

revel-george-2017-12-10.mp4

[00:00:10] Will you tell us about your role in the Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club?

George Revel [00:00:10] Yeah. So the Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club was founded 1938. It started being built in 1933 as a WPA project and it was sort of the Casting Club and grounds that a club San Francisco Fly Casters Club that was casting on Stowe Lake decided that they wanted to build and apply applied to the WPA for and there was actually a schism between the San Francisco Fly Casters wildly enough wanted to be more interested or were more interested in trout fishing and they brought up property up on the Truckee River and then the Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club spun off that club to create what we have here today. We have a lodge, three ponds, and a couple acres here in San Francisco. It's a pretty special and incredible place. I came to know the club when I was maybe 10 or 11 years old. I grew up outside of Redding and would come down for casting competitions. I was a competitive caste. And I decided to move to San Francisco to go to college in 2006 and the clubhouse was a huge part of you know my happiness. Being in San Francisco is being able to come here and hang out and a great group of people. And then in 2000 and uh 11 or 12 I became president of the club. The membership had really taken a a drop and you know we're down to three or four hundred members, and so it it needed a lot of sort of transitioning into the new era which is you know we're not sending you know mailing mail newsletters and just kind of total new approach to how we look at getting new members and you know can probably say we got that up to about 900 people and which was a huge huge thing because the club is losing energy and and people were just kind of dropping off and so to get that new blood in here is so important to a club because the folks who've been doing everything for a long time they get tired of doing this. You just you have to have that flow of new people. And so this this place it's it's very special to me. I really enjoy coming here and the people are great and the lodge is amazing and it's it's pretty hard to beat.

Interviewer [00:02:22] How did you get interested in Angling?

George Revel [00:02:28] My so when my brother and I were very young 8 or 9 years old my parents got a divorce and uh it it was one of those things that was probably a lot more difficult than it needed to be. And my dad's like I gotta get you guys focused on something. So we found a couple of fly rods in the garage. Some old bamboo and fiberglass rods. We grew up on a creek called Cow Creek. It was full of smallmouth and started tying flies and that led into creating uh a fly tying business where we tie all flies for the guides in the area and then they would show us how to fish and um and take us out if they had a half day trip. So you know it was kind of this. We were at the right place in the Redding area in California where we just had fishing all around us and there's a large fishing industry up there. And then we got into casting. I mean there's every facet of the sport sort of right right off the bat really was interesting to me. On the fly tying, the fishing and the casting, the rod building. You know I kind of went down all all the avenues and and people from other areas so there was this gentlemen from Long Beach moved into the Redding area and he he became a very significant person my life. He was our casting coach and just a really good mentor. Guy Manning. And helped us work on our casting it's actually how I've found my way to the casting ponds as we came down here for a Northwestern tournament and we won best of the worst. We were in C level at the time and my brother and I both you know were kind of one in two in that casting division and a very young age. And then that led to uh we started going to the fly fishing shows in the area. So the IFC shows and the fly fishing only shows and we would have casting competitions there and my brother and I were both pretty consistently either winning or placing in the top three in the men's

division and the casting competitions and with you know no joke people you know Steve Ray Jeff and you know Jerry Seam and things like that. And Orvis decided to sponsor us and so we traveled all over the country doing demos and store openings and so I just got to meet so many amazing people through that process and was was lucky to just kind of be mentored by, you know, dozens of really incredible people that are you know some of the greatest names in fly fishing. So I feel very grateful for uh to the fly fishing community on how that all happened. So.

Interviewer [00:05:09] What do you find special about fishing in California?

George Revel [00:05:16] Oh California is the most diverse state I've ever been to. I mean I fished I fished all over the world. I've been everywhere and I still would rather be fishing in California. I uh the cold water springs coming off the Mt. Shasta, gin clear water that's been underground for 10 or 15 years popping out of the ground and creating these massive rivers with really healthy ecosystems uh is pretty extraordinary. Um that's that's one thing that I really like. And then steelhead you know, my my wife's from Montana. She keeps trying to drag me back to Montana but it's pretty far away from steelhead and tying into coastal steelhead that are especially wild fish that are genetically evolved to be in the rivers and the situations that they're in is probably one of the most incredible experiences I've found in fly fishing. And that's that's here in California. We've got a really cool invasive species called the striped bass. It's really fun to catch what we have here locally in the Bay, that the you know it's it's a it's a cool cool fishery albeit invasive. It's it is a cool fishery to kind of get your fix. Salmon fishing is really incredible. You know you go up into the Sierras and you feel like you could be in Montana or Argentina with just the mountains up there and it's just uh just it's the diversity. I mean you can have so many different types of fishing experiences in California, and being in San Francisco specifically it's kind of everything is equally far away with the exception of the striped bass fishery that you know I can drive five hours or I can fly five hours and can be anywhere. So it's kind of you know whatever we feel like doing it's all kind of the same time committment.

Interviewer [00:07:07] Is there something special about catching a native fish in its native water?

George Revel [00:07:13] One hundred percent. Yeah I have no interesting catching stocked or a hatchery fish. That's not me being an elitist or you know I don't I don't look down on people who are you know into that, everyone's into their own thing. But for me personally, looking at the features and the shapes and the coloration I mean that there's something so cool about that and looking at how fish evolved into into the area where it lives. And. Yeah I it's just I can't I I don't know why that's that's my case but that's one of the coolest things about fishing to me is is finding those fish in the places that they evolved in. It's becoming rarer and rarer and harder to find. And maybe that's why I'm so fascinated by this because you know who knows how long how much longer we're going to have them.

Interviewer [00:08:03] How important are national parks to the preservation of native species of fish?

George Revel [00:08:09] I you know I think it does play an important role. You know I see questionable decisions made in national parks quite often. You know we did a project this wasn't in a national park, it was in a state park. And we do stuff in national parks too but where we're taking scale samples of fish to find just close to genetically pure golden trout that we can find in California. And as we're doing this process the State Department Fish

and Game is going in poisoning lakes that have trout in them because that they're know sort of the thought is that they're eating the Yellow Legged Frog. And without doing any genetic testing or anything like that to see what types of stock fish they might be killing they're just sort of doing it. And you know we we might find that the last refuge of genetically pure fish had already been poisoned or you know you just don't know. But I do I think that the idea is good, it could use quite a bit of refinement as to how we manage the fish as well as you know state forestry. You know there's a lot you know there's no logging policy on in national parks. I'm not advocating we log it but I do think that things need to be managed a little bit better out there especially timber with bark beetle and with with increasing drought in California. For every I don't want to get the quote wrong but essentially the concept is this for every degree of temperature change or half a degree or we're seeing 1 2 3x on acres burned and in the West and so that's something that I think is we're going to have to play a big big part of in the next next few years.

Interviewer [00:09:57] In the near future do you see any threats to trout and salmonid habitats? Do climate change, overfishing and pollution pose risks?

George Revel [00:10:03] Everything. I am twenty nine years old and to see. And not not to get political, we're very politically active as a shop owner and as a conservationist is. You know California is the largest agricultural producing state in the country. And so not a lot of people know that. So we have not only do we have 38 million people in the state, we have some of the most diverse landscape around, and we also have the largest agricultural producing area in the country. And so water and agriculture go hand-in-hand. You know that's it's really important to to understand that. And and I think farming is getting more and more sustainable in part because the cost of water has gone up. But what really worries me is it's not as much the farmers it's our diets. And you know as the population grows, we can't eat the same way. And so I think it's one of those things that even myself being as aware as I am it's pretty hard not to order the steak. And so but I've even started eating a lot less meat. And it's something, I grew up as a cattle cattle rancher. So you know we raise cattle I never thought I'd say eat less beef. But the fact of the matter is is it's so water consumptive so damaging to the environment that we need to eat it with less, you know it needs to be a special occasion. You know we can't be eating steak and burgers every day. So that that's that's what concerns me the most is because I don't see the population generally caring. I think a lot of people in our peer group care but the general population isn't that clued into what they do here affects everything. And so that's part of my part of my mission at my shop is to get as many people into fly fishing as possible because we start connecting and really connecting with those waterways and those places the mountains. You feel it at home. I mean you you know you you flush the toilet and you're like you know where did that water come from. You know it's in it's connecting people in the city with the you know the outdoors. You know that said you know you can save more water by in one meal by saying I'm not going to eat a steak than changing your showering habits in a month, right. I mean that's you know in California we have this whole drought situation like oh you know we're going to have the restaurants aren't going to give you a glass of water at at at dinner you know you have to ask for it. Well that's the dumbest thing ever right. I mean we need to drink water. So telling people to stop drinking water and imagine that's going to have some effect, it's really not. I mean the agricultural is two thirds of all water consumption about 70 72 percent water consumption in California's agricultural based. And so you know we can make some changes there that'll really really affect and in a positive or negative way. You know it's it's important. And then other than that I mean the sort of climate change denial thing you, know we know that that these gases are having an effect on on the atmosphere and warming like that that's been studied and proven. And just to see that that exists out there and the resistance to change and uh do the right thing

for for our planet and our country and our states is it's it's tough to see it but you know all I can all we can do is try and keep trying. And so you know we really try and get people anglers who are going out and spending money in rural communities to let people know that they're there for the fishing and that they're booking that hotel room because they're there to fish and that the resource that river running through that that area is important to that local community. And so and you know we're we're looking at ways to kind of connect the loop where we can get people in rural communities to understand that and then also advocate for it. So trying to figure out a way to make it all work. But it's it's not easy on any of the answers. I just see a lot of the problems and want to help some.

Interviewer [00:14:19] Will you tell us about the fly shop you started?

George Revel [00:14:25] Yeah. So man it's been a, why I started is sort of a tough question to answer but if I had to sort of distill it down is, I had a self-imposed deadline on my life which was if by the time I was 25 I wasn't on the path to something successful in fly fishing I was going to get out of it and get a real job and do it as a hobby just like everybody else. And you know because of the Bay Area this isn't an easy place to live financially, right? So it's you know there's sort of a financial component to it. And um on my 24th birthday I was working at a company called Leland Fly Fishing Outfitters and things weren't going well there. We had a property in Sonoma and it was kind of on the wind down and so I I decided to leave there and uh I gave myself I don't know six months to kind of think about what my next step was. And I was still president of the Golden Gate club here and so I put a lot of time and energy into that for that that period of time and what I kept seeing was that without there being a fly shop in San Francisco, it was making it harder for people to go fishing. And it's already hard to carve out the time and to to go out and fish. It's hard enough. And so I want to make it easier for people to fly fishing. And that's and that's why we created Lost Coast outfitters was without a fly shop it just there's another barrier to entry into fly fishing. And so we wanted to create a place that beginners could come ask questions and not feel stupid and get good answers and and be comfortable. We wanted to create a shop that experts could come nerd out and look at stuff and and do what we do. And then and that cared about the environment and cared and promoted fly fishing. You know it's not about promoting gear or you know anything else, it's about promoting the art sport and and passion of fly fishing. And you know beyond that it's it's about you know creating that community. I mean we have a lot of community here at the at the club. But you know we're on one end of San Francisco. A lot of people spend their lives on the other end of San Fransisco in the downtown financial district area. So creating that little escape for them to to come out of their high rise building come down, talk about something that makes them happy, it's it's been huge. I mean just that building that community around the shop has been really cool. And so yeah I'm four years into it now. It's called Lost Coast outfitters and it's been one of the most rewarding things I've ever done. You know nobody is getting rich. We struggle every single day but we're we're really fortunate to have a great group of customers that make it a lot easier on us. And I uh I absolutely love it. I don't since I've opened my shop, I really don't feel like I've spent a day working. So it's been really cool.

Interviewer [00:17:25] Do you think it's important to diversify the sport of angling in order to get more individuals dedicated to the environment?

George Revel [00:17:30] One hundred percent. Yeah. Yeah my my belief is just making fly fishing as easy and as accessible as possible, you know. And I I don't I really don't attach attach too many different groups of people to that. It's just in general like young, old, different minority, different just different income bracket like whoever you are, I want you to

fly fish. Like that's my belief because it's like you said, the more people who fly fish the more people are going to care. And and that's what's selling a rod doesn't really get me out of bed in the morning, but creating another person who cares about the same things I care about it does. So that's that's what gets me fired up. And. Yeah I you know, I love seeing more women get in this sport. It's awesome. You know when it's been a huge shift in that in the last 5 10 years we're seeing a lot more of that in the industry. I don't think it was ever exclusive but it might just have been too... Maybe it was exclusive. I mean I'm a white male like you know we don't feel that as much as somebody else may. So I see it becoming at least more it's being broad and more people are getting involved and I love seeing it. It's such a huge thing.

George Revel [00:18:51] We don't want to be a old rich white guys club. We want to be a everybody club so.

George Revel [00:19:02] Absolutely. Yeah. I mean when we. Think a lot of what I do specifically is try and try and get people- do the research right. You hear bears ears was cut down on half and you hear companies making large statements about it but not necessarily explaining the entire situation. Right. And so I spent the other day. Eight or nine hours just down all these rabbit holes trying to figure out what was actually happening and what it meant and not from a political standpoint like you know I really try not to get caught up in the you know Republican Democrat thing. You know I just I don't think it serves anybody. I really don't. So I'd like to find out what the information is, what it means, and try and present it in a through the lens of the environment. And so that's my bias is is from the environmental lens and sort of from a what I believe is best for everybody which is that we we keep these places preserved and maybe that's because I'm a young person and I don't want to destroy them. You know I don't want to see them get destroyed and I want to take my kids there and feel like the last generation had that opportunity. We should too. But yeah. So we're very heavily politically involved and not just understanding what's going on so we can have conversations about it in a way that's not confrontational where you don't have a lot of the facts. You know I feel like the party line is Oh we did it this way and this way it's going to be on the other sides like well we don't want it that way. And so you just come from two very conflicting points of view instead of you know talking about the actual issue which isn't as black and white, you know. Nobody nobody likes to see you know the EPA's budget get cut. Right. Well while some people might feel like that's a good thing what a lot of people don't know is it about 80 percent of budget goes to just managing Superfund sites. Right. So that's a pretty big deal. We don't want to see them not manage a lot of these mining issues that go that were private sector companies that come in and destroyed a resource didn't clean it up properly and are now burdening us with that, right? Well they already got let off the hook. Somebody let him off the hook. And now the EPA is taking care of it and now we're going to take the EPA out of that equation and it's a it's a bad situation. So as a business you know I think a lot of the commentary right now is around creating jobs and things like that. And so I think as an outdoor industry, we need to be on that same page because we're a very very big industry. And the aq- for example is California's second largest agricultural producing state, er first largest state in the country. Industry somewhere around 68 billion dollars a year. The outdoor industry in that encompasses a lot of different things is 80 billion dollars a year. So I mean we're we're a force to be reckoned with. We create a lot more jobs. And and it's not as I mean nobody's getting rich in it but everybody's making a living. And so that's where I that's what seems good to me right. Like why do you need to be rich? Like why can't we all just make a living, you know. And why do we need to. Anyway. I think that's a little little bit off topic but as an industry, we need to show how much how much jobs and economic value we have and create. And I think it's important. I mean entire communities depend on on

fishing like the pebble mine what absurd thing to do. Right. You have this sustainable industry that is creating tons of jobs and that's going to keep coming back every year. And you want to jeopardize all of that for some for not a lot of jobs, short term gain, and that's going to create a Superfund site for you know that. Let them off the hook, like, crazy. Never should happen. And so we need to be.

George Revel [00:23:14] We need to be telling that story and poking holes in the arguments that are against it.

George Revel [00:23:27] You know I I am really big on what I call it.

George Revel [00:23:30] It's a concept of flow it's not my concept of flow but I read it somewhere I don't remember where, which is basically that you need to match the experience with the skill level. And so you know there's a lot of different places people can go they can go to our closest trout fishery which is Pewter Creek, but the fish there like the size 22 midges on 7 x Tippet and have PhDs in flies you know so it's not a great place to send a beginner. So we really like to put them in the right place. Usually a small stream right time of year at a time when they don't need to buy waders and boots and all stuff. They can go board shorts t-shirts three or four dry flies loop on a leader. So my my best advice is keep it simple. You know we really try and simplify it as much as possible it's not. You know I've worked in a fly shop I've taught people to fish my entire life and I you know as an instructor and a teacher you go through a lot of different phases and. Ultimately you know the phase that I feel like I'm in now, and I assume I'll stay in, but I don't know maybe it'll evolve but it's it's not about me as a teacher showing you how much I know it's about me as a teacher making it as simple as possible for you. And so we try and strip out a lot of the noise, you know. There's not it's not that complicated if you really distill it down to what it takes to catch a trout in a small stream. And and that's that's phase one. Get them to catch a trout in a small stream. They don't need a guide. They need to not know how to tie a clinch knot and change the leader and put on flow you know. So we want we just try and strip out all all the noise and make it easy, create a good experience with that matches their skill level and I get them to fish short. I mean basically they are fishing a fly rod like a tenkara rod. You know I've just kind of tapping it and I personally I'm not a big Tenkara person I know I'm just not something I do.

George Revel [00:25:29] So you know I feel like you can use a fly rod just like a tenkara rod. And it's really effective for beginners. They still get used to using the reel. Get the vision of a river runs through it like they saw in the movie.

George Revel [00:25:47] Yeah I mean I often hear that women are easier to teach. I've had it all I've had it all different ways you know. I teach here almost every morning.

George Revel [00:26:00] You know I probably teach 10 to 10 lessons a week or so. Yeah. Everybody everybody's different. You know my my favorite type of people to teach are, you know, former athletes or athletes you know they're very. From a casting standpoint they're very athletic. And then people who are open to learning because if you have it and I've had it with both men and women where they're there for the wrong reasons and they're not their brains are open to learning it's very closed off. And that's a very frustrating thing as a as an instructor is trying to teach somebody who doesn't want to be taught. And I try not to be in that situation very often these days.

George Revel [00:26:42] And I mean you try to break through that but you know sometimes you're just spinning your wheels. It's it's OK.

George Revel [00:26:48] You know it's it's I still get paid at the end of it.

George Revel [00:26:58] Oh well Russ Chatam, a lot of his short essays I really like and resonate with.

George Revel [00:27:03] He wrote a lot about growing up here in the Bay Area and the fishing and hunting.

Interviewer [00:27:09] It was in Dark Waters.

George Revel [00:27:10] Yeah Dark Waters is one and then. I'm trying to think what are the. He has another one. Well there's Anglers Coast he wrote as well. And then there's there's some various other short essays out there that were published in magazines and things like that. So he's he's fantastic. Jim Harrison who's also a buddy of Russes. I like Jim Harrison a lot.

George Revel [00:27:36] I mean McGuane is fantastic.

George Revel [00:27:39] I mean a lot of his novels are really good. Trying to think who else. Richard Brautigan.

George Revel [00:27:49] Yeah. You know I don't read a ton of fly fishing literature but I've read I've read a fair bit. But. Mainly it comes from a person being interested in a person. And reading the writing and sort of appreciating their style in the sport. Also Peter Matheson is really good. He wrote a book called men's lives about not specifically about fly fishing but it's about the fishing industry starting in the 1600s hundreds in Long Island.

George Revel [00:28:21] And it was really interesting. Sort of a sixteen hundreds to now account of the fishing industry of Long Island starting with whaling going to you know the striped bass and the cod and the wars between the guides and it was a really interesting book.

George Revel [00:28:40] Have I actually have a pretty significant library, and when you say author I'm thinking more whether it be fiction or anecdotes of authors books.

George Revel [00:28:50] But you know there's there's a lot of sort of reference books out there that I really appreciate and like as well. Though I I sort of I don't know that I've ever read one front to back but I reference them and. Doug Hogan's book as is really well done. Andy Miller's Target Book is quite good as well.

George Revel [00:29:16] Fishing. That's always, there's so many. No I mean I I would say one that would kind of sum up my my experience and and you know. There's there's tons of stories, this isn't like a particularly interesting one but more one that sums up what I like about fly fishing is that steelhead you don't you can't plan a steelhead trip. I mean you could certainly put one on the books but you know steelhead, to have good steelhead fish and you need steelhead in the river and you need fishable conditions. And those two things rarely line up and so when they do it's sort of a you need to drop everything and go and sometimes you're able to do that and sometimes you're not. My brother now lives up in and outside of Bend Oregon and he's sort of my my best fishing partner. He's you know we fish together since we were 10 years old and you know it's when you fish a lot with somebody that you sort of build a really good rapport and and enjoy fishing with them and

so you know we we drove he drove down in the snow, took about 10 hours, I drove up in the rain and it took me maybe eight hours we knew the river was going to blow you know that night the night next night or something. So we had basically a day of fishing and got out there and found a couple of fish and had a great time fishing with each other. So it was roughly 16 to 20 hours of driving for twelve hours of fishing but totally worth it.

George Revel [00:30:51] I mean just to be there when the fish were there and the conditions were right with the person that I like to fish with most was pretty incredible. Yes.

George Revel [00:31:10] I mean I think we touched on a lot of the a lot of the topics about. I feel like we're now more so at a crossroads you know more more than ever with how we need to be dealing with the environment.

George Revel [00:31:21] And if you're not doing anything about it, and you love the sport of fly fishing you're going to regret not doing anything about it.

George Revel [00:31:30] We all needs everybody. There's not one person that's going to make a huge difference. But it's you know it's going to be all of us together as an industry. And beyond.

George Revel [00:31:41] Beyond political party lines it's it's about us all agreeing that we love this these resources and that we need to do everything in our power to protect them.

George Revel [00:31:52] And and also realize that it's it's a communal resource. It's not it's not yours, it's not mine, it's everybody. So the more inclusive we can be in that process the better of a chance we have. So that would be my my two cents which I don't think is unique, but.