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Bud Lilly [00:00:10] I have a kind of a two piece answer to that, Jim. I was kind of the one of the early guys that began to promote the rash of new books being written about trout fishing. In my shop that I had at West Yellowstone. So I have been very familiar with a lot of the titles and I met a lot of the authors on a personal basis. So when the MSU library asked me to join them on a committee to create a special collection for the library I was thrilled to be involved. And I've got that kind of memory Jim, where I remembered a customer that had a tremendous collection of trout and salmonid books and papers and so on. And he of course provided a basis for the library. Then we've tried to continue to promote it from day one.

Bud Lilly [00:01:04] Well the whole world is under siege. The environment of course has been dealt with over a long period of time since we arrived here on our c- our continent here and it's all over, all over the world we're destroying a lot of the environment that provides clean clear water and clean air that's necessary for those species to survive. If they do survive, I think we're going to see a continuation of the sport of fishing. And of course I've been promoting fly fishing and catch and release as part of the program. And we called it the total experience. Not only did you fish but you enjoyed your surroundings as well. You know, wild water, wild life, and wild areas and under all those circumstances you could have the bonus of catching fish.

Bud Lilly [00:02:00] Well we have a thing within our family with my wife Esther and my children. And Esther and my children together as we use a policy called passing it along. Passing it on and teaching is giving us an opportunity to pass it along. When I was a, you know, public school teacher for many years teaching science and mathematics in the public schools, I dealt with youngsters you know, 12, 13, up to seniors in high school. And I promoted those ideas through their context as well. So teaching was an opportunity for me not only to teach but also to express some of the things that I believed in that would affect our lives.

Bud Lilly [00:02:50] We always figured about 10 years old, boy or girl, was primed for learning the basics of fly casting. They were in an age where they could begin to understand what it was about besides fly casting. And then they would hopefully follow that and develop the other interests that were required. I've been promoting a program with the State Fish and Wildlife with an outline that goes through that process of teaching and learning about the environment and of course the value of what it is to all of us and the history and the ethics of the sport. That's why I think the library is so important. It's such a treasure of information about the history and the ethics and the whole feeling of the sport of fly fishing for the trout and salmonids.

Jim Thull [00:03:43] In terms of men versus women, is there any difference?

Bud Lilly [00:03:45] The thing is that the teaching of fly casting is like any other incidental sport. The procedure is very simple. Men think because you're athletic, and stronger, that they can do it with their own activities and not depending upon what the fly rod will do for them. Whereas women will accept the fact that they're not going to overpower the rod and learn the basic steps of fly casting and put it into motion much quicker than the men.

Bud Lilly [00:04:21] Well that could write several books. Being a fishing guide I think my favorite story about best is that we met some awfully high power people. And our story was that when they would arrive they'd have dye gel running out of the corner of their

mouth. They were so nervous and upset about everything. After we had them two or three days the dye gel was gone and they were completely into the sport of fishing. Of course we met a lot of cranks as well. One of our favorite little stories about the guy that hired the guide he said I don't want to catch a lot of them, just a few big ones. And we had those kinds of things to deal with but we took it as part of the program.

Jim Thull [00:05:06] Sure.

Bud Lilly [00:05:13] When I started, Jim. My, I started in 1952. In 1952, there probably were three major fly dealers in the United States. Dan Bailey who was one in Livingston, Montana and then the others came out of the East Coast area and here comes this little guy from Manhattan, Montana thinks he could join that crowd. So I learned from all those in my early days. And I was able to be on the cutting edge of all, a lot of the things that developed the fly fishing in the west. We got a lot of our information from people that came to fish the West Yellowstone area so we learned from people that came from not only from the United States. I have dealt with outfitters from practically all over the world. I could give you a long list of people that came from other countries. So we exchange all that information. And when my wife Esther and I were developing programs for national organizations we said that that's a, thing that is universal language all over the world is fly fishing and be talked with people in France or Italy or Germany or whatever in the same language that we talk to them in the United States.

Bud Lilly [00:06:39] I started to recognize, probably in the late 1950s, you had to address all the things you've just listed. There has been progress. But that's 60, 70 years ago. A lot of those problems still exist today. They have not been solved. We're seeing worldwide contamination, you know, the atmosphere, degradation of our water sources. There's gonna be a tremendous shortage of water down the line. Water is going to be worth more than whiskey not too far along. So that if we can maintain those conditions and then encourage people to enjoy the out of doors and some of the sports that go with it. My particular one is, and my wife Esther's, and our family's, are fly fishing. And we hope to pass that along and encourage others and others and others to do the same.

Bud Lilly [00:07:41] You know that, there has not been a lot of outstanding environmentalists anywhere till it took us a while to identify all the seriousness of what was going on within our own backyard as far as affecting our streams and lakes. So that the people that are emerging, always took a low key. A lot of the efforts have come through clubs like Trout Unlimited, The Federation of Fly Fishers and even the Rod and Gun Clubs and others that have been a force in trying to get people to participate so the individual really didn't stand out that like you know, that Johnny Appleseed at all. But there was a great concentration of efforts and as you know I've been involved a long time and then of course Esther was a national director of both Trout Unlimited and The Federation of Fly Fishers.

Jim Thull [00:08:39] Yeah.

Bud Lilly [00:08:45] You know when I started my shop at West Yellowstone I thought I was a fly fisherman. I had grown up under the tutelage of my father who was an avid fly fisher. But we were not very sophisticated. We didn't know much about dry fly fishing. We fished with wet flies, English style. We had bamboo fly rods but they were not, the custom built a lot of the. We began to discover the fishermen came to West Yellowstone. A lot of them were carrying rods that were made by the famous rodbuilders. And they had fly tiers and they had information and they taught me about catch and release. I learned about dry

fly fishing. So a lot of my mentors were people that we've had on the display that's sitting right behind you, guys like Dave Whitlock. There was a couple from Michigan that developed a series of flies. I had guys working for them that became famous like Al Troth, Bob Jacklin, others, and all of that effort created the atmosphere.

Bud Lilly [00:09:57] You know I've thought a lot about that. And I have to be careful. My son Greg is now 66 years old. Greg started as an outfitter and fishing guide when he was 16, which meant that he has been involved with the sport for over 50 years. He was tutored under the people that you're talking to me about. He fished with them and met the celebrities as we all did from around the world as well as the outstanding people. And then he has had a career of developing fishing lodge and his own outfitting for the last 20 or 30 years. So even though he and I are father and son, I'd have to recommend Greg as one of the icons of today.

Bud Lilly [00:10:45] Well we do it to our kids all the time. And we've got Kristin and Lisa now that are under our tutelage and they are respectful for what you and I are discussing and the angling itself is just a way of doing all of those things. And then we say that catching whatever it is a trout or a white fish or a saltwater variety or Atlantic salmon, that's the bonus.

Bud Lilly [00:11:17] I think the story is that fishing itself is a universal language as we talked about. So you can talk with anyone on any level that's involved in the sport on the same vocabulary terms. We've dealt with kings and queens and, and all kinds of corporate leaders, famous stars, you know and celebrities that have been wonderful people. And we talked to them all the same.

Bud Lilly [00:11:53] I think it's a collage of talents. To be a great fly fisher and to be a great fisher of streams, it has to be a good observer. To see what the conditions are and deal with conditions as they develop. And it's not a throw it in the water because there's something everywhere. So waiting, it takes a very involved type of personality that will learn all those details. It's involves a lot of science. It revolves a lot of patience. It's not a sport for the person who gives up after a few casts. Sometimes a steelhead fisherman for instance which is another variety of these salmonids we're talking about will fish all the way to catch one fish and have a wonderful day. Some of my best fishing experiences we probably didn't catch anything but we were in a wonderful area with wonderful companions. And that's the answer. I used to add one other term. I was invited back to address a group of scientists and doctors and engineers that developed these defibrillators, people, in people's chests you know. Boston Scientific developed mine so they took Esther and I back there. I've talked to two thousand of these type of people. When I started my presentation I asked all those that were here that were fly fishermen to stand up so that I was talking to the fly fishermen about what the Boston Scientific had done for the sport of fly fishing.

Jim Thull [00:13:26] Wonderful. Wonderful. Now I, as you know, I interviewed Lee Perkins and he talked about how impressed he was with Jimmy Carter's fishing ability and about how he knew the river and the birds. Is there anybody that stands out for, for you?

Bud Lilly [00:13:41] Well, I've, I've had contact, you know, with Jimmy as well.

Jim Thull [00:13:44] Yep.

Bud Lilly [00:13:45] And that he describes a lot of personalities. Jimmy Carter is one of those personalities. He accepts the sport for what it really is. You know he called on me at my shop in West Yellowstone. And he had been fishing in Yellowstone Park and I had been advising everyone in the park what to do with Jimmy. So one of his friends said You gotta stop and see Bud Lilly in West Yellowstone, because he's been participating in your program. So one Sunday morning all these big limos pulled up by the Trout Shop in West Yellowstone. All these guys in black suits get out, started coming into the store and they said, say the president of the United States is out there and like to speak with you. I said, well, have him come on in. But Jimmy came in and we had some wonderful exchange.

Jim Thull [00:14:34] That's a wonderful story in your, in your opinion is he a decent angler?

Bud Lilly [00:14:40] Jimmy is a very good angler. He's learned from some of the best. I know who some of his tutors are. And it goes back you know 50-60 years.

Bud Lilly [00:14:55] Well I started with a lot of those organizations from day one. Actually I was acquainted with Trout Unlimited, probably in the late 1950s, and I had a fishing family that used to come to West Yellowstone a name that you know Joe Sample. And his wife Pat Sample was it. She was really an outstanding fly fisher in the early 1960s. So she said you know there is an organization that's just then developed, called Trout Unlimited. So Pat Sample, Dan Bailey, a guest ranch owner by the name of Brett Morris outside of West Yellowstone, they had a travel agent that was one of Pat's good friends by the name of Jim Dorn, and myself and a guy from MSU by the name of Dick Graham. Who was the head of the cooperative fisheries unit at MSU and is a very knowledgeable guy, we sat down and created not a chapter of TU, but we created Montana Trout Unlimited. I recently attended the fiftieth anniversary of creating the Montana Trout U-, in the state of Montana. We created it in 1964 and it's just 50 years old as I speak. And I have spent that meeting and I'm sure that you may have heard me. I was not as satisfied as I'd like to have been to be recognized and be able to speak to that group a little bit because they had several hundred people who didn't know who in the hell Bud Lilly was. But I didn't get that opportunity. I was a little chagrined, Jim, to be honest.

Bud Lilly [00:16:36] If you would go back with the archives at MSU. When Bruce and those guys got me together and gave me an honorary Doctorate, MSU they had different people that knew my history to write a little story and I think it's in a book someplace at the library. But my aunt who's my mother's sister at that time was probably in her 90s wrote about the day that I was called Buddy as I grew up as a little boy when I was 6. And my dad had me fishing a canal out here by Baker's Creek just outside of Manhattan and my aunt was there and my mother, and I had a angle worm and a little rod and I caught a fish and I jumped down and up and down and said Jesus Christ I got a fish and that's the memory of my first fish was probably a rainbow that had come down the canal from Baker Creek.

Bud Lilly [00:17:36] It was one of my old, old customers.

Jim Thull [00:17:39] OK.

Bud Lilly [00:17:39] Horace, and Horace was not blind but he was losing, he couldn't breathe anymore. And he wanted his last chance to catch a fish or do some fishing. I've been guiding him for many many years. So I took him to a special place on a spring creek and the fish were rising and he was able to see the rise and fiddle around and finally got

the fly near the fish, hook the fish, brought it in, it was a nice sized brown trout and he had a thrill of a lifetime. He went down and released it. And I said Horace that's another one that's wonderful. There's another one rising and he started rolling up his leader and I said wait a minute what are you doing. He said that's my last trout.

Bud Lilly [00:18:31] Yeah that's an idea that I've come up with and I'm getting a lot of, not help from what I would like to. But I, along with Esther's help. We were able to convince a very fine person to buy a site at Logan, Montana. And there was an old hotel and all kinds of junk, and took a lot of money. We had to pro bono people, come in and cleanup all the old hotel, haul it to the city dump and so on. That's been a process now going on for about three or four years. I have now involved with National Trout Unlimited, with Esther's help, to create that finally into a fishing park, not just a fishing access. But we'll call it a park. And we're going to use the terms that they do nowadays, goes P-A-R, Public access river recreation not just a fishing access. Including handicapped access for those that come out of our services as well as all the public that need to have a ramp for their wheelchair or some kind of assistance so they can fish. We've got now, in Logan, a site of about almost half a mile of riverside where those people can fish up and down. We're currently working on a site now over on a stream called Sixteen Mile, and we'll have a fishing park on Sixteen Mile as well.

Bud Lilly [00:19:58] You know when I went into the Navy in 19 I actually joined during the winter of 1942. But they let me finish high school, 1943. I joined the Navy in July of 1943, I was 17. And I didn't know one end from the other about anything. My big travel trips had been a trip to California with my family. Nineteen thirty five. So everything that I learned from the Navy was new. The Navy was the finest training that I've ever received. I was lucky enough to be involved in a program called Navy V12 where they selected people that had some brains and I must've had some cause they selected me and I received a commission the off- as the Navy, you know, when I was 19. So I was a commissioned officer and behaving as an officer for several years in the Navy. And then of course I got the G.I. Bill when I finished my service in the Navy. All of that experience gave me a, a way into life. I traveled all over the East Coast. I was in New York. I was in Baltimore. I was in Miami. I was in Boston. I went through the Panama Canal twice. I covered the Atlantic. I covered the Pacific. I traveled hundreds of thousands of miles at sea. Went through experiences like typhoons and saw 50 foot waves which were exciting. And when I finished up my service and I've told Esther this, stories, so I'll repeat it to you. We decommissioned a troop transport that I had been involved with for quite some time. We've hauled of thousands of troops to the Atlantic and to the Pacific and so we took it to Norfolk to, command ended and we were going to leave the ship behind, so we took everything off including the ship's flag. They gave me the flag. I was the youngest officer among the whole bunch and we had 300 sailors and 50 officers. And at that time I had just turned 20. I'm pretty damn proud of that, Jim, and I'm not bragging. I'm just trying to relate.

Bud Lilly [00:22:10] Just want to thank you too for all of the effort that you've put in. I want to thank Bruce Martin of course. He's been a wonderful influence on the program from day one and I worked with others, you know, through the library. I wasn't the only forces, you know, there's been a lot of others that have made a great contribution to the library and we have some looking down the line that are going to continue. And as you have said this library collection I think now is probably the one, the greatest one in the world.

Jim Thull [00:22:38] I'd agree we're right up there. And then since we are going to have this for a while, Bud why don't you show us the button that you got on your cap there and tell us who that is.

Bud Lilly [00:22:47] Well this is one of our pride and joys at the moment. That's my grandson Lucas. Lucas is a 15 year old sophomore in high school and he is currently playing a very serious part of the football team. He is a wonderful track star. He's won a lot of national track records for sprinting. We think he has quite an opportunity to become a successful athlete, then our daughter Alisa has a 7 year old. And Bridger, now is taking up soccer and football. So we're going to be busy for quite a few more years. I'm only 90. So I got a lot of time left.

Jim Thull [00:23:24] Well and they're taking after you, Bud. You were quite the baseball player when you were young. I know you got an offer for.

Bud Lilly [00:23:29] The Cincinnati Reds. Gave me an offering. Nineteen forty three. The Navy changed all that story.