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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** Oh yeah, I was like, whatever you guys are in. Well, I guess let's just start with the story of how you came to own this place. To own here? I mean, that story kind of starts before that, obviously, of you coming up here.

[00:00:14] **Speaker 2** Yeah, no, not before I was coming up here. So we came up here, we used to stay at a campground. We started coming up. Robin's aunt owned a resort up here on Spider Lake in like late 70s, early 80s, called Pinecrest Resort. So she came up like as a kid, you know, and then Robin brought me up in like 95. And we came snowmobiling on weekend. It was funny because Robin's Aunt goes, you got the same look in your eye that my husband had in his eye the first time we came And she goes, we never left. 15 years later, we were looking for a place, we used to camp in Minnesota, like Bemidji, Minnesota. And one time we were tired of driving out there and Robin called the Chamber of Commerce and just asked for if we had any campgrounds up here, nice campground, the one that I told you about. So we started staying there, like one week, two weeks, three weeks, you know. And then we finally wanted to get a permanent site so we ended up at this deer run place. So we start staying there and then it was cool, It was fun. I had a conversation with those guys goofing around one time about, you guys should sell this place and retire. And they said, well, you should buy it, this is our retirement. So we said, we would buy this place. That kind of fell through, we ended up, that kind of put the bug in us. So we kept looking and looking and looking and people knew that owned this, knew that we were looking. And they actually approached us and said, Hey, we got a resort for sale. So had you been here before then? A couple of times we came here for music and all that stuff. So they, yeah, we became friends with them. We knew who they were. So, yeah. And then like I said, we own that we managed that other resort. So we were up here more off. I was up here all summer long. So kind of got to know everybody more and stuff.

[00:01:54] **Speaker 1** So were you in the hospitality business before that?

[00:01:56] **Speaker 2** No, I drove a truck for 30 years. So, that's kind of a switch. Yeah, big time. Robin had never bartended before. The day we bought this was the first time she ever bartended. I bartended when I was a kid. Like 21 years old or whatever. But that was it. Running the other one gave us a good idea. Because there was no bar. It was just a cabin. So we had a good ideas with the cabins and stuff like that. How to manage it. It wasn't enough for us both to be up here. Robin was still working. I was getting summers off. My work was real cool. Robin was still working back in Indiana. So you need you needed something more in order for both of us. Yeah. And then we were too far apart. You know, it's getting hard. Like she was always I was always up here and she's down there and stuff. The kids were still younger.

[00:02:43] **Speaker 1** So what year was it that you bought this?

[00:02:45] **Speaker 2** We just bought this two years ago, so this August will be

[00:02:50] **Speaker 1** And how many years before that have you started managing?

[00:02:53] **Speaker 2** Three years, this will be our fifth year, this is our fifth years, so three years before that doing that. And then we had that permanent site for like two years, two or three years, before that. So that's how long we were staying up here like a lot.

[00:03:06] **Speaker 1** So it's been a gradual process.

[00:03:08] **Speaker 2** Yeah, yeah, little by little. Yep. It seems like that's what happens to most people that that come up here and live up here. That's how that works.

[00:03:16] **Speaker 1** This up here just kind of place kind of grabs you brings you in

[00:03:20] **Speaker 2** I always said, like, people ask why we drive all the way from, you know, seven hours to come up here. And I said, first of all, like the lake. I'm like, there's nothing as nice. If someone was like by the Dells, we're just going out with these guys. If it was half as nice, we would just go there. But like this lake with the islands and all that stuff, because I'm not a huge fisherman. I go out fishing a lot, but like we like hanging out on the islands, and all stuff like that. Bouncing around the different resorts and stuff. So like it's just the people, you come up and I tell them, we go to a bar at And you talk like the four people you're with. You come in a bar up here, it's like instant, like the whole bar is talking to each other within five minutes. So that's, it just always been fun, you know, so. I mean, do people say, oh, you feel like a local? Yeah, oh yeah, for sure, yeah. And it's usually the first conversation's like, hey, you guys out fishing, or you know what are you guys up to? You guys bumming around, and then where are you from? And then then everybody all chimes in. That's kind of cool.

[00:04:12] **Speaker 1** So what is it like being on your end of that? Because that's obviously what a lot of people feel when they come up to vacation.

[00:04:17] **Speaker 2** Right, yeah, yeah.

[00:04:18] **Speaker 1** Who gets to carry that over when you're the one running them?

[00:04:21] **Speaker 2** Oh yeah, when you're on the other side, it's almost like the same thing, it doesn't seem like you're working, you're just hanging out with friends, you know, behind the bar, you are just on the other side. That's pretty much what it is, and you still have the same conversations, like everybody comes in, that's how you usually start it. Hey, what are you guys up to, you fishing, or how's the fishing out there, and stuff, so yeah.

[00:04:38] **Speaker 1** So what has been, our story is looking at fishing, but also how fishing in some ways is competing with everything else to do with.

[00:04:49] **Speaker 2** Right, yeah.

[00:04:49] **Speaker 1** We talked about you know 20 30 40 years ago like it was fish. Yeah

[00:04:53] **Speaker 2** Yeah, yeah, just all little nine-horse motors and stuff. Yeah, so

[00:04:57] **Speaker 1** And a lot of these cabins were built for fisher.

[00:04:59] **Speaker 2** Most of those places are built, like that's why there's only a lot of places, just two bathrooms. Now you got a ton of people coming in like when we have music and stuff like that. So it's like, yeah, most of them were built for people in the bar. This bar used to end right here. The previous owner built this out just to have more room, you know? So just because like, it's coming more in the summers. Like fishing is still a big part of it, but like spring and then summer months, like June and July, you get a lot of families doing the recreation stuff, so.

[00:05:28] **Speaker 1** And did you, had that already happened before you came up here? Was that part of the way that you were a part of?

[00:05:35] **Speaker 2** Yeah yeah yeah like a lot of our friends that we met up here do fish but like I said it's like weekends like fish for a couple hours and then spend the rest of the day on islands or fish in the evening you know

[00:05:46] **Speaker 1** So, in terms of how you advertise the resort, are you advertising to two different groups or are they one group that does two different things? I don't think we...

[00:05:56] **Speaker 2** Like maybe in the spring and the fall, you know, you kind of, we talked about doing like package deals, like we're spring fishermen, our ice fishing is like this, like the best spots right out in front. So we like kind of focus them, but the rest of the time, it's just more like a family recreation type thing where you got all that's like the big, the big thing on the lake is there's more, you know, there's so much to do out here. That's why it's not just directed at just fishermen or just recreation people.

[00:06:20] **Speaker 1** So you've almost adopted it, it's almost like some of the clients came with the place.

[00:06:26] **Speaker 2** Oh yeah, for sure, like, we're probably like 70% repeat customer, you know, so it's like they've been here way longer than we have, so yeah, you kind of got to fit in.

[00:06:34] **Speaker 1** And what have they taught you about this place and the culture of this place?

[00:06:43] **Speaker 2** Like family type oriented, yeah, like everybody knows each other, like let's go, like the people here, you gotta like fit in with the whole crowd, you know? Like everybody here, a lot of these people come the same week, so this guy knows the guy in that cabin already and stuff like that, so we're kind of like, let them figure, we kind of just have to fit in in their groups is more than what it is.

[00:07:01] **Speaker 1** Now, Randy was telling us before about all the work that the owners do to try and improve the quality. To improve the fishing. It's part of it, right?

[00:07:10] **Speaker 2** Yeah, oh yeah. Yeah, like the Resort Association, like, so they put the fingerlings in, we stock muskie, we, you know, every so many years they just keep doing stuff to keep the lake, you know, that's a huge part of it. There was no fish in the lake. We probably wouldn't have anywhere near the people coming up here, so everybody has to pitch in and do.

[00:07:28] **Speaker 1** Yeah, so is that something that the resort owners do on their own? Do they work with the DNR or how does that come together?

[00:07:34] **Speaker 2** They, you know, there's probably other resorts that could probably, but like Treelands is a huge part of like Treeland's resorts. They own a couple different places. They're like a huge part of the fishery stuff. They put a lot of the stuff together and then like the Musky's Inc groups, they do a lot of stuff. So it's all different, you know, all different ones that keep it going. But the Resort Owners Association does a lot of it and their partnerships with other, they're in the DNR. But like, yeah, they do a of stuff just to improve, like, because some places... The DNR will put so many in and then we'll add like they with the money they collect or whatnot. They'll add more to it, you know, so

[00:08:09] **Speaker 1** so you were saying that you were had a presentation they gave you recently yeah talked about walleye and some of the competing you know the different fish that people go for yeah

[00:08:18] **Speaker 2** Yeah, it was very interesting. DNR came and they did they do a test every so many years. I think they switch off from the right then the east to the west side of the lake and then they drag a net and they'll tell you you know they give us a report on or they just post a report on you know up and down numbers versus 10 years ago, 20 years ago and stuff.

[00:08:36] **Speaker 1** And is that, I mean, you said you kind of fish or sometimes? Yeah, I'm not a huge fan of fish.

[00:08:39] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I'm not a huge fisherman. I'm like, I always consider myself a catcherman. That's why I like pan fishing and stuff. I like to go and take the kids out when the, like right now it's perfect. Crappie are spawning, bluegill are spawing. Go out there and catch a bunch of fish in like a couple hours and eat. That's pretty, I like catch and eat whatever I catch.

[00:08:56] **Speaker 1** So are wall-line not worth the time and the effort or just?

[00:09:00] **Speaker 2** I'm just not that good at it yet, I don't think. I have a lot of guides up here, and I keep telling my wife I want to get out more, you Because sometimes when I get out I don t have a ton of time, but that's why all these guys are like, hey, any time you're ready, I'll teach you how better to fish the walleye and stuff.

[00:09:15] **Speaker 1** Why is it that Walleye are considered a cut above?

[00:09:21] **Speaker 2** I don't know. Yeah, I don't know. A taste of it. I think the taste is one of the biggest parts. Plus it's like, you know, it's not as easy to catch. And I think there's a little more sport in it too. Like people come up just, most people are like, just walleye fishermen. You know, especially this part of the year. You know pretty soon there'll be a lot of muskie. Like muskie come more summer and stuff.

[00:09:40] **Speaker 1** But there's just, there's something, I mean, anyone, almost anyone, a kid can fish panfish off the deck. Right, yeah, yeah. It's usually your first fish.

[00:09:46] **Speaker 2** Right, yeah. Yep, yep. And walleye is just, yeah, it's just harder to, you know, harder and it's just more of a sport and stuff. So like, and people, you, know, they're all after the 24, 25, 30.

[00:09:56] **Speaker 1** You're fine, come on in. Do you want me to talk to him in this, sir? No, you're fine. Come on in, guys. What the heck?

[00:10:02] **Speaker 2** Watch, don't tip over anything.

[00:10:04] **Speaker 1** I didn't know you were a celebrity.

[00:10:05] **Speaker 2** I am, yeah. We're trying our best. How's it going?

[00:10:11] **Speaker 1** We just come to see how the other half

[00:10:13] **Speaker 2** Yeah, yeah, these guys are staying at our place on the other side. How's it going? How are ya?

[00:10:20] **Speaker 1** So, I mean, I guess, in terms of, obviously the DNR has put a lot of time and money into research. Right. And they're trying to make sure that Walleye are still there. Oh yeah. What would it mean if, like, there weren't...

[00:10:33] **Speaker 2** I think it would cut down on fish. I think there's a good example in Minnesota that miles lack, I think that's what it's called. Yeah, they cut out walleye fishing for like two years to let it replenish kind of deal and the resorts like they really struggle like now I guess it's fantastic I mean it worked out in the long run but I mean there's lot I think a lot of people they just come to walleye. It's not as elusive as a mussel, but you know more you know what people are looking to get.

[00:11:04] **Speaker 1** I'm so sorry, would you mind just sitting on that chair over there? Oh, which chair? Just hold on to this. Can I let him be behind you? Yeah, yeah, that's fine. Thanks, appreciate it. Right. We'll be done soon. We need to be quiet and simple. No, you guys keep your quiet. We just do one year in a classic, you know. We're going to be doing that in 1985. What was that? So, one of the other groups that exists up here, and that's obviously forever, are the tribes. Do they factor into what people think of when they think of these waters and fishing, especially walleye?

[00:11:50] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I mean, I think the tribes, a lot of the islands are theirs, islands out here and stuff, you know, so it's part of the, you know, this is actually a reservation, like we're on like the road and stuff going down, it's a reservation property here, so yeah. So I mean I guess, yeah, they're always, I mean everyone knows the Native Islands are and stuff like that, and like new posts, because it's kind of weird, like I guess you can go back to, last year was the 100 year anniversary, but if you ask, Looks like that. Resort owners, it's like, oh, they're celebrating like a hundred year anniversary. The natives, it was like a 100 year, they have t-shirts, some of them had t-shirts, like a one hundred year, you know, they were sad about it, you know, like it was two different, two different deals, you know, so yeah.

[00:12:35] **Speaker 1** Obviously way back in the 80s there were the walleye wars yeah

[00:12:38] **Speaker 2** yeah yeah i i never experienced but i heard stories about all that like fights at the drinks and stuff like that yeah

[00:12:44] **Speaker 1** doesn't exist, you don't hear people talk.

[00:12:46] **Speaker 2** No, you know, I don't know. I never see a boat with a needle. I mean, I don't what the difference is, but you know. They can fish earlier in the year, so I think they get a better chance. You know, like with spearing and stuff like that.

[00:13:02] **Speaker 1** But that doesn't fact I mean, you know, I guess you sometimes you hear poor people. Yeah. Yeah Yeah, yeah, yeah you hear

[00:13:11] **Speaker 2** I have a feeling it like died or like died down, you know, like you hear people. I think some people disagree that they can fish when it's when an early one, you know in the spawn and stuff like that. But you don't hear it's not as much like I don't think as it used to be. Like I said, we were nowhere near being here during that time, but I heard of like all the stuff that would happen.

[00:13:30] **Speaker 1** Do you think people know how many fish the tribes put back in through like their stocking programs or things like that? Or is it just more of that almost doesn't like that their full existence is kind of separate?

[00:13:41] **Speaker 2** Yeah, yeah, I don't know. Yeah, like we we don't get as many like what I mean when we have those meetings just a couple weeks So the tribe comes and talks and stuff and they talk about you know What they were talking about like camping islands and stuff like that But yeah, that mean ours the DNR just gave us bigger bigger thing on what they got stocked in So yeah, so I don't know I guess you don't really think about it

[00:14:01] **Speaker 1** In terms of like your long-term plan, is this like a semi-retirement or is this the like...

[00:14:06] **Speaker 2** Yeah, like eight to 10 years was our plan. Yeah, I was 52 when we bought it. I was kind of somewhere around 62 and then retire. Les, we really love it and it gets easier as we go on after we're done remodeling everything and stuff. And then who knows, someone could come in a couple years and be like, who wouldn't want to be retired, you know?

[00:14:24] **Speaker 1** I mean, is that gonna be like, you're gonna be the one trying to know who's interested in buying?

[00:14:29] **Speaker 2** Yeah, yeah, it could be. I always tell people now, like you hear people go, oh, you know, what made you do this? And that's really cool. Me and my wife talk about doing that. I'm always like, well, come see me in eight years, you know, like we got another eight years and that's when you're looking, you know, so.

[00:14:43] **Speaker 1** So what's it like for you when people pull in that you know, I've been here forever?

[00:14:49] **Speaker 2** Just like, yeah.

[00:14:50] **Speaker 1** I mean, there's a family coming back.

[00:14:52] **Speaker 2** It is like a big family like it's like our Sundays for music and then like the people now we're just getting to know like like these guys we know from the other place three four years now after you hear a couple years it becomes like family you know or we know what weeks certain groups are coming and we're like oh hey so-and-so is coming this week the McMahon group is coming this week or that we call the one group the Italians from Milwaukee they're coming it's look it's fun yeah it's a like you know it's it is like family yeah.

[00:15:17] **Speaker 1** And you can almost see their milestones like just on the brandy like this is the first year his grandson came

[00:15:21] **Speaker 2** Yeah, yeah, and it's cool. Yeah, and we tried like, like, but those guys, they, they came up and they asked me about a like basket that their friends made. They talked about it. So she went out and dug it out of there. I'm like, it's still over there. You can go get it. You know, so, but you can see how, how like it's, that's, I love it when they come and they've been here coming so long. And then, and when they, and they take care of the place, like it's their own, you know what I mean? Like, like the cabins are better when they leave. It's just cleaner, cleaner when they got here. You know? So it makes it, they're just, they know they're coming back next year, so. It's a big part of it.

[00:15:52] **Speaker 1** Anything else that you want to add along what we've been talking about? Yeah, what did I think of? That was good. Thank you for sitting with us. Yeah, yeah, no problem. So I think what we'd like to do is if you, you said to those of your friends, if they're okay with us sitting...