

## mcguane-thomas-2016-07-08.mp4

**Thomas McGuane** [00:00:10] Well I think that if you can find a broad accessibility to the collection, it'd be hard to predict how people will use it except that I think the nature of the collection suggests it will be put to good use. I was fishing with a very fine young writer fishing guide yesterday and I asked him I said How did you was your father a fisherman?

**Thomas McGuane** [00:00:33] Did you know, did you have mentors in the fishing world. And he's a literate expert angler and conservationist and he said. I got into it by reading. He lived in a tiny town in northern Michigan. He didn't really know anybody who liked to do it. He started reading about it and that was his aperture to something that's been a important part of his life. So I think that this library collection has the advantage of being unlike any other. And since they're practically more there's practically more literature on fishing than anything in the world that somebody once told me except mathematics. I think it's potential magnetism for a really wide audience is really great. I have always felt that the sort of non recreational benefits of fishing are limited. At a time that's really important as it places a lot of stakeholders in the natural world. And the issue for coming generations now seems to be to get them off screens and out of the houses out of their houses and off their couches. I read this thing about an art dealer former fighter pilot in Santa Fe. Maybe you saw it who has buried treasures in New Mexico, and you read about this? And he's trying to get this mystery.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:02:05] Sows the landscape with hints intact and where it is and they believe there's this treasure buried out there. They're all looking for it. They asked him why he did it. He said I did it just to get people off their couches. That's going to really be an issue. I had you know we go down for a couple months of the year we go down to Florida. The local family next door to where we stay with four big strong boys and they have a boat there right next to a magnificent fishing and their father said well they've never done it. They're just there they're on their iPads and their devices and they stay near the air conditioner in a sort of twilight world and have done so all their lives. So I mean I think these things that encourage people to get get out of the house and also to think about what they're doing while they're out of the house and why it matters and what it has to do with so that some of the benefits accruing to the planet. I think that's really important. So I think I mean I'm very excited about what this collection could do. I think if I could predict things at this great age I would I would suggest it suggest you're going to find that over time is going to be a huge pressure on the use of this collection.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:03:28] It is for some people. I mean people who are drawn in that direction in anyway and are looking for resources to fuel their passion. I think they'll I think will always be important. I know a lot of lots and lots of young writers I was this fellow that guided us when we were down on the new fork. I mean he reads everything. He's a native Wyoming kid who loves adventure. He's a great fisherman great fishing guide. He makes enough money each summer to go on some kind of extraordinary personal quest. Last year to save up his money and went to the Sudan, good bought bought insurance to get airlifted out if you get caught in a civil war. Took a fishing rod with them and then he went for it he does something like this every year.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:04:15] And then goes back and he reads he loves to fish. He love the earth. You know he wants to see as much of it as you can. He's still in his 20s but you know people denigrate printed material in some ways because they feel that I mean they often do it in the media world or in the movies where I used to work but I used to remind these people that you can do 30 million dollar movie I've been in projects like that I said

nothing ever gets off the ground without a typescript type script weighs about a pound sits the middle of everybody's table while they decide whether to get movie stars or directors or whether what country they're gonna make it in. Always starts with this stack of printed material. Oh let me think.

**Thomas McGuane [00:05:09]** It's going to be some dead air on your favorite fishing spots. Well I like fishing right here where I live you know. I live... And I have a great fishing pal Gil Drake who's a guide down in the Keys. He said he destination angling is great he said it's fun to do what is sort of sauce on the meal but. Really the best thing is to fish where you live. And fishing's really I've got it really integrated into my life. I fish practically every day but I don't fish very long and I don't like to I don't like generally don't like fish where I can't go write or I can't be around my family and stuff like that. So I really wanted and part of my life and I seem to have known that early on because I was always strategizing a way to find a way to live near fishing. And I'm happy to have fishing that's less good if I can live with it. I have this and I've enjoyed you know long range fishing in the past. I've done plenty of it. Usually. As part of an assignment that was mostly you know how I did that. But the fishing and I really love is just kind of anywhere I am.

**Thomas McGuane [00:06:25]** I mean if I lived near bluegill fishing and that was all I had. Well that would be fine. And you know my wife's from Alabama those people would raise catalpa worms to fish for bream you know stuff like that they get totally into their world of fishing and it's not anything that will appear at sporting magazines you know. Just what they do and what they love to do. Yeah. Oh there've been lots of but I mean you know I get very caught up in permit fishing. You know when I was could just stay and fish and I didn't have a lot of family obligations and permit are really interesting fish. Very hard to catch very alert to anything going wrong around them like a fly line in the air and they're hard to land and they're beautiful fish and they live in beautiful places and they have beautiful life habits and ways of feeding their ways use use of tide in their migratory habits. So I really get caught up in those that my my enchantment is over my lifetime has always been brown trout. Well. I think growing up in Michigan you know that was the fish you know and I used to go into these cafes and northern Michigan and there'd be a big brown trout on the wall and I could barely eat my meal just staring at it or thinking about what it'd be like to catch one like that. Not quite as absorbed in the sizes of fish anymore as I was then. So I love brown trout but I've had some just great experiences steelhead fishing and Atlantic salmon fishing. All of them are great. The state I've been able to do enough steelhead fishing I've done it for 30 40 years. You know I know how to do. I just a do it yourself-er. And I kind of know how to do it. Most of the Atlantic salmon fishing I've done has been a guest of somebody or with guides and things like that and a guided situation, the guide is about 80 percent of the fishermen. So you're missing a big part of the experience if somebody tells you where to cast or rows you to the spot. So those are great. Those were great.

**Thomas McGuane [00:08:39]** I had a phenomenal experience fishing in Russia with a guy suffering from PTSD who'd been the war in Chechnya three times and it was done as well as bonding experiences wandering around this Siberian wild Siberian landscape. So all of them kind of go into that kind of menu of memories. I guess we like to make memories as fishermen but you never know when something great is going to happen and a lot of times it's incidental to fishing you know. We were we're floating the new fork. This last week there were there were golden eagles right on the riverbank eating fish and they were big powerful hawks and they didn't care if we get close to them. They weren't afraid of us. They're going to finish their meal. We saw a bald eagle being assaulted by a fledgling prairie falcons. And the Bald Eagle would tower up. These young prairie falcons get

around to kind of harass it and the bald eagle would roll up into a ball and fall vertically. The Falcons have fallen down he'd pop open with his talons up try to get one and then he'd resume and go back up again. That was great. It had nothing to do with fishing and we didn't fish while all this was going on. We just stopped and waited for this to play through. You know but none of that happens unless you're sort of there. I mean it's like Woody Allen said you know 99 percent of life consists of showing up. In our involvement in nature is the same way. I mean you've got to show up you've got to be in it. A lot of the stuff I bird hunt all the time but I don't want to shoot anything really. But I have to have a game to play to get me out into those otherwise fairly unpleasant places, windblown remote places.

**James Thull** [00:10:36] I'm it's I'm drawing a blank on who said it but there's a quote Maybe fishing for me was just an excuse to be near rivers and if so I'm glad I thought of it.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:10:46] Yeah there's a lot of it. That's all, you know that bookcase over there I started collecting those books years ago was a series series of books that I forget I went through two or three different posters called rivers of America series. You've seen those books. You know where they were they would assign and you know they might have you know they might have just make this up Sherwood Anderson do the Ohio you know and then they each one of the mostly very distinguished writers they decided to do their river. So now they're I don't know, before that thing went out of business in the 50s or something. There must have been sixty or seventy river books you know. Delightful to read. I mean you know because every one of these rivers you know civilization was mostly around rivers. Either on seacoast or rivers. So if you're around rivers you're we were floating the Yellowstone yesterday and I remember this great story because we passed right by it. There was a wagon train coming out here and it was going very slowly. And a Protestant minister and his son just got impatient. They said we're not going, it's going to take us forever to get to Bozeman at this rate. They had guards and everything, we are just gong to walk on ahead. So they set out on their own and they were killed by Sioux Indians just down by Greycliff and buried on the site when the wagon train found their bodies. Well in the late 1930s the grand nephew of the minister said I wondered where my great uncle and my great cousin or whatever you call it are buried. And he came out here in a car and he hunted all around. He found the graves. And now there's a mark there marker there. Or if you go down to mission creek here see where the old mission fort was. I mean that's where that's where several of the scouts who were killed Little Bighorn were last to this part of the country. You fish right by that stuff you look up and you think. Or here there are two Vision Quest sites on this ranch overlooking the West Boulder river. I often think cause we see lots of signs of Indian life on this ranch. I often think you know we're going to live our lives here. But you know those Indian children used to play along this bank here and look for fish and throw rocks and skip stones and you know all these spirits you know doesn't take a lot of imagination to sort of visualize previous human lives in these places and you just think about those things when you're fishing. It's kind of like looking into a fireplace you know it's just some kind mnemonic thing happens. Gets your thinking into an area that's very hard to access and you're kind of busy life when you're doing other things.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:13:33] Yeah I think I like. I really like them all. In fact there was a book that came out about rainbow trout. Did you see that one A Wholly Artificial Fish?

**James Thull** [00:13:40] Yes. Yes. That's an I. Yeah. Yup yup.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:13:43] And Patty Limerick at Center for American West sent to me and I said I said I'll read it. But I said it looks like another academic spoilsport trying to ruin our fun.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:14:04] I think there is you know I think there's a certain amount of folly that devolves from this desire to kind of reestablish native fish. Sometimes it's plausible like what they're doing in the upper Shields now. Other times when they talk about sort of rodanoting the mission creek system get the brook trout and Brown Trout out of there. I just think you know we're past that point in history and also we're not indigenous to start with. The neighbors down here had this big pond they build, in fact a place I used to own a place down there had a big pond the California owner built mostly fed by an irrigation ditch. It was a great big pond and he built kind of a little barrier he stocked it with Camus rainbows. In over 10 years a little tiny brown trout got through into the system grew up and eat all the Camus rainbows. So. You know what. I don't know what that rainbow book really kind of annoyed me because it's not. I mean Brown trout have been propagated all over the world. That's how it is. I mean it's it's like English sparrows and just shit happens you know.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:15:26] I think there is but it's a little bit about it's a little bit of a museum sort of issue because they're very vulnerable to fishing pressure. You know you have to protect them not only from other fish but you have to protect them from virtually every other kind of pressure. And I think it's a great thing for them to find a way for them to go on existing. But if you think you're going to make them the base the basis of recreation. That is not plausible.

**James Thull** [00:15:52] I agree. Do you think that the national parks like Yellowstone's program of restablishing is that a good place to go.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:15:57] Yeah. That's a good that's a good place. And then it requires pretty vigilant control. The things that impact them you know I mean you know they're not there to support fish fries for tourists. You know I mean but they're beautiful exciting fish we catch them in the Upper West Boulder and I mean the fall of year I mean they're more colorful than tropical parrots. They're just gorgeous things. And it's a it's it's kind of a privilege to get to see them or touch them. And it is exciting when it happens. Down this far we rarely see the really pure when we see a lot of hybrid rainbow hybrids.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:16:47] I think probably my dad, I think. You know he was he was pretty keen you know but he was my father was an alcoholic. So we you know he sort of you know as I get more and more excited about it his sort of health problems sort of phased him out of it. So I was pretty by the time I was about 12 I was on my own devices as a fisherman and I was just interested in any kind of fish. I mean it was. Trout Trout were kind of fantasy fish for me at that time. I mean it was by the time I could get around. By the time I got a driver's license all that changed. I had a I had a 49 or 50 Ford. Six cylinder motor. It was just pimped out to go fishing. Just had fishing stuff where you could sleep in it. And that you know I just your fact at that point my dad started getting worried about me. He said Jeez, he's just not normal. That doesn't seem to be interested in girls. You know he just wants to go fishing. And I was very interested in girls but first things first.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:17:58] Not much I fished I fished all those northern lower peninsula streams so the Pigeon, the Black, the Au Sable, the Pere Marquette, the Boardman, the Pine, the Betsy, the Bear, the Muskegon, I mean I just lived for those rivers it was fantastic. Maybe it still is. Callan Wink guides over Livingston is from Northern

Michigan. In fact it for a long time, I don't know whether it was because the pressure on Michigan in our lifetime kind of took it out of being that the wilderness paradise that we knew it as is in the 50s and 60s. But this place is full of Michigan fishermen. You know and all in recent time Doug Peacock, Jim Harrison and me. Richard Ford, Callan over here. The guy that invented the elk hair caddis. What's his name. Anyway, all these people came out here and I think it was because everything they fell in love with in that zone started to go downhill and they were looking for it again. You know I mean I think there's a little of that. You know I had a little slightly different relationship with it in that my family are not from Michigan. My father's my family are mostly from Massachusetts. My dad was there to work. People like Jim Harrison's stuff had big families back there. So when I when I get out of the house in my late teens I really never went back. My my girlfriend's father had a ranch in Wyoming I worked on those ranches near Cody in high school and I just want to stay here. Somehow I did. But. I could be happy fishing in lots of parts of the world.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:19:59] I got this great book. I hope it's in your collection and I think it's maybe, a collection of Tomelleri's paintings but it was a crazy thing to do it had to do with the artist's peculiar passion to paint all the fish of the southeast. You know those little riverine fish to the southeast have you seen that book. I think so. I think it's called Fishes of Alabama's actually.

**James Thull** [00:20:24] We do we have we have that. Yes we do.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:20:27] Well it's a beautiful book, isn't it.

**James Thull** [00:20:30] Yeah. Large print, hardcover.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:20:31] I mean it was a crazy publication idea of just because the artist said so I'm going to do this because I'm interested in it. Nobody else probably supported the idea. But I had a had a friend an acquaintance and I was working with a bonefish tarpon trust group. He was kind of our director. He had been the chief ornithologist. The state of Massachusetts. And then he became the ran Ducks Unlimited and his offices were in Memphis news a mad fishermen trout fisherman stuff. But he got caught up in all these little fish that are of the kind that are in that book these beautiful little sunfish, that he lost interest in every other kind. He had something like a tenkara rod and he went around looking for piscene beauty in the forms of these little freshwater streams in the southeast. I have a I have a writing friend Ron Rash really a great writer who living in the same area, his family in the same area in Appalachian from around seventeen hundred have hardly moved at all.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:21:37] He just fishes around there and there's a little funky little stream Brook trout stream wild streams. Very sophisticated guy he doesn't really feel he needs to go anywhere else. You know. Well. Yeah probably because it was a pretty old fly fishing tradition in Michigan. You may remember that. A little bit less than the UP as you know all those classic rivers in the northern lower peninsula. But there were some strong feelings that I talked about a little bit that night which was you know these guys were sort of dry fly fishermen. They were catch and release people. I remember, and this couldn't have been any later than 1954. My father was adamant about how you handle fish. You don't take him out of the water and you don't kill fish and that's a long time ago. That's 60 years ago and there was pretty strong catch and release attitude then and people were very interested in not harming fish when they fished. And I had a I had a father in law back at that time who love to catch as many as he could and fry them up for them and have a shot of whiskey in the morning. Fried trout and whiskey for breakfast. That was the deal.

So there were other views of this but you know the sort of elite anglers were all kind of catch and release guys. You know it would be nice but as a matter of promoting it to do that I'm not a big believer in that. I mean either people are attracted to it or not. I was talking to Callan Wink when we floated yesterday. He said that he finds on average the women that he guides or are much better fishermen than men they're with though their technical skills may not be advanced. They always seem to catch the biggest for the most fishes so they're just the better fishermen. He said innately better fishermen.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:23:42] So I wish there were more women in it and we when I was on the board of American Rivers we had this whole issue I mean how do you attract people in the inner city to river issues. We made all these connections like [unintelligible] a city that somehow or another an inner city that cleaned up its river had abrupt drops of crime rates and all sorts of good things happen. On the other hand I don't see how you do it with an outreach program. I think you can do it by either on the libertarian basis making them an attractive business component of the fishing industry, or you make sure that women understand that their. Women or minorities understand that they are welcome which I think they are. But beyond that I think there are things that women would rather do, you know, and men would rather do and the idea that we have to act like we were all raised in a Petri dish and are uniform in our wishes I think is just another PC fantasy that's going nowhere.

**James Thull** [00:24:47] From just about every guy that I've ever talked to. Bob Bob Jacklin you name it. They say women are much easier to tease teach to cast than a male any day. And I think it was John Bailey who was saying that Brad Pitt brought more people more women into fish and fly fishing than anybody else with A River Runs Through It.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:25:08] But that you know is funny about that when I was on a plane one time with a guy who had a fishing operation after the movie came out and you know I gave that book to Redford.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:25:20] And he said after the movie came out you know he said the big seller is fly shop which was on Spring Creek in Virginia. So the big seller was Creels. And I said well isn't it catch and release? And he said Yeah but they just want to wear them. Adams is, you know I mean it is kind of the universal dry fly. I love to dry fly fish if it will work. You know I'll change if it's not working. But. You know I just get tired of fishing the same fly all the time and I'm fly tyer so I always want to do different things or make stuff up or it it's kind of mildly creative thing to do. I have a friend I was fishing over on O'Dell with he's been fishing there for years and years. And he always just ties on a parachute Adams and just never changes it until wears out and he puts on another one that's what he does all summer long. And. I think that works just great. I mean it's the universal fly and then the other reason I feel a bit attached to the Adams is one of my first Rivers was the Boardman where the Adams invented and.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:26:33] I remember when I was a kid the guy that tied the first Adams was a barber in Traverse City and he else tied flies on the side and he had an attorney client from Ohio that came up fished the Boardman every summer, the lawyer Adams and so that he sort of requested this fly. I think the I think the original version of it was a sort of downwing thing it was really a caddis fly imitation. But you can do so many things with it always looks right it's always buggy I mean you can tweak it in lots of different ways. The parachute Adams is great for us old guys because we can see it. The regular ones after but 50 you can't, it's impossible to see and it's a beautiful fly. That's the other thing. Well anything that's tied. I mean I think the Adams, all those Catskill flies you know

those you know the. You know the sulfurs and the original classical flies are usually up up wing divided wing classic Catskill ties which we don't do anymore for two reasons. They're not as good. We like our flies kind of be more flush on the surface of the water. Those are the most beautiful flies and they're very hard to tie. There's a Mike Lawson pattern called No Hackle dun. Which type of duck wings. Well last year when I was laid up I broke my again broke my leg again. And so I was determined to learn to tie that fly and Mike Lawson so if you practice and practice you can do it. And it's so hard to you take these little segments of duck wing you could roll them in your fingers until it turn into a perfect little may fly wings.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:28:24] You have to be careful not to shred them get a kind of a half hitch. Anyway I tried for two months to tie them, I couldn't do it. And I was trying all the time and then I have a friend who's a great fly tyer. He lives on one of the Catskill rivers and I confessed to him I couldn't do it. He said I can't do it either. I mean there and the other thing about him is shows you how frivolous we really are. These things are perfectly really look like you know with flies. They just look like a mayfly. And two casts they shred. They probably work just as well but all everything you tried to do, after the second cast is gone and that doesn't stop anybody.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:29:10] Well. Mike Lawson. AK Best. AK Is probably the best fly tyer ever. What's the name again. You know the guy down in West Yellowstone just did a spring creek book.

**James Thull** [00:29:32] Um, I do know... Parks?

**Thomas McGuane** [00:29:32] No not Parks, no I'll think of him in a sec. But he's a great fly tyer. He's got a shop down near Mike's shop. You know I there was a big two volume thing fly. Tying flies of the West. Remember that thing was book that Jack Dennis did years ago. That's where most of us who came out sort of in my era learned to tie flies. You know Jack Dennis couldn't find a publisher for that so he published it himself. I think he's told me he's sold 600000 copies. I mean New York any publisher in New York would've gone over the moon to have sales like that on a non fiction book.

**James Thull** [00:30:09] I'm looking to meet with. I've talked to Jack several times on the phone and I'm hoping to meet with him a little later this summer.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:30:18] That was that was a real watershed book. But before that the book from my you know with Charles Fox's books were the ones we just love. Those were all Pennsylvanian limestone driven books. But the book that really was a game changer for my era was.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:30:35] Ernie Schwiebert's Matching The Hatch. I still have mine with all my Michigan notes and things or somebody with no local paper would publish a couple fly patterns. I cut it out, paste it into my Matching The Hatch. That was a big important book to us. First thing would be a lot of people you fish with you realize right early on their aim is to out fish you. That that those go those are crossed off the list right away because then you start. The worst of it is that you may go back to trying to- Tessie shoo shoo shoo shoo shoo shoo shoo. You'll start getting competitive yourself you know and I don't want I mean I want to catch fish but I don't want to start thinking you know Bob's got two steelhead on the bank already and I haven't had a tug. That's just gonna ruin the experience. So you like to get away from those kind of people. Yeah. I also like people who kind of want meet up make make a little bit of a plan then go they go fishing. You

know they don't have to hover around talk all the time. I like to talk. I love talking and I love to talk about what we're doing, but when I'm fishing I don't want to do it. I want to go on. I have a friend that I've fished with over in Ennis and he's just always right next to me while fishing mattering away. I missed a lot of strikes floating on the Yellowstone because we're trying to talk about literature. This guy I fished with yesterday also fished with Jim Harrison and he said every time we've got a huge take on a big fish Jim would be hunting for a cigarette. I'm not sure I know what I would say but I do think this is an ansular that I do think one of the good things about.

**Thomas McGuane [00:32:36]** This tenkara fishing is that it gets, this is Chouinard's point of view about this, is it gets people straight to what fishing is actually about rather getting into some preparation. What Frued would call sort of perpetual student mode where you're really thinking about the gear and where can I get this stuff. Should I use Flora carbon and all these other things. I mean you can, a tenkara rod really can help people find out what they actually want to fish or not. Chouinard is here a lot and he was giving a lot of people, a lot of the girls, women tenkara rods. And they would go out they say oh my gosh this is great I'm catching fish right away. And then within a day they'd say You know I'm really not interested in fishing. You know alot them to instead of going into a long process where they wonder if you ever get one or what it likes what it's like to feel one, they find that right away they get kind of excited and they think this is really great but it's not something I'm into for a lot or and some of them said I want to keep fishing.

**Thomas McGuane [00:33:40]** They were much the minority. Most who said this is a riot, what's next kind of thing. It's global warming. I mean I think it's I mean. Global warming. Loss of habitat. I think those are the two big ones because I don't see fishing pressure as it in of itself as being a threat to them. I mean it's not a commercial fishery so there's not a there's no specific tragedy of the Commons it's sort of besetting the trout and salmon world. I worry about too much of trout and salmon fishing being taken away from the general public so that the stakeholders are reduced to a smaller number of privileged people who can just change their minds about whether or not they want to do it anymore or care about it anymore. I think one of the things that's great about Montana and the Montana stream access law is that it be very hard to overturn the fisheries in Montana without a major battle. But if say a hedge fund manager manages to tie up a whole river. And then does what he pleases with it and decides he's really more interested in automobile racing or something, he can take that river right out of play because he has the right to you know you could in Wyoming for example or you could in Colorado these places where the rules are different. And we're floating a pretty wild river last week you can't even drop the anchor out of the boat.

**Thomas McGuane [00:35:37]** You can't step out and wade. You can't do anything. And. So I think we're in better shape that way up here because we have the constituency for our fishing. That's a very substantial. I think American Rivers just because it takes a position. There their their stake is in the river itself. Whatever use it is but keep maintaining its quality just as it is a natural system. You know without saying you know it's to be for white water rafters or it's gotta be for trout fishermen. I saw a bumper sticker the other day at an old ranch truck that said I don't care if you do fly fish. So you know there's this little polarization back there, you know. I mean all these all our friends that ranch around here and I get lots of them, a lot of Norwegian native ranchers and stuff like that. None of them fish. And they live right on these rivers. You know my good friend my partner on this ranching stuff here he's probably got three miles of the Boulder.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:36:56] Well I think the problems are the same as any writing. You know Henry James said that writing only has one obligation and that is to be interesting. The, the thing that the reason I've written about fishing from time to time as I get sort of excited about something that happened or some passion I have some aspect of it. In my book *The Longest Silence* the title story that was about trying to figure out how to catch a permit. So it's this kind of quest thing. But you you find that you need to sort of get your obsession off your chest and you haven't even defined it to yourself. So the writing becomes an attempt to understand what you have strong feelings about. And if you don't have that, you either can't you have nothing to write about, or you're reduced to satire. I remember when I first started working for *Sports Illustrated* I got a good job for Jim Harrison. He was living in Michigan, starving to death. And he wrote a story for *Sports Illustrated* called ice fishing: the moronic sport. And he got death threats from yahoos in Michigan. But I mean at that point in time he was reduced to satire and it was pretty easy to satire ice fishing. Well you know it's, I've lived here just about a half century now. And it's really the only thing that is at my fingertips in terms of familiarity.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:38:42] This kind of spaciousness lightly populated equality in most of the state. We don't have a million people yet, do we?

**James Thull** [00:38:49] Are just over.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:38:51] Just over? The fourth largest state in the union. My county never passed that frontier threshold. Still there there's one simple somebody wrote about the frontier said this one. This is one of the counties that's basically held together by the little brown U.P.S. truck. So I like having a lot of room around me and I know I'm on the awards committee for the American Academy so I got to go back to New York now more than I ever have in my life. And one thing I notice and I like going there but the thing I notice about it is how inconvenient everything is. I mean I'm used to taking a leak when I feel like it. New York, you got to do some planning. But also I'm standing in line, making appointments to do things. 90 percent of my life is just pretty spontaneous. You know if I need you know we started haying up here. If I get some questions about that I'm just up and ride the 4 wheeler over there to find the guy we'll talk about it. It's just it's not encumbered. Life here is not encumbered with with with with. You know queuing up and applying for things, filling out forms. We don't do much of that we're just gonna go on about. The downside is that for somebody in my job a lot of really for a lot of professional people's it's hard to hold an edge when you don't have a lot of people that are you know I've talked to I had a friend who was a Stanford educated lawyer. Practiced in L.A. Moved to Bozeman. And he said with each passing year when he talked to his old colleagues back there he realized he was getting slower and slower.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:40:43] And less informed about law. He said it's just just not somebody that holds your feet to the fire all the time. And one of the reasons I did volunteer for this thing. I'm on this committee with Anne Tyler and John Guare. *Six Degrees of Separation*. They're really sharp people. I gotta really be on my toes when I go back there. So it's a little bit of a tune up you know time to time. And then in this environment it's easy to miss that. And living on a ranch you know if you're indoors it's assumed you're shirking your duty no matter what you're doing in there. I try to do most of my writing when they're indoors too. Otherwise I'm embarrassed.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:41:34] Of contemporary type or ones around now. Well you know I like John Geirach because he's is as interested as the rest of us are about the material of fishing you know. Basically it's about life. And I remember one story he wrote. He was

staying in a trailer with Archie Best and there were some campground fishing near a river. And he just remarked sort of incidentally that I hear that they hear a voice from the neighboring trailer. A shout. Leave my mother out of this. You know I like fishing writing that could include something like that. You know what I've read it. You know I've read Archie and Nick Lyons and all those people. Charles Kay Fox who wrote in the 50s I liked a lot. I liked, I liked Schwiebert as well. But I also read all of those earlier English books. G.E.M Skues all those people.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:42:36] And H.R. Jukes a river- a Loved River all these kinds of things that are that I've had this kind of conversation with Lefty at the time. Lefty he thinks there two things: how to do it and fancy writing only two categories. And the trouble is I mean if you look at some of the older how to do it fishing books I mean it's all obsolete. You know it just has a pretty short shelf life. So the difficult thing in fishing writing is to write about what it feels like to fish what fish. What it means to fish. How fishing is connected to other aspects of your life. Everybody's everybody's lives who encounters it. That kind of writing is what really most appeals to me. And as I sorted through all these books I kept a little shelf of books that I. There's a writer. Russian writer from the last century Aksakov whose writing I really like and it's all just about the strange world that he lived, in fished in. Chekhov was a fisherman. He'd written pretty good stuff about it. It's always about the experiential end of it rather than the technical end of it. Really there's, and I think that's where this tenkara movements come from as discussed the the technical end of it you know. You know I read these reviews of I Love kit you know all the stuff that goes with it. But you know they talk about trout reels and talk about the drags and they talk about you know that they don't need direct drags they need to click you know but there is this whole thing about five hundred dollar trout reels that are got these drags that will stop a freight train and nobody ever says why would you even want one of those. I mean a metalist with a click is does just great.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:44:29] I went down to Tierra Del Fuego with all these guys had this pimped out sea trout equipment. Had Bogdan reels and they had all sorts of stuff and I had these big medalists. You know that cost 30 dollars apiece. They're made on loose tolerances throughout. Snow I mean sand and wind blowing all the time. By the time we're there three days all the reels quit because they that close tolerances couldn't stand the grit stuff. For my medalists were roaring on and never took care of them. They got a little stiff I just jump 'em up down the river in that free up again and off we go.

**James Thull** [00:45:04] One of the things Bud has always told me is a fish doesn't know whether you're fishing with a 60 dollar rod or 600 dollar rod.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:45:12] And you know Callan said the other day he said. He said. These days given the stuff materials that are available there everybody it's almost impossible to make a bad fly rod. You know I I love fishing with Lefty. Part of it is because he's had such an extraordinary life. And he's such a kindly soul you know. And he seems to be. He seems to be driven by a kind of very broad based love. It's either the people he knows his late wife, the fish, the technology of fishing all these things he kind of brings this kind of benevolent glow to all this stuff and. You know when I've fished with him I was really infected by that you know. And he can show you little things without sort of correcting you you know. Just he just loves to share things you know.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:46:28] So I really like fishing with Lefty you know. You know a lot of. I like you know a Brokaw I fish together a lot but Tom's very competitive. Yvon Chouinard is very competitive. Some people you know Lefty is not competitive at all. I

mean I was talking to somebody he'd led a group this was like 20 years ago he led a group of people down. A lot of them were not very good anglers, took them down to someplace in South America and they said they realize the end of the trip that he'd helped everybody but that he had never gone fishing. The whole time. So he's he's a he's a guy that's that's fun to fish with. Let me think who else I fished with that's sort of renowned. I can't think of anybody. I mean you know we've been doing this book- These bonefish and tarpon movies. What do they call- buccaneers and bones movies, and they always have movie stars on them and things like that. Sometimes it's kind of embarrassing I won't name them but they they clearly can't fish the. You know you get these native guides out there they know who they are and they just know they can't cast. I did want to say something about the diversity issue. Let's go back to this for just a sec. One of the things that fascinated me when I've gone. I haven't gone to the Bahamas in a while but.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:47:56] When I first was going down the Bahamas it was like you know it was like going to Africa or something. This was you know 50 60 years ago. You go to Andros it was really primitive. Subsistence farmers and commercial fishermen and never the twain shall meet. The last few times I've gone down there you know these kids have been going on these black kids and going on ESPN and learning to tie flies and they can all double haul. They can all cast one hundred and ten feet and they can all find fish and read tides. I mean they're really sophisticated anglers and they're really really passionate about it. So you go into these all these little cocky towns and in the outer islands and there'll be a kid that can cast like Steve Rajeff. You know it's so you know I really could. There's a there's a. There's a fellow in Bozeman, I'll try and think of his name. His wife has the big nursery along I90 just as you go into town. [Unintelligible] Yeah. He's been going to Cuba. This little town in Cuba. Remote town in Cuba teaching kids to fly fish. He's been doing this for about, I'll think of his name hopefully while you're still there, he's been doing this for about 15 or 20 years. And they have- now they have a fishing club in this town they're all fly tyers they will build their own rods. If anybody comes in and starts wanting to fish, they're gonna be the guides. There's another fellow I know who's got a lodge in Andros. Young guy really interesting guy and he's gone up to these remote rivers in South America to have these gigantic fish I forget what they're called but he's trained these local Indians how to guide and how to how to protect these fish and how to make a living guiding. So these are really remote places to go out these on the outboard on a canoe for a half a day to even get into these Indian camps. He's been going in there teaching them how to fish and teach him how to appeal to people. And it's amazing how they willingly they take up fishing. I really notice you know. On a book tours of stuff in Europe and remote places I mean we don't speak the language. You run into fishermen you're fine. I mean everybody finds a way to get their points across.

**Thomas McGuane** [00:50:31] Well the only thing that I mean I don't know what I would add. The only thing is that. I just would like people to realize that if they find a way to fall in love with fishing that they have acquired a responsibility. This is a glaring case of there's no such thing as a free lunch. And that if you take. If you take a purely extractive view of fishing, you're not a real fisherman. You just you're just a rural recreationist. And so I like to people understand that it's a two two part deal. I mean you in there and you know you're not there to hammer the fish and go onto the next river, you're there to understand and to understand the fishery and understand what your little voice can do to make sure that it stays healthy. We're kind of enlightened at least semi enlightened that way here in Montana. It's not that way everywhere. It's a message that needs to go a little further I think.