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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** Just talk to me, I know there's a million things.

[00:00:02] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I'll do the best I can.

[00:00:04] **Speaker 1** And yeah, there's no wrong answers here. These are just your opinions and recollections. All right. Let's kind of start back at the beginning and tell me how you came to be here in this lovely place.

[00:00:17] **Speaker 2** It's kind of a long story, but I came here with a bunch of rowdy guys that were about 24 years old. We come back from Canada, we're very tired, and we decided that we needed to stop somewhere and sleep. So of all things, we drove to Garmisch and rented a room after driving a number of from Canada, and we got our polls and... Went down to the lake, and we caught more walleyes than what we caught up in Canada. And we were just laughing and having fun, and it was getting late at night, and the owner came down and said, can you guys hold it down a little bit? So there was four of us. We were just having a blast. We ran out of bait, and I always remembered Lake Namacoggin because of that. And when Mary and I were looking for a place, we looked at a number of lakes, and I said... You know, I know a lake that's a little further east that had pretty good walleye fishing. And we came here, and like I told you, we found the lot, happened to be for sale. So it was kind of a long, you know, my first experience here, I was, I don't know, 22 years old. You know, that's how long it took and then we finally ended up. We had had a lake place before in Yellow Lake but we wanted something different and maybe a little more, I don't know, wild, if that's the right word. And so this was it. So that was my connection. That was how I knew about Lake Namacog and staying at Garmisch and and you know, it's a fantastic lake. You can water ski, you can fish, you Take your canoe out. It's you know, let you do everything and that's what we were really looking for

[00:02:13] **Speaker 1** And when was that when you were buying here?

[00:02:16] **Speaker 2** You know, we bought here I think in 2002, somewhere in that area, and like I said, we built a cabin. This was a cabin, and it was just designed to be a two-season experience, and then we just decided we did not want to have two properties to take care of. So we remodeled and turned this into a home.

[00:02:47] **Speaker 1** So you, how many children is it? Just one son. One son.

[00:02:50] **Speaker 2** Just one son went to St. Norbert's, good football player, good football program.

[00:03:00] **Speaker 1** But he would have been, what, in high school or younger?

[00:03:04] **Speaker 2** He was, so we had a lake home on Yellow Lake. He was quite young. Then we had few years off. I worked for 3M, and I was an international, and I traveled, so then a number of years later. So he was. Just going into college, so I think he was just entering college.

[00:03:27] **Speaker 1** So this wasn't blocked with the idea of being a family getaway, this was for you two.

[00:03:32] **Speaker 2** Well, when we bought it, I got to get my timing straight, but we bought, he helped me from the family standpoint. It was the first time we actually got to work together and say nice things to each other rather than instruct each other. So it was really very good for the both of us. So he helped build it. And so the intent was all along, as it always has been, is to have a place for. The family and other family members come and fish and hunt, it's good grouse hunting around here, and just enjoy the Northwoods and the lake, and I think it's a great lake.

[00:04:14] **Speaker 1** So let's go back to your youth. When did you first start to fish?

[00:04:20] **Speaker 2** My dad was not a fisher person, but my grandparents were. My grandfather was an Italian immigrant. Why he ended up ending his movement and settled in Minnesota is beyond me. We always said if you just went a little further, we could have grown up in California. But anyway, he settled in Minnesota and got married, and they loved to fish. Not unlike other people who are immigrants, you know, they ate what they caught, but they enjoyed fishing and my experience fishing is really with my grandfather Mike and his wife Em, my grandmother, and that's where I learned to love fishing. And they were very good fisher people and that just where it started for me. You know, my dad hunted. He didn't like to hunt ducks, but he liked upland game. So that's where he would take me, but it was my grandparents that really got me going.

[00:05:29] **Speaker 1** And was that just anything that was biting?

[00:05:31] **Speaker 2** They ate everything. I don't want to say Italian immigrants, but yeah, absolutely. My grandmother would take walleyes and northern pike, even catfish, and she would steam them and then she would take them apart, bone them, and then make fish patties. They were absolutely delicious.

[00:06:00] **Speaker 3** OK.

[00:06:00] **Speaker 2** So fried fish patties. Many years later, I was out on the back porch of one of our cabins. And I had become a pretty good fisherman. And I was flaying some walleyes. And she came out and she said, that looks great. Your grandfather never knew how to flay a fish. So all the fish were caught and given to her. And then she would make fish pattys. But that's how they, and they loved them. And they loved fishing and they caught everything. I know there were regulations at that time and they didn't exceed those, but they really loved fishing. And that's where I got my interest in it.

[00:06:44] **Speaker 1** So how did you go? Was it a pretty straight line from there to being going to Canada with some other guys?

[00:06:50] **Speaker 2** You know, I went to a camp in Western Minnesota on Stone Lake, and probably the first fish I caught without a parent or a grandparent or somebody else, I caught a 10-pound northern, which was a big deal there, and it was a big deal for me. And I was just really hooked. And as I got older, I started going to Canada. And we'd go to White Pine Lodge up in Suneros. And I got to know a couple of, one guide in particular, and Bobby, he was Native American, and he taught me how to tie spinners and tide lures, and he took me even duck hunting. He knew all the great spots. He was an amazing guide. We're out in the middle of a rice paddy that's 40 acres, and he said, we'll hunt ducks here. And I looked around, and it went. He said, threw out four decoys. And the ducks only flew directly over us. They didn't fly over on that side. So he knew exactly where the ducks were. He was an amazing guy. And he taught me how to fish really a lot more. And so I went up to White Pine Lodge for probably 10 years, whether it was with Mary and I or just my buddies. And I kept going up there, or my brother and I. And Bobby always taught us how to fish and where to fish. So I guess my grandparents started it and I have to thank Bobby for teaching me how to

[00:08:29] **Speaker 1** So when you came here, there were lots of things that drew you to this area, including some of those memories, but what was your initial pursuit when you launched the boat here?

[00:08:42] **Speaker 2** It was really walleye fishing. My memory was that there was good walleye fishing here. I knew this was a lake that you could catch walleyes, and not just a couple, but you could catch enough to have a fry. And the lake I had been on previously, as many lakes in parts of Wisconsin, the walleye-fishing was a little tougher. The other part that really drew me here was you can do everything here. So, water skiing, swimming, the lake doesn't have swimmer's edge. The lake is good, clean water. Not that I knew it at the time, but all the water comes through the national forest. So, it's not impaired in any way. It's just really, you know, the Lake is stained, but that's a natural occurrence. So, its a lake that you can everything that you want. And I'd like to do, as a fisherman, there's nothing I enjoy more than to see a family out there water skiing. That we did with my father, certainly more than fishing, but I was a water skier, so I mean it's a lake you can do everything on.

[00:10:02] **Speaker 1** Was it different then? We were talking more than 20 years ago. Was there a different type of people that were here, type of the people that came and lived? Maybe this was a two-season cabin at the start.

[00:10:14] **Speaker 2** Yeah, so I think it was different in that there were more cabins, there were more even one-season cabins. There were some really large cabins that people from out of town, Chicago, would come up for just a month or a couple of weeks, but since 2002 or whenever the date was. People started building, you know, homes, and some significant ones. And the little cabins, in fact, I was out just across the bay here the other day, and there's a small cabin that's very traditional. The people come from Illinois. They'll come here probably on the 4th. They'll stay for July and part of August, and then they'll go back to Chicago. Those are almost gone. And when we looked the place, there was another place across the way here. And I thought, I can't understand why the realtor was showing it to me. But it was really, he said, well, you're going to tear it down. I said, really? And that's when it really started happening. There was a lot of teardowns. There was lot of people really looking at a different lake experience, you know, more home-like. So I told you when we built this and I wanted to build a two season cabin. They kind of laughed at us and said, we don't build those anymore. So your construction became, you know, either had a basement or you had a cement surface that's heated, but you had foundation. You weren't putting it on blocks. You weren't putting it in piers. And so that's what things really started changing at that time. And

[00:12:14] **Speaker 1** Do you think, I mean, there was a shift then also in the walleye population, do you think those things are related or is it just coincidental that as this lake shifted and the people that came here changed the landscape around it and what they did on the lake, that what happened in the lake changed too?

[00:12:32] **Speaker 2** Oh, I think so. I think, you know, as nice as it is that we have lots of springs here and water that comes from the National Forest. When you build a McMansion or just a big home, one of the things, especially doing what I'm doing now, is people have a tendency to go down and cut trees down in the front of their lake. They either do it for the view Or if you've seen, I think earlier in spring, we showed people that like to mow to the lake. And there's more than one factor why the walleye population has in our lake started to fall. But I think certainly that's one of them is that we weren't taking care of the lake, we were clearing out bigger areas, we were... Some people who built large homes wanted them to look just like their homes. Suburban Minneapolis and that I think had an effect on the lake. There were more things that affected but that I think had a lot a lot to do with it. The joke I have for people who are interested in redoing their shoreline is that when Mary and I moved here the first thing we did was take the wood out of the water because that was terrible. Why would you have in the water, when that's a critical. Element to the growth of fish and everything else. So yeah, I think that had an effect.

[00:14:13] **Speaker 1** So I did some research. I looked at some of the Navacog and walleye population estimates. And it was over nine fish per acre 20, 30 years ago.

[00:14:25] **Speaker 2** So on average, we've had over five fish per acre. We did have, and I've reminded Scott Toshner as our fishery, one of the fisheries biologists, he's in charge of the group. 1997, he was responsible for this lake. There was over nine per acre, so this is a naturally reproducing walleye lake. We slid. And it really started in 2002. Oftentimes people want to blame the spring harvest. That's not the whole answer. And by the way, hook and line fishermen catch three to four times more than any spring harvest that's done by the Native Americans. So anyway, that population... Was hanging pretty close to six walleyes per acre till about 2002, which might be when I came. I don't want to say I'm responsible, but then it started to decline. And it got down to, in 2018, population was 2.3 walleyess per acre. And that's when Glyphwick got ahold of us, and they were concerned. They really changed. How they harvested this lake. And we knew something was wrong. And when we first came here, the fishing was, you know, they weren't all huge fish, but I could take Mike out, and with a slip bobber, we'd catch 40 fish in an evening. And all of them went back, except for a few that were capable. But there was fish. And by 2019, 18, there were not. Actually, it was 17 is when we got the data, and then this project started in 2018.

[00:16:27] **Speaker 1** So did you change your patterns as a fisherman then, along with the patterns in the lake?

[00:16:33] **Speaker 2** Yeah, you know, I did. It probably has more to do with what I'm doing now, but I really kind of move towards catch and release. I do catch, I love walleye, but there's certain bodies of water close by that really can provide fish to eat. You know, bodies of like Green Bay, Winnebago. Um, anybody, and certainly this body of water can, but for me, I just said, okay, I'm just going to put the fish back. Um, unless Mary said, gee, could we have walleye tonight? And then I, you know, find my way to get a couple of keepers. And, um, but I did change how I fished and, and I actually changed, um. Towards a small mouth bass, uh, for fun. Uh, I mean, I always thought they were fun, but then You know, so now I fish for walleyes to find where they're at, where, you know, what weed beds are they in, you, know, the water temperature, like tonight, last night, my son caught two walleyess, one of which we stocked, and a couple of northerns, and they were in five feet of water. So in almost July 4th, everybody's going to think all the walleyers are in 12, 15 feet. This is a cold, dark lake, is what the DNR has classified it, and the walleye is really shallow. So I did change. I changed how I fished. If I like to eat fish, I like sunfish. I can fully sunfish as well as I can play a walleye. So that's what I fish for.

[00:18:23] **Speaker 1** There have been a lot of studies that have shown that to be the case of when walleye decrease and people realize, hey, they're harder to catch, there's not as many out there, they'll target something else. They still want to fish.

[00:18:37] **Speaker 2** But I fish really for fun now. And I'm more interested. Yesterday, Mike and I went out and fished. And he's 35 years old. And it's just a good time to go out and to fish. I'm not trying to hammer, let's get a load of fish. So that whole thing has changed. And even Mike has changed, too. And I think it's part of maturing. I think fishermen do that. It used to be important. The reason I went to Canada all the time and fished with that White Pine Lodge with Bobby was to bring back a limit. Now, I'd much rather have a fish fry and not bring any back or go to Green Bay. I go to green bay a lot and I catch some fish and I've got enough fish to cook up.

[00:19:29] **Speaker 1** As things changed out in the lake, was it the study that made you realize that things needed to change, or did Glyphwick contact you and that's what spurred it, or how did that all get in?

[00:19:40] **Speaker 2** Sure. You know, first we all recognized that fishing was getting tougher and you know the expression that, you know, 20% of the fishermen catch 80% of fish. A little arrogant to consider me part of the 20, but I think I was a pretty good fisherman and they were just getting harder to catch. And it became apparent that there was just less fish in the lake. Then who does surveys every fall. To understand the population of zero-year wall... Year of the fifth, you know, the fry of that year, figure out how to.

[00:20:21] **Speaker 1** It's the year of young, is that how you call it?

[00:20:23] **Speaker 2** Yeah, yeah. Young of year, Y-O-Y. So they count what they call zero year, first year, and then they call actually year one, so one year olds, and they can tell the population and how our recruitment has been doing. And what they had seen wasn't just in the year 2017, but in Succeeding years preceding years in preceding years, that survey that they've done was just declining. And you know, it had to have been some factors, but nobody could figure out the factors. It wasn't harvest, although harvest hurt. So every time I kept a fish, that affected. And so we were concerned. And so Glyphwix sent the information to Our town board, Jim Krieger is one of them, and he called me and we got a group together. We tried to get ahold of as many fishermen together and went to the town hall and brought the DNR, Scott Taschner, Mark Laring from Glyphwick. There was a few others, myself and others, and we said, what can we do or what should We do. And both Mark and Scott were very important to say, why don't you write a fishery initiative? And we wrote that. So we made goals. One of our goals was to have returned the population of walleyes to over five per acre. And that's pretty high for the DNR, because the DNr's objective statewide for each lake is three. This is a good lake, and they knew it was a good Lake. Glyphwick also considers this a very important lake. So that was the goal. The other goal was to provide some fish habitat. Not cribs, but fish habitat on the shore, whether they were fish sticks. And then we were just going to try to do some shoreline restoration. And we did a little of that. That's. It's hard in that going to people and saying, hey, stop mowing the lawn. You know, it's kind of, there's a nicer way to say it, but you're still telling somebody their, their lake lot looks bad or is bad for fish. So we've done some restoration, but there's got to be a better effort at it. So, and the other method that we were going to use was, was stocking. So, kind of as a group. We came together and I happened to have an opportunity to go up to Red Cliff and meet the people at NADF and it was a fantastic meeting. The guy at the time who was the director there, we made an agreement that if any one of our parties said, we're not together on this, he said, it's over, you can't use any of my space. So that means that Red Cliff would have to agree to what we're doing, that the DNR would have agree to we're what we are doing, that GLIFWC was on board, and certainly those of us working on this project and the Lake Association. But that kind of, that's what I do. I work on this projects. So we all four had to really come together and say, We agree with what we're doing, and it became a really nice collaboration that's worked out very well, and I think it's one of the, I think there's a few more in the state, but I'd have to say in 2017, that's probably the first one that did that.

[00:24:35] **Speaker 1** So, when there's a chance that something like this could fall apart, like, what would, not to point fingers, where's the most likely place it falls apart? Is it just hubris, or is it just different goals, or how does, how would, it seems like a pretty, like everyone can agree, yeah, let's try and get more efficient.

[00:24:51] **Speaker 2** The simplest way for this to fall apart is that if the pond's up at UW-Stevens Point, which is on property by that red cliff, if there's a project for the ponds, then we wouldn't be able to raise fish. But aquaculture is not raising fish in ponds anymore. So those ponds really aren't used. But that'd be the very first one is if Tyler said, gee, we don't have room this year. The other one would be if you have attitudes like it's the DNR's fault, it's Redcliff's fault. Hook and line fishermen take too many. That if we're not working together and agreeing... Then things can break apart. There's a lot of anger and silly issues that can come up, but we've got a good group that understand, you know, this is what our goal is, and we like each other and trust each other. So that's, I was just up talking to Tyler and talked to Lance and, you now, I consider them friends, but they're also important to it. But if if Lance said Gee, we can't get it done this year. There's not budget. I can't spend the time to, you guys, we're there. Get the fish, then it would stop. But sometimes, in fact, an individual said, wow, this is a big political issue, meaning we can use wall eyes for politics. That would be disastrous, because none of us want that. We just want to do good things for this league. And what Lance is doing is taking the same idea of let's get eggs from a particular lake and milk and let's hatch the eggs and grow them and put them back in the lake. You don't have the problems with the DNR in terms of fish farming or permits. It's just a lot cleaner. And I think Red Cliff is doing a great job with Area Lakes and they know we're on board for stocking and helping here. I think they're also pretty excited that we have projects to put habitat into the lake that helps the fishery.

[00:27:21] **Speaker 1** I've heard of other lakes that are stocked around Wisconsin, and a lot of times the attitude from the people that live there, the lake association, is when's the DNR going to put fish in my lake? It's a very my, my ownership centric.

[00:27:36] **Speaker 2** It is. Yeah, you know, Max Walters wrote sort of a plan for walleyes for the state, and I think the goal there was to not stock lakes that really aren't good habitat for walleys, because it's nothing but a And maybe those lakes are great, Panfish, Northern Pike, maybe they're great, Smallmouth Bass, Musky Lakes, but then there are certain lakes that are, you know, natural, naturally reproductive walleye lakes that stocking can help, can assist, and then we can, you know, make sure that that body of water is similar to like what it had been in So there are a lot of people that tell the DNR or expect the DNr that we need walleyes in our lake. And I think an effort was done a number of years ago that was political and some lakes were promised walleyess and probably in all likelihood it was going to be a dead end. What happens in those lakes, there's one north of Namacoggin is... They don't reproduce walleye, so the walleyes that you put in at $4 a fish mostly die off. The walleye that live are mostly females and the walleye you catch are large, but there's fewer and fewer every year and they don't re-produce. So when you're done with it and you put 10,000 fish at$ 4 a fish into a lake. You have, you know, $500 fish that you're catching, and there's no end in sight. It's just nothing but stocking. Where many of those lakes can be fantastic fisheries for other kinds of fish, and people can really enjoy it. And you know I think even on Namacoggin here, Scott many, many years ago changed the regulation on smallmouth bass from 14 to 18 inches, And it was. It's been fantastic. If you like fishing for smallmouth bass, sure there are more famous places, but man, our fish are fun to catch. And they're more numerous. People are putting them back and they're big fish and they fight a lot. So I think, you know, I think my lake deserves to have 10,000 walleye stocked in it sometimes that's probably gonna change. But if you said my lake should be a great panfish What can we do to, you know, help that population. I think that's where your fisheries biologist can really help out. So I think where we're trying to get, or I think, that's what Max was trying to do. And we're just lucky that we're considered a naturally reproducing lake. You've been on the lake, it's varied, it's got islands, it rock piles, it's fresh water coming into it. That's why I moved here.

[00:31:04] **Speaker 1** When did you start seeing a difference as a fisherman in this process?

[00:31:12] **Speaker 2** Well, I think in 2002 when we bought this place, the fishing was really good, and the data supports it, too. I would say it was 2015, maybe in those areas where it was like, man, I'm really working. I'm working really hard. I could go out here on our North Shore. Troll, you know, from 8.30 to 9 o'clock and have enough fish, you know, there was a limit was three, but had enough fish where I could bring it in and I could filet them up and we could have a fish fry. That wasn't anymore. You know, it was harder and harder. And sometimes when we were trolling, we were catching crappies. And there's some interesting studies about crappies and walleyes. That was a big change for me. I'm catching crappies on what I'm trolling for walleyes and usually, you know, so that's when things started getting different. By the time 2017 came around, people are better fisher than me, and there's a lot of them, but everybody was saying, man, it's tough. It's really hard. So I would say from that time on. So it was a good 20 years of decline In a lake like this, if you're down to two walleyes per acre, that's not a lot of fish.

[00:32:49] **Speaker 1** So since then, have you seen an uptick? Have you been able to see the work?

[00:32:55] **Speaker 2** Oh yeah, it's all the work I've done, and the team is done. It's not really us. We've had, remarkably, we've had a couple of years of good recruitment. And as much as we can stock, and we did stock, there's nothing like mother nature to get the job done. But it was a turnaround in recruitment and the fact that we were stocking. That, so I had, we had good recruitment in 2018, 2020. 21 and 2, it's rare. So we had like three or four good years of recruitment where on a one mile they're finding, in fact Mark called me and said on this lake as long as you don't tell anybody, they were finding 25 fish per mile. That's a big number. That's like the numbers that you saw, the data that you from 97. So the recruitments really helped. We believe the stocking has helped too. I don't know how the, we were going to assess doing tree drops because that's what we've changed to, how that's going to help the numbers, but we know that that creates a huge amount of not only habitat but food stuff for fish and places for perch to nest in and so it's going to help, but I don't know if we'd be able to figure that out. We are going to do a population estimate for wall ice next year. Glyphlic will be helping us. I know the DNR will pitch in. And that's what we're going to try to understand on this lake, which survived better. Minnow-fed fish or pellet-raised fish. And many states around the upper Midwest are just stocking with pellet raised fish. Minnow-raise fish are wildly expensive. So that's the real interesting study that NADF is going to do. We're all interested in it. The DNR is interested in. Lance and the people at Red Cliff are interested. But that's what's going to happen. But right now we believe we're at 4.3 walleyes per acre, so it's a great improvement.

[00:35:28] **Speaker 1** Now do you notice that as a fisherman, someone can tell you the numbers but compared to where you were eight years ago when you started this, do you feel when you go out in the boat?

[00:35:37] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I had a really neat experience this last fall when we were clipping fins. I like to say an older gentleman, but I guess that's what I am now. But I think he had a few years on me, and he grabbed my arm and he said, thank you. He said, our fishing hasn't been better for years and years. And so this was a guy who was up clipping fins, somebody who had brought his family up. For decades, and now the fishing was back. And any number of people have told me that the fishing, you know, was a lot better. Now they complain the fish aren't big enough, which is not a project I'm gonna take on. But you know that's good news. And I'm catching more fish. Now our fish relate. A lot of times people say, I can't catch any fish, and I said, where are you fishing? And they're saying, rock piles and 20 feet of water. And I'm saying, don't fish there. You know, they're in the weeds. I don't know if that's a behavioral thing or if they've always been in the weeds, but that's where I catch my fish. They're in weeds.

[00:36:47] **Speaker 1** So we talked about the involvement of the Red Cliff band, and obviously they're key to all of this. What were the attitudes of the locals towards the spearing and the rights of the Chippewa to come in here back when you first got up?

[00:37:02] **Speaker 2** Oh, you know, here's the, if I can tell a funny story, is when this group of fishermen got together in 2017, I think it was January of 2018, and Mark Laring was in the meeting with us, and Marc works for Glifwick, and we got into the conversation is that the fault was the tribes, they're sparing too many fish. You know, Mark is well versed, you know, he's been able to handle the Mille Lacs group and he explained exactly what the numbers are. And so, you know, it's really hard to get attitudes changed. So in the meeting I said, well, Mark, can you tell us what happens when you get together with tribal members? Oh, he starts laughing. He says, yeah, they complained that all the fish, that hook line fisherman. Take, go right into the live well. In other words, we don't bring fish back. So everybody's blaming each other. You know, the data is the data. When that meeting was done, a well-known fisherman on this lake came up to me and shook my hand and said, I wish you the best of luck. I just don't believe you're going to have any success. And so that was the attitude about... It's their fault. And the attitude for some of the tribal fishermen is it's there fault. No question when you take a fish and you flay it, that's one less fish in the lake. But we started losing our recruitment in 2002. Tribal experience started well before then. If it had been that, that would have dropped immediately. The formula that they use is pretty straightforward. It's a really hard formula to understand, but 35% of the fish are harvestable. Between Bad River and Red Cliff, they take a third of that, so they don't take 35%. And so they establish their quota. And if the ice is good and the season is good, hook and line fishermen take the rest. Last year, a couple of years ago, we had a survey. We weren't taking that 35% by a log shot, both between the tribes and hook and line fishermen. So if you notice, I tried not to say spearing. So we're taking less and less fish. So that's not the problem. The problem was recruitment and what's causing the recruitment to go down. And that's happening all over. The lakes are either getting warmer, which is true, there's more crappies. So there's an interesting paper speculating that crappie's may have an effect. There was a thought about largemouth bass and northern pike. I'd say like everything is probably true, but our lakes are warming, our lakes are changing a little bit, and that's the reality. So I think if you look at this lake now, I think the fishermen are saying, you know, it's working. One interesting thing that happened two years ago is there was a youth spearing. On this lake in the spring. And that's where I don't know how many kids they bring up. Lance told me about it, but they had a powwow or a blessing of the lake. And I got phone calls from people saying, so it was at night, it was dark, it was listening to the tribe with the drums and people were saying, it's just beautiful. The kids, I think, got 80 fish. It's not spearing, and I think we're getting there. We have meetings now, and we've gotten away from that. But when I first started, people said, gee, I'd really like to help, Mike. What can I do? And I'd say, well, you could help with some stuff. And they say, you know what? The problem's the spearing. All right, you're not on the list, because we don't need that. Those are the things that would say what would break up this collaboration. That would do it easily. You know, if Lance fell, now when Lance, when we stock fish and I stock fish with Lance, he's the most meticulous guy in the world. He doesn't let a single floater go, because one floater is found and they blame the tribes. But we're getting there. And I do believe that, that we're getting there. And I think we're an example of it. We're also very lucky that recruitment has seemed to have turned around a little bit. And I don't know that they can explain that as any better they can the decline. But I think things in the habitat or in the lake have changed. So temperature is certainly one.

[00:42:45] **Speaker 1** Do you think some of the the fishermen who want to blame the tribal members and their rights understand on the other side that the tribes are the ones helping to raise the fish that are being stocked back in or do they only view them as takers?

[00:43:00] **Speaker 2** No, I think they only view them as takers, and we first started with Chase Mariato, who was at the hatchery, and I said the same thing to Lance, is you got a PR problem here that you're not really working on, and the PR problem is where you're spearing fish, you're stocking fish. You're concerned about the habitat. You're concerned about the population. And most people don't get that. And I try to explain that when we have any of our meetings that Lance and team are out on another lake. Usually it's kept a secret for a while. And they're taking pigs and they're going to stock that lake also. So if you think of the area lakes and the lakes that Redcliff likes to spear. They're working at it, and it's not well... Publicized and maybe that's not their style, but I'm an old marketing guy. I would be letting people know

[00:44:15] **Speaker 1** Do you think there's a generational difference in mindset that some of the people who've been up here for a long time may remember the 80s, and even if they weren't here, remember hearing about the boat landing kind of stuff.

[00:44:29] **Speaker 2** So I asked Chase once, a number of years ago, if I could go at one of their spearing. And he said, Mike, I'd recommend you didn't. So I looked up what happened with Red Cliff. And there's a couple of members of that tribe that got injured. And so there's still hard feelings. And there's hard feelings here. That I hear recently somewhere, somebody, I don't believe in our, between our tribes, but somebody slashed tigers.

[00:45:07] **Speaker 4** It's like a friend though.

[00:45:09] **Speaker 2** Lock the flambeau. So, it's one of those you go... Is that where we're at still? The problem is, if it is a problem of declining wall-line numbers, there is a problem with declining recruitment. It's not because the tribal members are spearing. And the most hopeful thing for me is the DNR now when we're in meetings has nothing to do with it. They won't accept the conversation, they won't except the argument. They're saying they're not the problem. That's not it. We're not going there. And that keeps the conversation.

[00:45:50] **Speaker 1** Because it used to be the DNR would kind of destroy their shoulders.

[00:45:54] **Speaker 2** The Glyphwick is an asset to them, Glypwick is another resource to them and it's a resource to us and we easily can work together and do. Have you met Mark? Mark is a wonderful guy.

[00:46:14] **Speaker 1** I've spoken with the mic.

[00:46:15] **Speaker 2** And they're very helpful. And Nate Thomas, our fisheries biologist, they all accept. So when we do our population estimate next spring, there will be 20 nets from Glyphwick. Maybe we'll use some of Red Cliff's Fike nets. We'll have five or six boats and maybe one will be DNR. Maybe Lance will be on another, uh, Lance and Rob, but the others will be Glyphwick and we'll do our count. It's just a great resource and they're good biologists. They're just good biologists, they're not political biologists. They're not teaming up for the tribes. And I think the DNR has understood that. And I they're generationally have figured out, OK, that's not the issue. And we just can't have our local fishermen. Upsetting themselves about it because it's the law. It's settled. There's not a discussion. I saw an article in an Ashland newspaper about, said, depending on what side you're on, and I was irritated. There are no sides. This is settled law. The courts in the land have said this is it, and it's a treaty. On top of that, the one thought I had is, can you imagine living here a couple hundred years ago when the ice comes off, it's wonderful for Mary and I when the eyes comes off the lake that there was this gift that gave them that fish would come right to shore. You know, it was protein, it is fresh protein. So it must have been a fantastic thing. So I think the fact that the. Take that history, come out on the lake, and you've been on the Lake. It's cold. It's really cold. And they spear a couple of fish. They are counted. Mark has done a number of videos. They're counted, they're measured. You know, it's time to be really over with that. I think many of the people on this lake, in the hardcore fishermen and I think the other difference is you can't look at wall light now. And say it's gonna be a source of protein for my family. The tribes don't. I don't know, but I think many years ago, the fish were abundant. There were less people on the lake. There weren't any McMansions. There weren't any lawns that we were, you know, mowing down to the water. There were a lot more fish in the water and you could have a source of protein. I don't it certainly isn't for me. Nothing I like more, I was at a restaurant last night and I had fried walleye. It didn't come from here. But anyway, it's it can't be a source of protein. I think many people did. I told you about my grandfather and grandmother immigrants. It was a source protein. They loved to fish, but and so I think some of that attitude has come off. The last time I was, we were together down at Lake Woods, a fisherman, one that I would call one of the harder core fishermen. Pretty much what we were doing, and was very supportive, but the one comment he had that was negative. We should be very careful with forward-facing sonar. I thought, well now here's a guy that's worried about how we're fishing rather than worried about others. So he knows he has better fishing on this lake but he's concerned about how we are taking fish. So I think it's getting better. That's a long way of saying it. I think it's good.

[00:50:42] **Speaker 1** Well, you brought up something that I want to talk about, and that's why, why walleye. Why walleye? What is walleye, like the fish, the species?

[00:50:53] **Speaker 2** That's a great question. I don't know it. You know first off it does taste great It's unbelievable on the plate. There's not a lot of bones in it Unless you get a big fish, and then there's the pin bones and you can take care of those pretty easy It's an excellent eating fish. I think northern pike are better I know how to take the Y bones out thanks to Bobby And I can take them out almost as fast as I can um, filet a walleye. I like sunfish, but walleyes are sort of the symbol of what everybody wants to catch. That's the only way I can describe it, because I can't understand, you know, I mean, for those people who live on lakes that really should be sun panfish, northern pike lakes, you now, they insist on having walleyes per din, or big day of walleyers per din. I think if you can make that sunfish population much better, but it's walley. People love to fish for walleyess.

[00:52:02] **Speaker 1** What is it about catching them? Take me through what it's like when you know there's a walleye. Because it's a different bite, right?

[00:52:10] **Speaker 2** It is a different bite. You can tell how it feels, whether people call it head shakes or, you know, they don't jump. They're not as much fun as a smallmouth. And even the little sneaky northern will give a better fight. But when you have a good walleye on and then when they get up a little closer to the boat and decide that that's not where they want to be, then you can tell sometimes, wow, I really have a nice fish on. I don't I get it, but I can't have a hard time describing it to you, but you know it when you're fishing for walleyes. In fact, I think I can tell, almost every fish I catch, I'll go, that's not a walleye. And that's probably the first thing I say, that it's not walleye."

[00:52:57] **Speaker 1** You're discounting it, right?

[00:52:57] **Speaker 2** I'd discount it immediately, no it's not acting like a walleye. So that is part of it, it's part of the, I don't know if it's a mystique or it's part of fun of it. I still enjoy fishing and I enjoy catching walleyes and I have to tell you, a small mouth bass is like three times more fun. Walleyes are a big deal. And walleyes would attract money, attract tourism. It's part of the history, whether you're a hook-and-line fisherman. 50 years ago on this lake, your grandparents or parents, you were catching walleyEs. And that was important to you. Smallmouth bass, much better.

[00:53:47] **Speaker 1** But there's a generational thing, like do you remember the first time that your son caught a wild eye?

[00:53:52] **Speaker 2** Oh yeah, yeah, I mean, absolutely. And we, like I said, when we were out here, when we first moved and could take our boat out and a couple of slip-bobbers, and I'm working hard taking the fish off the hooks more than I'm actually fishing. Because you could have a couple of those nights that, you know, it was just fun. And almost more like panfish, but it was good walleye fishing, and then you could... You know, by the end of the evening, you could have, you know, three of them, you know, 14 inches, I think the limit was under, you know, up to nothing over 14, you know, something like that. Limits have changed. That's the other thing I think has helped, by the way. I think our new limits are.

[00:54:40] **Speaker 1** But, I mean, you've got a young grandson. Yep. He's not quite ready for that part yet. He's two. That's got to be in the back of your mind. It's like, I want to be there when he gets his first one. I want see the look on his face.

[00:54:52] **Speaker 2** Well, yeah, I want to see the look on his face with his first fish. Walleye will be, yeah. I would like to be there. I mean, I'd like to be part of that. I'd liked there to be walleye here so that my son can have that experience so that he can, you know, his grandson is Adrian, so he can take Adrian and and fish for walleyes and be the have that experience in it. I'd like him to have that experience on this lake. Which is a decent walleye lake rather than have to take him on a long ride somewhere else uh... To catch a fish. That works too but it would be nice if he could come up here and then Adrian and the young seven-year-old would, you know, say, Grandpa, I caught my first walleye and be all excited about it. And that's what, you know, like my first northern pike that I caught on my own, that was a big deal.

[00:55:50] **Speaker 1** Well, I mean, I'm sure you can imagine the time when it's like, all right, let's run on down to the water. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Just head on out to the boat. Another part of the aspect of your life is obviously your wife. There are some relationships that fishing is separate, and some where fishing gets incorporated. How is yours?

[00:56:12] **Speaker 2** Well, she loves to fish. She's a good fisherman. She's better a fisherman than I am. When we first got married, my wife is a lot smarter than I am, so she's the academic in the household, and she's really smart. So we went to Canada, and I said, we're going to go fish in the morning. She said, great. She had a great big straw hat with a visor on it and five books. That she carried down to the boat. I went, okay. And so we went out, and the very first fish she caught, we stopped in one place and we trawled through it. She caught a five pound walleye. That's a big fish. And she was like, oh my God. And so, we put it back. It was a very big fish, and then we went to a deep area and she caught a 10 pound lake trout. The next morning, at about 5 a.m., she was kicking the end of the bed, and when coffee was on, she said, come on, we're going fishing. The book stayed back at the cabin, and she's always been a really good fisherman. You know, she's not as, she has a lot of other things in her life that are important to her. We're gonna go on a fishing trip in August and she'll out catch me. In fact, last year we were on a fishing trip and she caught the first fish and it was like 26. And of course we put it back. Even where we were at, we put that back. And then she out fished me for the rest of them. So it's like, I just give up. So she's a good fisherman, the relationship, that's important because she has to be willing to live up here too, so she has things that are important to her, but she's generous enough to, and she likes the lake life, but it was generous enough to. Maybe a more academic life.

[00:58:24] **Speaker 1** But I'm sure you know guys that never see their wives because they're always out fishing or maybe they've lost a marriage due to that. Fishing in widows is a pretty common thing.

[00:58:36] **Speaker 2** Be really bad. There's a lot of people that I guess I know a few that fish and not not with their spouses or whatever consider it. But you know I do think of it as something to do with others. I do fish on my own but I'm not crazy. If I fish on my own I'm trying to find where they're at at the season. So as you know early in the spring. The fish are very shallow and I try to understand what they would bite shallow, but when they move, where are they moving to, what weed beds, they're usually at weed beds. I do that for myself. If I want to eat any fish, I go for pan fish. But having my wife with me is very important. And we enjoy our time together doing that. She's just not as, she doesn't want to be on the walleye project. So she has other things.

[00:59:44] **Speaker 1** We've covered a lot of territory here. Anything else that you can think of that comes to mind? Otherwise, I'm sure we'll have other opportunities.

[01:00:00] **Speaker 2** Is working on this with me. His name is Ted Pichel, and I've told him, I said, you get into a meeting or you have a conversation with somebody and they say the problem's the tribes. Don't be nice. You have to say, that's not true. There's data that supports that we catch more fish, hook and line fishermen, and I don't want to make it racial, than the tribes do. And what you're saying about the tribes is not accurate. I said, Ted, you can say it nicer or more diplomatic than I am, but that's no true. Excuse me. And I think we have to get there. And so I'm glad you asked about that, and, you know, they have every right in the world. They're wonderful people. I think of, was it 1540 when they finally moved here in this cold area, and they found this fish that comes to the surface, almost, in the spring. It must have been a wonderful experience, you're eating wild rice. Not much, any dry berries, and now you can get some fish or fresh meat. So I think it's wonderful. I hope they continue to do it, and I told Ted, I said, you absolutely have to say that's not accurate. And I've been really pleased with DNR, is that they don't put up with the conversation anymore. And they say the same things, that it's not accurate, but, you know, for us, You know, you want to be... One of the guys, and, yeah, you know, it's the tribes. And I explained to Ted, I said, well, you gotta tell him, no, I'm not having that conversation, and that's not true. And I think you have to find the nicest way to say that is not. Because it gets us all screwed up. We're worried about what the other people are doing, what others are. And if you think about this collaboration, then that would end it. And that's why the guy who said, I'd like to help you, and the first advice he was going to give me is the problem is the tribes. You're off the list, buddy. Ted is all with me all the way, you know, it's not true. It's a conversation that has to be had. I think if we get here, if we had another big meeting, I don't think you'd get many questions anymore. Where in the winter of 2018, a lot of questions. You know, everybody's seeing there's more fish, we're working together, Red Cliff is here, everybody likes Lance, Rob is great, the hatchery is working. Um, and I wish they would hire a PR guy, um, to talk a little bit more about what they're Cause they, you know, they're, they help on other legs too. I mean, it's smart, but you know they're in there. That's why I tried to get the community, and you'll see that, up to Red Cliff, and we'll clip fins, and if I could get some of them to help lance clip, that'd be fun too.

[01:03:32] **Speaker 1** All right, so I think what we'd like to do is we're going to put a little wireless mic on you back again just so you can kind of walk around. I was hoping you could kind of show off some of your fish. Maybe walk us through some of the photos you've got here. Sure. Sure. Before that, I just need 30 seconds of quiet if that's all right. We have to get some sound of the room. Yeah, so it's...