

Catskills Fishing Fever Forums: Frank Mele
With Andy Mele, John Hoeko, Roger Menard, and Tony Bonavist
Moderator: Bill Birns
March 19, 2016

The Jerry Bartlett Angling Collection presents Catskills Fishing Fever Forums, recorded live at the Phoenicia Library, Phoenicia, NY. March 19th, 2016. Frank Mele, fisherman, author, and activist. Made possible with funds from the Catskill Watershed Corporation in partnership with the New York City DEP. Recorded by Silver Hollow Audio.

Bill Birns: Welcome, my name is Bill Birns, thank you. Welcome to our panel. Today we're here to celebrate Frank Mele. But whenever you gather four fishermen to talk about another fisherman, we might just bury him, as Roger reminded me a minute ago. I'd like to introduce the panel, if I may. On my left is Andy Mele. Andy is Frank's son. Andy holds a BA and an MS in environmental science from Bard College across the river. From 1999 until 2005, Andy was the executive director of the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater. And during his tenure as his leader of the Clearwater, not only did their annual revenues more than double, but he was instrumental in the EPA's 2002 record of decision requiring General Electric company to remove PCBs from the Hudson, and in the court judgment requiring the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to comply with federal regulations and law when it comes to water and the cooling systems at Indian Point. Presently, Andy travelled all the way from Florida to be with us. He ... Presently Andy is the Sun Coast Water Keeper for the Sarasota Manatee Tampa Bay region. And he's vice-chair of the Sierra Club in that region. Let's have a round of applause welcoming Andy.

Directly to my left, your right, is John Hoeko. I've known Johnny for over 40 years. He began to fly fish at the age of 7. And I'll bet that first experience was in the Bushkill just on the other side of Highmount; the stream that Johnny knows like the back of his hand. Up in Fleischmanns we call him the Art Flick of the Bushkill. John holds a marketing degree from the University of Colorado. But he has an extracurricular major while he was out there: fly fishing in the streams and rivers of Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho and Montana. And when I first met Johnny over 40 years ago, he was knee-deep at that time in Catskill waters, to the push to get New York City to regulate stream releases in a fish-healthy manner. And John went on, was instrumental in the passage of the 1976 water release bill that saved over 180 miles of Catskill Mountain fly fishing streams. This spring, John has opened Fur, Feathers, and Steel, a fly tying shop up in Fleischmanns; it's only 15 miles up the road, come on up, and take a visit to John's shop. It's open Saturdays and Sundays from now on, except for next weekend, when John will be at the Spillian event on a panel up there. Let's have a round of applause for John Hoeko.

To my right is Roger Menard. Roger's the author of this book, *My Side of the River, Reflections of a Catskill Fly Fisherman*, published in 2002. He's a native New Yorker, spent most of his adult life as a resident in our Catskill mountains, fly fishing our beloved rivers. He's a charter director of the Theodore Gordon Fly Fishers and a member of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild. Roger's a Navy veteran, a retired sales rep for a major food corporation, and he and his wife, Lisa, live in Olivebridge. Let's have a round of applause for Roger.

And on my far right is Tony Bonavist. Tony worked as a fisheries biologist for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for 26 years. He holds a BS in Aquatic Biology [dog barks] ... not canine biology, but aquatic biology, there was an objection back there, from the University of Montana. He's taught at the highly prestigious Wulff School of fly fishing, as well as the Frost Valley YMCA, becoming more prestigious every day. Tony's writing has appeared in Trout magazine, it's appeared in Fly Fisherman, it's appeared in Grey's Sporting journals, speaking about prestigious. And Tony and his wife Gayle live in West Hurley with their boxer dog, Molly. Let's have a round of applause.

I'm going to start by asking Andy to start out, and any of the guys can jump in, to tell us a little bit about Frank as a dad, as a man, as a violinist, as a guy, you know, how would you characterize your father to folks who both knew him and didn't know him?

05:00

Andy: I feel like a total imposter in this group, because I did not get the fishing gene. I didn't have the patience. You know, I learned how to cast, I'm probably still a pretty good caster. Never tied flies and anything. I just, like, why am I standing out on this stream, flogging the waters to death, and catching nothing, you know, so I couldn't turn off the chatter, and drifted away from it. But, you know, I'm old enough to pre-date the environmental movement in this country, and I learned about nature and the sort of nature ethic tramping the woods with my father and a couple of guns, you know, in search of, I don't know what, the mighty squirrel, anyway, whatever came our way. And you know, one thing that for some reason sticks in my mind, it's not that extraordinary, one day we were walking around, and it rained the night before, and he said, what's different, it was fall, and he said, what's different about today, being out here in the woods, what's different about today? We were walking along, and walking along, and walking along, and I'm like, damn, racking my brains thinking way too hard. And... I don't know. It's like, the sun's shining? It's not raining? He's like, the leaves are wet, so we're quiet. We're walking quietly. And it was just like, it was a realization, the subtle, the small things in your environment and in your context actually affect how you move, you as a human being move through this world. And so I took that as something of an allegory, and I've thought about it many,

many times since. My father was a troubled guy in some ways. He grew up in Rochester, in the Italian American neighborhood called, I don't know, they had usual names for it, you know, Devil's Pitchfork, or Hell's something-or-other. Hell's Half Acre, you know, one of those things. And it's now, I guess everybody's grateful that it's now underneath a huge freeway interchange and is no longer. I know that when we went out there on the book tour for Polpetto, he was somewhat alarmed to see, you know, he sort of oriented himself, and this was like, uh oh. It's all gone. But you know, he had bouts of panic, anxiety, and I think panic, anxiety actually drove him out of his career as a prodigy violist; he played with some extraordinary conductors and was really a state-of-the-art master violist, and just didn't like performing ultimately; argued with his conductors, and you know, just came home and preferred to teach. And preferred to write. And so, and of course, fish. So in many ways, his life in Woodstock, where he settled and just remained, except for one brief year, for some reason, he just got a wild hair, he had to go to Rhinebeck. And he moved over to this development house in Rhinebeck, you know, and it was just like, so wrong for him. Within a year, he came back, and was back in some rickety, funky, rustic Woodstock studio with a big north light window, and a big studio room with a piano and good acoustics for a string quartet and stuff like that. So ... he was a guy who did not particularly have much of a public, civic sense, to put it mildly. He was a writer. He just, you know, he was, worked unto himself, he practiced the fiddle, he wrote, and went fishing, all more-or-less solitary pursuits. And when he ran into Johnny, and they came up with this Catskill waters thing, and he started telling me about it, I was really, really excited by that. And I watched him just blossom into this mad environmental activist. And the two of these guys were out there kicking butt, doing, you know, bluffing congressmen, and you know, raining down the New York Times on people, or at least threatening to, and getting, you know, members of the state assembly to do their bidding. And ultimately passing this bill. And after all was said and done, and the portals stayed open, first summer, he just went back to what he'd always done. I don't think he ever did another public thing again in his life. This was his issue, this was the one, it was seven years I think, just about, and it was an inspiration for me. And when I hit the brick wall building boats, I went back to college and went into environmental science, and followed in his footsteps to a certain degree. Growing up in Woodstock, you grew up around, you know, in the shadow of some major giants. And living up to their expectations was always, and remains, a challenge. You know, they're all dead and gone now, and I'm still trying to, you know, earn the love, you know, and trying to make my father proud of me, and trying to make the others proud, and I just couple of days ago got myself a literary agent for the first time, so I've got two beautiful novels that I hope will soon be, you know, part of a book deal, and will be able to finally achieve my dream of writing full time, and actually having a reason for doing so.

Bill: Andy, I wonder if your activism as the Sun Coast water keeper, for example,

with the Sierra Club, do you trace that back to seeing your father emerge in activism at the time? How old a guy were you at the time?

11:00

Andy: What were the years? I was a sentient being. I had done my time in the Navy, and been in the Tonkin Gulf, two tours in the Tonkin Gulf, I wrote my way out as a conscientious objector after doing active duty. Somebody said it was my first successful writing job. And I guess it was. And I was, to make money, I was building houses and was just starting to build boats at that time. So, you know, I had a sense of the river, and I was already a member of Clearwater. And so I was just in awe of what these guys were doing. It blew me away, and I'd say it had a huge role in shaping me into, you know, whatever I am today.

Bill: Johnny, how about that, when you met Frank, and somehow the two of you turned into major activists in the state of New York. Can you tell us a little bit about those early days?

12:00

Johnny: Excuse my voice, I have an upper respiratory thing, and I had a stroke about three years ago. So the combination, I'm not at my best. Anyway, let's start at the beginning. In 1973, the song of the Catskills lured me back to our rivers here, from Colorado, where I did indeed major in fly fishing. And that spring, it was a day very much like today, but maybe perhaps a month later, I was at Harry and Elsie Darby's fly shop and home over in Roscoe; between Roscoe and Livingston Manor. On the porch, enjoying the mild morning, and a diminutive man was walking down the path to his house, carrying a satchel, like an old fashioned gym bag, and he's like, dark complexion, see the back of his head, busy eyebrows, and I'm wondering, does this man have a Tommy gun, he's going to mow Harry and I down? Well, it turns out to be Frank Mele, with a satchel full of fishing reels. So, and most of them are Hardy reels. And, so we're talking, and of course Harry's, you know, was quite the raconteur, you know, he was ... Elsie, if you read Fisherman's Bounty, Frank's story, Elsie did most of the work, and Harry did most of the B.S.ing. Anyway, so Frank said, let's go down to the ... lodge, and have a bite to eat; that's how he said it. And so we went down there. But I think he had an ulterior motive. So we had a little lunch. And he said, Johnny, he said (I can imitate his voice pretty well, because this man is in my thoughts every day of my life), Johnny, I've been commissioned to do a little piece on fishing in the Catskills, but I do not have the time to do it. I was wondering if you can do it. Well... he had read one of my fishing journals at Harry's house, and I said, Frank, I can't do something like that, it was for the New York Daily News... anyway, somehow he convinced me. I did the piece... fly fishing in the Catskills. And then I did a few articles, magazine articles in subsequent years. But anyway, so we got to know each other, and then it was

not I, but it was Frank's idea, it was his conception, Catskill Waters. He takes full credit for that, in battling the city of New York for the water release that we needed to save the rivers. To that point... so what happened was, Frank again said, I don't have the time nor energy, you know, he had teaching commitments, he had writing commitments, and he just plain wanted to fish. And so at one point, the organization... committee for water release, or something else, and we formally organized, and Frank suggested they elect me president, which they did, because nobody would ever refuse one of Frank's whatever. So that's how it started. So I went to Albany and I lobbied for two years, '75, '76. Seventy-six, intensely, every day. And quite often I would go back, on the way back to Frank's, and would stop at his house, again for a bite to eat, after a day dealing with these bureaucrats, who Frank had no use for at all, much less patience for, and that's where I developed a real affinity for authentic Italian cuisine. And also, now I always loved classical music, but he expanded my horizons immensely with classical music, because quite often, on a Sunday afternoon before the Maverick, he would have a quartet or quintet there, practicing, rehearsing, before Maverick, it was extraordinary. I would be like a fly on the wall, just soaking it in. Buy back to the food. Now, Tony still makes his pesto sauce from the original recipe. True?

16:40

Tony: Uh, modified.

Johnny: Well, I think, when Frank lived in the first house, the studio house, the bigger house, he rented from some woman, the last house was a little house off of... side street, smaller. I think Frank grew his own basil, and I don't know about the garlic, but he made his own pesto. It's just simply garlic, basil, olive oil, "first pressing, Johnny," and ...

Andy: Parsley.

Johnny: Parsley.

Andy: Salt and pepper.

Johnny: Salt and pepper.

Andy: No pine nuts. No walnuts. Those are all impurities.

[some back and forth]

Andy: I used to pick those God damn basil leaves. And wash them. And the ratio was 3:1.

Roger: I was at the pesto parties; they were making it, right? And my job was to get garlic underneath my fingernails, and if you don't think that doesn't hurt... But one good thing about it, he introduced me to my wife... at a pesto party.

Bill: One thing that's clear is as the lobbying was going on, people were having a good time. But maybe Tony, you can tell us a little bit...

Johnny: I'm not through with the food.

[laughter]

Bill: But maybe Tony, as the fisheries biologist, can tell us a little bit about what were the conditions in the river that led guys like Frank and Johnny to feel the need to take this kind of activity? What was going on that time?

Tony: Is this my presentation? Or is this a question?

Bill: This is a question, and you can do whatever you wish with it.

18:30

Tony: John covered quite a bit of this. I was going to actually read a passage from a little deal that I wrote in Frank's book, *Small in the Eye of the River*, but I think I'm going to pass on that. Let me give you a little history on the water releases, and I'll tie it into what John said. 1972, July. Hot day. Catskill, Delaware river, 86 degrees. I get a call from Ed Van Put, who was the fisheries technician with us when I worked out of New Paltz. He said, we have all these trout off the stream now; he said, the water temperature in the stream is real high, so they're seeking refuge away from the hot water. So I went over there with a camera, and a Polaroid filter, and took a bunch of pictures, from which I wrote a long memo to my boss who said, why are you going to do this? You're never going to get anywhere with New York City, because they're the city, and they're, you know, it's political. So I made a slide series that I went off and talked to the federation, TGF and Trout Unlimited. Started to generate a little groundswell. One day, I get a call from this man with a big voice. That's what I called him. Part of my quote in this thing is, I met this little man with a big voice and a Greek fisherman's hat, on the east branch of the Delaware, way back in maybe 1968, well before any water releases. He calls up and he says, I understand you work for the DEC. And you're working on this trouble with the temperatures and the rivers. Can you come to Woodstock and give me a presentation? So I said, sure. So I went up there; that's when I met Frank. That was in 1973. But when I explained to him that we were not getting any internal support for the stuff that we were working on, within the DEC, he started to get his dander up, and we had a couple more meetings, and then he got pissed. And he called me up, and he started to call me Toto. And I don't know where

that came from. T-O-T-O. I think it was from affection, but sometimes I'm not sure about that. Because there's other stories that I won't get into today. But in any case, he says, alright, I'm gonna smoke 'em out. I'm writing a letter to the New York Times. And I'm gonna tell them that the DEC is letting these people kill the rivers. So he wrote the letter. It's called A Catskill Letter. And I have a copy of it home. And Frank never wrote anything short. This is like a 20-page tome. And the Times's editorial board is going to read this and... you know what I'm saying. Anyway, somehow, Bob Boyle, who was a senior editor at Sports Illustrated, got wind of this, and he calls Frank up, and he says, Frank, don't send the letter. I'm going to help you out here. So the next thing you know, Frank gets a call from the commissioner; I think it was Ogden Reid at the time, from the DEC, and he says, we're going to send some people down to talk to you. And that started this whole ballgame rolling. Frank met with them, and then we talked some more. Meanwhile, the political climate was starting to change. Johnny's coming on board. This is probably 1973. Subsequent to that, they started meeting every month at Antrim Lodge, when Catskill Waters was finally evolved, and we met there every month for several years. And as this rolled along, more and more political operatives got involved, because of Johnny putting pressure on the governor. And when you, when this thing got all done, which is in 1975, we had Ed Koch, we had mayor Corning, we had, who's the congressman from over in...

Johnny: McHugh?

Tony: Yeah, Matt McHugh. We had Phil Chase in the Times Herald Record with a column every month... Warren Anderson. He was the senate leader in Albany at the time. This thing blossomed into a major league issue. And finally, they drafted legislation, and it was passed by one vote in the assembly. And actually, one of the commissioners that just lost his job a couple years ago... Pete Grannis, he was the guy that generated a lot of stuff here. So a lot of people spent a lot of time with a lot of tentacles, getting involved with all kinds of different people to put pressure everywhere. Koch had, we had, we knew people ... anybody remember the lady that her husband and her invented the pole staff? ... Stolio! She knew Koch. So, because she was in the Catskills, Frank knew her, she knew Koch, pressure got on the DEP, and that's how this all came about. It was a grassroots thing that was started by Ed Van Put, actually, by documenting the problem. And then evolved into this major-league conservation issue. And when it was passed, it was probably the most significant piece of conservation legislation passed in eastern United States probably ever.

Beth Waterman: Can we just say what it is?

Tony: Yeah, I'm going to get to that. I'm getting to that right now. What happened is that when the city of New York decided they wanted to build

reservoirs, they met with the conservation department, at which time the conservation department worked with them and said, okay, you can build these reservoirs, but you have to have a minimum flow. And that's exactly what they got. The flows out of Pepacton in the summertime were 15 cubic feet per second, which is about, maybe the size of the Chichester creek. Normal flow in that river at Margaretville at this time of year is about two to three hundred CFS. So you can see the amount of water that was agreed upon when these guys built the reservoirs, that the conservation department said it was okay. They didn't have the foresight to say, build the thing a little bigger, so we can have a tail water below it. In any of them. And that included Cannonsville, Rondout, Neversink, and Pepacton. They all had very small releases. What the water release regulations did when it was finally implemented in 1976, is increased Pepacton from 15 in the summer to 70, which was a huge jump. Cannonsville went up to, like, 300. Neversink went to 50. Subsequent to that time, Wayne Elliot, working with the DEP and some other people, got those flows even increased more. So now the East Branch summer is 140. Neversink is about 100. And Cannonsville fluctuates because of Montague formulas, which is whole other story that we can't talk about today. So that's jumping around all the time. So because of Frank's efforts, being tenacious; and Johnny too, being up in Albany, probably sleeping on a couch somewhere in the assembly, you know, a lot of people put a lot of heat on a lot of people to get this done. And it took 5 years. It involved not only New York state, because the way this whole system is set up, is that there's four or five other states that are involved in the water from the Delaware that goes down to Pennsylvania, and so forth. It's called the Delaware Compact. And those states had to sign on to all of this, because the water that's released out of these reservoirs has an impact on their ability to draw water for water supply. So what came out of this, the United States Supreme Court way back in 1956 came up with the Supreme Court decree which required all the water in the Delaware River had to go by Montague, New Jersey, at 2600 cubic feet per second. That's been lowered to 1750 now, but that all had to come into play with these reservoirs, and how much water was released, and when it was released. And when there's no enough natural flow, the river master calls for water, most of which comes from Cannonsville, until that's drawn down, and then they call on the other ones. Cannonsville also has the least best water, so of course they're going to dump it, instead of sending it to Manhattan. So that's a fairly fast and dirty encapsulation of how this whole game came on, and how we ended up with no water, to I don't know how many miles you said, of tail water we have now, and those three things. And I didn't even talk about the Esopus. And I would if you wanted me to, but I think time is an issue here. I just have a couple more quick things I want to say. And I'll let it go to Roger. Way back in 1985, Frank wrote the first edition of this book, Small in the Eye of the River. Nick Lyons, when Frank was ill in 1996, agreed with me to reproduce it, in this book. These are selling now, there's a limited edition, two for, I don't know, two limited editions between three and five hundred bucks. There was a trade edition of the second book, and it's about 30 dollars on

Amazon if you want to get it... and then way back in 1973, Polpetto was his first novel, which is about Italian Americans in Rochester, and it's very funny. If you can find it. It's around. Lastly, we're dedicating in April hopefully, maybe May, finally, after 10 years of fooling around, a memorial plaque, with the town of Colchester, in Downsville, in memorial of Frank's thing. And I should have brought a copy of the plaque, and I forgot to do that. Anyway, that's the story on what I have to say about the release business and what Frank did to make that happen. Without his personal involvement, without his inability to put up with B.S. from anybody, being a little frail man, it got it done.

[applause]

Bill: Let's talk a little bit about Frank the fisherman. Roger, you've got some reflections on Frank?

29:00

Roger: I've got quite a few reflections on Frank. And I have to come down to one paragraph here. I appreciate Andy for what he said about Frank, where he was born. But if you asked him about his background, he would tell you with a smile that he was born under a hanging provolone in a family store in Rochester, NY. Okay. Listen, it's an honor to be here, to give a tribute to an extraordinary man and a very dear friend. And let me say that every fisherman in the audience here today has benefitted from the efforts of this intrepid man. Johnny just told you that. I know that I speak for all of us who were close to Frank that although this year will mark the 20th anniversary of his passing, the memories of him are as sharp and clear as if it was only yesterday. I have to put this up here right now. If you went to his house that's the first thing you would see. And that's about 35 years old... and a pipe that he gave me... It is interesting to note that wherever his interests led, he had a remarkable talent for surrounding himself with people of experience and knowledge of the subject matter. Some angling friends, including authors Art Flick, Preston Jennings, and Nick Lyons. He also corresponded with Robert Traver, and had a great admiration for [Roderick K.] Brown. Frank had an excellent sense of humor and was known for his wit and charm. On one occasion he invited me to join him and a lady friend, Heidi, on a fishing trip to the Delaware River. She was the mother of one of Frank's violin students, and took a keen interest in fly fishing. We drove out across the river at Hancock, to the Pennsylvania side, to fish a large pool that Frank liked. Being new to this sport, Heidi looked like an ad for Abercrombie and Fitch. Brand new waders, vest, wicker creel, a Constable bamboo rod, and a wide brimmed woven hat. And even a wider smile. Off we went. Frank going downstream, Heidi going upstream, and me in between. It wasn't long before I heard Frank's reel singing, and I saw his rod bending under the weight of a fish. He landed and released a beautiful 18-inch brown trout. I caught and released several small rainbows, and could see that Heidi was constantly netting one fish after another.

When we returned to the car for lunch, Heidi came in last and with excitement and glee opened a creel to show us the trout. There in the creel lie five of the biggest silver chubs you can imagine. With more charm than a fairy tale prince, Frank said to her, bravo! They're not trout, darling, they're chubs and will make a wonderful chowder. As charming as he could be, if you crossed him, Frank could use words as effectively as bullets. Alright? Just the thought of him being angry was enough to make anyone run and hide. I had the chance to see this when early in the 1980s, Ron and I (another friend of ours) shared a summer rental in a motel on the East Branch with friends; Alfio Pignotti, a fellow musician who taught music at Eastern Michigan University. Ron and I decided to run up to our camp on late Friday afternoon, intending to fish that evening; to do a little scouting on Saturday morning, fish the afternoon, and return home that evening. We fished as we planned, and had dinner with Alfio that Friday night. The next morning, we invited him to join us on our scouting trek to the West Branch. We weren't familiar with the river, and asked Alfio if he knew any good fishing spots. No, he said, I've never been there. But I'd like to go with you. Up and down the West Branch we went, making mental notes of new pools to try, when suddenly, Alfio in the back of the car, in the back seat shouts, hey! Make the next right turn! Alright? Ron and I looked at each other and started to laugh. Alfio had that look on his face; he said if Frank found out he talked, he'd be skinned alive. Several days later, Frank called me. It was good news to hear that Alfio was still in one piece. Frank explained that he and Alfio had explored the west branch two weeks before and would report on fishing as soon as they had a chance to fish it. I said to him, yeah, right? We both laughed like hell. Those two curmudgeons were trying to put one over on us. Charming and alarming, this was the Frank that we knew and loved. When Frank completed one of his stories, he would call and invite you -- and this is talking about Italian food, alright? -- when Frank completed one of his stories, he would call and invite you over for dinner, and in my case, he would say, Rog, Rog, bring Lisa over. I made a sauce. Most likely his lamb neck with fusilli. A salad. A glass of sweet vermouth with bitters. And finally, coffee so strong it was enough to melt a spoon. And if you're in the mood, a sip of his favorite Irish whiskey. After the meal, he would sit in the chair with the lamp bearing down over his shoulder, and begin to read aloud with an unforgettable deep, lilting voice. All of his readings were his own work, much of it on fishing. We always enjoyed being there. Wonderful evenings, and wonderful memories. As a fisherman, he was always considerate of his fellow anglers, congratulating them on a fine catch, of perhaps a nicely tied fly. Never did I hear him give a dissertation on his angling exploits that were saturated with saturated with the words, "I" or "me." We had many talks on angling history. And one of his favorite subjects was the life of Theodore Gordon, the father of the dry fly in America. Frank had enormous respect for this man, who fled civilization, moved to the Catskills, and followed the passion of creating trout flies for our rivers, and writing about them. When Frank fished, he was slow and methodical, picking out a good piece of water and putting a dry fly over rising trout. He also had the patience to rest a fish if

necessary, and would retire to the bank, light his pipe, and search through his fly book for other possibilities. I'd often join him for conversation and a good pipe full of tobacco. One day stands out in my memory because of Frank's famous one-liners. We were fishing a stretch of water above the confluence of the east branch and the Beaverville. Frank decided to take a break on the bank, and I joined him. He started rummaging through his pockets for his pipe tobacco -- which was horrible stuff! Rough cut, pungent, and harsh on the tongue. Mine, on the other hand, was mild, with just a hint of maple flavor. "No luck," Frank said. "I must have left it in the car. I'll walk and get back." I said, no, don't go back to the car. Have some of mine. I'd like you to try it. Frank agreed, filled up his pipe, and we smoked as we watched the river flow by. When we were ready to fish again, I just had to ask. "Frank, what do you think of my tobacco?" Here comes the one-liner. His answer: "Not very much." Those of us who fished with Frank can still picture him standing in the river with his Marathon waders, Hardy reel, and latest Payne rod. Now, let me explain what I mean by "the latest." Frank was a man always on a quest. For example, he was always search for the perfect Blue Dunn neck, or the ultimate bamboo rod, which for him would be a Payne rod. I'd get a call. Rog, I found a beautiful 8-footer. A two piece for a five weight. Come on over and we'll cast it on the lawn. I'd give him numerous accolades -- it's crisp, it throws a beautiful line, both close range and at a distance. Congratulations. A week later, another call. Rog, I'm selling that rod, because I found a better Payne that casts better. This was Frank in his pursuit of "the" rod, and was the search that gave him so much pleasure. The calls would continue. Here we go again! [Len Cadello], [Wall ...] and [Martin Keane] hot on the trail to find Frank's perfect rod. In closing, perhaps it's most important to let Frank have the last say in his own words. This is an excerpt from The Brook Trout, from the prologue he wrote for my book. "That, said God, is the Brook Trout. Perhaps I am risking immodesty if I say he is one of my masterpieces. And, continued God, you will find him in the joyous little rivers and the purest ponds, and the lakes ... I painted his back the dark blue of the night. On his sides I sprinkled the freckles of the starry sky. At his fins I brushed in the colors of the sky at sunset with a touch of gold. This trout I give to you and your children. In your quest for rod and line, and when you catch one, he will remind you of me. And of the great love I bear mankind." Thank you.

Tony: Wait a minute. You're not done. Five minutes time out. You gotta talk about that...

Roger: I knew this was going to happen... We've come here to praise...

Tony: No, this is praise, it just shows the way the man was.

39:30

Roger: We were fishing one day out on the East Branch. He had a student with

him, he was about, I don't know, in his late 20s; absolute marvelous violinist. And we took him out to the East Branch. We stopped, we fished the airport pool. I don't know how many of you people are familiar with it here. But we said, okay, so, we get out, and this fellow goes downstream, I go up river, and I fished for a couple of hours, and ... a couple of small trout that I'd gotten, I put them back. I walk back down the river, and I see Frank; he's laying there, like this, right up against a tree with a pipe smoking puffs... and he says to me, "hey Rog, how'd you make out?" I says, I got a couple of small ones. I said, how about you? He said, "I had an interesting afternoon." I says, what do you mean? He says, two big milk maids came down the path here, he said, and they had legs like, thighs like cream cheese." What do you do with a guy like this?

...

One last thing... this is one of the holders that Frank would use. He'd carry the dry fly dressing in it, liquid, and what you would do is you'd clip it on you, and you'd just open it up and dip your fly in it. And this was one of Art Flick's ... but this was Frank's. He used to have it on his vest all the time. Thanks, Jamie, for that.

Bill: Well, we have a number of people that, I'm sure in the audience as well as up here on the panel, who knew Frank. And now's the time for a few more stories. John? A food story!

41:25

John: Before I was so rudely interrupted... One night I was at Frank's, and he made a marinara sauce. I said, this is the best marinara sauce I've ever had in my life. What's your secret? And he says, Johnny, he says, the sauce must adhere to the pasta... make it thick enough, somehow. I don't know how he did it, but it was so delicious. And then he made a salad with romaine, and he said, he of course dried the romaine, and extra virgin olive oil, first pressing again. And he had cherry tomatoes, very ripe, very delicious. And, with his own garlic powder; not the McCormick's you buy around here, but, I don't know where he got it from. And his own olive oil; I don't know where he got that from, too [audience suggestion] ... anyway, another ingredient, and I asked Tony about this; he called them, they looked like a ginger root with a water chestnut texture when you bit into it, and Frank called them Jerusalem artichokes; I can't find them anywhere [interaction with audience]. My last story about food: one night, I went over with, I don't know, my girlfriend at the time, I don't remember who, but I always had a point that whoever I was with, years ago, I'd always bring her over to Frank's house for his approval, whatever. So, Judd Weisberg and Pam and me and my date were invited for dinner one night. And Frank says, I have a special treat for you. So we get there. It's a God damned sheep's head. Apparently an Italian delicacy. I didn't know this. So of course I just couldn't ...

Judd and Frank just dived into that thing, it was demolished. That's all I have to say about that dinner.

Judd: Can I just add that we acted like two dogs growling.

John: Oh, Judd, you're here. Good to see you!

Judd: Contrary to popular belief! We had ... the sheep's head was split, so you could see the teeth and the eyeball. It was really, it was really for the ultimate in meat eating delight. And Frank and I growled as we ate. My wife couldn't stand it.

44:30

Andy: When I was five years old, we went to Italy for a year and a half. I did a whole school year there and everything. And one time, my mother was ill, having some issues, I don't remember, but we went off into the mountains to go to the Abruzzi, to the home, the place where the family comes from. And we're winding our way up this woodland road. The Abruzzi is surrounded by this huge, huge, huge mountain park. It's like one of the largest, or the largest in Europe. And it was so mountainous and forbidding, and the Abruzzi is so poor, that as the legend goes, the Romans never even bothered to conquer it. So it remained basically a catch basin for all the space trash and sea scum; you know, whatever refugees, pogroms, everything; everybody; and this is a true story. Every time I run into somebody who comes from the Abruzzi, they're like... so I have no idea what I am. We're all just made from everything; and everyone around the Mediterranean basin. Anyhow, pull into this joint, it's time to get a bite to eat. And the first bite to eat that comes out is some red wine, right out of a cask, into a little clear water glass. And he starts... "and the specialty of the house is calves brains on the half shell." Exactly that. Grilled, blackened, beautiful thing. And so all of these grizzled; you know, here I am, this little boy up at the bar with my father, and there's this platter of cow heads split down the middle, all the teeth and everything; and so all these grizzled old guys, with you know, 14 days growth of beard under their hats, and their weather-beaten fingers, look up from their glasses and wine and ... you know ... I wonder how this little American boy is going to handle that! And little did they know, I have always been an omnivore, and I just wolfed that thing down, and I don't know if I growled or not, but it was great! And he was very proud. It was one of those times where he was just beaming and looking over at the Paisan.

46:40

John: One more thing. On his marinara sauce, he had a cheese, and it was so good, I don't know what, where he got it from. I said, Frank, where did this cheese come from? He goes, "Johnny, from the catacombs."

Roger: A friend of ours used to belong to a nice Italian family whose mother could, forget it, alright, absolutely a wonderful cook. And I never liked tripe. Alright. She invites me over to dinner one night, and I had never tasted anything like it in my life. I'm scarfing it down like it was shrimp. So I get the recipe; I told Frank about it. He says, you remember -- the butcher shop -- Schneller's -- he was very close friends with Schneller. He says, I'll get him to order us some tripe. Would you split it with me? I said, sure, why not. So we go in there, and I don't know what he bought, maybe 5 pounds, 6 pounds. Alright, I give him half. He's making the tripe. About three weeks later, I get another phone call. Want to get more tripe? I said, sure, alright. After about 3 or 4 months, I had about 15 pounds of tripe in the freezer! I said, when is this going to end?! I think I gave a whole bunch of it to him.

48:10

Bill: I never knew Frank, and I'm learning about a guy who, it seems to me, you know, you had said, Andy, that your father was somebody who didn't like to perform. But yet, here was somebody who evidently could perform very well with the viola. Somebody who was very particular about the ingredients that he put into the cooking, where he performed very well in the kitchen, and performed very well on the trout stream. And writing. So I'm wondering if we could explore if anybody sees or finds some connection with Frank that ties those things together. Is there a relationship between the music, the fly fishing, the writing...

Tony: That's all about the romance... I think they're all intertwined, I mean they're all sensuous things, and you know, I don't know what other word I can say.

Andy: His fourth love, his fourth passion was beautiful women.

[Audience]: If you would like to learn about Frank, Nick Lyons, publisher; if you're a fly fisherman you know who he is, he wrote a story called Mecca, and it's all about Frank. And Hawks is Frank Mele in the story. And that was Nick Lyons's very, very first fishing story he ever wrote. And because of that story, he started writing more fishing stories. He left being a professor and started his own angling publishing house. It all comes from Nick. Well, I should say it all comes from Frank, but Nick ...

Roger: I could see a parallel with him and Theodore Gordon, to be honest with you, because he would sit there and talk to me day after day; I mean, many conversations about Gordon. And I was fortunate enough, I'm old enough, that I knew three of Gordon's friends. Okay, and Herman Christian was one, we had a few more... and everything that you would read about Gordon ... was the truth. I

mean, there was no fooling around. Frank used to tell me, he'd say, can you imagine that man who gave up everything and moved to the Catskills, lived on the Neversink, and just devoted his life to tying flies, creating patterns that suited our waters here, as opposed to England, where they were swapping letters back and forth. And he said, can you imagine that man sitting in an old house by the Neversink with a woodstove, tying flies in the middle of the night on a very cold winter. And you know, I looked at it, and I says, you know, I see a resemblance. Frank was so into his music and fly fishing and lived the sort of same life in a home that he did in Woodstock. You could see a parallel in there. But it would come up time and time again. We'd swap notes on it. That's the way he was.

51:35

Judd: Could I add, I just can't resist telling a story about his good friend, Alfio, and he used to stay at the River Edge Motel on the East Branch, and they brought their instruments, and they would play music, and one night he was, they were playing section from the Trout Quartet, and when they were done, they put the instruments away, because it was 7:00, and that was the magic hour, and the two of them went down there and went fishing right below. And then later on, there was a celebration dinner when the, when that fantastic piece of legislation came through. I think Lisa was there at that. Frank had written the Angler's Anthem...

Lisa: I did the music that's written in the book. I hand penned...

Judd: What we did is we all sang it at that celebratory meeting. And Art Flick was singing, I was singing, we were all up there singing. And it was ... celebration. But that was a mixture of all the ingredients you were talking about.

Lisa: If you read that, Tony, it's short, it's nice.

Judd: That was, for me, one of the amazing things about it. Also, that particular little 3-room motel was where my wife and I got together and still are together after 37 years... Right there, on the bank, on that little clearing just below where Frank and Alfio used to be in residence is the little clear area, and there are Trout Lilies growing out of the ground there. And my wife and I got married on that stream bank. We eloped and went there.

Tony: If you want me to read it, I'll just read part of it. It says, "the music for an angler's anthem first appeared in a song by Franz Schubert, The Trout, that's in quotations; the tune was later incorporated as a theme with variations in Schubert's celebrated trout quintet for piano and strings. This version was first sung in 1976 at a celebration of the landmark legislative victory by citizens group Catskill Waters over the city of New York, putting an end to the

capricious, often disastrous releases from city reservoirs into the rivers, resulting in periodic fish kills over many years. The law transferred the custodianship of the releases to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, which maintains a just regulation of flows..." sometimes.

54:50

Bill: I wonder, Andy, if your father had a favorite style of music. Was he into the romantic period, for example?

Andy: No, no, no. He ... just one day, I was always trying to find things to bond us together, you know, because he always shared music with me, and you know, one day I took him to see a movie. That was a disaster. I never did that again. And one day I brought over Miles Davis, Sketches of Spain. And he listened to that for a while and tolerated it well. And then finally said, Andy, I mean, this is very good. But why would you listen to this, when you have the real thing? And he whipped out Rodrigo, and put on Rodrigo, and the Concierto de Aranjuez, and I sat there, and I was like, oh, shit. Okay. I see. So his, you know, he fancied himself progressive. You know, he would occasionally suffer through a little jazz of some sort or other and he was great friends with Bill Ames, who was a neighbor of ours on the Maverick when I was growing up. Now, Bill Ames was that rare breed of human called a composer. And, but his stuff was out there. And you know, but he would listen to Bill Ames occasionally. Mostly it was, he liked Tchaikovsky, he liked Stravinsky. Stravinsky was about as progressive as he would get. And you know, we would occasionally sit down and listen to the Rachmaninoff second piano concerto, which remains one of my, like, three desert island pieces. The second one is Miles Davis Kind of Blue, and the third one, I'm still trying to figure out what the third one is; so in the event that I have to go to a desert island, I will have all the music that I want. And so I don't know if that answers your question. But all the usual suspects were there, and he'd listen to them all, and he taught them all. He taught at varying degrees of demanding-ness.

Lisa: And he knew what was going on, too. In fact, I studied with both of them. I went to Frank first, to learn how to orchestrate, because he could do that. And he is charming. And he always loved to look at beautiful women. And if you went to any of the parties, he'd have beautiful women there. And if you think about it, one would suspect, how did he get all these beautiful women to come if it wasn't for his charm. And he was, he was great. He wrote some violin pieces for children, the first adventures for violin, which I actually got to play with him on that. And they're waiting for me to tell one more story... which I will, about Frank. I had shown up early for a lesson, and there was a Grand Union, now it's a CVS in Woodstock, so I stopped there, and I see Frank come down the aisle. And he was in his 70s then, he's not that fast, and you can't miss him, because he has the unibrow, too. So he's coming down the aisle, and I see this very large

woman, I mean, this is what opera singers are about, they wear the horns on their head. She comes around this way, and I was like, off to the side, so he didn't see me, she took one look at him, and she raised herself, and she was big, it was a big raise, and she went, "you beast!" She went that way, I got out of there, I don't want to know nothin'...

Bill: Johnny had something to add?

58:45

Johnny: Frank arranged a date or two with some beautiful women with me on occasion. He arranged a date for me with one truly beautiful woman, and I dated her once or twice, but we lived a little ways apart, and the situation and the time just wasn't right. It wasn't anything else. And that beautiful woman was you, Lisa... many years before you met Roger.

Lisa: In a land far, far away.

Rich: I'm wondering, Andy, you had started out saying you didn't get the fishing gene. And we were all gathered in this library, actually it was the old library before the fire, with Cal Smith, the son of Ray Smith, and he said, I didn't get the fishing gene. And I'm wondering about the whole fishing and family, you know, fathers and sons. Fathers and daughters. Any thoughts about that?

Tony: Yeah, I got the fishing gene, and my father didn't fish. So maybe because I had a brook across from my house? And at that time there weren't any iPads, laptops, TV sets. We still had wood stoves. So we entertained ourselves. So I went to the brook. And I eventually thought I was catching trout, and a lot like Heidi, I was catching black ... or creek chubs, or whatever they were. But my grandfather, who was Irish, was a great fisherman, to the degree that he went to Sheepshead Bay every week all year, and went on a party boat. And when I was about 5 or 6, I think, he dragged me down to this whole, you know, maze of New York Central Railroad, to subways, to Brooklyn, to Sheepshead Bay, only to get seasick for four hours. But I did catch the biggest fluke, and he kept the money. Being the good Irishman that he was.

Andy: I think, you know, things skip generations. There's that. But fishing is something that you have to discover on your own. And there's so many things you need to discover on your own. Like, you need to just find it for yourself, pursue it yourself, learn it yourself. You know, when I was little, you know, I had allergies. We were always beating our way through fields of waving grass, and I would be sneezing by the time we got there, and I was a pain in the ass, I'm sure. And God, what was the name of that bartender at the Cafe Espresso... one of my father's good friends, because they would be drinking buddies... Joe... Joe Disaro, yes. And Joe would start making fun of me, and my father would join

in, so it was just a, you know, not altogether pleasant. And, you know, sometimes. And again, but for me, it just didn't suit my temperament. And you know, other things did. So, you know, I discovered and I initiated my other interests in life, and fishing just wasn't one of them. But boy, I sure did appreciate, you know, I loved learning how to cast, and you know, loved paling around with the old man. It was, you know, one of the few things we just, like, really had in common. And, you know, we were talking about how ... anyhow, I found myself wondering when was actually the last time he got out on the stream, and did any of us know it was going to be the last time he was going to be out on the stream, and stuff like that, and maybe some of you were there.

01:02:30

Roger: One of the last times; in fact it was the last time I had fished with Frank, he called me up, and he says, let's go out to the camp on the East Branch. I said, okay. So I picked him up, and we drove out there, and we got to one of the original camps that were down there... and we pull in with the car... below Downsville, and we get out, and I got my waders out, and I got my rods out, my vest, whatnot, and he wouldn't do it. He says, I'm going to take a nap. So I get out on the river, and of course I got one eye on the river and one eye on him back there; he got in the car and he took a nap, never got out to get his waders, rods, or whatnot, and I came back about, I don't know, an hour later, and I said, Frank, are you going to fish? He said, no. He says, I think I've had it today. He says, I think we ought to get back to Woodstock. The traffic is going to get heavy. And I just looked at him, and I says... what can you say. He was worried about traffic going back to Woodstock from down at the East Branch... he had to beat the rush hour.

Andy: Alright, I'm going to go back in time to a happier memory. I'm sorry I brought up that, sort of that era. I know a lot of you guys still have a beef with me about the ending, and so I don't want to go there. But the, when I was little, I learned how to drive on his lap. We had a '53 Chevy. It was green. One of those beautiful muscular cars; looked like muscles; you know, had the things, and the little hood ornament; but, and we're weaving down the Maverick road. The old man and I have just gone to score a gallon of apple jack from his Paisans down in Glasco. And it's in a paper bag. And he had this artful way of putting the, you know, those wonderful glass... he'd slip his finger through it, cradle the jug in the paper bag over his arm [makes glug, glug, glug] and I would be driving, sitting in his lap. And that is how I learned how to drive [glugging sounds].

Bill: Catskill mountain boyhood! John has a point here.

John: It's sort of an add-on to your story. One year... Judd, are you awake back there? -- you, myself, and [Chadreu] went out west. Chadreu is what Frank used to call John and I... pickle? Cucumber. Anyway, so we ... drove ... took Judd's

old Scout, and we drove out west, but the rivers... they were kind of big and brawling. He loved his East Branch, he liked the Bushkill, and you know, more classic waters. And so he didn't like... he wanted to come back early... so thought, well, I'll go back with Frank, because I had work to do home, my father's business, whatever, and I shouldn't have even been on vacation. So we flew back. Only one problem. Frank had never been on an airplane before. And he was really nervous. So we were seated. And Frank reaches inside of his tweed jacket, got a little flask in there, he takes a nip or two. Stewardess comes by: sir, you're not allowed to drink on flights (you know, except for what we give you, of course). Okay, okay. Puts it away. Time went on. Plane was ready for takeoff, or maybe it had even taken off. He goes again, takes the flask, takes another nip. This time the stewardess comes back and said, sir, it's against FAA regulations. I'm going to have the authorities waiting for you when we land. So Frank was like, now he gets, he almost goes ballistic, you know. I can't, I don't recall his exact words, but I said, Frank, chill out. Cool it. Please. You know, she's just doing her job. Somehow, you know, we landed without incident, and I'm going, oh my God. Look, anyway, out of that trip, Jeff caught a beautiful, I think it was a 21- or 22-inch brown trout, and he made an elegant pastel out of it, an outline out of it, and I had it framed by Geoff Rogers, and it's hanging in my fly shop today.

Bill: Open Saturdays and Sundays!

[Audience]: Are you open?

John: If you call it that. It's not finished yet. I have to do my rod display rack, my pegboard... I have my bookshelves. I have 3- or 400 books. And, but it's a work in progress. I'm open weekends...

Bill: Anybody have any Frank stories? Reflections on Frank? Reflections on some of the ideas that have come up here today from Frank's life, and interests?

Mark Loete: What was Frank's favorite fly?

Tony: Probably a Quill Gordon and a sulphur...

01:08:25

Roger: We were at the airport one day, Lisa and I fishing, late, and sulfur hatches, flies were coming up, and we got a couple of fish that night. But it's getting dark. And I see his truck pull in. Bill's truck pulls in, he gets out of the car, and he and Frank and I used to go around with, what fly do you tie, how do you tie your sulfur how do you do this... so he's an avid dry fly fisherman, and Bill comes up to me, and he says, sulphurs. It's getting dark, you couldn't see. And he's getting his waders on. He's going to go out there and fish, right? So he

says to me, here's my dry flies. Let me see. What sulphurs do you use? I says, a small nymph. He almost threw me in the river right there, you know. What are you fishing wet for? Fish a dry fly... that would always be a subject. The sulphur. How do you tie it, what do you tie it.

Bill: Judd?

Judd: There were two flies that Frank taught me how to tie. Very, very different flies. One was the wingless parachute. And we used to call it just the parachute wingless or wingless parachute. And it was a go-to fly. If I was forced to have one fly during the season, or be in a one-fly contest, that would be my choice. The second was this huge white marabou streamer about size 4, based on a Dr. Burke. You know what I'm talking about. And when things got really frustrating on the East Branch, he would take that big white marabou and put it on the end of his 7-foot Payne, and nailed some very big fish. He didn't cast it very much. But he'd catch fish. But those were two favorites that I remember. And I always keep them in my fly box.

01:10:30

Roger: Remember the day he came in, and he was very friendly with Dan Brennan, the rod maker, and we had our annual get-together—I'll tell you about that in a minute—but he was always looking for necks. And they would bring them in from Cortland, I guess... and he brought in... ten Brennan rods, one piece, and he was selling them for about, I don't know, about 100 bucks a piece. I should have bought every one of them... they were all one-piece rods. If you wanted to take them down you'd have to have them cut and then a frog put on them ... but he knew these people with strange things. They'd come ... oh, yeah, I found these special birds over in Cortland ... and they'd bring the necks...

Tony: Maybe you need to hear the story about the turtle soup... I get a call one day; I got a snapping turtle. I got to get a pot! I'm going to use a galvanized garbage pail...

[Audience] ... we got the snapping turtle out at the family farm. It was in the pond, it was crossing, and gum bah, that's what we used to call him, brought in a turtle. Well, we got the snapping turtle... I'll take it. Bring it. How do you want it done? Take the head off. Take the legs off. Alright. So I think after we took those off, we weighed it, it was like 40-something pounds. It was huge, like this. So we dragged it, I don't know how we got it up, it was disgusting. Even though it was dead, it was still trying to roll all over the place. We got it up there, and Frank pulls out all his pots, and there's nothing big enough. So he hands me this galvanized garbage can. He goes, "wash it." It was full of garbage... and I'm like, Frank, first of all there's garbage. "We're going to boil it, don't worry about it."

And I said, second of all, Frank, it's galvanized. He goes, "don't worry about it." So we set it up, it took all four burners on his stove, and I got out of there. And then Tony showed up, thankfully, and saved his life.

Tony: I don't know what he cooked it in, really, what he did with it. But you know, those snapping turtles are about the nastiest critters around. They're from the Pleistocene or something.

Bill: We have a story in front here?

[Audience]: I met Frank through my son Jamie. And Jamie brought me a snapping turtle, up to the kitchen. I have 100 cookbooks. I couldn't find a recipe. I had no idea what to do with this thing, and it was like this. Gotta call Frank! He talked me through it. And we made soup. I'll never make that soup again.

Bill: How was the soup, though?

[Audience]: I had a taste of it; it was okay. But Frank got it all... I have a commercial stove, and had big, large pans. So I had to keep rolling him over, and got him cooked. But to clean it and gut it and take everything apart, he was in wheel barrow, with a newspaper over the head; couldn't stand looking at it.

[Audience]: Andy and I ran the maritime museum down in Rondout when it got started. I don't fish. I have no exposure to any of this stuff. But I'm going to Gray's, I think it was Gray's, and Frank had a little ad in there... so I saw the last name, Woodstock, and I called him up. I said, I'd like one of your books, and he says, "you're going to have to pay for it, you know!" I said, fine, okay; sent him some money, and I decided, well, maybe this wasn't for me. And I asked this guy to go up and get it. And that started it. And at one point, soon thereafter, I guess the party started to shift down to the farm... anyway, Jamie brings Frank, Ruthie comes out of the house, and Frank goes over and leers at her and says, oh, you must be Jamie's sister. And I said, what have I started now?

Andy: What a slime.

[Audience]: Now, Andy, I can appreciate how difficult it must have been to be the child of a very demanding, specific man. I remember when he was in the hospital, and he wasn't eating, and I was working at Continental, and I had come in, and I decided I would go to the store to make; remember how he liked his egg sandwich, and you had to break the yoke and do it on that bread... I would make that for him. They didn't have the Meredith's bread, they only had a different kind of bread, so I made the sandwich; I bring it over, and he took a bite; he said... no. Not the right bread. And so I can just imagine, as a child; I'm an adult, I can handle this; but as a child, how difficult it must have been.

Andy: I've got the scars up and down... big, deep, little, small. You know, you name it, I've got the scars to show for it. But you know, I love the guy desperately. Last night I was having pizza with my daughter and her husband and my ex... and she walked me out to the car, and I heard the first peepers that I've heard in years, the peepers. And the old man and I always; you know, if I heard the peepers, I would dial him up... and usually I was the one who heard it first, and I was like, "Pop, the peepers are out!" And he was like, ah! Andy, that's wonderful, and everything like that. After he died I had his ashes for a couple, several years actually, while I was trying to figure out what he would have wanted, right? And I would take, first peepers, I was living in Fishkill, right across from a wetland, and the peepers would be, just one night, bam! They would be deafening. And I'd take his ashes out there and talk to him for a while, and let him listen to the peepers and everything. Finally, I was reading one of the stories, that saccharine kind of story in, it's in *Small in the Eye of a River*, about the lost love, so on and so forth. And in in, it just, the words leaped out. If my son and daughter wish to honor, want to honor my wishes, after I am dead, they will cast my ashes off of the X-bridge. And I'm like, wow! I get on the horn, I call Angela. I'm like, Angela, I've got it, I've got it! Because she was a pretty major evangelical Christian, and I think she was beginning to really, really, really lose patience with me having our father on the mantelpiece. And so we had the thing out on the bridge; many of you were there. And anyhow. So many stories. I have one question. I would like to ask for a show of hands. How many of you make the lamb neck sauce? ...

[audience reaction]

Not as many as I would have thought. But anyhow. I just, so I'm glad it carries on... calamari, absolutely.

Lisa: It's important, I think, to realize that Frank used food, it was part of his graciousness. And he was social. He would invite people, very graciously, over to dinner. And he would always cook. It tasted wonderful. You never knew what it was going to be. And there were times when you'd say, what is that? And he'd say, taste it first, darling, and then I'll tell you... but it was delicious. So you would keep on eating. But he had a slew of magnificent known musicians that would come in and out of his house. Every student he had musically would get into any musical school. If that was their desire, he had them ready for it. He knew what he was doing. Was he easy? No. But it was part of his psyche. And the one thing I think I appreciate most of all, besides meeting Rog through him-- and food--but I really appreciate about him, he never stopped. He was always bettering himself. He really was, Andy. He would learn more about this; he would ask the right people. The artists he knew, I mean, it probably read like a list of who's who. So whatever he was doing, he would seek the best. And he was a very, very highly intelligent man. And everybody, without thinking about it, if they were invited, they would show up. And a lot of people would show up

even if they weren't invited... he was really a wonderful man, and he was beloved by a great many more people than you can even realize, because he touched a lot of lives in a lot of different positions.

01:20:20

Andy: He had relationships, friendships, with many of my generation, my childhood friends from Woodstock. You know, Rod McCloud was over there all the time, and several others, and guys that I had almost nothing to do with, they'd be telling me about, well, I was over at your dad's house the other night... that was really cool.

Roger: He called me up one night, and this happened several times, he said, can you come over for breakfast tomorrow morning? I says, what time? He says, about 7:30, 8:00 would be alright. So I'd go over there in the morning, and he'd have his eggs, and he'd have two strips of bacon, and then he had his... the almonds, he'd sit there and eat them. And you'd hear this commotion... sitting there and drinking coffee; people walking through the house. It was like the United Nations. 7:30 in the morning. People coming; thanks, Frank, thanks Frank! And he's thanking them and what not. I don't know what the hell... and remember that one story. He was teaching that one student, and the student kept going like this on the violin, and Frank...

Lisa: This is about a 9-year-old boy, and I was waiting for my lesson, and he had another room and you'd sit there. And he was tough. And the 9-year-old kid is plugging away, and Frank is watching him, and you could see that Frank was not a happy man. He's kind of like tapping a pencil. And he looks at the kid, and he says... tell me, are you expecting to play a violin in a phone booth? ... Fortunately it went right over his head... but this is the wit that the man had... it was just wonderful.

[Audience]: For his students, he demanded incredible devotion. I'd be sitting having dinner with him, and he would have one of his students practicing out front, and we'd be eating, and all of a sudden he'd just look at me, he'd go ... bravo. It's good. But the problem with this student is -- he was getting him ready for Juilliard or one of the symphonies at the time -- and he said, the problem with him is that he can only -- he has to work; he can only practice 8 hours a day. He needs to practice at least 12 hours a day.

[Audience]: Are the instruments still in the family?

01:22:45

Andy: I distributed... there was only... there was one. And Sergio... he befriended this; I guess Sergio was Brazilian, Argentinian, somebody knows the answer to

that. But he had emigrated to New York. The old man took a lot of credit for hooking him up with, for recognizing the quality of his instruments, and hooking him up with this string quartet with a bunch of Italian guys, and I forget their name; they looked like mafiosos. If you saw these... Joe, of course, was the leader's name. I wish I could remember the name, because you'd all recognize him -- walking into the room with his gray coat and his hat and his violin case, and you'd go, oh, this is, you know, I'm about to get shaken down, shot, killed, whatever. It was just, like, reflexes from so many movies and everything... I still have... he commissioned Ed Curtz in Kingston to go down to the Corcoran museum in Washington, DC, where there was a set of Stradivaria -- a cello, a viola, a violin, and possibly even a bass or something. Just invaluable, irreplaceable set. And he had enough cache to get Curtz in there to actually mic the viola, the Stradivari viola. And so Curtz did it. He took all the dimensions off it, every which way he could, short of taking it apart... had to wear white gloves and everything. And he made this instrument, and it was not terribly successful. My father kept saying, well, it just needs to be used more. And he never really wound up using it, because it was just not quite there. The thought was that maybe the finish wasn't up to the Stradivari standards. So I've still got that, and I have no idea what to do with it. It's just being wasted sitting in a closet in my house. I was actually sort of starting at it this very morning wondering what to, there should be something done to it. It should go to a better home, certainly, than my closet.

01:25:10

John: You were talking before how your father, you, and the peepers. I actually have a copy of a short story he wrote about the peepers.

Andy: Yeah, wonderful story.

John: And the other thing is, again, about food. We were talking one time, and I asked him about the old days on the Maverick. He said, we were very, very poor, all of us at the Maverick. Well, how'd you survive? And he gave me that wry smile of his and said, coon cacciatore.

Andy: Yeah. Coon cacciatore, squirrel cacciatore, rabbit cacciatore. I was describing, you know, the hearts of beef, the beef hearts were practically thrown away in those days. So he'd go get them, and go get the kidneys, too. And my mother wasn't much of a cook, but boy with those organ things, there would be, you know, sizzling, you know, sauté of the slices of beef heart in the pan. And the old man would find either some apple jack or some cognac or something like that. There was always something; and he'd throw it on there. Bam! Flambé, you know. Flame leaping high, almost to the ceiling. And geez, they were good, you know, and they cost nothing. And so, when the money was really, really gone, it was moose pie. And the old man hated it; we all hated it. It was corn

flakes and tuna fish. We were down to the moose pie, you know, on several occasions. One year he jacked a doe. It was, she was hung someplace, I have no idea, and frozen someplace. And we ate like kings for the entire winter off of that one doe. Man, was that good. But never had venison like it since. Tender. Yummy. It's lunchtime, isn't it? Let's talk more about food.

Beth Waterman: I just wanted to remind everyone that in 1996, I believe, Andy, we had a memorial service in the library for Frank. And I'll just pass around some pictures... this was donated in his memory, it's a blue Dunn neck, and one of his flies, and the portrait, and this framed piece is right down the hall in the angler's parlor. And we were also given these photos... so for those of you don't have much of a visual image of Frank ... [shows pics]... thank you.

[Audience]: I think that it's long past time for Frank Mele and his accomplishments to have been recognized. When you think about the Clean Waters legislation, the significance of that. You know, we came here today and told about what Frank did, and what John did, and how it happened. What we didn't talk about was all the efforts that went on before that, that did not move New York City. And did not move Albany. There's one individual who made it all happen. We have fishing all summer long because of Frank Mele. John Hoeko. And those efforts. This is a rare thing, and it's been a shame that Frank's been overlooked up until this time. So Beth, thanks for having this party. It's long overdue.

Beth: Thank you all for coming... [applause]

[Audience]: Frank didn't suffer fools lightly. And as a result of it, sometimes politics gets in the way. Sometimes people who deserve recognition don't get it. So I'm very happy that you had this today. Thank you.

Andy: Well, you know, whoever suffered the lash of his tongue shouldn't take it personally, because we were all fools sometimes.

[Audience]: I saw him cry once. He asked me to, if by chance, when I was going to school in Scotland, if I could find this book on the hand, by Sir Charles Bell, that he had tried to find for 50 years. So what did I know? I walked into a bookshop in Portobello Market, I'm looking for this book on the hand. And the gentleman says, by Sir Charles Bell? I said, yes. He goes, oh, I'm very sorry, we don't have it here. But we do have it in our Oxford store. So I bought it for him, and I took it to him, he invited me up for dinner, I handed it to him, and he just stopped, and the tears...

Andy: Thank you for doing that...

Tony: A couple of other quick points. In addition to all his fishing literature,

which was quite a lot, not only in books but in short stories that were published mostly in Gray's, he wrote quite a few other short stories that were nothing to do with fishing. If you can find them, one is The Inheritance. And another one is called The Story for a Month. They were published in the Quarterly Review of Literature, which is not something every Tom, Dick and Harry gets into. You can find those if you snoop, and they're not easy to find. At the end of his life, he wrote a book called A Certain Love, and I have the manuscript of that thing, and that was kind of... and The Hand, both. Those things were major league things, and I don't know what would ever happen with them in this market, but...

[Audience]: I was able to find a publisher for him in Scotland on The Hand...

Tony: You have the manuscript for that?

[Audience]: He said, at that point, no. But thank you. It's done.

Bill: Well, that sounds like a good note for us to end our panel discussion on. I want to thank all of you for coming. I want to thank our panelists for giving us such a wonderful portrait. And not just a wonderful portrait of Frank, but really a wonderful celebration of Frank and all his accomplishments. So thank you all very much for coming today.