

Kenneth E. and Mandy Partyka

Oral History Interview
Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Carson G. Prichard
June 15, 2021
Partyka residence
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

There is no introduction at the beginning of this interview, and the recording begins mid-conversation. The interview took place beginning around 1:00 p.m. in the backyard of the Partyka residence, on the Lake Huron shoreline. Throughout the interview the sounds of wind, waves lapping the shore, and a bonfire crackling can be heard in the recording.

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KEN PARTYKA: —we're doing good and—

MANDY PARTYKA: I wonder why nobody else was.

KEN: —so we're doing that. And the next year rolls around and we're doing and okay. Now people are around and they're doing that. Not so many boat fishermen, but they're still back in the area. And one day I was in to Clem's Bait Shop, Sonny's Bait Shop, whatever, in Alpena by the Ninth Street Dam, they had this three quarter-ounce glow-in-the-dark Cleo—not Cleo, it was a—

PRICHARD: K.O. Wobbler?

KEN: —it was a—Krocodile. (Prichard: Okay.) Okay. A glow-in-the-dark Krocodile, okay? So I'm out there—we're out there fishing before daybreak. We're out there fishing before the sun comes up. And that's (laughs) what so many people never did. So many people *never* did that. We're out there before—so I'm out there. I give this Krocodile a shot. Fling that baby out there. Three quarter-ouncer goes out there—

MANDY: A shot of light. We had flashlights at the time, shine up that glow.

KEN: Anyway, I fling that—

MANDY: I'll fill in—fill in—(Prichard and Mandy laugh)

KEN: —I fling that baby out there. Hits the water.

MANDY: —gave it a shot with a flashlight.

KEN: Crank it. Bingo, right off the get-go. For two years people were, like, and then all of the sudden they're realizing, Okay, he's got a light. Now he's throwing this lure out there. I can see it go out, you know? Pretty soon now there's other people. But we were just casting. And it was kind of funny because, you know, I'd go out there, I'd have waders. My brother, always a little bit radical, had—he was a diver, so he had a wetsuit.

PRICHARD: Chuck?

KEN: Yeah.

PRICHARD: Is he [an] older brother?

KEN: He's younger.

PRICHARD: Oh, he's younger. Okay.

KEN: Four years younger than I am. But anyway, he had a wetsuit. So he'd put on his wetsuit, and he'd put on a pair of bib coveralls and a flannel shirt, (Prichard and Mandy laugh) and out he is in the water like this here, and people are looking at him like, Holy Cuh-rist that guy really wants fish. *Jesus Christ*, you know? And there he is, just, you know? And we'd lose some lures. I'd take his other suit and we would go out, snorkeling for lures later on in the day. But, oh yeah, it was like, you know, people go, "Them guys are crazy," you know? (Mandy laughs)

MANDY: Tell him the size of the fish back then when they first planted them.

KEN: They—yeah they were all—they were all nice. They were nice fish. I mean even—I mean—I mean we were catching forty-pound fish. (Prichard: Really?) My mother—I mean, you would catch fish and you would just stop because your arms were sore. We were catching very big fish, back early, early. Not a lot of plants, but we were catching—my mother caught—some big fish. We caught big fish. Big fish. Back further on they got a little smaller, but even back in the—back in the day when there was like eighty boats coming out of Rogers City every day it was like, you know, we were averaging—oh geez, we we're averaging eighteen to twenty pounds. Now you get an eighteen-pound salmon it's like, Holy shit, there's a dandy. There's a dandy. Eighteen pounds. It's like, shoot. You'd go out and you'd catch—okay, you'd catch one twenty-seven, a thirty-one, a thirty-three, for your bigger ones you were catching. But you were averaging back then eighteen-, twenty-pound fish, average.

PRICHARD: In the eighties? Or back when it really started in the seventies? Like the early seventies, or—?

KEN: I'm going to say back when the—. You know, I know it's 2001. [ed. note: presumably Ken meant to say "2021"] What was back there—life just goes on. (Prichard: Yeah.) I'm talking back when the salmon tournament was going, (Prichard: Okay.) when the salmon tournament first got going, (Prichard: Okay.) and whatever time that was.

PRICHARD: That was 1986.

KEN: But back then—

MANDY: You know, it was before the tournament started that your family was doing real good on salmon, before they even thought of having the tournament.

KEN: But, you know there's a—. (laughs) We went out—. People never went out early, okay? People never went out early. We went out early. We were out setting lines before it's breaking day, okay? We're out there setting lines before it's breaking day, setting lines with flashlights. We came in one time, Mandy and I, we came in one time, it's like eight o'clock in the morning, come in and it's like eight o'clock in the morning. We're done. We got our limit. Ten nice salmon. This guy meets us on the dock, he says, "You forget something?" (Prichard laughs) Mandy goes, "No, we're boxed out. We got our limit." "Oh, bullshit," you know? (Prichard laughs; Ken laughs) We had this twenty-four-foot center console. We didn't have no livewell or anything like that. I had a big wooden box made. Big wooden box. She lifts the cover off this wooden box and it's full of salmon. We had people lined up—I mean you can only do so many fish, you know? Back

then, there was people [that] knew we fished, and that's what we did, we fished. And they'd get on the list. You're giving fish away. (Prichard: Okay.) And people have no problem taking fish, especially—they're fresh caught, they're cleaned, filleted, (laughs) skinned, cleaned—you got them. We never really had a problem getting rid of fish. There's always somebody [that] wanted fish. So, yeah we had some pretty good times there for a while.

PRICHARD: So you lined up your vacation, probably for (Ken: Well—) August and September, then?

KEN: Right. It was—I would get off the middle of August through—we had a date—and I think that's what the first salmon tournament ran, or—

MANDY: The twenty-fourth?

KEN: —the twenty-fourth of August was when we normally were catching our first fish in shallow water, in shallow water, to where—. I mean we did a lotta-lotta downrigger fishing. But, I tell you right now, we go out in that little sixteen-footer, we don't even put [planer] boards out, if there's any kind of traffic we don't even put boards out. We string out a couple of Bombers, and we just troll, hanging on. We were in there one time—

MANDY: Swan Bay.

KEN: —into Swan Bay area—we were in there one time and there was the Fat Hog tournament or something going on here, and we were in there anyway, and we don't usually fish on the weekends because of the traffic, but the weather was good so we went. And we went out, and there was—the center console, three guys, they're running six

lines, they got boards out. They've got them strung out from here to your car on each side. Swan Bay is small. We're just running, hanging on to our pole. Boom! (laughs) It's like, "They got one on. *They got another one on,*" you know? (laughs) They're following us and we pop three, (Prichard laughs) and they are *gone*. It's like, I can't take it anymore. (Prichard laughs) I can't take it—and they got *another* one. It's like, just—

MANDY: Instead of following us or paying attention to what we were doing they leave because they can't take seeing us catch fish and they're not. (Prichard laughs)

KEN: But we used to do this—I had fishermen, I had charter fishermen and—oh god. I was down one time with a friend of mine and we popped a limit in the afternoon, him and I, in that little boat right there with a six-horse motor. We're coming up between a charter fisherman and another big boat. And we come in between these two boats and we're just hanging on. Buh-boom! Buh-boom! (Prichard and Ken laugh) We got doubles. We got doubles. (laughs) And these guys are going by and they're going, *What? What?*

MANDY: We had fun.

PRICHARD: That sounds like a fun way to fish, too.

KEN: We had a big Bose stereo system, a Bose stereo system (laughs)—

MANDY: In that little tiny boat. (laughs)

KEN: —in the frontend, just a'cranking and we're just out there, yeah. Yeah, he was a good friend, he happened to be a first mate at the time on the boat I was on. And, hey, you talk smart. Talk smart at the fish cleaning station.

Prichard asks a question, but based on the response says that he will remove the question and response from the recording (a total of forty-one seconds).

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KEN: We would fish—I would fish—I would set lines—. There was times—because I’m taking friends, and I’m taking people, and I’m taking friends and people and relation, and friends, fishing, who never caught anything like this, okay? They never—and I’m taking them fishing. There was times when I swear I didn’t hardly reel in a fish (Prichard: Okay.) all salmon season. All I’m doing is setting lines, steering the boat. Setting lines, steering the boat. Setting lines, steering the boat, okay. And I’ve got to set lines. Okay, I’m going to set lines. I get somebody to steer the boat. Steer on that boat right there. Steer right on them—don’t move. Steer right on them. Oh, we’re getting close. I said, “It doesn’t matter. We’re bigger than him, he’ll move.” Okay. (Prichard laughs) I’ve got to get these lines set, and you’ve got to go straight while I’m getting these lines set. But, we did different things. We did different things that people didn’t do. People go, and they go, and they troll, sixty-five feet of water, eighty-five feet of water, straight—

MANDY: For miles.

KEN: —eighty-five feet of water. You know, you just keep going.

PRICHARD: Contour—they just follow—

KEN: You know, they just run that, whatever. We would run, we would run, if we’re running like, if we were running, like we run a lot of Grizzlys, a lot of small J-Plugs, big J—we run J-Plugs. We run spoons. We’d go no more than twenty feet in back of the ball.

Twenty feet in back of the ball, and that's it. You get a fish, you spin right around. You're not tangling your lines. You're not back there a hundred feet, trolling a big dodger that's—if you're putting a dodger down, we'd go this far in back of the ball (holds out hands in front of him) with the dodger. (Prichard: Really?) That's it. That's it. Turn on a dime. (laughs; Prichard: Yeah.) Turn on a dime.

MANDY: There's a school of fish, you just caught two, you'd make a circle (Prichard: Right.) right back through them (Prichard: Right.) instead of keeping on down the shoreline. Uh, what don't they get? (laughs; Prichard: Yeah.) You just caught a fish here—this is where the fish are. (Prichard and Mandy laugh) That's what happens when you come in at eight o'clock. You got your limit because you'd be paying attention to what you're doing. You don't need to be out there wasting time. (Ken: But yeah—) Catch your fish and come home and clean them, and be happy.

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PRICHARD: That first tournament, were you the only boat that was in Swan Bay, doing what you were doing?

KEN: Oh god, there was, there was—there was so many boats in there (Prichard: Oh, okay.) that it was unbelievable. You would not believe—there had to be—I couldn't even—I mean, that's a long time ago, (Prichard: Yeah.) okay. That's a long time ago. There was so many boats I've never seen so many boats. Okay? There was so many boats there was, thirty-five-forty boats anyway, anyway. And they had spotter boats out, because I knew—I talked to one guy that was in a spotter boat. They're just checking to make sure nobody's doing anything wrong and they're going, "Wow. You guys are

catching fish like crazy.” And the funny thing was it was an onshore wind, it was windier than a bugger, and everything was riled up. And prior to that I was doing good like on—not a Bomber, but a something like a Bomber that was a firetiger. And I caught one fish right off the get-go on this firetiger. But we ended up going to—I had these little teeny Grizzly plugs, little J-Plugs, (Prichard: Okay.) Grizzlys. Just like a J-Plug, but (Prichard: Smaller.) a small, little—. And the four of us went to that. And we’re just—I mean we’re running right up on—we’re dragging these through sand, they’re bouncing, and we are just—. And there’s so many fish, I mean, we landed fish that I can’t even imagine how it happened because I know we landed fish that were on and it’s past that boat (Prichard laughs) and it’s past that boat. And there’s—Swan Bay is not that big. Anymore like when we go out, hey, there’s like three or four people in Swan Bay, half a dozen it’s like really crowded. It was like there’s I think forty boats in there. But this was Rogers City, this was going to be a small boat tournament, okay. Small boats. Hey, this is not all about big boats. All of a sudden, in two years, Oh you can’t go in a line from here to there. You can’t go anywhere over there. You can’t—I just quit fishing, I mean, (Prichard: Okay.) they put so many rules in, in my opinion, (laughs) the anti-*Salmon Slayer* fishing rules (Prichard: (laughs) Oh, okay, yeah.) to—you can’t go—. But there was a lot of—

PRICHARD: What were the rules? I’m curious now.

KEN: Well you could just go anywhere from here to here and you could fish, anywhere. Now after that they changed the rules and they says, “Okay, you cannot fish inside of a line from the breakwall to Swan Point or Quarry Point over there. You can’t fish any—”

MANDY: Inside.

KEN: (unclear)

MANDY: Yeah, you can't go in the bay, where people were catching fish. (laughs)

KEN: You know, there was forty-some boats in there, there was.

PRICHARD: Huh, I didn't know that.

KEN: Yeah.

MANDY: It wasn't fun anymore.

KEN: You know, okay, you can only—like I think I told you, I says, “Hey, catching the big fish is just luck,” okay? We were out for the daily boat captain's catch. (Prichard: Yeah.) Three times a day they take the most—now they're down to three fish. Well, one good fish (Prichard: Yeah.)—it's not right. We came in that day that we had the big one, and it wasn't that big, whatever it was, twenty-five pounds or some god-darn thing, it was nothing. No big deal. But we won every daily captain's catch. That's what we were looking for. (Prichard: Yeah.) Cash money. Just cash money. That's what you could talk smart about. (Prichard: Oh yeah.) Yeah, we kicked ass. We took every—

MANDY: That's why they changed the rules because they wanted it to be fair for everybody. (Ken laughs) But, when you're just on top of the game, and you fished all your life and your family fished all your life, and you know what's going on—you kick ass.

PRICHARD: Right. (laughs) Yeah.

MANDY: And when it's not fun anymore you go and you just have fun with other tournaments. There were other tournaments going on.

KEN: Oh we had fun.

PRICHARD: Outside of Rogers City or—?

MANDY: Here.

PRICHARD: Here. Okay.

KEN: Just here, where like Steelheaders, okay, Michigan Steelheaders—Rogers City had a small little group of Steelheaders. But we had Metro Detroit and Detroit Area Steelheaders. And these guys would come up, and we'd fish together. And they were fun. They were fun. You'd get together afterwards and have a keg of beer and cook some hotdogs, or whatever, and talk smart. And every hour they would come on and they'd go, "Okay—"

MANDY: Radio.

KEN: —come on the radio and go, "Okay, okay. *Salmon Slayer, Salmon Slayer*. Fish call. How many in the box?" Alright, "We got three." "Oh, okay." Next hour, "*Salmon Slayer, Salmon Slayer*, how many in the box?" "We got five in the box." "Oh, okay." "*Trina Dawn?*" "One in the box." "*Teacher's Pet?*" "Two in the box," you know? All of a sudden, all of a sudden you're going along, you're going along, you're doing pretty good. You're winning, you're doing pretty good and all of a sudden you get, "*Teacher's Pet, Teacher's Pet*, how many in the box?" "We got nine in the box," and I'm going,

Wow, they had one in the box last time. But you know these people and they do different things. They're out north, they're out way north. Way north, beyond the lighthouse, over towards—and they told us about this, okay? Yeah, we were out. We came in off of Evergreen Beach down there. There's some big sand dunes. They come inside these sand dunes. Right inside these sand dunes there was a slot in there loaded up with baitfish, and they just (laughs)—but they passed that information along. That's something that stays with you. There's a spot over off the other side of—and so many people—and we would talk about it—and so many people don't really know, but we'd go, “Hey. We just popped three. We're off Black Point Marsh.” Okay, well nobody knew where that was. There's a giant hole over there off of the Grand Lake outlet on the other side of Thompson's Harbor between Thompson's Harbor and Presque Isle, there's a giant hole out there. So like if you're fishing the tournament, and you've got this little bit of an edge because you've been riding around, and you know that this hole is there, and you know that nobody's been cruising it, at all, and okay, you got what you got in the morning catch, you're waiting for the afternoon catch or the evening catch, and you've got some time to kill, and you've got gas in your boat, you shoot over there, and you can pop three or four fish because nobody's been there and it's just a deep hole—it's not that big—and you can just circle around and pop a couple. It's just a little bit of local knowledge, and if you're out there and if you're fishing all the time—.

But we used to have a deal, used to have a deal, we're leaving the harbor, we've got people lined up, got people lined up, I left people on the dock, I left people on the dock, go out with half the people I thought I was going to, I'm saying, “Hey, you've got plenty of time. Six o'clock. My boat is going to be launched, at six o'clock I'm leaving the

dock.” I might wait until five after six, if they ain’t there, I’m gone. Say, hey, people back then—this is really pretty amazing but I mean this is a long time ago—people back then didn’t go fishing early, didn’t go fishing early.

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PRICHARD: Did you often take people out?

KEN: All the time.

PRICHARD: Was that on your twenty-four-foot?

KEN: Yeah. All the time. All the time. (laughs) And people—people (laughs)—you know, sometimes just people just didn’t really like us. Maybe because we were catching fish. Maybe whatever. You’d come in, you’d fish the evening, okay, you’re fishing right to dark. But you don’t want to wait to dark because things get to be a madhouse. So, everybody starts scrambling back to the boat harbor, okay? Now I had like a twenty-four-foot boat. I only had like a 175-horse, a 175-horse Johnson on it. But, this boat came from Florida. It was a Florida flats boat. Shallow draft. Scooting right along the top. And everybody wants to get in ahead of the next guy, you know? Everybody wants to get ahead of the next guy. (laughs) So I remember I was out there, I was out there with Tom Kelly, Steve Kelly, Todd Kelly, Bob Kelly, whatever. They’re standing in back. Mandy and I are in the seat. And we’re going. And we’re going. And I’m going like, three quarter throttle. I’ve got a couple of boats over here that are just catching me. Catching me. Catching me. Catch[ing]—we got the *Salmon Slayer*. We’re going to, we’re going to

beat them in. We're going to beat them in. (laughs) I'm like, "Okay boys, hang on because here we go." (Prichard laughs) Brr-VOOM! (laughs)

MANDY: And he wonders why they called us assholes.

KEN: Cut the buoys, two buoys short and slip in ahead of them and—. [Look] at him, fucking assholes. (laughs)

MANDY: We just had fun. We didn't do anything illegal or any, you know, lie to anybody about anything. Hey, what are you fishing with? We show them and, Aw, you've got to—nah, (Prichard: Right.) you're not catching them on *that*. (laughs)

KEN: You know, I mean, we came in on that salmon tournament and we quit at nineteen because I knew we had nineteen, but I didn't want to make a mistake. So we're going to quit one short. And we came in and it was getting close to quitting time anyway because I think that was a Sunday one o'clock cutoff, and we had to get back. But, we came in. People asked, "What did you catch them on?" I show them this little, chrome Grizzly. I said, "Eighteen of our nineteen fish came on this." "Bullshit." (Prichard laughs) "Bullshit." You look—I says, "This was a brand new lure. I took it out of the package this morning. Brand new lure. Look at it—," it is just carved up with teeth marks, "—look at it. This was a brand new lure this morning." "Bullshit." "Um, what can I tell you? (laughs) What can I tell you?"

I was up on Big Bay de Noc. A neighbor, close neighbor, a mile or so away, but a close friend—

MANDY: For the UP [Upper Peninsula of Michigan] that's close. (Prichard: Yeah.)

KEN: Anyway, he goes, “What did you catch these fish on?” I’ve got ten walleye and a forty-two-inch northern pike laying in my cooler. I mean it is full. And, “What did you catch them on?” I says, “Wayne, let me show you.” I pull them out, and I show him, because [he said], “You catching them on Rapalas?” (pronounced RAP-uh-luhs) “No. No, I don’t use Rapalas. (pronounced ruh-PAL-uhs; laughs) No, I use nightcrawler harnesses. Small nightcrawler harnesses. I tie them up myself.” People don’t understand. I’ll go and I’ll go, I’ll go down to Frank’s, I’ll go down to that place in—

PRICHARD: Jay’s?

KEN: —that, (Ken and Mandy simultaneously: Northwoods), in Pinconning—

PRICHARD: Oh, I know what you’re talking about. Northwoods Wholesale Outlet or whatever.

KEN: —and I’ll buy a harness, I’ll buy whatever, for the blade. I just want the blade. And I’ll tie my own. I just want the blade. So I got these—I found out—nobody tells you anything up there, okay? Nobody tells you anything up there. I tell everybody anything I’m doing. I tell everybody because they’re going to set illegal gillnets up there, they’re going to do whatever. You might as well catch some fish if you can catch some fish because there’s too many illegal nets. Whatever. But anyway, so I tell people—. So I’m telling Wayne and he says, “What did you catch them on?” and I show him. I says, “Wayne, this is what I caught my fish on. I caught two on this purple one, and I caught eight on this here, plus the pike came on the purple one. But the green was good.” Little teeny tiny, teeny tiny little spoons that are just the right color, just spin the right way, just the right color of beads that you have on, the right size of beads, tied up with Gamakatzu

hooks. He looks at me like, You caught that northern—? (Prichard laughs) Wayne, it's right here. It's busted apart. It hit the net. It's destroyed. But I got all the pieces, I'll put it back together. He looks at me like—he didn't say, "Oh, bullshit," but he gave me that Oh, bullshit look (Prichard laughs) and I'm going, Uh—. Anyway, that's what goes around out here, too. It's like, I don't—

PRICHARD: You can't get credit for being good. (all laugh)

MANDY: But we have fun. (Prichard: Yeah.) We have fun. One year, it was early in the year, and somebody stopped us at the dock. "Just, roughly, how many salmon do you think you caught?" And he says—and we're thinking the sizes and how many times we were out and it's like, "Roughly a ton." (Prichard laughs) "Oh, *bullshit*." And we had. I mean, we knew when we fished and what size and how many and how many days we were out there and—

KEN: I was fishing with my brother, okay? And he kept a record. Where we caught them. What they were on. He was like my dad, always had a record.

MANDY: A ledger. A fishing ledger.

KEN: What lure they were caught on, what depth they were caught on, boom, boom, boom. But you don't have a scale. You ain't measuring, you're just, geez—

MANDY: You know from experience.

KEN: —geez o'petes. But you know that back in that time your average fish was eighteen to twenty pounds. Your average fish. You caught a lot of twenty-fours. Caught a

lot of twenty-twos, twenty-fours, twenty-fives. You caught thirties. You caught a lot of fish, okay? And this is when the Stroh's Tournament was going on. They had this Stroh's Tournament (Prichard: Okay.) going on statewide. And geez I think we won every, we won every—

MANDY: Every weekly—

KEN: —every weekly—once a week at the weigh-in stations, we won every—we'd go out—geez, my brother was relentless crazy. He was working, I had six weeks off. He had a two-week vacation, and when he had a two-week vacation we fished every day. I mean I'm telling you, we went out—phew, we went out in crap that was, like, unbelievable. We fished in lightning. I hate lightning.

MANDY: Waterspouts. Three waterspouts out there. (laughs)

KEN: But, we fished, we fished where—

MANDY: You fished.

KEN: —we came in one morning to go out, and there was like five boats sitting at the harbor. And it was ugly. It was ugly out there. Terrible. Rough. Oh, I go to the guys I say, “A little gnarly out there, eh boys?” “Uh, yeah. Yeah.” I said, (Prichard laughs) “We’re gonna go take a look at her.” (laughs) We launch the boat and take off. It’s him and I. You can’t—we took time. Now if you know I’m fishing with my brother, you know things are really bad when we’re fishing two lines. (Prichard: Okay.) We’re only fishing two lines because if it’s him and I, we’re going to be running four, and there’s going to be sliders on them, because that’s the way he is. He wants the max that he can run. We’re

running two lines. The passenger can't sit in the seat and watch the lines because it's too rough. It's too rough. It's too rough. The driver can hang onto the steering wheel, so we'd take turns catching fish. I don't know that I've fished in any worse weather than that. It was horrible.

MANDY: Kneeling in—

KEN: But you had to kneel, you had to kneel on the deck between the two downriggers, and then grab it, and it's a miracle if you land it or not. You try to turn into the waves, try to hold your own and get the fish.

PRICHARD: You just get beat up out there.

KEN: Holy *Christmas*.

PRICHARD: (laughs) God.

MANDY: That's where you have the experience and the knowledge and you do good, (Ken laughs; Prichard: Yeah.) because you have the hours on the water catching fish.

KEN: But there was three boats that left after we left that day, and one made it as far as the breakwall at Calcite, and that's as far as I saw any of them go. And we were down off of Adams Point at the end of the bluffs, and catching fish, because that's what we did. That's what we did. But, that was back in the day when—that's what I lived for, you know? (Prichard: Yeah.) That's what I lived for. Now it's like, I live for a limit catch of walleye and a forty-two-inch northern, and it is like, My god, nothing gets any better than this. But we still do our salmon fishing.

|00:40:32|

PRICHARD: When did you really stop hardcore salmon fishing? Or for how long did you do that?

KEN: I—. I don't know. It wasn't because of the fact that they quit planting salmon—you know, they were planting bazillions of salmon. It wasn't that. It was, I think we tried in the spring a few times at the smelt run off of Alpena and caught some walleye, and Mandy dearly loves walleye. And it's like—and I'll really have a hard time—*had* a hard time—I still don't have an easy time of catching them, but I take a lot of satisfaction in having a good day of walleye fishing, where, like, right now we go salmon fishing to do two canners-full of salmon, and hopefully have enough for a couple of batches of smoked fish—Mandy does a great job on smoking fish—and to have some on the grill, and we're happy. And we're happy with that. But I get a lot of satisfaction [out] of catching walleye, (Prichard: Yeah.) where, I just—you know, salmon came—. Geez, you get a couple of friends come over from Traverse City. You go out in the morning it's drizzly, drizzle, rain, half-foggy, can't see real well. You go out. You go out. Twenty salmon. Two and a half hours. (Prichard laughs) I mean, you know? They're going home. (laughs) They're going home. Fish is all clean, they're going home. They're canning salmon. Bingo—pressure canner's going to be going for a couple of days. We're happy. Hey, I'm just driving the boat, you know? (laughs) I'm just here having fun.

MANDY: It is a challenge.

KEN: But I do take some more satisfaction now because it's a little harder to catch them. Sometimes you know there's fish in the bay—they won't bite. You try anything, try everything.

PRICHARD: You think that water clarity makes it harder?

KEN: I do. (Prichard: Yeah.) I do.

MANDY: And the lack of planting.

KEN: But, I mean, there's still fish around. But, yeah. When it's really clear—that's why I always like to go after a north wind (Prichard: Oh, yeah.) that pounds in there. And if I can get out the next morning, well, okay maybe the next morning, okay that's—but it's not always a given anymore. It's not always a given anymore.

|00:44:31|

PRICHARD: Do you walleye fish out of Rogers City at all?

KEN: Unh-uh.

PRICHARD: I know that some people I've talked to have said they occasionally pick up walleye but nobody I talked to really targets walleye out of Rogers City.

KEN: There's a lot of walleye caught out here, so they tell me. (Prichard: Okay.) I don't fish—when I'm done up in the UP I don't fish until—I usually wait until after Labor Day to go out on the bay, but I think this year I'm going to go out more towards the end of August and see if I can do better because I didn't do very good last year.

PRICHARD: You mean in Swan Bay for salmon?

KEN: Yeah. (Prichard: Okay.) But—we can. We can. Like, okay it's summertime. You sit down on the beach. You sit in the shade. It's a little warm, you go for a swim. You go, you talk to your people down the road that run this farmers market. Oh, boy we've got some nice tomatoes in. You go get a couple of bushels of tomatoes and you can tomatoes for a couple of days. And we can tomatoes, can salsa, can—. Then later on, like in September, early September, then the fruit comes in. The peaches and the pears. But, pickles, and salsa, and green beans. We can gobs of stuff. And we like to do that, too. You don't have to fish every day. (Prichard: Yeah.) So you go and you get your canner done, and you come down to the beach and it's, ooh, let's take a little dunk, and have a little fire, and grill something up. It's not all salmon (Prichard: Yeah.) anymore, you know? (Prichard: Yeah.) It's just our bag. I mean, we played the game. I loved it. But, I got—I'm not going to say bored with it, I mean how can you get bored?

Oh, geez, I had (laughs) a couple friends, I had a friend out, a good friend. He gets me some firewood, he gets me some firewood from time to—you know? I had him out—he's not a fisherman, okay? I had a couple guys I worked with that weren't fishermen. Oh geez. Anyway I had Johnny out there, I had Johnny out there one day. And we're out there, and it's like he might have caught a bass (Prichard laughs) somewhere a long time in his life, and he's got this salmon, and he's got it in, and he's got it in, and he's got it in and it's like right to the boat. It's like, right—and I had my drags set, I mean my drags are set meticulous—I'm [meticulous] about drags. And this fish is right there and I get the net like I'm going to net it. I swat that net (laughs) like three times in the water. (both laugh) That salmon took off a hundred yards out there, (laughs) non-stop. Bzz-zz-zz-zz-

zz, (laughs) and I'm going, It was worth the price of admission. (Prichard and Mandy laugh) What a fucking asshole that Mort is, you know? But, you know, "Crank him back in, Johnny. You got him. Wasn't that fun?!" Holy Christ. (all laugh)

MANDY: I think it was in 1995 when we got rid of the *Salmon Slayer* and got the red boat, and started to settle down a little bit and did the more challenging walleye fishing, (Prichard: Yeah.) than salmon fishing in the boat

KEN: A lot of Canada fishing.

MANDY: Yes, we took time to take our kids to Canada, fishing.

KEN: A lot of Canada fishing. Lot of—

MANDY: Before they were too old, and not want to go with Mom and Dad. (Prichard: Yeah. Yeah.)

KEN: Just go out—. I had new passports and for the last two years I've been wanting to get up to Canada, but I can't get in because the border's closed for—. But, yeah they're pretty strict on [the] Covid thing. Hey, we got our vaccine but it doesn't matter whether you do or don't. But anyway we'd go up as far as you can go. This last place we've been takes about twelve hours to get up there. You don't stop, you eat in the car, have sandwiches. And you go, and you get up there. And once you get there, once you get close, you've got like forty-two miles of an old logging road to go down, and then you get in. Then you get your stuff situated. There's a little resort there, and a little—you can get ice, you can get minnows, and you can get water. And if you want to come in, and my daughter wants to take a hot shower, she can come back in and for a toonie [\$2 CAN] she

can have a shower, a hot shower, and whatever. And you take a break here and there. But you come in forty-two miles down an old logging road, and then you go through one, two, two lakes, two rivers systems, into the third lake, and then from there you branch into a couple other lakes. But that's where you'd go and you would stay out on an island for, camp on an island for—. And that's where we went. From salmon we went into total wilderness (Prichard: Yeah.) in Canada.

MANDY: Only rained thirteen out of fourteen days. (all laugh) But we caught fish.

KEN: It was, you know, just fun.

PRICHARD: Just transitioned into something different.

MANDY: But the same thing, for catching fish. You know, you stop, twenty casts, twenty walleye.

PRICHARD: Oh, wow.

MANDY: Okay. Move on to the next spot. Twenty casts, nineteen walleye. Sometimes you couldn't help yourself, you'd sit there and you'd catch fifty. It just—man. When you've got fishing down, you've got fishing down.

KEN: Stop here, this looks like a good spot, this looks like a good spot. Twenty casts, five walleye. Well we won't stop here again. (Prichard laughs)

MANDY: And we got the pike there, too. Well I showed you that one. (Prichard: Yeah.) Yeah. That was on a little teeny tiny, little—

KEN: Beetle Spin.

MANDY: —little Beetle Spin (Prichard: Oh yeah.) this big.

KEN: (laughs) Little Beetle Spin. Two-inch thumper tail on it. Pink thumper tail.

|00:53:02|

PRICHARD: Did you trailer your boat when you salmon fished or did you have a slip in the marina?

KEN: Oh, yeah, I just trailered it. (Prichard: Okay.) We used to have fun. Like these metro Detroit guys, they were more like us, okay? But they fished all over, you know, they fished all over. But they were not opposed to having fun. They weren't so serious. So, they had, (laughs) they had these elastic surgical cord—shoot water balloons.

(Prichard: Okay.; both laugh) Shoot water balloons, okay? You'd be going along, you'd be fishing, minding your own business all of a sudden you'd hear, "*Salmon Slayer*, *Salmon Slayer*, incoming." (both laugh) It's like, Holy shit. *Trina Dawn*, I'll get you.

(laughs) I'll get you. It took—we were blasted for the first year but the second year, my brother couldn't let that go, (Prichard: Yeah.) so he got one of those. And then it's like, okay, "*Trina Dawn*, *Trina Dawn*, here you go. Incoming." So anyway, somebody complained, "Oh, the *Salmon Slayer*'s shooting ice chunks at boats," you know? And we're just out having fun.

MANDY: With our friends who were having fun with us too, you know. And somebody—. We're having fun. (laughs)

KEN: Oh, Jesus Christ, they're—chunks of ice. They're shooting chunks of ice at boats. Send the cops out here, arrest these guys. But we were all done anyway, we had our fish,

we were coming in. No big deal, nobody bothered us. So we, (laughs) we came in, and a dear friend of mine, she comes over, and we're telling her about the story and she said, "Well let me see what this is," okay? Okay. See this here? We got some water balloons left.

MANDY: Just them little itty bitty little—

KEN: (laughs) So, I says, "You just pull it back and shoot." So she shoots it down the road because there's no cars. All of a sudden a car comes through the intersection—

PRICHARD: Oh, no.

KEN: (laughs) —as she shoots. And the guy's got his window open. I mean, (both laugh) he's got a van. He's got kids in there, he's got his van. And he's got his window open. And it's like, Oh, my, god, (all laugh) this cannot happen. Honest, this cannot happen. Oh, it is going perfect, perfect, perfect, and it just happens to not hit him in the side of the head through the open window, it lands right on top of the door. Boom! Water all over the place. He comes up. He's heading to the police station. (Mandy laughs) He's—you know? (all laugh) And we're just, it's just an accident, you know? There's that *Salmon Slayer*, they're shooting ice chunks! (all laughs) Jesus Christ. We're just out here having fun, you know? Not everybody has to be so intense. Geez o'petes. (Mandy and Ken laugh) Yeah, them guys are just nothing but a bunch of assholes. (Prichard laughs) Well, we had fun being that.

MANDY: All we wanted to do was catch fish and have fun doing it. (Prichard laughs) And now we still do the same thing and they look at it and, "You didn't catch them on

that.” Okay, (laughs) think what you may. Yeah, we made one and a half passes, we got our limit, we’re coming in. (Ken laughs) Yeah—right. Meet us at the dock and look in our cooler, uh—.

KEN: (talking over Mandy) When we go walleye fishing we can’t always talk smart. We still have to work at our fish, but—

MANDY: Most of the time—

KEN: —but we get them.

MANDY: —most of the time.

KEN: We do get them.

|00:58:26|

PRICHARD: From some of the other people that I’ve talked to, they have described Todd Curtis as somebody who’s [a] pretty hardcore fisher out of Rogers City nowadays. I don’t know if you, do you guys know him at all?

KEN: I, I—

MANDY: Oh, Curtis. Excavator.

PRICHARD: Yeah, he’s an excavator, yeah.

KEN: Yeah, he is a—yeah. I know he is—*Sandman* I think is the name of his boat.

(Prichard: Okay.) *Sandman*.

MANDY: No doubt. Curtis Excavating. (laughs)

PRICHARD: Makes sense.

KEN: Yeah. Yeah. He's, yeah. Yeah, he fishes. Bigtime. Like I said I don't really, I don't really know who fishes really, but I know there's, I know that there's so many people going out fishing lake trout because—I mean, I don't fish lake trout. I mean I don't—I give a shit less about a lake—. I would take one for the grill. When I was up at camp, my little six-horse crapped out, and the guy's having trouble finding parts for a carburetor kit. It's just leaking gas all over the place. I don't go out on the big lake without two motors. I mean, I'm smarter than that. Well, you had two, one died. Oh, what's to say something might not happen to your other one? This little motor's running perfect. I don't go out here. Mandy and I cannot paddle a sixteen-foot boat with canoe paddles very far, very fast. Well, you can get on your cell phone—I don't have a cell phone. Get out your smartphone, get on your tablet, get—. We are computer illiterate. We don't have any of that.

MANDY: Not illiterate, we just don't want it.

KEN: Well, I mean, we are. (laughs)

MANDY: Well yeah, I mean we could be computer *literate* if we wanted to have a computer.

KEN: But, be that as it may.

MANDY: We'd just as soon go to a camp and go fishing. (Prichard: Yeah.) Don't even have cell phone service up there so what good is a cell phone? (Prichard: Right.; both laugh)

KEN: But I do know he fishes, and [is] a bigtime fisher. (Prichard: Okay. Yeah.) I don't ever remember him being around when I was around, but I mean, I haven't been around. I'm old time. I mean, I'm old school. Way old school.

[01:01:36]

PRICHARD: Tomorrow I'm interviewing with Matt Hollabaugh and Ivan Wirgau. And Matt told me that he sees you on Swan Bay every fall. And then I know Ivan was part of the *Salmon Slayer* crew.

KEN: Oh he freaked out. He freaked out.

PRICHARD: During the tournament?

KEN: Yeah. (Prichard: Yeah.) Oh, that was—I don't know whether it was the first day or the second day. It was really rough. And we're out there—.

MANDY: Poor Ivan.

KEN: Oh, you know, I mean we're fishing—Ivan's, Ivan's good, okay. Him and I went to school together from grade school all the way on through, same grade. Okay. He was our weak link, but there is no weak link because in the tournament—he was, he was a good fisherman. He was a good fisherman. But he didn't like the weather we were in. I was in waves where I drop down, drop down in the waves, I'm standing, steering the

boat, coming into the bay, the waves are so big I'm dropping down and I can't hardly see the top of the trees in front of me. I come up, and I take water over the bow. Pushes all the tackle boxes and everything to the back of the boat. But it's a self-bailing cockpit, you know, these center console things bail themselves. They all go this way, as you're going up, as you're coming down, wave comes over the back, (laughs) all the tackle boxes go forward, (laughs) all the tackle boxes go back, all the tackle boxes go forward. I've got water in the boat this deep (hands held about eight inches apart), all over. I mean it's like—and we're to the point where, okay, this is too much. We can't really do this, okay, so we're going to go, and we're going to go back. We're going to head back. And we head back inside the breakwall of Calcite. And we head back inside the breakwall of Calcite, and Ivan's father-in-law was up on Harbor View, used to have an access road up onto Harbor View. We came inside the breakwall, he saw his father-in-law up there. We pulled up, dropped him off at a wall. Boom—he's up, he's out of the boat. Because we were deciding whether we were going to attempt to come around the breakwall of Calcite and make it back to the harbor. And it was like really bad. There was big big seas. Big seas. Somebody said ten-footers, I don't—you know. Big seas. So we pulled around, we came up, we took a look. Got out, took a look at things. Called tournament control and says, "I don't know that I can safely make it out." My brother, hey, he's always, "Eh, we can—," you know? His buddy, Jeffy Heward, says, "Mort," he says, "Hey—I say you got a 90 percent chance of making it back." And I'm going, (laughs) 90—? I think we could have made it, but it was like I called tournament control. I said, "I'm going to tie up inside of here, inside of Calcite, and bring my catch in, and I'm going to leave my boat

here. I don't know that I can safely make it back." And they were cool with that. But, yeah Ivan—yeah.

Matt Hollabaugh—Matt Hollabaugh's cool. I've been fishing with—Matt Hollabaugh's been fishing here—he's a small boat fisherman. (Prichard: Okay.) But he does have a big boat. He does have a bigger boat. But when we fish, we fish Swan Bay. He's got a, he's got a newer boat. He's got a newer boat. It might be a seventeen-footer, but it might only be a sixteen. But he's got a steering console on it. I just like my tiller. And you get into traffic, like I say, it's Mandy and I, we get into traffic, holy cow we come out of the fog and there's a boat with—you just stop, reel in your lines, and let them do whatever they want to do. Somebody's pushing you too tight on the backend. See, people don't understand, sometimes, very many people troll fast. The bottom line with salmon, at least in Swan Bay, you can't go too slow. (laughs) I mean I'm just saying. Sometimes, you know, you're getting run over, you're getting run over, people coming (unclear). You just stop. You just stop, because you've got a small boat. You just stop. What's the big deal? You just stop, reel in your lines, sit there. Okay, maybe I'll just take a pee. Maybe I'll have a little sip of coffee. Who cares? Who cares? (laughs) Matt Hollabaugh is a—Matt Hollabaugh and Howard Madsen are the three—used to be Tim Bruning. Tim's legs have given out on him and he just can't do it anymore. But, yeah, Matt Hollabaugh, Mandy and I, and Howard Madsen are the three people that you will see in Swan Bay (Prichard: Okay.) in September. That's what you will see.

MANDY: Not giving each other any grief or anything. (Ken laughs) There's a system and you just work with it. They're good people to work with. (Prichard: Yeah.)

|01:09:55|

PRICHARD: Do you have anything you think would be, in particular, I should ask either of those guys when I talk with them? About the fishery? Or their, kind of, history with the fishery?

KEN: Matt's been around, Matt's been around pretty much as long as it's been going on. No I don't, I don't—. Matt's pretty cool. Ivan, I don't know. I mean he probably still fishes but I've never run across him out there. (Prichard: Oh okay.) He's not out there when I'm out there. But he had been with us.

PRICHARD: I think he still fishes lake trout. I learned—well I got into contact with Ivan through Dave Smrchek who still fishes lake trout, too.

MANDY: They're easy to catch, they're all over the place.

KEN: Say, you want a beer? Would you like a beer?

PRICHARD: Yeah, sure. (laughs)

KEN: I mean we're sitting here drinking beer. I don't know, it's just Stroh's.

MANDY: He's just a schoolkid and he's got to drive. I would have offered but, I don't know, some people are particular about things like that. All you've got to do is ask.

Prichard stops the recording and has a beer with the Partykas. The conversation continues. Altogether, Prichard spends over three hours with the Partykas. At some point during the conversation the topic returns to the Rogers City Chinook salmon fishery, so Prichard resumes recording.

|01:11:32|

KEN: So, go in the shed, grab the motor, push it [fourteen-foot Starcraft] out. And that's a little teeny tiny boat, but okay, so you know what you got out here, this is like—oh yeah, I've got another story for you, too. (Prichard: Okay.; laughs) But anyway, you go out here and it goes sixty feet—boom. From the fire pit to the water, you're in sixty feet, you're in eighty feet (a distance of less than twenty yards). (Prichard: Really.) So I go out there in the morning, pop a couple salmon! *Ain't anybody* out—there ain't *anybody* fished out here. *Nobody* fished out here, okay? (referring to Lake Huron directly off his property) I just go (laughs) out there and catch a couple fish. I had a time, I had a time—I just got off on vacation. I just got off on vacation—it was another one of these things. I just got off on vacation, I'm on the twelve to four. It's four o'clock in the morning. I got my bags packed, I'm off. I'm off the boat, I'm on vacation. I come home, it's a full moon. It's like a full moon, and it's like, I'm howling, (Prichard laughs) I'm going (howls, then laughs). It is a full moon. And I (laughs) turn around, and I come home, I grab my fish poles, throw them together, and I'm out on the breakwall of the boat harbor. By daybreak I had five salmon and three lake trout, (Prichard laughs) and I was like—hey! (laughs)

PRICHARD: Were you the only guy out there?

KEN: No, there was two other people out there (Prichard: Okay.) if I'm not mistaken. But, you know, there you are, got a flashlight in your mouth, (Prichard: Yeah. (laughs)) you've got a pole here, you've got a net here—because we never used to use nets back in the day. We always used to—

MANDY: Nets were for Indians.

KEN: Nets are for Indians. We used to have a glove and tail-grab (Prichard: Okay.) our salmon. We never (Prichard: Really?) netted our fish early on.

MANDY: Salmon's tails stay fluted. (Prichard: Yeah.) You can grab them here, and—

KEN: But, it's crazy.

MANDY: —it worked.

KEN: It's crazy. Because the hook can come out (Prichard: Right, right.) and it's like, *ehh*, that's too dangerous. After a couple years you go, (Prichard laughs) You know, this is not that smart.

MANDY: It's one of them things.

KEN: You can always say, okay, "Nets are for Indians," but—we had people say, "You need a net? I've got a—" "No, nets are for Indians." Okay, hey.

So here's the other story I ought to tell you. This was—this was so cool. Them guys are such assholes, okay? But anyway, (laughs) they had a salmon tournament, it might have been the third, might have been the fourth, might have been the fifth. Whatever. At that point in time I could still get in back of Calcite and there was a little launch ramp back there, and I launched the *Salmon Slayer* in back of Calcite early in the morning. My brother and I, our take was we're going to come out here and we're going to kick ass at daybreak. We're going to kick ass at daybreak before anybody gets out here. Because the launch time, flare up in the air is six o'clock. Whatever the case is. So we launch in back

of Calcite, there's nobody around, so we come out of Calcite back in—there's a boat launch way back in the corner in Swan Bay—come out of Swan Bay. Come across. Come across the breakwall of Calcite, we're coming across, and you see all these boats. All these boats with all the lights on, all their running lights, all floating, all floating, all floating. And we're coming by, I don't have my running lights on. I'm coming by. Pitch black, coming by, coming by. (laughs) I turn on my running lights, hit the throttle, and go full-speed heading this way. And I got like I don't know how many Q-Beam lights, mega-thousand-watt candlepower lights, we are lit up like daytime. (laughs) We are lit up like every—"Tournament Control! Tournament Control! *Salmon Slayer's* taking off early! *Salmon Slayer's*—" "Uh, boys, (laughs) they're not in the tournament." (Prichard and Ken laugh) And we are lit up like, we are lit up like—

MANDY: Fun. It was all about fun. (laughs)

KEN: Oh, geez. (laughs) Just come by, just come by, just come by. I said, "Okay, Chuck, I'm going to turn the lights on and throttle up!" Turned the lights on and just go. (Mandy and Prichard laugh) "*Salmon Slayer! Salmon Slayer's* taking off early!" Yeah, well, hey. Boys—uh, nobody likes them guys. (laughs) Just play around. I mean that's what we do. I mean, you want to know where we're from, or what we're at? We're just different. We just do what we do. (Prichard: Yeah. (laughs)) It's like, I'm not hurting anybody.

Just a few things.

[01:19:19]

PRICHARD: I've had a great time talking with you, or listening. (laughs)

KEN: I mean I don't, I don't, honestly I just don't generally say much. I'm a pretty quiet person, but— (laughs)

PRICHARD: Well I love to fish and it's always fun to hear from people that are hardcore about it. (Ken laughs)

MANDY: Oh we are that. But we like to have fun, too.

KEN: Then again, every once in a while, every once in a while out there, can't get anything going. I remember being out there one time with The Dude, Eugene Modrzynski. I think he's passed away (Prichard: Okay.) now, but—

PRICHARD: I tried to call his brother Mike, but I haven't gotten hold of him.

KEN: That would be his son.

PRICHARD: His son?

KEN: Yeah.

PRICHARD: Oh, okay. Okay. [ed. note: Based on personal correspondence with Mary Ann Heidemann, Mike Modrzynski is neither Eugene Modrzynski's son nor his brother.]

KEN: But anyway, The Dude was catching fish, and it was just driving me crazy because this was back in the day when, like, *I* can catch fish, anytime, anywhere. And I can't catch—and I—The Dude has popped another one. The Dude has popped another one. And you flop around and you flop around. And you can't be afraid to change lures and I put down a blue Northport Nailer with a red stripe on it and—Boom! Buh-boom! Buh-boom! Buh-boom! (laughs) And it was like, Yes! (laughs) Okay. The Dude ain't got

(Prichard laughs) nothing on me, man. Hey. It just takes a while, sometimes. It just takes a while.

Matt Hollabaugh is a heckuva fisherman—heckuva good fisherman, heckuva good guy. He's a good, good guy.

PRICHARD: Yeah, I had an interview with Scott McLennan earlier this year and he described Matt as his best friend. And before, earlier in the morning when I had talked with Scott, he had been walking down on the boat harbor and had seen Matt down there, and so he got me in connection with Matt so I'm looking forward to talking with him tomorrow.

KEN: Yep. Him and I, chances are, him and I, and Mandy, (laughs) and it's like, we're down to the bitter three. (Prichard and Mandy laugh) Yep, us and Matt, and Howard Madsen, he gets in there.

PRICHARD: But none of those guys that do the Fat Hogs tournaments or those people, they don't—?

KEN: I do not know if they do or not. Just one of those things. Hey, you've seen my little boat up there. (laughs) I ain't doing tournaments, you know? (laughs; Prichard: Right.) It's like, I have two downriggers that'll easily fit on that boat and go, good to go. It's just like when we go to Swan Bay. When we go to Swan Bay, if there's no traffic, we'll put up two poles out of the front seat with a planer board on each side. I'll put it out, snap my board on there, snap the board on here. Mandy sits up there, she's got two. And I can

sneak one for a third line out straight out the back, and we can run three lines. We never ever run more than three. When we go up—

MANDY: And we hardly ever run three because you start catching fish and you can only put two out anyway.

KEN: Just—we just never ever liked the issues. It's just like, back when I fished with friends and fished on the *Salmon Slayer* I'd run four downriggers. Unless my brother's with me, then we're running sliders and we might have Dipseys out or whatever we could have to be, you know. I didn't do that stuff. Okay—and so you're out, and you catch a fish. Okay, well salmon are a lot easier because you catch a walleye, you've got to go like hell to get your lines in before you're ready to net the fish because that walleye comes to the boat pretty quick, and then it'll open up its mouth and shake and you hope you don't lose the, (Prichard: Yeah.) you know, and you scoop him up. But salmon, they're out there. So, most often we stop, we knock our lines down. We float, you sit, and you fight the fish.

MANDY: For the enjoyment of catching the fish.

KEN: As opposed to, oh okay, reeling him back, standing in back of the motor. That wasn't our bag. The bottom line is, there's been a couple a few times, several times, where, okay you play that game, boom-boom, you're knocked down, you're just floating there, and this fish is out there, and he's going, and he jumps there, and he jumps there. And you look and you're going, Holy shit. (laughs) There ain't no—you fire up. By the time you turn around and get going, you're spooled. (Prichard: Yeah.) You're spooled.

You go, Well, I guess I fucked up there. (Prichard laughs) Well, alright, big deal. (laughs) Big deal. Pull out another rod and put her down. (Prichard laughs) Big deal.

MANDY: Yeah, tournament fishing was fun for a while, but after a while it was just let's just catch some fish. (Prichard: Yeah.) How many fish does a person need? And let's try and catch some walleye. We know we can still catch salmon. And walleye were interesting. It was a challenge. We knew we could go out and catch salmon anytime we wanted.

PRICHARD: When you started fishing walleye was that in Thunder Bay, then?

MANDY: We had gone a couple times there. There were so many snags right at the mouth of the river that it wasn't cost effective. (Prichard: Yeah.) So, we only did that a couple times, and that just wasn't that much fun. Then we got into going to Canada it's like, Wow. There's walleye. And the kids were still young, take them up, camp on an island for a couple weeks, and buy lots of bug spray, (Prichard: Yeah.) and it was an adventure. That was an adventure. That was well worth the effort, taking kids up into Canada.

The recording continues but the conversation does not return to the Chinook salmon fishery. For the purposes of this oral history project, the remainder of the recording has been removed.