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Tom Sutcliffe [00:00:10] I don't and I think what I really need to underline is your statement that that's a hard thing to put into words and as you know I know in many many fly fishermen out there know it's a question probably most asked in fly fishing why do we fly fish. And I guess the answer is lies in a combination of the most obvious. Why do we breathe in and out to stay alive. Why do you enjoy going out to enjoy ourselves. Fly fishing really just an amalgam of of joys that you either subscribe to or you don't. And if you do subscribe to them they have by their nature and rather strangely and more than just commonly almost an addictive property about them so that in a way Fly Fishing is a little like pregnancy in that it's not easy to be a little bit pregnant and it's not easy to be a little bit of a fly fisherman. We tend to fall into one side of the spectrum which is the fanatical type where we are preoccupied with the sport for the joys that brings us and find very few people who dabble. In fly fishing as a pastime. Just the nature of it. But perhaps that's the nature of many other activities in life whether it's stamp collecting or shooting clay pigeons or whatever it is we become consumed. And I think in fly fishing we become consumed for the obvious reasons and that the reasons would be being stated to you by many many people that you've already interviewed not the least on the list being issues of that Robert Travor made so famous in his testament. About solitude and about beauty and I think it was John Buchan who wrote that the endless. Opportunities that it provides the anticipation that it provides the the series of occasions for hope I think is the right quote from that piece. All of these things combine and with them come the amalgam of associated joys and endeavors by flyt tying fly tying art and my particularly interests are one of my particularly interest. Fly fishing literature. And when I combined it all together it's it makes the life experience more than just a hobby it's a it's a life style. Yeah I've noticed in my in my readings of fly fishing and I've done a considerable amount of reading that many many many many writers with few exceptions and I'll probably name the exceptions for you have indicated that they started fly fishing as a result of one opportunity at a time when they were young and and and that opportunity invariably produced something by way of a trout or a fish of some sort and captured them. And I think that that fortunately in youth we are almost neurologically programmed to receive impulses like that in various receptors in our minds that lodge very very easily and and with a level of permanency. And mine was one of those almost now cliched examples of how one becomes introduced to fly fishing by an event. And it was when I was 9 years old on a beautiful river with a gentleman who knew how to fly fish and lent me his bamboo rod cast the line for me and I caught a brown trout never ever expecting a fish to look so beautiful. It looked like it looked like a combination between a fish and a Keelan rug with all its bright colors. It was huge. I think if you put it between two slices of bread cooked you could have eaten it but it meant the world to me I never forgot it and I have never forgotten it. And that did set me on my course. But that's clichéd. Many writers don't really quote The the the impetus that began them fly fishing. For example if you ask me how Roderick Haig Brown started I don't know. I don't know how Robert Travers started fly fishing. I don't know how Frank Sawyer started I don't know how. Oliver kite started but people like James Bear, James R Bear. He writes. The American writer people like Ted Leeson frequently referred to an event in their youth a life changing event and it's an important thing to take note of because while our own particular events that introduced us to fly fishing are relatively unimportant other than to ourselves. The example and the principle that they set is very important. And that is that if you have an opportunity to take a young person onto a river. And introduce him or her to fly fishing you can be at risk at Happy risk of creating a life changing moment. And I'm always aware of that and I can think back on some moments where that I know has happened. Fortunately for me to other people that have taken on fly fishing from that point so well that it's a cliched start to fly fishing. It's a common one and long may it last.

Absolutely absolutely. You know when you get to my age I am now 74. I can see myself living through evolutionary stages and fly fishing. The Fly Fishing of the 60s in its cloistered kind of subset of an elitist group exploding in what I call the American Revolution in fly fishing. Because that's where it started. There was a sub revolution in England where we people like Bob Church and and others began salt water fly fishing and made it a sport for the commoner. The revolution in England in the United States was I think even more abrupt and I rather think that it was begun in part by the introduction of the magazine fly fisherman and along with that Sylvia Colabi's production fly rod and reel which brought fly fishing to common to common people and I refer to them as common people in the nicest way of the word myself being a common person. And that it was no longer out of reach at their various stages within this evolution I witnessed this evolution in this country vicariously because we lived on the back of the revolution that was happening in fly fishing in the United States. We lived on it through fly fishing magazine through fly rod and reel and and and slowly also through through visitations to the United States as a young person to Canada. And to other places. And since then fly fishing is now into the third evolutionary phase where on the back of probably mainly competitive fly fishing which has become an international sport and what everyone thinks about its validity from a moral point of view or ethical point of view and I have no doubt that it has a place that is introduced as a result of political change in the world it has introduced us to a wider spectrum of fly fishing techniques and opportunities. I say a political spectrum because beat before the cold war stopped. And the Berlin Wall came down and various other events took place which in fact were. Were events that united the West and the east. We discovered that the Checoslovakians and the Polish for example Hungarians to a lesser extent Serbians had developed styles of fly fishing which were unique to their own waters and to themselves and which we adapted to competition fly fishing proved extremely effective. And so now you see the development of things that you would not have thought of five to ten years ago and certainly in the times of Theodore Gordon and Le Branch people like that were unheard of. Jeremy Lucas's hand two leader fly fishing a fly line. Yeah yeah. I don't want to go into that it's not common knowledge amongst us all that that that evolution in fly fishing has taken fly fishing into a new into a new era. Whether you subscribe to it or not or not subscribe to as much as use it for your own benefit because you like it is a different matter. I personally like to cast a fly line and I would fish with other fly on the end of my line at fish or a fly without a hook a hook on it to fish just to rise them because I like casting on a river I like the challenges that brings this these new techniques. The French nymphing Euro nymphng thing and hand to leader nymphing and hand to leader dry fly fishing are different techniques which require. Less. Actual physically casting and and an approach which which is which is either very close. Up as in Czech nymph in right under your nose or under your feet or long distance away on 30 foot leaders in Euro nymphing or French Nymphing which are quite unique and would not really have been anything but totally revolutionary at the time that the fly fisherman in America came out and fly rod and reel came out. I can see Silvio Calabi publishing an article like that without raising. A complete storm in the United States. So yeah I've. I'm I must ask you to go back to the question you asked because I ramble so much on actually forgotten what you actually ask and then what you were after but I hope whatever it was that I've managed to answer to some degree. In the 60s 70s and probably into the 80s they were essential pivotal seminal and that has changed because of some of the major changes in communication in the world in digital format and so on. But if I think of my my own experience and the experience of people around me. We literally used to live for the next issue of fly fishing magazine and fly rod and reel. Not so much trout salmon because. And similarly English magazines because they were a step or two behind the American Revolution which which really combined not only extravagant descriptions of new techniques and methodologies but an extravagance of new tackle and new choices and

tackle. The new opportunities for different fly rods and and fly lines new tippet material different fly patterns and so on. So today it just gave a major put impetus. To not only the individual fly fisherman and his or her particular interest but to the tackle industry. It gave massive impetus and I believe that the effect I imagine the effect of those magazines in the United States and in Europe. And to a huge extent in South Africa in American magazines. Made a major major difference to life. I'm not talking so much about the softer articles. That appeared the stories for example that appeared frequently in fly rod and reel magazine for. The lovely column Anglish spoken here. That was written by Arnold Gingrich. Beautiful columns but there were very technical articles by people like Dave Whitlock Gary Lafontaine Tom Rosenbaum and people like that. I could go on naming them on and on and on but. They did also introduce us to some of the better the better writers and some of the reviewers. So excellent people like Frank Amato who reviewed new books and not only didactic books on fly fishing but but books on on on fly fishing which could be recorded as part of the literature of fly fishing. In a sense it's important from a literary point of view. As subject matter point of view and and that has been another subsequent revolution over the last 20 or 30 years it has been the growing interest in our heritage our joint communal heritage in fly fishing literature. I think that you ask what influence the magazines have had they've had a huge influence. The books that people like Frank Amato and Nick Lyons and later in scales publishing his son John brought out equally had a massive impetus. One thinks of some of the major massive works Schieberts Trout two volume trout all of these put together. Cemented a base that was preset to to the future arrival of social media YouTube and so on. Yes the magazines were important but equally the books and the literature were important. OK there there there are some obvious ones and there's some ones that I rather fear Americans are losing sight of and worries me. I'll name a couple of them. But the. If we if we put. Didactic books on fly fishing to one side. Because they don't really interest me a lot beyond reading absorbing some knowledge and putting them down but. If we go back to. The really important writers Roderick Haig-Brown. Robert Trevor. And more currently people like Scholmeyer Sherk, Ted Leeson, James Arbar, Harry Middleton on the spine of time Harry Milton with ease said life was just a magnificent writer and I can read those books and my wife can read those books for the sake of the writing. I said to you there are some American writers that I fear the Americans are ignoring. And have ignored . Think of one example yes Niggly Farson was an American adventurer and author. This forget about Zane Grey. Zane Grey was just kept clicheing himself in cowboy books and then writing about about high octane fly fishing for for for big fish. But but a person like Niggly Farson who was American born in 1890 died in 1960. Read one of Anglings classics. Going going fishing. No I don't see it mentioned anywhere in any list and I've recently read a list of top writers in America by an American on angling literature Niggly Farson wrote going fishing which of course is his famous work. He also wrote a two part life history autobiography the way of a tresspasser was the name of one of the books. The other one with reading if your a. Fisherman. Is. A. Mirror to a narcissist. By Niggly Farson there are other writers like that and I'm not going to go into depth about them. So I think I've become boring. But Niggly Farson is somebody who should be taken out of reps in American and giving more giving them more status than he deserves at least. Should stand alongside people like Roderick Haig-Brown and Robert Trevor and other writers. The English and European writers have really never met. Ever. The heights of the American. Writers in respect of non dedective writing one book that comes to mind that the English wrote which I admire greatly is Oliver Kites the fly fishermans diary. His book on nymphing is about a straight up and down as a strached shirt as is Frank Sawyer's book on nymphing. And there are some writers of course Lord Grey Featherton who did write books that were worth reading but they're outnumbered by the American School of good angling authors by a figure of probably 10 to 1.

Tom Sutcliffe [00:21:24] Well James I must tell you I think the biggest single change is that we have we have become a community so. Fly fishing is borderless now which it never was before. And I think that if one were to if one were to think of a collective noun for fly fishermen I would think that it would be a community of fly fishermen the word community kind of highlights it all because on the back of electronic media the world of communication expanded to the point where it shrunk the formal. Boundaries. Geopolitical boundaries to a large extent. So that's one of the major changes. The other advances that I've seen in fly fishing are far more obvious and they are generally a growth in the in the technology associated with tackle making. On the one side probably a defining moment being the the introduction of graphite fly rods in the 70s and following on that the introduction of better and better made fly reels and fly lines and leaders and materials and and Trout flies. So so those are major changes. There are other changes that that that that occurred in fly fishing at the time which which are. Probably as significant in a way. But but. But but all this. Probably newsworthy in terms of an interview like this I think for example discrimination in fly fishing has withered. And we become less selective about the presence of certain people. In fly fishing and the exclusion of others. And that pleases me greatly. It's one of the things that is perhaps most pleased me about fly fishing in my lifetime is to see the gender gap. Slowly disappearing. The racial gap. Disappearing and the handicapped gap disappearing. I've had the very good fortune and been honoured to have hosted three. Fly fishing days for handicapped people. And each of those was an experience beyond words. So those are among the major changes together with. Obviously. Just improved vastly improved communication networks and access to information. I mean existing information when when I was fishing in the 70s for example in still water reading books by famous. British Stillwater anglers like Tom Ivans Bob church and others. You know I. I just feel that that we've probably now got to a point where any child of 14 who enters fly fishing is not going to have the battle. That I and I maybe speak for you as well had when it came to deciding. About. A problem that you couldn't answer in fly fishing and that you can now simply Google I must then maybe mention also a growing. Feeling amongst fly fishers about the protection of fish that are caught and released. How to release them and understand their requirements. And the fact that their oxygen tolerance levels are lower than our own and so that when we lifting them out of the water we. doing so at a cost to to the fish. I had thought of another change that I wanted to mention but it's gone out of my mind at the moment. Maybe if we carry on it'll come back into my mind and I I can reintroduce it to you. But those are some of the major. Major changes that I see. It brings me to one of the concerns that I had that I didn't answer in the question that you pose and yes I think there is a degradation of the environment generally and we won't go into that because. Many scientists have done that on our behalf and are doing it all the way around from the top down in the top of course is climate change and and and the bottom is simple basic disrespect for rivers and streams indiscriminate stocking policies. The one of the greatest tragedies I think on the West Coast of the United States will see was that the cross hybridization of so many unique species of rainbow trout like the Colorado Red Band the Gila. And other examples of that. The introduction into this country of trout a hundred years ago would not be something one would think of today. With hindsight the knowledge of invasion. Invasion biology. And alien biology. But it happened and it's. I'm at peace with it at the moment. I. I decry. People who in this country try to put down trout with a veal that is. It's almost a messianic ferver to put down trout and it's all in it's sadly quite selective. There are far greater challenges to our country's environment than the presence of trout and it's almost as if we've now developed in this country in terms of trout what I called a green apartheid trout on alien not wanted and there is no hard concrete evidence that they are invasive. the the awareness of the degradation whether it's right up at climate change level going lower down is as up to now been being addressed I think very responsibly by some and not responsibly. Responsibly

by others. And I think if there is a single change the world needs to make not on behalf of fly fishing. But on the behalf of the wellbeing of our children and grandchildren it is. To learn to treat this planet with more respect and and with more care. And and I see signs of that happening that run parallel. With evidence that it is not. So it's very hard to make up one's mind. Where you. Where we are. In in this in a world split between the perpetuation of the bad and attempts to rectify the wrong. Yes I do. I wrote a book called Hunting trout. At a time in my life when I was managing. A massive Department of Health. With a 13 billion rand budget and employing thirty four thousand people. And the budget was crunched and we had just had democratic elections and I was placed in charge of the health of this entire province. And had been scaling down. Cutting back on the funding to academic hospitals providing funding to. Basic health services in communities that had no health services at all. It was a tough time and I. Would take great comfort in the evenings in recalling my experiences in fly fishing and writing them down which I did and produced a book called Hunting trout. I'd written two books before that my way with trout and reflections on fly fishing which were really. Far more superficial and a lot less praiseworthy not the hunting trout greatly prized praise really but it is a book that was much appreciated at least by one American in good standing Nick Lyons who wrote the forward for me and selected a piece from hunting trout to go into his book The Best angling stories ever told published by Sky horse printing which is probably. The biggest compliment I've ever been paid in my life in fly fishing to feature along side people like Hemingway Zane Grey incidentally we missed Hemingway way in our discussion of authors but we that the discussion of authors could occupy us for the next two or three days. So yeah that was a great. I followed that up with Shadows on the stream bed and I did a book on fly tying. With the principal aim of taking somebody new to fly tying. Into it. In a way that was almost bullet proof in terms of his or her understanding of it. and its proved a very popular book and I'm happy to see that you've got a copy of it there. It's never going to be a book that. Is going to rank highly in the world. In any way at all. But it has served in this country to introduce successfully a lot of people into the I think the rather magical and certainly most absorbing pastime outside of fly fishing itself which is fly tying. I think the motivation is very simple. It is really to communicate the joy of fly fishing to people in a way that is absolutely non-commercial and in other words you will see no adverts or anything of that nature on my website. And I keep it that way. There's a lot of photography in it. The only part of it that could be deemed commercial is that it features my books and my art my painting. But that is a small. Part of my life and in fact I. To be quite honest I actually dodge commissions for art at the moment because they are time consuming and I often can only paint when I have a mood. And so I and I have no intention of making my life in books or art. So my website is is he essentially just a communication of the joys of fly fishing in its many forms and fly tying. My newsletter initially was weekly that drained a lot of my time too much in fact and I then went over to a monthly newsletter which provides a service to anglers to sell. Used tackle provides articles on on on. Or. People who fished in various unusual venues. And describes my experience of the month before in fly fishing. And it's proved very popular over one and a half thousand more now. Monthly subscribers who pay nothing. And get the newsletter for nothing and I. Note happily that it now reaches 61 countries around the world and at one moment in time caused me a great moment of concern. I had a. I had a Japanese follower. And there are ways to determine where your newsletter is being opened in the world. Right down to whether it's Toronto and if it's Toronto what suburb. And prior to that awful tsunami hitting Japan I had a regular subscriber from Japan in a small town. The name of which escapes me at the moment I can't remember it but he disappeared and I feared that he was dead. And to my absolute joy a month or two later. Amid those images you will remember of course washing up the river. On high tide literally and buildings knocked over. He reappeared and was was safe. I am I have friends that I've made through the newsletter firm. Very firm strong friends I've

never met and that is one of the other joys great joys of fly fishing. I mean I now regularly correspond with a man called Nick Teranski who's one of Australia's great bamboo rod makers and incidentally. He's I think a wonderful photographer and author and we've shared. A lot on on photography which I'm very very keen on in fly fishing and we've shared a lot. I've got to to learn a lot about the fly fishing in New South Wales in the in the mountains in those areas and also in Victoria's State of Victoria beautiful streams beautiful trout and of course in Tasmania. So yeah. The newsletter goes out I get a lot of input from it. From people either asking questions or wanting further information or just saying well we enjoyed it and it has been a joy to to put it out and I will continue doing so as long as I'm able to. You know James that is such an interesting question that that let me let me just start by saying that my art began. At medical school. Where I will amuse myself in lectures by sketching trout. In the notes that I was taking from whatever lecture I was being given. It kind of helped soften the fact that I sit on a hard bench for four hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon. And. I sketched leaping Trout. Trout over pebbles whatever and then started doing cartoons of the various lecturers we had and found that I could sell those to my fellow students and made a little pocket money. So that's where my art started. And then. For a long time I was in general practice in medicine left no time for any art at all. I slowly started making time for landscape painting and oils then decided that I'd rather focus on trout in about the mid 90s. In watercolor. And I've just done it for the joy of doing it. I I I I would not rate myself as one of. One what is as even the remarkable artist in fly fishing. But it's something that I've enjoyed doing and I have my art hanging in houses in eleven or 12 countries around the world. And I'm just happy that it's there. I I like doing commissions that. I feel I want to do. I had a request recently from a mother whose son was turning 21 and who said that. He would like nothing better than a sketch of a trout that I had done in which I took great pleasure in doing for her. And that that alone is a lot of to I don't charge a lot of money for my art. I appreciate angling art though tremendously. I mean a person like the American Winslow Homer is just somebody I can actually just look at these paintings everyday and never ever get bored of them. I spent a night in Manchester Vermont. Slept under an original Winslow Homer. In the house of a man called Lee Perkins who owned the Orvis company and the wall was a Winslow Homer. It was a thought in my life I'd never see one. And I think art is very important. You will know and I know and it's now common knowledge that angling artists now started to to become more and more popular whether in the form of art as in painting or sculpture or art in the form of craftsmanship whether it's bamboo rod making and and and so on. But art is becoming more and more important. And I always feel that when that starts to happen to a pursuit. You know that it's a straight taking on a greater dimension. I don't know about the art in boxing or. Motorcycle racing or. Formula One racing but there is art in fly fishing as in painting or sculpture. And I and I think that is because people like to be surrounded by by images of. This thing called fly fishing. That we love so much.

Tom Sutcliffe [00:42:10] In nineteen eighty two a fellow in Johannesburg had managed to secure the orvis agency and made a mess of it and we drove up to Johannesburg and bought it from him and took it to where I was in in practice and living and set up a little shop called the Fly fisherman which was an orvis outlet so orvis appointed US as their agents without ever having met us. I subsequently in about 1986 went across to America simply to to cement the relationship with orvis got to meet a man called Lyman Foss who was then one of the marketing managers for overseas products of always fished with Tom Rosenbaum a wonderful honor for me met Lee Perkins who took one look at me and said Where are you staying and I said I'm staying at a Bed and Breakfast kind of motel and he said No you're not staying in my house and I've got to fish the Battenkill and became a great friend of his. We corresponded and I invited him to South Africa and he arrived with his wife Remi. And I met him at the airport in a town called Pietermaritzburg in South

Africa. He and Remi and I flew them in a light aircraft to our Montana of South African fly fishing which is an area called the Barker the east or the Eastern Cape islands and Lee when he got there I couldn't help remarking on how much it reminded him of Montana. It's an area filled with mountains and streams and high mountain peaks in the background like the Rockies. And I flew Lee down there on a in a light aircraft and we landed on a golf course much to Remi's. Absolute amazement she said. There's somebody teeing off on the runway. And anyway they had a marvelous time. And I then went back across and I recently fished a year ago with Charlie Perkins is the grandson. And Lee and I remained good friends when he wrote his book a sportsman diary. He mentioned his trip with me and Remi in aircraft to Bark east in the book and I was greatly honored. I've been very blessed and very honored in fly fishing well beyond what I actually rightfully deserve in terms of whatever talents I have. Fly fishing has been very good to me and I think it's a case of that I was just one of the people in life who came to fly fishing at the right time I happened to be in the right place at the right time. Otherwise I'm sure I. Would just be. Another fly fisher.

Tom Sutcliffe [00:45:29] OK. I think that you know all of us that that get to my age in fly fishing when you never know when the silver bullet is going to be around the corner and hit you. Have. Have an idea of what we would like to see develop in fly fishing. And it fortunately has started in this country and that is that. The the. Barriers to the entry in fly into fly fishing in terms of color creed race and gender. Are starting to melt away. And that pleases me. And we can also include the handicapped amongst those. But particularly in this country with its dismal history. Of. Of. Division. On the basis of color. And discrimination on the basis of color. Left a lot of people like me who lived through those times and and were not instrumental in doing anything that I could put down as. Anything other than. Lip service. Disrespect for that particular policy and not voting for it. Now an opportunity to put back. A lot. To help correct what I think were huge gaps in in in our past. The the discriminality practices are not limited to this country alone. I have a great friend and a person that I would strongly recommend you interviewed called. Claire Booth who. Is a story in a life is a story in itself. He was asked in this matricula not to write matric because he had dropped the school averages and to rather leave which he did. And his father put him in as a clerk in an insurance company. He became the head of (unintelligible) the biggest insurance company in the world. He now lives in London. He has a house here in South Africa. Fishes here quite often has a place in Ireland just a wonderful man member of the London fly fishers club. Going through great torment recently because they will not allow lady members. And it's all of those sort of barriers that I really like to see being broken down. And in fly fishing. So maybe those last thoughts would be there. I I'm not I'm not concerned about issues of overcrowding. I think if you look at the United States the more trout streams there then then then the majority of the anglers could fish all year around a different stream just that they're not used to fishing rivers that don't have a blue ribbon name and and that collectively we all hope that politicians and and conservationists and people who can inform policy in the world. Take on collectively the flight. The fight to clean up our act when it comes to. To keeping the house that we live in tiny the world.