

Joan: Before we begin, this is not being filmed and the reason I'm here is all about casting and this is an indoor practice outfit. The whole idea of casting is, is to form a loop, an unrolling loop so you can present a fly to the water where you are sure there are fish and so on, so you can cast, you can cover the waters of the world, so it's not just about knowing what the bugs are, because I've never been good at entomology at all. I never cared about it, but because I could cast, I finally learned where the fish would be by covering all the water, and then learning how to read water. I couldn't read water; I just saw pretty patterns on the surface. So casting is, casting opens the door. It's your passport.

Beth: Well, thank you all for coming on such an inclement day, but as we all know it could have been worse. My name is Beth Waterman. I'm the curator of the Bartlett angling collection here at the Phoenicia Library and a co-founder along with Doris Bartlett, who is here, right there. In 1995, we started this endeavor. And, if some of you may not be on my mailing list, many of you are, if you'd like to be on my mailing list for future events, I'll pass this around, and you can give me your information, but if you're on it you don't need to sign again.

... : And these are just some postcards that tell you about the angling collection here and what we are, what we do. So I encourage you to take these. The reason I would like to encourage you is because our website is on the back, and our website is really a wonderful repository, an archive of not only our talks but also a match the hatch chart and other information about the history of, of especially fishing on the Esopus. And this talk today will be recorded by Brett Barry of Silver Hollow Audio and his assistant, and photographed by Mark Loete, and the still photos and the audio portion of the discussion will be put on our website so that you can listen to it or for those people who weren't able to attend. So, I want to thank the Catskill Watershed Corporation with support from NYC DEP without whose support we wouldn't be able to have these technical services here, recording and photographing.

I have two other announcements Roger Menard was a frequent attendee at our talks and he passed away several months ago. He was an avid fisherman on the Esopus, and he is an author of books about fishing on the Esopus, and was a friend and active member of Trout Unlimited. So we're having a special afternoon to remember Roger and bring your stories and tell tales about Roger. I'll pass these flyers around in case anyone wants it as a reminder. And I also want to announce the fifth annual Anglers Symposium which is being held on Friday, November ninth from one to four. This is a program from the Sullivan County Soil and Water, and Rondout. Neversink Stream program. And one of them, there are several interesting talks, but one is about E.R. Hewitt, who was a famous resident of the, on the Neversink, and was a man who had a lot of interest in the science aspect of fishing as well and also an author. It's free and everyone's invited to attend. It's over in Denning. Should I pass this around? You can just take a look and make a note if you're interested.

... : Today's event is really the culmination of many years of interest in Joan Wulff, and her amazing career. When you think about the history of women in the field of Angling, there are not too many luminaries. You really have to go back very far in history to ...

Joan: Dame Juliana.

Beth: Exactly! To Dame Juliana Berners who in 1496 published the first book in English on fishing. That was only 20 years after the printing press came to England. She is really revered I think, but between 1496 and now, there's not too many and no one that I know who has the kind of career and reputation that Joan has. So I'm so pleased she can be with us today and accompanied by her friend Jen Grossman, who has had a career in the environmental law field, and I just learned is now raising French Guinea fowl. Jen has really been a leader in the open space protection and preservation movement. So these two ... I'm so excited to have two women on the podium. I'm so proud that we finally have achieved this. They're going to carry on a little conversation here, and I encourage all of you to ask questions at the end, please. We're going to have a small reception upstairs afterwards with some refreshments. If it's too warm in here, we can open the windows. I think that's just about all of the business at hand. So please welcome Jen and Joan!

... : [applause]

Jen: Well, it is truly an honor to be here. And I have to say that it's not just how much I've admired Joan and been inspired by her as an example, as a fellow female angler. But I'm proud and really blessed to call you a friend and a fellow member of the woman fly fishers. We are the oldest fly fishing club, all women's club in the United States, and founded by Julia Fairchild in 1932. We are a proud bunch of women enjoying mostly the rivers, streams and brooks of the Catskill region. So it's near and dear to our hearts for many reasons. And it really connects us and keeps us together as, as a really important community. Let's start from the beginning. Let's, let's kind of get back to how you found your roots in angling, whether you were fishing for a bass on a boat with your mom and dad.

Joan: Oh, yes. You've heard that?

Jen: I have, I heard it might be a bass that really got you hooked.

Joan: No, it was my mother rowing the boat that got me hooked... I was four or five years old or six or whatever. And one night my dad, who was an avid bass fisherman and more, my dad was an outdoorsman. He hunted and fished game birds. He hunted Moose, he had an outdoor store in Paterson called the Paterson Rod and Gun store, so everything in our lives with hunting, fishing and dogs. So one night he wanted to fish for bass at Greenwood Lake, which is on the border of New York and New Jersey, and invited me to go along with mother. Mother was rowing the boat and dad was fishing with a fly rod with bass bugs and mother really didn't know how to row. And so all night long he was saying, Ina, you're too close; Ina, you're too far. And so I'm listening and I'm waiting and waiting and waiting for him to catch something. And he would put out the bass bug and

wait 'til all of the rings would disappear. And then he would pop it back toward the boat. And finally a bass took it. And for me that was, ahhh, this came up from this dark water, boom! That's what hooked me, that particular move of that bass. And so he played it a bit and then he handed the rod to me and I didn't know what to do with it and I didn't put any tension on it. The bug came out of the bass's mouth and I was going to cry and he said he was gonna release it anyway. So everything worked out well except that I went home at night thinking it's better to be the fisherman than the rower.

... :

And so I am and I don't tie flies, but I've had husbands who tie flies for me. There was a Paterson casting club and we lived in the suburb North Haledon and they met at a dock right near the house. My brothers were invited to a practice casting every Sunday morning. And of course my dad had taught them how to shoot a 22 and all those sorts of things. And I was left out. But I would watch the casting and I got intrigued by the beauty of fly casting. So one day before my dad came home from work for supper, I asked my mother if I could borrow my father's rod and try it. And she said yes. And I took it and went to the dock. I hadn't put it together well and I don't know how I was trying to cast whatever. And it came apart and the tip went into the lake. My father's rod. So home, I went crying, of course. I was 10. And the man next door got home for dinner before my dad did and he got a rake. My mother got him to get a rake. She was in trouble too. And he retrieved the tip. So when the story was told at suppertime about it, my dad invited me to go to the casting club on Sunday mornings with my brothers. He hadn't, you know, it was just perfect. I just didn't anticipate that he would be happy about it. And so I became a, a tournament caster. I won a New Jersey sub junior all around championship. I have a little trophy about that big, and that, as soon as you win something, it gives you the incentive to practice, which I'm sure you all know. And so that started me. We had local tournaments, we had state tournaments, regional; and in 1943 I went to Chicago for my first national tournament and won the dry fly accuracy in the women's division. And so again, that, that gave me the incentive. Also, I loved the fact that we were traveling to get there. So, my tournament casting went from age 10 onward, and I was in national tournaments from 1943 to 1960, and I won 17 national titles in that time. And I had two outstanding happenings that gave me a lot of publicity. One was in 1951, I entered an event that was called the fisherman's distance fly, and it was a nine weight rod; and I won it against all male competition, except there was one other woman with the nine weight, because I could handle that, I was strong enough. Nine weight rod; it was fine. Then there was another event in distance where the tackle was much heavier where they weighed the line, the fly line in ounces, to do it. And so I had a casting teacher from the club named William Taylor, and he, I used to drive him to casting practice once a week. He had a candy store, and he made bamboo rods in it, and he didn't drive and so on. And uh, so I became his gillie. He would cast these distance lines out maybe 150 feet, and I would pull them back in and lay them out on the platform so they wouldn't tangle. And I finally couldn't stand it anymore. I wanted to do it. And so I tried with his tackle, and it was much too heavy. I couldn't even take the line off the water; the line would have been, the head would have been 52 feet long. The bamboo rods weighed, well, the one he, he ended up making a rod for me because his outfit was too heavy and the one he made for me with six and three quarter ounces. Those of you who are fishing with five weights, you've got 3-ounce rods, whatever. So I loved distance casting. At the time I was a dancing teacher and I just loved the fact that it was a full body activity, and you just had to use every part of yourself from your

fingertips to your toes in order to cast. And I cast a fly 161 feet, and that gave me a lot of publicity. And the reason I did it was because when it was, we were in New Jersey in Goffle Park, and when it was my turn to cast, my four-year-old son had to go to the bathroom and I said, I can't, you know, I can't go. And so a man from the club said I'll take him. And I know that my son did not like that man. So he did not want to go; the man picked him up, put him on his shoulders, and off they went, with my son Doug banging on the guy's chest, and was taken to the bathroom. So I think that's why I cast 161 feet that day.

Jen: You're inspired, clearly inspired. Did you feel that, when you talk about a nine weight rod or even a heavier line, do you feel that gives you more capacity to have greater distance with a heavier line, a heavier rod as your...

Joan: For pure distance? Absolutely.

Jen: Yeah. And accuracy as well.

Joan: No, no. The casting club tournaments had, they actually had 16 events in the whole thing. Accuracy and distance and plug casting and spinning eventually. But the plug casting would be like a quarter ounce accuracy. Then they had distance events for plug and fly. And I forgot what your question was.

Jen: So just the weight of the line and the weight of the rods. Joan: So when you're casting for accuracy as a fisherman, yes, you're always going to want to be accurate. And so what you do is you take your hand and take it here and now there's your target no matter how far away. And you go to the target. That's your accuracy. And it's bothering me that I am sitting down and I can't see your faces. And you can't see mine. Can I stand up?

... : [she stands]

Joan: So tournament casting got publicity, because I won things, and the newspapers would carry it on. And the first bit of publicity I ever had was in a magazine called the American magazine. And it was 1945 and the war was just over and they, they had done ... come and taken lots of pictures and they had a one page thing and it was titled "No Flies on Joanie." Is this microphone going to be all right?

... : All right. Okay.

... : In 1948 I met Charles Ritz at the New York sportsman show and he convinced me that I should go to Paris in the following spring and compete in the first international tournament after the war. And I did. And also as a background here, I was a dancing teacher. I had started dancing and casting at the same time Now it's making me go back to high school, which was, what are you going to be when you grow up? I don't know. What do you like to do? Dance and cast. Oh. [laughter] So I went to secretarial school [laughter] because at my social level it was secretary, nurse or teacher. And that was it. So I went to secretarial school. I'd worked in New York City for four whole months as a

junior secretary for NW Air and Sons in the NBC building. And I noticed that all the people on the streets of New York had crabby faces.

... : But I commuted, and then on Saturday I was teaching dancing, and I had a partner who was older than I was. And so she, I was in one of her dancing classes, and the woman teaching tap became ill and had to stop. And so they took me to another teacher. I'd learned the step, come back and teach my class that step. So that was the beginning of teaching, teaching casting was what I was going to say, because teaching seems to be what I love to do most. And so we, we had a dancing school on Saturday and we finally had too many students for one day and so this gal said, her name was Eleanor Egg, and she had been a national 100 yard dash champion. So again, inspiration from a woman who wasn't a fisherman but a woman. And so she said, we either to give up or open a full time studio. So we did in 1944 and I was there until 1952. We got to have 265 pupils. She taught ballet and acrobatic. I taught tap and baton twirling. And I was casting and winning championships and things. And one morning I woke up and thought if I don't get out of that dancing school, I'm going to be happily teaching dancing at age 75 and never have done anything else.

... : I was making \$150 a week, 1952. And so I decided I was going to give up dancing school and try to make a living in the fishing world. And I never have. [laughter] You had to be a man and you had to sell tackle, and of course you know, it was mostly plug casting in spinning eventually. So what I did was I went sportsman's shows and gave demonstrations and I would do trick casting. I would take cigarettes out from between two people's mouths with a plug casting rod. And I once did that to Johnny Carson [laughter]. And my husband, it was on a show probably 1956 or something like that. And Johnny Carson was shaking like hell.

... : And so I, I did that. And sportsman shows then could be 10 days long. I got paid \$400 for 10 days paying all of my own expenses. I traveled to places like Cleveland and St. Louis and other places. And then in 1954 I was going to be doing a demonstration in the sport show in St Louis. And the emcee turned out to be an old silent screen movie star named Monte Blue. And I got there ahead of time of course. And he said, I want to talk to you, because what I usually wore was shorts. I had a creel over my shoulder and rolled down hip boots. He said, I want to talk to you about changing your costume to some kind of a dress. Well, to jump to the end of that, I ended up and maybe some of you have seen a picture of me in a strapless white and silver cocktail dress, high heels, glitter in my hair; and Monte Blue sold that so beautifully. He, you know, he did all the talk. I didn't do any trick casting and I had a better response to that than anything I ever did was I felt with trick casting and stuff because it showed just the grace and beauty of fly casting. And The audience responded to it. So that was another place where I got publicity. You know, if it weren't for publicity, none of us would be anywhere

Jen: But it moved even just from entertainment to real education where you were teaching and showing how it was done, not just getting a wow or a yay, even though you were getting both.

Joan: Right. And so all through that time I was going to sportsman shows and became friendly with Garcia Corporation, with a man named Dick Wolf. And so we would have, they

would have contests at the sportsman shows. My father was one of the guys who would be a judge, that sort of thing. A little more about my father, come to think of it. He was an outdoorsman, as I said, he wrote a cast, an outdoor column for the Paterson Evening News and the Paterson Morning Call, one after the other. He was a, I can't think of the word that he, he represented sportsmen in the state. He helped start all of the clubs in the Paterson area. And it was all about bird shooting and hunting. I mean, uh, animals and birds. Where was I?

Jen: So your father, really being sort of a model, a mentor for you, but also allowing you and supporting you in a field that women just... daughters didn't do it. And his did and he was proud. So after leaving the dancing world, which is such a great analogy and also a wonderful art form, just like your casting is, it's this grace and beauty, you shifted and left and got on the road and became really a representative for casting and the Garcia company.

Joan: And it was my education traveling the country. I went to Canada as well as the United States. And so I was on the road a lot. And having been involved with, with Garcia at sportsman shows, they finally offered me a job. What I did for them was I gave them so many days out of the year and they sent me around the country, the whole country, you know, to, to tackle shops, and I was there and I would do demonstrations and talk about products and all of that sort of thing. So it was all promotional work for Garcia. They were the largest tackle company in the world. They had imported the Mitchell spinning reel which took the country by storm, which everybody old enough would remember and fly casting, fly fishing, was about two percent of their total sales, but that's, you know, so I, I did some of everything. And I went into a couple of casting tournaments, fishing tournaments. I remember being on the Garcia boat in Marathon in the Keys and catching a 60 pound sailfish, which was the largest that had ever been caught in that contest. And so they mounted it for me and put it in the Garcia entryway and so on and, and I have that sailfish in my fishing school in Lew Beach Right now. So a long bunch of years there.

Jen: And you must have given a lot of credibility to the company and the products and the tackle because here was a woman I could do it, and if a woman could do it then hey, a man could do it... not necessarily.

Joan: That's another subject. [laughter]

... : And they actually had another woman who was doing that kind of work too. I ended up, I started out doing, in the meantime, I had been married. I started in '58 with Garcia, but I was married in '54 and I have two children from that marriage. And so we lived in Florida at the time and I would only give them one third of my time for the year because of being a mother, wife, and all those good things. And then, well, I was working for Garcia in 1966. The phone rang one day and it was my boss at Garcia. Dick Wolf was his name and he said, how would you like to go fishing in Newfoundland for giant Bluefin tuna with Lee Wulff? My mind went—aaah—I get seasick, Newfoundland, fog, Lee Wulff's kind of a hermit, isn't he? That kind of thing. At the same time I'm saying yes! When? [laughter] So that was a phone call that changed my life. Lee was making a film for the American sportsman series. Did anyone here ever watch that? On Sunday

afternoon? Right. And when Lee made films, he had made films for Garcia by the way, but when he made films, he was always trying to teach you something. So he wanted to show that giant Bluefin tuna fishing was a team sport. You didn't have to do it all alone. The crew on the boat would set up the bait and all that sort of thing. And they wanted to have a woman who had preferably never fished before to show that it was a team sport. And They wanted her to catch a tuna five times her own weight. Well, they had chosen, they had chosen Kay Starr, who was a singer who sang Wheel of Fortune. Does anyone remember that? Yes. Okay. And she became ill and couldn't go. And so ABC called Garcia and said, do you have anybody else? And my boss said, yes. And it was me. And so Katy Starr's Wheel of Fortune turned to me is the way I always say it. So I went to Newfoundland. I caught a 572 pound tuna; and Lee and I connected. [laughter] And so we then went. We got married in '67 and we then were both working for Garcia. Lee's idea that Fly-O, the little rod, and the yarn, that was his idea and the first thing we worked on when we went to work for Garcia together, and that was because he said, you know, golfers are able to practice indoors with soft golf balls and we should be able to practice with a soft fly line, whatever. So I went out and bought five different yarns and we had a, you know, took two pieces of a fly rod and stuck them together and tried and we found the yarn that worked, and so Garcia named it Fly-O, which is a dumb name, but that's what it is. We were of course doing what we called the rubber chicken circuit, which is every Saturday night at, different clubs that are having their dinners. And so Lee would talk about conservation, and I started talking about casting, you know, not really knowing anything much except how just to do it without thinking. And so we did that, and when I started standing up there in front of an audience and having to say, do this, do that, don't do whatever, whatever. And so I started thinking about this, about how to talk about casting. I had to end up analyzing it, and I really didn't do that until we had opened a fishing school. Now we lived in New Hampshire and we started talking about having a fishing school, but the waters in New Hampshire are more acidic than they are in the Catskills. And so in 1977, Lee was asked to be the speaker at a federation of fly fishers event in the Catskills in, Roscoe and we went and there was somebody walking down the street in waders, they had just done catch and release on the Beaverkill. And we'd looked at each other and said, this is the place to have a school. So we went home and put our house on the market and we were in the Catskills in 1978.

... : We opened the school in '79 and have been there ever since. And the Catskills are the best place to fish for trout in the eastern United States. We have clean water, but we have water that is comfortable for the insects upon which trout feed and so that's what it's really all about. The hatches in the Catskills are famous and you live by the hatches, you know, what should be hatching this week, what should be hatching next week. And so it really is a home place for trout fishing more than in almost any other place. Yeah ... help me.

Jen: Sure, and you know, and it's important to really mention that the Catskills, as many of you know, are part of a wonderful forest preserve system and no other state in the country protects forest like we do. We do it constitutionally. The forest preserve was established in the late 1800s, 1895 and it's forever wild. You cannot lease, sell or exchange the lands of, that are currently owned by the New York state DEC in this forest preserve. And as Joan said, it's not just the wonderful unique watershed we have, but

it's the lands around the watershed. You protect your mountains, you therefore protect your rivers and those mountain areas, and the wildlands are support for this intense insect activity. So we're really blessed by that. And the abundance of fresh, clean water is, is unmatched even within the entirety of the northeast.

Joan: Absolutely.

Jen: So, um, so you, you picked a good spot.

Joan: We did. So more about the fishing school. Lee was famous; well, I should go back to say that marrying Lee introduced me to Atlantic Salmon fishing because Lee had opened the door—doors—to fishing for Atlantic salmon with trout tackle. When he first started, it was all about two handed rods from Europe and that was considered you had to have that. And he took his trout tackle even down to a six foot rod for a seven weight line, and made history with catching Atlantic Salmon. He also introduced me to the adventure of, of fishing for giant Bluefin tuna. He was after a couple of world records, which he did. And then I can remember I tried to go for a record for women, and I fought a giant Bluefin tuna from a 15-foot Boston whaler in a storm off Prince Edward Island; finally had to give up because we were in this little whaler you know, but we had been in a bigger boat and they said, if you don't come in, we're gonna leave you here in the storm. [laughter] So there was plenty of adventure. He also was the person who introduced me to conservation, the whole conservation idea. I hadn't, I wasn't there, I wasn't, I didn't belong to organizations and so forth. And so he really put me there. If it weren't for Lee Wulff, I would not be here; he made that much of a difference in my life. So in the fishing school now we have students coming in, actually Lee did. On the Beaverkill Lee did an Atlantic salmon school, when we first started; and he could do it, he could describe the, the wonders of the Atlantic Salmon who are born in freshwater and they go to Europe when they're three or four years old, as little parr and so on. And then they grow and eat over there. Then they always come back to their native rivers to spawn. And unlike the Pacific Salmon, which have to die when they come back to spawn, the Atlantics can survive it, but it's tough. They come into the rivers starting in May and they end up staying there through the whole rest of the year in the winter. And then they go back. If they're still alive they go back out again the following spring. And so it was a very romantic story that he could tell about what these fish went through and waiting for spawning time and all of that sort of thing. Uh, so we did have that on the Beaverkill. And of course he tied the salmon flies and then we did teach people double hauls and all of that sort of thing. And so I, as the casting instructor, found that I couldn't talk to people about the parts of the cast. Well first I had to figure out the parts of the cast and, as I said, we used to go to the rubber chicken dinners and Lee would talk about conservation. I would talk about casting. And so I had to start thinking about the mechanics of casting. And then when we had a school, you know, in those days, the way casting was taught was, watch me; do it like this, putting the onus on the student. And so I realized that we had to have something so I could talk to people about the parts of the cast. And so I analyzed and analyzed with that Fly-O, with that little rod... And I can remember that if it weren't for Fly-O, I would not have been able to do it. But so when, as soon as I did something like this, what have I done? And so I had to talk about the parts that your hand, your wrist, your forearm, your elbow, and your upper arm. And in those days, again, even now, people learn to cast with books under their arm, which is

how I was told to do it, to start with. And so you're restricted, you have only this much. And when I was in the casting club at age 10 and 12, I got rid of the book because I could only cast 35 feet well, and the targets were 50 feet. And so I learned if I lifted my arm up, my elbow up and down, that I could reach those longer targets. And so that's how I'm now teaching in the school. And so I've got to talk about the three parts of the arm as they relate to the, of the action of the fly line. So the beginning of the cast is to get the fly line moving in the direction you want it to go. And then you're going to come to a quick stop. And what this does is it creates the loop, which I showed you earlier, the loop that's going to unroll to the target and as it unrolls, and then you start in the other direction, you get everything moving forward, and then you make a snap and a stop; a sharp stop is an acceleration to a stop is what it is in two directions, and it's the only sport that that you actually have two strokes. So you'll need as much force on the backcast as you do on the forward cast. It's not, don't come back easy and snap forward, so it's two strong things. And the fly line to unroll off the tip of the rod parallel to the ground, that's your perfect backcast and forward cast is going to be aiming to a target and you're going to be using your hand and your thumb to go to the target.

Jen: When I first started learning, it was a 10 and two.

Joan: 10 and two, right.

Jen: And the same thing, my father, I remember strapping my arm with a belt and I felt very constricted, but it really ...

Joan: You were constricted!

Jen: And even my wrist, he said, forget you have a wrist. This is one piece right here. And even the psychology of it. The visualization of it really helped. So how did you, by breaking down every component of the cast, you demystified this incredible talent ...

Joan: Well, then I had to put it in print, and that was, that was the hard part. And so, after going through all of this and starting to use it in the school, Nick Lyons started talking to me about writing a book, and Lee did. And I thought, I can't write a book. I don't know what I know, and it's true. That's how it was. And so they finally convinced me to try, and that writing that book is what taught me having to analyze and I would pass it by Lee and he would challenge me all the time and that I had to be able to prove it, what I was seeing and feeling was true. And so I finally agreed to write the book before I was ready, but it really, it gave me the foundation from which I can explain any cast that anyone can make with any rod, a fly cast we're talking about. And so the book came out in 1987. Yeah. I look at it now and I see lots of things lacking, but I, I wrote four books altogether and the last one was 2/12, called Joan Wulff's New Fly Casting Techniques. And so what I learned from '87 to '12 that, and you learn every time I teach, I learn. There's just no doubt about it. And so the book came out. Nobody said anything for five years. No one knew what I was talking about because it had never been presented in that way. And even now, I know that it's very difficult to learn a physical thing from print, but I have had a few late letters in the last year. I had an orthopedic surgeon tell me that he thought what the way I wrote it related to something in his understanding of orthopedics and it really, it really made a difference in his casting. And so whatever it is,

it's precise. And good casting is a matter of precision. Every single cast I make, I make sure that I make that back cast stop, and that there's a little ba-boom in there. Every single cast. I never, ever make a sloppy cast, you know, if I make one that I can't understand how I made it, whatever. And so that book was the first book that was ever written with specifics in it. And then I got a job with Fly Rod and Reel, writing a column. Actually, I started the column in 1989 and I did it for 22 years and that's where, again, where I learned what I needed to know by having to write that column. It was only six times a year, but it was enough. And I see a few people yawning. So I think we need a break.

Beth: I just wanted to also have you tell us a little bit about women in the field today and the changes that have occurred since you started?

Joan: I will.

Jen: We'll come back to that... five minute break... two minute...

... : [break]

Jen: Okay. So we thought we would, we would talk a little more about how the school progressed and that the dynamics and the demographics of the students that made up the school and how the, how you've seen that change from the time you and Lee opened the school, and what you're seeing today.

Joan: When we opened the school, we had male students. Occasionally they would bring along a wife or something like that. And I think it was to prove to the wife that when they said they were going fishing, they really were. [laughter] It was at a time when men and women were disconnected on their activities and free time. It took three years before a woman came to the school on her own, and she was from Missouri and she eventually wrote a book with her husband about trout fishing and so on. But it was really a remarkable thing. This woman came all by herself to learn how to do this.

Jen: And what are you seeing today? You're seeing more?

Joan: Well, we, we've had a lot of, one very good reason as to why women came, but, uh, you already know about that, I'm sure because it was *The River Runs Through It*. Before that I used to have all the attractive men in the world to myself. [laughter] But *The River Runs Through It* brought more women to our school, more women than men from 1992 to 2004, believe it or not, we had 20 people in the school. We had 180 people in a season. There were more women than men in all those years because of that movie. It really, as you've probably figured out, we need another movie like that. And so women came together, women came separately. It was wonderful to see.

Jen: Do you notice there's a different student capacity between a man and a woman? I've heard, and I've seen women listen in a different way than men. And sometimes women will catch more fish than men.

Joan: It's true. Women come and start at zero and you give them something to learn and they will take it one step at a time. Men come at zero minus x. [laughter] So it takes a while to get rid of "minus x, because you men are brought up to believe you have to know how to do everything without being taught. Is that true or not? You're not going to admit it. I know. And so that's why guides would rather have women customers, you know, because they listen. And they don't think that they could be competitive but they don't have as much competition to start with I think or whatever. So that's women and men in the fishing world.

Jen: What about the gear? You know, in terms of tackle and rods, that's universal. But as I mentioned before, I started fishing, I was 14. I had no choice but to buy a men's boot and stuff it with plastic and several pairs of socks. My waders were Red Balls. They were way too big. But if I was going to fish with my father and brother, I had no choice.

Joan: Well when I was young, we could only wear men's hip boots, because anything that was a full wader, I used to call them killer pants or something like that because they were rubber and, rubber and what ... canvas, canvas and rubber. And, I thought ... walking in them like this... [laughter] And so in the 1970s, Royal Red Ball, which was a well established firm, came out with light weight waders that either men could wear or women could wear. And I have a picture of me clicking my heels in them at a conference in Chicago, because it made such a difference to women's fishing life. And now we've, we really are having a, an upsurge in the, in, in women coming into fly fishing and to having companies like Orvis and Patagonia actually making gear, clothing and so on for women, and advertising it. So we have something going on now that we've never had before for women in the field. And I always used to say... I'm saying it now... I've been waiting all of my life for women to embrace the sport and for men to welcome them. And I am seeing it now, so I can die happy. [laughter]

Jen: Absolutely. Absolutely. And in sharing again, your skill, your experience and knowledge, the written word wasn't the only way that you transferred all of this great information. You, you did a video. Several videos.

Joan: Yeah! Well. Lee and I did a video about the school, but then in 1997 a man named Jeff Pill came to me and said he wanted to make a video of me teaching casting. So we did it. It has sold more than 50,000 copies of it, and it was 1997 when it came out. Yeah. And so now of course it's not high definition or any of those things. I'm afraid that that's it, but it is, it's gradually that the sales are going down because other people are doing videos, you know, you can have a jillion videos anytime you turn on your computer. But I'm happy with it.

Jen: Was that filmed up here?

Joan: It was filmed on my property. In Lew Beach, yeah.

Jen: Okay. How long did it take to put a video like that together versus writing the book and...

Joan: Oh, much shorter because that's, you know, that's all the thinking of the producer. We had an indoor session which we did in California, just, you know, one day that was about Fly-O that we did, and then at my property it was probably five days that we did it in. And we had a full crew and so on. Even had somebody who came up and made sure that I had some rouge on my face. [laughter]

Jen: Were you wearing a cocktail dress and heels? [laughter]

Joan: Right. I'm very glad we did that video. If I, you know, I could do another one now that I've learned more. Every time I teach. I learned, as I said earlier, and so you can always improve on whatever you have done. But we're not going to do that. [laughter] There's one other thing I would like--maybe more--but I call it the evolution of a fly fisher. And it came out of the fishing school. At the end of the school and trying to encourage people to go fish immediately within the next two weeks, you have to go fish and even on the way home sometimes take your hand off the steering wheel and go... [casting motion] So to try to encourage them, I would try to tell them where they might look to go. And so I came up with what became my evolution of a fly fisher, which I've written about; it's in my latest book, the last book. And at first when you first start out, you want to catch as many fish as you can; and then you want to catch the biggest fish; and then you want to catch the most difficult fish. So you're moving ... and then stage four is really about thinking about the resource and you get into the conservation end of things and join Trout Unlimited and federation and all of the good groups like that. And then stage five is being able to fish all by yourself. You don't have to have anybody building you up, tying your flies, or any of those things; that you enjoy fishing all by yourself. And then the next step is that even if you don't catch fish, you have wonderful days on a stream. It's just that it's being there. Those are the two words that describe that stage. And then you come to a stage when you are mature, when you can fish through somebody else, meaning that you can be as happy that they caught that fish as if you had caught it yourself, because you have caught enough fish, and you know the feeling. So that maturity comes sooner with women than with men. [laughter]

... : And then; I don't know if I'm up to seven or eight yet. But the other thing is to now teach your kids or teach other young people, but teaching it to young people is to try to produce people who will care about the streams and the resource as we do. And the eighth, the last one has just come to me in the last few years. I have a friend whose name is David Goodman, who has a house on the Beaverkill; and he was fishing, he told me, in the salmon fishing, you can only catch and release so many Atlantic salmon in a day. All right. And so instead of stopping when he had caught his four fish, he would cut the hook off, cut the bend of the hook off. So he was still casting; fish would still hit the fly. He just wasn't getting to play them. And so this was brought home to me, this whole idea of, of not having the full hook. Couple of months ago he was on the Beaverkill, and the water was high. I walked along with shore while he was casting. He was using a two handed six weight rod. He had a big bushy salmon fly on the beaver kill with the hook cut, and he was casting 90 feet and presenting a fly under an overhanging hemlock branch. It was incredible. It was the most beautiful thing I've ever seen in casting, and every time that line unrolled, I felt that in my soul, so I was casting through him. And so here you know, to be this old and they have a new kind of thrill is quite wonderful. And another thrill has happened which has to do with women, and it is that there's a young

girl in California named Maxine McCormack and she was written up in the New York Times about a month ago. Many of you saw that. Well the fact that the New York Times gave her that much space has never happened. Anything like that had never happened before. And this girl is 14 years old and she recently won international championship in Europe, and in one of the events she cast a fly 161 feet. [laughter] You remember that that's...

Jen: Your number. [laughter]

Joan: That's my record. At age 14. Now I won't be around to see what she does at age 30... 34 when I did it. But I would love to have a session with her using her tackle... She would be using graphite. I used that heavy bamboo six and three quarter thing, you know, so if we had a session would be with her tackle. And so I'm finding it harder to climb up and down stream banks, harder to tie leader knots and flies and seeing flies on, on the stream. But I'm still thrilled by the strike of trout or any other fish. And I love salmon fishing, tarpon fishing, bonefish. I love tarpon fishing because tarpon make you feel so small, you know, and the jumping. And... I want a tarpon to jump three times and get off. Playing them gets to be pretty rough after a while. The largest tarpon I've ever caught has only been 125 pounds. And the woman's record is about 135, 140 now, something like that on 12 pound test. Bone fish have never really done much for me. They do run very fast and so on, but I, I like jumping fish better than I like running fish, I guess. The other fish, the salt water fish, is permit, and they're the smart ones. I have only caught a couple of permit and only in the five and six pound ... I really wanted to catch at least a 15 pounder before I quit it, but I have not yet, but we're hoping to go to Florida this winter for maybe a last trip and maybe I can get to a permit. You have to have so many opportunities with permit that you finally learn how to catch them, is how I understand that whole game. That's the other trouble with being a woman is you have too many responsibilities, and you can't say, hey, I'm going off for a week and a half; take care of the kids. And so I've never had just unlimited time to fish. You know, I've, I've been around long enough years so you can add it all up and it's a lot. But it was never at one time, although we did go to Iceland in the early seventies, we were there for three whole weeks. Lee caught 60 salmon and I caught 30 salmon in that period of time. Atlantic salmon in Iceland. And of course the, the Atlantic salmon are in trouble because of commercial fishing and all sorts of things. So if you care about Atlantic salmon fishing, go as often as you can now while whatever we have is there. The striped bass are invading ... and others, you know, because of climate change, the warmer water is bringing new fish where they never used to be.

... : And so I think that I have said everything I need to say on my own.

Jen: Well, I, before we open it up for some questions, I wanted to maybe tap into some of your favorite spots. You mentioned a whole bunch of fish. So let's start with the trout. Where do you like to fish?

Joan: Let me go back to the whole bunch of fish. People used to ask me what my favorite fish was and I used to say, I'd give them an answer. I'd say Atlantic Salmon fishing or tarpon fishing. Okay. Now I say whatever I'm fishing for [laughter] because they all have different characteristics. All different. You never fish in ugly places. You only fish with

clean water. It's always beautiful. And so, and so my favorite place used to be, and now my favorite place is wherever I am. So I hope you all get to that point.

Jen: Absolutely. If you're fishing here in this area, what would be one of your favorite spots to look for a trout?

Joan: Well, it's going to be on the Beaverkill. And it's going to be either on a mountain pool...

Jen: That's our home waters for our fishing club. Beautiful spot.

Joan: Oh, the other thing I haven't even mentioned is the, the Catskill fly fishing center and museum. I was a founder; I'm the last living founder. There were 13 of us and when we first moved to the Catskills, Elsie Darbee was still alive and she and her husband used to fish in Nova Scotia every year for Atlantic salmon and they had a small museum. And Elsie thought we should have a museum in the Catskills. And so that started with the fly fishing center and museum, and she died I think in '81, something like that. And we really started the museum that year. So we're up to 30, yeah, 30 some years, whatever.

Jen: There's some great water to fish there right in front of the museum.

Joan: Yes, right in front of the museum. And catch and release is the other thing that Lee introduced to all of us. Lee raised the bar. He, he brought sport into the sport and so on. He just never... one of the things I learned from him is if you catch three fish on the same fly, change the fly! Learn something! Find out what else they'll take. So he always made challenge in our sport. Very, very big thing. And the catch and release, he first wrote about it in 1939. He said game fish is too valuable to be caught only once. And in 1939 people were eating what they caught, of course, and so it took, God, you know, 1939... just figure out how many years it took before that started to be important enough for areas to be set aside. Catch and release only.

Beth: I think we should have some questions so we have time for refreshments...

Mark Loete: Your husband Lee is the person who was reputed to have invented the concept of the fishing vest?

Joan: Yes. He sewed the first one in about 19... he did the first flies, the with the hair wings. And the fishing vest in '29... '30 and '31. Those were the years. By the way, I have another husband [laughter]. and Ted... The reason that we got together to start with is because when Ted was in law school, he spent his summers with Lee Wulff flying in Newfoundland and Labrador in the super cub. And he was a photographer for Lee. And so we can live together with Lee's stuff in the house yet, and he's not jealous of it [laughter] and so he also worked for and with the government. When the ... the EPA started under Nixon and he said he was one of, what, 16 lawyers? ... So stand up and just tell a little bit.

Ted: I flew with Lee Wulff and did the series with Curt Gowdy for CBS and NBC [wide world of sports]. So I was lucky because I didn't have to do all the casting. I just took pictures and

it worked out very well. After I finished my law school at Columbia Law School, I worked for a law firm ... New York City, Wall Street practice, but in the sixties I turned environmentalist and I was hired by the Justice Department to form a new environmental enforcement station. I started that. But Stewart Udall, who was secretary of interior, caught a hold of me and said I was working for the wrong agency, and he hired me to be the water counsel for the federal government. And I was responsible for writing some of the clean water act provisions, especially about oil pollution, which are very important. And, setting up the environmental protection agency in 1956, which President Nixon stole with an executive order. You see a lot of that going on, now. The Republicans built the agency, but then that agency was started with 16 people and within six months we had 1,600 people, and helped form agencies at every state in the United States. And I feel that that simple political gesture of requiring states to have independent pollution control agencies, free of federal involvement, and you see the play right now in California of fighting the federal government, because California has to go further in their laws than the generality of environmental protection regulation. Now I've got to stop here because I'm getting to be political. [laughter] We're really too close to the elections.

Jen: Ted, if you don't mind, just last month, Joan was honored at the Anglers Club. The Anglers Club is the oldest all-men's fishing club in New York City, does not allow women. However, there's only been 11 honorees, the first woman is right here, given in recognition of someone who has rendered outstanding service and conservation, Ichthyology and the sport of angling. This is the, the Anglers club medal of honor. And Ted, you told a great story that night. Would you mind repeating that now?

Ted: When Joan told you about the shows, and we traveled together from the local airport. Whenever we travel, we're going to Denver through Detroit. And I always sit at the window, because I like to look out. And Joan always sits in the aisle because she likes the comfort of leaning and so forth. And we signed up, and the empty seat between us honored a young man who came on and he's about 20 to 25 years old, and the conversation goes like this between Joan and this young man, like, where are you going? And he says, well, I'm going to Denver. What are you doing? Well, I'm meeting my brother. He's a fisherman and he, I don't know a thing about fishing, and I thought, oh my gosh. [laughter] And so... from Denver... to get to Denver from Detroit is about three hours and maybe a thousand miles, you know, so all the way through. I hear ... snapcast! snapcast! [laughter] powercast! powercast!

Joan: My hand's on his arm.

Ted: Joan's teaching. And on the way out, the hostess, the young lady who seats everyone asked this young man, What was that woman talking about? Was that a religion? [laughter] So the young man turns to her and says, I think it was religion, but we were catching fish. But I let them all go, and I don't know what they were. [laughing] [applause] Tells you something about Joan. She just loves to teach.

Beth: One more question, and then we must adjourn, because the library closes at 3.

Guest: Wonder if you have a story or two about fishing on the Esopus.

Joan: No, I only fished on the Esopus once or twice, and once was when I was a teenager, and I came up with my father and two other members of the casting club, and I don't think any of us caught a fish [laughter] but we came and stayed and whatever and I just remember trying to get to sleep before the other guys started snoring. [laughter]

Beth: Well, thank you so much. We're really honored.

Jen: Just to close, and Joan and I talked about this and there's so many folks in the audience that are here because of Joan, then because of your love and admiration and respect for this wonderful terrain and environment we're in, but realize the capacity you all have. We're the hook and bullet community. We like to fish. We hunt, we love the hiking. We have the outdoors. And we vote. Whatever party you vote for, vote for conservation, vote for protection. It's really our opportunity now to get out and really make a difference in whatever kind of work or background you have. If you enjoy what we are, we are here today and I'm honoring and respecting, we really want to make sure it's here for the next several generations and, and it's up to us now. And we have capacity as a unified front, so don't just use your rod, use your pen, talk to your legislators. Make a difference. Really. I mean this is going to protect something that's precious to us all.

Beth: Advocacy. That's one of our missions. Thank you so much. Let's go upstairs. [applause]