

The Jerry Bartlett Angling Collection presents Catskills Fishing Fever Forums: "Fishy Tales: Catskills Fisheries Stories from retired DEC folks. Made possible with funds from the Catskill Watershed Corporation, in partnership with the New York City DEP. Recorded by Silver Hollow Audio.

Beth Waterman: My name is Beth Waterman, and 20 years ago, Doris Bartlett -- Doris Bartlett (applause) -- Doris Bartlett and I started the fishing collection at the Phoenicia Library, in memory of Jerry Bartlett. And this year, 2016, is our 20th anniversary. In honor of our anniversary, we are hosting a series of fishing forums that are, this is the third in the series. And I'd like to thank you all for coming, and just say a few words before I turn it over to Judy VanPut, the moderator today. First of all, when we first started the fishing collection, we asked a number of people to be on our steering committee to help us figure out what to do and who to talk to and what kinds of things we might want to include in the angling collection. One of those people was Wayne Elliot, who was the head of fisheries in DEC region 3. Wayne wrote a piece for us about the Esopus Creek. This was one reason why I thought of this panel, and also thought of Wayne. It's one of my favorite memories of Wayne. In three paragraphs, he sums up 10,000 years of history of Esopus Creek. I really never knew that Wayne was quite so poetic and such a good writer until he volunteered to do this for us, for the steering committee of the angler's parlor. Wayne also told me some interesting stories during the time that I knew him. One of them was about a sucker drive on the ice. I thought that was the strangest thing I had ever heard. So that was one of the ideas that I wanted to pursue in this panel discussion when we first got the idea for this series, which was last year, before Wayne passed away. I'm sorry he can't be here today, but we're going to dedicate this to his memory for the combination of crazy stories and serious biological work. He also worked, his first job was on the Hudson. He had a task to do a survey of fish in the Albany pool, which is the water from Albany to Catskill for a Niagara Mohawk-proposed plant. When he did this, he found only one fish in all of that water. And today we know it's a nursery for so many species and filled with fish, filled to overflowing with fish. So that was another reason that I thought about asking our friends from DEC to come and talk about their careers because they've seen so much in their careers, between the environmental legislation and the public consciousness of conservation in the last, what, however many years. Forty years?

[Mentions mailing list; website (catskillanglingcollection.org); show on tied flies at the Kleinert/James Center for the Arts, by Mark Loete; Stephanie Blackman, and the "match the hatch" feature on the website; past and future forums, and funding.]

So... let me introduce Judy VanPut. Judy started her career as a fish and wildlife technician at the DEC region 3 office in New Paltz, where she met her husband, Ed... raised her family in Livingston Manor and for the past 20 years, Judy has

written a column through two newspapers about fishing and farming. Judy and Ed live in Livingston Manor with two Morgan horses and several dogs... one dog... so without further adieu I'll turn it over to Judy and our panel, she'll introduce our panelists. We'll have a presentation, and then we'll adjourn and go down the hall for show-and-tell and schmoozing.

00:08:15

Judy: Thank you very much, Beth, and I'd like to thank all for gathering here this morning. Our panel is comprised of former employees of the Conservation Department of New York state, which is now known as the Department of Environmental Conservation, who worked in the Catskill Mountain regions. New York state is divided into 9 regions, and the two regions that cover the Catskills are region 3 in New Paltz, and region 4 in Stamford. So you may hear a number of us referring to region 3, region 4, just to clarify that. As Beth said, our forum today is dedicated to Wayne Elliot, who worked both in region 3 and region 4. Wayne loved to fish, and was delighted to be able to spend his career among the rivers and trout streams of the Catskills. He began as a biologist in the Stamford office in 1968, and eventually moved to New Paltz in 1981 to become the fisheries manager, until his retirement in 2006. And all of us on this panel were so fortunate to have worked with Wayne and enjoy many fond memories of his friendship. We'll also talk about Bill Kelly, known as Catskill Bill, who we all had the opportunity to work with and enjoy friendship with.

00:09:48

So I'd like to give a very brief discussion of each of our panelists, and then I will invite each one to give a little talk about their career, and some of the highlights and accomplishments along the way. So let's begin with Walt Keller.

Walt began the early years of his life in downstate New York, but spent his fisheries career in upstate New York. Beginning in 1968, with eight years of cold water fisheries research for the Conservation Department, and subsequently the Department of Environmental Conservation in the Adirondacks. Then spent his time as region 4 fisheries manager in Stamford, until he retired in 1999 after a 31 1/3 year career. Walt caught his first trout – a rainbow? – in the Esopus, at the tender age of 8. And his years of fisheries research were mainly dedicated to studying brook trout, a species which he still enjoys fishing for, and is extremely knowledgeable about today.

Mike Gann started working during the summer at the Stamford region 4 office in 1966 and 1967, after which he completed his education and spent 6 years in the U.S. Navy, submarine service, and returned to the DEC in New Paltz office of region 3 in 1974, sporting a very short haircut. He served as regional fisheries manager through 1983, and was promoted to the Albany DEC office in 1984, as

public access unit leader and public use section head, retiring in 2003, concluding a 37-year career, all in the Bureau of Fisheries. Mike loves to fish, but is also remembered for his passion, and was known as a legend in the Stamford office during the lunchtime ping pong tournaments.

Jack Isaacs is an aquatic biologist who started with the DEC region 3 in New Paltz in 1978. Jack worked in the stream protection program for more than 30 years, retiring after 32 years and ending his career as habitat protection manager. Jack has a lifelong passion for fishing, both on the streams, and in the Ashokan Reservoir, where trout are measured not by the inch, but by the pound. And like Wayne Elliot, he loved it when their “work” took them to Sullivan County late in the day. These work session mysteriously seemed to occur during the great mayfly hatches of May and June. And they would bring their rods and end up at our house, and join Ed to spend their evenings on the East Branch, West Branch, and main stem of the Delaware. And... they caught fish sometimes.

Ed began his career in 1969, working in the New Paltz region of region 3's Conservation Department, and subsequently DEC. He retired after 40 years, spending 35 of those years in the PFR program, buying public fishing rights. Along the way, through no surprise, after acquiring fishing rights on new streams, you can bet that Ed added them to his list of places he needed to fish, and as Ed's wife of 35 years, I can attest to the fact that most of our lives, whether working, “leisurely-ing” or socializing, revolve around trout fishing.

We're also going to talk a little bit later about Bill Kelly, but I would like to start with our panelist Walt Keller, and ask Walt if he would be kind enough to give us some highlights of his career, what it was like working in two different regions, some of your favorite stories, accomplishments; and I'd also like to invite the audience to interject with any questions or comments they may have.

00:14:22

Walt: Thank you, Judy. Okay. The accomplishments... let me say, Brook Trout, brook trout are sort of where I'm at. That's my totem animal. And I started out working in the Adirondacks doing, basically brook trout research, and finished up with a plan for management of wild and hybrid brook trout for the state of New York. And I've kinda, I use brook trout as a focus for just about everything I've done since. Environmental protection and everything else. And I'm still, I still have the opportunity to work, I work summertime with USGS and with Cornell, and I had an opportunity to write a plan for management of the aquatic system, Esopus Creek, for Cornell and the City in 2007. And in any case, that's part of my career. The best thing that I ever did – I'm a vindictive person, and I'm also an opportunist – and while I was fisheries manager in Stamford, we were constantly tilting with Hunter Mountain over who owned water rights. And they wanted to put it on a slope of snow, and I wanted it in the creek, protecting

trout. And we had, we wound up in court with an administrative law judge. I can't remember the year now, in any case, but we lost, and I'm sure politics interjected. But in any case, Hunter pretty much got what they wanted. And I never forgot that. And so later on, I had an opportunity, they had a consent order, actually what they did was they built a reservoir, a small reservoir to contain water when the flows were up, so that they could use that for making snow in the wintertime. And the way they were supposed to manage that, they were not supposed to take water out of the creek during the summer and pass it through that pond, heat it up, and put it back in the creek. They were supposed to leave it alone, leave it in the creek. And we caught them in a violation of that, of that consent order that told them how to manage that reservoir. At the same time, they were campaigning, the rumor had it that they were at that time trying to sell the ski slope. And it had to do with a group in New England that owned a bunch of ski slopes, some big consortium of ski slopes. And so they started to, well, let me step back a second. The top of Hunter Mountain belongs to the people of the state of New York. And obviously Hunter can't make snow up there or build ski trails or do whatever; it's your folks, all of ours. So they wanted that pretty badly. And they wanted, they were proposing an exchange of that state land for an equal area of land undescribed of whatever, for a land transfer, and in order to do that, it's state forest I think, it's special state forest, it's a critical habitat... forever wild. And there's a smoke tower up there, a fire tower and everything. It's neat land. And it's special habitat for certain birds. In any case, they were making a move to do the land exchange, and in order to do that, it would have required a constitutional change. And in order to make the constitutional change, it required two consecutive legislatures, each legislature being two years... elected legislature being two years long. They were in the second year of the first of those, and they were campaigning to, in the legislature, to have the legislature "okay" this change, so it could be put out for referendum vote to the people of the state of New York, see if they'd okay this. And I'd had a bunch of dealings with Hunter Mountain about water withdrawals and the way they operated. And they were, they had violated their consent order. They were passing water through that reservoir in the middle of the summer, and we caught them at it. And so I told Bridget, I sat on this information, and then I said, you know, I have a chance now. I can go right for their throat. And for a whole week, I think, I tried to leak it to the press, and I'm thinking, how can I get this out there? I was 55 at the time. And I said, you know, if I do this, I'm liable to get fired, because it wasn't cool, and the state wasn't, DEC wasn't acting – they had taken no position. So finally, nothing happened. And I called the Times Union, and I said, you can say Walt Keller said Hunter's rubbing our nose in it, and you know, this isn't going to work. And the day it came out, I got a phone call from first the public affairs officer, the DEC public affairs officer. He says, Walt, he says, I hope we can have this conversation without me hollering. And then he says, 'you're a nobody.' You're gonna squash this deal! And I was kind enough not to say, if I'm a nobody, how come you're calling me? [laughs] But then... didn't stop there. At 5:30 I got a

phone call from the commissioner's secretary. She said, you have yourself up here at 8:30 tomorrow morning. The commissioner wants to talk to you. But that was the end of that land swap. So in any case, that was the best thing I ever did. And it was short-lived. It was fun. But I realized at the time that I was a nobody, and I crawled back under my rock.

00:20:20

Anyway, to diverge a little bit, do I have minute?

Judy: You have 10 minutes.

Walt: Really! I can talk for an hour... God forbid... a little bit about Wayne, while I'm here. I had, Wayne was working at region 4 when I moved down. I moved down to Stamford in 1976, from my research unit up in the north country. And I was a brand new manager. I'd been doing research, I didn't have any idea about fisheries management. Region 4 is 9 counties. It's bigger than the state of Connecticut. It has some pretty important resources. It's got, you know, almost the headwaters of the Susquehanna. It's got 2 major branches of the Delaware. It's got the upper piece of the Hudson estuary. It's got some pretty important stuff. A bunch of city reservoirs. And a portion of the Beaverkill. And, but I knew nothing about fisheries management. I knew nothing about the region. All I knew is I wanted to be down there, and so Wayne was there, and a guy by the name of Kay Sanford. And those guys mentored me for an entire year. I mean, you know, they taught me how to manage, how to relate to people, what the job was, here's the region. And I learned a lot from them. I still wasn't very good – I wasn't good when I retired – but I was a lot better after their mentoring. And Wayne – I actually hunted and fished with both of those guys – we had a really great unit, and it was just because of people like Wayne and like Kay. And I hunted and fished with both of them. But I wound up spending much more time hunting and fishing with Wayne. We grouse hunted together. We deer hunted together. We killed deer on the same day. We fished together. We picked apples together. We boiled sap together. We did a lot of stuff together. He was a really good friend. And I think that relationship early on helped us work together when we were both, we were managing sister regions, I mean we were, he had most of the Catskills, he has most of the New York City watershed as a responsibility. He had a heck of a lot of really important resource to deal with. And so did Mike. And so did Ed. And so did Jack. But anyway, I did spend a lot more time, social time, with Wayne. And he was a really good friend. And I learned a lot from him. He was a really interesting guy. He was a contrast, and part of this... he did a lot of things the old fashioned way. When I first hunted with him, he had a deer rifle that belonged to his grandfather, it was a Winchester. Anybody that hunts, Winchester made a lever action rifle that was a classic. It was a 94. And Wayne hunted with his grandfather's lever action model 94, deer hunted. But then later on he got a semi-automatic rifle, you know, he came up into the current world.

Not one of these black guns, like everybody's in the woods with now, assault rifles. But he also, you know, fishing, when we fished with him, and I salt water fished with Wayne, he was out at the Cape, we went out to the Cape annually a bunch of times for a week or so, and when we fly fished, he fished with a, he had a Boron fly rod, which is about state-of-the-art. And I remember seeing him fish with that. But when he retired, you guys gave him a, it was a cane rod, for his, as a retirement gift. And I remember when we were boiling sap, I mean, it was... with wood that he'd split, and I don't know what we used for a container to boil it, but I remember sitting around, you know, in the smoke, watching the sap boil. So it was a really – contrast. I mean, he liked things the old way, he liked history and that sort of thing; but he also came into, you know, to the, into current way of doing things. And, anyway...

Judy: Do you have a favorite anecdotal story, a funny story about Wayne...

Walt: Wayne was really competitive. If you ... not fishing, however. Honestly, not fishing. I mean, he was a great guy to fish with. But I remember, when I first came down here, we were trying to figure out how to catch American shad in the Hudson River, and I'm not sure whether they were doing it up at the Troy dam like they did when you could still fish for them. But we were out... we had purchased a lobster boat, 22-foot lobster boat, and we went out on the estuary, I called Everett Nack, who was a commercial fisherman, and Everett fished for shad commercially, fish netted for them. And I said, hey Everett, we want to try doing a sport fishing, where would you go? He said, well, right across, you know, from, he said, I fish, you know, across from Catskill Creek, at the mouth of Roeliff Jansen Kill. So we went over there, and it's a pretty good boat we had. And we had a bunch of people in there. And Norm McBride was one of the biologists. We had Norm, who had no sense of diplomacy or anything, I mean, he's really, he was an interesting person. And he later became a fisheries manager. So Wayne's out there, and Norm's out there, and I'm out there... Kay, and some other people. And Norm is the only guy catching shad. And he's catching them, he had this little light rod and very light line, and apparently the shad dart could sink very quick, and he was getting down to the fish, and he's catching them. And so we're all sitting around, and after a while it gets annoying, and so [laughs] Norm knew Wayne pretty well, and Norm had a fish on, and he said, he says, hey Wayne, you want to reel this in? [laughs] And he didn't wind up in the water. But Wayne was thinking about pitching Norm over the side. That was one of the...

Judy: Thank you very much.

Mike, would you like to tell us a little about your career and what it was like working in two different regions, and maybe some of your favorite stories and accomplishments?

00:27:06

Mike: Okay, I'll attempt to do that. Thank you for the nice introduction, Judy, and I certainly enjoyed some of your stories, there, Walt. I don't know that I have as many humorous ones to tell. I spent a little time, actually, thinking of a more serious subject that I would talk about here, because it was one of the great environmental clashes of all time in the history of the Catskills. But before I get into that, I just would like to say that in my career, I was blessed and cursed to be the regional fisheries manager in region 3 in New Paltz, during the period of about '76 through '83. And unlike you, Walt, I didn't get any mentoring. I just got tossed into the fray by a set of very bizarre circumstances. Anyway, what occurred there during my time was a proposal by the Conservation Department of the state of New York to build a second pump storage power project over on the Schoharie drainage, utilizing Schoharie Reservoir, New York City water supply reservoir, as the base reservoir. And they would build another reservoir high up on a mountaintop above Schoharie Reservoir, and install a pump storage plant. I don't know if everybody in here is familiar with the Blenheim-Gilboa project? Well this was a sort of a clone of that, right upstream. And of course, DEC got involved in this as soon as it was announced, because we recognized that there were two very great fishery resources that were going to be at risk as a result of this project. One of them is right out here, Esopus Creek. And of course, Schoharie Reservoir itself. I guess you all know how a pump storage plant works, more or less. You have a reservoir up high, and another one down low, and you have a pump generator unit that is capable of pumping water to an upper reservoir. When electrical conditions on the grid permit it. And then that water can be let out to generate electricity at times when there's high demand. That's sort of an oversimplification of the concept of how it works. Anyway, many dozens of people in DEC became involved in reviewing this, and the Conservation Department also hired many dozens of experts. And there were years of intense studies, evaluations, fancy simulation models done; public hearings held, and so forth; leading up to a licensing hearing down in Washington, D.C., before the federal energy regulatory commission. And I was fortunate enough to be one of DEC's expert witnesses at that hearing. It was our contention that the effects of this pump storage project would basically be to mix and turn over the water in Schoharie Reservoir so that it would not set up a thermal stratification anymore. And consequently, the water diverted from Schoharie Reservoir into Esopus Creek, and ultimately Ashokan Reservoir, and down to the city, would be, 1., much warmer, and 2., very turbid. Neither condition being too favorable to sustaining the fine trout fishery in the Esopus Creek, or the very good trout and walleye fisheries in Schoharie Reservoir at the time. I guess that many weeks, if not a couple of months of hearings, when a little group of us were flying back and forth to Washington, D.C., was probably the most intense period of my career, working for DEC. Our routine would be to fly down to Washington on Sunday night, to be ready for hearings all week, fly back home on Friday night, go into the office on Saturday to research material

for the next week's testimony, and then repeat this. And we did this for many weeks. Anyway, the hearings progressed, the Conservation Department was able to hire and parade a string of witnesses across the witness stand that were people of exceptional high caliber, knowledgeable people. I remember listening to some of their witnesses testify, these are the people that wrote the books that we studied from. And they were all contending that the pump storage project would not have anywhere near the kinds of effects that we were attempting to portray; which was rather a shocking thing for those of us in DEC in participated in the hearings. When this all wrapped up, and after incredible investment of effort and time, the FERC [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission] came out with their licensing decision, which was a strongly, and in fact, sarcastically worded approval of the project license. This is after several years of intense investment by many of us in evaluating this thing. In fact, I can remember to this very day a few of the words that were written into this decision, which were extremely offensive to those of us who had worked on it up to that point. The FERC in their decision likened DEC's contentions to an "Alice in Wonderland Fairytale" for which there was absolutely no substantiation. And the historical record still reflects that. And if you can find the FERC ALJ's [Administrative Law Judge's] decision on it, you will find those very words in it, to this day, unless the statute of limitations has run out on the records. Anyway, so we were really downtrodden after all of this. However, there was still the matter of a DEC-issued water quality certificate, which the Conservation Department would have to obtain in order to proceed. And there ensued after the federal hearings another year of very intensive studies on both sides, which led to a DEC water quality certificate hearing, which was held in Catskill, New York, around 1981, - 2, maybe. A 401? Is that right, Jack? ... And to make a very long story as short as possible, after that hearing, the administrative law judge who sat and listened to both sides, recommended to the DEC commissioner at that time that the certificate be denied. And in fact, the DEC commissioner at the time, Bob Flack, did deny the water quality certificate. And that ultimately killed the project [applause] ... after all that effort, we got some pretty strong sense of vindication.

Now... in spite all the seriousness of this, there is one funny aspect of this that I would like to cover. It might take me another few minutes to do this, but... during all this time, while there was this intense scientific study going on, and hearings and models and so forth, there was a local sportsman, Frederick G. Farber III – that name may ring a bell with some of you if you've been around Ulster County long enough – he was the president of the Ulster County Sportsman's Federation for many, many years. And he was, he took it upon himself to personally be my detractor and nemesis and antagonist at every opportunity. He was bound and determined he was going to show me and demonstrate to me that he knew a lot more about fish and fisheries management than I did. And once in a while he proved himself right, to my embarrassment. But nonetheless, Fred and I were very much on the same page when it came to this pump storage power project. And Fred, to his credit, took it

upon himself to develop what I'm going to call the layman's model of this project. And I brought here a little demonstration which I'm going to try and copy what Fred did, because it really is priceless. So I hope you'll bear with me.

00:37:00

Walt: While you're doing that Mike, let me just interject one thing. As part of their preparation that Mike was talking about when they were fighting this thing, and he worked with a biologist out of region 4, he wrote a report on the Esopus and Ashokan Reservoir and the contributions of the portal to the creek, and I had mentioned that I'm still doing some [work], they let me play in the water down here in region 3 once in a while during the summer, and in 2007 I had to write, I mentioned the report that I wrote, and that report was based on everything that I could find relative to Esopus Creek. It had to do with DEC data copies, from their files, fish surveys and stuff. The best piece of information I had for that report was what Mike had prepared for that Prattsville pump storage thing, that report was just superlative. That was the best piece of paper I saw in that report that I wrote, that I used. So thank you for that, man. You bailed me out.

00:38:00

Mike: Thank you. Alright, I describe pump storage to you all. What you need is a big volume of water, Schoharie Reservoir, at a low elevation; and you need a reservoir up high. And what you do is you take the water from the lower reservoir, and you pump it up the hill into this upper reservoir. So we're going to do that. [pours water] Alright, that's probably enough energy stored.

Audience question: Why is the water turning brown on the upper reservoir?

Mike: That's a fair question, and it has to do with the very large amount of silt and clay banks that exist along Schoharie Creek and also along Esopus Creek that get eroded from the flow into the reservoir. Happens here on Esopus Creek and Ashokan; also happens in Schoharie.

Anyway, Freddy would pump this upper reservoir full of water [shakes] – now, here's Schoharie Reservoir, fairly clear, it's undisturbed. Now we're going to generate some energy, so we're going to let the water run down the hill into Schoharie Reservoir [pours water], I'm sure you're getting the idea. Okay, so that's probably enough energy generated. So now we have a somewhat altered Schoharie Reservoir... and of course, you know, you can see what it looks like.

Audience: Doesn't look too good.

Mike: Doesn't look too good, no.

Now, of course, Schoharie Reservoir is connected to Esopus Creek by the Shandaken tunnel, so when the city moves water from Schoharie into Esopus Creek, you know, this is kind of what you get [pours water], probably enough to make a point. And we sort of mix it; this is what our trout are trying to survive in. And of course, ultimately that water goes down to Ashokan Reservoir and then on through a treatment works of sorts and into the city, and so you get this [pours]. Now, that's the whole demonstration. I apologize for taking so much time with this, but the really fun part of this was that, now I can't do this with the same kind of fanfare and panache that Fred Farber did, but he would lug this demonstration — he used gallon jugs, which was somehow more effective — he would lug this around to every sportsman's meeting that they would allow him to show his face, over a period of at least a year, maybe longer. And of course, he drove the Conservation Department nuts with this demonstration. And they had spies at all the rod and gun club meetings, where Fred would show up. And so on and so forth. And they would just cringe when he would do this demonstration. So his point in all of this — well, he had a couple points, but — his point was partly to needle me and the rest of DEC, which he loved to do, with the notion that we spent millions of dollars, tens of thousands of man hours invested in studying the impacts of that pump storage project; and in about an hour, he put together a demonstration [laughter] at his own level, which convinced many more people than we did about the terrible consequences of this project. So he got to needle me pretty good about that, and I must say we were never the best of friends, but I was willing to give him grudging credit once in a while for doing something good, and I thought this was just terrific; so anyway, I mean I can tell a lot of stories about Wayne Elliot, too, now, but I'm not going to do that, other than to say that during this process, I was attempting to do the regional fisheries manager's job and deal with this; and it was just overwhelming. And about halfway through, as circumstances occurred, Wayne was able to come to New Paltz and become the regional fisheries manager. And that actually was somewhat of a great relief to me, because Wayne allowed me to spend basically 100% of my time for the last couple of years that I was in New Paltz, working on this. I was relieved of all the other responsibilities that other fishery managers had. So that's it. I guess one last thing may be about competition. Wayne... is a very competitive guy, and he is; especially when it comes to sports. And I learned pretty quickly for the short time that I was working up in Stamford, while Wayne was working there, that ping pong is a contact sport. And when things weren't going well for Wayne across the table, he became irritated, to say the least. And I still have a scar in my forehead from a ping pong paddle that he smashed on the table, and the head went flying, and just managed to hit me in the head somehow. So he was a fierce competitor. But I certainly echo everything that Walt said about Wayne. He was a terrific guy. He was wonderful to work with. He was wonderful to work for. He was wonderful to play cards with. Or drink. Or go carouse. Or whatever, go fish. I mean, he was just an all around wonderful guy, and it's an honor to be a part of this whole presentation in his name. [applause]

Judy: I'd like to turn next to Jack Isaacs. As I mentioned, an aquatic biologist who, after 32 years, ended his career as habitat protection manager, having an intimate relationship with streams, and trying to keep bulldozers out, and protect the streams, and the trout. Jack always brightens a room with his wonderful personality, and his quick wit, and I wondered if Jacky would like to give us a little... couple of thoughts about your career, some significant things that happened along the way.

00:45:45

Jack: Well, first thing, you know, I'm old and I've been with the DEC a long time, but other than Judy, I'm the youngest guy here [laughter] ...

I came down here in '73. I'm from the Adirondacks. So this is "down here" to me. I worked for Texas Instruments on the Hudson River for 5 years, doing the research for the nuclear power plants. So I got the opportunity to go with DEC. If you're a fish biologist working for fisheries, and DEC is like, the pinnacle of being a fish biologist. So I had the opportunity to go, to get with DEC, not in fisheries; my first go-around was with the permit section. It's called "environmental permits" now, or "regulatory affairs," or whatever. I didn't last that long there. I didn't blend. [laughter] I got laid off after about 10 months, but the natural resource supervisor at the time, his name was Fred Slater, and he said, Jack, don't worry, I'll get you a job. And Fred got me a job about a year and a half later, and I owe everything to Fred Slater. But he got me back in fisheries. I worked with Mike Gann, and they adopted me and took me in like I was one of their own. And I ended up doing the stream protection program for a long, long time. It was interesting. When I first came on in '80, it was after the flood of '80, and bulldozers ran rampant through a lot of the streams in the Catskills. And that's what they did. They bulldozed streams and dredged them and cleaned them out. I didn't have a lot of experience in this, but I kind of knew that that's not how a stream is supposed to look! And started my own campaign, along with the support of fisheries folks, to stop this. And after working with Mike, my hero, watching him, what he did with the Prattsville project, Wayne Elliott became the fish manager, and he supported me and helped me all the way; and we slowly but surely got the bulldozers out of the streams. And I think that was a, it was a battle, because I had commissioners come down to the Bushkill in the town of Olive, and look around and say, yeah, this stream needs a good cleaning! That was after the flood of '84. That was pretty routine after floods that you had to punish the stream. So when the stream, when the flood came, you bulldozed the hell out of it, punish it, and then you blame somebody. It was either DEC, the guy upstream, somebody took the blame. Nobody wanted to blame the man upstairs, so, but you had to do something. But slowly but surely, we got the bulldozers out of the stream. And for about the first 20 years of my career... there's a very technical term for that.

It's called "dickin' in the crick." [laughter] Don't dick in the crick! And it worked. For a while. And then, a guy named Rosgen came along, and it's sort of, a guy with a cowboy hat and a big belt buckle became an expert on streams, and he turned dickin' in the crick into something of a public service [laughter]. And it was kind of baffling, because experts took the course, or came from out west, and they'd look around on the Esopus, and tell us what it needed. I had walked just about every inch of the Esopus Creek. I know the Esopus, at the time, I'm a little older now, but I knew every inch of that creek. I have been to almost, I have been to every property that required a permit to work—bank stabilization, whatever. I knew the Esopus Creek like the back of my hand. They came, looked around, and proclaimed what it needed. And we had a few battles with that. And then dickin' in the crick developed a life of its own with Rosgen, and unfortunately with DEP. They meant well, and we want the same thing, but they wanted projects for projects' sake. And I blame that on the filtration avoidance document. The FAD [filtration avoidance determination], they called it, required certain amounts of stream work to avoid filtration. But the FAD was developed by engineers, and somehow the perception of stream work, avoiding sediment and turbidity in the stream, became fact. Whereas whatever they did in the streams was immeasurable on the other end. So they threw millions and millions of dollars into projects that essentially was, the results were immeasurable. They didn't improve water quality. But it continued. And I think it still continues... But that's an important part, and unfortunately it's still going on I think. But at least people are thinking about it. And then of course with our good governor suspending article 15, after super storm Sandy or whatever, that kind of put stream protection back about 20 years. But I think it's coming back now.

Judy: Do you have a particular project that you were really pleased with winning the battle, or accomplishing the turnover of someone's thinking about, gee, maybe we shouldn't be cleaning out the streams?

00:52:20

Jack: Well, when I first came, crushers were set up in the Bushkill, town of Olive. A crusher was in the stream! [laughter] And they were wondering why every time it rained they got flooded, and the banks fell in. And eventually we stopped them, and we stopped them from bulldozing, the last time after, I can't remember what the commissioner's name was, but he decreed that the stream needed a good cleaning. The Seabees actually came, with the biggest machines I've ever seen in my life. And they cleaned out the whole, I mean, it was incredible what they did. But that was the last time they bulldozed. And when we got them to stop, the stream hasn't, there's no more huge bank erosion, no more flooding, and... just a little common sense worked really well. I think one of the proudest things I can say in my career with DEC was when the national president of Trout Unlimited tried to get Ed and I fired [laughter].

Ed: It's true. True story.

Judy: Needless to say, they ripped up their membership cards.

Jack: True story. They decreed that the Beaverkill was under threat of rampant development, as a way to raise money, and there was this, huge articles in Trout Magazine about the rampant development. So we're looking, and say, where's this rampant development? The entire upper Beaverkill was in my region, and I'm the stream protection guy. I can't find the development [laughter]! And they did some other things. So Ed and I, well, we were interviewed by a reporter from out west.

Ed: Colorado. Because that was their next big project.

Jack: That's right, because they had a Beamoc (Beaverkill/Willowemoc) project, spent a lot of money, brought in consultants and their own employees to work on the Beaverkill. We got along not that great [laughter]. And so the reporter calls; interviews Ed and I, and we told the truth.

Ed: We told the TU coordinator, we were going to tell this reporter the truth. We're not going to tell him the crap that TU was telling the public. And so if you have them call us, we'll tell them, tell it like it is. And...

Jack: I think, watch for the sales job was one of the quotes that they picked up. And we told them. I don't know what they're doing here; they're raising a lot of money, but they didn't do a whole lot. And they made a lot of promises. And the article was published and the president of TU called and wrote to the commissioner, expressing outrage that we would say such things, and on and on. A member of Trout Unlimited saw it, and he called it, we treated the Catskill trout streams like our own fiefdom.

Ed: Your fiefdom, not mine! [laughter]

Jack: Okay, so ... a member of Trout Unlimited saw the letter and was outraged, because he knew Ed and I and our work, and he wrote a letter back to our commissioner saying... basically, defending us, with a copy to the president of TU. The president of TU wrote another letter back to the commission, refuting what his member said! So that was, that's one of the proudest moments of my career.

Ed: You ripped up your card.

Audience: How long ago did that happen?

Ed: In the '90s.

Jack: Yeah, some time in the '90s. Yeah, I quit Trout Unlimited when they had the big article about how the rampant development was ruining the stream. It was a drought! There was no water! You know... [some back and forth]...

00:57:00

Can I tell two quick stories about Wayne?

Judy: Of course!

Jack: Wayne and I fished a lot together. A real lot. So we always ended up at least once, sometimes twice a week, we ended our days in Sullivan county. It was a coincidence [laughter]. So at 5:00, what are you going to do? So we'd go to Delaware, the East Branch, or whatever, to fish. But Wayne and I, and Doug **Stang**, we also fished out west a few times. So, we arranged a camping and fishing trip to Montana and Yellowstone. It was unbelievable. We planned this for months. I tied flies for 6 months in anticipation of this. I'm ready to go, this is going to be the great trip. We get into Montana, we load our rent-a-wreck station wagon with food, beer...

Ed: Cards.

Jack: I mean it was ... we were ready to go. We drive down to Madison, oh, it's like heaven. We set up camp on the Madison, the next morning, we're going, it's going to be, this is great. So we get ready, put on our waders, I get my brand new rod and set it up, we're all set to go. Wayne smashes the shit out of my rod... tailgate... boom, slams the door on my brand new fly rod. I watch it; in pieces! Oh, he says, you have another rod? [laughter] But we also fished the Big Horn River and some other places out there that dreams are made of. It was great. I've got more stories about Wayne, I'll tell you later [laughter].

Judy: Well, thank you Jack. That was great. Ed began his career in 1969, spent most of his time in the public fishing rights program; but can you fill us in on what it was like working for the DEC or the department in those early days? How did you begin? What was your first job?

Ed: My first job was in fisheries, '69, May of '69. And Bill Kelly had outlined a stream survey on Willowemoc Creek, between Livingston Manor and Roscoe. Seven miles. And the survey included a count run, where I would make a run, count the number of fishermen, turn around, come back, and interview them, gather information about how long they were fishing, where they were fishing, where they were from, what they caught. And if they caught any fish, I would measure the fish, identify whether they were hatchery fish or holdovers or wild fish, take scales off of them for age and growth analysis. I started in '69, at the yearly salary of \$4875. I don't know how I did that [laughter]. But Kelly had just

made a section of the Willowemoc a no-kill area. There was a no-kill on the Beaverkill before that. And one of the reasons for this survey was to get the reaction of the public to the no-kill stretch. In the beginning, he allowed bait fishing in the no-kill. And his reasoning was that a lot of local people fished for eels on the bottom with worms. And he did not want to deny them this opportunity to do that. I have to also mention that in those days in the department, people worked in fish and wildlife were also special game protectors. You had a badge and you worked under a conservation officer. Mostly during the deer hunting season, when they needed help, and we had cooperative hunting areas, where hunters came in, turned in their license, you gave them a permit to hunt, and they went out, hunted on large parcels like Ten Mile River in Sullivan County. And we would patrol. And if there were violations, we would get involved, and get a conservation officer to come out there. And the reason I mention that is because the first two years of the no-kill, we had lots of violations. And my interviews would be interrupted by people keeping fish. And Kelly got a little annoyed at me, because I think he thought I was hiding behind the trees, ready to pounce on people who were keeping fish. It wasn't like that at all. It was just so blatant, you could not ignore it. And I would then have to stop, take the fish from the person, and record information from his license, and tell him he would be contacted by a conservation officer, and pay a penalty. Kelly wanted me to look the other way. I mean, it's like somebody getting mugged. You know. You're not going to do something? And one particular day, he wanted me to not focus so much; and I wasn't focusing on people keeping fish, but I came around a bend at Sherwood Flats, and I looked down, and as I'm driving, and there's a guy nymphing with a very short line. And I see, flips the line upstream, and he's following it down; does it again. And I'm just watching him as I'm driving by. And all of a sudden, I see him set the hook, I see him lift the rod, fish, white belly, grabs the fish, unhooks it, looks upstream, looks downstream [laughter], in the vest. I can't ride by this! So I pulled over, crossed the highway bridge, come around behind him, and I came up behind him, and he's got TU patches on, and he looked like a very professional fisherman. And I walked up to him, and I said, I'd like to see your license. Because once I have his license, I know he can't run. So I have his license. And then with a very, I'm sure, satisfying smile on my face, I said to him, and now... I want to see the fish that you put in your vest. His complexion changes; expression changes; he gets this big crap-eating grin on his face, and I think, what the hell is he smiling about! He says, well you're not going to believe this. And he pulls out of his vest one of those wool hat bands, loaded with flies. And he said, that came floating down, and I hooked it [laughter] ... finders keepers! I mean, I would have sworn in court, and I've got good eyes... what else would you catch in the river and keep!

01:05:10

But, in 1972, the state of New York passed a huge environmental bond act, which had set aside a lot of money for public fishing rights. Public fishing rights are easements that the state of New York purchases from landowners along trout streams. They began the program in the 1930s, Mike? And for instance, the lower Beaverkill, all those many miles of public fishing, where as we speak are filled with fishermen, they were all bought in the '30s. And probably at \$300 a mile. The bond act, I can't remember the figure that was involved, but basically again, the state pays the landowner along the stream for the right for the public to fish. Not to picnic, swim, any other activity except fishing. And regional fisheries managers come up with a list, a preferred list of streams that get approved to buy fishing rights on. At that time, I don't think we owned any easements on the Esopus Creek. All the fishing here was done at the mercy of the landowners. Whether they wanted you to fish or not was their prerogative. In fisheries, the word went out that someone was needed to do this program. And let's face it, people in fisheries like to fondle fish. They like to be on streams and lakes. Nobody wanted to do this job. I mean, you would spend your time in the county clerk's office, looking up deeds and dusty old records and maps and ... so guess who got this job. And it meant interviewing landowners, meeting with landowners, and trying to convince them to sell an easement for the public to fish on their property. First of all, they hated the DEC. Secondly, they weren't crazy about the public coming on their land neither. But amount that was paid, often, I mean it all depended on the length of the property that they own; the more land they own, the more money was involved, but it was not an easy thing to tell people that you should be letting others fish on your property. For the first part I did best on, in agricultural areas with farmers, because farmers already let people fish, and most of them would think that, I might as well get paid for it, and would sell the fishing rights. But it wasn't easy. And then once you had a willing seller, the next thing that you had to tell him was, by the way, you're not going to get paid for at least a year. And maybe two. Or even three. And God, you used to pray that in that time, which gave him a lot of opportunity to change his mind, or his neighbors might say, no, don't do that, you hoped that he would be there at the end, and usually they were.

Judy: Was it a long time, a long process, like, you know, you'd knock on the door, and someone says, leave, or stay, or ...

01:09:40

Ed: Well, you know, winters in the Catskills are long. People get lonely. [laughter] I had people who would say, well... I don't know... maybe. Come back next week. [laughter] And I would come back and meet with them again and sit down at the kitchen table. And they would bitch about governor Rockefeller, and the DEC, and all these regulations. I had a farmer once tell me, next they're going to want me to put diapers on my cows. You know. Why do you issue so many doe permits (as if I personally)... but like, they don't see anybody else from the DEC.

I think some people, I remember a woman up in Big Indian, I must have went there 8 times. But I realized about the sixth visit, she was lonely. It was winter. There was nothing to do. I was entertainment for her. [laughter] But it certainly had rewards, too.

Judy: What was the most satisfying part of it?

01:10:50

Ed: When you closed on a particular piece, whether it was big, small, or whatever, because you knew that people could now fish this property forever. And I took great satisfaction of going out there and putting up the first public fishing area signs.

Judy: And your greatest accomplishment in your 40 years, you think?

Ed: Surviving [laughter]. No, I managed to acquire 54 miles [applause]...

Beth: What's happened since you've retired, Ed?

Ed: It's bad. I mean, I just saw up in Big Indian, a trailer parked where we had a fisherman parking area. And there's no sign of our parking area, but this guy has a, not a house trailer, but a pull-along trailer.

Jack: This is a purchased; we own it.

Ed: We own it. We own the land.

Jack: State of New York owns it.

Beth: Is it marked?

Ed: Not anymore. I mean, the maintenance has been let down dramatically. I mean, I did see a few PFR signs coming down from Big Indian. And that was satisfying. I mean, all those places, those parking areas, I bought. You know. And it's forever. It's long after I'm gone. But even on the Beavercill, Willowemoc today, the signs that tell people they have the right to fish there; they're not there. There's a parking area on the Little Beavercill. There isn't one shred of evidence that it's a fisherman parking area. No ID sign. No nothing.

Judy: And you used to do that; you used to post a lot of those signs.

Ed: The last person that did it was me. That was 6 years ago. I mean, I took a lot of pleasure in putting up the first signs. That's what I thought I should do. But

then for 40 years, I was the only one who put up those signs. It became, like, my permanent job. And now nobody does it. No one.

Mike: Maintaining that whole system is an extremely labor-intensive job. Across New York State there's over 1200 miles of these easements, and they're all in little 300-foot, 500-foot, 50-foot parcels, that somebody has to very carefully catalog and document where it begins and where it ends and where I can put the sign up and where the parking lot is. And I'm not trying to defend the fact that this whole system has kind of deteriorated over time, because when Ed was doing it, region 3 was right up to snuff all the time. But it is a very, very labor intensive process to keep that system up.

Ed: Well especially if I, alone, added 54 miles to – I think when I started in the region there was 23 miles that was purchased before that, going back to the '30s – but I'm sure every region has increased; parking facilities, foot paths, and fishing easements. And you know, our sign being down is not the worst thing in the world. But when they post it – take down our signs and post it – that really pisses me off.

Judy: Thank you, Ed.

Ed: I would just like to say one thing. I mean, I have lots of Wayne stories too, but... Wayne was a Red Sock fan. [laughter] I'm a Red Sock fan. And I would usually come in on Monday mornings, and he would review what I had done last week, and what I was going to do this week, and sometimes when he got a little testy or questioned me more than he thought I should about what I was doing, I would immediately say, how about those Red Socks! [laughter] It worked every single time [laughter].

Audience: I've got a question. Word has it that your favorite fly begins with an 'A.'

Ed: You can't say it.

Audience: I can say it; I can spell it, even! It's 'Adams,' and 1., is that true? And 2., why?

Ed: It is true... It is true. It's a grey-brown fly. Many, many mayflies are that coloration, especially this time of the year. I used to tie many different patterns, and then when I began working for the state I learned to identify hatchery fish and holdover fish and wild fish. And I started keeping a diary. I thought it would be kind of an important thing for the future that I could see in 1969 I caught 40% of the fish were wild, or whatever... I learned more about fish, and I wanted to document what I did. I guess that... and I, so when I would go fishing if I had a good day, and I had to record what I caught, you know, I'd have two on this,

and one on that, one over here, and one on a Elk Hair Caddis, and I got to the point where, you know, if it would be better if I could just catch them on one fly. I wouldn't have to stop every time ... all I had to do was remember how many fish I got. And it worked! [laughter]

Beth: What's the most fish you caught in a day, Ed?

01:17:45

Ed: 116. Wild brook trout. On the 4th of July. It was a stream that is open to the public. The state owns half of it. And we have PFR on the other mile of it. It's Fir Brook. There. [laughter] And I would fish it from time to time; it's like an Adirondack bog stream. It's got great meanders. I mean, two people can be fishing 100 feet away from one another, and yet it's a half a mile of stream, I mean... had a lot of little beaver dams, which really created good habitat for those fish. And I always would catch a lot of fish. But one day I just thought, I'm going to see how many brook trout I can catch. And in 6 hours, I think it was. But it's nice to know that there is still brook trout streams, or stream, out there, that you can do that type of thing.

Judy: Any other questions?

Audience: I really like the demonstration you did by Fred Farber. That was really good... and I understand you're New York State DEC, and you know, I didn't come here primed to ask you this question. But I understand that they just approved the Belleayre Mountain resort up in Pine Hill. And I noticed them, I noticed a landowner there bulldoze a road, widen a road up to his property back around 1999 or 2000. I used to hike up there behind Belleayre Mountain all the time. And I guess maybe somebody from the town went up with graders and bulldozers and widened the road and actually cut the uphill side of the road down to stumps, and even grind... it looked like they took a chainsaw to the rocks, too, and just leveled it. On the other side of the road was a little creek, and somebody sprinkled some hay down there to mitigate the erosion, which didn't do a thing. So now, what they want to do, is from what I understand, like, cut off the top of the mountain, okay. And that runs into the Esopus and the Neversink, right? ... East Branch Delaware.

[conversation clarifying the spot]

Jack: Yeah, we violated him for that, for the road up there. I noticed that too.

Audience: So what's going to happen with this development?

Jack: It's hard to say.

Audience: How can this go forward? I mean, besides New York City drinking water being affected, what about the fishing? I mean, this is exactly what's going to happen to the streams below that construction site for years and years and years. And then with all the parking that they have up there, you'll have runoff from the parking, and then the oil from the cars, and the gas from the cars. I don't understand.

Walt: There's a thing called politics. And money. And that's it. Those two words. That's how it happens.

Judy: You know, it's one of those opportunities for people who care and are concerned, to write letters and make phone calls. And I know it sounds like an old saw, but it's true. And ...

Audience: I've been writing for years.

Judy: And keep it up, and get your friends and neighbors; make copies of the letter and have people send it out and sign it. I know that there have been times when as few as three or four letters or phone calls would turn someone's head. I remember once, and I have to say that in my brief year of working for the DEC, Mike Gann was the fisheries manager, and had the utmost respect for Mike. He was diligent, he was orderly, he was organized, and he just did the job so well. And I was sent to do a creel census... it was a reverse study on the west branch of the Croton. It was a reverse size limit. And the west branch of the Croton was impounded on both ends by a reservoir. And the thought was that you could keep five fish less than 10 inches. I think this is correct. My memory could be faulty. But you could not keep any fish over 10 inches in length. So here I am with my little clipboard walking up and down the stream interviewing people. And I come across this large man, and I was probably 21 years old at the time, and it looked like I was about 14. And he had a basket full of fish. And I asked him where he caught the fish. And he said, here. And he said he was keeping 5 or however many. And I said, I'm sorry but there's a reverse size limit, and your fish are over size. Well, he had a ruler that was broken off at 7 inches. And he goes, oh, no, they're not. I've measured every one of them. And I said, I'm really sorry sir, but I'm going to have to take your information and I'm going to have to turn this in. Well, he flashed a badge and said that he was a policeman or, you know, so I'm shaking in my boots and apologizing, but you know, this is my job. So I let Mike know, or maybe I didn't let Mike know. I told Ed. Anyway, I get a phone call from Mike a day or so later, and he sounded annoyed, and he said, I have a man here in my office that told me that he was harassed on the stream for keeping oversize fish, and he even brought his ruler and told me that he measured every fish and that you were harassing him. And I said, his ruler was broken off at 7 inches. And all of a sudden Mike said, oh, really? And you know, it was one of those things where one person stepping forward can have an

affect on anything. This was just someone complaining about an overaggressive DEC person, but certainly a letter, phone call, couple letters, couple phone calls about something as important as damage to the stream...

01:25:15

Mike: I don't remember that incident, Judy, but the person you ran into must have been a New York City watershed inspector.

Judy: Yes, he definitely had a...

Jack: With regard to the Belleayre project, though, my suggestion is that you and whoever else you can muster be very diligent when they're doing the construction. And if you see violations, water quality violations or excursions from the plans and permits, call, write, scream, yell, continue.

Audience: They're not going to let you up there to see it. I mean, I was walking down Vega Road the other day, and there's a rehab of a beautiful building with some very skilled painters and carpenters there. And I'm walking down and they're taking their – I don't know what it was – if it was turpentine or just latex wash, and just dumping it in the stream next to the house. So you're talking about a big project; they're not going to let you up there. You're not going to see it.

Jack: You know, stuff flows downhill. And if there are impacts down... but don't let up. I would tell you from experience, don't let up. If you see a violation, keep calling, keep writing, and stay after it, because that's going to be your only recourse at this point. There is a permit issued, and I don't think stopping the project is going to happen. That's an opinion. I'm not employed anymore. But...

Judy: An iPhone with a camera? Somebody throwing something in the stream. A picture's worth a thousand words. Could be effective, too.

Beth: Can we move on to Bill Kelly, just touch on Bill Kelly a little bit before we ...

Mike: How many more hours do we have?

Beth: Well, we don't have too much more time, so, we're going to, I'd like to touch on the ... couple of things. A few Bill Kelly stories, and the sucker drive story. Do you want to do that first?

01:25:25

Walt: Yeah, I missed the part... I mentioned that Wayne, you know, embraced the older techniques, but also jumped ahead with modern stuff. And while I was manager, and Wayne was still in the region, it was before he came down here to be manager, he had... we had some great conservation officers. The state has great conservation officers, but we had one in particular in region 4. And I guess somehow Wayne found out about a thing called sucker gigging. And a lot of people don't know what that is, but it was an old winter tradition, and what it involved, and you can Google this right now on the internet and see this thing, and it's really fascinating to watch, but what it involves, and I'll open those things up later on – they look like gaffs – they're hooks that go up this way, and you get a bunch of people out on the ice when the ice is safe to walk on, on a creek that has a lot of white suckers in the wintertime, and you drill a series of holes across the creek. And you have people – careful, Beth, that one's really sharp – and you drill these holes, and so you have people at each hole looking down and watching, and behind them you have a bunch of guys walking downstream thumping on the ice with a log or something, making a lot of noise and driving the suckers, and as they come over your rig there, your gig – one of them's busted off there; they were in a chicken coop; it's not recommended that you sharpen them with chicken ...

Beth: They're very small. I mean what is the possibility of hooking a fish through a hole in the ice with one of these things?

01:29:20

Walt: It's pretty good. If you watch that – seriously, Google it – it's really fun to watch. But, so as the suckers come down, you just... when they come over those hooks, you just lift them out, and the one – Wayne did this, and I don't know, I never asked him – he borrowed that one, the workable one there, with the real sharp pins on it – and he took it out and used it, probably on one of the branches of the Delaware one winter – and I never asked him how well he did. But when I watched it on the internet, the guys were, they had suckers all around them on the ice, you could see them lifting, and then later on they had like, a barbecue out there, and they're barbecuing these suckers.

Beth: How did they drive them down?

Walt: They just walk down the ice with, you know, with a log or something, with a heavy branch, and just knock on the ice, and it just moves the suckers down. And I mean, they have a whole bunch of them around here, it's kind of; I didn't see any beer, but I think beer is absolutely essential [laughter] when ... and cards. After the barbecue.

Beth: Okay, so in the newspaper release I promised that people would understand the difference between Albany beef and Delaware beef.

Walt: Albany beef I think is sturgeon, right? Yeah, Albany beef is sturgeon. They used to get Atlantic sturgeon and use them for food, and of course then they used them for caviar. They also used sturgeon for a thing called eisenglass – swim bladders – was a substitute before plastic or glass. It's clear, and sturgeon get really big, so they have a big swim bladder, so you get this big balloon of clear stuff, and you can put it in your window [laughs] ...

Beth: It was so numerous that they stacked them like cord wood and they called it Albany beef.

Walt: So how'd they catch them, Beth, and when?

Beth: Nevermind, we're not going there [laughter] but, Ed ... did you tell me that they called suckers Delaware beef?

Ed: It could have been. It makes sense. That could have been the Delaware beef...

[conversation; laughter]

Beth: Let's go on to Bill Kelly quickly.

Judy: Bill Kelly, William H. Kelly III was also known as Catskill Bill. But many of us who worked with him, and we all had the pleasure of working with him, called him just "Kelly," with the greatest of affection, as most everyone loved Kelly. He loved nature, and all things natural. He never met a fish he didn't like. [laughter] He was an avid fisherman from the tender age of 5, and spent 27 years with the Conservation Department and region 3 in New Paltz. He was known for his quirky personality, boisterous laugh, and demonstrative speech and actions [laughter] and he would change his voice and he would... oh my goodness, there was nobody like Kelly. Two of his favorite sayings were, 'as I live and breathe,' and 'don't throw out the baby with the bathwater.' [laughter] He was passionate about fish, and he loved learning. Kelly was a lover of music and literature and the arts. He was an innovator. He learned how to smoke fish, and how to raise angelfish, which by the way was so successful he wound up stocking probably all of the tropical fish stores in a three-county area. He sought to establish various fisheries during his career. And he was never seen fishing without his signature floppy red hat.

Ed: Once he lost it on the Beaverkill, it fell off his head, and a guy fishing miles below him found it. He knew it was Kelly's! [laughter]

Judy: I'm sure we can each share a Kelly story. Who would like to start?

01:33:40

Mike: I'll start. Because when I got the manager's job in New Paltz, I had the immediate and dubious responsibility of trying to supervise Bill. [laughter] Bill was pretty much a free agent, as those of us who worked with him know. And ...

Judy: Polar opposites.

Mike: He would come into the office late many mornings, and I would chastise him about that, but the last straw was when he came in late, and he'd come into my office and he says, geez, Mike, he says, I'm sorry I'm late this morning. But I'm going to have to make up for it by leaving early [laughter] because the shad are in the Delaware and they just won't wait, and I've got to get over there, and so and so forth. He was a character. He was a wonderful guy. He was a fantastic fisherman. I mean, you could learn a lot standing next to Bill, and I did learn a lot watching him fish. Very, very entertaining, funny guy. He favored smoking a corn cob pipe, and back in those days you could smoke in the office. Bill would get that pipe going, and he'd get all excited about some issue, and the sparks would be flying out of the pipe, and he'd have to answer the phone, and he'd stick the pipe in his jacket pocket, and the next thing his pocket would be smoldering [laughter] because it was on fire! Or he'd knock the ashes out into the wastebasket and then that would go up [laughter].

Ed: Well, once somebody said, something's burning! Oh, my God, it's Kelly [laughter].

Mike: Well, anyway, we had our moments, Bill and I, for sure, and I guess I'll pass on some story opportunities for others.

Ed: Well, Kelly's big project was stocking salmon in the Neversink Reservoir. And I forgot where he got the fry from... Adirondacks? I know I had to go up to Blue Mountain Lake and pick up smelt eggs, which he also put into tributaries of the reservoir for food for the salmon. And I think he had been stocking maybe two, three years, and began netting the reservoir to see, hopefully, the results of his great experiment. And the first two years he didn't catch anything. But one day, he came into the office (late) [laughter]; somebody told Kelly, someone brought in a salmon, and it's down in the freezer in the fish lab. Remember that, Mike?

Mike: Yes, I do.

Ed: Were you there?

Jack: Yeah [laughter].

Ed: Kelly, all excited, his heart must have been racing, runs downstairs, opens the freezer, and here is a can of Bumblebee [laughter]. With a handmade label that says Neversink Salmon [laughter]. Was he pissed [laughter]!

Walt: Who did it? When did you do that, Ed?

Ed: I don't know. No, I would have been afraid he'd have a heart attack. But Judy was there when he finally finally did catch a fish.

Judy: I was. It was a really cold day, probably in early March, and it was dark and raining and freezing. And we were out in a boat on the Neversink with his brother-in-law, I guess, who he brought along. And he had a big cooler. And we're rowing around. We went to retrieve the gill nets. And we're pulling in these nets and freezing, and all of a sudden, Kelly's whole demeanor changes. And he goes, 'as I live an breathe!' [laughter] Do I see a silver fish?? I'm like, yeah! Does it have x-marks on the side? It does! And is there a forked tail? Yes! Hallelujah! And he dives under the bottom of the boat, pulls open this cooler, which is stocked with ice cold beer, and we celebrated our first salmon on the reservoir. [applause]

01:38:55

Jack: After we established that there was salmon, we would have to survey... electro-fish continually to keep looking for the salmon. And that involved, of course, loading up everything. Artie Falk did a great job. He'd have the trucks ready, the shocking equipment, the generators. And that's driving up to Sullivan county, getting Bill (who was late), and doing stream surveys. So I learned after two or three that, don't plan on doing anything the next day, or don't plan on coming home! Because I learned how to drink Bellows Partners Choice Manhattans with Wayne and Bill, and eventually I had to tell my wife when we went up to Sullivan County, to survey, uh... don't worry about not coming home tonight; we'd have to sleep in the car, because we couldn't drive home. And that was, that went on pretty well. I mean, so we'd end up in his little cabin up on the Neversink – coincidentally he has a house on the Neversink once the salmon got established – and we'd have smoked shad and Bellows Partners Choice Manhattans, until God know what time in the morning. Then we'd have to sleep on his living room floor or in the car; survey the next day!

01:40:25

Ed: Kelly was very persistent on things. I remember fishing the Delaware with him at Bouchoux Brook, it was like five of us. One was one of his kids, Joe Horak, maybe Doc Fried was with us. And were there for the evening rise and probably got there like 7, and fished 'til dark. And while we were there, we all caught fish. Everybody would have a fish on, and the reels screaming; except

Kelly. Kelly was insistent that you could catch these fish on wet flies. I mean, they were rising like crazy. But he was going to prove to us that you could catch them on wet – even his kid was catching them one after another – it got pitch black! We were on our way out, and I hear him yell, see?? I told you! [laughter] You can catch them on wet flies.

Walt: But only in the dark [laughter]. Oh wow!

Judy: Any region 4 stories of Kelly?

Walt: I didn't know Bill that well. I took him out one time. We fished the Hudson together. But I do know before he got to the region, he worked, he was part of a fish research program down at the... DeBruce. And he worked with a guy, he worked with a guy, his boss was Howard Loeb, and he also worked with a guy who became our regional conservation officer, Norm Gallman. But anyway, when that disbanded, when Bill got to the region, to region 3, that research unit, the boss went to Albany, but a couple of the researchers came up to region 4, and they brought their research project with them. And Beth's going to share a little bit about some of the research they did. But one ... you do the good part, I'll do one part of it. Their research involved marking fish and also control of fish. Particularly controlling carp. But, and I know later on they did some stuff that I'm sure Bill was involved in. They did cold brands on fish [using a branding iron cooled with liquid nitrogen]; they were injecting colored liquid latex as a marker; they did a bunch of stuff like that. But anyway, when the guy moved up to our region, and the Stamford office, he brought all these chemicals and stuff up there. So we had a cage down in the basement, you know, with all these chemicals. And we had, they were also responsible for working on big reclamations in the state, statewide reclamations. And when we used rotenone, you detoxify rotenone with a chemical called potassium permanganate. It's a purple crystalline thing. And it's an oxidizing agent. And you can stop the toxic effects of rotenone with this stuff. So we had barrels of this stuff in the basement. And I was worried about it. I'm not very good with chemistry and stuff. But being as it was an oxidizing agent, I wanted it out. I thought it was a fire hazard. And we had people coming through. But there was this carboy in this wooden container and it was a carboy, it's a big brown glass jug... with a ground glass stopper, and it's suspended in this wooden box by four springs, and the label was all ... you couldn't read the label, and it's containing this yellow fluid, and it's locked in a cage. So I'm walking with ... we had a really good technician, we're going through there and we're deciding what has to be taken out... all these bad chemicals and stuff. And we're looking at it, and we're holding it up, and all this kind of stuff. And there was some crystals at the top. And it's full of yellow, this yellow fluid. And we're joking somebody, you know, peed in this thing. It's 5 gallons of urine. Well, so we're out one day working, and this crew came in to get all these bad chemicals out of the building, and Fred and I, the same technician, we come back, and the building's vacated! And

there's nobody there. And I came to find out that this stuff – I don't know if anyone knows chemistry here – and I had used this stuff at school to mark some cottontail bunnies when we were doing some – it's called picric acid. It's a really, really bad explosive, especially when it's crystallized at the stopper! And I should have known; I mean, I'd seen pictures of when they move nitroglycerine, it's in a, they have this little jug, and it's suspended on... but I don't know whether ... and I'm sure Bill was involved in this, I don't know whether they were using it to mark fish, or whether they were going to blow up the carp with it [laughs] but anyway they got it out of there and fortunately Walt didn't blow up the village of Stamford. Anyway...

01:45:18

Beth: Well, in the course of looking up information about Bill Kelly and so forth, I came upon something which I've been trying to get to the bottom of this subject. It had to do with a research project, again to control carp, using LSD [laughter] that Howard Loeb and Bill Kelly did.

Ed: I don't know a whole lot about it, but I remember Kelly telling me it made the carp swim on the surface backwards [laughter].

Beth: This was in the '60s before LSD was illegal.

Ed: And I'm sure Kelly tried... [laughter] ...

Beth: And they were trying to find; it was before electro-fishing was really developed...

Ed: It probably was true, because I remember him telling me of an incident up in, there are some canals near Albany... and they were trying to get rid of fish in there by netting; and he said, carp were very smart. If one jumped out of the net, they all jumped out of the net. So it probably was, it was a tie-in with the LSD...

Beth: So apparently they used LSD to try to control carp, all the fish floated to the surface, and unlike rotenone, which, as you know, kills them all, this way they could just take the carp out and everybody else came back to life and lived happily ever after! I found a story, this was published in the 1964 issue of Sports Illustrated. And it is on the internet. You can read a little more about Howard Loeb, and Bill Kelly. And they were contacted by Dr. Harold Abramson, director of psychiatric research, South Oaks Psychiatric Hospital, in Amityville, New York, who chanced to read of Loeb's work on carp poisons. And he offered the suggestion to them that they use LSD 25. They apparently did some experiments using LSD on fish, and wrote it up as a scientific paper, and it was published by DEC.

Judy: Just to add one sentence to that, that appeared in the article, that I thought was fascinating – it goes on to say, if LSD could work on carp and other fish, the opportunities were unlimited for conservation authorities and sportsmen. [laughter]

Mike: You know, it was rumored that while Bill and Howard were engaged in this research up at Camp DeBruce, that they possessed the single largest stockpile of LSD in North America. They had so much of it that if you injected all of it into the New York City water supply, it would have sent everyone in Greater Manhattan on a trip for the rest of their ... [laughter].

01:48:45

Ed: Kelly didn't really need LSD, though. [laughter] He would hunt some sort of mushroom and eat it, and it would, he'd lose depth perception. I mean, that was his cup, he'd be reaching over here. He thought it was great! [laughter] He'd bring it to the office.

Jack: He was an expert on mushrooms [laughter]. No, this is ... remember? The hospitals used to call... yeah! Hospitals used to call. They'd have some kid in there, somebody wiggling out, and they would call Bill and describe the mushroom, and you know, I'd hate to listen to the phone conversation, but you couldn't help it ... and he knew by the description of what the mushroom was and what the effects were, and if there was any way... was it poisonous? Was he going to die? Or just have a good, couple good hours? But he, yeah, he was an expert...

Ed: Probably tried 'em all.

Jack: He knew.

Judy: Well, any other questions or comments before we adjourn to the angling library?

Beth: I'd like to thank you all for coming ... [applause] ... thank you all, and we have a copy of Ed's new book that he signed for the library. It will be on the shelf soon. So thank you.