

People of the Sturgeon: Wisconsin's Love Affair with an Ancient Fish
Haze Diemel Oral History
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Interviewer: RB – Ronald Bruch
Transcriber: NCC

Haze Diemel: Yes. Here's the sturgeon confiscation tag that I told you I had. I had given you a picture earlier. If you want to take it and make a direct copy or – I brought it with me.

Ronald Bruch: Oh, from 1940.

Kathleen Schmitt Kline: Oh, that's terrific.

RB: This is the tag that Ken – we interviewed Ken Corbett.

HD: Yes.

RB: You remember Ken?

HD: Yes.

RB: This is a tag sold to Haze Diemel.

HD: Yes.

RB: This is exactly –

HD: This came from a –

RB: From a snag line. Look at that.

HD: Yes. But it came from –

RB: (OK Johnson?).

HD: OK Johnson it came from.

KSK: Oh, we were just hearing about him.

RB: Wow.

KSK: That's great.

RB: One twenty-pound sturgeon at 20 cents a pound for \$4.

KSK: Oh, that's terrific.

RB: Wow. Yes. We'll get this back to you.

HD: Right.

RB: It will be in good hands. We just would like to scan it and make an image of it for the

book.

HD: Right.

KSK: That's really – that's terrific.

HD: I don't know –

RB: It's very historic.

HD: Yes.

RB: It's very historic.

HD: I don't know what I'll do in the future. If my kids don't want it, I'll donate it to your museum or something. But I don't –

RB: No. You don't have to donate it.

KSK: Yes. Yes. [laughter]

RB: But we'd like to get a scan of it.

HD: Yes.

RB: We will definitely do that. Tina's scanning all that stuff, right?

KSK: [affirmative]

RB: So, Kathy will take it back with her to Madison. We'll scan it. Then we can either send it back to you or we can hand carry it. Whatever you're more comfortable with.

HD: Well, I don't want it to get all folded up within the mail or something.

RB: Yes. We'll hand carry it then. We'll get it back to you.

HD: You know how things happen.

RB: Yes.

KSK: Oh, yeah.

RB: I wouldn't want to take a chance on getting it lost in the mail either.

KSK: Oh, that's so terrific.

HD: Even though that is not a great value, it's just something you can't replace.

RB: This has great value. I mean, maybe not monetary value, but great historic value.

HD: Yes. You notice when you turn that, there's a fret stuff in there.

RB: 1940.

KSK: Yes.

HD: See it when you turn it, and it'll –

RB: Oh, sure.

KSK: Oh, there's a –

RB: What else is in there? This looks like –

HD: There's a date there, though.

RB: There's a date there, 1940. But it looks like it might have been from when he wrote a previous ticket out or something.

KSK: Yes. Oh, right. Yes. Oh, that's great.

HD: [inaudible] 1940 is clear.

RB: Yes. Well, you grew up – did you grow up right here, Haze, on the river?

HD: Yes. Yes.

RB: Now, this was your original family farm right here, where you live now, or –

HD: This is part of it, yes. My grandfather had a garden here, but this was woodland then. Across the road was farmland.

RB: Oh, okay. Where the tavern is?

HD: No. Where the trailer house is across the road is where our house was. There was a barn on this side of the road. Before you got to my gate there on the east side, there was a barn sitting there. So, my – I don't know, three generations have been here.

RB: But who started the tavern then?

HD: My dad.

RB: Your dad did?

HD: Yes. He built it in 1932.

RB: What was his name?

HD: Haze.

RB: He also was Haze.

HD: I'm Haze Jr., yes.

RB: Oh, yeah, for crying out loud.

KSK: So, was your grandfather, your father – you're the third generation here right now?

HD: Right.

KSK: Wow.

RB: Wow. Is that actually the proper spelling? Now, this was –

HD: No. H-A-Z-E is the right one.

RB: That's what I thought, yes.

KSK: Well, this was your dad that he sold this to then, huh?

HD: Right.

RB: Oh, yeah. Oh, that's pretty –

HD: Yes, that year, 1940.

RB: Yes, May 2nd, 1940.

HD: I know I'd been 5 years old, so I don't think he sold it to me.

RB: I guess not. [laughter] How long did your dad live?

HD: He died in – oh, I'm trying to think now – 1969 about.

RB: Oh, yeah. But it was his dad that started here then you say?

HD: Yes, Herman.

RB: Your grandpa.

HD: Herman Diemel, yes.

RB: Herman Diemel.

HD: I gave you some earlier stuff on the – remember the Indian Village and stuff that was here?

RB: Yes. Well, I was just – we were just talking about that working up. Because that was right back here, wasn't it?

HD: It was here, yes. Right.

KSK: You gave me a copy of that, too, when I was here with my husband.

HD: Right.

KSK: We read it. I did a little more research and looked into it, too.

HD: Yes, there's a lot on it. Yes.

KSK: Yes, there is.

RB: What did you find out?

KSK: Well, just that there was a lot of talk between different archeologists trying to figure out where that lost village was.

HD: Yes.

KSK: They're –

RB: It was here.

KSK: – pretty darn certain it's here now.

HD: Yes.

KSK: But yeah, they mapped it out and –

HD: Then this rock that is here on the land, I'm trying to think when my dad put that in there. I can probably find that information for you, but –

RB: Oh, where the sturgeon spawn?

HD: Yes.

RB: Oh, yes. Because they're not – I mean, that's totally manmade sight, right?

HD: That was a – yes. That was all just a high sand bank with clay on the bottom.

RB: Yes.

HD: The birds eroded it so much, the swallows.

RB: Oh.

KSK: Oh.

HD: They make all the holes in there, and then it all caves in. Then the water washed a lot of it out on the bottom. So, the river has moved over almost the width of the river in my lifetime.

RB: Really? Wow.

HD: It's changed a lot.

RB: Wow.

HD: More than you realize, you know what I mean? You start looking back, and you see the receding trees back. But those stones were put in there with a contract with the government. I think they paid 80 percent until they had \$3,000 out or something like that.

RB: Really? So, that might've been back in the [19]30s, huh? Or –

HD: No.

RB: – in the [19]40s?

HD: It would've been in the [19]50s.

RB: In the [19]50s. Okay. Well, I'm sure your family relied a lot on the river to fish and game and that for subsistence.

HD: Oh, yeah. It was a much different attitude than there is now. I mean, if you wanted a sturgeon in those days, they just went and got one. You see, in the fall of the year, many years ago, my dad would say, "Today is the day we're going to go." We'd each take a spear. We'd take the flat bottom boat. We'd go up above to what's called Jake Scott's Red Banks up there. Put the boat in, which is about five miles, and float back here. Sooner or later on the way down, we'd –

RB: You'd see one.

HD: – find a sturgeon on the sandbar. We'd get our fish. We'd go home. That's it for the year.

He get one fish, then he was happy. Then –

RB: Oh, I mean, would that be a spear with a detachable head, too, or how did you get him in the boat?

HD: No.

RB: I mean, that had to be quite a struggle.

HD: Just a spear with a rope on it.

RB: Really? Oh, so he'd spear them, then just pull them in with the rope?

HD: Yes.

RB: Oh, yeah.

HD: If they took it out of your hand or anything. If you hit them, they won't go any place.

RB: Oh, yeah.

HD: They generally got one that was twenty pounds, twenty-five. But that was a way of life.

RB: Sure.

HD: Many, many, many years that they've done it. They just –

RB: Right.

HD: Now, well, it's frowned on. It was then, but not like it is now.

RB: No, not – no. It's different now. That's for sure.

HD: I told you before about the deal where – down on (Carol Herb's?) rocks, where we call Carol Herb. You guys call it the Pine (Southern?), the Wolf River Bridge here now.

RB: Yes.

HD: They were down there tagging fish. Kendall was there, somewhere there. Here comes a woman with two little kids, a little boy, probably 4 years old or something, in which you have one of your DNR personnel down there. He's netting these fish and holding them in a big landing net. People were tagging. He'd transfer the fish to the tagging people, and he'd dip another one and stand there. He dipped one. He stood there, and the fish got out of the net. The little boy spoke up and said, "You let it get away, you crazy bastard."

RB: Goofy.

HD: No, you goofy bastard. That was it. "You let it get away, you goofy bastard."

[laughter]

RB: You were there that day?

HD: I think so. [laughter]

RB: [laughter] Well, that's a good story.

HD: That was funny.

RB: Kendall still goes by that handle.

HD: Yes. So, I mean, it's humor for your deal, too.

RB: Yes.

KSK: Right.

RB: Those rocks had to be there for a long time too, huh, on Herb's there?

HD: I think probably the same time period. Probably more than one other people down here, in general.

RB: So, a lot of these rocks went in with that government assistance –

HD: Yes.

RB: – program for the (grapping?).

HD: It was twice here.

RB: Twice here.

HD: Yes. Done half – the top half. Then we've done the bottom half here.

RB: So, you figure maybe in the [19]50s or [19]60s?

HD: [19]50s, I think.

RB: [19]50s, yes. Oh, that's interesting. Because Kathleen and I were just talking on the way up, if you look at the long-term recouplement of sturgeon, the number of yearlings that are produced, it really starts taking an uptick in the [19]60s, where you see a lot more young fish that were produced in the [19]60s.

HD: Yes.

RB: It had to be partially a result of the increase in the number of spawning sites.

HD: Before, they were just logs along the bank or something.

RB: Yes, just a handful of places. Well, they got a spot up here that's called the Old Hotel. Are you familiar with that? Where they –

HD: I'm not really familiar, but it's above –

RB: Yes. It's just –

HD: Above Triple C up there.

RB: It's below. It's about halfway between Triple C and –

HD: Right.

RB: – 156 on the west side of the river. It's a natural gravel rock across the entire river right there.

HD: Yes.

RB: But there was that and Shawano and the stick farm. After that, there wasn't a whole lot.

HD: I know they didn't spawn here.

RB: No.

HD: Little, tiny bit by the bridge once in a while because there was some rock there. But they never seemed to stay.

RB: Right.

HD: It just –

RB: Do you remember when you first saw fish spawning here?

HD: No, I don't. It would be shortly after they put the rock in. Maybe the first year.

RB: Yes.

KSK: Wow.

HD: Because they like clean stones.

RB: Did people back then – were they surprised to see that happen, or did they kind of figure it might happen?

HD: I think they figured it happened because every place there's rocks.

RB: Oh, yeah.

HD: Talking about goofy things, years ago, when we violated, we used to sell fish, just make a buck or two and end you didn't make nothing. But I had fun, I guess. It was a challenge. I've been done for years. Anyway, they had a sale for three fish – three sturgeon one time – and we got three. Then we had a place to sell them. But they had to be cleaned. The guy wanted them clean. The head's off, the tail off. He got it. But he bought the – he ended up buying the three fish. So, we cleaned the three fish behind my house, which is down across from the bar there. We took off to go deliver them, get it done, and come back. All you do when you take a fish, you pull it – you cut the tail off. You cut it around the head, but you do not break the backbone. Then you twist it, and you pull.

RB: Pull the (head or the tail?).

HD: The head will separate from the body. Then you get in there and grab that cord. You pull that cord out. Once that final cord is pulled out, it'll be almost double the length that originally was in the fish. It'd be longer but stronger. You got lumps in it. Well, anyway, we went and sold these fish and came home. Three of my kids were jumping rope with the cords in the front yard. I think I had a heart attack. [laughter] We went by, and they never noticed. They're jumping rope with the cords. [laughter]

RB: [laughter] That's a good –

KSK: [laughter] It's really –

RB: That one's got to be in the book. [laughter]

KSK: Yes. It was really good. [laughter]

HD: Yes, jumping rope with them. [inaudible]. Oh, another thing that happened. Years ago, when we were violating, we had CB radios. We had a copy of the warden's frequencies. So, we could monitor them.

RB: Sure.

HD: So, a lot of times, we knew what was going on.

RB: Right.

HD: But anyway, one time they sent some babysitters up here, like the other people before they had the sturgeon patrol. But they had people come to watch because they already heard we take fish out. So, anyway, they came up here. I was here, and I said to the guys, "What are you doing?" "We came to sit and watch the sturgeon," I said. "You don't have to watch the sturgeon. This is my land. I'm here. I'm not going to let anybody in here." "Okay." So, they left. They went. All of a sudden, they get on the radio, and the guy says something about, "What are you guys doing here?" "Well, the landowner up there, he told us that we didn't have to be here. That he would watch the fish, and nobody would bother them." "Get back there as fast as you can." He says, "Hurry, get there." He said, "You left the fox guarding the hen house." [laughter] Yes. We left the fox guarding the hen house, so –

[laughter]

RB: Well, you probably knew – well, you mentioned you knew Ken Corbet. Did you know OK Johnson, or was that before –

HD: Yes.

RB: You did know him, huh?

HD: I knew OK, yes.

RB: Yes.

HD: He had a warden by the name of (Artick?) that used to be with him, too.

RB: Oh, really? Okay. I didn't know that.

HD: Artick was a barber in Shawano, but he was a deputy warden underneath OK Johnson.

KSK: Did something happen with Artick?

RB: Was he an older guy?

HD: Yes.

RB: He was the warden before OK, I bet.

HD: Probably.

KSK: Was there some sort of law? I've been looking through a lot of old records in the Conservation Commission. I thought I saw something about a Warden Tick, T-I-C?

HD: T-I-C-K. Yes, T-I.

RB: Yes.

HD: Artick.

RB: But he was a barber up in Shawano.

HD: Yes. He worked with OK Johnson.

RB: Yes.

KSK: Okay.

RB: So, you got – you knew him, too.

KSK: Wow.

HD: Yes. Well, we went through a lot of wardens here.

RB: Yes. [laughter]

HD: They didn't –

RB: You were hard on them, huh? [laughter]

HD: Yes. We didn't get along very good in their time, no. But some of them weren't the nicest wardens to deal with either.

RB: Right, right.

HD: [inaudible] was a hard man to deal with.

RB: Oh, really?

HD: Hothead.

RB: Oh, yeah.

KSK: Oh.

HD: Very much so.

RB: Yes.

HD: So, that didn't help matters then on either side. No. We get along pretty fair anyway.

RB: Yes. Did you know (Doc Taft?) from Clintonville? Is it Taft?

HD: Doc Taft owned the land above here.

RB: Right. No. You took us into the marsh there the first time you came shopping with us, (Taft Marsh?). Is that the same place?

HD: Yes.

RB: Yes. But he was –

HD: He was a dentist in Clintonville.

RB: He was a dentist, yes. Then he trafficked a little bit in fish too, didn't he?

HD: Very possible. I don't know.

RB: Yes.

HD: I know a lot of those guys. I'm just not going to mention any names.

RB: Yes. No, I understand. But yeah.

HD: Yes. I knew a lot of people that trafficked in fish, yes.

RB: Yes. Yes.

KSK: Do you mind talking a little bit about the – and you don't have to say any names. I know that a lot of people are just taking fish just to have it home. But were there markets in Milwaukee or Chicago where fish being – or was it more like somebody would come up and just want to buy one?

HD: If there were markets, it would've been out of the Shiocton area. It wouldn't have been out of Lima.

KSK: Okay.

HD: Here, it was just you knew personally somebody –

RB: Yes, that want to –

KSK: Who want to have one.

HD: (It's like if Clintonville wanted to fish for somebody?).

KSK: Okay. All right.

HD: They would talk to you. You get one, "Give me a call," or something.

KSK: It was pretty much –

HD: I want a twenty-pounder. It's something that I really like.

RB: Yes.

HD: But Shiocton, many years ago, down that way, I think they did – there might have been some stuff for the market. But you'll find there's a place there where, in the heck, they made a big bust down in Winneconne or someplace, if you will, where they got some guys. That was trafficking. That was big, big time.

RB: Yes. The (Corn?) family.

KSK: Oh, that was – okay.

RB: Well, that was probably, maybe not even twenty years ago now. That was a big undercover operation.

HD: But there were a lot of fish taken down in Winnebago and Poygan and (Southlands?) too. Yes.

RB: Well, it turns out that probably the biggest detrimental illegal harvest we can trace back now was the set line fishery on the Upriver Lakes.

HD: Yes.

RB: Yes. A lot of people like to say that –

HD: Oh, they –

RB: – down there, let's say that fish were taken up here. There were fish taken up here, but it looks from –

HD: Yes.

RB: We can see from tracking the size structure, the population over time, the biggest detrimental impact was the set line.

HD: A lot more down there than up here.

RB: Yes.

HD: Another thing, many years ago, we had a – we call it a boat factory. One day in my dance hall, when I owned the bar we built, I don't know, eight or nine boats.

RB: Oh, really?

HD: Flat bottom sculls, all identical, all sixteen footers, all certain width. Painted them, everyone alike, all the same color paint. They were identical. So, we'd have these boats out around the country. That airplane every day virtually would fly this river and try to keep track of all the boats. So, we'd make it a little hard for them. [laughter] We'd put boats underneath the bridge where you can't see them from the airplane or we'd take one way out in some marsh someplace and just leave it there for them to watch. But these boats are all identical, so they try to identify all of them. That'll give them a job – give them something to do.

RB: Yes. Well, they would say how difficult it was that they'd see a boat way back in the marsh. Then you go back there and sit on it. But they never would catch anybody.

HD: No, because that was just a decoy.

RB: It was a decoy. [laughter] Oh, a game of cat and mouse.

KSK: Yes. [laughter]

HD: Well, it was. It was a game of –

RB: Wow. That's –

HD: So, what I do need – I have a gentleman that wants to make a Leopold, I guess you call it, or something bench. Aldo Leopold bench or something, certain kind of bench that they had.

RB: Okay.

KSK: Oh.

HD: I need a clear picture of a drawing or something that's really good of a sturgeon. They want to laser engrave it into this bench. Then they will donate it to Shadows on the Wolf for –

RB: Oh, I can get you that.

HD: I figured I'd ask you for something.

RB: Let me make a note here.

HD: You got to have it in your notes there too. That's why I brought this for you.

RB: Yes. Okay. As a matter of fact, my wife has a really good – my wife's an artist.

HD: Oh.

RB: She has a line drawing that could be laser-engraved, ready to go right now.

HD: Right. That's why I mean. We can get it back to you. It's just to get –

RB: No. I can just get you a copy of it.

HD: Okay.

KSK: Where did the name Shadows on the Wolf come from?

HD: Well, first of all, I can go get the book. There was a book written on Shiocton on the history of the Shiocton area.

KSK: Oh.

HD: The name of that book was Shadows on the Wolf.

KSK: Oh.

HD: Then when we started the club, we asked permission to use that name. That's how we came by.

RB: Oh, really?

KSK: It's a neat name.

RB: Yes.

KSK: I like it.

HD: Yes. I'll go get the book.

KSK: Oh, wow.

HD: There you go.

RB: Oh, yes. Look at that.

KSK: Oh, that's a beautiful book.

RB: I assume this is not in print anymore.

HD: Last people I knew had any was Johnson Hardware.

RB: Really? You think they might have some in town here yet? Because we'll stop there. That's the hardware store right on Main Street, right?

HD: Yes. We could call here, too, and find out.

RB: Yes. Because if they've got some, I'd like to buy one.

HD: I think you'll find sturgeon stuff in there too.

KSK: Oh, yeah.

HD: There's been [inaudible] –

KSK: Yes. I saw this photo online, yes. You mapped out.

RB: Oh, yeah. Wow.

HD: There's about three or four books around here that are old and all this stuff. Outagamie County.

RB: Oh, yeah.

HD: They have Navarino.

RB: Oh, really? There's one on Navarino, too.

HD: I think I got that. [inaudible] there.

KSK: This is a nice book.

RB: Wow. What a resource.

KSK: Oh, wow.

HD: That's –

RB: Oh, this is a really good one, Outagamie County. Look at that.

KSK: Oh, is this your dad?

HD: Yes.

KSK: He's –

HD: He had a trucking company in 1927, I think it was. He decided he was going to build a bar. So, then he gave up his trucking and –

RB: What kind of trucks did he have? Do you know? Did he –

HD: Four-wheel drive.

RB: He did? FWDs.

KSK: Wow.

HD: Clintonville Four-Wheel Drive.

RB: At Clintonville?

HD: Yes.

RB: That –

HD: He worked for FWD for years. He was –

RB: The guy that started that company, what was his name? What –

HD: Was it Besserdich?

RB: I don't remember. But that fellow had some French manuscripts that he donated to the library.

HD: Oh, you're talking about this other guy.

RB: Olen or something like that.

HD: Yes, Olen.

RB: That he donated –

HD: (Gerald Olen?).

RB: Yes. He donated to the Clintonville Library.

HD: Right.

RB: I don't know. Did you guys go and look at them?

KSK: We did go and look through them, yes.

RB: Was there anything in there?

KSK: It was a little difficult to figure out the dates on them. So, I didn't really find too much.

RB: Not too much, yes.

HD: Yes.

KSK: We really need to look –

HD: You have stuff in here.

RB: That's a good book.

HD: So, you want me to [inaudible]?

RB: Oh, yeah. That's right. Yes.

HD: [inaudible] some of the stuff I gave her.

KSK: Oh, right. Yes.

RB: Yes.

HD: Yes. That's –

RB: Oh, sure.

KSK: Yes.

HD: That's the stuff I gave her.

RB: Oh, yeah.

KSK: That's very interesting. Yes.

[talking simultaneously]

RB: Well, these books are a testament or they're an example of one of the reasons we're trying to do this for sturgeon on the system.

HD: Yes. You're trying to do basically the same thing on sturgeon.

KSK: Right.

RB: Right, on sturgeon. Because we figure it's –

KSK: It's Bamboo Bend.

RB: Look at Bamboo Bend. Look at that.

[laughter]

Holy cow. Because we just figured this stuff's going to be lost as people pass on. We need to capture this stuff.

HD: I got this in Navarino. Let me show you something here. This has nothing to do with your – oh, here.

RB: That's you. [laughter] Look at that. Oh, my goodness.

KSK: You're a ski jumper. Whoa. [laughter]

RB: Holy cow.

HD: I ski jump Iron Mountain. That big hill at Iron Mountain, Pine Mountain, you ever seen that?

RB: Wow.

HD: Do you know the highest artificial ski slide in the world or what it used to be?

RB: For crying out loud.

HD: I jumped up there when I was 16 years old.

KSK: Oh, my gosh.

RB: One of the funny moments was when Haze Diemel Jr. and (Henry Lehman?) rode the six-foot wide scaffold side by side. Henry got off a little before Haze and started down the hill. As Haze started down, he hollered at Henry to move over as they were floating through the air. Oh, my God.

[laughter]

You must have known a fellow named (Malcolm Lehman?).

HD: Sure.

RB: Now, his farm is the one just on the east side of the river, just south here. Is that the –

HD: Yes. It start –

RB: Tthat's the original Lehman Farm?

HD: It started there. When you go out to Lehman's store, go south, the first house on that west side –

RB: Because we went in and tagged walleyes in that little bit of a – just above herds there.

HD: Yes.

RB: There's that little slip that goes in on the east side of the rivers.

HD: Yes.

RB: That's the Lehman Farm there?

HD: That would've been Reese's there. Then you got up a little bit, and then there was a little fence across there. Then there was Lehman's on the north.

RB: Oh, in the north. Okay. (North there, yes?).

HD: You would've been right – probably stopped right about at the fence when you went in there.

RB: Oh, yeah. When we went in there, yes. It's not a very big spot.

HD: No.

RB: I remember getting some fish in there with you.

HD: That's right. Malcolm used to put his fish trap.

RB: Oh, yeah. But –

HD: Get back on the sturgeon stuff. I don't know what else you have here. You got any questions? I'll answer anything I can, but –

RB: Well, we're just mostly interested in your experiences, and I guess what sturgeon meant to you and your family as you were – in your lifetime. Heing on the river here and what it meant to you.

HD: I don't know. Like I said, we only harvested one a year to eat them and more or less. They were kind of a nuisance. Last week, I donated four (pounds?) of sturgeon last week. I got a twenty-pound line. I took a brand new (snap rig?) and the snap came back closed, and the plug was gone. So, that tells you that split ring, and then you know that plug straightened it out.

RB: Wow. Now, was that something that – I guess in your lifetime, have you noticed the increase in sturgeon abundance in the river?

HD: I think so.

RB: Yes.

HD: A lot of big fish anyways. [inaudible] there the other day, just come up on top and roll, and that's it. Off you go. You try to get them back, and they take the landing net and rub on the plug and pull it off.

RB: Oh, yeah. Right.

HD: Because you don't catch them in the mouth. They're going down.

RB: No, you don't.

HD: All of a sudden, your line is tight. You set the hook, and well –

RB: Because when you were younger then did the fish seem smaller then, or they didn't have as many big ones, it seems?

HD: Well, I think I've seen some awful sized fish years ago. I've seen one that was silver-colored. It was much larger than any other I've ever seen.

RB: Really?

HD: I know that fish had a couple hundred pounds. You've got some now, so –

RB: Yes. We've got some now. This is the first time since about the [19]50s that we've seen this abundance of large fish. So, there's been this leg in between. But in the [19]50s, you would've seen fish that big on a more regular basis.

HD: Yes. I tell you, there were some awful big fish at that time.

RB: Yes. Did the people on the river up here that used the sturgeon one way or another, did those people also go down and spear one in Winnebago, or did they – they didn't go down there? Or did they have any –

HD: No.

RB: How did they feel about what was going on down there with the spearfishing, especially when they opened the Upriver Lakes?

HD: Well, I don't know. Our people, even now, I don't think hardly ever went down – years ago went down spearing at the lake.

RB: Really?

HD: They said it would take one year, and that's it. You know what I mean?

RB: Yes.

HD: They weren't interested down there. Down there, they always say the guys up here are taking all the fish. But it's kind of the opposite. But we'll take the blame if they want to give it to us.

[laughter]

We don't take that many up here.

RB: Yes.

KSK: I've been trying to do some research on when they opened up the sturgeon fishery again in 1931, [19]32.

RB: [19]32, yes.

KSK: They had closed it in 1915. Then they reopened it. I don't know. I've just been asking people just to see because I'm trying to figure out kind of how that came about. I actually can't find – do you know – did you hear anything about Senator Merritt White in Winneconne or any sort of people talking around on the Wolf River trying to reopen the sturgeon fishery or –

HD: Not that I'm aware of.

[talking simultaneously]

RB: Because they had a hook and line season here until 1959. Did you know that, Haze?

HD: No. They had – actually –

RB: They had fall hook and line.

KSK: In the fall, yes.

RB: Fall hook and line season.

HD: One time they had a fall hook and line season was in Waupaca County.

RB: Yes. You're right. Because it bounced around from –

HD: The Wolf River had a little shark pieces in Waupaca County.

RB: Yes.

KSK: Right. Yes.

RB: Right. Yes. Did you ever fish in that fishery?

HD: No. If I fished, I fished.

RB: If you fish, you fish. Right. Yes. [laughter]

KSK: When you take a sturgeon, it would be during the spring run? Is that when – or in the fall or when –

RB: Or when did people typically –

KSK: Yes.

RB: If they were going to take a sturgeon to eat, when would they do it, in the fall or the spring or –

HD: Some of both, I think.

RB: Both. Yes.

KSK: Okay.

RB: I mean, you guys always knew that there were fish up here in the fall.

HD: We knew they were here year-round all our life. [laughter] We didn't tell you guys.

RB: Right. [laughter]

HD: They have always been here.

RB: Yes. Right.

HD: As I said, dad and I would take a float in the fall. We'd get our one fish, and he'd be happy.

KSK: Yes. I don't think that really was known down –

RB: But would it be typically in October in that time of year when you'd go, you think, or –

HD: I'd say about September. The water, all of a sudden, it'll clear right up in the fall. We'd wait until it's clear.

RB: Yes.

KSK: Okay. That's interesting.

HD: But what is the reason they're here on the river? Sturgeon are here. The river's clean, real

nice and clean. Right now, it's dirty. Rivers and its banks are dirty.

RB: Yes.

HD: Is that all carp, or what is doing that?

RB: I don't know.

HD: Where was that dirt before? When the water was high and there was a lot of current, there was no dirt.

RB: No. I don't know.

HD: Now, I'll take you out here, and it's stained.

RB: Yes. It wasn't like that. I mean, when you were growing up, it would be more cloudy in the summer, though, as well?

HD: As far as I know, because we always waited until fall for it to clear up before we –

RB: Yes. I mean, I think some of it comes from tines and runoff. I don't know.

HD: I was just wondering if it's the – leaves are deteriorating more. They weren't like that. They're getting –

RB: Well, I'm sure –

HD: – rotten and –

RB: – there's blooms going on as well. Algae as well as zooplankton blooms that are occurring in the river as well. Because it's pretty productive.

HD: Right now, you get dead leaves, the rotten ones. So, you're casting it where you cast it before, and the water's going down. You start bumping the bottom, come up with rotten leaves, and [inaudible].

RB: Right, right. Yes.

HD: What other questions did you have? Shoot away.

KSK: Do you ever hear any stories about any of the Chicago bootleggers coming up here and doing any illegal hunting or fishing or –

HD: No, not really. I know they said they shipped stuff out by train and stuff years ago. I don't know.

KSK: Yes.

HD: But I saw DNR come, and they had a great big salmon and got carp one time. Those were going out in –

RB: In trucks. Really? Did they do that in the river?

HD: They were supposed – yeah. It was down toward Shiocton.

RB: Really?

HD: About halfway between here and Shiocton. They were hauling them out of there with – oh, what heck are they called – big trucks with water, water tanks. They were supposed to be going into some railroad car deal then going to New York. It was all for the Jewish people. It was live carp.

RB: Live carp, yes. Well, the DNR had a huge rough-fish program starting back actually in the [19]40s. But it really ramped up in the [19]50s.

HD: I don't know if there was any sturgeon involved in that or not. But I know my dad took me down there. They had this big loop, like I said. They had all these fish in there. They were dipping them out in these tank trucks and taking them away.

RB: Yes.

HD: So, sturgeon, they said years ago, they piled them up and burned them, huh?

RB: That's a – yeah. On the Great Lakes, they did.

KSK: Yes. I keep looking for pictures just to see if anybody has them.

RB: Right. We haven't found any cordwood piles of pictures.

KSK: Yes. You always hear the description that they piled them up like cordwood.

HD: You're going to be going quite a while on your book here? You know we find stuff in –

RB: Well, we're getting close to wrapping up interviews now.

KSK: Yes. These are some of the last interviews.

RB: I wanted to make sure that we got a really good sample from Shiocton. We're interviewing some people on the Upriver Lakes yet some decoy carvers on the east shore. Then that'll be pretty close to the end of the interviews. Then we hope to have the book out next year sometime. So, now we will probably have – not probably. We will have our photographer come up and make an appointment with you to get a picture.

HD: Yes.

RB: That'll be a separate appointment.

HD: Yes.

RB: As a matter of fact, when he comes, we can probably have him bring this back to you.

KSK: Oh, that's good.

HD: Yes.

RB: He can hand-carry that back to you.

KSK: Yes.

HD: Well, like I said, it's just something that –

RB: Yes. No, that –

KSK: That's really special.

RB: That is, yes.

HD: Lucky I still have it.

RB: Yes. I mean, that's a nice piece. But otherwise, I don't think I have any other burning questions.

KSK: No. That's kind of like –

RB: I mean, one question I do have is, I mean, most of the DNR or conservation department's presence over the years has been wardens. But do you remember when the biologists first came – first started showing up here? Do you have a memory in time of that?

HD: No, I don't.

RB: Because they started tagging fish back in actually 1954. But then like you mentioned, there weren't that many sites that they could tag at.

HD: No. Most of the rock in the river was old concrete or something that – and these steep banks. The farmers would dump their concrete and stuff over the bank for two reasons. Mainly to get rid of it. The second one is to protect the river bank because they're (watching?) it so bad.

RB: Right.

HD: Like on my rocks here, there's some silo block in there.

RB: Oh, yeah.

HD: Then one girl asked me what those were. It was a silo blockage. She didn't understand what that was. They're concave.

RB: Sure.

KSK: Right.

[talking simultaneously]

RB: Those old silos, they go all the way up. Yes.

HD: Yes. There's a bunch of silo blocks in here.

KSK: I mean, those sturgeon really like it there.

RB: Yes. They like it there. It's a good spot.

HD: Well, normally I got two and a half days when they show up. I always figured it's two and a half days.

RB: Right. You see fish here every year, Haze, pretty much?

HD: Yes. Some years more than others.

RB: How was it this spring with the water so high?

HD: We had a double run. I'd say we had six days of fish here.

RB: Yes. Well, we had the run in – well, the one in April, but then we had runs all the way up and down the river. We actually had a third run in some spots where fish came in. But the second runs usually don't amount to that much as many fish.

HD: We had fish last weekend spawning.

RB: Really? Last weekend? So, not the one we just finished, but before.

HD: Well, let's see. I lost my plugs last weekend. So, it would be just before that, a couple days before.

KSK: Wow.

RB: Really? So, last week? Today's the 27th.

HD: Oh.

RB: I got a calendar right here.

KSK: Do you want to look at it again?

RB: Today's the 27th.

HD: That'll be the 17th.

RB: Really? I got to write this down.

HD: 17th or 18th.

KSK: Wow.

HD: There were a whole bunch of them in one spot. I always tried to tell you. I was going to call you. It never seemed like you're interested. I said –

RB: No, I'm interested.

HD: I told you that three to four weeks after you think they're all done, there's one more time they'll come.

RB: Oh, we know that. We know that.

HD: I tell you, the fish don't look like the other ones.

KSK: Really?

HD: Normally, the ones I used to see didn't anyway. They're short. They're stubby. Real big round and shorter fish.

RB: Really?

KSK: Short, fat fish.

HD: Your idea would be, "Oh, these are normal all along." These are shorter and heavier. They're stockier. I guess they're stocky.

RB: Yes. I mean, we've actually tagged fish on the second run already. But part of our problem is that we get done with sturgeon, and then we put all our stuff away. We get busy on other things. By the time we mobilize, the comfort – because the second run usually lasts a little bit shorter than the first run, it seems.

HD: There's always one run that's a month later than the last.

RB: Yes.

KSK: How did your family prepare sturgeon? Did you smoke it mostly?

HD: We smoked it. I had a recipe. I got to see if I could find it, baked.

RB: Oh, yeah.

HD: A woman from Shawano gave us a recipe for sturgeon – baked and sour cream. It was excellent.

RB: Oh, yeah. I bet that's good.

KSK: That would be good.

RB: I do that with walleyes.

HD: Yes.

RB: Bake them with sour cream.

HD: June –

RB: Potatoes and onions and sour cream and butter.

HD: (June Vought?) from Shawano, (George Vought's?) wife came back. She was originally from the area here toward Nichols.

RB: Did you guys ever prepare a caviar?

HD: I never did. There was a guy by the name of Red [inaudible] up there toward Shawano that used to do it.

RB: Have you eaten it?

HD: I've eaten it.

RB: Yes. You don't like it? [laughter]

HD: The stuff he had wasn't too bad. I had a guy that got one out of Winnebago this winter and gave me some. It was so salty. You couldn't –

RB: Oh, yeah. Well, that's –

HD: You couldn't do anything.

RB: – part of the problem is that it was over-salted.

HD: The other guy's has more of a wintergreen taste. It had a –

KSK: Oh, really?

HD: Yes. He did something that had a wintergreen taste to it.

KSK: Yes. Some of it is just –

RB: Well, it's just in preparation.

KSK: Right. Yes.

RB: Well, and also how they handle it after. They drive around for the taverns for the day with the roe inside the fish. If it freezes, it's not going to make a very good flavor.

KSK: Oh, yeah.

RB: You got to get it out of the fish right away.

KSK: Right.

HD: I don't know. I didn't see any delicacy in it. [laughter]

RB: Can't understand why it's going for – what is it? \$200 an ounce or whatever.

KSK: An ounce, yes. Well, I think that's all I have.

RB: Yes. I think that's all I have, too. So, we really appreciate your time.

KSK: Thanks so much. Can I just ask you? I was telling you a little bit about Shadows on the Wolf on the way up. I didn't really know much about –

RB: Your projects that you worked on, yes.

HD: Oh.

KSK: I didn't really know much about the organization. So, could you just tell me a little bit about how that started? Because he said you were one of the –

HD: Yes. I was one of the original charter members.

KSK: Right. Could you just give me a little history about –

HD: Well, we started off with – what heck was the name of the club? I'm trying to think. Man, there was a – it wasn't Ducks Unlimited. It wasn't [inaudible]. I'm losing the name.

KSK: One of those –

HD: Anyway, it might come back. Anyway, there was a club, and we were affiliated with that. We had our banquet. We made \$15,000. We wanted to do some work. They would give us \$1,500 to do work with. That's all they'd give us. We monkeyed around for a little while, and we just said, "Heck with you. We'll start our own." That's how we got started.

RB: That wasn't the Wisconsin Waterfowlers, was it?

HD: Yes. I think it was.

RB: Yes, Wisconsin Waterfowl Association. Yes.

HD: I think it probably was.

KSK: You made 15,000 on your first – from banquets?

HD: I think so, something like that.

RB: Yes.

HD: Shadow on the Wolf, you need to see what we make.

RB: Well, these guys –

HD: We make 40,000 a year.

KSK: Really?

RB: They do a good job on their banquets. It's amazing.

HD: We've overdone over half a million dollars on projects.

RB: But then the projects that you do – I was telling Kathy a little bit about what you guys do with the money. It's –

HD: We bought twenty-six acres of land in Shiocton for the rifle range. Then we donated it to the village. So, that's under their tax umbrella and their liability insurance and everything. Then we just keep sticking money into it. In fact, we put money in again this year for a bar. It's been fun.

RB: But I mean, you've done habitat projects. You've done a lot of spawning marsh projects and –

HD: Big culverts put in.

RB: For Wallace [inaudible].

HD: Boat landings.

RB: Boat landings.

HD: Boat landings.

RB: Fishing piers, right?

HD: Fishing piers.

RB: Did you guys help with those piers at Koepke?

HD: Yes.

RB: Then the youth program that you have, too. Don't you have some youth programs that you support?

HD: Yes. We support – well, all the local stuff, turkeys, and all that stuff. We support all of them. I think on nature center, we gave them, I don't know, \$5,000 once. Then we turned around and gave the nature center at New London, gave them was about the same amount. Then the nature center up here needed money for a parking lot, we gave them money for a parking lot.

RB: Bamboo Bend. You put money in the Bamboo Bend, too, with –

HD: Stone and everything else there.

RB: Yes. So –

KSK: That's really terrific. That Bamboo Bend, it's just –

HD: All these trap clubs, we help all of them.

RB: Yes.

HD: The bull ranger here by – what the heck do you call that one now? Right on 47, do you know what I'm talking about?

RB: Yes, Token Creek.

HD: Token Creek.

RB: Yes.

HD: We donate to them too every year.

RB: Oh, really? All the way up there.

HD: Yes. So, those take – what do they call it? Ladies and Youth Day at Navarino J&H. We always donate a gun there. You just name it. We just – all kinds of stuff.

KSK: Wow.

RB: You're a very active organization.

KSK: Yes.

RB: A lot of workers, people that get stuff done.

HD: Yes.

KSK: Well organized.

HD: Too bad that they threw the wrench into all our stuff, that DNR deal got cut down. We were going to do a project. We went down and said, "We want to do this project in the marsh. What are we going to do?" "Go ahead. Permit will catch up to you." By that time, the project was done before the permit was written.

KSK: That was a surprise. [laughter]

HD: But now, what do they do? Drag us out two years, three years.

RB: Yes. That's –

HD: It's all back. It just went back.

RB: It's a shame.

KSK: It's more difficult to get –

HD: We weren't doing anything wrong.

RB: No. All good stuff. We're trying to fix that, but it's –

KSK: The red tape.

RB: I'd have to turn the tape off to tell you the whole story.

KSK: Okay. All right.

[end of transcript]