kind. Whether it's this club or another local fishing Club, that's probably the best way. And then so much information is available now on the Internet. You can learn a lot without even leaving home to tell you the truth. But I think the best thing you could do is join a club and get out and actually do it. Cast, fish, tie flies, and and and get to know a group of people who can help you out. So yeah I think that pretty simple advice. But.

Nelson Ishiyama [00:18:31] Oh a fishing partner? Somebody is very adaptable and who doesn't have to catch the most fish or out fish you or whoever with you. Somebody who's knowledgeable about what they're what they're doing and serious about it, at least that in my opinion I like to fish with people who are certainly there to have a good time but also sort of interested in learning and and and being good at what they're doing. So most of my fishing friends are people who are who are like that. Who are really into it I guess I would say and and but they need to be understanding that you know sometimes the weather doesn't cooperate or the fish don't cooperate and and can still have a good time just being out there fishing and trying anyway. And my best fishing friend is somebody who's just like that. He doesn't have to catch a lot of fish, he can go a long ways around the world and come back with three fish and still say he had a fabulous trip. And so those are people I tend to like its fishing partners because I go on a bunch of trips where we don't get a lot of fish and we still have a really great time.

Nelson Ishiyama [00:19:47] Of course yeah. Trout fishing is my main kind of interest but I sort of fished for everything and I do tend to like to go those places that are beautiful whether it's for trout or Bonefish or steelhead or whatever whatever. But yeah. And so most places I go to for trout fishing are beautiful and I tend not to go to places that are ugly even the fishing might be terrific. Although I have to say I've been to some places where the fishing was so good I could overlook the scenery a bit. But yeah I like to go to places where the fish are wild. I don't really like to fish for hatchery fish. And most of those places tend to be pretty beautiful places because they are unspoiled and capable of supporting you know self-sustaining populations of fish. Yeah I mean one of my favorite places next to the Yellowstone area is New Zealand and it's just spectacularly beautiful almost anywhere you go and the people are wonderful in addition. So yeah I spend a lot of places where beauty is a big part of it. In Alaska being wild and beautiful, British Columbia places like the.

Nelson Ishiyama [00:21:08] Well my favorite place of all time is the Henry's Fork.

James Thull [00:21:11] OK fair enough.

Nelson Ishiyama [00:21:12] And it's not because my lodge is there it's actually quite the opposite. My lodge is there because it's my favorite place. And I think my second favorite would be New Zealand for sure. Both because of the fishing but also because the people are so fantastic.

James Thull [00:21:29] New Zealand's a little bit of an oddity because it's a manufactured fishery. Of course there's no native trout or salmon in New Zealand. But it's really become part of the culture.

Nelson Ishiyama [00:21:40] Absolutely. So there's no there really wasn't any competition for trout down there and so it didn't they didn't really displace anything, there weren't Grayling or cutthroat kind of populations there. So. Yes the trout thrived and yeah they might- I mean everything in New Zealand not everything but lots of things in New Zealand are non-native. All the mammals are non-native, there were never any deer or dogs or cats or rats mice or any of those things. So yeah in a way it's not native anymore. But. They've become naturalised and that's for sure. I think that first of all climate change is the overarching threat to everything. It's already had its effects on the snowpack and therefore the quantity of water we have. It has an effect on the temperature of the water during the summertime and other times. So that that's going to limit the range of waters that are suitable for trout habitat. That's already happening in my opinion. It's changed the weather pattern. So we have more forest fires than we used to have. I mean it's just a huge issue that is pretty tough to address just from a fishing point of view. It's got to be addressed obviously on a comp in a comprehensive way and that will have benefits for us fishermen and for the for the fish populations. But yeah I worry about that a lot because I own a fishing lodge that's dependent on fish populations, and you know with limited and more limited habitat it's going to be a smaller resource for maybe a growing population of people to fish for. So yeah I think that's the biggest problem of all. I think another, I guess I'd call it more of an economic problem. But there are going to be fewer with fewer young people entering the fishing population, there're going to be fewer advocates fewer sort of smaller constituency for doing whatever needs to be done to protect the resource whether it be neutralizing the effects of climate change or just you know. Protecting rivers from overdevelopment or exploitation. I think that's another thing that's going to affect rivers in a maybe indirect way. Just the smaller environmental environmentally conscious constituency. Yeah I think in the West in particular water is the biggest economic issue there is especially in states like Idaho Montana Wyoming the Rocky Mountain states as well but also California. And there's just going to be a shortage of water that's the quantity regardless of the quality of it. There's not enough of it. And there need to be some creative solutions to figure out how to allocate water in a more efficient way and in a way that's actually more favorable to the fish and fishing as well. And those changes are slow in coming cause some of the states where water is scarce are fairly conservative about making changes in the established economic system. That would be true in places like Utah Wyoming Idaho in particular. Yes. Yeah. I mean I think it's pretty clear particularly, yeah in the current political system. Political regime. That's absolutely true. Unfortunately. Yes. When I built the lodge in 1990/91, the architect and I studied the temperature patterns to decide whether we needed to put in air conditioning. It was pretty clear at that time that we did not. There were few 90 degree days that required air conditioning not enough to make it sensible to have to have it. But now it's obvious that we should have put in air conditioning if we had known the way that the climate was going to change. I think also the weather patterns have changed so that snow melts off earlier than it used to. I'm not sure about the quantity question but certainly the timing of the snow and the melting off has made a big difference. So sometimes the snow melts off earlier when the irrigators do not need the water. And so it just runs off. Whereas if it had remained in the snowpack longer and could be saved to a time closer to the irrigation season then there would be a different flow regime a different flow pattern that would be better for the fish and better for the irrigators at the same time. So yeah that the... Hydrology has has definitely changed since the climate has changed. As to the water temperature I have a feeling it's gone up a bit but I can't actually cite any you know studies that show that but I think even in the Henrys Fork which is spring fed, the water temperatures have changed a bit because the water heats up as the sun beats on it going down the river so I think it's a touch warmer than it used to be. At least the higher highs the highs are higher than they used to be. So yes definitely

had an effect but I think as rivers go, the Henrys Fork it is reasonably safe but I think it's also going to have its problems with climate change.

James Thull [00:28:20] That's the same thing in Montana with Gallatin. It closes earlier. You know limits on it earlier and earlier we get it determines it's yeah it's it's a pattern. And I just don't see how people don't realize it or just deny it. But anyway.

Nelson Ishiyama [00:28:39] Some things are more subtle.

Nelson Ishiyama [00:28:40] I notice the places where the hatches in the fall that only come out after the weather turns cooler and triggers these hatches come later. They used to come in mid-September and other coming in mid-October and places like the Missouri. And people wonder why is the hatch so late. But I think I've seen it in enough places where the temperature regime is changed and the hatches then come at different times. Although that's not necessarily a bad thing I suppose but it's definitely a change. Not exactly words of wisdom I would say, but I will say for my part. I've been lucky to be in the right place at the right time and there was I started did fly fishing in the 60s and then. Both by being here in San Francisco, I was fortunate to meet people who were really good at whatever it is that they did. People like Mel Krieger who is a great caster and casting instructor and Steve Rajeff who is a great caster and you know through fishing shows I met guys like Ernie Schwiebert who is good at all kinds of things and. I guess I would say the way that kind of thing helped me was by finding people who are genuinely really good at what they did or really innovative in what they were doing. I learned a lot and so if anybody really is serious about this, I would say that the best advice I'd give them is find the people who who are really good at whatever it is they do whether it be casting or fly tying or writing about fishing or whatever and find a way to get acquainted with them because most people in the fly the little fly fishing world are pretty accessible and not big headed mega celebrities or they shouldn't be in any way. And so get to know them and learn from them because that's the way I think to advance your own skill and knowledge and interest the fastest and best.