

## **Outdoor Guides**

### **Narrator 0:00**

The Jerry Bartlett Angling Collection presents Sporting Legends of the Catskills: Outdoor Guides of the Catskills, the adventure experts. Presented May 11, 2019, at the Phoenicia Library.

### **Beth Waterman 0:03**

My name is Beth Waterman. I'd like to thank you all for coming today. Such a beautiful day outside, I appreciate your presence here. I am going to pass around a sign-in sheet for anyone who would like to be notified for future events. If you're already on our mailing list, you probably know it and don't need to sign up again. And I'm also including some copies of our recent newsletter. We publish a newsletter once a year, and it came out in April. It gives a rundown of what we did in the past 12 months. We have two programs coming up. On July 27th, we're going to be doing macro invertebrates in the Stoney Clove, the stream is right outside the library here. This is a program for kids, but it's as much for adults as it is for kids-- everybody has a wonderful time. Aaron Bennett, who is an environmental educator, who grew up around here and studied in the Phoenicia elementary school, learned about macro invertebrates there, and has been fascinated ever since. He does a wonderful exploration in the stream. Then we identify them on tables and learn about what those macro invertebrates can tell us about water quality. So that's going to be from 11 to 1 on Saturday, July 27. In October, Ed and Judy Van Put are coming. They do a program about Hudson Valley painters, where they have researched and examined paintings from the Hudson River Valley School and isolated some of those that deal with fishing and quite a few of the painters were passionate fishermen. This is an interesting show and an interesting look at our history that was recorded by these famous artists. So that'll be in October. And then we just got a grant to do two more programs in this series. Sporting Legends of the Catskills. This is the ninth in our series, the ninth program. We started in 2016. And all of these programs have been recorded thanks to Silver Hollow Audio; and photographed, thanks to Mark Loete; and posted on our website, thanks to Stephanie Blackman. So they're archived for the future. We have a broader audience than people who are just here today. The only other introduction here, before I get to the speakers, is I'd like to credit the Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program for providing the funding for this program and making it possible for us to archive and record the the presentations. And Mark Loete has offered to say a few words about the Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program, because he works with them on a regular basis.

### **Mark Loete 3:20**

So first of all, most of people in the room, I think know that this is New York City's watershed, right, these Catskill rivers... five different reservoirs. The Esopus runs into the Ashokan Reservoir, and that provides 45% of New York City's drinking water. And that water is delivered unfiltered, which is a rarity. And that is a determination by the Environmental Protection Agency as to whether or not this municipality can deliver water filtered, and they issue what's called a filtration avoidance determination, a FAD. And there are only five cities, five municipalities in the country that have a FAD. One is San Francisco, Boston, New York, Syracuse and Portland. So we're in a very exclusive, unique club. But that's testimony to the purity of the

Catskill water system here. Well, in 1996, I think, and the FAD is awarded for five year determination. So in 1996, Mayor Bloomberg lobbied the EPA to issue a 10 year FAD from New York City. And the EPA said they would give us a 10 year FAD, if we took more steps to clean up the turbidity in the Esopus Creek, which was running pretty intensely and pretty regularly up until the Ashokan Watershed Management Plan addressed this. The Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Plan sprung out of the 1997 memorandum of agreement between New York City and the watershed communities about how to manage this watershed, so that New York City is guaranteed pure drinking water. But these Catskill communities can thrive economically and thrive with our trout population, maintaining our wilderness. So the memorandum of agreement was born 1997, and out of the memorandum of agreement, the EPA required New York City to create the stream management plans. So there's one for the Ashokan watershed, which is the Esopus Creek and all its tributaries. And there's one for the Schoharie. And there's one for the Neversink Rondout. The first one was the Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Plan. And they really started, it sprung out of the 1997 Memorandum of Agreement, but it really started in 2003 with a survey of the Broadstreet Hollow drainage which is a tributary. Since that time, since 2003, New York City, primarily New York City money, has spent \$20 million in stream restoration... and in some cases actually building, rebuilding mountainsides, it's actually a partnership between the Catskill Cooperative Extension, the Ulster County soil and water... and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. Most of the money comes from New York City Department of Environment Protection. It's been determined that if New York City loses their FAD, and they have to build a water filtration plant for their 9 million people, now, we're giving fresh, clean water unfiltered 9 million people; the numbers keep going up, when this first came up, it was going to be a \$16 billion build-out in a \$2 billion maintenance and operation, M&O. Now I think they're saying it cost \$22 million, and for \$4 million a year M&O. So it's to New York City's deep interest to maintain pure waters is up here. So hence the Ashokan Watershed Management Plan. So what do they do? They're concerned about stream stability. They've taken great steps to mitigate erosion and consequently turbidity in the Esopus Creek. Maintaining water quality. So this water is being drunk, directly to the New York City taps. I told my fly fishing clients this morning who were from New York City, if you if you pee in this river, you're drinking it in about a week. So don't pee in the river. That's how immediate it is. And a primary example is the Stony Clove Creek, a tributary just up the street here, was supplying 30% of the turbidity in the Ashokan Reservoir. And after I think about a \$5 million build-out and in some cases actually rebuilding mountainsides and installing French drains, recontouring, replanting, they've mitigated the Stony Clove contribution down to just about nothing. So education, stream management, land owner, education, I noted cooperation, stakeholder cooperation. We have an access to recreation Committee, which I'm chairman, we have a grant committee, we've given away \$12 million in [Smith] grants... \$12 million in [Smith] grants in the last five years and negotiating for \$12 million for the next five years. So I'm not sure those negotiations are complete. But the plan is to continue the program for at least the next five years. And another thing we're doing, for example, is they are sponsoring this Safari program. Safari is the Shandaken Area Flood Assessment and Relief Initiative. We've done a complete survey, a LIDAR survey, flood flow survey of the entire Shandaken community, we know exactly where the floodwaters are going to rise, how high they're going to be and what type of event, how much

time that would take, how much property will be impacted. What is the value of that property being damaged. We have a complete mapping of the town, and we have flood mitigation practices in in play, for example, there have been I think about it I think it's been about 12 properties have been bought out, that have been flooded stressed, either bought up by FEMA primarily and either reverted to town ownership or New York City, DEP ownership, forever wild. So they're actually increasing the the wilderness area along the Esopus Creek, and increasing access, also. There is a grant committee, there is a stakeholders committee, three or four other committees.

**Beth Waterman 10:04**

Today's program falls within the purview of this Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Plan, because it deals with stewardship and environmental education. And without further ado, I'd like to introduce our speakers, the program today features guides. The adventure experts are here with us today. So I will just introduce all four of them briefly. Then we'll have a conversation and I encourage you to ask questions whenever you would like. And afterwards we'll have some cookies and networking and hang out down the hall. I think the guides brought some things to show and so we'll have a little show and tell. So starting up with Cliff Schwark. Cliff is a lifelong angler and has been a licensed guide since 2005. Member of NYSOGA, I believe. And Cliff was one of the founders of Catskill mountain Trout Unlimited, which was the first chapter founded in Kingston in the 60s; first chapter in New York State. So Cliff has a long commitment to environmental conservation, and recreation. Patti Rudge was New York State's first full time female forest ranger, now retired. Patti works with the guides program as a water safety instructor. Will Soter is the president, current president of New York State Outdoor Guides Association, NYSOGA, and he's going to tell us about that organization. And he's also a full time professional guide, which he'll tell us more we're about, with Upstate Adventure Guides. And Hank Rope, Big Indian Guide Service. Hank moved up here in 1991 and has been a full time professional guide since then, and Hank is a life member of NYSOGA. So without further introductions, Cliff, we'll start with you.

**Cliff Schwark 12:30**

I'll start by giving you a little of my fly fishing history and how I got into guiding, which will hopefully lead into discussions with the rest of us here. I had a very good friend who had a grandfather who had a camp on the Woodland Valley Stream, he rented this camp. And eventually he built another camp up on the Silver Hollow stream, Warner Creek. And as a young boy, young teenager, I convinced my parents to give me a cheap fly rod outfit. And I used to go up there and fish. During the school years when I was still in school, I'd go up during the weekends, and I would fish from as much as I could Friday night, and I would be gone all day Saturday, and all day Sunday. I'd take a sandwich, and that's the last they'd see of me. And I guess you could say I was a fanatic. Well, I kept doing this. And then eventually, I would go up weekends. And then I would fish Friday night, all day Saturday, and all day Sunday. And so basically, I guess you could say I was self taught. I learned I guess the hard way. I learned by experience, but I just kept doing it until I figured it out. I will be very honest with you. I've been fly fishing for 70 years, I still haven't quite figured it out. And I'm still working. I'm still trying to work at it. So yeah, so I've been going for 70 years, with the exception of, you know, while I was

in the military, and when I was in college. Other than that, I've been pretty much steady fly fishing. Then I was teaching friends how to fly fish, I was teaching classes at TU and giving the lectures to organizations and things like that. And so I wasn't doing it as a professional guide, I was just doing it. I decided as I started getting ready to retire, I thought that would be a good retirement for me. So I started developing a course, two days schools, various schools, and then got my guiding license. When did I get that, I got that in 2005. And so I started as soon as I retired, I started guiding professionally. And I belong to your organizational also. I did it primarily because I had so much, so many years of experience and knowledge of the sport, 70 years worth, I thought I would like to share that with other people, and give them the knowledge and the love that I have had for the sport, and pass that on. By passing it on, too, with getting people into fly fishing, you start to get conservationists, environmentalists, because they're the type of people that will now protect your streams. So I never, I never really did it for profit. The bucks were nice. But I used them to finance Western trips, or buy some fancy fly rods and things like that. But as that old pop song goes, I was only in it for the love. And that was basically it, it was never a profit. I thought that... I retired in 2017... bad knees, bad shoulder, everything started to wear out, I am 85. And, and my balance started... you can't have those things and take people out on a stream. That's absolutely taboo.

I thought I'd just give you six things that will probably open up the discussion, what I think it takes to be a good guide. One is you got to know your subject. Obviously I do. If I don't after 70 years, I never, I never will. But I'll give you just a brief story. I was at a TU meeting, a young lady approached me. She said, I understand you're a guide. I said yes I am. She said, how do you become a guide? Well, I said, you gotta go to state, do some studying, you've got to take a test, and so forth, so forth. She was very young. I said, well, what, do you want to be a fly fishing guide? Yes. I said, how long you been fly fishing? She said, I started last month. Well, obviously I didn't say what was on my mind. I never saw her again, which was fine. But anyway... [laughter] The second thing is you've got to be a good and patient teacher. You come across all sizes and shapes out there. A lot of people are not at all familiar with the environment or walking in streams, walking on rocks, or being in the wilderness. Some people are very uncomfortable. So you got to be very patient with these people, because, and some of them are just plain klutzy, just a fact. And you know, teach them to fly cast and things like that, it can be very difficult. So you got to be very patient with these people. You got to be physically capable. I was talking before that, you know, you got to be able to carry a backpack, if you're going in the Adirondacks, backpacking people into the ponds. You gotta carry canoes, and you got to be physically ready in case something happens to the person, you're responsible for these people. Obviously, I don't have my balance, I can't guide anymore, I wouldn't even think I could. I don't have the strength now. But you never know what you're going to come across. And you got to be prepared. The next item is you got to be prepared for unexpected emergencies. You just don't know what's going to happen, for instance. And I always ask people, do you have a heart condition? Do you have this? Do you have that? So I'm ready, in case. Are you allergic to bee stings? I always carry ... you're not supposed to do this, but I always carry that pen with me just in case. I'm not supposed to do that. I'm not authorized to do that. But if a guy's there and he got a bee sting, his throat started swelling, I'm going to hit him with that. I'll make that decision right there. But, but you never know what you're going to get out there. So that's one of the

things... you got to be honest with people, you can't tell them, look, yeah, I'm a great guide. I'm gonna get you 100 fish today. No question. No, you don't do that. All you promise is, you'll do your best to give them a good time. And you'll teach them the best you can, but you got to be reasonable. And then you got to give good value. I usually wear out the people that go out with me, because I'm experienced out there. Most of the people, they tire because they're trying hard to learn to cast, walking on rocks and walking in the stream. I've got some good stories later, that can talk about some of these. some of these events, okay. But I, if at the end of the day, and it's getting dark, and the flies start coming off the water, and I know it's time to go home, I won't leave, if they don't want to leave, I'll stay there. Because that's, I think it's only fair. Maybe all day, you haven't had any success. And now you're going to. I'll stay there 'til they say uncle... [laughter] And so anyway, that's that's my little pitch in the beginning here. And I'll be glad to, if time permits, I got some stories I think you'll find humorous and so on, so forth.

**Beth Waterman 20:43**

Thank you, Cliff. How about you, Hank? Another veteran.

**Hank Rope 20:47**

I probably shouldn't catch 100 fish a day. And I'm going on June 1... [laughter] Well, anyway, I kind of got a, hey, how do you become a guide? It's an easy thing. Well, back when, a while back when I decided to be a guide. I was going up to the NYSOGA rendezvous. And this was what they said, if you've ever been a Boy Scout or a Girl Scout read this book. And that's the test. And it worked for me. And now today (laughs) things are different. You have to have a license. If you're going to take any money to fish, hunt, camp, hike, whitewater raft, canoe, kayak, rock and ice climb; all those categories. And the DEC looks at it and says, Well, if you're going to take somebody out, and they're going to take you out and buy you a nice dinner, technically, you need a guide's license, okay? The tests are given every month in DEC headquarters. The best way to take this test is to wait until March and go to the New York State Outdoor Guides Association. Because you can get your safe boating, your water, what you need, believe it or not, you need water safety if you're going to guide rock climbers, so figure that one out, right. And if you go to the rendezvous, they're also going to do a little better than they did years ago, and not tell you to be a Boy Scout. They have a practice exam. It costs you a few bucks, you're going to go there on a Thursday night, spend Thursday, Friday. And I always think you should stay for the banquet, we always have a really good time. When you take the exam, this little lady up in Albany, Colleen, she's gonna send you all your paperwork that you need. And the program is run actually by the Division of Forestry. And that's who she works for. Same people that provide us with the forest rangers. And Colleen has been working there too long to mention, but she does all the paperwork. She's real efficient, she's real good. But, so the DEC is really what overlooks the guides. But they will ask you for your identification. And if you're a guide, you need your guide's license, you need this little brass doohickey over here, and you have to have it displayed. So when you're guiding, you need your physical license, you need a copy of a current CPR card and a current first aid card. Now in order to get all that stuff, they'll let you take the exam and then put it in later on. And when you finally do that you also need a note from your doctor on their paperwork. They don't just take a scribbled note. And the doctor has to say that you're capable of being a guide. And when you finally get to the

point, you're going to take a test, it's going to be 50 questions and 20 other questions on what your specific guiding is going to be. I don't know how long you get for the test. I never pay attention, but it's half a day right?

**Will Soter 24:42**

Yeah, I think they give you way more time than anyone's ever taken.

**Hank Rope 24:45**

Okay. I don't pay attention to it. I'm usually there doing something else. Time flies at the rendezvous. If you, if you want to be a guide, you have to be as Cliff already brought up, you have to be, I think, an outdoor person, and you have to like people. That all goes together. What else we got here? Once you pass that exam, Colleen is going to take about a week to send you your guide's license. And she's a great girl, she does, I don't know how many people know her up there. But when you renew your license, she also takes care of it for you, and she tries to come to our rendezvous. Anybody have any questions they want to ask me about what you actually have to do?

**Beth Waterman 25:38**

How long is the license good for?

**Hank Rope 25:40**

Oh, good question. Five years. So I'm on my fifth renewal, I think, something like that. I'm waiting for somebody to give me a retirement party. like Cliff. [Laughter] It's good for five years and every five years, you have to have another doctor's notice. However, it's going to be every two years now that you have to have CPR and first aid. They expire at the end of two years. They just changed that this year. You don't want to hear what it used to be. It's two years. And so if... a mental blank... my friend, ex-friend Bruce Fuller, told the game warden down in Margaretville... can't think of his name... and told him... anyway, Bruce told him that when you're going to check a guide's license, you have to make sure he has CPR and first aid. So here he comes out of the bushes. I'm down there with a customer. And he's waving to me, you know. Okay, so I walk over, and he asks to see my license, and I show it to him. And then he says, I need to see your CPR and first aid. Nobody ever asked me that until Bruce went and told him about it. But if you don't have it, you're guiding without a license. So it's something that you have to remember to keep up. And another advertisement, you can get that if you go to NYSOGA. Come to the rendezvous and you can get your CPR and first aid. You can also take it in local hospitals given by the Red Cross. I took it once in Kingston hospital. That was a mistake. It was all day long. And the test was like, that long, because it was for nurses. And it was a tough test, you know. Anybody have any questions? That's about it from me.

**Beth Waterman 27:48**

I think, you know, we've heard a lot about NYSOGA. So Will, let's let's hear from you, as president of this organization.

**Will Soter 27:56**

Yeah, sure. So I'll kind of go way back to the beginning of how the guides association actually got started and kind of go through a brief overview of how it got to be where it is now. So about 128 years ago, the guides association first formed, and that was kind of in response to the train in 1887, making its way all the way up to Saranac. So kind of like we're seeing today with social media, all of a sudden, people were outpacing the ability to connect with knowledgeable people out of the field. So there's, you know, it's no longer a jarring stagecoach ride that only the hardest, and most avid anglers or hunters would, you know, need to undertake to get to this in the heart of the Adirondacks back then. So there was a big rush of people getting up there. And naturally, there was people trying to cash in on it saying, oh, yeah, I know where you can catch fish, I know where you can get game. And they were going out with guides who weren't real bona fide guides, and it started to really impact the reputation, not just of the area, but of the industry as a whole. So 128 years ago, the first meeting of guides came together, and they said, you know, we've got to figure out what we all agree upon, because there's different things based on different disciplines, or if you're a hunter, you may have, you know, some different concerns than an angler. So they really looked at what are the things that we all can rally around. One was, you know, promoting the professionalism of the guiding industry that you can find a knowledgeable person who is physically capable and knowledgeable in a particular area or, you know, activity. The other was, you know, helping protect the resources. They understood even back then, as they saw things, you know, were starting to be just exploited that, you know, if they didn't work with their partners in the then forest commission, now DEC, that the resources could be exploited to the point that the very bedrock of their, you know, industry, could be undermined. Without healthy fisheries, without abundant game, without, you know, protecting the forest, the lands and waters, there's nowhere beautiful to take these people. So it was very, you know, even back then it was understood that they needed to play their role in protecting the resources. Flash forward to the early 1980s. And there again, was a rush of people getting outdoors. This time, there were different activities that started to become popular. So people going further afield, hiking clubs, and and people getting the guides license that were bringing, you know, bringing people up to the high peaks to you know, bag peaks. So there was more in popularity around backpacking and things like that, getting people further afield. And there was some concern about how easy it was to become a guide at that point. So NYSOGA was one of a bunch of different organizations that worked with the DEC to help kind of figure out what qualifications, what minimum qualifications they would need to be, and they actually helped develop the current licensing exam. And actually, we're still working with the DEC today to, you know, kind of reevaluate the standards of what certifications we need to hold.

So it's, you know, it's been a part of the, the guides history to to make sure that, you know, the public is aware that there are people out there and, you know, what they should really look for in a guide. You know, not just someone who has all of the props, you know, someone who's got a bunch of fishing poles and, oh, yeah, I live near the river. I've been, you know, I've grown up here all my life, I know where to find fish, Well, you know, you might be an expert amongst your friends, but are you an expert? And do you know how, and are you physically, you know, capable of, and are you prepared for those unexpected things, as Cliff mentioned, there's a lot that goes into it.

When I first became a guide, I had already been leading hikes for the hiking clubs, and a friend of mine just happened to stumble across a guy; he called me up, you know, frantically and said, Hey, you know, we can get paid for this? I met this guy. He's a guide. Yeah, like hunting and fishing, right? And he goes, No, no, I'm like, really, people pay to go hiking? Like we do this for free? He said, No, no, no, call this guy. So I called him up. And he told me you need, you know, CPR, first aid, water safety. And then you take this exam, and you know, I'd already had all those and they were kind of set to expire. And I hadn't taken water safety since I'd sailed a number of years back. So I said, you know, let me go to this rendezvous, you know, that NYSOGA is holding, and I can get all that stuff done in one weekend. And right after I got the, you know, the exam, I kind of felt like I crossed this threshold from being the expert in my friend group, to all of a sudden being someone that everyone viewed as an expert, and I didn't feel like an expert yet. And that's, that's for me, where NYSOGA really played a role, because I had these veteran guides that I could ask and say, Hey, you know what, I'm doing this, and I've done a trip like this before when I led it for the hiking club, but I feel like, I might be missing something, what are other things that I should consider? And it was great to have people with, you know, decades of experience say, did you consider what would happen if, you know, if you're out for four days, and you haven't been able to check the weather? How are you going to, you know, keep on top of that. So just being able to have, you know, people who've actually lived those experiences over and over again, to really help me, you know, kind of get my feet and get me on the right path was, you know, one of the biggest benefits for me of being a member of the organization.

**Beth Waterman 33:23**

So I'm trying to understand, NYSOGA... DEC licenses the guides...

**Will Soter 33:30**

Correct.

**Beth Waterman 33:31**

They give the exams. And what is NYSOGA's role?

**Will Soter 33:37**

So NYSOGA is a professional organization, so we provide additional training for our guides. So we have seminars at our annual rendezvous. We also hold the training certifications. And then we have different committees within our organization. So we work with DEC and other partners, other organizations throughout the lands and waters of New York State to see, you know, can we gather information from the field to get to those folks who are doing the legislating to provide better protections for the resources or sometimes better protections for the folks working in the industry, to make sure that the people we're taking out are safe. So you know, we have, you know, a legislative committee, we have a standards and education committee, we've got all these different committees that work to gather information throughout the different regions, and across the different disciplines and activities.

**Beth Waterman 34:26**

And what are the recreational activities that are licensed?

**Will Soter** 34:31

So those are the ones that Hank mentioned before. So it's hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, rock and ice climbing... whitewater.

**Hank Rope** 34:42

Whitewater rafting.

**Patti Rudge** 34:44

But interestingly enough, and if it's okay to just kind of break in like this, I understand that you do not need to have a guides license, if you simply want to take somebody for a paddle on flat water, and you charge a fee.

**Will Soter** 35:01

There is an endorsement on the license. But it is not a licensed category as of yet

**Patti Rudge** 35:04

Isn't that interesting?

**Will Soter** 35:05

It's very interesting. It's something we're working, we've been nudging to get included, there's currently a Senate bill out there that will kind of raise the bar for the standards of guiding, that will request a little bit more of guides. Going back to what Cliff mentioned, and this is part of the code of ethics, is that truth in advertising, that accuracy and the information you're presenting to your customer, that you actually, you know, have a contract that outlines the services that you're providing and the things that they can expect. So that's one of the things that's included in that. There's some other aspects to it that hold guides to a higher standard as far as being safe out there, and you know, paddling is one of those things, because just because there's not, you know, dynamic water, not whitewater, doesn't mean that you can't get yourself way over your head. And, you know, which I was thinking about recently on a paddling trip I took just two weeks ago. And as I was thinking about, wow, if I went in this water right now in the middle of a lake, I would really need those folks in that other boat to get me out, because I wouldn't, I wouldn't be able to swim myself to shore because the water's so cold. So you know, flat water paddling is not something that should be taken lightly. And it really should be included in the licensing program.

**Cliff Schwark** 36:26

One advantage of your organization also is you put out a yearly magazine. Personally, I have gotten a lot of jobs through that. I'd say, how did you find out about me, and they'd say, well, we saw it in the magazine.

**Will Soter** 36:40

Yeah, still to this to this day, just like the original Adirondack guides Association. So in the '80s, when there was that second boom, that the organization reorganized and became a statewide organization, and we still promote awareness of the industry, but we also promote awareness of our members. So we make sure that folks, you know, who are looking to hire a guide, can find a guide that's in their region, and that guides in the discipline. So we have a public, we have publications, and then we also have our website, and folks can go on there, they can, you know, search for a guide by activity, they can search for a guide by region, they can also just put in a request that says, on this date, I want to go to this area, and I want to see this thing. And here's how many people. And it'll go on to all of our members. And the members who feel like they're best qualified, can send them a reply, which is a really, it's a great resource for folks looking to connect with someone, because otherwise it can be kind of an endless search. And usually the only thing that pops up at the top of the list is, you know, the thing that's advertised the most. So this is a great, great way to really get folks into the depths of each one of these regions or activities.

**Beth Waterman** 37:53

Patti, as a former forest ranger, what would you say is the value of having a guide?

**Patti Rudge** 38:00

What I would say is that anytime users come to the backcountry, wilderness areas or wild forest, the better educated they are, the better everyone's going to come out at the end. You know, so having had a guide, even if it was just a telephone exchange, or an exchange of maps and information and brochures, those people then come to the preserve, prepared. They have a wonderful time, they share that wonderful time, and it becomes this tremendous domino effect in the right direction. When we don't have enough educators out there, whether they're guides or rangers, or some type of environmental educator, then things frequently start tumbling with a very small misstep, and they go in the wrong direction. So when we have guides out there, fishing guides, hunting guides, those are the two that I would see the most... I did see some backpacking guides in my tenure, but not many at that time, I think it's a building, I think it's growing now... but those folks that were out there with a guide were undeniably having a much better time than if they had not had a guide with them. Because it isn't just the formalities of the information that gets shared. It's the pleasantries. It's the relaxation, it's having lunch together, how many times I would walk up on a stream and encounter a guide with their client, and usually they weren't fishing. They're oftentimes just sitting brookside, more or less, and it will be lunch hour that I had stopped in on. And they would be having the nicest relaxed exchange. And if that isn't the way to celebrate the backcountry, I don't know what is. So it was just something, it was a really good reminder to me of a beautiful exchange. And that's really what should be going on out there. So I only have, you know, good things to say with regards to those kinds of relationships, I can say that when things go sour in the backcountry, they go bad very, very quickly. And it takes a great deal of resources to fix things, to bring things back to a level of stability, and then a recovery to get people back out of the, out of the woods. So if we can get people in the woods with good information, good guidance, good skills. Part of that is communication. The communication was touched on earlier, how well you need to communicate before you start your guiding, really sharing upfront, what it is that

you can provide. And does it match the expectation. When things would go poorly is when an expectation would be high. And if not a guide, but who's ever in charge of a group, is trying desperately to meet that expectation, and it's not reasonable, whether it's the weather that's moved in, or the group dynamics, the size of the group, many things can start to tumble and go wrong. And usually when one thing goes wrong, other things fall in poorly behind it. And that's when the rangers would end up being notified. And then a whole group of us would have to go in and try to stabilize, find the problem, stabilize the problem, and then evacuate the problem. So that would be how I would get involved in a situation where things have gone awry in the backcountry. I have to honestly tell you, I don't have any stories of something going awry with a guide in their presence. Not in the Catskills, not in Region 3, I can package it like that. I know that I brought a few props with intention, and that is everyone needs to know where they're going. And it's kind of, I say this somewhat tongue in cheek, but you need to have really good skills, and it is not always with a map and compass that I use this as a, as a prop; you need to know where you're going when you're guiding. You need to know what your real goal is with your clients. Is it to catch X number of fish? Is it to bag the largest buck? Or is it to make sure you get to the top of that ice climb regardless? And I say it all with that emphasis, because I want you to know what the answer is. The answer is no! In case You aren't clear on that.

**Cliff Schwark 42:34**

It's more important to get back.

**Patti Rudge 42:35**

That's right. That's right, you need to get back. And you need to be able to shake each other's hands at the end of the day and say, well, we gave it a good try. And a really good try. But everybody came home at the end of the day, and not to be morose. But I will tell you that I've had the terrible position of being in an emergency room and having to speak with family when somebody passed in the backcountry. It is an awful position to be in. And I share it like this each time I teach a water safety class. You don't want to find yourself in that position. There's no way you're going to make those decisions to continue on your adventure at any risk of having to make that kind of phone call at the end of the day. Nothing's worth it. It's just retreat. And we'll try again another day. Another time.

**Will Soter 43:28**

Yeah, Cliff mentioned being a patient teacher. And sometimes what's giving you that frustration is not the client, sometimes it's the conditions out on the ground. I know you can plan a perfect itinerary and sit down and plot it out on the map and, you know, it warms up in the snowshoe trip. Now all of a sudden, you're snowshoeing through mashed potatoes. And it's slowing you down to about a mile an hour or even worse, sometimes. So you just look at it. And you start to realize you're not making your milestones. And there's lessons, there's things that you can teach the person in there, and you can keep them excited about what's happening without making that goal. And as Patti said, the important part is not getting to the top, not, you know, filling that bag limit. It's about bringing that client back safely. And happily. And hopefully with a little bit of knowledge of where, you know, where those things went wrong, you know, that kept you from that goal, but not where they went so wrong, that kept you from ever trying

again. And, you know, it's a really humbling lesson when you get out there and you're all excited. And you think, you know, you've made this perfect plan and you're going to, you know, tackle that challenge, and nature gives you that little reminder that you know what, there's some other variables you need to consider. And that's where really, you know, paying attention and being aware, not getting wrapped up in that excitement, because it's a very exciting job. So it gets easy to go right along with the excitement of the client. Oh, yeah!! But you know, it's our job to pay attention to those little clues that sometimes add up, you know, if we're not being paying attention, to be a big issue. And the backcountry is not the place where you want any issue. So, you know, being mindful, being aware, paying attention to those small things and knowing when to say, you know what, I think we're going to make an adjustment here. And you know, when that client gets back to the car, and they still have all their fingers and toes, and they're not shivering and cold, they're happy, because you know what, on that way back, they can start to, you know, they start to get a sense of, you know, why you made that turn around. Maybe when you made that turn around, they're not quite feeling it yet. So they're kind of like, I don't know, you know. But when they get back there, and you know, all their fingers and toes are not frozen, they can really kind of see and, you know, pointing out why you made that decision, and what factors are starting to stack up against you not only help, you know, justify why you made that decision to turn around, but you're helping to educate that person so that they can then recognize those things when they go out on their own. You know, I always tell clients, I said, you know, I'm not looking to make your return customer over and over again, I'm looking to help you become better at doing this. Maybe you come back and discover another thing with me. But really, you know, I view our role is, as you know, somewhat of an educator. And we do have to be patient, whether that's with the client or the conditions that we find ourselves in.

**Cliff Schwark 46:19**

I find that there's a level of experience-people in the wilderness in some cases that are just zero. I can remember I had two policemen from New Jersey, Trenton, New Jersey, and they had their two sons. And I had these people eight miles back in the Adirondacks. And it started to rain, and the kids were running around in the rain. Then they'd get wet. They went back into the tent, changed her clothes. They did this two times. And I said to the kid, I said, Look, you're going to run out of clothes. She said, he said, That's not a problem. We'll put it in the dryer. [Laughter] Actually said that. Can you believe that? Oh, yeah.

**Beth Waterman 47:19**

Now when you guys, Hank, do you also, you're a fishing guide. Let's just make that clear. Do you fish with your clients?

**Hank Rope 47:28**

Never.

**Cliff Schwark 47:29**

Why?

**Hank Rope 47:30**

Well, to be blunt, you know, I'm blunt... The guy's paying me or the lady's paying me. And if we go out in the water and I catch three fish and that person catches zero, what do we have? But I will say okay, let me show you how to do that. And more than once, and who knows how many times, you know, I'll demonstrate how to cast, a fish will come up, take the fly, and I just hand them the rod and say, caught you a fish. That's the way I feel about it. I don't think the guide should fish.

**Cliff Schwark 48:06**

I agree. I agree with you. I never, I never fish.

**Hank Rope 48:10**

I feel strongly about that.

**Cliff Schwark 48:11**

Yeah, I do too. And you know, I got caught, and this is after many years, I was very surprised... when you go down into that DEP area below the five arch bridge. I was there with a client and I didn't have a rod, and ...

**Hank Rope 48:29**

Did you get a ticket?

**Cliff Schwark 48:30**

DEP guy comes along and he wants to see the licenses, which annoyed me, because I just got this guy out in the water and kind of left him alone. So I said he's got to come in. And so I brought him in, give him his license. I gave him my license. And he said, Well, first of all, he said, What is that? I said, it's a fishing license. I never seen anything like that before. I said, Well, what, it's a lifetime license. Oh, I didn't ever hear anything. He argued with me that I didn't. But anyway, he said, Where's your, where's your fly rod? I said, I don't fish when I guide. And I know people out west do, but I don't. And he said, you're breaking the law. And I said... yes, well I started arguing with him. Then I thought better of that. [Laughter] And when I got back home he was, he was absolutely right. You can't be on that property just to, just to hike and walk around.

**Hank Rope 49:31**

Well, they changed the rules, the rules have changed.

**Cliff Schwark 49:35**

A few years ago. And I was breaking the law. I said, well I gotta rod in the car. Do you want me to go back and get it. No, he said, it's okay. Finish up here. But don't do it again. But I never knew that.

**Hank Rope 49:49**

I said, How about if I have a drop line? You know. And he said, that doesn't count. So I used to carry a little pack rod in my backpack. But they changed it. They have the city guides program now. And you can sign up for that. And if they like you, they'll let you go down there and take somebody down there, and you don't have to carry a rod.

**Audience** 50:13

When is your next water safety course and where?

**Patti Rudge** 50:17

Well, I teach water safety classes on request, quite frankly. So if there are one, two or three, it doesn't really matter if you need it. I'll be glad to meet you. And I teach them up to the Pine Hill Community Center.

**Will Soter** 50:30

I have one coming up in July in High Falls, as well.

**Audience** 50:34

How much does it cost?

**Patti Rudge** 50:37

The class itself doesn't cost anything. It's just the fee that you have to pay online. And I think that's \$60.

**Mark Loete** 50:45

Water safety lasts for a lifetime. You don't have to renew the water safety.

**Beth Waterman** 50:48

What kind of guiding do you do, Will?

**Will Soter** 50:54

I do primarily camping trips. So whether it's backpacking or canoe camping trips. And I'll do long distance hikes here in the Catskills, I prefer to get off the beaten track too, so I'll go to areas that are a little less frequented by folks, I'm not going up to, you know, check off the list of the 3500 peaks, I have done that. And I will do that on request with clients. I do have some clients that are, you know, looking to check those lists and they'll, you know, hire my services for that. But the favorite trips that I do and the stuff that I'll put on my calendar are camping trips, I've been going up to the Adirondacks to St Regis canoe area for the past couple of years and doing canoe camping trips up there, which is just a truly marvelous, how, just how far you can get back with, you know, not quite as much effort, you know, relatively easy hikes, you carry a lightweight canoe, a Kevlar canoe. The one I use is a 24 foot four person canoe, and it weighs about 60 pounds. Which is less than my 15 foot aluminum canoe. So you can get pretty far back and you can get a nice group of people back there and really enjoy some, you know, some pristine wilderness areas out there, and that's, I've noticed with groups, especially if they'll stay

out, you know, if you have groups who have the time who stay out more than three days, once you hit that fourth day, there really becomes a transformation with the people, they start to kind of realize, you know, those things that are kind of unnecessary in their lives back home, the things that are conveniences, they're nice things to have, which is why we have them, but they realize how much of that is unnecessary, and really just, you know, what few things they need to be safe and comfortable. And then nature kind of provides, you know, fills in those gaps with the beautiful scenery and those wonderful experiences they have. And, you know, they, they walk away feeling very, you know, fulfilled and satisfied. And, you know, one of the exciting things about being a guide is getting to relive those moments of discovery over and over again, I feel like I'm constantly discovering the same things, which is, it's neat, you know, I watch someone find something new. And I'll catch myself doing it every once in a while, I'll walk past something, and I'll just be excited about something that's a half mile up the trail. So I'll be kind of in a little hurry to get there. And someone says, Hey, wait a minute, what's this? Oh, good question. That's really neat. I just have already seen 15 of them this week. And I get to explain what type of moss something is or, you know, what type of spring flower is coming up. And it's, it's neat to see that, you know, that excitement in their eyes and that curiosity, and you know, kind of comes right back to me. So yeah, I find those camping trips to be my favorite.

**Hank Rope 53:35**

If you have a fishing license guide, a fishing guide, you can't take people on a hike. But if there's water at the other end, then you can take them on a hike. The rules are crazy.

**Patti Rudge 53:51**

So Will, I have a question for you. Do you find that there is a withdrawal phase in this culture that we live in right now where people are really connected to their smartphones or iPads, and what have you? Do you find that it takes a day or two, or not?

**Will Soter 54:10**

I think it depends on where the group is coming from. I notice, because I now partner up with some guides who are based in Manhattan or Brooklyn, and they'll provide the transportation and I'll run the trip up here. Or I'll run the trip up in the Adirondacks. And yes, so folks who are very immersed in that culture of constantly being attached, I was just on a trip where a guy's like, Oh, well, my battery's almost dead on this phone. And he pulls out another phone, he goes, Oh, I'll just I'll just use my work phone. It was like, wait a minute. What do we need a phone for? And he goes, I don't know. I said, well, how about we just put it back. And then that way you have it if you need it, and let's just see if we can make it through today without it. He goes, Oh! Okay. You know, so it's, Yeah, I do find, you know, folks, especially that are you know, I get folks who are just immersed in that, you know, whether it's part of their job, and they just have to stay connected. So they're just used to having these devices in their hands. And you know that first, I had a group I took up to the St. Regis canoe wilderness. And luckily, I noticed it because one of the people in the groups right away took their phone out, and he goes, we have signal, and I was like Shhh! I said, I told everyone else, you must have been in the bathroom when we were at the rest stop. But I told everyone else to put their phone in airplane mode because it preserves their battery. But I also knew that there was signal here, and he goes, Oh,

oh, so should I ... I said, you know, for your own benefit, you probably might want to do that. But don't tell anyone else in the rest of the group that there's signal here. So yeah, there is, there is a little bit of a disconnect. But you know, when you get folks to either where there's an area where there's no signal or where there's, you know, if you, if you can kind of trick them out it by telling them their batteries will last longer if they leave it on airplane mode. Once they get through that, usually by the time they get to dinnertime, that first night, and you kind of sit around and you tell a couple of stories, you get people laughing, they start to kind of really settle in. And I find usually after that first night, the first night for people if they've never camped, especially if they've never camped is usually kind of uncomfortable because they're like, Okay, well I guess I'm gonna, I guess I'm going to sleep there. And then when they wake up and you know, they're still in one piece, and they realize, wow, that wasn't that bad. And look where I am. Look what I, you know, I unzipped my tent flap. And this is my view, right, like that. They really start to embrace it more wholeheartedly. And then that, that next night, around the campfire, you get them sharing some of their stories from the day. And you get those little moments of people recapping things and that excitement kind of builds. And by the last night people don't want to go. They realized that Oh, geez, I'm going to have to face all of these things that now don't feel like they're necessary. Like, oh, I gotta turn both phones back on. [Laughter]

**Cliff Schwark** 57:05

Oh, that's interesting. Yeah, yeah. Want to hear a funny story? I used to volunteer a day on the stream for an organization like toTU, and this dentist, and his wife, won me for a day. Well, these were two people that don't belong on a trout stream. But anyway, you've got them and I took them out. And we, I took them on, actually Cold Brook road there, right, where there used to be an old metal bridge, it got washed out with that flood, this nice easy place to wade. And there's fish there. And so I took them out. Well, she was a very small lady, which was actually good.

**Patti Rudge** 57:56

That small??

**Cliff Schwark** 57:57

Well, maybe a little bigger. [Laughter and chitchat] Yeah, she was very tiny. But anyway. So I always keep people that don't know how to fish and don't know how to walk in water, I always keep them upstream. Because it's easier to pick them up on the way by than to go running down there [laughter]. Well, he was up above her. And she was right next to me. And I was right close to her because she was very wobbly. And she was, you could see she was scared being out there. Well, to make a story short, she started to go. And she did. And I reached over. And she was small. [Laughter] And I grabbed her by her vest. And I was holding her horizontal. And I said to him, Hey, Doc, about my tip. He said forget the tip, he says, let her go! [Laughter] I don't think those people ever became fishermen. But they had a nice day. They had a good time. And that was, that was the key ... While I'm thinking of it, I was on the Esopus with a lady and she had her little daughter with her. Her daughter stayed on the stream, on the bank, walking along. And she was fishing, and she had, she was picking it up pretty quickly. And she

said, Oh, look upstream! Look at that big black dog going across the river. I looked and I said, That's not a dog, that's a bear. She said, oh my God! She says, We gotta get out of here right now! I said, No, no, no. I said it's going up in the mountain. It won't bother you. No, no, it's gonna come down! It'll kill us! It'll eat my daughter! I said, No, no. She would not fish there. She said, you got to get me out of here. I put her back in the car, we went a couple miles upstream, to fish. But she was terrified that that bear was going to turn around, come back, kill us and then eat her daughter. I couldn't convince her otherwise, you know. You don't know what to say in those kind of circumstances, you know? You do the best you can.

I got a lot more! [Laughter] I took a guy out. I had to develop a two day course on fly fishing. I was giving it out of Don Traver's shop in Red Hook. Maybe some of you remember Don, he passed away this year, unfortunately. And so I had this fellow in the class. A wonderful individual, concert violinist out of New York City. And so the first day, what I would do is I would teach you know, the knots, the equipment, the bugs, and all that stuff. And then the other half of the day I would take them out on the lawn and teach them how to fly cast. And this guy picked it up very quickly. And he was very enthusiastic. He had bought before we got there, a new rod, new reel, new lines, vest, waders, boots. He had everything, and he had the best stuff. He was ready to go, and boy was he excited, he was a pleasure to be with. Next day, part of the two day program, I would take him out on the stream and put in practice what I was teaching. So I took him out. I took him to that exact same place by where that, Cold Brook road, I took him down there, got him rigged up. He walked out into the water about the height of the top of his socks. I was standing right next to him. And he looks at me and he says Cliff, I can't do this. I said you can't do what? He said I can't stand in water. I said you've never stood in water? No, I can't do this. I'm going to fall, grabs me. I said you're not going to fall, I'm right here. You know, just stand still for a while, you'll get used to it. No, I can't do this. I can't do this. I said well, he said I looked down at the water, I said don't look down at the water. Look horizontal. Look at the bank. Maybe that ... I can't do this. I said, well let's just stand here. So I made him stand there a little bit. I thought he'd get acclimated to it. But he had some kind of vertigo or something. He just could not stand it. He said you got to get me back on the shore. So I back him up, he's on shore now. I said, Well, what do you want to do? I said, You don't have to go in the water. We can go along the bank. You can fish. It'll be just fun. No, no, he says. That's not fly fishing as I understand it. You gotta get out in the water. You gotta do it the right way. I'm not going to do it halfway. I said, Well, we're here. He said, Let's sit down and talk. And let's eat lunch. I said, okay.

**Patti Rudge** 1:03:18

And that's when the ranger shows up!

**Cliff Schwark** 1:03:20

Yeah! So we eat the lunch. And I said, Well, what are we going to do? I said, you know, the day's young. He said, I want you to fish. I said, no, no, wait a minute. You're paying me to fish?? I said, that's not right, that's not right. He said, yes, I'm paying you and that's what I want you to do. So I felt pretty strange. I tried to talk him out of it. But, so I started, took his rod, and I started fishing, and then rather than just fish I was trying to teach him at the same time. And I was

showing him the different kinds of casts. You know, how to mend your line, how to fish dry flies on top, how to fish nymphs underneath, and how to use a strike... I was doing all that stuff. Well, obviously, after all these years, I can catch fish. So obviously once in a while I get a fish. Well, I figured like you said there Hank, here, take the rod. He wouldn't take it! He said, you caught him... I said... I couldn't get him to do anything. He kept walking along with me. Well, to make the story short. We ended up the day. It's about an hour and a half of watching me fish and catch fish. He said, that's it. That's good. That's fine. I said, you sure? He said, yes. So we go. I drop him off at Don Traver's. He goes his way down to New York and I go back home. He gives me the money and I just put it in my pocket. And I said to him, Look, half price. Pay me for the first day. You didn't do anything the second day but watch me fish. That's not right. So he says, okay. When I got home I counted the money. Well, he not only paid me for a whole day. There's an extra hundred dollars in here. So I called him up the next day. And I said, you made a mistake. First of all, I said, you didn't do what I told you to do. You gave me for the full two days. But I said on top of that you've given me \$100. You made a mistake. He says No, that wasn't a mistake. That was a tip. I said. he gave me \$100 tip. I said that's not right. He said, let me tell you something. The two days I spent with you are the best two days of my life. [Laughter] I didn't know, I didn't know what to say. I was dumbfounded, and that's not like me. I can talk. I didn't know what to say. [Laughter] I just said, well thank you very much. Never heard from him again, but two best days of his life, he said.

**Patti Rudge** 1:06:05

Well, that's beautiful. You did your job. Yeah. You made him happy.

**Cliff Schwark** 1:06:10

Well, it was mentioned here that you give them an experience out there. Now this was a rare thing of course.

**Patti Rudge** 1:06:18

It doesn't happen every week? [Laughter]

**Cliff Schwark** 1:06:22

Well, I'll give you one that isn't so nice, if you want. I had a call from a fellow in New York City. He said, I understand you're a guide. I said yes. He said, you guarantee me fish? I said no. He said, well why not? You're a fly fishing guide. I said yes. But I can't guarantee you fish. He said well, what can you guarantee? I said I guarantee you probably a good time. And I'll probably be able to teach you some things. But I'm not going to guarantee you fish because I never know. Some days I can't get fish myself. And I've been doing it forever. And he says Well, we'll see about that. I should have, right there, said thank you very much. Call somebody else.

**Will Soter** 1:07:06

I'm booked.

**Cliff Schwark** 1:07:07

Yeah, I'm booked. I just got booked. Well, I met the guy. I took him out. Well I met him here on the Esopus. And he was just as irritable off the phone as he was on the phone. And he says alright, let's go, I know how to fish. I know how to fish. Well, we go down to the stream, the flies are hatching. There's a brown, I remember it well, a small brown caddis on the water, and the fish are rising like crazy. I said, oh, I'm going to get this dude some fish. And I said, well, Let me put the fly on for you here that they're taking. No, no. He says, I know what I'm using. I'm going to use a blue egg pattern. Now I, to be very honest, I've used blue egg patterns up on the Salmon River for salmon ... artificial egg with a blue tint to it. Not on the Esopus! I wasn't using it there. And this guy, he insisted. They're all small fish out there rising, he says. I said no, no, there's some big fish out there too. No, no, no, I'm gonna use the blue egg. I'm going to get the big ones. First of all, he didn't know how to fish the egg. He fished it so that it was just under the surface and floated. Eggs bounce along the bottom. I said, you're not fishing it right. Don't tell me how to fish! What am I here for, you know? Well, then he started getting pretty obnoxious. You don't know what you're doing. You don't know what you're doing. And he kept that up and it got worse. Right across the Esopus on the other side there were two young guys. And hey were fishing. And every once in a while I'd hear one of them say, I got one! And then pretty soon the other guy, I got one! I can see what they were doing. They were fishing on top probably using a caddis. And they were getting fish left and right. And he said those kids are getting fish! Why aren't I? I said, well, because you're using a blue egg! He said, no, the blue egg will get them! I want to go over there, he says. Okay! Get the car, take 'em around, go over the bridge. Come back. Put him there. The kids have gone. Flies are still hatching. Fish are still rising. He's blue eggging! [Laughter] He gets nothing over there. When they're over there. The bank is high behind him. So he couldn't cast as well, and he was getting hung up. That got him even worse. All right, I'm climbing trees and unhooking him. And I'm getting about up to here with him. He's up there with me beginning. So he said I want to go back over where we were. I said Okay. And we go back over. I said, how about change over? Nope. Back to the blue egg. Now he starts getting nasty. He starts cursing! He starts cursing at me, telling me I'm not worth this, worth that. And I said, Okay, good luck. I'll see you. I just start walking. You can't leave me!! I said, watch me. And he says, I'm not going to pay you! I explained to him where he could take care of the money. And he understood that. And so I got in the car and left, went up the stream, and fished the rest of day by myself. I never saw him or heard from him again, but there's a case of... and I'll say this... 98% of the people I've had out are just wonderful people, just wonderful people. You learn as much from some of them. Some of these people I've had out were real celebrities. They're very, very famous people and that, you know, and you learn an awful lot from them, and some of them were the nicest people you ever want to meet. The majority of people are nice. There's been a couple of bad experiences. That was one.

### **Will Soter 1:11:08**

Usually you can you can kind of tell, like you experience on the phone, and that's when Hank says you know, you should have said you were booked [laughter]. I had one time, a fellow guide, he was booked. So he said, Hey, you know, I got this trip going out last minute. It's a full trip. So it's a full group. And I said, Okay, you know, I have that weekend off. Let me take it, what are they looking for? Oh, you know, they want something with a view. And they want something remote. So I said, Oh, great. I'll take them up to the Balsam Lake fire tower and then

we'll go, you know, we'll hike down to the fall brook lean-to. Nice remote area in there and they come past, you know, the headwaters of the Beaverkill. And so the group comes out there and they're taking the tags off of their, you know, backpacks that they just got in the mail that morning. I kind of had a feeling because every time I'd send a list of questions in the email, I would just get back more questions and no answers. And I finally had to, you know, all right, who's in charge, so I'm not emailing everyone? And one guy said, I'll be in charge, I'll take care of everything for the group. And the day before I had to buy the food. I said, you know, I need to know. Does anyone have any allergies? Are there any dietary restrictions, I just want to make sure I'm not killing anyone out here. Because if I'm buying peanuts in the trail mix, and no one can have them, that could be a problem. And he says, oh, okay, we have one vegetarian, and then there was eight more questions. Okay, I said, this is gonna be interesting. Maybe I got this one because he wasn't booked! [Laughter] So, you know, when they show up, they get all brand new stuff. You know, I showed them on the map where we're going, they asked me to convert it to kilometers, because they're not familiar with miles. So you know, we kind of do the rough math on it and they say, That's great! So we went up to the fire tower, and we're, you know, probably just about to turn off the old road there and go uphill, and they go, So how much further is it? And I said, well, alright, so let's review the plan again, because if we go uphill here, we still have to go all the way back to where the car is and hike another four miles to get to where we're sleeping. And they go, oh, well, that's fine. But how much further? And I said, Okay, so you're not saying that because you're tired? Oh, no, we're tired. Okay. So do you want to see the view? We can camp up there. There's a place to camp up there. Oh, no, no, no, no. So you know, we go up there, the fire tower is unlocked, because it was a weekend, they enjoyed the view. And I knew it was a good thing to get the view in because it was going to be rainy the rest of the weekend. So we stop at the lean-to up on the mountain there. And I said, you know, we can, we can sleep here. No, no, no, no, no, we really want to go to the other place. I said, Okay, you know, that's going to be four miles from when we get back to the car, which is, you know... Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, that's fine. So we get back to the car, pick up some extra supplies, because the packs were fairly light going up there. And I know I kind of had to trick them. So there's a couple of primitive campsites along the way. So we passed the first two, and we get to the third one, and I told him that it was the first one. And they said, oh, geez. And I had been there just the week before and I knew there was a bear in the area. So they're like, this is a great place to camp! And I said, Well, let's just get some water here have some snacks, I filtered some water. And the one guy who, you know, was kind of the leader of the group was like, why isn't this a good place to camp? I said, Well, aside from the fact that it's going to rain pretty heavily and it would be kind of muddy ... And he goes, but look, somebody's been here, you see, the ground's all disturbed. And I said, Yeah, somebody's been here, they were digging for food. And he goes, Well, who would dig for food? I said a bear! And he goes, Okay, guys, I think we gotta go follow this guy to the other camp. [Laughter]

**Cliff Schwark** 1:14:36

Someone's digging there, huh?

**Will Soter** 1:14:39

It was just interesting, kind of trying to manage those expectations and draw them along a little bit further. But uh, you know, you recognize those clues and from that point on, I recognize those clues in correspondence with people and, you know, when you don't get clear, you know, responses back, that's generally they're not on the same page, they've just locked on to this idea of this ideal experience that they want. And they're not listening to any of the information in between. Luckily, that group, I was able to get him back there. And they were surprised that I knew that it was going to rain the next day. They're like, how did you know it was gonna? It's my job. I need to know what things we're going to face out here. And I knew it was going to be this rainy. And they said, So we don't have to leave the lean-to today? I said, you don't have to if you don't want to. And they're like, Great. And they all went right back in their sleeping bags. All right. I said, I said I'll be over here tending the fire. You let me know.

**Beth Waterman 1:15:33**

Short story from Hank.

**Hank Rope 1:15:34**

To end on a high note about why I live here. And why I'm a guide. Two day trip on the Beaverkill with a gentleman that was a president of a bank in Florida. More money than anybody. He really had a lot of money, all nice fancy stuff. Anyway, on the second day, he said, I have to be out of here at noon because the chauffeur's coming to pick him up and take him to the airport in Sullivan county where his jet's waiting to take him back to a meeting. So I said okay, about 11:30, we have to go in 15 minutes or so. He said, I'm just going to sit here. And the man sat on a rock in the middle of the Beaverkill. And I kind of went in the woods a little bit, got out of his way. Come back out later on. And I said sir, we have to go. And he says to me, I envy you. You'll be back here tomorrow.

**Beth Waterman 1:16:38**

Well, that's a wonderful way to end because I really think it's marvelous how much effort you all put into sharing the outdoors with the public. And obviously, sometimes some people are more grateful than others Patti, you brought a few things to share here. Do you want to show and tell? And then we'll break up for cookies and ...

**Patti Rudge 1:17:05**

So the first thing I brought is your classic guide's pack. And, actually, I had an opportunity to meet and make this pack with Beth, many, many years ago. I brought it because it is your quintessential... experiences... in the old days, when you would go out with a guide... to me it goes back that 120 some odd years when you had the big money out of Saratoga and Albany, and New York City. They would buy huge tracts of property up in the Adirondacks. And then they would hire an architect and an engineer and then all the locals to build this beautiful home, which would be called the Great Camp. In those great camps is where a lot of the original guides came from. Because these Great Camps had to be staffed. They had their caretakers, and they had their fancy cooks, and they had their housekeepers, and their landscape people, but they also then had someone in the downtime, take the families that were up there for three weeks in the summer, to take them out for that exceptional

experience. And what you would see unconditionally is they'd have their own guide boat that they made by hand, and they'd have a pack basket look like this. You were cared for in every small step of the way. And most locally, I can tell you, is a beautiful trail that is on private property that goes up to one of our high peaks, and it is also called the step trail or the ladies trail. It's also called the Dutcher trail. And that was the guide's last name. So back in the late 1800s. Here in Shandaken, we had a guide, who took the time and the pains to build this step trail up this mountain. And the steps are perhaps this deep, because back in the day, when you had the women wearing the high collar dress, the high boots and the multiple petticoats, how difficult that it be, they couldn't be taking these even average steps, they could only master these small steps. And there was a step trail built all the way to just off the summit of this peak, just intentionally for that kind of company. So about 3600 feet, there's actually an old spring that is still, its hand dug, it's hand laid up with stone and it's still totally locatable. And potable. I was just there the other day, it's a pretty special place. So we still have tangible evidence of guides out there. I brought this to remind people of the history that's parallel with the New York State guides history; it's really the history of the New York State Forest Preserve, which we are so surrounded by here, about 72% of the land in the town of Shandaken is New York state land, and it is all protected. It's all forever wild. And the boundary lines are painted. They're first blazed about DBH diameter, breast height. And then it's painted yellow. And that's one of my jobs was to paint those boundary lines. And this is actually article 14, which is of the New York State Constitution. And basically it says, and I will read it, "The lands the state now owned or hereafter acquired constituting the Forest Preserve, as now fixed by law shall be forever kept as wild forest lands." And that's article 14. It comes again along, it parallels the history of the New York State guides. So that's what I wanted to share with you. Those are my props.

**Beth Waterman** 1:20:49

Well, thank you all very much for coming [applause] for spending some time on this beautiful day with us here. We have some cookies and things down the hall. Yeah. We can hear some more stories...

**Narrator** 1:21:05

This event was made possible with funds from the Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program. Audio recording by Silver Hollow Audio.