

Myron Peltz

Oral History Interview
Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Carson G. Prichard
May 18, 2021
Myron Peltz's house
Rogers City, MI

Project—Human dimensions of the Lake Huron salmon fishery crash: Using oral histories to assess the attitudes, values, and beliefs of anglers and non-angler stakeholders in Great Lakes coastal communities

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PRICHARD: So, my name is Carson Prichard and I'm here with Mike Peltz at his home in Rogers City. Today is Tuesday, May 18, 2021 and it's 10:35 a.m. Mike, thank you for taking the time to participate in the interview with me. Before we begin, for the recording can you just please state that you do agree to being recorded and consent to participating in the interview?

PELTZ: Certainly. I'm happy to do it.

PRICHARD: Alright, thank you. So to begin, can you just tell me a little bit about yourself?

PELTZ: Well I was born and raised here. I've lived no more than four blocks from the center of town for ninety years. The only time I haven't been here is when I was in the service in the fifties. And other than that, I've been here. I'm one of the old local residents left. Unfortunately most of my friends are gone. So I've been here all these

years. My family, entire family was born here, raised here. So, we're what you call local people.

PRICHARD: I had gotten into contact with you because I spoke with Dave Smrchek at the end of April and he told me that you were a police officer here and that your perspective would be good to get for the story of the salmon. So I was wondering, I know that you were with the Rogers City Police Department and the Presque Isle Sheriff's Office. What time—what years were you with each of those?

PELTZ: Well, I was in business with myself a while but then I worked for Consumers Power Company, locally, for the local power company. And then, in 1965 I believe it was, Consumers Power came in, bought the local power company along with the employees. So I worked for Consumers Power Company for several years. And then, an opening came up with Rogers City Police Department, to where I could stay in my hometown. So I took that job, worked for the Rogers City Police Department. I had several heart attacks on the job—

PRICHARD: Oh my gosh.

PELTZ: —at that time, and I was forced to leave that on disability. But then in 1978, shortly after, the local sheriff called me, he wanted me to come back to work as his undersheriff in the sheriff's department. So my doctors agreed that I could do that, so I did that. Unfortunately, about six months after I went to work for him he was killed in a shootout and I became sheriff. So I remained sheriff for about seven years, and then I retired. And that was in 1984. (Prichard: Okay.) So I've been retired for quite some time. Lot of medical problems. But I managed to (laughs) beat them all. But all of that was

done locally—the city police, the sheriff’s department, and all my other employment. The only time I wasn’t working here is when I temporarily worked on the west side of the state for Consumers Power Company, but that was very brief. Otherwise I’ve been here. I was very active in the community—still am—with civic clubs, activities, all kinds of things. I just completed a fundraiser for the local bandshell renovation that had to be done. They needed a charter but they didn’t have any money they needed, so I volunteered to go out, raise money for that. That took about a week and that project is underway right now. Over the years I’ve done all kinds of that stuff. President of the local Optimist Club for about twenty-five years, I just gave that up. And my health is not good, but I manage to stay afloat. But like I say I never was a fisherman. Although everybody in my family was, I’ve associated with fishermen, my friends were fishermen. Unfortunately some of those people that could really add to this story are not here anymore, so that’s about it. (Prichard: Yeah.)

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PRICHARD: But you were sheriff in the early eighties (Peltz: Right.) when they were—

PELTZ: Right. When this fishing phenomenon (laughs) took place. (Prichard: Yeah.) It was kind of an explosion when it happened. Most people weren’t ready for it. I’ll tell you—add to that, when I worked for Consumers Power, over at the Traverse City area, it was big there, that’s where it started. Platte River. And we drove over there, some of my friends that were working with me, had time off. We drove over to watch that and that was almost like a circus. These people—I never saw people so reckless in my life as those fishermen over there at that time. It was just crazy. You couldn’t get near the beach

because of the cars that were parked, the traffic. The little stores were completely sold out of (laughs) anything that they had that the fishermen—snacks, anything—they just couldn't get enough to keep it. And these people were so reckless. Those little boats going out into Lake Michigan. I watched heavy, oversize people in rowboats get out of the boat to push it out of the river into the lake, to go out into Lake Michigan. Rowboats. It was just unreal. (Prichard: Yeah.) And of course then as the salmon spread, came around to this side of the State, and then we saw that here. But not to that extreme. It was not like that here. People were more prepared for it. In fact a lot of people from here started their salmon fishing over in the Traverse City area because that's where it was to begin with. But then it spread over here and it got really big here because of the spawning and where they planted them, and the reproduction, and the food. So, that's when I was working and that's what I saw. But the salmon tournament was big, not only economically but for the sportsmen it was a great thing. People from all over the State came here. I believe at one point that the salmon tournament, it was like 350 boats. And they couldn't handle them here at the boat harbor. They used three harbors, they used Hammond Bay Harbor to the north, and Presque Isle Harbor to the south. And launched boats from all three areas, and all those fishermen were qualified. They had to—I believe they gave them like an extra hour to get to the weigh-in. They all had to stop fishing at the same time but those people had an extra hour to get to the bandshell down here where they held the weigh-in. But it was just unreal to see how many fish that those people caught and brought in, and weighed in. And many, many of the boats didn't even weigh-in because when they saw the board they said, "We don't have a chance. What we caught, it doesn't mean anything," so they just drove off and came back the next day and

didn't even weigh-in, so all the fish that were weighed-in weren't all the fish that were caught. It was just unreal. Beautiful fish.

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PRICHARD: Did you used to go down and watch the weigh-in, when the boats would come—?

PELTZ: Oh yeah. (Prichard: Yeah.) Yeah. Oh, that was a huge crowd. That was a big thing. They had a good setup. They had—they used the local bandshell which is almost perfect for that. They had the sound system, and the park right in front, and park benches, and a big parking lot. Yeah, it was great. People couldn't wait. They had concession stands there, they sold lunch for people, for—the fishermen really loved it. Just hamburgers and hotdogs, stuff like that. Cold drinks. The fishermen had their own—beverages, we'll put it that way. (Prichard laughs) But it was an annual event, no question about it. It was big. Locally, as far as economics it was a huge impact on that. There was a lot of people. But we'd go down. I—several times, I'm not sure, two or three times I did the shotgun start. Get out on the breakwall, and I think it was 6:30, I'm not sure now the time, but when the time came, fired that shotgun and (laughs) it was unreal to hear those engines roar up. I mean you could hear it all over Rogers City, those engines. There were so many boats. And they were fighting to get out of the harbor, which was dangerous at the time because there was too many boats for the harbor. So eventually, they moved the starting point into the lake so they didn't have to compete with that entrance to get—exit to get out of that harbor. It was actually—the small boats were in danger, no question about it. But fortunately we never had any incidents. But, it was hazardous, to say the

least, for all those boats to get moving at one time. But, when they fired up all of those engines it was a roar. (laughs)

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PRICHARD: So you were the one who fired the gun to start it all off?

PELTZ: Several times. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, oh yeah, we were down there. We had a patrol boat. I don't remember now if we had the patrol—I think we had the patrol boat out on the lake, ready to help anybody [that] got into trouble. But I never went out in the boat, I was on the breakwall to fire the shotgun. But I didn't do that every year—I did it several times. It was a big show. Half the town got up early just to go watch those boats head out into the lake. It was quite a sight. (laughs) Something you couldn't plan ahead of time, when you get that many people out that early in the morning to do that. And the breakwall was a perfect place to watch it because when the boats get ready to leave they're on your right, when they got out into the lake they were on your left. You couldn't miss anything, it was the perfect place. Kind of, spectators were right in the middle of the action. But, it was a big thing. That's why I say I'm sorry some of my friends aren't here to tell you the story because they were out there in the boats, and I was not. We didn't have any real incidents that I can recall. The biggest problem was fishermen out there getting lines tangled up because there were so many boats. And these boats were all in a big hurry when they left to get to a certain spot. I don't know how they found a certain spot, they didn't have the equipment they've got now. But they all had a favorite place to fish out there. And they were all in a big hurry, they wanted to be there first. But then they got there and everybody was dragging four or five lines, and

somebody didn't make the right turn, the right place, they were snagging other people's lines. That was the problem. But, I don't recall any serious—you know, it caused friction. I'm sure there was some name-calling, and some choice words, but—(laughs) especially with guys out there that weren't experienced fishermen that were probably causing most of the problem. (Prichard: Yeah.) But it was nothing serious. And I don't recall ever having any injuries or altercations. I'm sure there were a few; I'm not aware of them. (coughs)

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A timer can be heard going off in the kitchen from |00:12:34| to |00:12:46|.

PRICHARD: I know from reading through the newspaper articles—*Presque Isle County Advance*—kind of from the eighties until—I read them all the way up through 2007—there was a lot of years where one or more of the days of the tournament would end early because of weather or winds, so that was probably—

PELTZ: Oh, well, definitely. Lake Huron. Weather was factor. (Prichard: Yeah.) Yeah, all the time. Yeah, they would terminate it at a certain time. And the word got out—some of them had radio, some did not. But the word got out to the boats that, you know, head in. I don't recall a lot of that. I know there was some, and probably more than I can recall because like I say, I wasn't out there. Oh, definitely. The wind, the weather on Lake Huron can deteriorate pretty rapidly, and a half hour can make a big difference. But fishermen kind of gauge the weather. You can look at the sky, they can tell what's coming. Most of them pay attention to that, some don't. And we had rescues—mostly disabled boats. (Prichard: Okay.) But we had a good boat. Had a good man on the boat.

Sergeant Daniels. He was involved in that, with the boat. Karl Daniels. He was local. He was my marine sergeant. It would be only proper to mention him because he knew what he was doing. He did a great job recovering boats, and checking boats, and stolen boats, stuff like that, he was great. But, basically, law enforcement, we weren't really involved in a lot of stuff because fishermen pretty much were on their own. And I don't recall any really serious incidents. So, it was pretty much minor.

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PRICHARD: Okay. I know that the Rogers City Salmon Tournament was, especially when it started, the biggest of its kind in the Great Lakes.

PELTZ: It was huge.

PRICHARD: I was wondering if you knew whether or not law enforcement here was consulted as big tournaments developed around the rest of the State of Michigan? Or the Great Lakes?

PELTZ: Not that I know of. (Prichard: Okay.) I wasn't. And I doubt the city police were. It's possible, but not that I know of. (Prichard: Okay.) I'm not aware of any other—because it started—it didn't really start here, it started on the other side of the State. And that was the focus. (Prichard: Okay.) But, it's unfortunate that, you know, the fishing was so great, and the fish—it was just unreal the amount of fish and size of those fish. But eventually they ate themselves out of house and home. They ate all the small fish. We used to have a big—the fishing here, years ago it was the small fish, smelt, and alewives, and some other small fish, was—everyone looked forward to spring, to harvesting those

fish. But the salmon ate all those, and then they started to diminish because they didn't have any food. And they were down to, you know, in the later years if you caught a fifteen-pound [salmon] it was great. Now it's coming back up to—this last fall, I think they had some close to thirty pounds. Twenty-five to thirty pounds. So they're coming back. Unfortunately we still don't have the small fish. The smelt industry is gone, and I always enjoyed that. I'd fish those when I was a kid. But, the salmon are coming back. They had a huge—I don't know what they called it. The DNR [Department of Natural Resources] had a big—I'm not sure what they called it on the river down at the Calcite property.

PRICHARD: A weir?

PELTZ: Well, I kind of hesitate to call it a weir, (Prichard: Okay.) but it was a trap. They built it in-river so as the salmon went up the river to spawn, they were able to trap them, and then harvest the fish and the eggs. And they took tons and tons of salmon. They hauled them in semi-trucks, they hauled them out of there. I was only up there once or twice. It wasn't open to the public because it was in the Calcite plant property. But it was a big, expensive facility. The only one I know of that's still around that actually worked there was a young Cherrette, still lives in Rogers City, and he worked there quite some time, and he would know the whole story on that. But I don't know—I'm not familiar with that operation whatsoever, except that they took tons and tons of salmon (Prichard: Okay.) and harvested the eggs and the salmon. Where the salmon went to, what kind of a facility to process them, I really don't know—if they went into pet food, or if they went—I don't know what happened.

PRICHARD: Yeah. I know, in those early years there was a company called Tempotech, and they I think were based out of Hart, Michigan. And I just know that from the newspaper articles. But I know that changed hands over time. And I don't know, either, where those salmon went as far as food.

PELTZ: Yeah. They used them. But I really don't know for what they used them. There was a local problem here during that time with illegal fishing—they called it snagging. Everybody was doing it to begin with until they started to crack down on that, the DNR did. And some people abused that as far as snagging and then selling eggs, (Prichard: Okay.) discarding the fish. It made a problem along the beach, and on the docks, and along the rivers. Some of these guys that weren't really fishermen, they were out to make some money with the eggs. And they did, they did make money on the eggs and stuff. And it was kind of funny because, when this first started I was with the city police, and we would drive down to the mouth of the river just to see what was going on, and—

PRICHARD: Is this the Trout River?

PELTZ: —this is the, yeah, Trout River—and just kind of shoot the breeze with the guys because we knew everybody. And when you drove down there they would see a police car they'd all run in the woods—most of them. And I remember I'd walk down there and there'd be fish laying on the beach, and I'd say, "Well whose fish are those?" And everybody would say, "They're not mine, they're not mine, they're not mine." And I said, "I could probably have one of those, nobody'd care." "Yeah, take all you want," (Prichard laughs) because the guys that were snagging were up in the woods hiding, (laughs) so the guys down there on the beach didn't care if I took a fish or not because

they didn't fall in with them. (laughs) It was just—and we didn't police that, anyway, we weren't enforcing the DNR laws, but they saw a police car and they'd run in the woods, and it was kind of comical, at the time. And I think, over the years I did probably (laughs) take a couple of fish, but I don't know. It was something to see, though. Kids, little kids that couldn't carry a fish would have to drag them home. (Prichard laughs) I'm talking eight-nine-year old kids that would go down there fishing. And they would drag them home with a rope because they couldn't pick them up and carry them. (Prichard laughs) It was something.

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PRICHARD: I was wondering if you interacted with the conservation officers with the Michigan DNR much at that time.

PELTZ: We did. Oh yeah. (Prichard: Yeah.) And I was friends with them. (Prichard: Okay.) Some of them were really good friends. But we didn't enforce that because we really didn't know. And at that time it's just like, that's not our job. That's their job, we don't need to interfere with them. And we got along great, there was no friction between the departments whatsoever. But, oh yeah, the DNR officers, some of them were personal friends, good people. In fact, that letter that you took a copy was, he was a good friend of my dad's, good friend of mine, for years. He was a local. He was a DNR official at that time, he had moved up the ranks, but he started out in Rogers City as a local game warden. Was a family friend. But yeah, it was great for Rogers City, it was a great experience. It was great for the fishermen. I mean it was—and locally, economically, there were people [that] actually came up, bought homes that were available in Rogers

City. Some of them were not the best homes, but they just wanted a place to come up where they could stay because there wasn't that many rental units in Rogers City at the time. So when that many people showed up for a weekend, there was no place for them to stay. So people came up, they bought homes. Just used them during the summertime for fishing. Left their boats there. Had a place to store their things. And some of those people still live here—many of them. And they're good citizens. When they did move up here they bought or built nice homes. Economically it was a big thing for Rogers City, as well as any other community that had fishing. And some of those people are still here that—but yeah, it was really an experience.

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PRICHARD: Yeah, just coming to your house and seeing how close you are to the lake, I mean, it's a short walk. I mean, you must really have known when there were a lot of fishermen coming into town.

PELTZ: Oh yeah. (Prichard: Yeah.) Oh yeah. (Prichard: Yeah.) Yep. Yep, I've always lived within four blocks of the lake. We kind of take that lake really for granted because, well, I've lived here—in fact I've gone other places and people have said something about the lake, and I felt guilty because I drive by this lake every day and don't even see it because I'm so used to it. And that's bad (laughs) because it's a beautiful lake.

(Prichard: Yeah.) And over the years—that boat harbor, that was our swimming beach when I was a kid. There were some old docks there from the lumber companies. But that has evolved into a beautiful area down there, now with the playground. I take my great-grandson to the playground there almost every day. But yeah, the area itself, the beach

area, little league fields are on the beach, the playground—two playgrounds are on the beach. Yeah, that lake is, like I say, locally, we don't appreciate it like we should. But we enjoy it. I would enjoy it more if I was a boater, but I'm not. I have a cottage on an inland lake about fifteen miles from here, so we go there. But the big lake itself, I've never really got to use it. I've been on it many times. I did go fishing out there two or three times with some of my friends but—they did let me catch one salmon, but that was it.

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PELTZ: And I did catch—I have to admit I did catch some salmon illegally. (laughs) But it was—

PRICHARD: In the early days?

PELTZ: I don't know if you have the time for that. (Prichard laughs) I was actually working, city police, and one night I went down there I don't know what time it was, I went down to the mouth of the river and no one was down there and I just had my flashlight, and here's all these nice salmon coming into the mouth of the river. And I'm looking at them and I said, "*What—?*" And of course I had a pretty good flashlight. And I shined a light on one of those salmon and it made a quick turn and went right up on the bank. And I said, "*Wah—,*" and I had to jump across the mouth of the river which was about twelve inches wider than I could jump, so I kept getting my feet wet. But that fish was up on the beach and so I jumped over there and kind of, with my boots, just kept it there long enough so it quit struggling. And then I turned around and I shined my flashlight on another one and that one went up on the beach on the other side, so I had to jump across again, and like I say, I couldn't quite jump it without getting wet. I think I

had ten or twelve nice big salmon, (Prichard laughs) with the flashlight, and (laughs) I had to call my brother in the middle of the night to come down and get them. (laughs) And they were big salmon. I mean, there's a picture some place of those. They were big salmon. And then one other night I was down and, just looking at the bridge which is three hundred yards upstream, and some guy stopped and said, "You catch any fish?" and I said, "No, I'm not a fisherman." And he handed me a gaff hook. Just a small gaff hook that I know was made at the local plant down here, they made thousands of them. And he said, "I got a bunch. I'm leaving. Here, I got—here's a gaff hook." And I didn't have any way of getting in the river and I could see salmon going up, coming up, going under the bridge. My brother-in-law lived just, quite close by. So I went and walked over there and found a pair of boots—this is 2:30 in the morning, I'm not sure. But I put those boots on and I went in the river, and I couldn't catch those fish. I had that gaff hook but they were quicker than I was, I couldn't get the timing to catch any. And so I went back to his house and I saw a net, about a three-foot square—it wasn't a minnow net because I remember it had maybe like two-inch net. And I looked at that and I says, "That'll work." So I took it off the garage wall and went back there and went in the river, and then as those salmon came up to me I'd drop the net over the top of them. I missed the first one, I still remember that because he was quick. But then I had the timing right so that I'd drop that net over top of them and then stood on the net and then I got ahold of them with the gaff hook and took them up on the bank. And then again I don't know how many I had but I had to call my brother, (both laugh) my brother again to come and get them. And he did. And I remember it was kind of funny because he asks, "How'd you catch those?" and I told him and he wouldn't believe me. So the next night he went with me and we took—

my son was—he had a son about the same age as my oldest son, they might have been twelve, I'm not sure what it was, but anyway, the two boys came along. So I showed them how we did it and we caught another bunch of salmon that night, which was illegal, but it was just kind of a—nobody cared, until it got to be a serious problem. I'll admit it. I signed a waiver here but, (Prichard laughs) no, I don't think they're going to prosecute me now. (laughs) But it was just a common practice. And it was the people that abused that that made it bad, but the people that were using—taking the fish, nobody seemed to care how they caught them, there were so many. And I would say I was an amateur, I didn't know anything about fishing and I was able to catch them. So, it was just that many fish. It was fun.

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PRICHARD: That was even before they stocked a million of them here.

PELTZ: Pardon?

PRICHARD: That was before they started stocking—

PELTZ: Oh yeah. Yeah. This was—(Prichard: Yeah.) yeah, there was just thousands and thousands. It was just unreal—

PRICHARD: Really?

PELTZ: —how many fish, and how big they were. I don't think you could do that, plan it. It just happened. I don't think when they introduced the salmon to the Great Lakes that they anticipated that. It was just the way it happened.

PRICHARD: Oh yeah. Yeah, how could you know? (laughs)

PELTZ: And you know, the thing about it, my son-in-law—my daughter lives in Ludington, and they had good fishing there, but they had to go out ten to twelve miles to catch fish. Here you catch them on the beach. It was that much different. The boats would go out maybe a half a mile. It wasn't a big thing to go out. But I know in Ludington it took a long time to get there and get back, and the weather was a factor, when you're out that far on the lake. (Prichard: Yeah.) And here, I think that's probably what made it so popular here is that it was so close, and it wasn't a big risk to get out on that lake. But, yeah, it was just—and you know, I don't think about it often, I haven't thought about—but the more I sit and think about it, it was quite a thing. (Prichard: Yeah.) Almost unreal. And something you couldn't plan. (coughs) But, there was a lot of things that took place because of it, the nature of it, and things that kind of coincided with fishing. And there was many events, festivals, just all kinds of—tournaments, the tournaments evolved. And the tournament is still big, it's a big thing here. Draws not anywhere near what it did. I mean now they maybe get thirty to forty boats and the fish aren't as big, but the interest is still there. They have the weigh-in ceremony. People look forward to it. (Prichard: Yeah.)

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PRICHARD: I did an interview earlier for this project with a guy named Jayme Warwick who fishes the tournaments. (Peltz: Yeah.) Yeah. The Fat Hogs. Yeah.

PELTZ: Yeah. And they have a women's tournament, too. The women only are allowed to fish. I think maybe some of the boat drivers can be male but the women are—and I think everybody follows the rules, and they have a lot of fun. I have—some of my family

members have been involved in the fishing but, like I say, I just never, for whatever reason. My dad was a fisherman, my brothers were fishermen. I just never—I think over the years what I did—and I did fish occasionally when I was younger but I always figured I had something better I could do than sit there waiting for something to bite on the other end of the line, and so I just never got into it. I love fish. I still get fish, people bring fish, my family members. I've got a grandson that likes to fish. It's fun.

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PRICHARD: Was it—I mean you talked earlier about the size of the salmon at the tournament getting smaller, to a time where fifteen pounds was a big one. Was it really noticeable—the decrease in the amount of people coming to fish? And—

PELTZ: Oh definitely. Yeah.

PRICHARD: —how quickly did that change happen?

PELTZ: Well it wasn't so much the—it was that the number of fish—the size diminished because they ran out of food so rapidly, it just happened so quick. They had food one day and then all of a sudden that was it, is what happened. They just ran out of food. And so not only the size went way down, but the number of fish. And so the interest just wasn't there. But it's strange, I still see that. If I see ten boats down at the boat harbor I say, "Ope, there's fish out there." Because the word spreads fast. If somebody catches a couple fish, the next day there's ten-twelve boats there, or even more. It's just, you can tell when there's fish out there because there's boats in the boat harbor. If there's no

boats out there then there's no fish out there. The fishermen seem to—somehow the word spreads pretty quick.

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PRICHARD: I drive down here and I look at the harbor and I think about, you know, there was only one trailer—boat trailer—in the parking lot this morning, but as I read back through the newspaper articles—because there was a time in the eighties where they were trying to prepare, you know, If we stock as many salmon as we want to stock here we need to make the boat launches set up differently. And they had researchers come from Michigan State [University] and say, “Well you probably need to be able to accommodate two hundred boats launching a day,” and I try to think about how different that must have looked launching two hundred boats a day compared to the activity that goes (phone rings once) on down there now.

PELTZ: And that brings to mind, too, because at that time we didn't have all the launches. It wasn't as big down there as it is now. I mean, nobody was ready for that. And so, when you have this many boats coming in, people are coming there at one o'clock in the morning, and of course every boat had to be inspected to make sure there was no fish that were caught yesterday in the coolers. So they had people inspecting every boat. And they had to launch all those boats. And then we had a trailer problem—vehicle problem, because there was no place for all these vehicles and trailers, so we had, down the road a little ways there was, where the disposal plant is, there's a huge area there, so they took vehicles down there and then they ferried whoever drove down back to the boat harbor because there just was no place to park all those vehicles. It was just—

nobody was ready for that much equipment. And like you say the launching, I hadn't thought about that but that was a problem because everybody had to launch that boat, and it takes ten-fifteen minutes to launch a boat, and so when you get that many boats—and then they had to inspect them all. I guess they didn't take anybody's word that they didn't catch any fish yesterday, (Prichard laughs) so they inspected all the—any place in a boat that could have had a fish to make sure that they were all fish that were caught that day. But yeah, it was a problem. It was great but it presented problems, but everybody worked through it. And everybody could park a vehicle—vehicles and trailers took up a lot of room. (laughs) It isn't like—a small parking lot, you had to have a lot of room for that stuff. So there was cars and pickups and boat trailers all over. But that never created a problem either because it was temporary and everybody knew what it was. It was a big thing. I'm not sure if you would want that permanently on that basis, but if it was you would gear up to it and you'd have everything ready to go, because it isn't something that lasts year-round. But it was big all summer. It wasn't just the tournaments, it was every weekend, yeah. A lot of fishermen. And like I say, economically, it was great. Housing industry. Restaurants. Liquor store I'm sure (Prichard laughs) did pretty well because that's only a block from the boat harbor. (laughs) You know, gas stations, sporting goods stores—everything. Everybody. It was great for the community, no question about that. And it helped enhance the boat harbor and the boat area. (coughs) And we do have a great boat harbor here. (Prichard: Oh yeah.) The whole area down there: the bandshell, and sailor's memorial, and the beach, and the pavilion, playground for the kids. We have people come here—and like I say I go there quite a lot with my little guy and people from

out of town there all the time [are] telling me how great the area is. It's a nice grassy area. It's a nice place.

I don't know what else I can help you with, but it was a pleasure just to be able to talk to you.

|00:39:27|

PRICHARD: Yeah, well the pleasure is all mine. Yeah, if there is anything else you think you'd like to add about, kind of, the legacy of the salmon fishery on Rogers City, or maybe how it influenced the culture here, and how that changed over time. But we basically covered a lot of things that I was hoping to talk with you about.

PELTZ: Yeah, it—oh it definitely, you know, it brought people to Rogers City that are still here. Good citizens. People that came temporarily, saw the area, liked it, came back here, moved back, bought homes, retired here. Some of them still fish, but most of them are beyond that. But as far as the city itself, yeah, it left a definite mark on the city as far as economically, and just the beach area itself. And it's going to continue. I don't know if it will ever come back to that. I don't think the fish can recover, as far as the food supply. I'm happy that it's come back somewhat, but I don't know how long that will last either, because there's only so much food out there for that many fish. And if they're getting bigger again now, at some point it's probably going to reverse back to what it was. It's just one of those things. They're dependent on the food supply and if it's not there they're not there. It just can't happen. But it was crazy (laughs) to see that many fish, going down—and the size of them, nobody ever saw fish that big, and we had a lot of fish in the area. And years ago when I was a kid we had commercial fishermen here. There was a

small—I don't know if anybody else touched on that but just to the north of our boat harbor there was a small harbor, we called it the fish dock. It's still there. It's just a little harbor for the local fishermen. And they had all kinds of shacks there. They had an icehouse. They had structures for drying the nets. And there was probably six or seven fishing boats. In fact, my wife's dad had one called the *Barbara J*, named after my wife. We have pictures of that. So that was a local industry, but that was mostly whitefish, and chubs they called them, and things like that, but it was a fishing industry. There was probably ten or twelve families that survived on just the fishing. The boat fishermen, plus they all had a crew, two or three on each boat, and they would leave in the morning and in the evening come back. You'd see them coming back. They all had diesel engines in them I think so you could see the smoke coming out of the stack. They weren't big boats. Twenty feet, twenty-five feet maybe. In fact there's one of them down in the boat harbor right now, in the parking lot. Did you see that one?

PRICHARD: No—I just saw a big sailboat that—

PELTZ: Well, right in front of the pavilion—it was there, the other day it was still there, (Prichard: Okay.) maybe because it's gone.

PRICHARD: Maybe I just missed it. I'll go—

PELTZ: One of the Indians' fish tugs is in there. (Prichard: Okay.) It's the first time that's ever happened. They stored it there for the winter. But it's right in the parking lot. It's black and white. (Prichard: Okay.) But anyway, that's similar to the boats that were here. But it was a local fishing industry. They shipped them out, packed them in ice. But that was when I was a kid. And some of those people smoked fish, they sold them locally.

But they had an icehouse. I'm not sure—I never saw them put the ice up, but they put the ice up in the winter, packed it in sawdust, and they had ice all summer. And they had a chipper. Packed them in boxes and shipped them. And that was every summer. And they were cleaning those fish as they came in, and you could see the seagulls would be right behind the boat. And they would come in, pack those fish up, and ship them out by truck. It was a local industry for years and years. And if I remember, there was—in fact, one of the boats, I think it's the *Katherine V*, is at the Alpena Maritime Museum. (Prichard: Okay.) I think it's there. They kind of redid that in the last ten-fifteen years, they had it. And they had some kind of a drive or some kind of a program to restore that, and I don't know to what extent that's been done, but I'm sure it's at the Alpena Maritime Museum I think they have there.

PRICHARD: Okay. I'll be in Alpena tomorrow.

PELTZ: Yeah. It's the *Katherine V* is the name of it. It belonged to the Vogelheim family.

PRICHARD: Okay, yeah.

PELTZ: And they were in the fishing business and the lumber business. And like I say my wife's dad, it was the *Barbara J*, named after my wife. And they all docked in that little—we called it the fish dock. We'd go down, we'd go swimming there because they had docks you could dive off of. And that's before the local beach was—it was a local beach down to the right of that where it is now, but it wasn't developed like it is now. It was more of an industrial area. But that was our swimming beach. There was a big dock that went out there. The local lumber—baron, I guess, for lack of a better word, old

P.H. Hoeft had his yacht, and he had a boathouse—he had a dock going out and at the end of the dock there was a boathouse where he kept his yacht. I think it was called the *Topaz*, or something like that, I'm not sure. But when I was a kid he had—he destroyed the boat during the Second World War so that the navy wouldn't use it. That's the story, and I'm pretty sure it's true. But the boathouse and everything was still there, so we would use that as a swimming spot, that boathouse out—the dock. And that was eventually torn down and taken out of there. I remember when they took it out one of the local contractors actually built a road out into the lake so they could get his equipment out there and destroy that—remove the cement piers and everything that we used as swimming—and cleared it, cleared the lake. But I never did see the boat itself. That was just a boathouse. But there was three docks that I know of, that the lumber people used. But that fish dock, that's what we called it, was a pretty good industry.

PRICHARD: Was that the one that would have been called, like, the Vogelheim lumberyard?

PELTZ: Yeah, that's part of the Vogelheim—. And Vogelheim, they had the lumberyard and they had a fishing boat. Same family. And the fish dock was part of that property. (Prichard: Okay.) It's right at the foot of Huron Avenue, (Prichard: Okay.) the fish dock. It wasn't big, but it was big enough to house those small fishing boats. And it was a thriving industry. They would process them locally, sell them. I remember they would smoke some, and wrap them in newspaper, and go around to the bars, and sell a package of smoked fish, and go from house-to-house. People bought them. It was—other than the ones that they shipped—iced up and shipped out—and I don't remember, volume-wise how many fish, how many pounds of fish, but it was a daily—. And those were little

boats. They were subject to the weather. And I don't know how, at that time, how they found their nets, (Prichard laughs) where they left them. You know, they had no electronic devices. They had a compass and that was it. But they managed. And some of those—I mean I knew most of those captains. They were older than me, but I knew them. And then one of them, his son took it over, and he and I grew up together. And he's still around. I'm not sure what kind of shape he's in, I haven't seen him for quite some time, but he fished for many years here and then off of the Upper Peninsula. But eventually, the DNR I think bought his license (Prichard: Okay.) and he quit fishing. But I haven't seen him for a long time. Name is Gary Lamb if you ever run across it.

PRICHARD: Is he related to the editor at the newspaper?

PELTZ: Pardon?

PRICHARD: Is he related to the editor at the newspaper, Richard Lamb?

PELTZ: Um, let me see, let me see. I've got to stop and figure families out here. Rich—*yeah*, yeah, he would be. His dad and Rich's—they would probably be, yeah, (Prichard: Okay.) yeah. There's some relation there.

PRICHARD: Okay. I've been thinking about contacting him. (laughs)

PELTZ: I have to go back a couple of generations here to connect them all. (laughs) I'm able to do that because I've been here all these years. (laughs) Yeah, I'll be ninety in a couple months, so I've been around a while. A lot of people come to me for, "What was this? And where was this? And what was this?" But it's interesting. But yeah unless something like this comes up those things tend to be forgotten. You know, just sitting

here brings back a lot of memories that I would never have thought about again. Just, it was a fun time. And like I say I don't really recall anything bad about it. There were no real problems. I'm sure some people did, but not that I'm aware of. And that Indian, kind of, controversy with the Indians is, it was just, they kind of thought that they had—they could do what they wanted, any place that they wanted to do it. And I guess I can see their side of the story. You know, to them, private property was at one time their property, and so if you look at it from both sides I can see where the problem came up. But, it was nothing serious. I'm sure there were some pretty serious threats that I'm (laughs) not aware of, but physically, it never got to that point fortunately. [It] could have been bad, could have been some bad injuries, incidents, but I'm not aware of any. Everybody kind of cooled off, and it worked out. There was never a problem down at the boat harbor, with the Indian controversy that I'm aware of, it was just along the beaches, along the private property where they would launch their boats. And I don't know how they operated off the beach, but they did. They knew what they were doing. And they caught a lot of fish. And local people would go over there and buy fish from the Indians. It wasn't as bad as it sounds. It was just that they weren't too concerned about what other people considered their property. Yeah, a lot of people went up and—go up there and wait for the Indians to come in with their boat and buy fish from them. Because they sold them pretty reasonable, put it that way. (laughs) Other than that I don't know what else I can tell you.

PRICHARD: Okay. Well I really appreciate you (Peltz: Yeah, it was—) telling me everything that you have.

PELTZ: —it was great. And like I say, again, I wish some of my friends that were fishermen would be here to tell you, but they were out on the lake, they were in the middle of it, and I was not. I was kind of an outsider looking in. I saw it, but I didn't experience it.

PRICHARD: It's good to have those perspectives, too. (laughs) Alright. Well if that's all, I'll turn off the recording now.

PELTZ: Yeah, fine.

end of interview