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John Porter [00:00:11] Bud taught here for Approximately 10 years. And we became very good friends and and and then I I helped him set up his tackle shop there in West Yellowstone. And I actually built some things for the shop then I helped him out periodically in the summer. And that's pretty much my my acquaintance, we were our families were good friends. We we hunted a lot together, but Bud wasn't really into fishing much here when he was here. But, in fact when he

John Porter [00:01:08] First went down to West Yellowstone before he bought a tackle shop, he he and a friend, he and a friend set up a temporary carwash and they were very very busy. And I think that's when he learned that the tackle shop was for sale. So. Or probably with the family or through Yellowstone Park in the thirties.

James Thull [00:01:45] In the 30s.

James Thull [00:01:47] So. So speaking to you and you've spent a fair amount of time time there gone through there on a regular basis over the years.

John Porter [00:01:54] Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

James Thull [00:01:56] So what what have you seen in your lifetime of visiting the park and going to the park. What have you seen change for better or for worse.

John Porter [00:02:04] Well. Of course the yellow the yellow buses. They were 14 passenger. And and we were.

John Porter [00:02:16] We were stationed at four different spots. We carried are our sleeping gear in the bus. And then we were assigned different runs the following day. And then that gives some free time in the afternoon place. But we did do some driving in the afternoon for short tours.

James Thull [00:02:44] And what year were you driving the bus down there?

John Porter [00:02:47] 52.

James Thull [00:02:50] 52. Do you remember much about when you went to the park with your family when you were a kid? Has it changed much over the years.

John Porter [00:02:57] Well the big change of course is the traffic. You know, I assume they still have bear jams. But I mean I, when I first rode down there they didn't discourage people too much from feeding the bears. And and I remember one afternoon I had, there was a place around the lake where it was a sow with three cubs. And that was a real bear jam. And this woman was trying to get her kid, about 7 or 8 year old kid, to go over and sit on one one of the cubs. I said lady.

John Porter [00:03:46] You're asking for trouble I said mommas around here someplace and she'll be here shortly. Well anyway Momma always there and a cub went up a tree. This is one interesting experience I had. And of course we told all kinds of, well not lies but stories. And. Well actually the park has not really changed much. The... The canyon, new hotels, this type of thing. But actually. Well in fact my wife relatives were here two three

years ago and I took them to the park. And and actually, it hasn't changed much. Really hasn't. The buildings is the primary thing that has changed. A lot of it is still there.

James Thull [00:05:00] Now when you were younger going through the park where they still have the dumps where the bears used to come and feed? I've just heard stories about it.

John Porter [00:05:09] Oh yeah. But then about the time I left here was when they really start that. Really made an issue out of feeding the bears. And and in fact driving the bus I should've just reached under the seat and I had a rag there and I would hold the rag out there and the bear would come up there figuring there was something to eat. Well I had it in gear ready to go. Soon as that bear got too close, I took off. But that is kind of a thrill for the passengers. But you see, the tours have changed so much. They have, you know, bigger buses now. They don't use the old yellows. And they're, oh. I can remember going to the depot at pick up passengers. The UP ran a special up to West Yellowstone. And I don't know how many buses. They hold 14 people and there's quite a string of buses to haul all those people and then we'd haul them to Old Faithful that day. Then the next day and depending on the type of tour they signed up for, we'd go to the canyon. Pretty much that's the highights of the park is the canyon and Old Faithful.

John Porter [00:07:03] Well you see we're off the afternoon. Many, in fact when... Well. In West Yellowstone, almost every afternoon we were off and I'd, to kill the time, I went fishing.

James Thull [00:07:23] Do you remember what kind of fish you were catching?

John Porter [00:07:26] Well I was a rain rainbow and... What's the other one.

James Thull [00:07:34] Cutthroats?

John Porter [00:07:35] No. Well yeah. some cutthroats.

James Thull [00:07:37] Brown trout?

John Porter [00:07:38] Brown. Browns and rainbows. And they were nice fish, you know. Of course I didn't keep them. But back when I first went fishing I brought home several fish and Bud said what are you going to do with those? And I said never thought of that.

John Porter [00:07:59] So he convinced me right then and there that hook and releases was fine. But one business he did have there that he would freeze the fish and ship them. And he had, he bought a lot of cardboard boxes. And then the Salt Lake paper was distributed there in West Yellowstone. And they they'd bring the papers that didn't sell over to him. So what we do, you put 'em in for a quick freeze and then we take the cardboard box, line it crumple up the newspapers and so forth and put the fish right in the middle. And then also put a block of dry ice on top of the fish and then we stuffed the box just full. And they would last two to three days. So it very lucrative for him to do that. And that way the fish weren't wasted.

James Thull [00:09:09] Sure. Were they like trophy sized fish, that kind of thing? Or was it just eating fish?

John Porter [00:09:16] Not necessarily. They were nice sized fish, you know, two pounds or. The bigger little depending what they caught I guess. Yeah. And then he always had a fish on display out in a cabinet. And then he had, he kept dry ice in there. And that really, people would see that fish in there and a real four or five pounder So he sold alot of tackle.

James Thull [00:09:44] I bet, I bet. Yeah.

John Porter [00:09:55] Oh it really changed. It's really built up. Many many more motels and hotels and so forth. And of course they have a resort tax there now. And 2 or 3 percent something like that. Then they, the city then was able to put in a lot of sidewalks and pave the streets and so forth. So it's not the the Wild West you might say it like it used to be.

James Thull [00:10:33] So what brought you to Yellowstone to drive the buses in the first place.

John Porter [00:10:38] I. OK I had the summers off. I was teacher. And I worked as a carpenter during the first summer. And I said heck I don't need the money. Somebody said why don't you go drive a bus in Yellowstone its a good It's a good summer job for you and kind of a vacation. So I applied and that was it.

James Thull [00:11:07] You get to meet people from all over the world.

John Porter [00:11:09] Yes. Oh yeah. It was really interesting is having people from the East Coast. New York and Delaware and forth and of course it was a lot of fun just being with them and learning a lot and so forth. Thinking back, there might of been a few but I just couldn't comment on it really. There's very very few I'm sure. But I can remember several loads you have would be office workers. The the women, office workers. Often. You get a load of those.

James Thull [00:12:00] The office workers were non-were European or?

John Porter [00:12:07] No. Most most of the people were Americans. Oh yeah. The foreigners I don't recall having very many of them if any.

James Thull [00:12:21] Well that would have been about what six seven years after World War Two right? You said fifty two is that correct.

John Porter [00:12:27] No. Oh yeah. Right yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

James Thull [00:12:31] So yeah I suppose Europe and Asia both were still.

John Porter [00:12:36] Yeah they. Well you didn't see many. Though of course now you go to the park and its almost half.

John Porter [00:12:42] In the Pacific. I got in you might say in the tail end. I was on Guam on an airbase where we. There, it was completely rebuild an aircraft. By the time I got there, they didn't know what to do with all the new airplanes. It was sad. It was really sad. After the war was winding down or over, one or the other, they just load them all up and dump them. Dumped in the ocean. And they did that with so many things. OK you take military vehicles you know at one time they were in really demand you know Jeeps and so forth. And they dumped them in the bay. They didn't want to destroy the American

economy by flooding the market with surplus vehicles. And and that was the reason. And when I remember the shop that I was in there, my gosh. We just loaded stuff up and put it in the back of the weapons carrier and take it down.

John Porter [00:14:11] Dump it in the ocean.

John Porter [00:14:12] What branch of the service were you in?

John Porter [00:14:14] Navy.

James Thull [00:14:15] Okay. Yeah. My grandfather served in World War 2. He served in the Pacific. He was a Marine machine gunner. Served on Iwo Jima. Few other places.

John Porter [00:14:26] He was in the thick of it. Yeah. No I that I was in too late, really. All the Japs would send a nuisance airplane over once in a while. I can't think what, what were they... I can't think what they called themselves. No any, nobody ever was shooting at me. So. I was just there. I was very fortunate. Immediately immediately. Oh yes. I was discharged in June and signed up for MSU that fall. And of course, there were so many doggone GI's there. Oh. I was very fortunate my father went over there and he had lined up place for a good friend of mine and myself to live. And you can't believe some of the places the guys people had to live. You know Bozeman was a pretty small town at that time. And they, and then and a lot of- they didn't care about school. And the second year, most of them were gone. Good percentage of them were gone. They weren't interested in really learning something like most of us were.

James Thull [00:16:11] .So I'm guessing you went under the G.I. Bill is that right?

John Porter [00:16:17] Oh yeah. Well I got my college education out of it. So that was great.

John Porter [00:16:21] You'd never know it was the same campus. Main Hall. Oh yeah. They're very there are very few buildings on campus.

James Thull [00:16:42] I'm guessing Montana Hall would have still been there. Romney? Would have Romney gym.

John Porter [00:16:48] Oh yeah. Oh yeah. You see that a carbon copy of the one that was in Missoula.

James Thull [00:16:54] Oh I didn't know that.

John Porter [00:16:58] Yeah most of them were identical.

John Porter [00:16:59] That was the gym. It's called Romney Hall now?

James Thull [00:17:04] Romney gym. It's still Romney. We just call Romney.

John Porter [00:17:09] Yeah. Well it was the gym. And while like I say its hard to recognize campus.

James Thull [00:17:20] Can you tell me anything about what the library was like back then.

John Porter [00:17:26] Library. It was in Main Hall. And it was quite small. And one day had sticked in my mind. You had climbed stairs to go up to it, and every step was cupped.

John Porter [00:17:49] Curriculum. And that's that's where UM is in trouble now. Because the, the engineering school, you know they can make a good living. And okay, liberal arts you have a hard time making a decent living. Fortunately a lot of the science is there, all sorts of stuff. You know I in fact I was raised two blocks from campus.

James Thull [00:18:27] Oh I didn't know that. Yeah. Missoul's far fallen on some tougher times.

John Porter [00:18:31] The thing is they're blaming all kinds of people for it. Heck, the enrollment is down. They have to quit. And it's too bad too a lot of that, a lot of that curriculum... a lot of people want to learn. Well I hunted and fished through the years. And the thing is, what's happening as far as hunting is concerned in this immediate area especially. [unintelligible] Well anyway, the people....lost my train of thought.

James Thull [00:19:31] You're talking about hunting.

John Porter [00:19:32] Oh hunting. Oh yeah. These are moneyed people. They go out there and they buy a ranch. Huge ranches. And then what do they do. They post all of the land so.

John Porter [00:19:47] In fact that area I used to hunt I can't hunt it anymore. It's all posted. These people, this one fella for instance, you went by it coming here. Anyway he he doesn't raise cattle. But he doesn't want anybody hunting on his land. OK what's happening is the deer and elk know where its safe. And then they got a real problem right now. You put up a crop of hay, guess who gets it? And I talked to a fellow the other day and he said those doggone elk its costing me a couple thousand dollars worth of hay. He says I can't build a fence to keep them out. Okay we have the state prison here you can't hunt there. And then you have three huge ranches. And they're all posted. So it's kind of ruined our hunting. And then of course fishing. My dad was an avid fisherman. I you might say. was raised with a fishing pole. And and you would, there was no limit on fishing then. Well yeah there was a limit. Twenty five. Unless you went up to a mountain lakeand there was too many fish in it, you take all you want. In fact that's still true. But Missoula has a lot of excellent streams in the vicinity.

John Porter [00:21:44] And the Bitterroot's one of them. So I became quite a fisherman. Flies and spinners. Those two things.

James Thull [00:22:02] So would you say if anybody brought you into the sport fishing would, would you would you say it was your dad?

John Porter [00:22:10] Oh yeah. My dad. Oh yeah.

James Thull [00:22:12] Was that just kind of a tradition in your family.

John Porter [00:22:14] No. My my folks were originally from Indiana. They moved out here in 29. And things were pretty tough then. But anyway. And one reason my dad came out here he said he liked the mountains and you know the streams and so forth. Glad he did.

James Thull [00:22:40] Yeah. Well it seems like a perfect place for somebody who wants to hunt and fish that's for sure. Yeah.

John Porter [00:22:47] Well you know I like Bud you know he had a guiding service for years. He and he had an excellent reputation in fact a couple of his boys helped him guide at one time. People come here, came over here to fish even from foreign countries.

John Porter [00:23:15] Trout.

James Thull [00:23:16] Trout in general.

John Porter [00:23:18] Well. I can remember my dad, he used to go to a lake north north of town here that you catch cutthroat. But anyway. He ate you know he caught. And it did not make difference if it was a rainbow or a brown trout. Itt tasted the same I guess.

James Thull [00:23:43] You guys eat a lot of harvestable game when you're coming out when you were a kid? Deer, antelope.

John Porter [00:23:50] No. Dad was not a hunter. No he was a bird hunter. Ducks and geese.

James Thull [00:23:57] So what got you into hunting?

John Porter [00:24:00] Well. A lot of people this is, this is the thing to do. And well like I say we'd go up to Flathead and and [unintelligible]. Then of course here a lot of a lot of my friends they grew up duck hunting. And we tried to find somebody that wanted to. Yeah we have too many televisions, is the big one. That is the big one.

John Porter [00:24:41] And fraternal organizations. They're dead. Most of them are dead. And well the Elk's Club is really doing well here in town. But the rest of them are all non existent.

John Porter [00:25:08] Oh I'd like to be round the kids and I like. See I was an industrial arts teacher and the kids can see what they've accomplished. And you're sitting in a math class. And then. You know. But anyway I just I just enjoyed it. It is my hobby. And.

James Thull [00:25:34] Did you have a teaching.

James Thull [00:25:36] Philosophy, a way you approach difficult students or or what you wanted them to get out of your class?

John Porter [00:25:45] Well yeah. In fact we had we had vocational schools in the major towns in the area. One in Missoula and Helena and Butte. Kids that were juniors I would take them to one of those schools and expose them to OK if you want to be a carpenter or an electrician or whatever, this is where you go. And a lot of them took me up on it. And I have kids... They're about as old as I am now. Anyway they say, you know I still use a lot of the things that you taught me. And it gives you a lot of satisfaction.

James Thull [00:26:42] Sure that's some of that stuck with some of them.

John Porter [00:26:44] Right. Yeah. Well then I think, I didn't realize it as much then as I do now. A lot of these kids did not have a good home life. And I kind of, I was kind of you might say, there are two or three kids they come up to me and say well you saved me.

John Porter [00:27:21] Well I kind of thought at one time. See I was an electrician in the navy. I thought well maybe I'll pursue that. They started in that curriculum in Bozeman. And. Then my dad was a superintendant of schools in Missoula so you might say born into education. So anyway. And then, well I just. thought well I think I can still be a teacher. And helping kids really made it worth it. Worth a lot. You know when I was, you know, younger. you know, there weren't as many people then. Uh. Missoula was a town of fifteen sixteen thousand people, and it changes a lot of things. I can remember.

John Porter [00:28:42] Going fishing with my father, if there was somebody out there we'd go down another mile or so so there were nobody around. You can't do that now. Well I kind of I had to give that, if I had leg problems now and so forth. And I took up golf and, that kind of puts fishing... But. No I fished [unintelligible] the whole area around here.

John Porter [00:29:29] Big hole.

James Thull [00:29:30] Big hole? What makes it special to you. Just just good fishing.

John Porter [00:29:37] It's good fishing, good fishing. And its not that crowded lets put it that way. Rock Creek this side of Missoula thats the premier stream immediate area. I haven't been there [unintelligible] its a smaller fishery. Same thing's true with hunting. too. Same thing true with hunting. More people, more people hunting. I guess they have time to do it. Deer and elk.

James Thull [00:30:25] Deer and elk? Bird hunting at all?

John Porter [00:30:29] Oh yeah. I used to do a lot, used to do most all of those things. But I am not really able to do all those things now. Well anyway, the bottom line on fishing is they limited the bag limit. Course that's preserved the fishing. You can go fishing now and catch fish. And it got to the point there were it was pretty difficult to catch fish. He's the number 1 angler in the country as far as I... Every time you hear something about fishing, Bud's involved in it. And he was a real promoter. Like I say hook and release fishing that was his thing.