

People of the Sturgeon: Wisconsin's Love Affair with an Ancient Fish
Ken Corbett Oral History
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Interviewer: RB – Ron Bruch
Transcriber: NCC

Ken Corbett: For two years.

Ron Bruch: Is that right?

KC: He was bleeding internally. They didn't know it until this happened. They've been doing it for years, kind of allergic to aspirin.

RB: Well, it is May 27th, right?

KC: Yes.

RB: 2008, and this is our second interview with Ken Corbett. So, already fill up two tapes in the first interview, and there is a lot more good stuff.

KC: [laughter] Yes. It's kind of dealing with a memory issue now.

RB: Well, hey, there is a lot to remember. [laughter]

KC: Yes, a lot of fun stuff.

Kathleen Schmitt Kline: So, who was the warden before you? Who did you replace when you came in?

RB: When you were at Clinton, Ohio.

KC: I was the first warden there.

KSK: Oh, really.

KC: But the ones before me, going back about two or three, his name was O.K. Johnson. His real name was Ordis Kenneth, everybody called him O.K. I always call them Ordis Kenneth because he kind of made him mad.

RB: [laughter]

KC: But he was a tremendous guy.

RB: Because he was in (Chilo?), right?

KC: Yes. He was in (Chilo?), right. Then prior to him was a guy by the name of – I probably shouldn't mention names because some of this could be debatable as far as their relatives. But he was one of the most crooked state employees probably on the payroll.

RB: Really? Was he on (Chilo?) too?

KC: Yes. He'd authorized people who wandered over. This is back before the Depression even.

This is back in World War I. They were still logging. They just kind of finished up logging at central northern part of the state. Some of the guys raising families were pulling deadheads out of the river, right.

RB: Logs that gets stuck in the river when they make the river drive. Every company has a stamp on the end of the log. Then when they get them down here, they would sort them all from one company to another.

KC: Correct, right here in Oshkosh.

RB: Right in Oshkosh.

KC: They'd float them down the wall from the [inaudible].

RB: But some that would get stuck in the river, they get buried in the water or whatever.

KC: Sink, yes.

KSK: That's a deadhead.

KC: Yes. They call them deadhead. So, the one guy that was doing it when I was still there made a flatbed or a flat bottom, big, old wooden boat with a homemade crane on it. He was still doing it in the summer. They do it mainly in the summer when the water level was down, and they could see them. But part of that was back when the fur industry was still strong. Then along the river system, the sturgeon was more valuable than walleyes. So, they did a lot of spearing and trapping, but they didn't make too much money on that. So, it would be mainly picking up the dead heads and then the sturgeon that's what kept a lot of families going. But O.K. replaced this guy. I just happen to remember his girlfriend – you got to be at the candle enough on him to fire him.

RB: What was his name, Ken? Do you remember?

KC: Yes.

KSK: He is not going to tell you. [laughter]

KC: He's very infamous.

KSK: I have read some stories about a man named Boomer Johnson, I think.

KC: Oh, yes.

KSK: It is not that guy?

KC: No. His girlfriend – he got to be a barber at (Chilo?).

RB: Oh, really?

KC: So, one day, just for the hell of it, I went out to get a haircut. His girlfriend was one of – the most infamous – the guy that was shot. FBI shot him down in Chicago.

RB: Johnny Dillinger?

KC: Dillinger, yes. One of his girlfriends, that's who he finally was living with up there.

RB: Oh my gosh.

KC: She was at half breed squaw.

RB: Wow.

KC: Anyway, he was living up there with her. That's how we got to talk to him. But reason I really wanted to meet him. I heard so many stories from these old guys live along the river. So, I went up and talked to him. He didn't really want to talk about his days on the state payroll. But he was also in that illegal fur trade too, but they had a they had a guy worse than him. He was stationed up in the northwestern part of the state. The guy I trained under is the crookedest guy they had on the payroll.

RB: Really? The one from Chilo?

KC: No.

RB: Oh, the one from the northwest?

KC: Northwest.

RB: Wow. [laughter]

KC: He was so bad. This is back in prohibition days that the outlaws from Chicago didn't even mess with him. He was too mean.

RB: Really?

KC: He controlled the whole illegal booze in the northern and northwestern part of the state.

RB: Wow.

KSK: And he was a warden?

KC: He was on the state payroll. He controlled all the illegal fur and booze. This guy – I don't know if I told you about him last.

RB: No, I do not think so.

KC: The guy I trained under had a report to this guy the first day of his career, and he stopped. The warden up there told him to stop at his house and his wife would tell him where he's at. So, he went to the house and his wife said, "Well, he's out in the brush," and she gave them the directions. So, he had to hide his car. The warden told him to hide his car when he got there. So, we hid it. He was walking down this long dead-end driveway, and all at once, he heard some shots. He kind of ducked down. So, he kind of thought that was a big gun battle. So, he snuck up and heard this warden was shooting at this shack. It was a warden shooting at the shack.

RB: Oh, my god.

KC: He saw him, he said, "Get an eye on it." So, he snuck up there and here – this developed afterwards. That warden was suspected of killing a guy in a gas station, which he ran because he wasn't getting his kickback from the illegal fur industry. So, he shot him.

RB: Oh my gosh.

KC: They suspect him of other stuff too, really bad stuff. You could write a book about it. The guy was still living about five years ago. He was almost 100 years old.

KSK: Oh, wow.

RB: Really? Wow. Now, at that time, there were not that many wardens in the state?

KC: No.

RB: I mean half a dozen maybe.

KC: First, I talked to one that was back before the cars too. They didn't have many cars. So, they ride the trains. They spent a lot of time riding trains. Then one of the guys I trained under, they issued the motorcycles one time. They call them all down in Madison, issued the motorcycles. They said half of them cracked up before they got – [laughter] So, that was a bad deal. But O.K. was just a hell of a guy. He's probably one of the most honest guys I've ever met. We used to have to pick up our own turtles. They don't do that anymore. That was part of the job. Then when O.K. got up there, well, two of the old wardens they worked under here in Oshkosh also had part of Shiocton. I mean, they had that area. One of them was (Doc Chase?).

RB: (Doc Chase?), yes.

KC: He said – and O.K. told me too – that they couldn't make a drag. They had catches where they unload the boats from the snag lines. They couldn't go very far. So, they'd hide them, and it always sink the boat.

RB: Yes, so many slides.

KC: Yes. Because each one had a lot of lead weights. Each line probably weighed maybe 50, 75 pounds.

RB: Wow.

KSK: Say hundreds of hooks.

KC: Yes. If it was a double line, a lot of times on the way up, the [inaudible] on the bottom fighting the current on this scenario. But when they come back, they're on top. Most of them are on top, they're kind of floating back. So, they put a double line. In case it was winter season, so they get the ones going up and then the ones going back. So, if you ran into those, you probably had 100 pounds of line and weights and stuff. So, they had to unload them all the time.

RB: There are probably still some piles out. [laughter]

KC: Oh, yes. They wouldn't know that. You bet they wouldn't know that. But I had mentioned the last time my dad was interested in buying a farm up north of Shiocton. It was a little higher priced because on a sturgeon bend, a real good sturgeon bend. So, some of the farms may be better. It does at the most maybe were a little more pricey because of its location.

RB: Do you remember exactly where that bend was, Ken?

KC: I think it was just above the old [inaudible] dump, in that area. Because I was pretty young, but I think it was in that area.

RB: Sure. By the landing up there.

KC: Yes, up in that area. Then I think the most productive snag line area was at the cemetery.

RB: Really? That sharp bend area right there.

KC: Yes, that big, sharp bend. The other one is where I caught the last good commercial sturgeon fisherman, which was up by [inaudible] north of (Lehman?). The reason they liked that one, it had a real high bank, and it had a big border river. The river came back within about two 300 yards of itself. So, the guy had the high bank upstream because signal where they had the lines. The night we caught one of the major ones, we'd use the shotgun. Just about scared the living hell out of all these kind of a rainy – you're all wet and not very happy, 25 feet off the shore from us. No. So, by the time we got down there –

RB: Did he know you were there?

KC: What they heard is dragging.

RB: Is that right?

KC: That was the time we had dragged that part of the river three times. They sat and

[inaudible] were there all day getting smashed. They said, "I'm bored tonight. They've been through here twice, so I'm going to drag this again tonight." So, we dragged it again. I don't know what made me do it, but we did it. They had two lines. They had a double line up there. Then (Gabby Paul?), who was a hell of a guy, he was a real rich farmer. He was the lookout and then the guy that had the longest conservation arrest record, plus another guy running the lines.

RB: Wow.

KC: Then when they fired, I jumped out of the boat. The guy that was with me kept on dragging but they had two fence posts tied on the end of this sag line. So, they just cut the line and then kind of float the line in the current so when we went by, it wouldn't be there. But we found it, actually. We found over there it's set up and everything.

RB: Did you catch them, or they were –

KC: Yes, we caught them. Gabby, I chased him. He used to work in the woods in the summertime or in the wintertime. He had a tree fall across his foot. So, he couldn't run very fast.

RB: [laughter]

KSK: So, you caught him? [laughter]

KC: Yes. So, he crawled under a brush panel over the water. So, I'm running along there. I didn't hear anything. So, I started looking around here, his feet sticking out of the brush. I knew who it was. I said, "Gabby, what the hell are you doing under there?" He used to laugh all the time. "Oh my god." "What do you run for?" "Well, I had too many (mono lines?) used for [inaudible]." But he had about six or eight of those out. We still hadn't found this snag line. He says, "I had too many (mono lines?) Put me under arrest for fishing with too many lines." So, we were at an area there where three counties come together, Outagamie, Waupac, Juneau. So, I threw him in the car. This is after we do a lot of thrashing around and the guy down here fall in the lines. But that guy ran away, we didn't get in until later. The other two guys. But anyway, I said, "Gabby, I got to put you up in the slammer." He thought I was going to take him to Outagamie County. But I took him off the Juneau and we locked him up in the bullpen where all the Indians, all the drunken Indians were. It was on his on a Friday night. So, he had to spend all weekend with the drunken Indians. He's never forgiven me for that.

RB: [laughter]

KSK: He is mad.

KC: I pinched him three or four times, but he's never forgiven me for that.

RB; [laughter]

KC: For spending all weekend with [inaudible]. So, the other two guys driving out of there got

stuck. The guy that owned the farm was in the medical profession. His daughter was revisor of statutes. She was an attorney. He gets part of the sturgeon and walleyes. He had a real good walleye trapping area there. So, anyway, I used his tractor that's about 2:30 a.m., 3:00 a.m. by that time when the rain ended. He had a beautiful – I think he had 160 acres here. I don't know who owns it now but, god, it's just a beautiful area. So, I cranked up one of his tractors and pulled myself out. Gabby locked them up, got home. I got back there was 9:00 a.m. I'm sitting there having a cup of coffee and breakfast and phone rings and here, is this professional man on the phone. He said, "Hey, Ken. I hear you had a little problem down there last night." "Yes, I did." "I see you using one of my tractors." "Yes. I got myself pulled out." "Well, I call the Ford garage, he tore the transmission out of that thing." I called a Ford garage and they said it's going to crack where I was." And, you know, the state owes me three, whatever it was. I said, "Well, Doc. I use the [inaudible]."

RB: Oh, no kidding. This was [inaudible].

KC: Yes. He had been charged with stealing his own gold while he was in practice. His daughter is revisor of statutes. They had arrested him for shining. He was so huge. He always had a white shirt on. He put a toll when he gets in his jeep, because the steering wheel, his belly would kind of overflow on the steering wheel. So, he'd wear a chute shirts out. So, he always had a toll on that.

RB: Oh, for crying out loud.

KC: But the night I caught him, he had a fifteen, sixteen-year-old kid with him that would retrieve the game and do all the dirty work and all. So, when I stopped him – I don't know if you know by road how to get back down in there, but you had some old buildings or long county trunk after them.

RB: Yes. Is that south of (Lehman?) or north of (Lehman?)?

KC: North of (Lehman?).

RB: North of (Lehman?).

KC: About 2 miles, about a mile and a half maybe. By road, it's about 3.

RB: On the west side of the river.

KC: Yes. But anyway, I saw him shining on it.

RB: Were they called [inaudible]?

KC: There's just a big cut. There's a high bank there. There used to be a rule no truck body there. Then there's a nice cut that goes back up.

RB: Yes. The walleye is going to –

KC: Yes. He has the property logged off. He gave you gave a guy permission to trap and only he got after fish. We found twenty-six fish traps up in there. The guy had leads, just like we set them out here. You'd have chicken wire leads going into the traps. But, you know, it takes a pretty good year to get the walleyes up in there. Because a lot of times there isn't enough water. Well, they had the whole thing trapped with leads. That's the only one I've seen because the damn leads would fill up with leaves and sticks and stuff. The current would knock them down. So, they had they had to really work on them and keep them cleaned up and everything.

RB: We are going off Shiocton today to interview some other people.

KC: Did you get the chance to talk to Haze?

RB: We are talking to Haze today. We are taking to Russell Collar.

KC: Oh, yes. They are the Collar boys.

RB: Yes. Then we are going to try to set up an interview with Gerald Van Stratten. I am sure you probably know all those guys.

KC: I know the last names, but I don't remember them. I could have been working on their dads.

RB: Yes.

KC: How old are they?

RB: Well, Gerald ran the gas station. Gerald Van Stratten owns the gas station.

KC: Yes. How old is he?

RB: Oh, he is probably your age.

KC: Yes, I knew him.

RB: Russell Collar is older. He is older. He supposedly is the one that really taught everybody how to do it. I talked to Ace van Stratten this morning.

KC: Harold?

RB: Wayne.

KC: The Van Strattens go back generations. One day I was flying and there's the black slew. I noticed this boat way the hell back in the slew. They shouldn't have been there. So, I looked around a little bit and I saw a little Gulliver[inaudible]. I didn't want to get too close to him because at that time, my airplane had stars under the wings.

RB: Yes. So, they knew.

KC: Yes, but they do. But I act as though I didn't see them. So, they got the hell out of there. I called the local warden who at that time wasn't really a good warden. His dad was the warden at [inaudible] called (Vanderbloemen?). This was his son. A real different guy but extremely hard worker. Well, prior to this, the warden there was – I got to remember his name. A real, goofy bastard but hard working. Just really a hell of a warden. He found traps there, Van Stratten traps. When they came, you could hear them paddling into the marsh. He sank his skiff and laid in the water. I mean, you talk about above and beyond. He laid in a skiff, sunken and caught up.

RB: Wow.

KC: I'll think of his name. But anyway, this Van Stratten was the County Secretary of Education – what's the proper term?

RB: For Outagamie County?

KC: Yes, for Outagamie County, and his brother. So, the word went out there. See, I really didn't have a good information that there were traps out there. But he went and them and then laid out and caught them.

RB: I mean, back then, it was almost people figured it was a birthright really to find the trap.

KC: Sure, yes.

RB: Walleyes or snakes, sturgeon or whatever.

KC: Of course.

RB: Did they use this mostly for sustenance?

KC: I'd say the biggest share did, but a lot would sell it. They have brothers-in-law or neighbors or stuff that they'd sold.

RB: Did they process the caviar?

KC: Yes.

RB: They did?

KC: Yes.

RB: So, they actually processed up here?

KC: That's what I forgot to mention. O.K. Johnson, he and his wife would process this caviar

and sell it for the state.

RB: Oh, really?

KSK: The one they saved?

RB: Fish that were confiscated.

KC: Right. Stuff that was on the snag lines. He and his wife actually process that.

KSK: Who would they sell it to?

KC: To anybody.

[talking simultaneously]

RB: I mean, you can still to this day buy like confiscated deer or confiscated fish.

KC: Sure. You can sell a deer or turtles and different illegal stuff. I sold a lot of deer and walleyes and sturgeon. But O.K., instead of selling it raw –

RB: He processes it.

KC: – he processes it.

RB: Really?

KC: Just a hell of a guy.

RB: That is something.

KC: Yes.

KSK: The people who lived down the river, do they ever get mad thinking about the people living down here on the lake? Did they kind of feel like well, if they get the spear them at the lake, then –

KC: There was a hook and line season up there that they didn't know about that. Was it still in effect?

RB: No. It ended in 1959.

KC: Yes. The real sharp ones knew about it. So, they try and [inaudible] thinking they got this book in line.

RB: Yes. It was a fall season.

KC: Right. But most people didn't even realize this.

RB: It was it was a strange season because it went into effect in 1932. But then it flip flopped around from one county to another. It would be on one county and off in another. Then it would be on in a different one.

KC: Then they just say, you'd run out, "Oh, that's a hackle back."

RB: Oh, yes. It is a different timing.

KC: They'd try and steer you over to that part of it. So, there aren't any hackle backs, were there in the river?

RB: No.

KC: So, we'd have to go fight them on that.

RB: Really? So, you would have to fight them on that then? In court?

KC: Yes. They go to court. "Let's hackle back." They didn't have a separate tag, did they for hackle backs?

RB: No.

KC: We had a girl, her name was Charlotte Brown. She worked for the state crime lab. She's the one that developed the ability to check blood specimens, whether it's sturgeon deer, human, whatever it is. She developed that system. I think they perfected that. I had her on two of my trials and she was really a sharpie. She'd say, "Well, I can become more definitive and more positive depending on the defense attorney." If you really start putting his thumb on her, [inaudible]. If you kept pushing her, she was truly intelligent.

RB: Did you have some good sturgeon trials?

KC: Yes. One of which happened involves Charlotte on a land that one of our board members owned. He wasn't a board member at that time but owns this area. That island is just below the 22 bridge at Shawano. He owns that farm on eastside road. They like to snag line that area between the island and the shore.

RB: Yes, it's shallow.

KC: Yes. There's a lot of current there.

RB: A lot of current, yes .

KC: So, anyway this one guy who was really notorious, he'd fish. He liked to [inaudible] and

roll the pillar down. They really like that. Then the [inaudible] rips down through here. Well, he had a couple of lines over there in the wolf. I got a complaint on it. I started checking in. There was an old house there. Had been a log house and they kind of converted it but when I checked the house, they already had the lines out. So, I checked the house I found a little piece of hide, maybe about four inches in diameter. I found an old lady laying in there. She was in her late 80s. They had been a rabbit coop. She was laying in this drag rabbit droppings.

RB: A woman?

KC: An old lady – had a pile of eggs and this belong to future board member of ours, this area, this property. He was kind of letting this guy use it. This guy had his mother in there.

RB: For crying out loud. [laughter]

KC: She was within a couple of days of –

RB: Passing away?

KC: Yes. So, I got the health department out there and they got her out. She lived – they got her back. But anyway, I got this piece of hide then and called Charlotte and ask her if she could do anything with it. "Yes," she says. "Send it down." So, I took it down there. Then this guy that owned the farm was also an attorney. He was one of the very few attorneys at that time to have taken a game law cases because he couldn't make much money. There wasn't much money involved in it. So, he was going to fight it. [laughter] Charlotte could pin it down so well that he decided to plead the guy guilty.

RB: Really?

KC: He got to be a board member now. One time I walked out of the courthouse and old – we just call him Jolly Jack was across the street. He saw coming on, he said, "Hey, Kenny." I said, "Yes?" "I'm a board member." I said, "What? What?" "I'm your boss." [laughter]

RB: What Governor appointed him?

KC: (Lucy?) I think.

RB: (Lucy?)

KC: Thank you. He was the only Democrat and Sean O'Connor.

RB: For crying out loud.

KC: He really melts it. "I'm your boss." But he got to be a hell of a good board member.

RB: Is that right?

KC: Oh, Christ.

RB: Interesting. [laughter]

KC: But month after that, I heard rumors. He used to have some wild parties. He owned the island in Shauna Lake which was really valuable. This is all rumors, but he got that from an Indian that owed him a bunch of money for legal work.

RB: For crying out loud.

KC: So, he used to say, "Oh, instead of that, I'll take your guns. I'll take that 40." That's all he got. He was investigated for that. But anyway, he had a hell of a wild party up in a shack. They had a real nice home up on that real high bluff that overlooks Shauna Lake. Just kind of east, southeast of town. He backed over one of his girlfriend's. She got drunk and was going to take a walk. He backed up to go find her and he backed over some way or another over the leg or something. But he paid her off. So, anyway. [laughter] He got to be a board member,

RB: So, when people would violate sturgeon or take sturgeon illegally like that, it was primarily on the set lines, you'd figure?

KC: Back then it was snag lines.

RB: I mean, snag lines.

KC: Yes. When I moved down here to Oshkosh, a lot of it in this area was set lines. Snag lines won't work actually.

KSK: What's the difference between a set line and a snag line?

KC: Well, a snag line is about a quarter inch roll they string across the river, all the way across the river. Then they'd tie leaders on it about a foot to foot and a half long with a big shark hook. It looks like a shark with a weight on that hook. So, as the line comes down with the hook, and then they have this weight here, the weight would keep it down in the water working. As the fish fought the current, it will get its tail in it. Normally, it will get the tail in the hook first, and then thrash around and get the body next one. It wasn't big. They were just strictly –

RB: I've got one in our office, and I got it from Ken.

KSK: So, it's just basically based on the current structure.

KC: Just current, so it has to have a current to work. It has to be cleaned because leaves would float it up. So, then the resistance and the current would flow it up in the river.

KSK: So, then you'd see it.

KC: Yes. I could see them from the airplane. Especially if they use real new weights. They

kind of flicker. So, your old [inaudible], you couldn't see them very well.

RB: Yes. But these are all homemade.

KC: Yes. They had to keep it clean. If it's a dirty part of the river, if you had or ran or something, a lot of leaves coming in there, they'd have to clean it off oftener. That was the fun part of working a snag liner. Because fish trap, they could plug it in and two, three days later come and get it. So, we don't know I've laid on them two, three days on a damn fish trap. You just don't know.

RB: When they're going to come back. With set lines, you knew they had to come back.

KC: You know on a snag line, they got to come back.

RB: Or snag line, yes.

KC: Although it's efficient. They take the [inaudible] most of the time, they will look on it too because they're really vulnerable. They just put the line up and give it a good shake like that and go down the line and shake it like that. So, they could do it probably in ten minutes or less.

RB: Very quickly.

KC: But this is the last commercial sturgeon, which I think was the last commercial on the river. He built up a little pram, little flat bottom double ender, on a white cedar. It was real light. He hid it under a brush pile.

RB: Quiet [inaudible].

KC: All it took was one man. That was [inaudible].

RB: He did run on himself though.

KC: No. This guy was from Shawano.

KSK: You said he was the last commercial surgeon. But who was he selling to? Would he send it to Milwaukee or Chicago? They had markets –

KC: The market was larger than the supplies. But they had to be little careful when we started the undercover operation. So, they had to be a little selective. It took a long time to get into them. So, they trust you. This brings up a story I can write a book about

RB: Before you start that, Ken, what year was that that you caught this last operation? Do you recall?

KC: That was in 1956. I shouldn't say the last commercial because the guys after that were still selling them. But this guy, I mean was really a pro. After I lacked [inaudible], I'll bet you never

saw equipment like that. A real brand new one, a really good stuff

RB: Really.

KC: After that, about three years after that, it was far lot more than that, maybe six, eight years, if I run real early morning, the sun was just coming up. He lived just below the Shauna below the highway bridge there. I think it'd be about the second place on east side of the river.

RB: Yes, just down from the landing there.

KC: Pretty long pier. He's standing on the end of the pier, and I know where he lived. I said, "That's really funny." I started looking, I'm sure as hell, he had a snag line under the pier.

RB: No.

KC: All brand-new weights and they're reflecting under the pier. So, I got all [inaudible] out there.

RB: Oh my gosh.

KSK; This is after you had arrested him.

KC: That was the guy that had all that real good equipment and dock tops, about six, eight years before that. We had two trainees. One of them, his name was John. We call him Big Johnny. He's a great, big guy, kind of naive, just a hell of a nice guy. He reported it to me. I met him at the restaurant in Clintonville. We went and had a cup of coffee and I met him and came out. He couldn't find his car. We looked down here, he had an old 46 Ford. This was in [19]55. It was a 10-year-old car and a junker straight stick. He had parked it on the hill in gear. He looked and heard the damn thing had run over the fence. [laughter] Big John. Then he was dragging one day. He had a little 32 Pistol Revolver and he always carry it in his pocket. I kept telling him, "John, you got to get a holster for that thing." I had moved up to Clintonville and we had three kids in diapers. My wife was down at Fond du Lac. I hadn't been on her for three weeks and so I thought I better get down there. So, we went to down to Fond du Lac to take her out shopping. I got there and sitting in the house, I get a call from the hospital up at Clintonville. One of your people around here shot himself. [laughter]

RB; Oh, no.

KC: Oh, Christ. So, I turned around. I just got home. Turn on up, went back up there and here's the Big Johnny sitting on the edge of the bed, kind of head down. "What the hell happened?" Well, [laughter] he got snagged. He was dragging them on. He got snagged and he reached up for an oar. I think the pistol came out of the jacket pocket, hit the hammer, and went off. It hit him in the belly. It skidded around inside his ribs, and he took it out back here. It went straight in, and it went right in his belly. But the doctor showed me an X-ray. He says, "Here's a skid marks all over on his ribs."

RB: Oh, my gosh.

KC: All over his ribs here and he took it on his back. But anyway –

RB: But the set lines, that's something altogether different on the [inaudible] when it relates to the set lines [talking simultaneously].

KC: Yes. The snag lines had to have currency. Down here, we didn't have enough current, so they use set lines. Most of the guys, some of them I went to high school with. Just one of it was really bad freaks. His dad owned the tavern, and he sold his stuff out of that tavern. But [inaudible] tried to hire me in high school to help run the lines. He and (Cobb Corn?).

RB: Yes. We are interviewing Mike Will tonight. I think Mike knew the Corn family.

KC: Whatever. (Cobb?) were really bad. His son, who I flew, work for London construction. I flew for London though I lost my physical now. But I flew him for about twenty years. His son is just a fantastic guy, just a hell of a guy. But (Cobb?) was really bad.

RB: He had this place right where the [inaudible] is, right?

KC: Yes.

RB: That was a tavern, and he had a boat livery and bait shop.

KC: (Frakes?) had at their tavern just a little ways off the river up in that area. In fact, they did hook up with – they had become like a smooth back up in there.

RB: But what would they use for bait on the set lines?

KC: They stopped cropping minerals and had a little seine on the [inaudible]. They got little minerals, and they just stopped the guts on them so they would be more attractive.

RB: You just put a bunch of them on the hook.

KC: Yes.

KSK: So, set lines are baited.

KC: Yes. They were baited.

KSK: Were the hooks pretty much the same?

KC: No, those were just regular set line. It's much smaller, totally different.

RB: But back then you could legally set line.

KC: Yes. Well, see, these would be unmarked. These were all unmarked. So, the way we found them is just dragging them out there. Then the east shore on Winnebago is using a lot of illegal set lines. They have one legal one, and off of that one, they knew how far they'd set the other ones.

RB: Yes, they weren't marked.

KC: They were unmarked.

RB: I suppose back then there wasn't a lot of trolling and stuff by the fishermen.

KC: No.

RB: So, you didn't have to worry about getting snagged up.

KC: Right.

KSK: The lines were down in the water, and how are they anchored down?

KC: They'd take an ice cream bucket and make an anchor out of that.

KSK: Oh, okay, just to make it down.

KC: They kind of felt that these people had a God-given right.

RB: Oh, really?

KC: They really didn't attach too much importance on conservation and ecology and environment. The biggest problem I had with the paper mills, and it was the cheese industry. A lot of the cheese factories were located along rivers. So, they get rid of the waste products –

RB: Right in the river?

KC: Yes. Now, my daughter roasts \$23 million last year out of her house with milk byproducts.

RB: Wow.

KC: Out of her house.

RB: Oh my gosh.

KC: She's using those products they used to run in the river.

KSK: Wow. [laughter]

KC: She buys waste products, whey, mainly from New Zealand and Australia and ships it

halfway around the world cheaper than she can buy at Wisconsin and Minnesota.

RB: For crying out loud, wow.

KC: Yes. So, all those guys were running that stuff in the river and the paper industry in the same way. I took a picture one time up at Nina. They had three outfalls different colors, and they were making toilet paper. They were probably 2 or 3 feet in diameter, these pipes going into the river. I took a picture of that, and somebody sent it into the Life Magazine, and they put it in Life Magazine.

RB: Really, wow.

KC: Of the outfalls on north. So, you pinch them. Most of them were operating beyond their permits and they put me on trial. They put the warden on trial, the judge would. That's why he was elected, they were all big contributors.

RB: So, the judges didn't have any sympathy either for – or they have sympathy for the set liners into on the upper lakes.

KC: Yes.

RB: You said the east shore of Winnebago, but the upper lakes must have had just all kinds of headlines at one time.

KC: Yes, they did too. But on Winnebago, mainly the set lining was over on the west shore. I don't know why.

RB: The east shore, you mean.

KC: I mean, the east shore, yes. There were a lot of the here too, we pinched guys – I'll think of their names. Really bad assess. But all the farmers were over there. A lot of them want to do it.

RB: In the upper lakes, was there a particular area where people would concentrate to do their illegals set lining?

KC: Yes. Most of the ones were on Tustin.

RB: Yes, Norwegian Bay?

KC: Yes.

RB: But [inaudible] point there. Right.

KC: Right. (Monroe?) in that area.

RB: (Monroe?) on that area, those two areas.

KC: Yes.

RB: It's funny because we're doing telemetry work now with juvenile sturgeon, young fish. Those are the two areas that they like to hang out.

KC: You know, that was another thing I had mentioned. I forgot to mention there's a run of males in the fall. See, when I first mentioned that to (Aris?), he would just kind of giggled about that.

RB: Females too.

KC: Yes, back then.

RB: But it's mostly males.

KC: Yes. Back then, they were catching mainly males. They wouldn't snag line and they'd drift the bends.

RB: Oh, sure, up in the river, that is.

KC: Yes, on that deeper holes. They'd kind of concentrate in those deep holes. They're just sit there and –

RB: Snag them.

KC: Snag them.

KSK: It's individually kind of their lines.

KC: Some guys had big, heavy rods, and they do it. Or they just sit over the side of the boat and just keep jerking. If somebody came out, they just drop it.

RB: You know this was happening, and you told the supervisors here.

KC: Yes. I told (Dick?) about. See, (Dick Perez?) is the guy that hired me. 1949, I had been commercial fishing on the west coast and came back here. My uncle was a beer distributor over on the east shore. He heard that was hiring – raw fish control. We were kind of a bastard child of the Conservation Department. We got all their junk equipment, and we saw supporting. We got all their old junk trucks and all their old junk motors and WPA boots.

RB: Live in a houseboat.

KC: Yes. We lived like kings. There's thirteen of us in this big, old houseboat. We got our own cook. So, anyway, that's how we got started.

RB: So, (Dick?) hired you but he didn't believe you when you told him that you were snagging fish up on the river.

KC: Right. I said, "You know, Dick. The outlaws say there's a run of fish in the fall." "What the hell are you talking about. Those are just –"

RB: But you were absolutely right because our telemetry has proven now that they do run in the fall.

KC: Yes, I imagine –

RB: They start about the middle of September.

KC: When the temperature starts going back down.

RB: By the end of October, they're pretty well [inaudible].

KC: Yes.

KSK: Where have they been?

RB: They're all the way from Shawano all the way down to Lake Michigan. Every hole is –

KC: Yes. That must excite them, especially the males when the temperature comes back down.

KSK: So, do you think that's why they – in the [19]30s, somebody was lobbying to get a set line season – or the hook and line season in the fall? Because that's right when that run in October?

KC: It's possible.

KSK: That's what it was. They said set line for September and October.

KC: Yes, it's very possible. That's maybe why they set it up for the fall.

KSK: Because some people knew it.

KC: Because some people knew that there was a run in the fall. That's very possible.

KSK: Because I've been wondering why they picked September.

KC: A matter of fact, that's probably the reason why.

KSK: Because people knew about it.

KC: Because people knew about it. That run is not unique to Winnebago. All lake sturgeon populations in Wisconsin, the adults that are going to spawn the next spring make this fall

running.

KSK: Do they go up and then come back down again for the winter?

KC: They go up and stay.

KSK: Oh, they stay.

KC: Stay over winter in the holes.

RB: Boy, in the summer, it's amazing the amount of fish up there. Mainly, I went down the river to find the exposed fish traps, the ones we didn't find. In those some of those holes, it was amazing, they lay up in the sun. It kind of come up on the sandbars there. They're real spooky.

KC: It's a complex population. Yes, they're real spooky. Because there's fish that live in the river all the time, but then there's these migrant fish that move up there and then come back. Then some of the males that go up there in the fall, they may spend half the summer up there before they come back. So, it's kind of a complicated, like history pattern, but there's always some fish in the river. But the highest concentration begins in the fall and goes through the spring.

KC: Ron, I don't know if this is true or not, but I've heard it several times. There are more tons of fish traveling up under the 41 Bridge than any other place in North America.

RB: Well, I wouldn't be surprised because they've got to go through there.

KC: The Perch –

RB: Walleyes and white bass, sturgeon.

KC: Walleyes, white bass, sturgeon, catfish. I don't know if there's any scientific data to back up.

RB: No, there isn't. But it would be a pretty fair statement to make.

KC: Yes. It's quite reasonable.

RB: Yes, because there's a lot – tons of fish in the season.

KC: Getting back to these judges, we had one that did most of the sturgeon stuff went to Winnebago and Outagamie County. Out in Outagamie County, we had a judge that was – anyway, we had a bailiff and a county cop that were bad. He would supply the judge with the illegal sturgeon and walleyes. So, I have my old buddy that I worked with up there. He said, "Well, let's be the good guys." So, we buy a sturgeon. We'd buy the damn thing to give this [inaudible] son of a gun. [laughter] That's how we finally got the [inaudible].

RB: So, you would buy a confiscated fish to give to them.

KC: Yes. Chuck and I split it. I had three kids, man. I had a house payment. a car payment. We had to furnish our own cars.

RB: You did?

KC: Yes, furnish our own cars. I couldn't imagine why we're broke all the time. All the damn things we just hammer it.

RB: You'd have to furnish your car, but would they pay for mileage?

KC: Mileage, yes. Five and a half cents a mile back then.

RB: Wow

KC: I couldn't imagine why the hell we're broke all the time. The damn thing that front ends are out there.

KSK: Oh, you bet.

RB: You're probably making all \$50 a month or something.

KC: Yes. We started at I was getting \$180 a month. But I remember I bought a brand-new Ford 56 from Winneconne, the Ford dealer because I knew the guy. I took it out here in Winnebago. This was in February. Three transmissions out of it, three of them. [laughter] Because you had to run it in second gear all the time and chatter and you know, bang.

RB: Wow. You worked a lot of spears out here too over the years.

KC: Chucky and I – he had a brand-new Ford. We're out there working on sturgeon spears. It was glary place out there, almost zero snow. So, we developed a system where we had the slider and the driver. The guy on the right was the slider. Then the guy on the left naturally, was the driver. If we wanted to check this shack, we drive kind of on an angle like we were going to go around the guy. Then at the last minute, we'd pull into him. Then the slider has to jump out there to jerk the door. So, we ran into some amazing things that happen out there in those sturgeon shack. You cannot believe what goes on out there.

KSK: [laughter] Like what?

KC: We are mixed company.

RB: [laughter]

KSK: Holy cow. [laughter]

KC: One guy wouldn't even quit.

KSK: [laughter]

KC: He jerked the door and look around and it was kind of dark in there. He's "What do you want?" " I want to check your license." "Well, they're in my pants pocket over there." [laughter] We're talking about cars. Chucky had this brand-new car out here.

RB: This is Chuck –

KC: (Rinoski?) He was a warden up on Sturgeon Bay. In fact, he was just down in my shack hunting turkeys.

RB: Is that right?

KC: We've told two stories for three days. That gets dangerous when you're old. If you're in a group of about ten old timers that and you're telling a story and you're probably had three or four beers. You think you're relaying an accurate two story but then you happen to be one of these old guys that has a better memory and you both share [inaudible]. [laughter] So, then you got to protect your honor. So, then you start pushing and shoving a little bit and we're all in our seventies [inaudible]. Really this is dangerous as hell.

RB: A bunch of old town turkeys.

KC: Yes, especially because his memories are a hell of a lot better years. But anyway, we're out here and we're just northeast town. We're going to go up to Waverly Beach. There are always two cracks up there. They're usually in the same place. We're trucking along maybe 50 miles an hour or so, 60, really humming brand-new, big wagon with a big hot Pursuit engine in it. I looked up and I said, "Hey, that guy is waving. What the hell is he waving at? I don't know." So, we kept on trucking it off. We looked and here is a crack. There was another crack. It was at least 6 feet open. At least 6 on. Chucky, you're going to slam on the brakes. I said, "Christ, help. Keep it on her, man." So, we hydroplaned across that thing.

RB: [laughter]

KC: Man, the water's flying. We get out there. Obviously, we did a lot of damage. So, we get out and we heard psh.

RB: [laughter] The tires.

KC: The tires. We had bent the rims. Luckily, we had an axe. We banged the rims back.

KSK: [laughter]

KC: But that didn't help much. So, we kept on going up to Waverly. We got off and went up on the road. We got out by the parking lot. The two front tires, the cords were showing through.

Then we had broken two motor mounts. They had dual exhaust. We broke both of those off. It was just bollard.

RB: [laughter] Oh, no.

KC: The fires coming out of the manifold on a brand-new wagon. But that could have been bad.

RB: [laughter]

KC: He had to fix it. Then he hit a milk truck driving black one night. He had a little Chesapeake puppy, killed that. He and I were working together. I had left about 5 minutes before that. He was following a guy and got off the road and hit a culvert and killed his puppy.

RB: Oh, for crying out loud.

KC: Yes. But that was really bad driving your own cars. We fought it when the state wanted to give state cars.

RB: Oh, really?

KC: Oh, yes. Oh, God, we thought that'd be terrible. We wouldn't be able to drive the car we wanted. But that was the best thing that ever happened.

KSK: [laughter] Yes.

KC: Then we finally could find out what the thing was costing us and why we were poor all the time. Georgia was growling and it cost you a lot of money.

KSK: [laughter].

KC: Oh, God.

KSK: To keep fixing the car. You said that you would sell confiscated – that was a common thing that you would do.

KC: Right.

KSK: Would you sell the confiscated furs and whatever yourself? Or did somebody else have to sell them for you?

KC: No, we sold them.

KSK: You did it yourself.

KC: Like venison was 30 cents a pound in the raw and gutted. But you'd make allowances. We were really flexible.

RB: Yes. What of the sturgeons? An average 50-, 60-inch sturgeon, what would that be?

KC: It depended on how good a cooperator the guy was. If the guy was really a good cooperator, you would get pretty reasonable.

KSK: Then did the money go back to Madison or did you get to keep it here?

KC: Yes. We made a red, seizure tag off.

RB: Yes. They still have those red tags today. Still using them.

KC: We'd tag it.

RB: But you were saying that fell off in Shawano before Okee. He used to do this stuff, but then keep it.

KC: Oh, sure.

RB: Keep the money.

KSK: Was that what was going on?

KC: Of course, yes.

RB: He would sell the confiscated stuff, but keep the money.

KC: Yes.

KSK: I was going through some old newspaper stories and I found a story from, I think it was [19]32 or [19]33, [19]34 maybe. It was a funny story about a sturgeon that had been left in the basement of the state capitol in Madison. I found some old memos and things, but it sounded like word maybe started getting around that the money from the confiscated goods wasn't making its way back to Madison. So, all the administrators got all upset and they said, "Oh, everything has to come to Madison now." So, they were bringing sturgeon and deer carcasses down.

KC: Equipment. I sent equipment like lights and lanterns and boats and a car.

KSK: So, you think that because of some of this fishy behavior, people keeping the money, that is probably why then they had the security really set.

KC: They had to come up with some type of system. I don't know what they had back long time ago.

KSK: So, this warden that you are talking about was –

KC: Of course, this is long time ago that I'm talking about, isn't it [laughter]?

KSK: Yes, it is [laughter].

KC: But anyway, when they first came out with the party permit system, the extra deer tag, the wardens had an issue with the damn things.

RB: Oh, really?

KC: Yes. The wardens and the county clerks were the only ones that couldn't fish them. The first year, I had them all the up my bedroom steps into my bedroom, cars parked out in the front.

RB: [laughter]

KC: They'd send you a hundred licenses at a time, and we had to account for all of that out of your house.

RB: Did you also sell extra sturgeon tanks?

KC: No.

RB: Or did that have to go right from the licensed vendor or the county courthouse.

KC: Yes. That was more courthouse stuff.

RB: Because in [19]32 when they opened the season, you could get five fish. It did not matter if you speared them or set lined them or hook and lined them. You were allowed five fish. It had to be a minimum of 30 inches. But you had to buy your tags individual for a nickel then.

KC: Oh, yes. I don't think we had to sell sturgeon tags.

RB: No. That was back when they had the metal carcass tags. The little, large one.

KC: Right. With a clicker on it, yes.

RB: I am sure you had experiences where people tried shenanigans with [talking simultaneously].

KC: Well, the way they'd do that, they just took it and gave it a wrap.

RB: Oh, really?

KC: Yes, the ball part of it when you slid that in. Take that and give it a hard wrap. That would trip that little mechanism in there. Then it wouldn't lock. So, the guys would say, "Oh, I tried to lock this thing and it won't lock."

RB: What could you do then?

KC: Nothing.

RB: Nothing.

KC: No, you couldn't prove it.

RB: Yes, wow.

KC: So, that is why. I flew a lot of deer shiners, which was like a suicidal mission.

RB: [laughter] Well, yes. You are out at night and you are carrying them [laughter].

KSK: [laughter]

KC: You got a little four-cylinder engine tucked down there between your heels.

KSK: God [laughter].

KC: If the damn thing quits, you are almost – I don't know the odds of being able to land at night because you can't –

RB: See anything.

KC: – can't define anything under there. You can't see if it's woods or a highline or whatever it is. I flew all the 30 some years and for these deer. Now, we should put a bounty on the things.

RB: Yes [laughter].

KC: Back when I was in the field, if somebody shot an illegal deer, I thought that was a personal insult. I'd start working shiners 4th of July and work them all the way through.

RB: You told me the story one time when you had the fellow in the plane and you were going to shoot that flare off.

KC: Oh, yes. A guy gave me a set of pistol-operated flares for nighttime flying. You'd poke it out the window and shoot this thing. It was a minute and a half. The pistol had the kick of a 10-gauge shotgun, which is a pretty good kick. The 12 gauge is pretty good. But a 10 gauge is even worse. In these instructions, it said you had to brace your wrist with no obstructions around there because it would break your wrist. So, I had these flares and he gave them to me. They were in kind of a rack, portable. So, right at the heart of the spawning run, just above Shiocton and about 2 miles, was an open area, not too much development and stuff. I had a guy by the name of (Kelly Popple? 01:08:53). His dad was a warden over at Sheboygan. But he was a trainee. He weighed about 240, 245. A great, big guy and all. Maybe a little more than that.

Anyway, he was in the backseat of the airplane. This airplane was already overloaded with radio gear. So, I had Kelly Poppo back there with parachutes. We had to fly with a parachute after dark. Why? I have no idea.

RB: [laughter]

KSK: [laughter]

KC: It was old World War II parachutes. It was like sitting on a plank. Just terrible. You'd sit there 5.5 hours and you'd all be crippled up trying to get out of the airplane. It was strapped to your button there about that thick.

RB: Yes. About 6 inches thick.

KC: They always get hooked up on a door when you were trying to get out. So, anyway, two of us with parachutes, big Kelly back there, and it gave you the rate of sink on that parachute. So, it burned a minute and a half, and you wanted to make damn sure it was out by the time it hit the ground.

RB: Oh, on the flare you mean? Yes.

KC: On the flare because it was phosphorus. In fact, one of them, a guy had them in his airplane, and I mounted some in the airplane after this. But anyway, one of his shorted out in the hangar, and it burnt through 4 inches of concrete. That's how hot that stuff is. Burnt right through concrete. So, anyway, we went out that night. I told Kelly. The window slid back about maybe 18 inches at the most. I said, "Okay, Kelly." He had a throttle. I had a throttle here for the engine. Then it was a tandem-seated airplane, and he was right behind me. There was a throttle with controls so he could fly back there, the guy in the back. I had a knob up here and he had a knob back there. So, I said, "Okay, Kelly, when I give you the word, you just come up." He had a hammock for a hand. "You hold my wrist so I don't hit the windows with my wrist when it goes off." The strut was right here for the wing. Then the prop is right out here. You had to make sure you hit –

KSK: [laughter]

RB: In between there.

KC: Yes. You didn't want to hit those. So, we got up and I climbed up. I can't remember how high. But I made sure that it wasn't going to come in some guy's barn. So, we got it up there. Then he had to slow up because if I got that out in that prop wash, I wouldn't be able to hold it.

RB: Right, or spray it.

KC: Talking about the prop wash. So, I slowed the airplane up, put on a couple notches of flap to try and level it out. I said, "Okay, Kelly, when I tell you, you just grab my wrist and then I'll shoot the thing and I'll slow the airplane up and everything." So, I got it all slowed up and I had

it trimmed out and I had the stick between my knees and had my hand on the throttle.

RB: [laughter]

KC: It started to shake a little bit, which means it was going to start stalling out because of the weight. So, I put my hand down there, put my other hand out here with that pistol and flare. They weighed quite a bit. It was kind of heavy. Said, "Okay, Kelly, grab her." So, when he went to shift his weight to reach my wrist, he hit the throttle. The backseat throttle shut the damn engine down. It was down to idle [laughter].

RB: [laughter]

KC: We're starting to shake up, turn it on.

RB: [laughter]

KC: We're not really high. That damn thing starts stalling out. I said, "Let go, Kelly." He didn't know. So, I had to shoot the damn thing. So, I shot it. Then I got my other hand and got the power up there. Then got the flats, milked them off. If you popped them too fast, you'd stall out and crash.

RB: Crash.

KC: So, we had to do that gently because I didn't have a lot of air speed. But anyway, we had no idea this was going on under us. (Gabby Paul? 01:13:43), he was the guy I caught under the brush pile up there. He was in the bank for these guys when they'd get pinched. They'd go to Gabby for the bail money. But Gabby, he had a brand-new Oldsmobile. A couple other guys had a Lion. They were running a Lion under us when this flare went off and on. So, they just scattered. Gabby jumped in his brand-new Oldsmobile. A couple of days later, the guy that used to deliver oil for me, he said, "God, Ken, I heard you really had a hell of a time up there a couple nights ago." I said, "Geez, what do you mean?" "Well, I was out by Gabby's farm, and Gabby told me what you guys did. He said you shot that flare off under him. Gabby jumped in his car without lights, and he ran his brand-new Oldsmobile off the road through a barbed wire fence. That flare followed him all the way home."

KSK: [laughter]

RB: [laughter]

KC: It was only a minute and a half flare.

RB: [laughter]

KC: He said, "That thing followed me all the way home [laughter]." I tried to convince Gabby after that it was only a minute and a half. "Bullshit, that thing followed me all the way home [laughter]."

RB: [laughter]

KSK: [laughter]

KC: Oh, God.

RB: Is he still around, Gabby?

KC: Yes. In fact, I got to stop and see him. My daughter went to college up here and she was sun bathing up on top of one of the buildings over there.

RB: In Oshkosh here?

KC: In town, yes. Her and a couple other friends. This girl right next to her said, "What's your name?" She said, "Well, my name is Linda Corbett." "Corbett? Is your dad Ken?" "Yes. Ken Corbett." "He searched me twice."

RB: [laughter]

KC: Here was Gabby Paul's daughter.

KSK: [laughter]

RB: Oh, for crying out loud.

KC: "Your dad searched my house twice [laughter]."

RB: Wow. Was his farm just north of Shiocton then up by Lockers or something about that way?

KC: It was about 5 miles northwest of Shiocton.

RB: Oh, northwest.

KC: Up in County Trunk F up in there.

RB: Off M?

KC: Yes. F even.

RB: Oh, even that far.

KC: One road over from M.

RB: Over that way.

KC: Yes, over that area.

RB: Over that area.

KC: He was a hell of a guy. He still is. Those roads up then were gravel. It was just terrible in the spring. The frost would come out. Then the milk trucks would all get stuck and all that crap. I got stuck one time out in front of his house with my drag boat on, and he came out and pulled me out.

RB: No kidding [laughter].

KC: Yes. I was just laughing. "You did really good."

KSK: [laughter]

RB: [laughter]

KC: He never held it against me. Just amazing.

KSK: Is that how it was with most of the people?

KC: No.

KSK: [laughter] Okay.

RB: [laughter]

KC: Well, the rest of them were really bad.

KSK: They did hold it against you.

KC: They had trouble with the sheriff. They were just bad people. One of them, I don't know if I should mention his name.

RB: That is fine.

KC: He was probably the only one that I know would have shot me if he got the drop on me. He was in sturgeon and deer. I pinched him for shooting two does with a pistol. They were going full blast, the full gout, and he shot both of them with a pistol.

RB: Wow. So, he was good.

KC: Yes. He was really a dead shot. Well, he lived about 40 acres. Do you remember the old racetrack up there northwest of Shiocton on Highway 76? There was an old racetrack up there.

RB: Yes, I know of the general area there, yes.

KC: Just above that, the Pelkeys and Surprises and Van Stratton's lived. This guy lived there also. Which reminds me of a story I should probably tell you before. It was on the Embarrass, and we found two snag lines. To find the equipment was one thing, but then to be able to set a lay job up to catch them, that's the problem. A lot of them would set up where it was tough. It was really tough to find a lay job.

RB: Yes. Tough to stake it out.

KC: Yes. They'd sent them right out in the open. Well, these two snag lines were right behind their house, maybe a hundred feet off the river. So, we came back at night. That was the other thing. You always had to do it usually between 2:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m. to do any of your local stuff. Like the walk in or hide your car, get the boat in there or something, do it then. Then you had to have enough gear and sleeping bag and your meals. Your radio back then was an old suitcase, heavier than hell.

RB: Oh, yes, for the radio.

KC: Yes, for radio. Then the batteries were terrible. Very little distance, not much power. So, if there was a car involved and a car chase, you had to have the car close enough for them to copy the pack sets, the walkie-talkies. But anyway, so at that particular job, I had to have a guy across the river. Then the two catch guys, there was I and a trainee. It was a tumble-down heifer shed. There were only two walls to it. Then I didn't know if they were going to run it out of a boat or right out of the yard or out of a car. They were running out of a car. Luckily, I had another trainee and he had a brand-new Ford Pursuit, the biggest engine they put on them, about a mile and a half away in a good friend's barn. So, a good strong mile. But anyway, we laid there all night. About 3:00 a.m. and all that, we heard this stuff, all get – we thought it was the wood shed. The guy in training kept saying, "Man, this must be the wood shed, huh? I don't know." Anyway, we got a light here. It was dried heifer manure. [laughter] We thought it was cedar chips and stuff.

RB: [laughter]

KC: Here we were laying on a big pile of cow dung [laughter].

KSK: [laughter]

KC: But it worked [laughter]. So, anyway, about 5:30 a.m., the sun was up pretty good. They came running over by Pelkey and Surprise comes roaring in with a car. [Side Conversation 01:21:42 – 01:21:22:01] So, anyway, they come roaring in with three of them in this car. They were going to run out of the car, and they had a boat. The guy went out. First, they looked it over. They walked all over hell. Big John and I were laying in this tumbled down shed. There was a bird sitting out from about here to that wall. They walked so close that it flushed that bird. If they would have walked two more steps, they would have seen us. Because it was only two walls to this whole shed. We were all huddled up there. They turned around and walked away.

So, then I called the lookout, the guy across the river, telling him what's happening and all. They had a dog with them too. They had two dogs, in fact. They always had dogs. (Bingo Lang? 01:23:03) was the guy across the river. I said, "They're coming back. The lookouts are coming back now." He answered me and one of the dogs heard him talking across the river. So, they started barking. But then they died down. So, they went out and they ran the line. They went out and cleaned the line off and didn't have any fish on it. So, then the dogs started barking to (me and Hell? 01:23:32). The three guys then started running towards the car. So, I radioed the guy in the car. I said, "Come on. We're going to do it in the car." So, they heard him. He took off so fast. He was laying a patch out there on Highway 76. He was screaming. I could hear him.

RB: [laughter] Geez.

KC: So, they all stopped. They heard him coming. So, they ran in the house then. Mrs. Pelkey – those three guys ran upstairs in this old house – and she tried to block me. I was right behind them. So, I just picked her up and took her and ran up in the bedroom.

RB: [laughter]

KC: They took all their clothes off, these guys, three of them. Climbed in bed with some kids that were sleeping there.

RB: Oh, my gosh.

KSK: [laughter] Oh, my goodness.

KC: Just no good mix [laughter]. So, we locked them up. But Mrs. Pelkey and Surprise and Van Strattons.

KSK: Wow. I cannot believe those dogs did not smell you or anything either when you were there.

RB: They had a good cover scent.

KSK: Yes, I guess that probably the manure helped out [laughter].

KC: We had twenty-some fish traps just out of the Black Slough. They had two dogs that tried to find us too. Women and kids would come down and walk around like they were just out for a stroll.

RB: Oh, yes. They were checking it out.

KC: Yes. But we got them. We were far enough away that we saw them coming and we turned around and got the hell out of there and all that.

RB: Oh, yes. But this thing with the Pelkeys, was that on the Embarrass?

KC: Yes, it was just above the 76th Bridge about a mile and a half. But then on County Trunk F, if you'd turn north and go up there, it'd be about a mile and a half on the east side of the river. But this badass got to live about a quarter mile south of that area too. He was really bad.

RB: The one that you said would take you out.

KC: Yes, he would definitely do it. Yes, no doubt. Yes, [laughter] funny. We had a really good undercover guy. He was a big, pus-gutted, potbelly, Jewish jeweler. Big, hook nose. The last guy you would ever think would be a warden. He was also a pilot. He had quite a bit of money and he had an airplane. So, when he'd come up and call him up on a case, he'd always stop at the bunny club and pick up a bunny. Always had a really good-looking girl with him. One of them was a colored girl. Really a beautiful girl. The last two people in the world that you'd ever think would be out there trying to buy illegal game. The last. But I got to think of this other story too before I forget it. But anyway, we had him up on undercover up at the (Dimo's? 01:27:18) Tavern. He had been up there quite a while making buys and stuff. Johnny Sams, who was this badass, was one of the customers up there. He was selling fish to him. He made a deal with Jack to spend the weekend with one of these bunnies.

RB: [laughter]

KC: He's married. He's got about four kids. So, I told him, "We got a pretty good investment. Let's bust him." So, one day there's a knock on my door here in Oshkosh, and I looked out and here's Johnny Sam standing. The worst crook you can imagine. He said, "Hey, Ken?" I said, "John, what are you doing down here?" "Well, I got to talk to you." I said, "Well, come on in." "No, I got to talk to you in private." So, we went down the basement. He said, "You know about this deal I got?" I said, "Yes, I know about it." He said, "God, I don't know what the hell to do." He's asking me [laughter].

RB: [laughter]

KC: He said, "I think I can beat that." "Well, John, the best thing you can do is hire the best attorney you can afford. Don't hire one of these guys that fill out income taxes. Get a really good criminal attorney." "But the problem is they got me on tape. I just found out they got me on tape." I said, "Only you?" "My wife is going to be at the trial." I said, "John, you might as well pay up [laughter]."

RB: [laughter]

KSK: [laughter]

KC: He said, "Yes, that's kind what I think too [laughter]."

RB: Oh, my God.

KC: God, funny. But this same guy, this Jack, the warden here, (Chuck Dillinger? 01:29:26)

was in a car accident and he was paralyzed. Then the district – but back then it was the area supervisor – he was gone on a month's vacation. So, I was the pilot and the field warden and the district warden.

RB: Who was the district supervisor back then?

KC: Al Galston.

RB: Yes, Al Galston.

KC: You knew him, didn't you?

RB: I did not know him, but I knew of him, yes. Herb Johnson was the business manager?

KC: Yes. Herb was.

RB: I knew him really well.

KC: To back up a little bit, an old guy had been a professional wrestler and a boxer. A little bit of a guy.

RB: This Jack?

KC: Pardon? No, this guy. What the hell was his name? I'll think of his name. An old, surgeon outlaw. That's all he did all his life.

RB: From Oshkosh here?

KC: Yes, from Oshkosh. He admitted it. But he changed. Chuck and I got to be good friends with him. He ran a big shop. He owned all that property now where that big marina is, where they did all the dredging in there, across from Spelman's a little bit.

RB: Oh, yes, there.

KC: What the hell's the name of that?

RB: Just downstream from the old Plus Wood.

KC: Yes, the biggest one on the river.

RB: Yes, the big one in there.

KC: He owned that. That was a marsh. He had to stay up all night. All the waste sand from the foundry, that's all filled with foundry stuff. He had to spot all that stuff. So, he had to stay up all night and they'd do it at night. What the hell? I'll think of his name, I hope. But anyway, he called me up. Chuck was such a good guy. He had so many friends. Chuck was kind of laid up

then. He called me Corby. "Corby," he said, "I got to talk to you." I said, "Oh, come on in the office." "No." "Well, come on down to the men's room." So, I went down to the men's room there in the old office. He said, "You know of all the fish I've gotten all my life." "Yes, I know." But he said, "These bastards are taking the little ones." They had set lines.

RB: You are talking of little sturgeon?

KC: Yes. Snag lines, you get the more mature ones because they're spawning. But set lines –

RB: We are getting the smaller one.

KC: You get the smaller ones, yes. [Side Conversation 01:32:27 – 01:32:37] So, anyway, he called me up. He said, "I want to meet you in the toilet down there." I said, "Okay. So, why don't you talk to Chuck?" Well, Chuck is such a good guy, I don't know if he'd arrest him. I said, "Well, I'm sure he would. No doubt he would." "No, I want to talk to him." So, I went down there and there were three brothers in this deal. They were selling out of Repp's Tavern over there.

RB: Yes, Repp's right there by the park.

KC: Yes, by the park. He said, "I was in there the other day, and here they came out with smoked sturgeon right on the bar." He said, "Brought them right out there." Hell, everybody knew they're illegal. He said, "I knew where the hell they got them." He said, "That's not right. They're using the little ones. I wouldn't mind if they were the bigger ones. But they're using the little ones." I have no idea why they only felt that way. So, he started to tell me what the operation was. One of the brothers was the bartender there. The other two, one had an oiler (route? 01:33:55) and the other one I don't know what the heck he did. They were big buddies of the local assemblyman who was Harris's big buddy.

RB: Is that right?

KC: Yes.

KSK: Who is that?

RB: Dick Harris was the supervisor of all the fisheries here.

KSK: Right. Who was the assemblyman?

RB: Do you remember the assemblyman's name?

KC: Yes. I got to think about it. I remembered it the other day because I was going to remember it to tell you, because the last time I had mentioned it.

RB: But this would have been probably in the early [19]60s?

KC: Early [19]60s, yes.

RB: Thereabouts? So, we can find that out.

KSK: Yes.

KC: Yes. I'll think of it too. I got a fantastic memory [laughter]. Anyway, the way they were running it, the bartender would do the selling. The other two guys had the set lines out here in Butte des Mortes and you couldn't. The problem though was to get them all three. You might be able to get the one guy for selling them, but you couldn't get the guys that were catching them. That's the guys that I really wanted to get. So, I called Jack, the undercover guy, and I told him what was going on. So, it took all summer. We had a hell of an investment. They were buying all kinds. Hell, they'd give you any amount they wanted. So, we couldn't find their damn set lines. We were dragging up there. They'd pick them up and leave them out for a week or 2, and then they'd put them back in. So, we just had a hell of a time. We couldn't find them. So, anyway, Jack calls up one day and he says, "God, Ken, I wanted to come up there and do a run again on them." What's his name? "But the bartender is going to be gone." I said, "Hell, that's how we can get them. You order the biggest order they'll fill." He told them he ran a – he had a separate phone number – he ran a big resort in Illinois. He had Illinois plates on his car. We had them all set up pretty good. "You order the biggest one. You tell them you got a big deal going on." So, he came up. [laughter] He was a little gun shy. He wasn't the most courageous guy. He said, "They're going to kill me."

RB: [laughter]

KC: He was giving them stock tips and spending state money on the bar tabs. You'd order a drink, the state's paying for it. He always had these good-looking bunnies with him.

RB: [laughter]

KC: Man, he was the most popular guy that you could imagine. I told him that we were going to back him up when we made the bust. "Oh, shit, man, you're going to make the bust. They're going to kill me [laughter]."

RB: [laughter]

KC: I said, "Well, okay." So, I told him, "You have them deliver them at Rainbow Park there, right by Repp's, by the tavern. The other warden would be right across the river from you where that big resort at that restaurant is.

RB: Yes, where Fratellos is now.

KC: Yes, where Fratellos is.

RB: But at the time, it was just a painting.

KC: It was kind of a parking area. "I'll be right across the river from you. If have them drive in there, and if they've got the stuff, you tell them you want to look at it. You go back to their trunk." They were driving a car, which got to be state property [laughter]. "You just have them open the trunk and you look." He always wore sunglasses. I said, "If they got the stuff, just take your sunglasses off and it'll take me about a minute or so to get around there." So, he did. He took them off. We came running around there. The two brothers were standing there, the guys that were doing the catching. The other guy was out of town. We had enough on him. We had a good case on him already. So, anyway, they're standing there and they had two cardboard boxes of smoked sturgeon. 200 and some pounds of smoked sturgeon. They went and bought fish to fill that order. We found out about that later. They actually went out and bought stuff to fill that order.

KSK: From other poachers.

KC: From other outlaws, yes. So, anyway, they're standing there and I'm [laughter] in uniform. I said, "Well, you guys, you're both under arrest." The one of them said, "Well, how about that son of a bitch? He sold it to us. He's as guilty as we are. He's buying it." Jack said, "Man, I'm the fuzz." Oh, he's kind of a wise ass.

RB: [laughter]

KC: I'm the Fuzz, are we? We talking, "How about that guy? He's the guy that bought it. [laughter]."

RB: [laughter]

KC: "I'm the fuzz, man."

RB: [laughter] Oh, my gosh.

KSK: [laughter]

KC: He had them so snowed.

RB: Wow. They could not even believe it.

KC: They just didn't comprehend it.

RB: So, was this the end of these guys' career as outlaws?

KC: Well, probably not. No.

RB: No. But you had a good case on them.

KC: Yes. Oh, Christ, then we took the car. Geez, I almost thought of that assemblyman's name. Yes, locked them up. Took the car, confiscated it.

RB: Finally.

KC: The night before we made the bust, we knew they were smoking it. So, God, we went –

RB: Well, you tried to find someplace else.

KC: We tried to find the smokehouse. We knew they weren't smoking it. Here they were using this assemblyman's smokehouse.

KSK: Oh [laughter].

KC: Yes.

RB: Oh, wow, that is good.

KC: Yes. He was doing the smoking.

RB: Oh, my gosh. So, he knew about it.

KC: Oh, sure. Hell, yes, of course.

RB: [laughter]

KC: God, it'll come to me.

KSK: Wow.

KC: Yes.

RB: Holy cow.

KSK: So, the stories that you have heard during Prohibition and things, it must have been the same crowd of people doing the bootlegging and doing the furs and everything. They were involved in all that.

KC: Yes. Back then fur was really a big thing. Lots of money made on fur.

KSK: But they were probably the same people taking sturgeon.

KC: Yes. It was the same type of guy. Fur and bootlegging and prostitution. Woodland from Chicago controlled most of that type of activity. They had people up here that they controlled. They didn't do any of the dirty work themselves.

KSK: Do you think there was a caviar market then? That caviar was moving a lot?

KC: Yes, caviar was pretty big, yes.

KSK: So, then the people in Chicago were probably wrapped up in that.

KC: Sure. The whole gamut, yes.

RB: It probably was most lucrative even in the fall that we did caviar. But it was primarily in the spring?

KC: Well, I think it was in the fall. I don't think there were many ripe fish over there.

RB: Well, the females were up there.

KC: I don't think there really that ripe though, to make good caviar.

RB: Well, yes.

KC: Could you make caviar out of that?

RB: Well, you make it out of the black eggs. But actually, maybe they did not even know this at the time, but they have the black eggs in the fall.

KC: Oh, they do too.

RB: Yes. But they probably did not know that. Did not think too much of it. It was mostly in the spring that they would take it.

KC: I never heard much of it in the fall.

RB: But they would take fish in the spring as caviar fish.

KSK: I have heard a couple stories about Al Capone ordering caviar up in northern Wisconsin and blah, blah, blah.

RB: Oh, really?

KSK: Yes [laughter]. So, it must have been making the rounds.

KC: It's funny –

RB: They came from the Wolf River.

KSK: Yes, that is what I was thinking.

KC: Pardon?

RB: I said it probably came from the Wolf River.

KC: Oh, sure, I would imagine. Where the hell else would they get it? Embarrass and Wolf.

KSK: There were not enough up in Lac du Flambeau or not really enough sturgeon, though.

RB: Not as accessible. Not like here.

KSK: It probably was the Wolf then.

RB: Yes. I am sure there were people that were outlaws up there on sturgeon. But the sturgeons were so abundant here. There were people who were good at catching them.

KC: Back then – I was telling around – we didn't have this babysitting program. Of course, on the other hand, we didn't have as many spawning areas either. It was only really maybe five really good hot ones on the whole river system. It was natural stuff.

RB: Would have been Shawano.

KC: Shawano. (Sticks? 01:43:43).

RB: Sticks?

KC: Sticks up there. That was a real hot one.

RB: Whereabouts is that?

KC: That's up the Old Hotel.

RB: Oh, the Old Hotel.

KC: They're about the second band above that, Sticks. Funny story. Sticks, there were two brothers and an old man. He was probably in early 80s. But two brothers were kind of alcoholics. They were on the farm. I can't remember. I got a complaint. So, we were going to search the two brothers for sturgeon.

RB: Oh, was this the Stick Farm?

KC: Stick Farm, yes.

RB: Stick Farm. Oh, yes. The Stick Farm. Yes, they still squander today.

KC: So, anyway, we searched them. First of all, we'd always put a guy with a walkie-talkie out in back of the house in case they wouldn't let you search. Then you'd tell them you're going to go get a search warrant. So, then you'd leave and all the crap would come out. Everything. Anything they thought was illegal, horns. I'd have them bring deer horns. We always told them

that, "We're going back for a search warrant. You better not move anything because we'll be back in about 20 minutes." Man, that crap would come out the back door [laughter]. But anyway, they let us search. The old man was out by the car. The two brothers were by the house. [laughter] Chuck was a really crazy, goofy guy.

RB: Chuck Dillinger.

KC: Chuck Dillinger, just a hell of a guy. Took him 6 years to go through college because he was a bartender. He was having so much fun tending bars he didn't want to get educated [laughter].

RB: [laughter]

KSK: [laughter]

KC: So, anyway, he's on the radio. He's on the radio and I'm in the house. I didn't see this happen. But the old man Stick, he forgot to shut the police radio off, and there was some traffic on the police radio. The old man, he thought there was somebody in the car and he poked his head in there and Chuck said, "Get out of there." Bang, he backed up [laughter].

KSK: [laughter]

KC: Hit his head on the window.

RB: [laughter]

KC: Poor, old guy. But then these same two brothers were really tough. Every time he'd catch them, it was a wrestling match. So, they went. One time they went into town, got drunk, and the cops were afraid of him in Clintonville. They got a parking ticket. So, they backed up to the parking meter, hooked the chain on it, and tore the parking meter right out by the ruts [laughter]. Then the guy got in a motorcycle accident and was paralyzed from the shoulders down. He had a bunch of kids. They owned a house on one of the farms they rented out. This guy called me one day. It was in July. He said, "I shouldn't call you, but this really makes me mad. The damn Stick boys went and shot a buck in the velvet. It was in July. Dragged it through my tomato plant." In his garden.

RB: [laughter]

KC: Right past his house. "Tore all the tomato plants up and right past my house." I said, "Was it the Stick boy?" "Yes, the Stick boys, they own the place." So, I went out there. Yes, I did have a search warrant. Yes, I went and got a search warrant. I shouldn't probably tell you this.

RB: [laughter]

KC: The mayor was also the justice of the peace.

RB: In Clintonville?

KC: Yes. He was the personnel manager at the four-wheel drive. A hell of a nice guy. One day I said, "Frank, what the hell's going to happen now if I need a warrant and you're on vacation or something?" He should have said, "Well, go to the other one." So, he signed six search warrants.

RB: Oh, yes. So, you just had them.

KC: Yes. So, I had them.

KSK: [laughter]

KC: They brought this up in my retirement.

RB: [laughter] Still got a couple left.

KSK: [laughter]

KC: One of the other wardens knew that I had these signed search warrants with me. In fact, the one guy said, "Yes, you had dumb pot liquor." He said, "You didn't even know what township we were in. You had to ask me what township are we in to fill it out?"

RB: With the Sticks?

KC: Pardon?

RB: The Stick boys?

KC: No, not for the Stick boys.

KSK: [laughter]

KC: One of the other wardens was. We did some searching up around the other side of Marion.

KSK: [laughter] Where are we?

KC: We said, "Now, what township is it?" Anyway, so I went out there. This was on this big buck too in July. We went in there and we didn't find anything. Searched all over hell and this little kid, about 6, 8 years old, standing there watching us. I walked out to the car and he still followed us. I said, "Where did dad bury that big hide that you had on that deer?" "Oh, dad didn't bury that. Grandpa buried that. That's way over here in the garden [laughter]." He never forgave me for that either. Boy, he said, that is really chicken [laughter].

RB: So, were they involved in any sturgeon stuff too?

KC: Oh, it's all sturgeon, the Stick boys, oh, sure. Yes.

RB: Oh, that is a good spawning site right there.

KC: Oh, yes. They grew up right there. After dad and then their granddad evidently owned that farm. The Stick Farm, the wardens, God, they spent all kinds of time out there. It was a bear to lay on to really be able to see it and then catch them.

RB: But you were talking about the spawning sites. You had Shawano on the Stick Farm. The Old Hotel, was that one of them?

KC: The Old Hotel was good. All the way across the river, it's all rock out there.

RB: Right. It is all rock there, yes.

KC: On a low year with not a whole lot.

RB: It should be across the whole thing.

KC: Yes, there'd be backs all the way across the road. The Old Hotel was an old shack. Back in the logging days, they put their horses in there. Now, it's a big pine plantation. The pines are up above.

RB: Oh, yes. Pines have grown up.

KC: That was all open there.

RB: But that was all open before.

KC: It was a field, yes.

RB: Oh, and they kept the horses there for the loggers.

KC: They kept their horses.

RB: That is what the Old Hotel was. It was a horse barn.

KC: It was a horse barn. That's where the wardens laid in. They called it the Old Hotel. They'd spent so much time in there.

KSK: [laughter]

RB: Is that right? So, that is how it got its name?

KC: Yes. That's how it got its name, the Old Hotel [laughter]. Because so many wardens slept in there.

RB: Oh, well, for crying out loud. Then below that, then what?

KC: Then below that, there was nothing between the 156 Bridge and Leeman. Nothing. Nothing real natural. A lot of snag lining, but no spawning areas. Then below Leeman, the next good one was the cemetery.

RB: Oh, yes. Because that was ripped.

KC: Right. That was all ripped there. Then below that, you'd get into on the west side that big cut there that goes up in there. What the hell is the name of it? Boy, it's tough to get a name.

RB: By lockers down there, not by Spoehr's Marsh.

KC: Spoehr's, in that area there was a rock pile.

RB: Oh, yes. There is that long stretch.

KC: By (Keptee's Dump? 01:52:20) there was kind of a natural one. Bamboo Bend wasn't that hot.

RB: No, because there was not that much rock there.

KC: No. You'd go down to that long dead-end road from the east side.

RB: Oh, that was Conley's bar.

KC: Conley bar. That was pretty good. Then you'd go all the way down to New London.

RB: Probably X, huh?

KC: Yes. Then X had some. But that was about it.

RB: That was about it.

KC: So, maybe you're talking about six, eight of them.

RB: Six, eight sites. Yes.

KC: Really good ones. The hell it is, we didn't have the help. We didn't have this volunteer program. We were dragging and then laying on snag lines too. If you had a lay job, that'd tie up most of the crew. You only had two guys. Three at the most. So, that was the problem, is the available help.

RB: Did you work any fish in a Little Wolf too at that time?

KC: Yes. That was mainly spearing because they could spear suckers there. Harris and I would argue about that. I'd see them in the airplane standing on a big rock and here's a big female, and they're standing there with sucker spears. Dick said, "Well, that's an unharvested resource. We want them to harvest that resource."

RB: Oh, those suckers. Yes.

KC: Yes, those damn suckers. They wouldn't snag on them. Well, there wasn't enough –

RB: Depth there, yes.

KC: Depth there to work a line. But they'd stand there and –

KSK: Just spear them.

KC: Yes. It was easy to get rid of them. It was only knee deep, so they would just flop them over on the bank and hide them in the brush someplace. There was a lot of access to it. Then the pumpkinseed and fish go up there too.

RB: Yes. The pumpkinseed.

KC: Pumpkin, yes.

RB: The willow.

KC: Willow, yes.

RB: The pine, yes.

KC: They're always up there. You can't just can't watch what they do.

RB: At all.

KC: They don't concentrate there. They go up to the first dam all the time and they mill around there all day. But no big concentrations. I can't remember what I was going to tell you. Mention another couple of deals. But where's my notes here? So, well, on the Embarrass, we had this one outfit that would string barbed wire across the river at night. So, we'd do a lot of dragging at night.

RB: Oh, so you would run into it.

KC: Yes. So, I damn near lost a part-time guy. Hooked him in his jacket. You bundle up because it's usually cold. Dragged him out of the boat. But he held onto the gunnel. So, that was able to back the motor up fast enough, so he got back into the – you probably don't remember World War II, the Germans were doing that to the jeep drivers over in Germany. They'd string wire across. So, they put these hooks in front of the jeeps. They had wire cutters

on them. My county warden was a body man. So, he made two angles that came up with another angle up here with a big hook on it. So, when we hit it, it at least turned the boater on and wouldn't get the guy up in front that's holding the drag. You couldn't tie the drag off because if you did –

RB: Oh, you would sink the boat.

KC: Plus, that, yes. You'd swamp the damn thing. Or you'd break the line. So, you'd pick one. Then you wouldn't know that you got it. So, you had to hold onto it and see what kind of a –

RB: Tension there was.

KC: – tension was. If it gave, then it was a dead stop. Then you'd know it was the tree branch or something over there, so you could gauge it accordingly. But those suckers, it could have been really a bad deal.

KSK: So, does your wife worry about you a lot?

KC: Oh, yes.

KSK: [laughter]

RB: [laughter]

KC: Even the flying too. She worried more about when they started flying. But that we did it back then. The sheriffs didn't have access to the boats they do now. The wardens all had boats. They had the ability to go find the people that needed the help. Plus, the airplane. So, they'd always call us. I got a lot of bank robberies and all kinds of crap. They just didn't have the access to the proper equipment they do now.

KSK: Just thinking between people wanting to shoot you and drowning in the river.

KC: Well, they were shooting. They were shooting at me that big Rock Fest back in upper on Iola. The big Rock Fest. You guys were too young probably to remember. This would be in about [19]60.

RB: Oh, it was right after Woodstock.

KSK: They shot at you?

KC: Right after the Woodstock, yes.

RB: I remember that big Iola.

KC: Yes, up at Iola.

RB: Yes, I was in high school.

KC: Oh, yes. The warden over in Manitowoc wanted to be a pilot. He got the be one and a hell of a good one. He was with me. I was training him on checking them out in the Champ. They called so we could fly it for the sheriff's department state patrol. So, we had a church there that we used as a command post. They served meals there for all the people, the guys that were working. About a half mile away, there was a nice, big hay field. I used that as a landing strip. I stopped for lunch and I'm sitting out by the church and there's thousands of people walking by this church to get down into this area, the big farm they had bought. I'm sitting there and these two little girls walked by me about 17, 18. They were talking about these people that were shooting at the airplane. I didn't know it. This outfit, there were a bunch of conmen, hired the Hell's Angels to be their enforcement agency to make sure nobody got in there without paying. Those guys were all in there with guns. Sheriff wouldn't do it. He was afraid of them. He didn't really want to enforce it. He just wanted them to get the hell out of there. So, I went over and I said, "Who's shooting at the airplane?" "Well, those Hell's Angels." "What airplane?" "Well, the one with the stars under it [laughter]."

RB: [laughter]

KC: So, I started talking to them. Well, they got this beer truck. They had a 1-ton truck with a bunch of kegs on it. They had all the spigots coming out about four or five on each side. Then ice piled in it. They jump up on this truck every time I'd go by and those pistols, they'd shoot at me. But anyway, so I called Hetrick up. You didn't know Hetrick, did you?

RB: Harold?

KC: Harold. Did you know Harold? He was a hell of a good guy. He and I were stationed together. He was at Hortonville at one time and I was at Clintonville. So, we worked together quite a bit. I called Harold. He was our training officer then. I called Harold up and I said, "Harold, I need some bulletproof underwear. They're shooting at me up here [laughter]. He said, "Well –" He had some pretty good contact with the National Guard. I said, "Well, I don't know if I can get you any of those bulletproof vests. Back then it was brand new. He never did get it, but I lined the floor of my plane with old catalogs. I had a bunch of catalogs and stuff. Lined them up here.

RB: [laughter]

KC: I had a guy that was shot. Well, one of the real famous race pilots here, Steve Wittman. The airport's named after him. His buddy was killed down in Kentucky. A guy shot him and it went up into his abdomen.

RB: Really?

KC: Yes.

RB: Just shooting at his airplane?

KC: Yes. Then Steve Wittman, they shot him down too. It didn't hit him, but it punctured his oil tank up on his engine so he'd land. But they shot at me. The shiners are those guys that shot out.

RB: Oh, sure.

KSK: Very sweet.

KC: But I was always up at 5- to 7,000. So, they couldn't hit me anyway. But I had him shoot at me. But with the Skymaster, it was a twin-engine airplane. Just to harass him, I'd go up through there with the landing lights on. I couldn't see a damn thing. I was going 140 miles an hour. Just terrified the hell out him.

RB: Oh, yes. They figured you would see them.

KC: Oh, God. Those two big landing lights coming out of the sky, I'd be at about a thousand feet. So, when they'd look up at those big lights.

RB: Coming right at them [laughter].

KSK: Yes.

KC: Yes. It was noisier than hell. I'd make sure it was out of sync.

RB: Oh, yes. So, it really made noise.

KSK: [laughter]

KC: They always talk about that.

RB: [laughter]

KC: That flare though, he was totally convinced that thing followed him all the way home [laughter].

RB: Yes. We will have to wrap up here in a few minutes because we got another one in [talking simultaneously] good days.

KC: My God, it's 11:30 a.m.

RB: Oh, this is good stuff though.

KSK: It's great.

KC: Holy shit.

RB: You got any last one that you want –

KC: Well, I don't know.

RB: A good one that you want to give us here?

KC: Oh, geez. one of the permanent undercover guys, he was a warden at Green Bay and then he went into undercover. Then he got to be a warden pilot. He inherited quite a bit of money. So, when he was undercover back then they had to drive their own car. So, he had a purple Corvette [laughter]. He was big. He had a big, hooked nose. I used to call him a fur buyer. Fur buyers all were Jewish back then. I call him the Jewish fur buyer. But his name was Dave Froggatt. A hell of a guy. But I called him up and I was warden at Clintonville. He was undercover. I got to be a pilot. I had the airplane up at Clintonville and still a field warden. So, I called him on a case, and he comes into town with this purple Corvette. He always wore a purple tam.

RB: Oh, geez.

KC: He'd come into town and he'd say, "Well, I don't know." I'd say, "Well, I'll reach you out of town." "No, I'll come into town." He'd park about two blocks away. I said, "Christ, everybody in town knows you're in town with that purple Corvette [laughter]. Then you walk into my house [laughter]?"

RB: [laughter]

KC: So, anyway, I called him on a different case. It involved the son of the chairman of the county board with sturgeon and venison, both. The problem there was that the bailiff was crooked. He being the son of the chairman of the county board, things really get pretty tight. This judge was a guy that was shaky. The one Chuck and I had bought him a sturgeon every spring? So, things were not really good. So, anyway, the sheriff was a good guy. He was honest. So, I pinched this guy and I didn't have much on him, the son. I wanted to find out who he was selling them to and he was buying and selling sturgeon too. So, I wanted to get Froggatt Dave into a sell with him, lock him up, and then pump him for a few days. This was during deer season. I was running two roadblocks then. Both 47 and 45. I was busier than hell. But anyway, I got the opportunity to pinch this guy for deer. That was on a deer deal. I had searched him but I found blood on his basement steps. I sawed out his basement steps and sent it down to Charlotte. She established it was venison blood. So, I pinched him and locked him up, possession of parts of an illegal deer. But anyway, it got mixed up. The sheriff said he told him to lock this guy up. He was a special prisoner with Dave. Well, he screwed up and put the bad guy in a separate cell, but put Dave in the bullpen.

RB: Oh, geez [laughter].

KC: Over Thanksgiving.

RB: Oh, my gosh. So, your warden undercover was in the bullpen [laughter]?

KC: He was in the wrong damn cell in the bullpen with a guy he had pinched about 10 years before that. But a tree had hit him in the head, and Dave knew this. (Squeaky Wheeler? 02:08:21), his name was. Squeaky Wheeler. So, he only had peripheral vision. He couldn't look straight ahead. But [laughter] Dave said, "I moved down the end of the bullpen and this guy had come." He said, "When he started zeroing in on me," he said, "I knew he was looking at me [laughter]."

RB: [laughter]

KC: "I'd have to go down the other end of it."

KSK: [laughter]

KC: Three days over Thanksgiving. After 3 days, I didn't hear anything from him. I thought, Christ. I was busier then. "Something's wrong, I better go bail him out." So, I went up and bailed him out. We're walking out of the jail, Froggatt kept saying, "Margaret is really going to be pissed at you."

RB: [laughter]

KC: "In the bullpen over Thanksgiving for three days [laughter]. She is really going to be pissed at you, man [laughter]."

KSK: [laughter]

RB: Oh, my gosh.

KC: So, he never really did get to go out and talk to the guy. But he was a hell of an undercover guy, man. Well, yes, we better cut her off.

RB: Yes. We better get to our next one.

KSK: Thank so much, Ken.

RB: This is great, Ken.

KSK: Terrific.

RB: Appreciate it very much.

KSK: [laughter]

KC: Like I said, information after you have about – because old Frank was kind of an outlaw way back.

RB: We are here with Ken Corbett. It is the 28th of May. We are doing a follow-up to our interview from yesterday. Here we go, Ken. But is she still living?

KC: Oh, yes.

RB: Is that Frank's wife?

KC: That's Frank's wife.

RB: Oh, yes. She's still around. Tilly?

KC: Ma' Tilly, yes. Her maiden's name was Tilly. Her married name was Ticker. But her mom was in her 90s, and her father-in-law was 90 something. I bought him his last drink.

RB: Really?

KC: I saw Frank. He died of a heart attack the day before for lunch at the Roxy. He and I had a couple beers and the next day he died just after.

RB: Oh, for crying out loud.

KC: So, it was kind of ironic.

RB: Yes, for both of them like that.

KC: But Alice is really an interesting person. Just a really good girl. If you had time, then maybe –

RB: Well, I wish.

KSK: Now, is this (Harry Kinker? 02:10:53)?

KC: No.

KSK: No? Different.

KC: He is a different one. The reason I called her on Kathy, there's two reasons. One was [laughter] I told him I started to break out in a cold sweat when I was driving up the road going to the shack. "What the hell did you –" I'd been sued six times by Urban Van Susteren.

KSK: That is what you told me.

KC: His daughter is Greta Van Susteren on TV. He was a real ding-dong. He was Joe McCarthy's chief of staff.

KSK: He was the prosecutor? He was the lawyer?

KC: No. He was a defense attorney.

RB: Well, later on he was a judge then.

KC: Pardon?

RB: Was he a judge too?

KC: Yes, he got to be judge.

RB: Later on.

KSK: Later on.

RB: So, at the time he was just a defense attorney.

KC: Joe McCarthy, they kicked him out. So, he was an attorney. So, he started a law practice, Urban did. He was starving to death. So, nobody really wanted game law cases. You were talking about a \$25 fine. So, anyway, he started taking game law cases. He wanted the crew at Shiocton to know that, boy, if you had a problem with game law cases, come see me. He told them all. They told me afterwards that they put me on the defensive. So, five of them were Circuit Court cases that we won. Two of them were just penny ante \$25 pinches. But he sued me for malicious prosecution and illegal search and all this other stuff. But the reason it was kind of hairy back then the state didn't back you when you were sued as a warden. You were on your own until it was proven that you acted in good faith. So, I'll tell you, I was wiping dishes one night the first time – which I didn't do very often – and a knock on the door. One of the local cops had a summons for me. So, after the third time, they wouldn't serve me anymore because they knew what Van Susteren was trying to do to me. So, they had to get a strange deputy to come in to serve me. But anyway, then the first round we had a Warden's Union that would back you up until the case went through court. Then when it was proven that you acted in good faith, then the state would repay the Warden Union. But if it was found you acted in bad faith, you were sued. You paid. The Warden Union didn't pay it, you paid. So, you could get a goofy jury which happens. So, anyway, it was pretty hairy. But now, the state backs you up. So, yes. But I just wanted to emphasize my concern that these names I give you – I don't know if you could make a disclaimer or something to the effect that the names have been changed to protect the innocent. Because some of this, even if I could prove in court that the guy was pinched or I worked on him, I'd still have to defend myself. I'd still have to defend myself. If he wanted to set me back on my heels, he'd just sue me for defamation of character or something, and I'd have to defend myself. Even if I was totally innocent, I'd still have to pay an attorney to defend myself. I understand, sure.

RB: We are going to be very careful about all that. That was our intention from the beginning.

KC: Because there's other information that you'd get.

RB: Oh, yes. Oh, absolutely.

KSK: If you would like to look over the parts to exclude anything.

KC: Well, I'm not. I trust you.

KSK: Yes. But if you would feel like it.

RB: Well, we can actually. I think it would be probably good for any of the parts that we would include any of the information from you, just from an accuracy standpoint, make sure we got it right. Maybe there is an element of it that is we did not get on tape or something that would enhance it. Because we got a lot of good material from you, so I think we would like to have you go [talking simultaneously].

KC: One thing I forgot to mention – I have all kinds of stuff I happen to remember. But Gabby Paul, you should have really talked to him.

RB: He is still alive, I guess.

KC: Oh, yes. Did any of the other guys mention him?

RB: Oh, yes.

KC: He was a good guy, a hard worker. He and his wife were really hard workers. But he just liked to violate. One time he and the crew went up to Shawano. I ran them out of the Leeman area. So, they went up to Shawano Dam. They came back. Stopped at the coffee cup where I and the crew always ate breakfast. Went in there, had breakfast, he and three other guys. They told the little waitress that they were part of Corbett's crew. So, they just put it on the tab [laughter].

RB: [laughter]

KSK: Oh, man.

KC: So, the next morning I came and after I paid my bill, she said, "Ken, how about this ticket? Your crew was in here yesterday morning." I said, "My crew was in here?" "Well, yes." Then I started talking to her and, "This one guy limped," and she described him and hell. So, at my retirement [laughter], I sent him an invitation and I told him, "The least you could do is send me enough funds to cover that breakfast I paid for you."

RB: [laughter]

KC: He didn't know that I knew it was him.

KSK: That you knew.

KC: By God, he sent me 10 bucks [laughter].

RB: No [laughter].

KC: That was about what the bill was back then. That was back in the [19]50s. But anyway.

RB: Oh, my gosh. Is that the restaurant on the top of the hill on the south side of town there?

KC: No.

RB: Oh, no?

KC: I think it's the old age home. Or it's a senior citizen center.

RB: Whereabouts in Clintonville is it? Is that in the top?

KC: Do you remember where that custard stand is up on top right across from the library?

RB: Yes.

KC: Well, then you go down the hill a little bit. Just when you make that hard left on that Old 45, it's right there in that corner.

RB: Oh, right there.

KC: Yes. It used to be the coffee cup. That's where old John's had the car parked in the hill there. He came up from there and found his car was gone [laughter].

KSK: [laughter]

KC: Ran down the [inaudible]. But then the other thing I was going to mention back when they set up the enforcement division there'd be – well, I think it was only six wardens he hired at first. But anyway, back when I started, there'd be one warden per county normally. There was hardly any management. Very, very little.

RB: Not much.

KC: No.

RB: Dock Schneeberger.

KC: Old Dock. When I started with rough fish over at Calumet Harbor. The first day I saw a biologist was Vern Hacker. We lived on the Bergen and this guy comes driving up and he comes in and introduces himself. I was 19 at the time and there was a collection of real characters. One guy had sailed on the last sailing ship in the Navy. (George Belkey? 02:19:04), his name was.

He did the jig and everything. He had a great, big potbelly on him. An old bachelor, never married. But anyway, after Verne left, he told us what his responsibilities were. We all sat around going, "What the hell do we need a biologist for?" God, no, if we're out there catching them carp [laughter] and sheep. Then what the hell do we need a biologist for?

RB: [laughter]

KC: So, they've been studying sturgeon that I know of since 1949, which that's long time for them to study. How long have you been really onto sturgeon?

RB: 20 years now.

KC: But Ron has done more for that species than all those other guys put together.

KSK: I think Rob could say that he was standing on the shoulders of giant.

KC: He's finally gotten it to where it is now.

KSK: He has done a great job. Then back then there was a warden in each county. No management, no game manager, fish manager. When they started into the management part of it, back then this district was an area. So, you had fish game enforcement area supervisors with very little control out of Madison. Those guys were like tribal chieftains.

RB: Dick Harris was the fish guy here?

KC: Yes. The state senator they had up there at Clintonville said, "We don't worry about the sheriffs because they're limited on term." They can run two terms and they're gone. But the damn game warden, he's around for a lifetime. If he's a politician, he is truly somebody to deal with as far as a state senator is concerned. If the guy was really sharp, the warden, he was a damn good politician. So, when I asked Harris Dick who hired me and Ron, "What the hell do we need a fish manager in each county for?" He said, "Well, we don't." He said, "We could have probably three in the district. But it's because of you bastards. It's because of those damn game wardens. I got to sell my program. I don't want to have to go through some damn game warden to sell my program. That's why I got to have a fish manager in each county."

RB: [laughter]

KC: He was right.

RB: There was some animosity between them.

KC: Oh, that's what I was going to get into. A lot of animosity because of turf battles. These wardens finally realized that, Christ, I'm not the conservation department in my county anymore. I got other people that are stealing my thunder. Taking it away from me. So, if you were a real strong enforcement guy and you started budding up to a good fish or game management, they look cross ways at you and they wondered about it. They questioned your allegiance. But Ron

now has really done away with that. The cooperation between fish game and enforcement, now I've never seen it any better. So, I wanted to tell you [laughter].

RB: [laughter] Well, we have had the advantage. I think I was in a very opportune position and the timing of the whole thing where eventually the animosity just wore down.

KC: Yes. I'll tell you what kind of probably helped a lot was the reorganization which it should have gone through and worked, where they'd have an area manager with responsibility for all the disciplines, fish game enforcement, fire control. But the Kellett Committee set that up. That should have worked. I thought that'd be a great thing because of all the duplication of equipment and personnel and all this stuff. This guy should have sat there in his office and if a warden put in a requisition for a boat, this area supervisor should have looked at the inventory and said, "Well, hell, fire control has got two boats over there." Or fish or a gamer. Or they have personnel. They've got two aides over there from the time they make hay after the last forest fire. They've got guys sitting around there looking for something to do. If game needs a couple of aides, the coordination should have been. Well, some of them were really good. A lot of the people they put in those positions were not leaders and they were afraid to make these decisions.

RB: They did not give them budget control.

KC: Yes, right.

RB: So, they could not integrate.

KC: That is exactly right. So, it should have worked. But that helped somewhat, but guys like Ron. There's another hell of a good guy, (Tim Lissette? 02:25:26).

RB: Oh, Tim was great.

KC: But you two guys, they've done more. Especially Ron what he's done over in Calumet County. I got relatives over there and they're some of the most obstinate, rock-hearted ding-dong, especially with sturgeon.

RB: [laughter] Yes.

KC: They feel that those fish belong to them, and now they really respect you.

RB: That is good to hear.

KSK: That is pretty amazing.

KC: Oh, it is. Yes. Over and above what he did with the resource itself. It's what he did with the public relations.

KSK: People.

RB: Thanks, Ken.

KC: I wanted you to hear that [laughter].

RB: [laughter]

KSK: Well, that is quite a tribute.

KC: Yes, it is. You're damn right. Because I know he wouldn't tell you that.

RB: You mentioned that you remember the name of that legislator too?

KC: Yes.

RB: You told me and I forgot it.

KC: Floyd Schubert.

RB: Schubert?

KC: Yes. Oh, he was a character. When I was thinking of Floyd yesterday, Gordy Bradley – did you know Gordon?

RB: From the Bradley Egg Farm?

KC: No.

RB: No.

KC: I think they're related. But he was one of the other assemblymen. I had him up one day. We had a lot of snow one winter. Here these farmers with the big tractors were plowing out snow out in the field so they could spread manure. So, I got Gordy up one day and just repulsive. I could not understand why the hell the state allowed that. It all runs down. It doesn't seep into the ground.

KSK: Yes, runs on the ground.

RB: Just runs off.

KC: Runs into the waters. We're drinking it here too all those heavy metals and all that crap that feed the cows and the medicines. So, I took Gordy up and I was showing this going down here. We get done, I said, "Well, what do you think of that Gordy?" He said, "Ken, I want to be reelected [laughter]."

KSK: [laughter]

KC: He said, "You understand? I want to be reelected." I said, "Gordy, I understand." So, yes. But this Floyd Schubert, boy, he was a true character. It was Harris's big buddy. Harris was the hell of a politician.

RB: Oh, yes.

KC: You would know that he'd be pretty close to the local ones and he was too. He did a real good job. Much better than Skilling. Skilling was a great leader, but a terrible politician. But Harris was kind of the –

RB: Skilling was the head of law enforcement. Harris was the head of fish.

KC: Yes. Skilling was my boss.

RB: Matter of fact, they named the boat after him. The marine law enforcement boat up in Sturgeon Dam is named after Skilling.

KC: Yes. He was a character, Christ.

KSK: There is actually a book I just to want grab to show Ken if it is locked right now.

RB: Yes, it is locked here. I will give you the right key.

KSK: I just spotted it. I will be right back.

KC: Sure.

RB: You mentioned Van Susteren and how he had this connection to McCarthy?

KC: Yes. He was his chief of staff.

RB: He was his chief of staff.

RB: Yes.

KC: I got to tell Kathy. But anyway, he was really far out. I think the guy was a little mentally off his noodle. He got in an argument with the city of Appleton about taxes.

RB: Oh, this is Van Susteren, you mean?

KC: Yes, the judge. By that time, he was judge. He ran for judge and he was a big Republican, actually. So, they pumped a lot of money in there to get him. So, he got to be judge. He walked around with a cape just like Batman.

RB: Really?

KC: He'd walk into the court hall swinging it. That cape would be flying and you'd say, "Hello, Judge." He'd never answer you, especially me [laughter]. Because he never beat me –

RB: When he was an attorney.

KC: – when he was that defense attorney.

RB: [laughter]

KC: One time I hired my local assemblyman, Peterson up there in Clintonville. He was a big Republican. But anyway, I was telling Ron, this Van Susteren, Greta's dad, was really a wacko. I hope you get that on tape.

[laughter]

KSK: Is he still around?

KC: No. He died. But he wore a cape.

KSK: In court or all the time?

KC: When he'd walk into the courtroom – into the courthouse, he'd be wearing a cape. It'd be flying in the wind. They tell me, you know, that he had an argument with the city over taxes. He found out that he was taxed beyond the sidewalk out to the curb on his lot. So, he plowed up the terrace and planted a garden out there just to show the city that if he paid taxes on it, he was going to control it.

RB: Use it.

KSK: Yes, use it [laughter].

KC: Yes. Funny guy.

KSK: Oh, man.

RB: Well, there is another McCarthy connection to the sturgeon story.

KSK: Oh, yes [laughter].

RB: Kathy can tell this.

KSK: Yes. When Bill Casper started up Sturgeon for Tomorrow, the DNR administrators told – you know, they did not want that moving forward. So, they kept kind of putting him off. They finally said, "Well, if you want to do this, you have to have a research protocol written out, you know. It has to have –"

RB: On how to take eggs and do all that.

KSK: Yes. "You have to have a literature review." So that, basically, they would just back off. Well, Bill Casper went, and I think he contacted National Geographic. He found this professor at Dartmouth University in New Hampshire. So, they wound up flying him out to Oshkosh. Because he had been to Russia and knew some things about how to raise sturgeon eggs.

RB: His name was Ballard.

KSK: Ballard. He ended up writing the research protocol and helping them.

RB: That started the whole thing.

KSK: Yes. So, he was the scientist who helped them get started. I was looking up more information about him and his wife, his father-in-law was a senator in Vermont, a Republican. He was visiting Ballard and his wife. It was right in the middle of McCarthyism, right, when things were just getting really wacky. Ballard said to his father-in-law – you know, they were just having cocktails or something – he said, "What is going on with this? You know, this is out of control. Why do you not do something about it?" Then two days later, his father-in-law, the senator, made the first speech in the Senate, the first speech against McCarthy.

KC: Oh, yes.

KSK: Then he led the official censure –

KC: I'll be darned.

KSK: – in the Senate against McCarthy [laughter].

KC: Boy.

KSK: So, I just thought that was really [laughter] – then all these years later, he was flown out to Oshkosh to help with sturgeon [laughter].

KC: My God.

KSK: He had no idea. The funny thing is, Ballard, the scientist, had no idea that there was this sturgeon population in Wisconsin. He had gone to Russia to study sturgeon there, where he could have just come to Wisconsin and done his research here.

KC: God.

RB: He was actually an embryologist, I think.

KSK: Yes, he was.

KC: Yes.

RB: So, he was interested in the early development of the egg and the embryos.

KC: Oh, yes.

RB: So, he was in Russia. I do not even think he was a sturgeon specialist, necessarily.

KSK: No.

RB: But he was in Russia and because all the work that they were doing in their hatcheries, it gave him an opportunity to look at embryos.

KC: Right.

RB: It just happened to be sturgeon. So, he got experience with that.

KC: I'll be darned.

RB: This was during the Soviet time, of course.

KC: Sure.

RB: So, a very closed society but he happened to be there and had this knowledge that he –

KC: Yes.

RB: – was able to work through Sturgeon for Tomorrow. That is what started the whole shebang here.

KC: Yes. Geez.

KSK: [laughter] So, yes, got a couple of McCarthy –

KC: Yes.

RB: Connections.

KC: Boy, he was a character.

KSK: Fox Television.

RB: Fox Television with Greta.

KC: Yes. His [laughter] chief of staff was –

KSK: A piece of work [laughter].

KC: - really (different?). He got to be judge.

RB: Wow.

KC: Yes.

KSK: Well, this is a book that I found. Maybe you have a copy. Maybe you have seen this. Have you seen that before?

KC: Yes.

KSK: It is a whole history on the -

KC: Oh, yes.

RB: Oh, the Wisconsin Constitutional Law?

KSK: Yes.

KC: Yes.

KSK: That has been really helpful to me, just to go through and see what was going on -

KC: Oh, yes. Sure.

KSK: -in different times.

KC: Yes. I bet there's some old names that bring back - you got this at the library?

KSK: Yes.

KC: You did, huh?

KSK: Yes. We had it at the library. I do not know if we had it at ours or if they had to request it from, maybe it was at the Milwaukee Library.

KC: You know, I don't know if I saw it. I've heard about this.

KSK: Oh, there is a lot of information. You have to read through all of this. I mean, it is really -

RB: Oh, wow, small type.

KSK: It is really dense.

KC: You know, I forgot to mention, we had kind of an evidence collecting kit that really helped with some of that sturgeon enforcement. This Charlotte Brown helped develop that kit. Part of it was we have a real tough time on lay jobs on the snag lines. We had a powder and a liquid and a salve that we could put on the equipment. If they touched it – then we had a portable black light – the guy, he'd light up like a tavern sign, like a beer sign. He'd put his nose in, you know, he'd put the light on and all. Christ, he'd light up. They just wilted. He'd run them by. "Hell no, I never touched that thing." So, you'd get that little black light on and punch the button. He'd light up. [laughter]

RB: Oh, my gosh.

KC: One night, I got a call from one of my county wardens who was a – worked a four-wheel drive – procurement agent. He heard a rumor that the Shepard boys – just below the Lehman Bridge just west of the tavern, there's a long driveway–

RB: Yes.

KC: – in the south.

RB: Right.

KC: They lived way down.

RB: [inaudible]

KC: Yes. They live way down here. They were Kentucks.

RB: Oh, yes.

KC: Their dad moved from up in Langley County down here. Then his father came from Kentucky.

RB: Yes.

KC: Big, raw-boned guys. But anyway, Tiny – this warden's name was Tiny. He was a real short guy. But he was commanding officer of the National Guard up at Clintonville, a real sharp guy. Anyway, he got this complaint, you know, Shepherd boys got a fish. "Oh, which one got it?" He told me. He said, "In fact, I'll ride along with you." So, we went out there. He had Waupaca County credentials but not in Outagamie County. But he just came along with me anyway. It was dark, you know, like, I don't know, quite late at night. Went in, drove in the driveway, and knocked on the guy's door. "No, I don't have any damn fish. You want to look around, look around." So, I looked around. He didn't have any fish. At least, I didn't see any. But then on the way across the yard, I had the flashlight. I don't know why the hell I had it on. But I was kind of swinging along there. Oh, here's a clot of blood. So, I stopped. I picked it up. It was really coagulated. I showed it to him. I said, "Okay, here's sturgeon blood." I didn't

know if it was sturgeon blood or what. "No," he says, "my wife butchered a couple of chickens today. That's probably from that chicken." I said, "Oh yes? How come there's no feathers around here or anything, you know?" "I don't know. She carried some stuff out there." I said, "Well, okay." So, I got - this came in a little suitcase. I put "Crime Kit" on it in big letters. So, I'd flash it out and made damn sure they saw that crime kit, you know. So, I opened it up. He's standing there. I said, "Well, I can tell in a couple minutes if it's sturgeon blood or not or whatever it is." We had like a filter. It looked like a coffee filter. So, I put that clod of blood on there. We had blood preservative if you had a specimen you wanted to send in. I said, "Okay. Now if this stuff doesn't change color, it's sturgeon blood. [laughter] If it changes color, then it's something, could be venison or beef or whatever, you know." So, I just make a little bit on there. I shook it around a little bit, put the light on. He says, "Okay. What do you have?" "Oh, my brother's got it."

[laughter]

So, I said, "Do they live up by the old man?" "Yes, they live up the old man."

[laughter]

So, Tiny and I drove back down this long, dead-end driveway. By the time we got there, you know, all hell was breaking loose. But anyway, we go driving down the driveway. The dogs started barking. They all had a bunch of dogs. All the lights went off.

RB: All the lights went off?

KSK: All the lights went off.

KC: In the house, yes. I looked around the pickup. Christ, there's blood all over the back of the pickup. The old man sent two boys out. I was going to arrest them. I had gotten them to send out the sturgeon. They had it all staked up and everything. So, I said, "Well, send the boys out." They ran back in the house. He sent them out. So, I was going to put one of the guys in the car. Tiny, my deputy, sat right next to me. It was darker than hell. He started running backwards, you know. I tried to catch him. He took a swing at me. I could see it coming. I ducked. It plowed Tiny right smack dab - put him right in the gravel, you know, never saw it coming. So [laughter] -

RB: So, one of the boys did that?

KC: Yes, one of the Shepard boys. So, then I went in to get the old man. Because he's the one that handed out the stuff.

RB: Yes.

KC: So, I went up into the kitchen to get him. He put a double-barrel shotgun right here, backed me right off the - pulled both triggers too. [laughter] Click, click. So, this is Ron Brook, the sturgeon man.

Male Speaker: He's the what? How are you doing?

KC: Ron Brook, sturgeon guy.

RB: Nice to meet you.

MS: Sturgeon.

KC: Sturgeon. Don't tell me you don't know anything about sturgeon.

MS: Oh, right.

KSK: Hi, I am Kathy Kline.

MS: You're from Sturgis, too?

KSK: I am from Madison [laughter].

MS: Yes. I was out to Sturges with him one time. He's got a tent that's like an Indian tent, you know, a teepee?

KC: This is true. He never speaks the untruth.

RB: [laughter]

MS: It's 2:00 a.m. They were setting fireworks off. I was coming right over his tent. He was sitting there sleeping, of course. It was just beautiful. You should have seen it.

RB: I am surprised it did not start the tent on fire.

KSK: Yes [laughter].

MS: So, about 5:00 a.m., here he's up there. He's packing up. I go, "Where are you going?" "I'm going home." He said, "I just thought of it. I have to sell an airplane," or something like that.

KC: [laughter] Grade school and high school, can you do that? I never said this before, but he'd be in fourth grade yet -

MS: [laughter]

KC: -if it wasn't for me. Spell come. K-U-M, right?

MS: Yes. Somebody caught you in a lie. Well, I've got to go, you guys.

KC: Nice to meet you.

KSK: Nice to meet you.

MS: Well, see you.

KC: Have a good evening.

MS: Yes.

KC: We'll carry on.

MS: Yes.

KC: I'll get that hole put in that airplane.

MS: Well, don't you think it should be in there?

KC: No. But I'll put it in anyway.

[laughter]

I'll put it in anyway. I thought he'd forget about it.

MS: Because it would warm it up.

KC: I just ignore it. He'll forget about it. Anyway, that tractor is sitting over there in the trailer.

MS: Yes. Did he put a road tiller on it and stuff?

KC: You don't want a road tiller on that.

MS: Why?

KC: I'll tell you all about that, Jesus Christ.

MS: We'll see you.

RB: We will see.

KSK: Bye.

MS: I love you.

KC: Unbelievable. You can't believe the crap he buys. He just bought three cabooses and has them all restored. He wants to buy the railroad station at Hilbert. He owns fifteen companies,

maybe sixteen now. I sold him four John Deere's.

RB: Yes.

KC: They're all restored.

RB: Wow.

KC: Well, he owns three airplanes. He doesn't need any, you know. But I've been working for him about 24 years.

RB: Yes.

KC: Since I retired.

RB: Yes.

KSK: Wow.

RB: Great.

KC: We had fun.

KSK: That is great.

KC: But he's a hell of a guy. You can't believe what he - he was a day trader in the market. We used to fly to Minneapolis twice a week. At that time, we just had a single-engine airplane. [inaudible] But anyway, we get over to St. Paul and landed, gets out of the airplane. This is just when the cell phones were coming in. He says, "You know, I just lost \$2,300 because I couldn't make a phone call." So, the next trip, we put in one of those - it wasn't a cell phone. It was like ship-to-shore. You had to go through a marine operator.

RB: Oh, yes.

KC: Put that still in the airplane.

RB: Oh, yes.

KC: The calls were just astronomical. So, the next trip we made, we made \$1,500 just from Oshkosh to [laughter] -

RB: St. Paul.

KC: -to St. Paul, yes. "St. Paul paid for half of it, right there, just paid for half of that." But we'd be flying along. He'd buy and sell the stock two or three times, same stock, within about three hours.

KSK: Wow.

KC: Puts in calls. He was great on those, but just a hell of a guy. I almost caught him.

RB: Oh, yes? [laughter]

KC: They were putting lights at night.

RB: Yes.

KC: You know, they had a couple of batteries with a big seal beam. They'd put it down and then fish all night. I heard a couple of complaints on it. So, we flew a couple of nights out there. They had one guy that would kind of go out of the (shacker?) once in a while.

RB: This is sturgeon spearing?

KC: Yes, during sturgeon season, yes. You know, they put that light on. God, about 40 acres would light up under the glow when there wasn't much snow.

RB: You could see that from the air.

KC: Yes, especially when there wasn't much snow.

RB: Yes.

KC: Yes. One night we had a - you guys better get going. We had a chase that went through four counties with a small sturgeon. Actually, they had two small sturgeons. We started at Calumet Harbor. That was the first year we had state cars. It was two young guys. He had a Buick Wildcat with four on the floor. They outran all the wardens. They outran the state cop. They would have outrun me in the airplane if they would have kept going straight north. Because we had about a 40-some knot wind up at 5,000 feet. If they had kept going straight north, they would have outrun me because I only had a ground speed then of about 80.

KSK: Wow.

RB: Wow.

KC: But then they went doubling back around. They went clear up to Algoma.

RB: Really?

KC: Back through Manitowoc County. They lived about 3 miles from Calumet Harbor there. They pulled into a farmyard. There was about 6, 8 cars down there and pulled into the machine shed. They were having a card party there. But they hid the car in the machine shed. The wardens got out of the car. They said, "Well, we can't see it, but we can hear it cooling down." It

was sitting there, [inaudible]. [laughter]

RB: Yes.

KC: Well, anyway, you guys have got to be –

RB: Well, I want to hear the rest of that story.

KSK: Yes.

RB: The guy had the shotgun in your belly.

KSK: Yes.

KC: Oh, yes. He was eighty-eight years old.

RB: Wow. Good thing he did not know how to load the gun.

KC: It was empty. Yes.

RB: Holy moly.

KC: One other guy did that to me down at Horicon when I was training. We got a call about 8:00 p.m., 9:00 p.m. I was staying at Steamboat Island out there. The old warden used to be the shack. They burned it down now.

RB: Yes.

KC: But anyway, got a call, went out to the northernmost access end of the state portion from the west side, Burnett Ditch.

RB: Yes, Burnett Ditch.

KC: It was a real nice moonlight night. I didn't have a skiff or anything. You know, I could hear them shooting out there. So, I found a guy. In fact, I knew this guy. He welded two hoods of a car together to make a skiff, so he could keep it out. Nobody would steal it.

RB: Oh, yes.

KC: But no paddle. So, I broke a limb off. It took me a hell of a while to get out to him. I pulled up to him. I was right up before they even noticed me. There was an old guy and this young guy, up in the moonlight, shooting ducks. When I got up to them, I told them, you know, "State warden, you're under arrest." He turned around and pulled the trigger. [laughter] But he had just milked it dry just before about 20 feet from him. So, it took a hell of a time to get him into the car, took him down to Juneau, to jail. We pulled up to the jail – sheriff's office. He said, "Oh, hell, I've been here before." So, we ran a check on him. He was wanted for beating a

seventy-year-old man to death in a robbery in Milwaukee. So, about just before I retired, went down to Madison. I landed in skis, opened his shack door open, and this guy turned around and said, "Hello Corbett." I looked at him. "You don't remember me?" I said, "No." "My name's (Sosha?)." I remembered.

RB: No, that was the guy.

KC: Yes, just gotten out of Waupun.

RB: Wow.

KC: [laughter] That was like twenty years at least.

RB: Wow.

KSK: Wow.

KC: Yes. Just an old, good nick. Yes. Those are the two closest ones that I had. We had another one, four colored guys – but I think I told you that story. But anyway, you're bound to have them. Well –

RB: Well, thanks, Ken.

KSK: Thanks.

KC: Yes. But anyway, I wanted – because I know Ron would not have told you. If I told him to tell you, that wouldn't have [laughter] happened.

KSK: That was a really nice tribute.

KC: Well, truly, it is a fact. I think that accomplishment is a hell of a lot more important as far as the department is concerned than the sturgeon is. Because that wouldn't happen.

KSK: It is a pretty – yes.

KC: Yes. You know, nobody has done with the local population around here, Christ. I talked to these guys over in County (Macaulay?), "Ron Brook says, you know [laughter] –"

RB: That sounds so weak.

KC: Before that, a lot of the managers got crossed off by trying to promote their program rather than the resource, you know. After a while you could figure it out. Some of these old farmers, they take a little while. If you made their list, man, you're on that list forever, you know. If you count them once, that's about as much as you're going to count on them. They've all got an opinion of how the hell to manage the resources.

RB: Oh, yes.

KSK: Of course. Yes.

KC: But he's done away with that, I tell you. They really respect that.

KSK: I guess it makes it easier for the wardens then too -

KC: Oh, sure.

KSK: - to have the population that is more aligned with -

KC: Right:

KSK: -everybody is thinking the same thing.

KC: Not only the public has more respect, but the wardens have more respect for him too. Because they know he's not conning them or something.

RB: I am [inaudible].

[laughter]

KSK: Ron's getting uncomfortable.

RB: Yes. Well, thanks, Ken.

KC: Yes. You bet.

[end of transcript]