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John Judy [00:00:10] Let me tell you about a dream, and not a regular kind of dream. It's kind of one of the regular kind of previews I forget them. This is more of a spirit kind of dream. Taken to a place. And I was taken to a place and woke up in at Celilo. Which I don't know if you're familiar with what Celilo is. But Celilo is, was Native American fishery on the Columbia River. And around the Celilo village was a huge economy of the Native Americans in the northwest. And it was a trading center and a salmon fishing place. And in my dream I walk the path out to the fishing at Celilo. They had to walk several miles out across the rocks, the river when the fishing was out. There was a falls in and another place called The Long Narrows that was some kind of a slot in the rocks and then there were these bedrock ledges that would flood in the winter and then it would recede. In my dream I'm walking the path of generations of Native Americans who walked out over those rocks to places on the rocks and close to the river and in my dream I can feel the rumble of the river, the surge of that great huge river pouring down through that that slot. I can feel it and I can hear it. And the people that are there and it's so loud nobody can talk. Everyone talks in hand signals and the natives built fishing platforms out over the water. And you walk out onto these fishing platforms and they use dip nets and where the dip net goes is very very specific and you get it down there and you capture the salmon which was the lifeblood the food. It was the culture that it was a salmon culture. And when I am at Celilo I feel this great warmth and contentment. You know it's very much a fisherman's dream. And I feel this warmth and contentment in this connection way far back and as far into the future generations of fishermen that have walked on those rocks dip those nets in those places and caught those fish that are returning. And it's that spirit in that connection I get from that and that dream that is to me the essence of fishing.

John Judy [00:03:14] Well you know anglers, fly anglers in particular but anglers in general are thinkers and seers. They're the people who are out on the land. You know a hiker walking along the river doesn't see in the same way that the hunter gatherer sees. And so I think these are people that are learning and developing and understanding and creating a repository of knowledge for a group of people who are curious and learning and studying. That's just a fabulous concept. And so taking all that wisdom of time and placing it in one place is just a wonderful concept I really like being part of that.

John Judy [00:04:12] You know that's an interesting question. I've really had over the years have been very fortunate person and that I've I've had a lot of favorite spots over time. You know when I lived in Colorado when I lived in the Rockies I fished the Blue River a lot right around Kremmling. And that was a favorite spot. Then when I moved to the Pacific Northwest I moved in to Camp Sherman and lived on the Metolius. Of course and the Metolius has been a long love affair with me now almost 50 years of that. You know I've written two of my books are about the Metolius. It's a place where I really learned and grew with fishing. So it's very near and dear to my heart. But then I guided for twenty five years and that was all on the Deschutes. So the Deschutes and the Metolius is both interconnected. That was a place that was near and dear to my heart and recent environmental shifts on the Deschutes have kind of. Well that's another story and we'll talk about that a little bit more later. But I kind of don't want to go on the Deschutes right now. No I don't want to. I want it the way it was in my mind not the way it is becoming. And so my new love affair is the Columbia and the Columbia is the the queen of all these rivers in the northwest. She's the big one, the huge migration up the river. I had my first exposure to that this fall and and experiencing the salmon run in the Columbia and how big it really is. If you just don't get that vision and when you're on the smaller tributaries there's a certain number of salmon going up but all of the salmon that are going up all the tributaries go up

Columbia. It's a whole different animal. It's really really been interesting to get to know it. So that's my new love I'm going into an area, the Scappoose, the Willamette comes into the Columbia right there you can actually fish both. And that's my new favorite spot.

John Judy [00:06:56] I think two people really, and the first one is my dad who was a lifelong fisherman and unfortunately like many there was a period in the teenage years when I didn't fish with dad very much. And I didn't fish period. And it was later that I came back into it and fished with dad. So I really didn't have the opportunity to share all the knowledge with Dad. I really. He got me started. He created the interest, he created the passion but then I really went out and and learned elsewhere and I think of a guy named Danny Bifurt. And Danny was a wonderful fly tier and a knowledgeable fishing guy. And the first really top notch fisherman that I've met along the way. And I met him on the Blue River and I mentioned earlier in Kremmling Colorado. And Danny was an incredible caster, fisherman, fish catcher and he set the bar at a different place for me. He elevated my thinking of what was possible you know. Up until I met Danny it was kind of a lucky sort of thing. After I met Danny it felt like you could see it you could catch it. And so his elevation of the standard gave me a target to shoot for. And then as I went out and branched out on my own, I always had that elevated standard to shoot for. So I think my dad and Danny were the two that really really set me going.

John Judy [00:08:59] The best thing about being a guide is the opportunity to live on the river. And being a guide I think is really the only way that you can be there. The amount of time that my spirit wants to be on the water, you know and I think there is a learning in that. Like for example I think of the salmon fly hatch on the Deschutes and most people know that hatch as a slice in time and they don't really see the hatch from the bugs migrating to the bank and then crawling out and then the fish starting to key on them and then the upstream flights. They don't see all that, they'll see one part of the whole of the hatch. And so that opportunity to see the river day after day, to see its moods its changes its patterns to really become dialed into the water. That's one of the great parts of that. And as far as the native fish you know there really weren't a lot. I think how hard you work and the fact that you don't get to go to other places is probably the biggest downfall of it, you know. Somewhere along the line somebody is gonna write a book of guide stories everybody wants you to tell the bad clients stories. And I didn't have a lot of bad clients. You know I found them to be a really nice group of people when I found it to be my job to make them good clients. And I had a great really. There were one or two don't even need to tell those stories but for the most part it was it was a very positive great experience. I loved being a guide. I loved doing it.

John Judy [00:11:01] You know it's interesting, that goes both ways. Writing about a subject you have to understand the subject in greater detail in order to put it in language that people can understand, which makes you a better fisherman. But being a fisherman and being out there all the time makes you a writer. It gives you the subject matter you know so they they feed each other. One feeds the other and it's a it's kind of a recurring cycle that it just all helps to elevate the whole.

James Thull [00:11:43] Almost a symbiotic relationship.

John Judy [00:11:46] Absolutely.

James Thull [00:11:46] Very nice.

John Judy [00:11:53] You know it's interesting. That's kind of like my choices of river it's changed from where I was. When I was in in the Rockies I love the brown trout because you were so sneaky and tuck under the banks. And they were the harder ones to catch so I love their challenge. Then I moved to the northwest and moved into the territory of the rainbow you know like the Browns and the Rainbows are all stocked in the Rocky Mountains. In the Pacific Northwest, the Rainbows are native. And so as I started to fish for native fish in their native waters, I really turned on to the Rainbow. And then that of course led to the Steelhead which is really ocean going rainbow. And so the trout led to the Steelhead and then of course with the Metolius as the home river, the bull trout became a big deal. Because Metolius is kind of a center of bull trout knowledge and bull trout recovery. A lot of the current movement to recover the bull trout started with the recovery of bull trout on the Metolius. So there is a fish that nobody knows anything about and there's nothing, no literature no you know you don't hear anybody who's been a bull trout fisherman. And so the opportunity to research that and get to know that that was a wonderful part in my career as a fisherman. And now of course I've moved once again, I'm living in the Portland area and here it's all about the big rivers the Willamette the Columbia and the coastal stuff. And so I've switched once again and my new love is the Chinook salmon. And and so it's just changes with time and availability and what. And but I find the thing that I like most is the one that offers the challenge. And and so always seeking that new challenge and gaining and learning more that's all part of it. So I would guess the one my favorite one is the one that challenges me the most at that time.

John Judy [00:14:39] You know that's a difficult challenge and we have done many things that have already changed the balance. And I find that perhaps the best thing is to, after the balance has been disturbed is to allow it to find its own place. You know because nature really is all about change. Even in an undisturbed form nature is constantly changing. Evolution is occurring things move from one place to another. They come and they go. We've had more than our fair share of influence and we've been relatively thoughtless about how we've done that. But once the deal is done there's virtually no going back from it. I'm reminded of a woman who was pulling knapweed on the Deschutes one day down their mountainside just up the canyon wall for as far as you can see in this woman was pulling knapweed and just knapweed... Her effort was to go ahead pull it get rid of the knapweed but you're not getting rid of the knapweed. Knapweed is there. It's part of the landscape now. And that tends to be what happens and once something has naturalized, my feeling is that you can't go back. There isn't a good way to go back. So you just let it find its own balance.

James Thull [00:16:22] So would you. Would you. All right. I certainly I agree with you. I think a lot of those things once they're done they can't be undone. I would say in some respects there's things like the zebra mussel in the Great Lakes that cause invasive species that have caused a pretty significant amount of damage. Is that just something we just need as a society just to be more aware more conscious of what are... What are what we can do through through just carelessness something that we just need to be aware of? Because it seems like especially as the climate maybe changes a little bit there there's even more risk that in trout with with their facilities you know a couple of degrees difference can make a huge difference to that. Is that just something that we just have to be more conscious of a society as anglers not to transfer things from one body of water to the next?

John Judy [00:17:16] You know I think we have to make an effort to try to not do these things but there's so much, you know. In our mobile society work part of the planetary thing and I often look towards things as having a bigger a bigger scope more universal scope.

And and I think in a lot of ways the universe has plans and ways of doing things that we're sort of unaware of. And I think one tries to be as in harmony with the planet as you possibly can be. But I don't know that it's our job to go back and undo what has been done. I don't I don't even know if it's possible.

James Thull [00:18:18] When so much of that becomes. I mean the example I was used is potatoes in Ireland. They're not native to Ireland but they're certainly part of the Irish culture now. Tomatoes in Italy. You know I mean a lot of that stuff it gets so ingrained that there's no undoing it.

John Judy [00:18:33] Rainbow and brown trout in Montana.

James Thull [00:18:35] Yeah exactly. Yeah.

John Judy [00:18:44] You know I think the work is done on an individual basis and I think it's very hard to say that this organization outshines that organization. I think it's each of them have projects that are wonderful and some of them have projects that aren't as wonderful. I I really liked the wild salmon center and some of the work they do and their philosophy is one that I really like and they are trying to identify and preserve the best salmon habitat in the in the Pacific Rim. So they take a large view and they look for not that stuff which is in decay or in decline but that stuff which is as good as it possibly can be. And they work towards preserving that as a conservation of the genetic pool with the idea that maybe those genes will at some point be needed to go back to other places that aren't as well preserved. And I really like that concept in that it's so much cheaper and easier to preserve what is good than it is to go back and fix what's been broken.

James Thull [00:20:13] Makes sense.

John Judy [00:20:15] And as far as a concerned something to worry about. My concern is is kind of alarming and in that I'm worried about our own environmental organizations and our own attempts to protect what's going on. And I would cite as the first example of that fish and Departments of Fish and Wildlife everywhere are supposed to be the lead preservers of our natural resources. And in my experience Departments of Fish and Wildlife almost never do anything creative until they're really pushed and pressured to it. And so it's outside organizations that are pushing the ones who are supposed to lead. Some other examples of that. A number of years ago in Oregon we passed a omnibus Rivers bill and made a whole bunch of rivers in Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers, and those rivers were then turned over to managing agencies like the Forest Service, like the BLM, like others. And all of the plans that I'm familiar with that came out of that process are wonderful in the concept, we're preserving wild and scenic rivers, that sets off a set of ideas in everybody's mind. The realities of what the managers did with that is kind of depressing in a lot of ways. Because it really didn't do what we sought to do. So I worry about the managing agencies. Another one that's probably the one that's most on my mind right now is the the fish tower at Pelton Round Butte dam on the Deschutes. And the idea was PGE that runs the dam, Portland General Electric, came up with the idea during the relicensing program that they wanted to try to re-establish salmon and steelhead above the dam. And they spent, I think at this point they're someplace three hundred million dollars into this project. And they built this tower which, it's a long complex story but they're trying to skim water off the surface of the reservoir in order to move smolts through the reservoir. And. The whole thing has pumped algae nutrient rich water down into the lower Deschutes. And it's absolutely changed the ecosystem. This algae has taken hold in the lower Deschutes. That's the stuff known as rock snot. And it never was there. And now

with this mixing tower and this idea to try to conserve the salmon and steelhead, they've hit a whole other key that they didn't even think about. And in my mind having guided on it and been there for a long long time, the lower Deschutes is in deep deep trouble. It's not what it was. And that's why I don't want to go back and fish there right now. It's because it just breaks my heart to see what has happened and what's going on with the lower Deschutes. And PGE is 300 million into this thing, you know they're not gonna turn around and go Oh we made a mistake we gotta fix this. They're moving forward and there's this whole thing about moving fish above and that they just absolutely aren't. The project has really failed from the beginning but they're not going to admit it failed. And they're continuing to try to do this environmental effort while the environment is declining. And I don't know how to deal with it. That's a really really tough piece of land to navigate through this you know. So here's these people that did something that we all thought in the beginning was a great idea. Let's get salmon and steelhead back up there that'd be great. Rehabilitate that. And then the unintended consequences are just awful. And that's where I really see that's my biggest worry right now is unintended consequences of well-intentioned people.

John Judy [00:25:44] I have gone a very different route on that. You know in my senior years I have begun to feel within me a stronger connection to spirit, to God whatever you care to call it. It's very Native American like within me. But I feel this energy of the universe that that my years on the water have connected me to the broader movement of the planet. And I see grateful in the ability of the planet to heal itself from all kinds of wounds and things. And in a spiritual sense there's a community of people and I'm one of them who feel that we've moved into a new millennium. And this has just happened in the last few years, and the old millennium that we were in was one of discord and disagreement. And the new millennium that we're moving into is one of peace and harmony. And so I find myself wanting to live in peace and harmony, to spread peace and harmony, to talk to people about peace and harmony and an example of the way that works is that right now I've kind of moved from a fly fishing community. In Salmon Fishing I'm in a very much a bait fishing community. Very very harvest oriented people. A lot of people who can't enjoy their day on the water unless they kill a fish and haul at home. And I can share them with people, I can open out that there's a whole lot more to this than just that. And so I'm trying to lead by example now to create to to bring into being the new millennium in time of harmony. And I'm backed away from fighting individual fights you know like I've kind of backed away from the battle on the Deschutes because that's a head to head conflict and it makes me worry. And get all stressed out. Where I can find a greater harmony and I can talk about that sort of thing at another level and try to go there that way. So that's my effort these days.

John Judy [00:28:30] Well of course we see crowding everywhere we go. We see reductions of fish populations across the board. We see all those things and we can focus on them. But we can also focus on the way in which fishing has elevated people in their thinking. It has brought them to a place of peace. You know being in the outdoors and being in the fishing community you can bring such peace into your soul. That to have that to to for people in our rush and busy lives these days, to be able to go do that. And so that's I think the plus I see is the relaxation that it brings the people and the harmony that can bring to people. Where we could focus on the downsides and the crowding and so on and so forth. I just refuse the fight over places to fish and things like that. You know it's one of my guide partners to set used to say it's just fishing and we can't get upset about it. You know. And so I think if we can go to that place that that part of fishing this is still there and very much alive. You know the beauty of it is still there and very much alive. So you have her downsides but it will balance over time I think.

John Judy [00:30:22] I would say two things to a new angler. Be curious, look listen learn. Be persistent. It takes it takes time. Don't be focused on the goal. They don't catch one you still had a great day. Being there pursuing you know so it is the activity, not the end that really counts.

John Judy [00:31:07] You know I just I've been fishing some for salmon with a young guy that's working on that. Boy he gets wound out. Really intense. I think back on my guiding. There's a lot of pressure on you to perform in something that kind of pressure is really sort of inappropriate with fishing. But when somebody's paid you a bunch of money you feel this obligation to perform to produce. And I think if you can present your attitude, present the peaceful approach. Just enjoy what's there, show them what's there, to help them enjoy all the aspects of it and focus a lot less on the harvest the harvest will take care of itself. Or the catch whichever it happens to be, we were all catch and release. I think harvest now because the salmon thing is much more harvest oriented and we're fishing for a lot of hatchery fish. And so that's a change or a shift in my being. But you know that's that as a guide, the other thing I think that's really important that's kind of interesting is that the people you're guiding you as a guide have very high expectations for yourself. You've got a lot of fish. Your client hasn't caught anything. I can't tell you how many people have gone with me and we caught their lifetime best fish. It happens over and over and over and over again to a guide. And so you're able to take people to a place that they're not able to take themselves. And so if you can see that and relax and go with that, create a fun happy experience rather than an intense we've got to get them. And that's the thing I think I would tell an upcoming guide.

John Judy [00:33:22] Yeah. You bet. I wouldn't want to harvest the native fish. Well, that, let me back up on that. I don't trust departments to my own rule. Here's my own rule on harvesting. I don't trust departments of Fish and Wildlife to set the regulations. They're always willing to give away what they haven't got. So when I harvest I have to know the fishery that I'm in, and I have to know that that's a viable fishery and it can sustain a harvest. So if it's a hatchery fish, right away it was put in for the purpose of being caught out and it's probably better if their genetics don't intermixed with the native fish. So that's an automatic harvest. If it's in this state they fin clip. You know, so the adipose fin clip that one that one's almost criminal to put it back. You know it's it's a waste of wonderful food. That is supposed to be taken out of the system. That's the purpose. Native, native fishes I need to know that I do no harm. And I'll put an example of the Nehalem River in the salmon run. Up in the Nehalem. And that's a very healthy run it goes up in the Nehalem river. But they're not stocking Chinook salmon into that run. So everything there is native and yet that fishery sustains a harvest. And it's very healthy but that's kind of an enclosed one bay one river sort of system. And that's a place where a native fish can be harvested. You know if I'm out on the Columbia who knows where those native fishes are going. They could be one of two fish that're going up to east Oshkosh Creek in someplace that I don't know where. I would never harvest the native from there. So that's kind of the rules of it. You know I love it. Like my father taught me first do no harm. It's like a doctor. Leave the place healthier than it was and as long as you can do that then the tradition of harvest and all that means you know, fish for food- I really have a kind of a new outlook on that with salmon fishing. And being able to put the kind of, when you harvest 30 pound salmon you really put some food on the table. It's a whole different. It changed, it's changed my outlook quite a lot. On that.

James Thull [00:36:17] I've heard people say that that in the near future and probably would in our lifetimes. If something kind of dramatic isn't done there's a good chance that

genetically, from a genetic standpoint, wild salmon won't be the same. How dire is the threat to native populations salmon from your perspective.

John Judy [00:36:47] I almost don't know how to answer that because a couple of years ago I would have said that I thought that that the salmon were just a matter of time. And that it wasn't going to be very long till we saw an end to it. But my exposure to the size of that run in the Columbia. This is mind boggling how many fish are going up there. So there's a study done somewhere in Sweden or Norway or somewhere involving sea run brown trout. And it was all about how many fish does it retake take to restock a stream. And it's amazing with broadcast spawning how quickly places can be repopulated. So if we can get our foot off the neck of Mother Nature, she will do the job. And so that's the positive thing I see is how quickly nature can take care of itself. The negative thing I see is when are we going to get the will to do it that way. And that's maybe where an approach that is less scientific-based, more heartfelt and more focused on on the beautiful aspects of what this really is you know. And the awareness of this is something worthy to preserve. That's that's kind of how I see that as working.

John Judy [00:38:56] You know that's interesting. And I I can fish with a lot a lot of different people you know like my grandson is four years old now and he's soon going to start fishing and I look forward to fishing with him. He'll be the best fishing partner ever ever it could be a grand fishing partner and I'll take care of everything. I have another friend who he and I have fished for together for years and years and years. And he has Parkinson's and he's fairly advanced Parkinson's. He can hardly walk. Sometimes we have to wheel him down the dock in the wheelchair to get him in the boat. I love fishing with Rod. He's he's just a- and when I go with him I don't get the fish. I take care of him. I make sure that he can fish. He's a great fishing partner. But then there are other guys that I go with and they look after everything. They bait the hooks. They take care of all that. And those guys are just as much fun you know. So good fishing partners are as diverse as the people in the world. Good fishing partners are just good people.

James Thull [00:40:29] So alternative then, what makes for a bad fishing partner? Are there qualities that stand out. I heard things like not sharing the water or.

John Judy [00:40:39] Yeah I think sometimes a little too much ego in the game. And one guy and I I really like as a friend but I don't really like him as a fishing partner all that much because he kind of has some very closed ideas about what it is you know. He's got his ego in the game. He thinks he knows everything and he really knows a lot less than he thinks he knows. And so sometimes he's less than comfortable to fish with. As far as hogging the water I don't know about that one. I always you go first I'll fish second. I mean I have so much time on the water and I figure I've caught my lifetime quota so I'd like to see my friends catch fish you know. And so I don't care about that part of it. So you can't crowd me out. That just doesn't happen.

John Judy [00:41:56] I think about that and I. There are two distinct types of angling author in my mind. There's the books that are about life and people you know. River Runs Through It, River Why, Spawning Run, different books of that nature that are stories about fishing and life and people and those are probably my favorite ones. But then there are also the how-to books and there are some of those that have really really been influential over time you know like Dave Hughes has been particularly Dave and Rick Hafele have been particularly influential in the entomology area and learned a lot about entomology from those guys. And then Joe Humphrys did a book and he was talking about George Harvey and the George Harvey leaders creating a soft leader and I'm an absolute fanatic

about tying all my own leaders. Hand tie them in the way a leader works that always drives me a little crazy that people don't pay attention to that know for the price of a. You have your five six hundred thousand dollar rod if it's a spey rod and for the price of a leader you make the thing almost uncastable, unfishable. I don't get that one at all but that has been a hugely influential. Charlie Brooks was really influential and in he had a very simplistic approach to it. You know he didn't make it all complex and hard. He made it really straightforward and simple. And I really appreciated that aspect. I mean it goes on and on. But two categories. The favorite ones though were the ones with heart and emotion.