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Ted Leeson [00:00:11] Um... I-- I don't have a story. Um, I don't... really, habitually, think of my fishing in terms of narrative like that. I'm more inclined to isolate moments. So no one story encapsulates everything that it means to me. And from those moments, kind of abstract what it is that is appealing to me about fishing. And so, you know, no single storytellers tells the tale. And over time what is-- what it's meant to me or why I value it has changed a good deal. Now... now mostly what I value about it is solitude and I organize my fishing around edges of days and seasons and places other people won't be. Even if it means catching fewer fish or catching no fish at all. And when I say solitude it is often in the company of a friend so. But probably one of my great deficiencies as a writer is that I don't think- I think in terms of specifics but not in terms of story and so, tend to be a bit abstract at times.

Ted Leeson [00:01:33] You know, I started out probably like everybody, I was hungry to catch fish and um... But I happened to be in southwest Wisconsin in the driftless area, in a place that I found extraordinarily appealing as a natural setting. And that was also part of it, but I was, you know, a dawn to sunset stream trapper, [chuckles] you know, looking for those fish. And eventually it just became less important. Became more interested in the process, uh, partly because of people I met, like Jim Scholmeyer who you interviewed, got me real interested in bugs, and partly just as a result of increasing crowdedness on streams. You know, it was never, when I was younger, an issue. I mean, I started fishing those streams when I was about 14. I never saw a guy fly fishing till I was 26, [chuckles] you know, and uh... up on those streams, in fact-- yeah on those streams. Um, so other bodies were not a problem. And, you know, there had become more of a... I don't-- call it problem. Other people are just looking for what you're looking for. But a, uh... disturbance in my day. I like that sense of being alone on the water and having... undisturbed fish, you know, just to see what's going on. So, that's kind of how it evolved. And-- you know, age does that kind of thing to you. You sort of mellow. [chuckles] You don't have quite the energy it takes to go out there and, uh, hit it hard.

Ted Leeson [00:03:21] Brown's mostly. There was some stocked rainbows, occasionally catch a wild brook trout, which is the indigenous fish there, and that was always a rare and magnificent occasion, but browns had pretty much taken over and, you know, were actively stocked and reproducing so they were my first love as a-- as a trout fisherman.

James Thull [00:03:41] So have you been back to fish there at all in recent years?

Ted Leeson [00:03:44] Uh, not-- Not probably for about, uh, 10 years. Though I go back, I still have family in that area and go back a couple of times a year. But more and more my sister has children that are grown and having children of their own so it's become much more a family deal that-- that doesn't leave a lot of time to go fishing, so. And I don't have a car when I'm there. [laughs]

Ted Leeson [00:04:11] Um... Didn't really notice-- Actually there is probably more, better trout water now than when I was younger. But, and this is something I didn't witness, but I'm aware of, I mean there are guiding operations now there, which staggers me. Have-- Have you ever fish those little streams there?

James Thull [00:04:30] Mhmm.

Ted Leeson [00:04:30] You know, they're not a place one really requires a guide, you know [chuckles], their stream's the width of the sidewalk and it's pretty obvious where the fish are. But th-- An industry has grown up around that area and that, ah, places that were once relatively unknown are common and, um, commonly fished. And I understand they are more crowded now, though. I-- The last time I fished there I didn't-- didn't witness it.

Ted Leeson [00:05:05] I think it's inevitable, you know, you are not going to get rid of, uh, non-native species on the Yellowstone or the Madison in the park. It's just going to be impossible, you know, you would have to poison an entire watershed and they'd still come back up from the Missouri anyway. Um... Smaller streams, I think it's perhaps more possible to at least control things with you know weirs or whatever mechanisms are used-- physical barriers to the passage of non-native fish. But it's an enormous task. I mean, even getting rid of lake trout, Yellowstone Lake, you know, that is a-- a huge task and, you know, you'll never do more than, ah, hold steady with it, you know. You may be able to reduce it but you won't be able to eliminate it. They're faced with an enormous task so-- and I think it's a question of, "Is there room?" There will al-- "A room for both types of fish?" There will always be both types of fish and that actively managing where it's possible for indigenous species, seems to me, a wise idea. I'm-- big believer in genetic pools of all types, seed banks and things like that.

Ted Leeson [00:06:21] I do. Um, I think they can be perceived by, ah... people who are not, um... particularly interested in ecological matters that-- They can perceive it as a waste of money and a fool's errand and all that. But I don't think it is. I think it's smart. When you look at the National Park Service, the task they have is just phenomenal to me of, you know, preventing people from loving nature to death or at least touristing it to death and managing that. I mean, how many millions of people go to Yellowstone every summer, and yet somehow, by design or accident they've managed to create attractions that draw most of the crowd to Old Faithful and Mammoth and Yellowstone Lake and-- so that the rest of it is left alone to some extent.

Ted Leeson [00:07:21] That's a really perplexing question and we face it here to some extent with steelhead and salmon, you know, because they are declining. And somehow you have to figure out how to, kind of keep control of... the pressure on the resource. And, you know, one way that I favor that is-- that I have to say is-- would be unpopular is ceasing to stock some rivers with steelhead and salmon and letting wild populations. Which will mean fewer fish, which means sort of disenfranchising the people that go out, that are essentially meat fishermen, and saying, you know, that what you do doesn't matter to us. [chuckles] And it seems a bit elitist, but it also seems maybe the way that it needs to go or even closing rivers altogether, um, to fishing, which is something I'm not opposed to. You know, I think that we're at a point where the tipping point is the fish must come first now [chuckles] or there will be none. I have this picture in my mind of, you know, a fisherman and a seal, each with one end, fighting for the last steelhead on Earth, you know. [chuckles] That's not some place I-- I care to be around or live to see.

Ted Leeson [00:08:50] Ah, I think there is. Though, among people who fish to keep fish, I think there is a broad spectrum of things and you still see around here a mentality that says, "I paid my license fee and I deserve these fish," you know. That-- And they get angry at the Department of Fish and Wildlife here for not stocking more because they paid for them and when in fact, cost of a license doesn't even pay for one hatchery fish. [chuckles] But lowering bag limits is one way. But, you-- you know, what-- the people you are eliminate there, I think, are ones with outmoded ideas of what fishing is about. You can no long-- It's no longer, um, a subsistence kind of thing where you harvest enough for your

family for a year. There's just not enough fish to go around for people like that. And so restricting bag limits is one way. And a limited stocking of kind of marginal waters I think is another... One of the things you see in fly fishing now that's kind of interesting is-- and I come back to crowded rivers and fishing pressure, is a broadening of fishing opportunities by starting to fish for species that not a lot of people used to fish for with flies. Some that are capped and some that aren't, but you see, we had a lot of bass fishermen around here, walleye fishermen that go after them with flies. So-- And that's, you know, one way for people that want to fill a bag, you know, is to do it, is fill it with something other than trout or salmon.

Ted Leeson [00:10:35] Oh, that's a tough one. Um... Like most places but I th-- ah, you know, everyone thinks they're exceptional, but, um, here there are a lot of pressures on the fisheries people, who's commercial fishing, you know, which takes place only in coastal areas and they are a significant voice and a somewhat powerful one because they have an economics behind them that they use to justify what they do.

James Thull [00:11:01] Is that primarily salmon?

Ted Leeson [00:11:04] Uh, primarily salmon, right, right. And you have the timber industry, you know, which is a huge, um, lobby in this state. And they-- The influence they have over water quality is enormous, you know. And so the Fish and Wildlife people have to balance all these things and there is, you know, a tipping away from, um, basically hatchery-- hatchery fishermen or hatchery managers, you know, which... the Department of Fish and Wildlife being stocked-- being stocked with people, uh, that have the hatchery mentality that their job is to propagate fish for the sole reason of anglers. One of the unfortunate parts about it is that their budget is tied to license sales and so, you know, there you are, you start decreasing angling opportunities by reducing the number of fish, by reducing the number of hatcheries, and the license fees goes down and you become less effective at what you do, smaller, less influential. An independent source of funding that would allow fisheries managers to make the best decisions in favor of the resource seems like it would be ideal but, of course, you know, we live in an age in which everything must be justified by the money.

Ted Leeson [00:12:41] [laughs] Unquestionably. Restraint has not figured large in human history to me.

Ted Leeson [00:12:53] They don't have the water that Montana has, which is exceptional for trout water. And some of the states that have-- I mean, Colorado has some good water in it and it's more like Montana than, than we are here. The trout fishing here is good but it's restricted, you know, to a couple big name rivers. Um, I lost my train of thought, what was the question. [chuckles]

James Thull [00:13:19] We were talking about why more states haven't moved toward the river...

Ted Leeson [00:13:24] Oh, um, because I don't think they could create the quality of fishery that Montana has, which is, you know, legendary. It's funny. I have friends from England and Europe that come over and they cannot believe that you could just go to a river like the Madison or the Yellowstone and fish, you know, in lots of places. [chuckles] And my wife and I spent three months in England some years back and I brought tackle over there and fished and it was an ordeal to fish, you know, to find a place. It was very restricted. And cost money.

Ted Leeson [00:14:06] I think so. Just as a general principle... um, that I think those things are, um... jointly owned by the public. And if I can veer off into politics for a minute, the current-- [clears throat] current trend toward removing federal lands from federal control and granting them back to the States I think is a huge, huge mistake because I think access opportunities are going to dwindle significantly. But I think it is one of the things we have right. On a more practical level, you know, nobody likes-- nobody who fishes likes to see more fishermen out on the water, but we live in an age in which... vocalness and advocacy are necessary and more people that fish and have an opportunity to fish... they're not all voices, but some are speaking in favor of rivers and lakes and that's a good thing, you know.

Ted Leeson [00:15:21] Some can, some can't, you know. The national monument thing. The shrinking of, recently, of the national-- two national monuments. [clears throat] I think that's you know a terrible path to be heading down. Ah, but, you know, what can be done with the stroke of a pen can be undone by the stroke of another pen. Same with the Pebble Mine and Bristol Bay. That's horrifying to me. And that's something that, once it gets started, may not be reversible. So I think we are certainly, in this political climate, looking down that path toward privatization. Toward reduction of public land and putting more into private ownership which always means exclusiveness and removing things from the grasp of ordinary people.

Ted Leeson [00:16:28] No, it's very true. It's not uncommon. I bring a boat out to Montana and drift the river to come with trash in the boat. [laughs] And there-- here there are, as there may be in Montana, you know, organized river cleanups for specific rivers. And I'm not sure if it's a sense of ownership or a sense of stewardship or responsibility toward it. You know, I don't go to Yellowstone very much when I'm out in Montana and when I am there don't have a sense of ownership but, um, ah... a sense of liberty, you know, that this is there for the enjoyment of all and should be kept that way.

James Thull [00:17:13] And maybe ownership is the wrong word.

Ted Leeson [00:17:14] Yeah.

James Thull [00:17:14] That we all kind have a stake in it I guess.

Ted Leeson [00:17:17] A stake, ok, yeah, I'd go with that, sure.

Ted Leeson [00:17:25] I have a couple. Neither of which will be named. [laughs]

James Thull [00:17:30] Fair enough.

Ted Leeson [00:17:33] Um, and one I go to because I very much like the way it fishes. There are fish there. I like catching fish there, but it's also quite beautiful. And just that sense of anticipation always on the brink of realizing itself is there when there are fish that will come to the surface or sometimes come to the surface. But you know they're there. The other place is a coastal river here. And that's very much different because what lives there is anadromous fish. In there, here to there. Here today, gone tomorrow with those. But getting back to what I said before, this is a place that I know, that if I choose my days and times carefully, I can be on it alone or pretty much alone. And if there's even a chance of catching something I'll go. Just to enjoy the place. It's quiet, it's very pretty, it's kind of intimate. And so that's what makes it a favorite. And of course, like anything, you know, the

more you fish it, the better you know it, and the better you know it, the more you like it or, you know, it becomes even more of a favorite so. Those are my spots.

Ted Leeson [00:18:55] Yeah it is. It is. Yet, somehow what makes it fishing is always-- there is at least a remote possibility of catching something. And it's not just the catching it's the, you know, it's the sort of tempting of the visible from invisibility, you know. That conjuring of magic when something just appears is really quite wonderful. An experience best enjoyed alone too. [laughs]

Ted Leeson [00:19:27] Well, you know, I come from an academic background and to anyone with an academic background, the value of that is utterly self-evident you know. To, uh... preserve and archive the past is-- I mean, that-- you know, since the first person told a story that's what they were doing, is preserving and archiving the past. I think it's-- runs deep in the human thing. And you have to do it before you can learn about the past. You have to have the materials and you have to learn about the past before you can learn from the past. Though, as you say, historically it's not working out for us so well. [chuckles] Um, but just from the standpoint of understanding a different point in time and its continuity and discontinuities work with our own I think is really important. My wife was also a professor at the university. She's still doing research and over the years her research has brought her into contact with street literature and penny broadsides, she was a Victorian literature person, and all those kinds of things that are sort of-- uh, fall into the scholarly category of ephemera and how hugely valuable that is for understanding a time in a way that you can't get by studying the great people and the great events. That, you know, a culture is more than its leaders. It is the people and to preserve even in a fashion that, no disrespect intended, is haphazard in a way, I mean you can't canvass everybody it is a random crap shoot kind of thing that you're getting but that's kind of what culture is anyway. So I think it's hugely valuable and can I ask you a question?

James Thull [00:21:25] Absolutely.

Ted Leeson [00:21:25] Something like this must take resources. Do you have some sort of patron angel that is bankrolling this whole thing?

James Thull [00:21:33] I uh, sort of. About a year and a half, two years ago... about a year and a half ago I applied for a grant from the Willow Springs foundation and they-- they funded the project for three years.

Ted Leeson [00:21:43] No kidding.

James Thull [00:21:43] And so, um, yeah that's-- and I think we have some other potential-- I-- Part of, I mean, we'd like to document the-- the idea of the collection with folks, but part of it is, too, that when we apply for other grants, you know, we can sort of harness that information.

Ted Leeson [00:22:02] Yeah. Uh-huh.

James Thull [00:22:02] This is what other folks say the value of this project is.

Ted Leeson [00:22:04] Right.

James Thull [00:22:05] And I agree with you. I'm also a certified archivist and I'm the Special Collections librarian there. And I'd say one of the things archives have traditionally

done real well is preserve the papers of the Churchills and, you know, I mean, the-- the kind of the famous, the greats, the well known and not as well the average folk and average people and that's one of the aims of this is kind of a shotgun scattered effect in that we want those divergent opinions.

Ted Leeson [00:22:32] Yeah, yeah, no it makes sense.

James Thull [00:22:34] We want kind of a wide range to help paint as broad of a picture as we can I guess.

Ted Leeson [00:22:38] Yeah. I mean it's interesting we live in a great explosion of documentation, now that is both good and bad. But, you know, I mean you see a new phone advertisement, the first thing they talk about is the camera, you know. And, you know, almost every digital utterance will live in perpetu-- perpetuity, now in a way that you know, never has before, that the views of ordinary people or the transactions of ordinary people are a matter of record. They're not archived, they're simply stored. But not in any way organized. Which is another reason for doing something like this, you know.

James Thull [00:23:32] Yeah.

Ted Leeson [00:23:32] My father fished a little bit and uh, but I would not call him a fisherman, but his mother moved to a place-- this is in Beloit that had a creek running through the backyard that I imagine a few centuries back was a spring creek with trout in it, but is in the middle of-- it was in the middle of agricultural land, finally and became somewhat degraded. He took, first me and then my next younger brother and then my next younger brother out there whenever we went to visit my grandmother. We'd always do a little fishing and when you got old enough which wasn't very old, we could just go out there by ourselves and the parents were happy to have us out of their hair and we were happy to be fishing, but really it just kind of, you know, I believe that some people are born with it in their souls and it just caught fire with my two brothers and I and soon we pursued it quite independently of my father. And so outside of those first couple of trips there was really no one that-- We fueled each other's passion for it.

James Thull [00:24:56] On the plus side, catch and release which we talked about before, which [chuckles] I recall being introduced with great trepidation and about how, how this would be received and then closing off waters and putting these special kinds of restrictions on waters. And I remember the first catch and release water that was designated in the driftless area, it was a place we used to fish. We went there that first season and it was jammed with cars you know because everybody thought catch and release, this is where the best fishing was going to be. And so it's-- acceptance as a matter of course, over the course of my lifetime, to where younger anglers now accept that idea without you know... as a given you know, that it makes perfect sense. And I think that's wonderful. And so man-- you know managing for catch and release, I think we are seeing a lot more management for wild or even indigenous trout and that's a good thing. On the downside, I think we have seen the loss of water in some places, sometimes through water quality sometimes through private ownership, I remember a classic example of the Ruby River thing that's been going on and on and on and on, is, uh, seems to me a real important kind of test case about what the larger culture thinks should happen with this kind of stuff-- stream access laws. The crowding is, you know, unquestionable. And that's... it-- it's kind of funny that I thi-- my recollection is that fishing license sales in every, almost every state nationwide have been declining for 20 years but I've never seen as many fishermen in the water as I have now and I don't know if that means that the people

that enjoy it are going more or just what it means. But, you know, there are a lot more people in the world just in general, which is another big problem. So the crowding from the standpoint of the fishing, quality of the fishing experience is definitely something that's changed and... not for the better. The Madison, you know, I am part of the zoo there every summer. It is phenomenal the number of people that are on that water and, you know, fortunately it's a river that's big enough, but you gotta feel sorry for the fish and you also wonder how that kind of behav-- that kind of behavior changes fish behavior. That they aren't behaving... Their instincts are of wild fish but they're not doing what they do if you weren't there or anybody else was there... So, net gain, net loss I'm not, you know, I'm not sure it's hard to... depends on what weight you give what things, but at least there have been gains and it's not solely been losses. The big loss around, well... I'm not sure that's true. I was going to say the big loss around here is of anadromous fish. But I'm not really sure 50 years ago what that, or 40 years ago what the state of that was, if it was mainly a hatchery, you know, artificial fishery done strictly with propagating fish.

James Thull [00:28:48] I think to me the biggest is, probably the biggest is climate change because that is a gigantic problem and that's already taking place in other species, has altered their home range and migration habits and all that kind of thing. And I think we will see the loss of trout water and salmon and steelhead water. Other problems not in terms necessarily of priority, access I find that a really troubling thing and partly because it's symptomatic of other elements in our culture, the huge disparity in the distribution of wealth for instance. The increasing move toward privatization of almost everything I find troubling. Mining is big and this plays into the privatization thing, you know that not as we just learned the other day that the Canadian mining people who are interested in Pebble Creek no longer have to guarantee that they can clean up the mess they leave and the mess they leave could be permanent. I mean that's the largest aggregation of salmon on the planet you know, in there and it's a risk that seems insane. For what? You know, for bling? So, you know, I'd like to say I'm optimistic about the future, I'm a bit cynical by nature so uh, but I'm glad there are optimists out there who see a way forward.

James Thull [00:30:51] I think he has to ask what the motive for that would be. If it issues from a sense of inclusivity, yes I'm all in favor of it. To actively recruit people into a sport, I have some reservations about, but certainly to eliminate any barriers, to make everybody feel welcome, to provide everybody with the kind of access, equal access to an avenue to appreciate the sport or enjoy it or try it out or whatever. I think that's important. If it issues instead from some assumption that a group any group the composition of any group has to in some way faithfully reflect the statistical demographics of the general population, I find that utterly foolish. It's like, you know, why don't we have more women in stamp collecting which is another white male kind of thing. It just doesn't really make sense. If it on the other hand issues from a sense of recruiting environmental allies, you know, from a practical standpoint that makes kind of sense, though it doesn't seem to me to be restricted to women or minorities or children. That's something that you know, you recruit any allies you can find. It's nondenominational but and it's- that's something I worry a little bit about. Is that to recruit allies is one of the ways it's, it's being done. Is the number of people increases the economic presence of the sport and to base what to me is finally an ethical idea on the conservation of nature on money is a risky business because the next one that comes along with a bigger economic claim be to in your own terms. I'm sorry I'm diverging.

James Thull [00:33:25] You could argue that Yellowstone is like that, I suppose and that's what they were trying to do recently with the elephant shooting in Africa. And yeah I'd say as a practical matter of real politic you know that is the way it happens. But there, you

know, you don't have to recruit people to fish to recruit them to be allies into the environment, you know. There are a lot of fishermen who don't care one way or the other about it and a lot of deeply committed conservationists who don't fish. So it's a...But any port you storm you know when you're fighting a battle to save things.

Ted Leeson [00:34:08] I think yeah though out in nature and fishing are two different things.

James Thull [00:34:12] They can be certainly, yes.

Ted Leeson [00:34:14] And I do, I think that it is in a more general sense important to do that, to get people out in nature and I think that's one of the values of the National Park. Though I think some of what those people experience isn't exactly nature. But it's... whatever it is isn't bad. I think it has a positive effect on the people. And so yeah, when you're talking about the real world... so to get back to the original question I think if it's an idea of recruitment you go for everybody. There's, there are strength in numbers in this kind of thing. You just hope it's enough.

James Thull [00:34:58] I guess what I've always, what, what concerns me more and more is the idea that- the fear youth especially that we have out, out, out fishing out is experiencing nature in a general sense. I don't know that if you don't have that kind of firsthand experience at least maybe... I wouldn't say this of everybody but I think there may be a correlation between in 10, 15, 20 years when those things are well, what do I care about a forest?

Ted Leeson [00:35:30] Oh yeah, sure. You're right, it's hard to be seriously committed to an abstract idea that, you know, has no resonance in your own experience. And uh... but as far as children are concerned, you know I mean historically that's sort of been the province of fathers and grandfathers and uncles in some cases mothers. But you know what you say is true, it's going to rattle on down the generations that there's fewer fathers who fish and so fewer sons who fish. So yeah I think it's, I think it's good to provide avenues for those people. I don't think you can somehow force them to do it. Yeah and they have to be things made available. As I say on a nondenominational basis everybody should be made to feel welcome and encouraged to try it and given opportunities in terms of mentors and so on to follow through and at least see what it's about.

Ted Leeson [00:36:44] In terms of practical fishing advice I'd say, you know, the obvious. Be persistent. Try different things. You know, eventually if you really like to fish you'll teach yourself a lot of things you need to know about fishing. You can read books and you can try what you see in books and you go out and it works and then the next time it doesn't work. Pretty soon what you learn is when it works and when it doesn't work. You've taught yourself that. As a occupation in nature, my advice would be- I mean everybody who starts- who take takes up fishing or starts fishing really wants to catch fish. I totally understand that. My advice would be don't let that blind you to the other forms of appreciation that are there. You know, be aware of where you are mindful of nature that you are in and, you know, stay open to those things that have nothing to do with catching fish. Eventually that becomes- or it has for me anyway I shouldn't speak for others- the better part of it.

Ted Leeson [00:38:09] To me the quality to make a good fishing partner are pretty much the qualities to make a good friend. All my fishing partners are my friends. Not all my friends fish, but all my partners are my friends and we would be friends even if one or the

other or both didn't fish. And so it's the same thing, you know, a kind of compatibility of temperament. And enjoying one another's company because most of the time when you're fishing together you're not catching anything so, you gotta do something.

Ted Leeson [00:38:53] I'm not sure it was inspired. What occasioned it was just an accident of going to Montana... first went to Montana, fish- fished the Madison and uh... trying to think it was '87 and my wife and I had a camper and there was another couple we pal'd around with with the campers and fished around the West for two or three weeks, my brother was with us and fished the Madison. I'd never seen water like that, I mean every square inch of it shot in trout to me. So the next summer we rented a little house in Jeffers, you know where that is, outside Ennis? That was the year of the Yellowstone fire, the big fire in '88. And decided we wanted to go back and lucked into making contact with the guy who rented a house outside Ennis about 20 or 30 minutes. And we kept going... he was gonna make it a rental. And a couple of people I think rented it the first summer and the next summer he decided not to have it a rental but let us go ahead and do it. And that arrangement has persisted for over twenty five years now. Never met this person. I talked to him on the telephone. Wonderful man extremely interesting. So coming back which is another thing that's changed about my fishing if I can eventually circle back. I used to be very hungry to fish all kinds of different places and so I liked fishing new places. But now I take a greater pleasure in returning to the, to the same place as Tom McGuane has this wonderful line about young angler, I wish I could quote it because he's such a brilliant writer of sentences. You know, young anglers are always on the hunt because somewhere in the system is what they're looking for. But older anglers are like sentimental drunks who love what they already know. And I find that to be true. And so I came to feel like I knew this place and to a certain degree, you know, and wanted to write about what it was like to fish there and kind of why I valued it. That was something I tried to capture in the title of the book and in the book itself is this idea of a place you create and invest with significances, you know, that that's really what place is.

Ted Leeson [00:41:38] Not the writing, but the writing has put me in a world where I have had contact with and in some cases become friends with people that are much better fisherman than I am. Which is almost everybody. And so I learned from those people and so without writing I never would have had those experiences. So yeah I'd say that's definitely true. Jim Schollmeyer made me a much better fisherman. And I was still pretty new to the west when I met him and the waters out here were fantastically intimidating to me. Started trout fishing the Deschutes which is still, a lot of it's kind of intimidating to me, big and deep and fast and showed me how to go about it. And so I learned a lot from him.

Ted Leeson [00:42:31] Yeah it absolutely is and I think that's why I couldn't tell you a story because it's, you know, fishermen are- one of the great delights and chief occupations is taking observations and forming patterns from them, you know, why they're biting why they're not biting, what can I do? And that's kind of the same way I approach writing is abstracting those things and looking for principles or fishermen construct theories. And so yeah that is a- to me a deep point of contact between the two things. But that stems just from I think intrinsic habit of mind, you know, some just the way I was born.

Ted Leeson [00:43:19] First I'd say go seek counseling. And if that fails, don't look to me, look to a better writer for a path to follow. Beyond that I'd say question... question what it would mean for you to have success. What is it that you want out of this? Is it the hit of seeing your name in print which is, you know, a rush the first couple of times. You know if it's making a lot of money then I'd say go back and see the counselor again. Is it reaching a lot of people? Is it reaching a special kind of person? You know, what is it? Is it

producing a piece of work simply that satisfies you? What what could you do that you look at and say "I think that was a successful enterprise"? And there's a lot of ways to, you know, define what success would be. The other is, you know, keep trying to get better at what you do, that's an obvious one is once you determine the terms of what it means for you to succeed, work to get better at it and figure it out. And for me that meant reading, you know, trying to learn more about craft you know, reading the people I admired and trying to figure out how they- how they made me laugh at this or feel impassioned about this or make me wonder about- about something. You know what verbal tools did they have.

Ted Leeson [00:45:15] I mentioned Tom McGuane, who I think is one of the most skillful writers of sentences that I've ever run across. I taught creative non-fiction here and in my graduate classes would look at Tom McGuane's sentences for the way they operated. I'm still in awe of just the marvelous perfectionism of those that is the thing, you know that I, I'm sure he worked and it works at it but was to some extent born with that you cannot sit down and in some systematic way manufacture one of those sentences it defies, defies that. So I very much enjoy his nonfiction I'm talking about now and not just fishing non-fiction but stuff he wrote about motorcycles and the stuff he wrote about horses, it's all just great. Another writer I admire, and this was a guy who was going to recommend to you, I've already been east I guess. A nice guy named Franklin Burroughs, I don't know if you ever heard of him, I think he's a terrific writer, he also fishes. And I learned a lot from reading him and I used to teach him I learned a lot from teaching. It forced me to really come to grips with and articulate, try to explain to someone else not necessarily how they do things but how things can be done. You can make a wri- piece of writing work in a certain way by looking at words and sentences. Jim Harrison I really like like almost everybody. And John Gierach I also admired. I remember reading Trout Bum and I had the opportunity to review it when it first came out, it was a book that really blew me away. He was the first writer of kind of my generation and it was not a disappointment to meet him. I kind of know him a little bit but he's very much his writing. So there's a big-- people outside of fishing altogether. Essayists mostly. Ellen Malloy, I don't know if you know her work or... Eula Biss. Really wonderful writers in different ways.

Ted Leeson [00:47:45] Nah, I'm not really good at big advice. I can't even follow the advice I give myself. [laughs] But, uh, no. I would like just to follow up just by saying I think this is a wonderful project, you know, and what you're doing is again coming from an academic background, that this kind of thing seems to me self evidently worth doing, you know. Records like this that are at least in some way systematic and archived and searchable and all that kind of good kind of thing and free to the public, you know. That is... I'm a great believer in the sort of democratic...

James Thull [00:48:28] Open access.

Ted Leeson [00:48:30] Yes. Right. Just in general, an informed populace even if it's just informed about fishing is better than one that's not.