

People of the Sturgeon: Wisconsin's Love Affair with an Ancient Fish

Clarence Hopp Oral History

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Interviewer: RB – Richard Braasch

Transcriber: NCC

Richard Braasch: Clarence, I'm Dick Braasch. I am at Clarence Hopp's residence. I'm interviewing Clarence Hopp. He lives on the Fox River. It would be southwest of Berlin.

Clarence Hopp: Southwest of Berlin, yes.

RB: Southwest, yes. Clarence, when and where were you born?

CH: In Berlin, 1/23/51.

RB: How large was your family, Clarence?

CH: I'm the only son.

RB: Any sisters?

CH: No.

RB: Really?

CH: I'm the only one.

RB: What did your parents do for a living?

CH: Just farming.

RB: Farming?

CH: Then the last ten years before retirement, he worked at the foundry.

RB: Farming and he worked at the foundry?

CH: Yes.

RB: You're working there now, right?

CH: I'm working there, yes.

RB: How did you first get interested in sturgeon fishing?

CH: Through some friends, through some of my relation. Well, we started when we were about sixteen years old and we just kept it going. In fact, I think by now, with me and her, we went around the whole lake already.

RB: [laughter]

CH: Kept it going around. Yes. We just got going and got interested. I used the neighbor's

shack on a week. They'd spear during the week. Then on the weekends, they'd do their farming, and then I'd sit in their shacks. That's how we started and built our own and went from there. I started to enjoy it then.

RB: That's when you do enjoy it when you first get into it.

CH: Oh, it's nice. It's different.

RB: How many were in your group?

CH: Well, we had at one time up to about ten in the group. We're down to about six now. Some kind of went there with different ways or somebody worked different shifts that they couldn't get off.

RB: It changes.

CH: Yes, it changes. So, we're down to the smaller crew.

RB: Do you have any family stories or pictures of the sturgeon spearing or fishing?

CH: Yes, we got some pictures and stories. You mean about spearing the fish?

RB: Yes. Yes. Well, any different stories that you have about sturgeon.

CH: Well, there's times you sit for three or four days and don't see nothing. Then you get the urge to move and then the next guy stays back and spears a fish.

RB: [laughter]

CH: That's about the way it goes.

RB: Then you want to move back.

CH: You want to move back.

RB: [laughter]

CH: Or usually, you start one place, you end back where you started. There was a really good story that one weekend. My brother-in-law, he speared on Poygan. We talked him to come with us and put him in a shack. Pretty quick, (the hat?) comes out of the shack, he missed a sturgeon. Really upset, so we reset him again. So, then we moved (by him?). I think that's when you – no, no, that was the other same day. Anyway, then he misses another one. Well, he's ready to go home.

RB: [laughter]

CH: So, then one of the guys got one. I moved my shack on. My cousin always told me, "Get this spear ready before you bank the snow." Oh, no, too much of a hurry, quick bank the snow, get in the shack. Here's a sturgeon swimming (out of the hole?), no spearing.

RB: [laughter]

CH: Then that was the day, that same day my wife got one. Then she had to get out of the shack. We put another guy in. I knelt down on the floor. I'll never forget that. It was just like an aquarium. I could see sturgeon swimming all over, like eight, ten different sturgeon. There's one real great –

RB: Is that on Poygan?

CH: No. On Winnebago –

RB: Winnebago.

CH: – between Indian Point and (Blackberry Island?), about a mile and a half out. I'll never forget that.

RB: Really?

CH: Because you could see them sturgeon swimming. They were way out, but one was real gray, white, like whitish, grayish sturgeon. There [were] big ones. So, they're playing with the decoys, trying to con them in. It must have been a school of swimming (troops?). I never dreamed about it. See, I'm ahead of myself. That was the year when the snow all thawed away. It was glare ice. In the early [19]90s, the (Plains Point?) was picking up.

RB: They're picking up.

CH: Because we were all kind of telling each other, well, I guess I was the last one to get a fish because them guys were fishing the walleyes. Here, that big one [comes], that was eighty-eight pounds. Well, I get on the radio, tell them to get over here because I didn't know how hard I speared it. Well, here, I heard this truck coming and I heard it sliding. I thought they were coming right to the shack.

RB: [laughter]

CH: Oh, my God, here we go.

RB: [laughter]

CH: Because you could just hear it. Oh, I'm hanging on for my dear life, but finally they stopped. I mean, the mud was just rolling. We were in deep water. But finally, we see how good he speared. We didn't have to get another spear. But that was the biggest I ever speared was eighty-eight pounds. But that was very, very nice.

RB: It's quite an experience.

CH: Oh, then there's a couple times we couldn't get off this way. We had to go to Stockbridge or Quinney to get off because the cracks [were] too wide. Oh, yes. Yes, it's watching TV with no picture. But when it comes in, you never forget it.

RB: [laughter] Exactly. What factors or elements are involved in fishing, like your tools? Is there anything different that you use or do anything different than the other guys do?

CH: Well, some guys got the ice saws. We do it with chainsaws. We still got an ice hand saw, in case the saw breaks down. Everybody's got difference in spears, flying barbs, wooden handles on the spearhead. We got different ones too and don't really have nothing the same, or that we hang on one.

RB: Do you make your own [inaudible]?

CH: Spears? No. We have a guy that makes them. Yes. We build shacks and everything else up to spears.

RB: What did you use to cut the hole before you had the chainsaw?

CH: The old ice hand saw, yes. The old ice one, man. We wouldn't move every day then.

[laughter]

Maybe once or twice. Yes, yes. I can remember that. Then we had the old ice prongs. We'd lift them out. Yes. That was the good old days. Especially on Poygan, we'd always lift them out and push them down.

RB: We were afraid that you'd hit the black ice and you pushed it under. [laughter]

CH: Yes. I can tell what we started out with four-by-four shacks. That's what we started out with. I had a cousin that was a big man and young guy. I'll never forget that. The wardens checked me. So, I was looking out the shack. I see this guy. They used to jump off the snowmobiles (run?). The guy just stood there. He was amazed because this three-hundred-pound boy is in this little four by four shack. He asked him to step out.

[laughter]

There would have been a video there. It was so funny because he filled the whole shack up. Then the warden asked him how he ever got in there. "Oh, squeeze in," he said.

RB: [laughter] Four by four shack.

CH: Four by fours out of chipboard.

RB: Really?

CH: Yes. We had six of them. Well, we had them for snow. Years ago, the roads weren't plowed out that much between Stockbridge and off of Indian Point. That's where we always did most of our spearing. We'd go out with snowmobiles and we'd take them little shacks.

RB: What other problems or challenges did you have during your fishing experience? Weather problems or ice problems?

CH: Well, ice problems, yes. That one year when Payne shut their clubs, they're landing off, then we had to go off to the fresh air camp. Ice was going up and down. That's when the Budweiser truck went in. We had to go right past that, and ice was going just like this. Then we had some guys wanted to bail out of the trucks. They didn't want to ride. They were scared.

RB: That happens usually towards the end of the season when they –

CH: Towards the end, that was. But otherwise, we've been pretty lucky. I mean, we used our heads. I wasn't with the crew that one time. They were out by Wentz and they had to stay overnight. The snow come up so bad, it was drifting. They knew they couldn't make it. The dad was alive. Mr. Wentz was alive. But he knew the Berlin boys were out there. He went like 3:00 a.m. and followed them out, got them back because they knew they couldn't have made it. They'd have got stuck. At that time, you didn't have four-wheel drives. You had two-wheel drives. They'd have never made it to shore. But otherwise, we've been pretty lucky.

RB: Well, that's good. Anyway, it sounds like you enjoyed it, like I do. [laughter]

CH: Yes. Even if you don't get one, it's just to be out there.

RB: Do you do anything different than anybody else does, like different decoys?

CH: Well, we've got different decoys and we've got cups we use. To me right now, with the dead shed, I'd say you can make something small, a small decoy and make the fish act like it's dead and work it. Well, now, the big deal is guys are taking a dozen of shiners and putting them in a glass jug. They figured that's bringing them in. I don't know. But my theory is like a (hard hat?), but mostly like a cup or a smaller little decoy and just work it like it's a dead shed and them sturgeons come for that. They're acquisitive.

RB: What else do some of your guys use?

CH: They're passed away now, but we had a couple we speared with. The guys got thirsty and went to shore and left the two wives in the shack. They had a toilet seat for a decoy. The sturgeon come and got caught in the toilet seat. The girls were wondering if it was big enough to spear.

RB: [laughter]

CH: When the boys got back, they weren't too happy because they knew it was a lot bigger than it should have been. The women didn't throw the spear because they were wondering if it was big enough.

RB: [laughter]

CH: There's been some stories.

RB: Have you got any more stories? (I want to hear them?).

CH: It was [19]94. My boy bought a brand-new truck. Well, him and his other buddy had to wait until the last minute. That's when we could spear to, yes, 4:30, or dark, whatever. They'd wait until dark. They were coming off and got on Payne's Bridge. The bridge opened up. They didn't know. The water was squirting above the fenders of that new truck already, but they made it. The other guy had to go back the other way. Everybody was gone. His name was Doc Lynn. He had a beautiful shack. They sprayed that with fiberglass and with tubing. It was a beautiful shack. Apparently, the stove somehow shut off and the gas blew up and blew the shack up.

RB: Oh, boy.

CH: So, the next morning, we were fishing out spears and stoves, trying to get it out of the hole because it all fell in. The shack burnt right down and does the tubing. Yes.

RB: [laughter]

CH: The spears and everything was down. We were all trying to get it out for him. We never did get the spear out. We got the stove and stuff out, but never got the spear. We couldn't hook it. We couldn't hook it. At that time, I don't know, there probably [were] no divers at that time, or we'd never thought of it. But otherwise –

Female Speaker: Going back from the time when you and Rodney got lost in the fog that time.

CH: Well, we lost the shacks in the windstorm, yes. I can talk about that one. We took the shacks out.

RB: Like the headwind?

CH: Yes. We took them out like Wednesday before. We went out at night towards Stockbridge in the middle of the lake where the homes are. We took them off. We had two shacks we took out or three, two. Then some of the other people brought them out first on the weekend. We come there Friday and no shacks. Everybody says, "You've got to go to shore. Wind is blowing. You've got to go to the east shore." Well, there they were, all piled up. We couldn't find the boys' shack. We found the wife's shack. That went south, right with the wind or against the wind. How that went that way, I have no idea. The boys were hung up in one of them pine trees, but there were shacks where they were just stuck together. There was stuff laying all over them.

I had the eight-wheeler with tracks. The wind was so bad, I couldn't make it back. I couldn't make it back.

RB: Didn't you wait?

CH: They're in the [inaudible]. (You had to just?) sit and slide. Them plastic tracks, like a sail. Finally, I could find a little enough snow to make them back. You couldn't pull nothing with that. It was helpless. But otherwise, it's been pretty lucky.

RB: Who was the best spearer you ever know of? The luckiest guy you ever heard of.
[laughter]

CH: Well, I'd say the luckiest guy is probably (Jimmy Distract?). I'd say James Distract. He is one of the luckiest guys. His theory is when he can't get one, he goes outside, throws his hat up in the air. Where the wind blows in the ice, that's where he puts his hole.

[laughter]

Well, this year or this last winter, that one shack speared a fish every day. We'd put around them. Nobody else could get any, but whoever would sit in that shack could get a sturgeon.

RB: Isn't that something?

CH: That was Jimmy's shack. By just throwing that hat out, that's been just that one spot. I mean, we tried everything. My boy even went and got his decoy out of the shack and put it in his shack, and it didn't work.

RB: It didn't work.

CH: It didn't work.

RB: Charlie Furman and I used to say they followed the same path.

CH: Just like a deer.

RB: Like a trail.

CH: Like a trail.

RB: In the water. That's what his theory was.

CH: [inaudible]

RB: So, evidently, that shack, they were following that same pattern.

CH: In the years I've been watching, like if you see a crowd spearing a lot of sturgeon, that's a

mistake to go in by them. To me, it's when you get a lot of the blood in the water, I think the fish move away. We always try to stay at least a quarter mile away from them or more or half a mile, and we get fish. I mean, there is that one year when they were all spearing them – it's not that many years ago, 2000 – they were just pounding them. We were right to the southeast corner of Fond du Lac. There was sturgeon, everything, coming through, a lot of small sturgeon. They were coming through like a bullet. To me, that's what I think it is because we used to spear a lot of carp. If you spear an open marsh and you spear any amount of carp, they'll quit spawning. I'd say it's that blood. They sense that and then they leave. I think that's with sturgeon.

RB: That could be something to that.

CH: It could be something about that. Yes. I always like to kind of stay away from the crowd, if you can.

RB: Well, how many fish do you think you've speared?

CH: In my lifetime, I don't know for sure, I'd say at least eight of them.

RB: Really?

CH: I speared a real long one. It was seventy-some inches long. The head was huge. It was just like a stovepipe.

RB: It looked like they were well-nourished?

CH: They're skinny. Well, that's when they take that deal from the (fin?). They said she was seventy-three years old. She was on her way out.

RB: On her way out.

CH: The head was huge. The head was this huge. I mean, it was just like a snake coming in a hole. [laughter] I couldn't believe it. Yes, it was just a six-inch stovepipe. Yes, that fish didn't weigh over sixty pounds.

RB: Like that one year now or a couple years ago, they were smaller.

CH: Yes, yes.

RB: I think that was before the shad were really heavy in the lake.

CH: Well, like now this year, they said the red worms are coming back. The fish looked a little healthier.

RB: We had lake flies this year, quite a few.

CH: That helps. Some fish were really small or skinny. But I found out one thing, when you

get three, four in a party, don't mix them together because everyone tastes different. You don't mix your meat together and keep them separate.

RB: What they're eating.

CH: Yes. It's what they're eating.

RB: What illegal activities have you heard of guys doing?

CH: [laughter]

RB: Don't worry about it because [inaudible].

CH: Well, years ago, they used to spear the carp.

RB: (It's just for topic?).

CH: We could spear a rough fish. Can you remember that?

RB: Yes.

CH: We speared rough fish. Then sometimes, the guys would make a mistake and spear a catfish or a flathead or something because they thought it was a carp, fat. But lately, I mean, the last ten, fifteen years, I have not heard of much of anything. You don't hear none of that. But years ago, I can remember people would fry fish right on the shacks.

RB: Really?

CH: Yes. On Poygan. I can remember that. The guys would be frying fish.

RB: You had more luck on Poygan than Winnebago?

CH: No. We got the better majority of the fish on Winnebago.

RB: Winnebago.

CH: We were out there in Poygan. That one year, we filled up. But we had, what, five fish that one year in two days. But we never did good.

RB: Oh, your wife, Shirley. No.

CH: Susie. Susan.

RB: Or Susie.

[laughter]

I'll get it right. It's helpful.

CH: She is the lucky one, yes.

RB: She's the lucky one.

CH: Yes. She speared at least a half a dozen in her life. But we forget about her. We put her in her shack and we leave her and go. She's all alone.

RB: She's got a picture in a paper, was it last year?

CH: Last year, she got her picture in a paper. I went to get the lady to interview her. Here, she's got a fish. We stopped by the shack. I'm explaining it to her because some guys are cutting in. All of a sudden, I heard, "Help me. Help me." That lady said, "Well, is that somebody you know?" I said, "That's my wife. But I said, I think the help she needs, it is not that she needs help. She's got a fish, or something's wrong."

RB: [laughter]

CH: We opened the door. Here, she's got the fish.

RB: [laughter]

CH: I mean, how lucky could you be?

RB: How does she pick them?

FS: [laughter]

RB: Getting back to those different tasting fish, now, do you think that it's different between Poygan?

CH: I don't know if it's what you eat. Oh, yes. Your Poygan fish are, I'd say, a little more fishier tasting than Winnebago fish because we have friends that speared on Poygan, got fish. We all said that it seems like they're more fishier taste. I don't know if it's the shallow water or are they more males than females. At that time, we didn't know if they were males or females. It's no different, I guess, catching a northern on, say, Poygan and catching a northern on Big Green.

RB: Now, do you think that the sturgeon taste also has something to do with real fat content?

CH: Yes.

RB: Where the other ones aren't as much fat?

CH: Yes. I'd say that's got something to do with it, that fat. We trim that all off. It looks like a lot of waste, but we get rid of all that, all you can. Then we soak them. We keep on washing them and washing them until the water gets clean until it's pure. It is not milky. I think that makes a difference by trimming that all off.

RB: I just smoked some this last week.

CH: Oh, yes?

RB: [laughter] What do you have for recipes?

CH: Well, you mean for recipes for frying?

RB: Frying, whatever. How do you like them fixed?

CH: Well, she deep-fries them. Then she boils them in butter and – how is that? You put it in the microwave?

FS: You [inaudible] them.

[laughter]

CH: Well, she is the fryer.

RB: What's your favorite?

CH: I like them deep-fried. To me, when she boils them and then we dip it in butter, it's like poor man's lobster. It's like eating lobster, so muscly.

FS: We just kind of put them in the microwave with some butter and stuff and that and put some seasoning in there and that. Then just kind of bake it for three, four minutes or whatever. Then you take them out and then you dip them in butter. Then it's really good that way.

RB: It's good that way.

FS: Yes, yes, yes. But it's mostly deep-fried.

RB: Do you have any smoked?

FS: Oh, yes.

CH: Yes, we have them smoked.

FS: Jimmy smokes them.

CH: Jimmy Distrافت [smokes] them for us. We always keep the belly part. Then from the tail

back for smoking because that's, I don't know, more bloodier, more muddy, keep them – or by the head there for smoking. But the rest, we like to eat it. I like eating it.

RB: Well, let's see here. We're down to recipes and food waste here. You told us how you like them and how you made them. You got your own recipes there. Did somebody help you out on those?

CH: No. We just kind of did it ourselves, tried different stuff. I know before, we'd trim them. Boy, you'd smell the whole house up to get that fishy smell. Then sometimes, word of mouth, what some people tried, different ones tell, but then you try it. The way you do it is mostly with the cracker crumbs with the eggs.

FS: Yes, cracker crumbs. Well, a lot of times, it's with soda crackers. You crunch them up and stuff. Then you dip them in egg and then you roll it in your cracker crumbs and then you deep fry them. Yes.

CH: Yes.

FS: That's about the best. Then there's your golden dip, too. The golden dip is really good because you do the same thing. You dip it in egg and then you roll it in that golden dip and then deep fry it. It's great, or if you want to put a little seasoning salt or whatever and stuff like that. I mean, when I used to live at home, [laughter] I never ate any of this stuff before.

RB: [laughter]

FS: To me, this was all new when I met him and stuff. So, I got to learn how to eat and all this kind of stuff [laughter], and to go fishing because we never did no fishing in our lives at home. I never was taught that. Well, of course, I was only eighteen years old then and stuff. Then when I met him, well, I got into this, all this hunting and fishing and we do this and this and that. I enjoyed it and stuff. I mean, wow. He says, "Yes, I'll go sturgeon spearing with you and stuff." Well, like you say, when you see that. Then you fry this up when you come home and make it and stuff. It's good. I enjoyed a lot of it. I'm glad I have met him to do all this then [laughter] and stuff.

FS: Do you think that Clarence gets upset because you get more fish than he does?

FS: Well, probably sometimes, yes.

[laughter]

I mean, that's luck, I guess. I mean, I love fishing by myself. I was always fishing with him and stuff like that. I said, "No." I said, "I want my own shack." I says, "I can see more. If I have any problems, you're there and stuff like that and stuff and that."

[talking simultaneously]

So, it's just like if I spear one, I'll let you know. But then if I miss one, I won't let you know [laughter] and stuff.

RB: The lady doing the talking now, it's Clarence Hopp's wife. Sue, yes.

FS: Yes.

CH: Can I tell another story?

RB: Sure.

CH: Since this lady has been talking, she's got a story or there's a story that she has not told us here yet. We moved a bunch of shacks one day and we left her back. It was probably like four or five hours, we just kept it going and just kind of figured. We knew she was there, but we just left her with no vehicles. In a way, she got company in the shack.

FS: They just left me because it was really blowing and snowing and stuff and that. Then he said, "Well, you'll be all right." I says, "Yeah, I'll be fine." I says, "I don't care." I says, "I got my food here and whatever and stuff. I'm ready on that. I'm fine. If I see a fish, I'll let you know." So, in a way, then, oh, once I get a tap-tap on my door, and I thought, "Okay. Well, who is this?" I heard this truck drive up there and here was a warden. I says, "Come on in." He opens up the door. "Oh," he says, "you're a woman." I go, "Yes."

RB: [laughter]

FS: He says, "Do you have a problem with a woman," I says, "or what?" "Well, no, no, no." He says, "Where is your vehicle?" I said, "Well," I says, "I just got dropped off." He says, "Well, you're here all by yourself?" I says, "Well, yes." I says, "Can't a woman spear," I says, "by herself?" "Well, yes," he says. So, he came in there –

RB: [laughter]

FS: – and he talked with me. But I couldn't tell you what the name of the warden was and stuff, but he was very nice and stuff. He chatted with me for probably about ten minutes or so in there. He kind of took the flashlight and was flashing around. He says, "Well," he says, "I can't believe you're sitting here all by yourself." I says, "Well, I like being by myself," I says, "and that." He's going and he's looking, "Well, do you see any fish?" I go, "Yes." I said, "I've seen something go through. It was a carp or whatever." Then you see your garfish and whatever and stuff. I said, "No. Not a sturgeon yet," I says, "but I'm hoping." "Well," he says, "God," he says, "I hope they'll come after you," he says. [laughter] He says, "I hate to see you by yourself here." I says, "No." I says, "They'll come after me." I says, "They're probably way down from me and stuff because they dropped me off." Well, then he takes the truck with him and then he goes in his shack then. So, that how that went then. So, that was kind of neat.

RB: This is what we're after.

CH: The stories.

FS: Yes.

CH: What about the fillings on your tooth?

FS: Oh, no. That's right.

CH: You're not going to tell that one.

[laughter]

FS: Yes. That was kind of exciting because it was just like, well, I just had a filling put in and stuff. I've been sitting there all by myself. I'm just standing there right next to my spear. All at once, "Oh, my God," I thought, "What is this?" Here, this fish came in. It was a big Mississippi bowhead. It was just as yellow as yellow could be. He came right up to the top of the hole and he swerved like in there. It's like, "Ah." [laughter] I go like this. Then I broke one of my [teeth] in my mouth because I went like, "Whoa," like that and stuff.

RB: [laughter]

FS: Then it swam out then, but I never saw such a big Mississippi bowhead.

RB: Wow.

FS: Oh, it was a whopper.

CH: That was by Stockbridge. I don't know if you can see a quarter on the bottom.

FS: Yes. Oh, God.

CH: It was so clear. That's when the ice was so bad.

FS: I thought it was a – [laughter]

CH: It was crystal clear there. Oh, this is unbelievable.

RB: Isn't that something?

FS: Yes.

CH: Yes.

RB: We're getting down to the end here. Who are you passing this on to, this sturgeon fishing?

CH: To my son. I don't know, maybe my son-in-law will get involved. But my son is really

into it.

FS: Yes. Rodney.

CH: Rodney is his name. He's got a full-size mount that he got. You can look all the way around and see the glass cage, beautiful sturgeon.

RB: I've seen a picture of that.

CH: Did you see that?

RB: Yes.

CH: Beautiful.

FS: Yes. That was an eighty-pounder, I think.

CH: That was eighty pounds.

FS: It was sixty-eight inches long. Yes, he's pretty proud of that.

CH: Yes.

FS: That was in nineteen –

CH: Ninety-nine, wasn't it?

FS: Yes. 1999, yes.

RB: (Weitler?) showed me that picture when I was up there, too.

CH: Yes. Yes, he's a nice guy.

FS: Yes.

CH: Yes. He got that. Yes. I was in the shack with him that day, too. It was on the second day because we were laughing because some kids that night were riding around and they tried jumping the crack. They went in. The divers were, in the meantime, getting the car out. I said, "Yes. We'll be watching. The diver, he'll come swimming through the hole." All at once, he threw the spear. I said, "Well, why did you do that? You goofing around?" "No, there's a fish. Did you see it?" I says, "Yes, right." Then all at once, I've seen the rope taken off, and that was that big sturgeon. I'd never seen it, never, never seen it. It was just unreal.

RB: Yes, if you're not looking at them –

CH: No. You just don't get your eye on them at the right time.

RB: You don't get your eye on them.

FS: Yes.

FS: Now, you supported Sturgeons for Tomorrow for how many years?

FS: Well, we were there from day one.

CH: Whenever they started up at Neenah and then you guys at Oshkosh.

RB: No, we're talking about the banquets that you supported.

CH: The banquets. Yes, I'd say it's at least, what, twenty something – well, they had the 25th at Neenah.

RB: Appleton.

CH: Appleton. So, we've been there.

FS: And then all that –

CH: Then when you guys started up at Oshkosh, we've been there. So, not many years, but very enjoyable, met a lot of nice people, learned a lot.

RB: You meet a lot of nice people through these banquets.

FS: Yes.

CH: That one year, we had a lady that wanted the stomachs. Then she counted all the worms in the stomachs. This is when we had a lot of worms. That one guy had that one sturgeon. I remember that. We got papers or some place. Over three thousand red worms in one sturgeon stomach, yes.

FS: Well, that was like in 1994.

CH: That's before Ron Brooke was around.

FS: Yes. That's when our whole gang got a lot of sturgeon and stuff like that.

CH: Ron was [inaudible]. Yes.

FS: Oh, my gosh, it was just unreal. Then we had a big party here then and stuff. So, we did everything. I did all the frying and the cooking and everything and stuff. We invited a lot of people that we – sturgeons paired with and stuff like that. So, they all came in that. Then we invited that Mary Seaman because she did the stomachs and stuff.

CH: Yes. You hear Mary Seaman?

FS: Yes.

RB: Yes.

CH: She's the one that did that.

FS: So, she asked if she could come to my party. Then she would bring all this stuff that she did. She brought all the little egg things and she brought her scope things and everything and stuff. She did everything for us, that we could see through. You could see the red worms.

CH: We could look at it. Yes.

FS: You could see all the other different things and stuff like that. She was so happy that I invited her here. Everybody was just amazed because then she put on a show for us then and stuff and talked to us about it and everything and told us everything, what she did with the stomachs and stuff and that. She had a big literature of everything for us and that. I said, "I wish I could find it, but I just can't find it right now." But it was very interesting.

CH: That year, we speared one off of Winnebago Point there. It was full of crayfish. It probably was a male that time. It was a smaller fish, but it had all the crayfish in its stomach. She wrote that all down. I don't know. There was a guy from Madison that was with her, but I don't remember his name, that guy, her boss, whatever her boss's name. But yes, that was the year when my brother-in-law missed them, too, when we got all them fish. But that was unreal.

RB: It sounds like you enjoyed it.

CH: Oh, it was very nice.

RB: Isn't that something?

CH: Yes. Never forget it.

RB: Never forget it?

CH: No.

RB: Clarence, I guess we can wrap it up. Thank you very much.

CH: Thank you.

RB: (Thank you, guys?).

FS: Thank you.

CH: Thank you for interviewing us.

[end of transcript]