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Gary Tanner [00:00:10] I have one in particular that occurred about two years ago. That really is the essence of how I view everything and my partner Bridget Knight fish Atlantic salmon for a week every September and we have our guide up there is a gentleman named Vince Swazi who is a oral history project in and of himself. But Bridget had gone an entire week without hooking a fish. I had done pretty well and over the years I've developed some friendships I do auctions for a couple of museums and the Miramichi Salmon Association that I'm on I'm on their board and then had arranged for us. He's such a good friend. He arranged for us to be able to fish on an extra day. Probably the most famous salmon pool under Miramichi river. It is not open to the public. It's owned by a corporation and they use it for corporate work. So we went up there and Vin's been guiding he got his guides license. Two months after I was born in 1950 and he is very protective of Bridget. So we get up to this incredible salmon pool which is very difficult to be able to get a chance to fish it and Vin sent me out to the middle of the river. And it's a big river at that point and it's walking on greased bowling balls. So I went out to the middle of the river and had fish jumping over my line in front of me behind me hooking nothing. And he stood by Bridget's side in six inches of water. And she hooked seven fish that day. The largest was which was the last was a 15 pound. Atlantic salmon and I can't tell you how thrilled I was to see her be able to you know through the good graces of a friend that ran the camp and my friend Vin that got us there and then for him to literally stand by her side and hook all those fish. It just that's what it's all about. for me. I just was so happy to see that that all take so that's and that's in a nutshell that's what it's about.

Gary Tanner [00:02:58] It's not good. 2011 was a record run of a fish. Since then it's been downhill. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans for the Maritime Provinces exclusive of Quebec have gone to single barbless hooks only catch and release only which has brought the ire of many especially local salmon fishing fishermen who have been able to kill maybe four grills per year. It's brought their ire down upon the DFL organizations like the Miramichi Salmon Association who backs that kind of thing. There are a lot of. Threats to Atlantic salmon which maybe we'll go into later. But Atlantic salmon are in trouble there. There's no doubt about it and a lot of people are working hard to most importantly to figure out why. But and some would say that mandatory catch and release is a stopgap. The one of my friends just came up with the phrase that Grills lives matter so that they do. It's hard to become a multiple sea winter Atlantic salmon if you weren't a grills first. So if you kill that grills you have a problem. So I see that there are some some real threats to Atlantic salmon at this point in time and see.

James Thull [00:04:51] Just interject can you. Can you explain to a little of what is that the grills.

Gary Tanner [00:04:55] Oh sure. Atlantic salmon have life stages. They are Fry as they hatch from an egg. I forget the middle. The middle one. They become a parr PARR that's a fish about that long. And then in a year they become a smolt and the smolt is the fish that in the spring migrates out of the system for the first time and conditions to salt spends time in the salt and will come back in as it grills and the grills is a first time fish back in in the system and they're defined by the government as an Atlantic salmon. Twenty six inches long or less. They're quite easy to tell. And there are twenty six and a half inch fish that are grills but that's it's the it's an Atlantic salmon that's back in. For the first time from the sea.

James Thull [00:06:01] In their original range would of went down to New Jersey.

Gary Tanner [00:06:05] The Connecticut River had a huge run. Almost all of the rivers that empty in Maine that empty into the ocean had Atlantic salmon runs. I don't know about as far down as New Jersey. I don't even know about the Hudson. But certainly and in the Maritimes like the the rivers that empty into the Bay of Fundy have lost their salmon runs in in our lifetime. Rivers like the Miramichi and all of its tributaries empty into Miramichi Bay. They do not empty into the Bay of Fundy and they have not lost their salmon yet but the Bay of Fundy the rivers that empty into the Bay of Fundy have lost for all intents and purposes lost their salmon runs.

James Thull [00:07:00] Would you have a rough estimate of what percentage is left of Atlantic Atlantic salmon habitat?

Gary Tanner [00:07:07] I guess I would be uncomfortable coming up with that number. But certainly in the Miramichi system is considered the biggest producer of Atlantic salmon. But there are all of the north shore of the Gas Bay Peninsula rivers the Restagooch and all of those that produce salmon and they produce big salmon. But they are. Quebec is still allowing they still kill multiple sea winter. They kill huge Atlantic salmon legally and some of us are just dumbfounded and perhaps we'll get into it. That's where that's when politics and politicians get involved in fisheries management. And it's really a shame. And they kill a lot of big salmon in Quebec. In those Quebec rivers. Shame. I think it essentially a couple of things come to mind. One sadly we can track through the literature but the downturn frankly in both angling literature and the changes in attitudes values and assumptions of the angling community. It's happily we get to see for generations the reminiscences and the opinions of some really interesting and and and important people and even people like me that are not important. We just have opinions but. I think that it will be. It's an important project. And in that we will be able to especially as it relates to attitudes values and assumptions that timeworn set of variables. We will be able to see over time how those have changed and how are they changing for the better. For Salmonids and people. Or is it changing for the worse. Absolutely and it's the Miramichi and its tributaries and one non tributary called the Northwest. Miramichi which is a river into unto itself that also drains into the Miramichi Bay. I love the environs where those where those rivers are you can still feel like you are in the bush. But then I had the day of a lifetime. This past October on the Miriam and the Northwest canoeing doing a canoe trip down the river a full day stopping at different salmon pools. I took a video of a moose that. 50 yards down river from me just walked out into the river looked at me for a while decided I wasn't worth worrying about and just turned around and went back in. It's so it's that the entire environment up there I just identify with it and the people there are incredible. I have over the last 20 years or so just develop some incredible outstanding relationships. I just feel really good when I'm up there and so I go there as often as I can

Gary Tanner [00:11:23] One of the first and foremost is that catching is not the most important part of the day. Hooking hooking fish is not the most important part of the day being out there laughing having a good time enjoying the weather be it good or bad just being together enjoying it out there but hooking fish is not. It's the ostensible reason why were there but we might be there for other reasons too. Secondly that they care for the river and they frankly put either their money or their efforts where their mouth is and that they are a part of conservation efforts. And thirdly that they don't talk about religion or politics but that's about it. Find a mentor. Absolutely. That may be easier said than done but there are a lot of. TU chapters local clubs I know especially in the Maritimes and in New Brunswick. There are all kinds of local you know get together every Friday night to tie flies that kind of thing. I think I reinvented the wheel for myself. I am self-taught. But once I met certain individuals my life got so much better than I would. Most of all when I first

decided I wanted to become a fly fisherman I was in awe of how complex you could make it. And it doesn't have to be that way. And and you have to cross. You have to understand that or cross that hurdle. You can make it as complex as you want. Once you have a basic understanding of what you're doing but in the early going you just have to keep it simple and that's easy to do and it's easiest to do if you find some folks a person whatever that kind of take you under their wing and just help you over to get going. I think that's key in the best way.

Gary Tanner [00:14:08] In the early 30 40 years ago. Yes. I just fished for trout. I've only been a salmon angler for going on 20 years. I guess.

James Thull [00:14:22] Is there a difference in the culture in the fishing between the two?

Gary Tanner [00:14:27] Yes I think so. It may be subtle. We're not casting to rising fish. We're not casting to feeding fish so we don't have to match the hatch. Bless Ernie's heart. It says and we can cast thousands of times I have more than two or three weeks cast. Eight hours a day for seven days and never hooked a fish. So I think it takes not a special individual just a certain kind of individual that's willing to do that. I know so many people that could not do that that are great trout fishermen or great bass fishermen. But if it takes a little different outlook on life to be able to stand there for four hours in the morning and four hours in the afternoon and even towards the end of the week realizing I may not hook a fish but I'm going to keep trying. And so I think that's a there's a little different mindset going go in there between the trout fishermen and the Atlantic salmon fisherman. I wish we could talk to an Atlantic salmon. The theories are that they have some kind of brain memory that tells them that that bug that you're swinging across the current looks like something that they ate as a PArr or a smolt based on what I throw out there in the river. I don't. I don't think that's the case. Curiosity aggravation you know those are all things that are out on the table. I just know that Atlantic salmon takes some very weird very beautiful. Flies that are sweet just swinging across the current. You know your standard salmon cast if you're casting wet flies you know quartering across downstream and just letting it swing across and take a couple of steps and do the same thing through through the pools. And so we don't know why they take flies. We're just glad they do.

Gary Tanner [00:17:10] No I never have.

James Thull [00:17:11] Okay. It is a reason for that just haven't got round to it or something you like to do or.

Gary Tanner [00:17:17] Above my pay grade.

James Thull [00:17:19] Okay. All right.

Gary Tanner [00:17:28] There are a lot. The threats are easy. In terms of habitat let's say in the Maritimes clear cuts. Huge clear cuts with small buffers herbicide. Forest herbiciding to kill hardwoods netting like Marimacimi that salmon are headed to Greenland. So the Greenlanders are netting Marimacimi salmon. The seal population has exploded exponentially over the last few years and there used to be fifty thousand striped bass coming into the Miramachimi to spawn as Atlantic salmon Smolts are going out now. There's more than a quarter of a million according to estimates coming in when the Smolts are going out. So there are those are the immediate I think easily identifiable threats. I think perhaps the biggest threat to getting anything done is when fisheries management becomes politicized. When politicians control fisheries management it's almost impossible

to get anything done. I was pleased to see the new Premier of Canada Trudeau appointed an Inuit as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans in Canada and he showed up at a meeting. He went out to the Maritimes and he met with some friends of mine in New Brunswick and he had a seal skin tie on politically incorrect as hell. Perhaps in some circles. But hes an Inuit And it's a lifestyle for them. And so we're hoping that there's going to be a receptive voice there. And as it relates to politicians in this country anyway there are an awful lot of politicians in power that keep telling us that climate change is not a reality. Personally I--as a scientist are credentialed with as a scientist--Wow. Well I just thought that astounds me. So if you have politicians that are saying climate change is not real and politicians that are going to go make you go through an incredible political process that has no real bearing on fish management other than to make it more expensive and or impossible. I think that's a probably in my opinion the number one threat to fisheries management in both countries U.S. and Canada.

James Thull [00:20:29] So a couple of follow up questions up there are on those. You mentioned the explosion of both the striped bass and seal populations. Are those related. Why do you think those have shot up in numbers.

Gary Tanner [00:20:43] Well in both instances one possibility is that they are not being killed. There is no seal harvest. There is an almost ridiculous striped bass retention season in New Brunswick. You can go out and hook and land 100 striped bass of an afternoon and you are allowed to retain one for the season. That seems to myself and to many people a bit backward looking. There is currently a movement to allow first nations in Canada to have a seal harvest. Their numbers are now there. The grey seal population I think is estimated at around 400,000 seals up from about 25,000. Not too long ago there was no they're a top line predator and I think the water's too cold for great whites to go up and help cull. So there is work being done to allow First Nations to have a seal harvest and hopefully that will ameliorate some of their. They can still harvest adult Atlantic salmon. They have the right to harvest Atlantic salmon. They use nets. You can see them as you drive down the river. So first nations still do not have an Atlantic salmon harvest through netting. And we would like to see. I would like to see that curtailed if not stopped at least reduce what they're allowed to take and reduce it to a grills take. Well I think it and I think you need to look at who their supporters are where they get their financial contributions. Probably from some of the biggest contributors from a carbon footprint standpoint in the world. You would love to think that every politician has only their constituencies best interests at heart. I've always felt personally that a politician's first job the day they step into office is to start. Raising funds to get re-elected. I think it's fairly simple. Maybe to maybe I look at it too simplistically but I feel strongly that you just need to look at where their campaign contributions are coming from. And they you know they would be shooting themselves in the financial foot.

James Thull [00:23:58] Sure.

Gary Tanner [00:24:05] I have not seen honestly a lot of gains if I've seen any stream access or river access or Lake access here hopefully in the old days everybody slid their canoe in this one place and it kept eroding. So hopefully we've done some good things. For stream or river health or Lake Health. That way I just have not seen in my heart of hearts I can't see where we have any gains a sad fact of life. What we've lost is a lot of fish and a lot of fish habitat. And that's so easy to document. You know it's it's just a shame an especially lost a lot of native fish habitat and poor. Pity the poor eastern brook trout with all of its had to endure with Brett Brown Trout and rainbow trout. Just pity the poor native Eastern brook trout. It's been a tough road. I think one of the one of the stumbling blocks if

you will always be funding you know membership dollars and and being a good not for profit spending. You know the majority of the funds you receive on projects and things like that. But. The most from where I sit because you know the three of us that you're interviewing here today is gray beards we're all in our mid 60s. It would be very important to get younger people involved. And like I'm particularly gratified and again I'm going back to my new brunswick times they have I've developed friendships with a wonderful group of younger men all in their 40s that are rabid salmon fishermen. But as much they spend their time and efforts and money on conservation efforts it's just really gratifying up there anywhere. Frankly I spend more time in terms of rivers and fishing and conservation up there than they do down here anymore. But I am just so gratified that when I see all these 40 somethings guys that are 25 years younger than me really. Picking up the shovels so to speak and and getting involved and I'm delighted by those guys but they're fun. They're fun to be with. They are strong conservationists. It's really neat. In terms of good works I think TU chapters local chapters I know we have several in this region that spend a lot of time doing on. Onsite onstream Battenkill or other rivers work. I think they always will win in Canada the Miramichi Salmon Association which I'm on both the U.S. and Canadian boards of I know we do good work. I watch it. I see it. And I get reported to about it and there are a there it seems like every small river has its own conservation group. There's even in the Miramichi Salmon Association is charged with over and over kind of overall outlook on the river. But there is even a Miramichi headwaters association. All they do is work do habitat work raise funds for habitat work way up in the headwaters of the Miramichi and all the tributaries seem to have that and many of the other rivers have their own organizations. So I think that's who's doing good work.

Gary Tanner [00:28:43] This this is sort of interesting. I was a self starter. I'm a former Motorhead. I used to. I had my own business in the 70s I restored Ferrari and Rolls Royce basically automobiles slowly grew disenchanted with that had a history I had a grandfather paternal grandfather that was a big bird hunter and fisherman my father not so much he was a corporate controller somewhere. I just said to myself I set three goals for myself. I wanted to go back to college and learn to be. I wanted to become a grouse Ruff grouse biologist. I wanted to learn to raise and train English setters and I wanted to learn to fly fish and tie flies. I'm happy to report that I did all of those things but it really wasn't until I met my friend my 82 year old friend Vin Swazi up in Boystown New Brunswick that I really--if the word blossom works--became a really avid fisherman, salmon angler. I muddled, I will say I have muddled along for 20 or 30 years. I finally stopped wrapping a fly line around my head.

James Thull [00:30:19] About what you did to meet Vin.

Gary Tanner [00:30:20] That would have been 1995 or so. And as I said earlier he is an oral history project in and of himself. But and Vin is very fond. I do a lot of work on Vins camps and things with with him and he's fond of saying he realized early on he'd never make a salmon angler out of me. So he's making a maintenance man out of me he is one of the great senses of humor. Ever. But he he's really what made me dig my heels in and become whatever level of salmon angler I am today. Excellent. Then it's Atlantic salmon. And it's it's the rivers. But more importantly where those rivers are and more importantly than that the people that surround those rivers. That's that's it for me and that's it's always been. When I was an executive director of the American Museum of Fly Fishing we created a huge traveling exhibit which was at Montana State University for six months and my entire premise since starting getting the project going in and kind of working with the two other folks that created the exhibit with me was that it's about people we let's not ever put an artifact on the wall or in (unintelligible) that doesn't talk about the persons that were

involved in it. And to this day I feel that way. If you'd if you take the humanity out of fly fishing in any form then it's just you know you might as well just. Put your fly out on the wall and tell everybody how nicely made it. It is but that's meaningless to me. Three come to mind easily and in no particular order. The first is Gordon the late Gordon Wickstrom. I knew him well. I had lovely times with him at the Denver fly show but we used to do he and John Betts and I used to hang out in the Fly Fishing museums booth together and John and I would beat up on him something fierce and he just always took it with a smile. He personified gentleman and a scholar. Absolutely. And I what I enjoy so much and he only wrote two books but many essays. His blog was incredible and he wrote a lot of articles or essays for the the American fly fisher journal and they were his things from the 40s reminiscences of his boyhood in the forties are great and I've mostly and when prior identify most that is his comments and outlooks on the new generation of fly anglers. I like to call it Gonzo fly fishing. I'll video I'll splash I'll fly rod in your teeth. Big Fish held out like this. Gordon was. He had that one pretty well figured out. Another would be Nick Lyons. I was going through a rough patch a bunch of years ago and Nick's book Spring Creek just reading that book. Helped me so much to get through that rough patch. And I'm fortunate again too to know Nick well and I always enjoyed his company and and I love that book and many others. Third would be Paul Schullery. I think Paul is a friend. I enjoy his. It doesn't matter if he's talking about bears wolves or fly fishing. His sense of his lovely sense of humour always comes through. I love it. I've used the quote many many times. He's fond of saying he could tie wind knots as big as walnuts and very self-deprecating. Enjoyed fishing with him a few times. He's just a lovely man. I enjoy him a lot but I would like to talk about two books that are have really been inspirational to me as a salmon angler particularly the first and it's just a coffee table book. Excuse me it's Judith Dununs and the Atlantic salmon fly. It's just a book coffee table book that is just page after page of beautiful salmon flies often clipped into a wheetly fly box. There's the late Warren Duncan was a famous famous fly Tyer in New Brunswick in the first page that you open are pictures of wheetly fly box clip fly boxes with Warren Duncan tied. Atlantic salmon wet flies. I think that along that those two photos alone were enough to get me into tying Atlantic salmon flies. Tied flies prior to that. Probably not very well. But I tyed flies and they caught fish so that probably was it. The one that continues to be inspirational to me was Pam and Joe Bates Colonel Joe Bates book fishing Atlantic salmon flies in the patterns stackpoll published. They probably publish Dunham's book to my good friend Bob Warren one of the world's absolutely one of the world's best fly tires was the editor of it. It's an incredibly it's a feast for the eyes but in the end I don't read the pert parts frankly about how to how to fish for Atlantic salmon. It's I don't think it's that complicated. I sorta know how to do it but the photographs and the history surrounding Atlantic salmon flies is just my copy. It's it's out of print. It's hard to come by. It's expensive and pretty soon mine's gonna be held together with duct tape. I spend so much time in it. It's just I just wanted to bring those two books to the fore though.

James Thull [00:37:32] That's great. Thank you.

Gary Tanner [00:37:40] Diversifying for the sake of diversity is not high on my list. But having said that it's probably important not from a if I was a fly rod manufacturer I would say it's really important because if we get more women in more kids more. Minorities whatever we're gonna sell more fly rods. I think it's where it becomes important is more on the stream. If we get I just watched the other night. Vermont Public Television has a really great show once a week. Vermont outdoors and. Through Trout Unlimited. There is a classroom project where they rear. Brook trout in the classroom and then they go out and spend a day on the stream or in the river and they get. An entire days enjoyable lessons. In the ecological sciences there. They. They're getting their feet wet and their hands dirty.

And. They're not all going to like it but you know for every maybe 30 kids out there if the light bulb goes on in one head and it doesn't. Frankly. I don't care if they ever fish but if they become. An ecologist. We were another step closer at that young age and so I. I applaud public television for airing that kind of thing because you know that's not hook and bullet stuff like that not us aging white guys that are probably even watching it. I enjoy it because almost every week they do do a fishing segment. But I enjoyed seeing that. So that's you know those kids were black and white boys and girls. You know it'll trip some triggers in a few of them. A few them... At my feet are wet and I'm cold. Some of them look what's crawling in my hand. So I think. That's where diversity will help us. As I said if I was a fly rod manufacturer I'd probably really be pushing for diversity. I do know that. A lot of you know that Saturday mornings. Sunday morning or Sunday afternoon you know get together at the club or the fire station fly tying thing you know people are bringing their kids. What is. The. Most incredible young fly tiers I know is eleven years old and he's tying world class Atlantic salmon flies. He's eleven and he's been taken under the wing by all of the names big names from around the world. Pretty special treatment but he has a pretty special talent but. I guess art those kids aren't going to walk into places like that they're not going to go walk down to the stream on their own other than to skip rocks maybe unless somebody takes them. So I'm pretty sure you know. As middle aged white guys you know it's probably. Our job. To help. To help bring them their help teachers help TU the you know the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Division has whole programs set up to get kids in cooperation with TU chapters get kids in the river. And I think. That's if we don't do that forget about it.

Gary Tanner [00:41:59] Let me say I hope we can. And I think maybe what we were just talking about. Is our really only hope. And that's bringing. Younger people into the mix. I think we just went over that. Maybe it's a pipe dream but if. We need to work to get politics out of fisheries management. I don't know how that's going to happen. But I don't and I see that as a tough row. I think politicians are pretty possessive about any territory they gain and are unlikely to give it up. But I think that. If if we're going to make changes it has to be that we have to under what. They have to recognize climate change is a real. Issue a real problem. And I. Pretty much. The kids are our only hope. Just are. Sure. I think so. Absolutely. Especially for native cuts and. Native brook trout especially little small stream native Brooke trout in New England. And that's the good the bad news is. Brown Trout and rainbow trout are so many. Fishermen of any anglers of any. Stripe They gear or fly. They want. Brown Trout and rainbow trout. And the bigger the better. And. That's too bad. But I don't see that. Changing at least in New England. You know I was tickled to see say the lake trout is at Yellowstone Lake being you know. They're working hard to get rid of lake trout.

James Thull [00:44:17] They're working.

Gary Tanner [00:44:18] Yep. And. There is a lake, Miramichi Lake. The headwaters of the Miramichi river that some mal-intentioned individual decided would be a good idea to put small mouth bass and. We're working. We cannot get permission to rotenone that lake. So. It is being netted and fished and fenced where it empties into the river. But we we live in fear of a sustainable you know a self-sustaining population a small mouth in that river. Atlantic salmon PArr have no chance. If that happens me they have to live with cormorants and mergansers and striped bass. But I think that you know those two efforts are important and they're indicative of some of the problems that native species face. But. I don't see us ever being able to go in and explain to anglers on the Battenkill, a mere 10 minutes from here. We're going to. Work really hard to extrapate brown trout and rainbow trout from the river and it's just gonna be a. Native brook trout. And all it's gonna have to be catch and

release because it's gonna be tough. No gear no worms and no rapalas. That's that's so not gonna happen.

James Thull [00:46:00] Do you feel like national parks can play a role in preserving those native species? I know Great Smoky Mountain has spots for for Brookies and certainly Yellowstone is working develop you know access or. Places sanctuaries I guess for cuts.

Gary Tanner [00:46:17] They should be at the forefront. I mean it's they should be at the forefront. Years ago I was in grad school in Tennessee. The National Park Service got a contract just to do a literature review on the impacts of feral hogs on native ecosystems and. They were. Feral hogs were wreaking havoc in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. So. They were leading by a paper they were taking care of their hog problem and as well they should. Maybe in the national forest it's a different a different deal. Plus they can allow hunting but I think the national parks should absolutely be in the vanguard of. Native species. Sadly restoration as opposed to management. Yes absolutely.

Gary Tanner [00:47:24] Well. Actually it was about five or six years ago I started dying my own materials which added immeasurably to my whole fly tying experience and Kerry Stevens. Of. Maine 1920s streamer tyer had a fly called the green beauty. It's incredibly effective streamer i love it. I use it often but some how I I said Wouldn't it be cool if it was a darker green which does not. You cannot buy a deep dark lovely green. Cape or saddle chickens saddle. Can't. They don't make them. So I. Decided to dye my own and I had dyed up some. Really lovely claret and end up a purple couple other colors and they were just laying there and my partner who has rich Irish heritage came down where I dye materials and they were just laying there together and she said oh that's just a perfect set of Celtic colours. And so I did and I always if I publish something about it or anywhere I always give credit to Kerry Stevens for the green beauty as being an inspiration for my deep green beauty in those colours. If that fly that streamer has hooked every species of trout and salmonid in the Northeast New England and the Maritimes it's just a great fly. They love it so I decided again. Atlantic salmon being the inspiration and the long history of harrowing salmon flies. I. Translated it into a harrowing Atlantic salmon wet fly which hooked. 16 Atlantic salmon its first morning in the river. It's just pretty cool so that's it. Those are some of the inspirations I think. I've held. Flies from Ireland tied in the 17 nineties in my hands. Maybe you'll get to see them tomorrow at the American Museum of Fly Fishing and they're. Brown. And fuzzy and they caught fish and thank God for Irish fly tiers when that millinery trade took off. You know the captains of the sea captains of Great Britain were all over the map bringing all kinds of dead birds back to the UK and the Irish fly Tiers were the guys that took off with all those colors in the gaudy flies and all that. And so you know though we have a rich history in fly fishing particularly for Atlantic salmon. In my mind. So those are provided inspirations. In terms of things that have impacted fly time. The really neat man named John Betts who lives in Denver was a great friend of the late Gordon Wickstrom. He was the first guy to introduce synthetic materials to trout flies back in the 70s when Sports Illustrated still did articles on fishing. Now they don't. There's a huge picture of John in a Frederick's of Hollywood with a magnifying loup looking through the little gossamer teddy, a ladies garment, just but that's what he was doing and he. I'm a huge fan of synthetic materials in my streamers for example uv materials that are out there now. I think they make a more effective fly and I bet Kerry Stevens would have used them if she had them way back when but they're really important. Fly tiers being what they were. Some. Hate that thought. And by God it's going to be natural. The natural hair and natural feathers. Hopefully they're using organic silk or something for their bodies or whatever. For my money. If it's available use it if it makes a pretty fly and catch fish with it. I have a funny. Bellweather kind of thing in terms of young fly tiers. I know so many in their forties. I

always asked them when I meet a new one. Have you ever heard of Ernie Scheibert. I have yet to meet one of them. That has. Never met. A Some of these guys are really good really rabid tiers and I always whenever I meet I always ask them if they've ever heard of Ernie Scheibert. I haven't met one yet. And several times. Does he do youtube videos. No he doesn't. It's interesting that that is a commentary. I'd say.

Gary Tanner [00:52:56] I met. Them all. That was me. Lefty Kreh. Bud Lilly, Ernie. Almost, you name it, I met them. I would enjoy going to a fly fishing show and they would come out of the crowds to say hi. It was. I really made some lifelong friends. I met. Some incredible people and really selfless some of them are you know certainly fly fishing is how they make their living. But. A guy like Lefty Kreh. Is so generous with his time and efforts. It's it's really. Nick Lyons. So generous so willing to help in any way he could. So if it was. It was an interesting six plus years it really was and it was all about what made it interesting was the people. Was kind of cool and 17 hundreds flies in my hands but it was pretty cool but neat people. That was what that was all about.

Gary Tanner [00:54:13] Well in terms of difficulty for me with my arthritic beat up hands anything smaller than a size 10 is the most difficult fly to tie. And that's the good news about Atlantic salmon flight time. You rarely go below 10 maybe 12 once in a while the. Most beautiful. You know I'm sure. Many people especially that. Do what I do and have an interest what I do with would say the classic married wing beautiful big. Salmon flies. Not for me. I love the simplicity of modern hairwing and feather wing salmon flies. They're very simple. excuse me. But incredibly effective. And I could stare at them all day. They're really. My favorite. And I really do have an easy go to salmon fly. There's some stuff called Ice dubbing these days. Kind of glittery stuff that uses as dubbing and I make a ice dubbed pheasant tail soft tackle Hungarian partridge. The biggest landlocked salmon I've ever hooked was on that I think I've hooked. Every species of. Trout that's in New England. It hooked Atlantic salmon on it. I just love swinging that fly. I don't and I don't worry about. It. I've really especially My Trout Fishing. I've just taken it to a really simple level. I love getting in the stream going slowly downstream. Just swinging that soft hackle. And you know maybe trying to get it into just the right little pool or eddy. But. I have ultimate confidence in that little fly. And it's not that little size towel pretty big fly. But the trout seem to love it. you know my knee jerk might be Norway or Iceland but I think I'd rather go to Labrador. A pound brook trout huge Atlantic salmon. Sadly it's above my pay grade and likely will be. But I think I'd like to fly in. To Labrador. I have friends that do it and they have. Great stories to tell. And the pictures there to die for. So I think I'd like to be away in the bush and in Labrador would be. I'd go there. Before Iceland. Yes. The unexamined life isn't worth living. You know. And so I think that I question everything.

James Thull [00:57:10] Critical thinking as it applies to angling.

Gary Tanner [00:57:12] It is like. Why did that work. It's rarely why didn't work because that's most of the time. But why did it work. Is probably the more important question to ask and so I do that a lot. And on any given day especially with Atlantic salmon fishing one ask one more person you'll get one more opinion about what is the fly but on any given day. I hate to admit it but I'm not sure the fly matters. Might be presentation might be that the right fish is in the right mood in the right place but I think. That kind of why did it work. Is probably with my you know my back my training my credentials whatever I think it made me ask questions and wonder why and always recognizing. My partner Bridget is tired of hearing me say this but correlation does not imply cause and effect. So you gotta you gotta get over that hump.

James Thull [00:58:30] That's true. Have you had much luck in the in the critical thinking aspect to figuring out why things worked when they did.

Gary Tanner [00:58:40] No but it's sure it's fun to try.

James Thull [00:58:44] I agree. I was just curious because I know for me I can't explain it. It works. I know I'm going to do it again.

Gary Tanner [00:58:50] Yeah you know it's that old conundrum dark day dark fly break in our bright day bright fly. I have seen that kind of work. Except maybe that was just luck . Dark fly might not work with that beautiful sun. Hard to say.

Gary Tanner [00:59:14] I think just take someone fishing that's never gone before and have a good time. Just smile. The fish don't matter. That's it.