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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** Alright, you can talk to me, don't worry about all of this. Yeah, sure. So, I guess, let's go back to the beginning. You were born in Montello, right? Yes. So did you grow up fishing? Was fishing something passed down to you?

[00:00:15] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I sure was. My dad liked to fish and that's how I ended up in Montello, because he was from Kenosha. And his parents and his grandfather would come up here fishing as tourists back in the 1920s and 30s. So he met my mom in Montellos. She would net his fish. She was 13 and they ended up eventually falling in love, getting married, and then they moved. He moved to Montello after World War II, and so my mom is still there, same house, on the river, yeah, she's 96, so yeah, it's kind of in my blood.

[00:00:58] **Speaker 1** So how did she end up, did she work at a resort or help down on the boat or she just met him and he took her home? Yeah.

[00:01:03] **Speaker 2** Yeah, well, her dad owned a big, he was lock tender at the locks at the dam there and then she would always be down there helping him and you know cleaning his rental boats and bailing water out of them because they're wood and they leaked and that's how, you know, people shore fished and that was how she met my dad. So she would run around net fishing, not just for him but for other people too. So, yeah and I grew up there helping my grandfather then, her dad, doing the same stuff.

[00:01:35] **Speaker 1** Now was walleye the big thing back then?

[00:01:38] **Speaker 2** Well, walleyes were a big thing, but it was a big catfish river, it was the Fox River, so a lot of catfish, crappies, some bass, smallmouth bass especially, and of course a good number of walleyEs that would come out of Lake Puckaway, Lake Winnebago system.

[00:01:58] **Speaker 1** So growing up for you was fishing a diversion or was it like a passion?

[00:02:03] **Speaker 2** Oh, it was a passion. Yeah, I mean it was every day. It was 3 a.m. Before school. It was all weekend. It was all summer.

[00:02:15] **Speaker 1** So then you were telling before that you kind of came into your early life and trying to find a job, trying to start a family.

[00:02:22] **Speaker 2** Yeah.

[00:02:23] **Speaker 1** You know, what was fishing at that point in time? Was that where you wanted to get to?

[00:02:29] **Speaker 2** Yeah, you know, after high school I went to college and all that kind of stuff and I got drafted, Vietnam War thing going on and came back and I worked at a resort when I came back. Jobs were hard to find anyway so I thought well, if I'm going to work for that same amount of money I'll work at a resort and then I became a fishing guide there. So that helped a lot. And I really enjoyed that, getting people on fish and teaching them how to fish. And Worked other jobs, did my freelance writing, started to do that. The freelance writing was really the big stepping stone, because I got to meet people in the fishing industry, manufacturers, manufacturers' representatives, that kind of thing, and of course, pro-fishermen, excuse me. Sorry about that, and you know people in the industry, manufacturers, representatives, pro-fishermen and so on, and other writers, and resort owners. So just kind of...

[00:03:43] **Speaker 3** Can I get a drink?

[00:03:48] **Speaker 2** Like I said the other day, I've been fighting a cold.

[00:03:52] **Speaker 3** Mm-hmm.

[00:03:53] **Speaker 2** They've not coughed all day. That didn't cost the whole time we were talking earlier. No worries. Yeah. You can keep a glass and kind of buy it if you want. I want a cup.

[00:04:23] **Speaker 3** Yeah, perfect.

[00:04:32] **Speaker 2** Where's my fishing haul of faith? That'll help. I hope. Want me to do that over.

[00:04:49] **Speaker 1** No, we'll just keep going from there, so you're kind of manufacturing your own path in a way.

[00:04:57] **Speaker 2** Yeah, yeah, kind of, I love freelance writing and... I'm fortunate enough to be able to write for all of the big three magazines.

[00:05:10] **Speaker 3** What did I say?

[00:05:11] **Speaker 2** Outdoor life field and stream sports field and then just little things, not a lot, but but in those days it paid very well and and then if you had photographs as well, so I was finally making a decent living and that but I always wanted to be not interview in tournament anglers. I wanted to interview, you know, I wanted be the angler, right? And so I started fishing bass tournaments did well. I won the state championship. One year and then met a guy who fished the walleye circuit and he said hey how would you like to fish the wall eye circuit and I said I can't afford it and he says well I got a boat I got this I got that we'll split the cost and so I paired up with him we did really well won three tournaments on the very first year, sponsorships came and bam then it really took off after that.

[00:06:06] **Speaker 1** Around what time was that?

[00:06:07] **Speaker 2** That was 1988-89.

[00:06:12] **Speaker 1** So you'd picked your juice, and that was 50, you wasn't immediate, right?

[00:06:17] **Speaker 2** Oh no, it sure wasn't and I didn't know if it would ever happen, I didn't t expect it to. There was an opportunity. I did seize the opportunity and I set a goal, a five-year goal, and I thought, if I don't make these goals in five years, I'll get out. Made them in one year. So then you couldn't get out because it was too fun. And it paid well.

[00:06:48] **Speaker 1** How does a professional walleye fisherman make a living? Is it mostly from sponsorships, or is it from the tournament winnings, or how does that happen?

[00:06:57] **Speaker 2** Yeah, at first it's a combination. Usually when you start out, you don't have sponsorships, or they're very small, but it all helps. So then winnings really help. You gain notoriety, you get speaking engagements. You have to be willing to do them. And that means traveling all over the United States, all winter long at sport shows. And and giving seminars on walleye fishing. I liked doing that anyway, so whenever an opportunity was there, I would take it. You know, it's interesting because there again, they paid a lot for speakers. Walleye, professional walleye anglers were rare. Prior to the mid-80s, the only walleye pros were outdoor writers who fished with good walleye guides. So they knew how to do it and they would come into the shows and talk about it. There was no competitive walleye angling. Well, once that started and you proved yourself a winner, then you could get to stage time to go and talk your winning tactics and things you do and how you learn and how to tweak things and just how to be a better angler.

[00:08:18] **Speaker 1** So, for some of the people that would show up to this, were they hoping to be competitive anglers or were these just your average fisherman who just wanted to get a little better and catch the wall?

[00:08:29] **Speaker 2** Usually, most of the time it's guys that they want to be, they want to win. You talk to them, they compete in a lot of stuff. You know, they race in all of these cars, they do all that kind of stuff, dirt bikes. They're always racing. But yeah, they're competitors so that they do it for the competition. They want to win. Some want to do it to make a living. Some just do it because they enjoy the competition, but they maybe own their own business. I have some other job they can get away from, self-employed, whatever. They're never looking to become a full-time professional. They don't want to speak at shows in the winter and they want to go to Florida and fish all winter, get on their yachts. Which is good, because if everybody wanted to do that, then water is down the whole field. So, uh... There's always a handful, and it's always the same guys, year after year after years, doing these circuits. And we would, a handful of us would speak and take a regular route, and then actually we'd have a different route and a third year, another route, and then they're ready for you again two or three years later. And then some sports shows would have you every year.

[00:09:54] **Speaker 1** How much of what percentage of your life was actual tournaments versus talking about?

[00:10:01] **Speaker 2** Yeah, well the tournaments would run from mid-March to October and then all the time after that you're not tournament fishing. If that's your profession, you've got to make money in the winter and of course that's most of it because March to October, it's about half a year so you got your other half is speaking engagements, period, or guiding, a lot of guys still guided in between. Guided late into fall and early spring. I quit guiding three years into it. I could just couldn't keep doing it and mainly because I was fishing three circuits. Once while I tournament circuits proved successful, then all these other circuits started popping up. Bigger money, you know, getting sponsorships from elsewhere and longer travel. You know, you weren't just Midwest anymore. But if that was your profession, that's what you did. I mean, you just went where the tournaments were. And the paybacks were way better. Sponsors liked it. So the more you did, the more your got paid to do it. That's kind of how it works. And then the rest of the time of the year, you're promoting sponsors during your seminars.

[00:11:25] **Speaker 1** For you, did you get a chance to come back to Wisconsin and fish here, or was that kind of lost to you for a time?

[00:11:33] **Speaker 2** Oh, I was really lost. The only time I fished in Wisconsin was when it was a tournament here. We would come, I would, like I said, fish in two or three circuits, one time three. I did 19 tournaments that year, not counting the championships. So my wife and I, she would travel with me and help me out, she was kind of my jack of all trades and she would take care of all the side distractions that I'd... Didn't want to have to do. I wanted to focus on fishing. So she would take care of all that. And uh... So yeah, when I came home all I did was get the boat ready for the next tournament. I didn't even have time to fish here. But if the tournament was out on the bagel, if it was in Green Bay, Pete and Will Flowage, kind of the most popular places for walleye tournaments, yeah, then I fished.

[00:12:31] **Speaker 1** Our documentary is talking about walleye in Wisconsin as a significant cultural species, connected to economy and tourism and tournaments. So for you, did walleye still hold a special place or once it became like a livelihood did it kind of shift?

[00:12:50] **Speaker 2** That's a great question. Walleye, because I grew up fishing walleyes in the Fox River. They're like the golden boy of the fishery, you know. I mean, everybody, the elusive wiley walleye, that's all we ever read about or heard about and how hard they were to catch. And they were never hard for me to catch, I'd never bought that. I never thought, why do people keep saying that? Because it's not true, but for a lot of people, they can be. They're a special fish and yes, when I would come home, we have a walleye run here in March up the Fox River and I would always fish that and there would always be a smaller run in the fall and I'd fish that. And I'd do some walleye fishing on Big Green Lake because I guided for walleyes there. So Lake Puckaway, same way, I quit fishing in the Wisconsin River because I just didn't need to go there because I could catch them elsewhere. Fishing all over the U.S. Made me a better angler here, but fishing here made me way better anglers elsewhere. And I think that's why the Wisconsin tournament anglers especially were so good on the Professional Wildlife Trail. I mean, we just outshined everybody, almost everybody, just because of our knowledge of fishing on this Winnebago system. Tough system. But once you've got to figure it out, man, it's so good, you know?

[00:14:24] **Speaker 1** So that's the key. If you can fish them here, you can do it anyway.

[00:14:28] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I believe that, and well, I've proved it, and so have several other anglers, so yeah.

[00:14:34] **Speaker 1** So you have the ultimate home field test, a home field advantage.

[00:14:40] **Speaker 2** Absolutely, and you know, even yet, when I catch a walleye today, I mean, I just marvel at that fish. It's just a very special fish. And I never took it for granted. I mean I could catch, there were places you could go and catch a hundred walleyes a day. You know, those fisheries in North America are that good. And even in a half a day sometimes, they're so plentiful, but you never got tired of it. And never got tired of going the next day and catching some more fish and catching those walleyes. And it didn't matter if they were 10 pounds or 10 inches. You know, it's just, not for me anyway, for some people maybe, but not for my. It's just a special fish.

[00:15:24] **Speaker 1** What's it like to have a walleye on? Is it the anticipation for you of like when they're about to or setting the hook or is it when you get them in the boat? What are the different moments in that action?

[00:15:37] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I'm a caster. So I'm casting baits out, retrieving. I mean, I catch, obviously you have to learn how to catch walleyes in every method to be a professional. You can't just use one thing or you get a lot of zeros. So I had to learn these other methods but my favorite is casting. It's usually casting a jig, pitching it out, working along the bottom when you feel. It's just something special. It's like that. You know right away what it is. And I know a lot of fish bites, a small mouth bite like that, and a large mouth bite, and a pike bite. But if you're caught enough and dead enough, you can tell. And just feeling that. It's exciting. The most exciting thing for me in fishing is the bite. It was the same way muskie fishing. Bass fishing topwater, that's the most exciting thing. Actually, finding and catching a fish is no big deal. That's all part of the stick, but feeling that bite is so cool. This is, it sends such a rush, you know? And it's, and walleye's way more subtle than those other fish, but maybe that's what makes it so much better. And because they're in the perch family, perch bite the same way, even more subtle. So I love to fish perch with jigs the same way, just to feel that little tap and yeah, that's the deal. It's like, what's the best part about bobber fishing? When the bobber goes down, the same thing. And I still get excited about that when I fish with bobbers, so.

[00:17:24] **Speaker 1** So I mean, could you have been as successful as you have been without still enjoying every part of it?

[00:17:32] **Speaker 2** No, I don't think so. I don't think so, I mean, yeah, it's a job. I never, I dunno, every fish I caught, even if it wasn't a keeper, you know, even it wasn't a money fish, it was just, it just, wow. It was just that wow factor every time. It wasn't like, bah, bah. You know, I didn't care and just throw it. Never do that, just drop them over the side and let them go because that fish is special. I mean, you know, that's 10 years from now he's that 10 pounder, you know.

[00:18:11] **Speaker 1** Why why didn't you go into small mouth is that you know bass tournaments are what a lot of people most average non-fishermen They've heard of big bass tournaments. You see right in tv. Oh, yeah But it seems like that's where the money would be. So why?

[00:18:26] **Speaker 2** That's totally where the money is and still is and But the money started to come into the wall, I think in a lady in a late 1980s and I Thought well, this isn't bass And I would and I always wanted to be a bass guy. I mean, you know those guys They had the TV shows on and a lot of those guys actually are friends of mine today because we're all in the industry But... But they would always tease me that I was fishing those walleyes. And they would say, you're never going to make any money doing that. Why don't you get into the bass? But that's an expensive deal. I mean, you just, yeah. And just to get through all the qualifying and stuff to do it is brutal. But there are guys that, they're still doing it. These young guys today are just amazing. They've come in, we've had some in our own state here that have done great. You know, fishing all over the country for bass. Had the walleye thing not panned out, say the money was never there, I couldn't tell you if I would have gotten into bass or not. I may have probably just kept freelance writing, guiding, you know doing both because it was something I liked and it was easy and it was here and you know I didn't have a lot of expenses. Tournament fishing is expensive. I mean, even in the 90s, you're dropping 25 to 35,000 a year. And that was a lot of money back then. If you didn't have the sponsors, it was coming out of your own pocket. You couldn't sustain that if you weren't good, you know, if you just showed up and fished. So you really had to perform. It's a performance sport.

[00:20:22] **Speaker 1** Well, you were talking about that before, about how much of it is mental. It is interesting that you've heard people talk about pro athletes, and there's a lot more people that have the same physical qualifications, but they may not have the mental makeup.

[00:20:37] **Speaker 2** Well, yeah, you see that all the time. I mean, if you watch a lot of sports, you see an athlete, and you see it in so many guys who are husband trophy winners, know that they had the physical skill, but they didn't have what we called it. They didn't' have it. They just couldn't make it work with a team. Now, granted, fishing's not a team sport. Well, it can be, but most of the time it's not. So it's individual. It's you against the fish, you against yourself and you can't control anything anybody else is doing. You just have to focus on what you're doing. So the longer you stay in the game mentally, the better chance you have. But you still got to have the skills. You just can't say, well I'm a jig fisherman, I hate trolling. Period, that's me, okay, I'm a jake fisherman, I hate trolling, that was me in 1988. By 1995, I had, look, I gotta learn how to do this because we're on more and more lakes where you troll. I gotta learned how to fish bottom bouncers and spinner rigs, I got to learn how to fish slip-bottom rigs and have the patience to do it, which is a whole mental game and I learned all those things, I won tournaments doing all those thing. And had I not been versatile, I would have maybe won one or two tournaments, doing it the way I like. And that, don't pay the bills. Yeah, I mean, if you're independently wealthy, you don't care, fine, do your shtick. But then what are you going to do? You know, if I'm going to a sports show and do a seminar. And some of the audience says, how do you work planer boards? How much line do you set back on a floating bait, floating wrap law, for example, with a small lip? How deep does it go? You got to answer those questions. If you want to continue to excel in the sport, you got to know this stuff. And a lot of guys didn't want to learn it. They said, I don't like doing that, so I'm not going to learn.

[00:22:54] **Speaker 1** So you guided for quite a few years before that. What's the experience like as a guide? I guess what's the, these are different roles of how people see a guide. Like I'll take you there and show you versus I'll give you an experience.

[00:23:09] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I had a real love-hate relationship with guiding because you book a guide trip. They want to go. And they don't care if the wind's blowing, if it's raining, snowing, and you don't want to. You were beat up all day the day before. With guiding, you have an eight-hour day in the boat with two clients. Okay, so you get up. At 4 a.m. Get everything ready, get everything going, get the bait, get the tackle, meet them at the ramp. They're all fired up. Okay, they've had breakfast, you have, and you've grabbed some coffee, a quick trip or whatever, you know, and did a horrible donut and that's your breakfast. So they're fired up, they get out there, they fish. They fish all day. Fish may not be doing so well. Cold front, whatever. So you have to make them feel like they're Having a good time, having a good experience. You have to have a whole lifetime of stories to tell, to share with them. People in common that you might know, that you can tell stories about, and it's all way more than just sitting there like a bump on a log all day in the boat and not talking and moving around the places. You got to know your lake. You got know the techniques. You got be willing to say, look guys, walleyes aren't going to bite, and this cold front so bad. Let's go. You want to catch something, let's go fish northerns or something. Yeah, well it's better than nothing. Then you go out and you catch 20 northern's and a couple of big giant ones, they had a great day. They didn't get their walleyes, but they still had a good day. Then there's the no fish days. I guaranteed fish. So if I had a no fish day with clients, I would say, look, it's guaranteed. Come back. We'll do this again. I said, this is not going to happen twice. So and Some would take me up on it, some wouldn't, you know. And I always felt bad. I always feel like I let them down, you know, as a guide. And yeah, it's a hard job. And you drop them off, OK? Then they got fish. They want you to help them clean them. So you help clean the fish. Then they want to have lunch, supper with you. They want to buy you supper. Then maybe you sit around and have a few beverages. And you get home at 10 o'clock at night. And you got to charge batteries. You got to get paid for the next day. You got get everything all cleaned up, because you got two new people the next thing. I don't know how these guys do it. I mean, I did it, and it was hard. And I know guys that do it, and they just love it. Every day, they go, here we go, let's go get some fish. I'm like, and they won't even get to fish. Like I didn't fish. I let them fish. I only fished to show them how to, you know, how to do it So then you're not even fishing. So that, man, it's wicked.

[00:26:10] **Speaker 1** So that's why you did it when you needed to pay some bills.

[00:26:14] **Speaker 2** Tournament fishing was way more fun, believe me, although guiding you meet so many cool people and you get repeat customers like crazy, you know.

[00:26:24] **Speaker 1** There's got to be a joy that comes from giving them an experience when they have those

[00:26:28] **Speaker 2** Oh, for sure. My favorite was guiding, you know, dad and his son or dad and his daughter, the kids getting the fish. I mean, those were special. I tried to do more of that than adults.

[00:26:42] **Speaker 1** I'm sure you get a lot of guys that think they know a lot, and they're there to learn, where's the good spot? I'll have to pay them next time, right?

[00:26:49] **Speaker 2** Yeah, one of the toughest is you get them on good fish, you go the next day and they're there with their buddies and their boats, you can't even get in there fishing with your clients, yeah. That happens to them, but it's part of the deal.

[00:27:07] **Speaker 1** Did you also eat well? I mean, was that? Oh, heck yeah.

[00:27:11] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I still do. Yeah, every chance I get. I fish walleyes a little now. I don't fish them a lot. This is just my wife and I, and one 18 inch walleye is a meal. I don't need five. I don't need three. So just get one for a meal, and next time she wants a walleye, go get another one.

[00:27:39] **Speaker 1** It's kind of like the permanent freezer, right? It's always stock.

[00:27:41] **Speaker 2** Yeah, you get them fresh, you know.

[00:27:45] **Speaker 1** But what is it about walleye eating them that's different than other fish?

[00:27:51] **Speaker 2** Uh, yeah, they're, they are flaky. I mean, they, they they're more solid. Uh, I really think actually Northern pike are just as good. A lot of people don't think so, I do. I eat both, still do, it's there. And there's this whole stigma around the walleye, the price of them in a restaurant, for example. Some people think if I'm paying 20 bucks for a meal of walleyes, it must really taste good. Oh yeah, it's delicious. And they take it and sit in here.

[00:28:30] **Speaker 1** Well, that's interesting, because there is a lot of mystique around walleye in Wisconsin. What's the history of that? How did that culture get built up around this one fish?

[00:28:43] **Speaker 2** Well, I think the guides perpetrated a lot of that, mainly because they can be tough to catch for the average fisherman. They don't act all the time, they're not as predictable as other fish for one thing. They move, they have shorter feeding periods than a lot fish, they are very good at So they catch bait fish pretty quick. And then they shut down. So I think that, the fact that they're more difficult to find, to catch, has created this whole mystique about walleye fishing. And they're always, not always, but they're often in deep water. And shallow water fish are always easier to catch. And no matter what the species, so deeper water fish or tougher. More line, more mistakes, more snags, more things that that you have less control over, that the more line you have out, the less control you have always. And so, yeah, Winnebago being shallow, Pacoay, Fox River being shallow. Easy, easy peasy. So I never looked at them as being hard to catch till I got in a tournament trail and had to fish deep water fish. I went, wait a minute, I've never done this, you know? So you have. I shouldn't say never, but you have to learn the whole, the way they act differently in different bodies of water too.

[00:30:22] **Speaker 1** It seems like it's the combination of they're not easy, they don't jump in the boat, and then the value of what they're like on the plate, like those two things together.

[00:30:31] **Speaker 2** Sure, and they're a nocturnal species. So a lot of times they come up to feed shallow at night and that's when you catch them like the last half hour before dark. So it's like a crazy half hour fishing and then nothing. Okay, so a lot people don't get that opportunity or early morning. So there's that, but of course in professional fishing we didn't fish at night. We fish in the daytime. So we had to learn how to adjust. How do we get these about in the daytime. Where are they? How do we make them bite? And uh... I don't know that you could make them bit. But you can at times trigger some fish with certain tricks and tweaks and stuff you do with presentation, which gets us into a whole another four hour summer on how to present the bait properly to the mood of the fish.

[00:31:32] **Speaker 1** So when you look back at the history of, like you said, this place was up north for a lot of.

[00:31:38] **Speaker 3** Yes.

[00:31:39] **Speaker 1** And then there's up north today, which is Hayward, or River Managua. How much of that mystique plays into up north, like it had to be a travel, a destination for you?

[00:31:50] **Speaker 2** It's kind of that too. Yeah, we're in the same way with Northern Pike, you know, there's kind of like a, you what's a Canadian, that whole Canadian walleye northerners, that's all they ever talk about up there, come up to Canada and catch all these fish. Well, we have these fish and so, and we have this fish all the way into Illinois, so in Michigan, Minnesota, so why, why do I have to go there? But so yeah, people They want to catch those fish, they think big fish, oh, we get the big fish. The big predator fish is always part of that because they do grow big. People don't eat a lot of, people never ate a lot bass in Wisconsin. They did, when I was a kid, for subsistence. A lot of the neighbors, they'd eat bass all the time, but other people would, well, we don't need bass. Well, they didn't have to, they had walleyes. They had northerns, they had perts, bluegills, like we still do today, where they can, they don't have to eat these other fish, but there's nothing wrong with those fish. You just don't want to eat them in July. You know? But the rest of the year, when the water's cool or cold, they're fine, you know? But because of the abundance of these good eating fish, so to speak, but then those same people eat bullheads and catfish, and they're no great. Meal but they're not horrible either. You can eat them, yeah they're a fish you know.

[00:33:24] **Speaker 1** One of the things that we're looking at is how much attention the state and like the DNR or the universities and their researchers or Glyphwick or the tribes and they're all the stocking and the research and the studies and there's a lot of attention on one species. Yeah. Is it warranted for that one species to have so much money sunk into it because in a lot places the populations are declining due to a number of different factors. There's so much effort being like bring back the walleye

[00:33:57] **Speaker 3** Mm-hmm.

[00:33:57] **Speaker 1** Is that, is that needed? Is that worth it? Or should it just let it, you know, fall on a decline in an area, then decline in something else?

[00:34:08] **Speaker 2** If the money's there, if the resources are there, yeah. I mean, why not? We've done it with trout, we did it with muskies. I mean why not, the species you don't have to really manage. Like bass, for example, and bluegills. I mean they kind of take care of themselves. And yeah, they can get stunted, they can overabundant, things can happen there too, but they rebound so fast. They're fast growing, they rebound, and they can live almost anything, you know. But where walleyes need better water, cleaner water, generally, the perch the same way. Perch and walleyed are important to the angler. They like to fish them, they like to keep them, they like eat them. I think reducing the limit to three will really go a long ways to help that. And, uh... And in places where they've done slot limits in other states and even in Wisconsin, it's done wonders. In places that I used to fish where you could barely catch one over 15 inches, not today with the slot limits, you can catch lots of big fish and you have to release them. But that's okay. You don't want to eat those anyway. But you can still keep some 14, 13, 15 inch walleyes if you want. I think 13 is a little small. But because these fish, at that size, grow pretty fast. From the time they're finger length to the time that they reach 15 to 18 inches is three years, depending on male or female. So that's pretty good, I mean, for a fish to be plate ready, if you want to use that term. So is it worth it? Heck yeah, and with what the tribes are doing with the stocking, obviously it's a great PR thing. But it's also an important resource thing, because we get to fish those lakes, too. And I've fished quite a bit on a Lacta flambeau flowage. I know several tribal people up there that I've worked with over the years in PR and other stuff years ago. But some of those lakes up there are just loaded with fish. And they aren't even aware, the public's not even where that you can fish those. In the summer. Yeah, they're heavily speared, but there's a lot of fish there. Well, yeah, when you look, you know, people look at the spearing and they look at how many fish are taken. So, oh, they took 35,000 fish. Well, that's not, it's a lot because it's, you got the stats there, but you don't have the stats of the hook and line and you don't have the stat, you know, which is way, way, way, waaay higher, and so... I think the state has kind of figured out at this point, yeah this three fish limit is a good idea, it's a good thing. Once people are used to that, all they want is a limit, yeah I got my limit. It's way easier to catch three than five, or five than ten, so if you lower the limit to three, they still got their limits, four or five guys, you get plenty of fish, that's enough fish. And that's just walleyes, you can catch other fish. To eat too. It doesn't have to just be walleyes. You know Canada's been doing this forever. You know you can hardly bring any fish back from there. And those lakes are so full of fish it's crazy. You gotta be afraid to wash your hands in there. You know, get your fingers bit off. It's just nuts. And yet people complain about that. It's just wise use, and it can work. It does work. It's proven that it works.

[00:38:02] **Speaker 1** So talk to me a little bit about the importance of relationships in fishing. Obviously you have a different dynamic with your wife being an active part of your career, but I'm sure you know people who like either leave the wife at home or maybe the wife gets a little upset about the amount of time spent in the boat. How does that get managed?

[00:38:23] **Speaker 2** Well, like any career, sometimes it don't, you know, and people just go their separate ways, but tournament fishing, because of the scheduling, is tough. I mean, it's really tough. A lot of guys would bring their wives, and my wife loved that because she got to be friends with the wives of the fishermen, and they would do stuff together and so on. And a lot of them still do travel with their husbands. A few fish with their husband, like in partner tournaments and so on, do well, they do very well. But it's a strain. I mean, regardless of what you're doing, it's just a strain, but you can have that same strain if you worked at nine to five. You know, the guy comes home from work and then goes to the bar all night and plays, shoots pool, plays dart. I did all this stuff. Shoot porn. Do this, and they play baseball all summer, and that's the same thing. You're there, but you're not there. I mean, you're physically there, but you are not there because you're not doing anything with your spouse. So yeah, you have that. And it's something that the two have to work out like you would with any other jobs.

[00:39:48] **Speaker 1** Is there a way to make those I mean is it because we've heard from some couples that say oh well the wife come along read a book or read a book in the boat yeah yeah you can still go out in the water yeah there's other just well no it's his time and here's my time

[00:40:02] **Speaker 2** Well, I, yeah. You've got to decide you're not going to be as selfish as you are with your time. That's hard for a lot of guys and girls. It's not just the guys, but a lot times it is. Where I say, okay, I need to spend some time here with you, and I'm going to make the time to do that. I wasn't real good at that early in my career. It was much better later. Something I had to learn as well because it can you yeah, you can go this way pretty fast if you're Your spouse wants attention, and if you're not giving her attention, she's gonna find attention. So nobody wants that, neither does she. So you just gotta not be selfish and make time.

[00:41:00] **Speaker 1** Well, it probably helped you that she was a part of everything, right?

[00:41:04] **Speaker 2** It did, I mean, you know, you think about that, you got kids, who's doing everything with the kids? She is. Who's taking them to all their games? She is, school? She is? You're fishing. It don't look good. And it doesn't look good because it's not. But you get, man can be driven to the point of not seeing that and not appreciating that. And again, you've got to come back to reality. And that means you've gotta sit down when you're home, you gotta be home. You can't be in Mille Lacs because that's your next tournament. You know, you just got back from Lake Erie. And now you're home, but your head's in the lax because that's where you're going tomorrow. And that precious time together, you gotta block that out and really spend that time with her and that's enough sometimes. Sometimes that's not enough, but it's better than nothing. And once it all falls into place and things can happen for you, like with Sherry. She gave up she was a real estate broker at a time when that that thing was just exploding and she gave that up to travel with me to help me in my career that was a big sacrifice for her for both of us because her income was even better than mine at that time and would have way been been way better you know yeah everybody thinks you make a lot of money tournament fishing you're on but Yeah, I mean, millions of dollars, but she was willing to give that up, give up her career to be with me. And she loved it. I mean we had, we did a lot, I meant we went to places together we'd never, ever been able to afford to go to or take the time to go too, yeah, that sponsors paid and that, you know, when you get at that level. It's amazing what you can do and the people you meet and stuff you can see, concerts and all kinds of crazy things.

[00:43:33] **Speaker 1** Talk to me about the Hall of Fame, how did that come to be?

[00:43:40] **Speaker 2** To get into the Fishing Hall of Fame is very simple. First of all, you have to be nominated by someone. No matter who you are or how great you are, if you're not nominated, you don't get in. So you have be nominated someone. So someone nominated me 30 years ago. And I was so busy fishing, I didn't even care. I mean, if you want to nominate, great. I don't have time to deal with that. So, and I didn't get in. And so then, several years later, another guy, Joel Coons, a friend of mine, said, I'm going to nomate you from Hall of Famous. And he goes, I don't t have time. And then he goes. Well, you don't need to do anything. I'll do it. OK. So he nominated me and he put together a resume and stuff. I didn't get in, okay, so but then I got a little more interested because now I'm in my 70s and again I'd be kind of nice and da-da-da. So You get three chances so We did a re-nomination Or he did and it was present and did a better job. I did a Better job of getting the information that they wanted that he needed that he couldn't get out of me because I was too busy doing other stuff and uh... And so you have to the protocols you have follow them if you don't follow them even no matter what your resume says if you do not follow their specific protocols you can't get in so I did that and uh the vote is always uh... You have a committee a ten member committee it has to be unanimous so uh... Which makes it very, very difficult. And they unanimously voted me in 2025. So yeah, it was quite the deal. I mean, it's very honoring. Really humbling, because the people that are in that, I mean if you look at the, what am I doing in this? You know, with these guys over here. But uh... Yeah, it's a great honor, and there's a whole lot of people that aren't in that way better fishermen than I ever was. And they should be in, but you have to follow the rules to get in, just like you do with anything. So it takes a lot of due diligence to get it done the proper way, to follow proper channels and do it all correctly. But obviously it can be done.

[00:46:37] **Speaker 1** Does it feel like a cherry on top to your your career or is it?

[00:46:42] **Speaker 2** Oh sure, oh sure, yeah, I mean, I never, this is why I never took it so seriously the other two times because I thought, well, if I get it again, I'd never know that they had protocols or rules or things you had to follow to do this. I said, well here I am, this me, you know, I can catch fish and I've won tournaments. Spoke to millions of people and blah, blah, blah, and so, okay. You're like, nah. Today, Fishing All Famous has a whole new set of rules, curricula you have to follow and so much of it is media. What have you done? What have done to promote fishing in not only Wisconsin but in the world? What have ya done? To teach people to fish in your career. If you just tournament fished, if you just guided, a lot of people that are in Hall of Fame are in because of that, because of those two things. But today, that's not enough. Today, with all the multi-media podcasts, do you have a podcast? Do you have a show, a TV show? How do you reach people? Have you worked with state agencies and restoration projects? So it's much more deeper now than it used to be. And it's understandable. I mean, when you start out, a guy starts out, hey, I'm starting the Hall of Fame. Well, who are we going to put in? Well, I don't know, how about Joe? He's a great fisherman. Okay. You know, and it's true. I mean some of the really early inductees in the Hall of Fame were great guides, You know, but they couldn't do it. Fishermen could do today to promote the sport of angling and I think that and Biologists so more and more they're leaning toward people who are much writers But not just writers writers that are fishermen writers that promote writers that work with non-profit organizations With other fisheries organizations other groups. I mean, it's just expanded so much manufacturers that have done, contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to the industry, that kind of stuff. So yeah, it's not, it is hard. It's really hard to get in. I'm proof of that. You just can't get in because somebody knows you're a great fisherman anymore. Yeah, the ten member, the ten-member voting panel are very, very tough and I think that's a good thing. Of course I can say that, because I made it. But but yeah, I mean I mean do they give you a call

[00:49:41] **Speaker 1** When that happens, are you going to let her, or how does that work?