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Ted Rogowski [00:00:10] And my name is Ted Rogowski for voice recognition. And I'm going to tell my account of the earliest formation of Theodore Gordon fly fishers organization, a local fishing fly fishing organization, and the history of that organization as it led in part to the formation of the Federation of Fly Fishers the national organization. We're going back to 1960 and 1950s and what I'd like to describe about that era is we had just come out of really World War Two and young men had gone to college under the G.I. Bill and there was a restive air in the 1950s with people searching for assignments and life careers and so forth. There also was the development during the war years of nylon lines and a method of using those nylon lines to a spinning reel real and spinning reel posed a danger to the fishery which had been lying fallow sort of for a number of years during the war. And now spin fishermen came to the streams and they were competitive to the fly fishermen. So you had this kind of event where streams were being used for various purposes and a challenge to the fly fisherman and the fly fishing community. Now specifically and in the area of the Beaverkill River where most of us from New York City fished on weekends we had Harry Darby and we had a highway being built that was a great danger to the stream, and Harry Darby's viewpoint in that that highway and it was encouing upon the banks of the stream, silting the stream, and in other ways polluting the stream. Harry called upon a number of us young fellows who were at his shop on a regular basis to help by writing letters to Congress or doing something to protect the river.

Ted Rogowski [00:02:53] Four of us did respond and the four were Joe Pizarro and Walter Kehm, Keith Fulsher, and myself we met in 1953 at the Teddy Roosevelt restaurant to make some kind of determination to help protect the Beaver Kill River and these first meetings at the Teddy Roosevelt restaurant where really the genesis of the formation of the Theodore Gordon fly fishing organization. The problem there, you have an interesting situation. We we Harry was our spokesman and sort of our loudspeaker. During the first week we met together there were four of us. In the second week we had eight or 12 people come together. By the third week we had about twenty five fly fishermen who fish to Beaverkill who wanted to meet together and the person who owned the restaurant said you can't do this to me. I can't accommodate all of you. You come in at eleven o'clock in the morning you stay until two o'clock in the afternoon for heaven's sakes. My customers are complaining you've got it you've got to find another place. Well now we were rescued by the Williams Club and the name of my friend who is a member of the Williams Club escapes me right now. It shouldn't but it was Jennings who was a member of the club and we went together to Mrs. Humphreys. No it's not Preston Jennings. It will come to me. But the member of the Williams club spoke to Mrs. Humphreys and said he had a few guests that he'd like to bring with him to the club and she said there's no reason why you shouldn't have guests we can accommodate guests. And he said she said was it will there be four or six at table or two and he said well it may be more like 12 or 15. And she said oh my goodness the Williams Club is a very small brownstone. Twenty nine east thirty nine Street in New York City practically within Grand Central Terminal. It was most convenient place in the city for for meetings and that was part of this success of what happened shortly thereafter. But we did get permission to have luncheons at the Williams club by offering 50 cents more for a hamburger which was one dollar for lunch with coffee. And as soon as they had club meeting place was announced my goodness our membership soared. Now Trout Unlimited made an offer to us to become members of Trout Unlimited and we began the course to adoption of their application and we put in our name as Theodore Gordon fly fishers. Trout Unlimited amazingly rejected our application even though we already had 50 to 100 members and we were collecting dues and began at ten dollars a year. Most clubs and they said we could not have fly fishers in our title and we were put off by that because

what we discovered shortly was not only would they not allow fly fishers but they were espousing membership which would include bait casting would include spin fishing which we oppose because of the danger of spin fishermen to get when the competition is spin fishermen to the fly fishermen. And so we had really philosophical differences believing that the proper conservation method for fishing was to fly fish so that you could release the trout. And so part of this program was the concept of catch and release as well. So in the first year having our renewed renewable second let's say annual meeting we determined to divorce ourselves from the Federation of Fly Fishers and to have us a separate organization based on fly fishing exclusively and that was we were at that time still so one only organization but coincidental to this meeting was Lee Wulff's correspondence with people on the West Coast. Bill Nelson was thinking of a national organization having to do with fly fishing. So now we come to the year 1955. Two years after Theodore Gordon was well in existence. We our membership soared.

Ted Rogowski [00:08:54] We went to 750 members of the Theodore Gordon fly fishes which was almost unheard of. Within two years we were getting requests. How do I join. Where do I send my money. We had a treasury of three thousand dollars. We didn't know what to do with it but money kept flowing in and such.

James Thull [00:09:19] Ted were the members primarily from the New York area then.

Ted Rogowski [00:09:23] The members and this was a good question because we had members from Connecticut. All people who commuted to New York to work. We had New Jersey, Connecticut, and New Yorkers specifically and principally and so a important part of that membership is we already had announced we were protecting the Beaverkill river and within I'd say the first six months of our meeting, Joe Kleckner our senior mentor person who knew politics well had arranged for us a small group of us to travel to Washington D.C. We did meet with the highway commissioner the United States highway department. This was the Eisenhower highways were being built and this was a national network of major roads. We actually were able we arrived in Washington D.C. at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. We stayed until five o'clock. We had highway engineers called in to the meeting. We looked at the highway structure. Kleckner and Bill Herick pointed out this is a very important part of the river and you've got the road right practically on the stream side. Can you move it. And I recall a conversation with the highway commissioner to one of his engineers, can we move the road there and they said I don't think we can move it because this is shale rock formation. We'll have to do a lot of blasting. And the commissioner said well go ahead and blast it. It was that kind of a conversation where he was accommodating and we were accomplishing something. Now I could point to certain parts of the high of the river and the highway that there is a great stretch that's up on stilts sort of bypassing the banks of the river. But I can't say look Joe Kleckner's the guy who pointed that to that stretch and the commissioners said do it you know it was done but they were very accommodating and that's the kind of work we intended to do. One of the other projects we did within that first six months and I'm stressing conservation work because Walter Kehm was a conservationist. He said let's clean up the Amawalk river. Well the Amawalk is a little stream that joins two reservoirs in the New York drinking water system. Well you went to the New York State New York City drinking waters people and said We'd like to clean up the Amawalk. They said What do you mean clean up the Amawalk. Well we're going to put some log dams in there. We're going to fix that. Oh my God. You know you'll have to ask special permits. So we got 20 permits and we went out there one weekend with boots and shovels and modified about a mile of stream. And by golly it it really worked. So that was the genesis of the Theodore Gordon fly fishers. Now when you asked about membership what a strange thing that happened during that first six months

we were receiving applications. I remember an application from a club in Albany and a club in New Jersey. Can we become members of your club? And we were saying what do you mean members? Well we wanted to be an organization of a number of clubs. Well this was before the Federation of Fly Fishers was formed and we said no we're not we're not forming a national organization you've got to be your own club and do your own things and we'll be glad to help you. But goodness gracious we're not going to we don't have time and energy to form the hub of a national organization out of New York City.

Ted Rogowski [00:13:56] And so that was the... that was that was the climate of what was going on with local clubs.

Joan Wulff [00:14:10] You said at some point way back that you left the Federation of Fly Fishers and I think it was left Trout Unlimited.

Ted Rogowski [00:14:19] Oh yeah. We divorced ourselves from Trout Unlimited. This Guy Jenkins who is a member of the Williams club and Guy Jenkins is important.

Joan Wulff [00:14:31] Not Preston Jennings.

Ted Rogowski [00:14:34] Jenkins no Jennings.

Joan Wulff [00:14:35] Yeah ok.

Ted Rogowski [00:14:41] Now first I'd like to correct the name it was Guy Jenkins who was the individual who introduced us to the Williams club and Guy Jenkins is important because his father fished with Theodore Gordon in the 1920s and Guy met Theodore Gordon and it kind of accounts with a name Theodore Gordon Fly Fishers. We adopted that name to Ernie Schweibert who recommended Theodore Gordon as being one of the founders of fly fishing in America. And so we felt very kindly toward kindly disposed to that name. Now I describe that there was the attitude of forming forming a national organization and Bill Nelson I'd say in his communication with Lee Wulff were the progenitors of that for the new organization. It was an idea of forming a cohesive national organization of fly fishing organizations and I have the correspondence here dated August 26 1964 in which Bill Nelson says through Dear Lee Wulff to Bob Weather of the Oregon fly fishers I heard you are interested in a loose federation of fly fishing groups. It seems we have something of the same nature of that in mind here on the West Coast. So this was a letter that started that communication between East Coast and West Coast. The West Coast people feeling that if it's going to be a national organization it's going to have to have Eastern organizations joining the West. The letters and communication through Gene Andreg who is an important player in all of this. Strickland and the people on the West Coast the Oregon and the Eugene fly fishers club of Oregon formed the first of the national meetings there in Oregon. And that meeting is described in a tape that I'm presenting to you. You can go and make that tape part of your record.

James Thull [00:17:32] Wonderful thank you.

Ted Rogowski [00:17:33] And there in that tape you have actual scenes of presentations and speeches at the first conclave so that you have the individuals named and the speakers as part as part of your history.

James Thull [00:17:51] Excellent. And just for the record the name of that is Never Name the River.

Joan Wulff [00:17:56] Now Ted said there was no Lee Wulff speech in there.

Ted Rogowski [00:18:01] Well he's portrayed in the tape but Lee himself did not for some reasons speak at any time when the camera was running. I also have an early series of communications with Skip Hosfield who was one of those who did attend and Skip was the Oregon fly fishers so the Eugene fly fishers and he was at that event. And so he and I communicated and Skip is the one I believe it could have been Dennis who sent to me the collection of the bulletins of the Federation of Fly Fishers and I don't have number one but number two is here and consecutively each month's communication with members and I will determine whether we make copies of them or where we should house these. Other than that I have a number of documents which show the origination and the manner in which organizations communicate and join one another form their goals and purposes. And maybe we should discuss a little bit about one of the questions you've asked as to principle organizations today that are accomplishing or serving important conservation work in the United States.

Ted Rogowski [00:20:09] A strange you might say response to that question because what happened to the conservation environmental movement that was first conceived as the groundwork for forming the Federation of Fly Fishers and Trout Unlimited became politicized. In 1965 the federal government adopted the Clean Water Act. In 1970 the Federal Government formed the Environmental Protection Agency and I became part of that by leaving the federation program. And I actually became chief counsel for Stewart Udall as a number one water counsel in the Department of Interior. So I recognized for myself that if important work was going to be done in protecting the waters of America that it had to be done through the national government. And what happened then was a major program was undertaken to seriously clean up all the rivers in America. 19,000 sewage treatment works were built. Twenty billion dollars was spent by the federal government in cleaning up the waterways. Now this became important because these were the very waters that local clubs were were thinking of adopting as their cleanup program and now came Uncle Sam and did it for them.

James Thull [00:22:01] And as I understand it the federal government was largely involved in that by offering money to local communities to build these. Is that correct.

Ted Rogowski [00:22:09] Yes. Section 8 of the Clean Water Act offered 50 percent of whatever their local sewage treatment works cost to build sewage treatment works. And one of the problems we had in the Environmental Protection Agency was since these were subsidized projects by the federal government just like highways are being built by the federal government, communities were anxious and eager to build sewage treatment works. They were getting free money from the federal government to do it. And one of the disappointments I had in the recent subsidy program in 2008 is that the money that was given was given to the major financial institution the banks. And I kept thinking isn't it obvious to put people to work. We ought to build highways and we ought to build sewage treatment works and good things at the local level. And we have departed from that concept on the basis that we have a strong federal government now. And states are independently looking out for themselves. There isn't that cohesive effect but I'm not, Obama hasn't called me recently. I haven't been able to talk to him about that. But Joan has heard an awful lot of that now. Now one of the problems I see is what conservation work you you will see in the documents that evidence prepared that the first 20 years as a Federation of Fly Fishers we were the Federation was heavily engaged in national

programs and communicating directly with Congress and such about these programs and asking member clubs to communicate.

Ted Rogowski [00:24:16] I don't see that same attitude on the part of the National Federation today. Perhaps it's that we have less of those programs but we still ought to be communicating at a national level with Congress about where we'd like to have conservation programs adopted and from. And I'll leave this with a very cryptic statement. But I see the next election which is going to be very favorable, a challenge to the existing network of conservation laws that have been built to protect our streams and our wilderness area and I'll leave it to conservation program discussions. For my part at that.

Ted Rogowski [00:25:22] Well yes there is and fly fishing the trout is hooked with a fly in in the mouth so to say, and a hook can be removed and the fish can be returned to the water. So there is a natural catch and release possibility. The same may or may not occur with spin fishing or certainly not with bait fishing where the lure may be swallowed and the stomach of the fish or the gills of the fish hooked and fishes necessarily going to die if released. So it's fly fishing that gives you the possibility of release. And I don't want to go too extensively on this but I think the psychology of the sight of the fly fisherman is a very different kind of psychology. More more generous toward the quarry let's say than spin fisherman who's there to catch and kill and keep the fish. So you've got something that goes from the Hunter to the agrarian philosophy and the way in which the resource is used.

James Thull [00:26:59] So the difference between harvesting and sport.

Ted Rogowski [00:27:03] Yes yes. And it's it's strange that I could go on quite extensively but we were the Federation of Fly Fishing was challenged as being a conservation organization by the mail the post office director of Yellowstone. In that we were just a a a a fishing club and didn't have conservation really as our requirement to get free or less costly postage for our mailings. And I had to go all the way to Washington D.C. I was counsel for the federation at that time. I had to take the case all the way to Washington D.C. to prove that we were doing conservation work as fly fishermen. It's kind of a fascinating aside that kind of there's the concept of people not taking fly fishing seriously as a serious practice on the part of those who practice fly fishing.

Ted Rogowski [00:28:33] That is a concern and it's a concern both at the Theodore Gordon fly fishers level where we don't seem to be recruiting young people. And you just wonder whether fathers or mothers take their children fishing with them. It almost seems as though the boys and girls are doing their own thing and not adopting fishing in the sense that we use to when we were younger people. So a number of organizations I belong to the Anglers Club of New York has a specific challenge in bringing young young men into the club. It's a men's only organization. You've got the women fly fishers of the west coast the north west women which dissolve it's organization because they couldn't find volunteers to come in as officers of the organization. There's a Northwest women that I consider the strongest organization for women women fly fishers in the United States. They had over 200 members and they dissolved because they couldn't find people that come in with the same enthusiasm that they had practice earlier in their life.

Ted Rogowski [00:30:12] But let me tell you of an organization that's succeeding in bringing young people. The Boy Scouts of America they have adopted fly fishing as a merit badge program.

James Thull [00:30:26] I did not know that.

Ted Rogowski [00:30:27] And they have fly tying fly casting catching two fish cooking the fish or releasing the fish. If they released the fish then they could cook fish that they catch over the counter. And I have the figures showing that it's almost unbelievable. And two hundred and three. They had 30000 merit badges issued to boys.

Joan Wulff [00:31:00] 2003 start that over.

Ted Rogowski [00:31:01] 2003 and in 2012 there are fifty seven thousand five hundred merit badges issued and a fly fishing merit badge 2003. Well in 2006 there were 700 merit badge and fly fishing. And they've improved that program so that in 2012 that last year they had calculated there are 8000 fly fishing merit badges issued. They have jambories with thirty five thousand boys. And I attended one of those jamborees. And you see 100 boys lined up waiting for a fishing rod fly fishing outfits of which they are only twenty five fly fishing outfits and 10 instructors. But at the Jamboree that I attended there were one hundred and twenty five instructors senior instructor teaching boys how to cast spinning as well as fly fishing. And they Boy Scouts in their latest report have two hundred lakes and they're stocking at various camps throughout the country and they're going to stock blue gills so the boys don't have to wait more than 15 minutes before they hook a fish clever. They're not going for trout only. It's hook a fish and have them get that experience with Rod and line.

James Thull [00:32:39] I was a boy scout when I was young and that's where I learned how to cook a fish over an open fire.

Ted Rogowski [00:32:44] There you go. That's wonderful. But look let me question leads to organizations and what's going on. There are two or three organizations that are highly successful because they're financed at huge sums of money. The Natural Resources Defense Council is one of our leading conservation organizations. They have a staff of 200 lawyers and 100 million dollars a year in funding of which they're are 501C3. So these are donated funds and grant funds so the staff is a paid staff. They're not entirely or volunteer. The largest conservation organization financially we have is the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. Gordon Moore is a founder of Intel Corporation. Just like Bill Gates he has put 50 percent of his private fortune 2 billion dollars into funding a conservation organization which has the preservation of fish and the ecosystem of the West Coast as its goal. So there are there's that kind of money privately being given to conservation organizations and it's almost a challenge to the volunteer program in that. If you're serious about conservation you can even get a good job today in conservation either with the federal or state government or with one of these organizations that is well-funded.

Ted Rogowski [00:34:55] You had you had questions here about my film making with Lee Wulff. That was entirely Lee Wulff's program. I was a cameraman and we'll leave it at that. Yeah he had maybe three four five cameramen who variously participated in his films.

Joan Wulff [00:35:21] Not all at once whoever was around he said here push the button when I tell you.