**2WLI0603HDBA\_Transcript**

- This week on *Wisconsin Life*: Meet the owner of a thriving trolley business, a gatekeeper of the Fox River, a pair hitting rock bottom,

[clink, clink]

and an artist bringing the heat to the classroom. It's all ahead on *Wisconsin Life*.

§ §

- Funding for *Wisconsin Life* is provided in part by Alliant Energy, Lowell and Mary Peterson, and Friends of Wisconsin Public Television.

- Hi, I'm Angela Fitzgerald and welcome to *Wisconsin Life*. I'm at Door County Trolley, a local business that offers tours around the peninsula in these old-fashioned streetcars.

Our tour begins in Egg Harbor at the company's headquarters that houses 15 trolleys. Guests arrive, then it's time to hop on for a ride.

Our trolley will take us on the historic lighthouse tour which offers a bit of nature, history, and a view from the top. There are 11 lighthouses that still remain in Door County and we'll get a chance to see some of those from the inside.

However, it's not the destination that's important, it's how you get there. And today, it's on board a beautiful trolley. A trolley that was built just a couple of counties over, right here in Wisconsin. So, we're off to Crandon; home to a business that keeps the neighborhood rolling.

§ §

[trolley bell dinging]

- Trolleys are fun.

- All aboard. Here we go.

- Kristina Pence-Dunow understands that.

- It's an American history for one thing. Trolleys are like an iconic form of transportation.

- Kristina's been making trolleys since she was a teenager, and the thrill has never worn off.

- I feel like I'm going to Mr. Rogers’ neighborhood.

[laughs]

- Kristina sends Hometown Trolleys from Crandon, Wisconsin to vacation spots around the country and the result is always the same.

- People will let city buses go by, but if they see a trolley, they'll wait and ride that trolley because it's fun and it's an experience.

- So trolleys are fun, but who knew making trolleys could be fun too?

- When an employee is happy, the product is happy.

- When Kristina Pence-Dunow walks the floor of Hometown Trolleys, she is many things at once.

- Hey, Richie, how many seats do you have left?

- Like three.

- One, two, three...

- She's the owner. She's the inspector. But she's also a mother.

- Hometown Trolley really is a family and a team company. So, when I walk through the shop I'm like mother hen. Hi, what's your name?

- Ian, I just started here.

- When?

- Today.

- Oh, today 'cuz I'm like, "Wait a minute, I don't know you." It's his first day.

[chuckles]

- In two cases, she literally is mother. Both her son and daughter are employees. And Kristina knew many of her employees long before they came to work here.

- I mean, I know these-- Some of these people were kids in the same class as my children. And so, I know on their faces if they're having a bad day.

- Kristina knows about bad days, too. In the early '90s, she and her first husband moved their fledgling trolley business from Illinois to Crandon.

- It was a culture shock, really, to come to the Northwoods from Illinois.

- After a divorce, Kristina kept the company and decided to make it her own.

- I was a single mom in the Northwoods not knowing what to do. We had eight to twelve employees. And I had to fire, probably, half of them to get respect and rehire them as the woman taking over when the husband's leaving. To get their respect, I learned every single process. When I took over, we did one trolley a month and now we're doing two to three a week. Fifty-two employees and we're adding six more jobs as soon as we tear down the wall and can expand out.

[high-pitched whirring]

- To attract good workers, Kristina sells the family atmosphere, and the ability to earn a good living in the Northwoods.

[snow mobile opens throttle "vrooom"]

For some employees, the chance to ride your snowmobile to work in winter is a perk.

- It's just a fun thing to ride to work. You know, it's 20 minutes of fun before you get to work.

- Occasionally, Kristina visits her trolleys in their new home.

- We do have a big order coming up this summer for Hawaii and so we'll plan on a trip there and I'll definitely be going on that trip.

- But it's always nice to come home.

- When you go away and you come back, it's just cleaner air, cleaner water, space. What trolleys do you want to go in and see today? That one?

- Angela: Now remarried, Kristina has family all around her at work.

- Going to drive, Chase? Get up in the driver's seat.

- Even her grandsons like to inspect the trolleys before they leave for warmer climates.

- Look, see there's grandma's trolley bell up on the wall. For some reason, I was chosen to do trolleys and it's grown on me and I love 'em. So, I love the trolleys, and I love the colors, and I love the fact that we're building a happy product. Can you pull hard?

[ding resonates]

[chuckling]

You want to do it now?

- There are people across our state that love the work they do. Just like the next story takes us to Lake Winnebago where one man's love for his work all began by the water.

[breeze and waves]

- There's a certain freedom that you feel when you get out on the water.

- Not everyone finds their life's passion as a child.

- And the area just was very interesting to a young kid. I mean you hop on your bike and come down here...

- But Bob Stark did. There's even a photo of it happening.

- I'm probably, what? Maybe 10, 11 years old there.

- That's when he took the wheel of a family friend's boat on Lake Winnebago.

- That's when it bit, and it's been there ever since. I mean, look at the look on that face!

[chuckles]

[wave splashes]

- And he's never looked back.

- I've had a boat since I was 12 years old.

- Soon Bob's view went beyond the shores of Lake Winnebago.

- You could see the tug boats going out here on the water. They would have to take and go out around the entrance buoy before they could come into the river and go to the various yards that are along the river. One day it was like, yeah, you can go anywhere in the world from here.

§ §

- The key was the Fox River Locks. A series of 17 bays where boats could enter at one water level...

§ §

...and exit at another. Up or down, depending if you're heading upstream to Lake Winnebago...

- Bye.

- ...or downstream to Green Bay.

- The water drops 170 feet going through the Lower Fox River from when it leaves Lake Winnebago until it enters the bay of Green Bay. That's about the height of Niagara Falls if you put that into perspective.

- What's even more amazing is the locks don't rely on big pumps and motors.

- Twelve turns to open the gate.

- They are all operated by hand and with a simple understanding of physics.

- Hi, there.

- Hi.

- When a boat enters the lock, the doors are closed and a series of valves are opened to allow the water to drain down to the level of the next segment of the river.

- We used to tell our kids it was like being in a bathtub.

- Then, the next set of doors are opened and the boats can go.

- Woman: Away we go.

- To go upstream, just reverse the process. Water from upstream fills the lock to the proper level.

- It fills up with water and then you go through a little door thingy.

- Gravity makes the water pressure pushing on the doors so strong it's impossible to open them until the water level and pressure on both sides is equal.

- When you're in a lock, you get a real appreciation for the power of water.

[bird trills]

- The locks were built in the 1850s.

- Wisconsin became a state in 1848, and the construction of the lock system was actually the first public works project for the state of Wisconsin.

§ §

- At the time, water was the main highway to get goods in and out of the Fox Valley. The original logbooks show a lot of coal coming in and paper products heading out.

[old-timey piano music]

Eventually, the railroads and interstate system made commercial shipping on the Fox River obsolete.

- The last trip, I want to say, was, I think, officially in 1988.

- Federal funding for maintenance dried up and the Fox River Locks fell into disrepair and were closed.

- Ultimately, the whole system was destined to be filled in. In some instances, literally torn out and it just simply would have gone away. I found out about this group that was trying to preserve it. I got involved with them.

- The group became the Fox River Navigational System Authority. Bob became chairman, and then CEO.

- The more that I got into it, the more personal it became.

- Bob knew firsthand the impact the locks had on his life and his children.

- It's been part of my fabric ever since I was a small kid. I didn't know I was learning physics. I didn't know I was learning history. That's why I got involved and why I have the passion to do what I do.

- See you later.

- This needs to be preserved for everybody so that other people can experience that, as well.

- It took 10 years and $15 million, but the locks are restored and busy.

- You go to a museum and you stand on "this" side of the rope. Here, you are in this living museum and you're actually using it and you're helping to preserve it.

§ §

- It's been a long time since Bob's first trip through the locks but it never gets old.

- It's a thrill. It's amazing to me that you can do that. You can't get there from there unless you do that, right? This is the last lock going downriver. You can see the mouth of the bay down there. There's the world out there.

§ §

- I'm in Door County on a tour of the area via a bright red trolley. Our tour is well underway and one of the most fascinating things we're learning is the important role lighthouses have played through the years here.

- Let's put on a show. Let's have some fun.

- When it comes to being in the know, John Berns is the expert.

- We'd have to talk about dangerous waters to find out that there really was a need for lighthouses. People do a little homework about Door County. It's one mass of limestone ledge here. So because of that rocky shorelines, reefs all over the place, dangerous waters. One day you're safe and the next day you run into where the shoals are. The rocks are much higher. So we definitely had a need for lighthouses up here.

- That reputation of dangerous waters is exactly how Door County got its name.

- We have a very dangerous body of water that is quite famous here called Death's Door. That's how Door County got its name way back when Wisconsin divided up into sections, counties. It was 1852, I believe, 1851, possibly. They were looking for a name that was fitting up here. Well, that dangerous body of water between the mainland and Washington Island was called "Death's Door." So, what fits? Door County. I just-- You couldn't wait to schedule a trip to Death County. So we're quite pleased that they made the choice because of the dangerous waters: Door County. Much better fit.

- A lot of history to discover on the trolley tour with a few fun stops along the way.

- We go to some of the most treasured jewels in Door County. We start out at Eagle Bluff Lighthouse, fully restored to the 1880s and 1890s. From there, after getting a great history lesson, we go across to the other side of Door County, the Lake Michigan side. And we go to the Baileys Harbor Range Lights. We would love people to come see us and learn what range lights are. There's a great history lesson to be had there. So then, we finish up our day at the wonderful Cana Island where we actually transport people over to a almost nine-acre island. So quite varied. Each stop is very different. Each stop is very unique. I enjoy doing that at least three, four days a week.

- One of a kind stops, all with a well-informed tour guide leading the way.

- Everybody, the road to the left is Peninsula Players Road.

- Welcome to the Baileys Harbor Range Lights.

[playful, energetic jazz]

- There we go. Looking good, guys! Looking good!

- Definitely a unique way to see all that Door County has to offer. But this isn't the only place to find hidden gems. We meet with a pair in Fountain City searching for their next big find.

- Usually, we have a fist fight, don't we?

[chuckling]

- Yeah, you'd goose me. Anyway...

[chuckling]

- That was just laying here?

- Yeah, that was just laying right here.

- There's nothing like walking a field on a spring day.

- In farm fields across Wisconsin, spring is the time to pick rocks.

- Look at this piece, Bob.

- But Bob Keiper and Gary Eldred aren't farmers.

- Ooooh, look at the color in that one.

- They're flintknappers and they're looking for rocks shaped by ancient hands.

- All of the different cultures of Indians from Paleo all the way up to modern times are found in that field.

§ §

- This field is just below an ancient rock quarry.

[clink, clink]

- My guess is they were quarrying it right off this slope and taking it down there to work it up.

- Wonder if this was a hammer stone broke right in half.

- The ancestors of modern First Nations people found something more precious; a rock they could shape into knives and scrapers and arrowheads.

- When you find this high-quality material, you know that it's a workshop site.

- Broken pieces and raw material were left on site and covered up by the passage of time.

- You just can't imagine how much material there is in these fields.

- Each year, spring brings old stones to the surface and the farmer makes rock piles on the edge of the field.

- Of course, he says, "Take all the stone 'cause it wrecks my farm machinery."

- These rock piles are like little treasure chests, aren't they?

- Listen to this stuff.

[clink, clink, clink, clink]

It just rings.

- Every one of these pieces will have been tested.

- Bob and Gary aren't just looking for artifacts, they're looking for the raw material so they can make their own points.

- We're going to take this one. Oh, it's got honey in there and it's thick. Oh, Gary! Look at this.

- Bob and Gary enjoy knapping together but the term has nothing to do with sleep.

- "Knapping" is a German word that means "to break stone." So flint knapping is "to break stone."

- A few thousand years ago, people used a hammerstone and a deer antler. Modern tools aren't that much different.

- Most knappers don't have fingernails. They're all broke off.

- Knapping is about technique and the quality of the material. The stone must be hit in just the right spot to knock off a flake.

- The question is: should I take this one or this one?

- That makes the original stone thinner and sharper. The flake itself could become a smaller piece.

- You against the stone is what I like to think, but a lot of times it's you against yourself.

- You can also tell almost right away by the sound of the crack whether it was a good one or not.

- A knapper can work for hours only to find a flaw in the rock that makes it useless.

- So he just threw it away.

- Gary thinks that's why this stone was discarded.

- He was trying to make a atlatl blade or a hand knife. So to get that off, the piece would have ended up being too small for what he needed. So he just tossed it. So the idea of picking up these pieces like this that are discarded on the sites really gives you way more insight than the finished blade.

[train passes by]

- Not every stone is knappable. Outcroppings of silicified sandstone were destination spots for ancient toolmakers.

- It was not only Native Americans that worked flint. I mean, my ancestors, you know, Norwegian and German, they worked flint, too. We all went through the Stone Age. All of our families went through the Stone Age. It wasn't just our Native Americans here.

- Gary and Bob each remember finding their first arrowhead as boys and wanting to know how they were made.

- I just kind of stuck with it all these years. It's just-- I don't know why, but the whole history of the thing just captivated me.

- Scaly, looks like dandruff.

- You can pick up a flake of stone and you make this connection with whoever it was that knocked that off or made that point or broke it.

- They also travel the country attending knap-ins, where knappers get together to trade stone and stories [clink] and break rock.

- There's a rhythm. If you get eight or ten guys together and once they get focused, there's not a lot of talk going on.

- Even the knap-in has a connection to ancient peoples.

- Can you imagine what it would be like way back when another group comes to the same quarry site?

- Is there a conflict? Or is it a time to share knowledge, experience, stories?

- Gary and Bob have each been knapping for more than 40 years with no plans to stop.

- It's like opening up presents. You never know what's going to be inside the next rock.

- Here, here. Use this.

[chuckling]

Isn't that a beauty?

- Yeah.

- It's all about the creation for me.

[clink]

You sit down and knap [scraping sound] and something flows through your mind. It's just this primordial connection that's there. I don't know. I can't-- I can't explain it.

[chuckling]

- Creating and connecting to the outside world can be part of an artist's journey. That's certainly true for a Madison artist who shares her craft with students.

§ §

- In elementary school, we're introduced to solids and liquids and gases, and we understand those things or how to interact with them. But glass has this really, like, alien behavior of, like, being amorphous. How do you interact with something that's changing its behavior as you work with it? It's just really captivating to me. Now try the blades vertical and spread them to shape that shoulder. Yes! More vertical. I teach at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and I teach glass in the Art Department.

[glass bounces "clank, plink, plink"]

It's more exciting when it crashes, but...

[laughs]

We start with a furnace. It's super-hot. It's at about 2150 Fahrenheit. And you throw in glass that we buy from a manufacturer. It melts and then you gather it out of the furnace. And it's like a viscous liquid. It's sort of like when you're trying to gather up honey. Once you have this fulcrum,

[whistles for "pay attention"]

you just have to do the lightest thing and it just comes up. I think what I'm teaching them, it's like this act of magic to transfer that information from my body to a student's body. Like, they can see me do something and they're like, "How did you do that?"

[laughs]

But to work them through the process of learning how to do that with their own bodies is really exciting to me. Push forward to help it get shorter, too. Right, now it's really squatted up quite a bit. We're at the University of Wisconsin- Madison Glass Lab in the Art Department. This is a really historically-relevant glass program. It was founded by Harvey Littleton in 1962. He was a ceramics professor that was really interested in whether one could have an independent artist studio working with glass, because prior to that, glass really existed in factories and industry. So it was the beginning of glass being something one could study at a university, as well as something an individual artist could practice on their own. A lot of people "get bit by the glass bug," is how people refer to it. Once you get into it, you kind of just don't stop. My artwork, it's just my filter on the world. This is *Alphabit*. It's modeled after a letterpress type cabinet. Each of these pieces is an individual cross-section of a solid tube of glass. I'm going to estimate just under 10,000 little pieces of glass type in here. And it's kind of in response to our relationship to our phones. We're constantly connected to them. So I'm taking the material from the smart phone, the glass, and trying to bring it back to our former relationship with physical typography.

§ §

I make a lot of glass work that references language because my grandmother raised me and she only spoke Chinese. And so I played translator a lot. And I was always moving between the English-speaking world and the Chinese-speaking world. That experience of being bilingual has definitely influenced my outlook as an artist and my interest as an artist, as well. I really like working in glass. To ask my body to interact with this changing state of matter is something that continually captivates me. My art is something that feels like it's completely mine. It feels really authentic. It feels like no one else can be doing that work but me.

- I've met some friends and learned a bit of history all aboard a Wisconsin-made trolley. If you would like to learn more about Door County Trolley or the stories you've seen today visit *WisconsinLife*.org. We'd love to hear about your *Wisconsin Life* so send us your ideas at *WisconsinLife*@wpt.org.

Until we meet again, I'm your host, Angela Fitzgerald, and this is our *Wisconsin Life*. Bye.

§ §

- Funding for *Wisconsin Life* is provided in part by Alliant Energy, Lowell and Mary Peterson, and Friends of Wisconsin Public Television.