

Mary Ann Heidemann

Oral History Interview
Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Carson G. Prichard
June 15, 2021
Lakeside Park
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

The interview takes place inside the pavilion at Lakeside Park. Road noise and other commotion can be heard at various times.

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PRICHARD: Okay, so that's recording now. My name is Carson Prichard, I'm here with Mary Ann Heidemann at Lakeside Park in Rogers City. Today is Tuesday, June 15, 2021. It's 6:07 p.m. So before we begin, Mary Ann, can you just please state on the recording that you do consent to participating in the interview and to having the interview recorded?

HEIDEMANN: Yes, I voluntarily consent to be interviewed and I have no problems with it being recorded and shared.

PRICHARD: Okay. Alright, thank you. So to start, can you just tell me a little bit about yourself, Mary Ann?

HEIDEMANN: Well I'll relate it immediately to your mission here—the mission is fishing as a friend of mine likes to say. In 1988 I was working downstate for a large

engineering firm. My profession is community planner, and especially environmental planning. So that firm, Wade Trim and Associates, got a contract with the City of Rogers City to investigate the possibility of expanding the boat harbor here, because at the time there was a two- or three- or four-year waiting list for slips because fishing was so good, everybody wanted a boat in the harbor. And at that time the harbor was, mm, roughly eighty slips. So, Wade Trim was doing the engineering and I was sent up as a planner to do what they were calling—was an environmental scan, just to look over the environmental issues of the nearshore environment and the land part of the project to see if there was any deal-breaking issues involved in that. And frankly I had never heard of Rogers City at the time. I knew absolutely nothing about it. I worked in Wade Trim's office in Taylor, Michigan. And at the time I was living in Orion Township. But, planners like to go to new places so I jumped in the car and came up and started my research. And, you know, hey, I was a big-city girl, not at all from a small town. Born and raised in Detroit. Had worked, gone to school in Philadelphia, and graduate work in Madison, and worked in New York, and worked in Chicago for a while, actually. So I was not familiar with small-town environments. But it was kind of love at first sight, it's such a beautiful little place. And of course the water was incredible. And it was inhabited by, you know, not the Grosse Pointe types, but real people, normal houses next to the water, and people going about their daily lives with the lake in their lap, and I thought, Wow, is this really interesting. So, I of course had to look at all aspects of the project. One of the parts of the project that was related to fisheries but not quite was to build some condominiums by the lake where people could have a boat slip as well as having a condo or summer place, whatever. So, the discussion at that time was expanding the harbor north, and at the time

there was a large hardware store and lumberyard on the shoreline. So that property owner who was—that family was a very old family here, the Vogelheims—they were cooperating in the project and he was going to kind of try to make money off of it, and of course his property was ideal. In addition to his property—he had the waterfront—but the backside of the block was a block full of modest homes. But, they were right by the lake. So as a good planner does I was investigating the real estate market because under federal law, if you're using federal monies, which this would in-part do, you had to make sure if you displaced any persons from their homes—at that time you could in fact take property for a public purpose, which this certainly was a public purpose, so long as you paid fair market value. But you had to find out what fair market value was, so I was looking at prices and I just nearly fell off my chair because that whole block of homes, homes were valued at ten, twelve, thirteen thousand dollars. Now this isn't ancient history—I guess it is now, you're young, 1988—but you wouldn't be buying a house downstate for twelve thousand bucks. And the very most expensive property, residential property, was a duplex for thirty thousand, so you had two units for fifteen each. So, I just really was amazed. And I went home and said to my husband Karl, “Karl, you've got to see this place. It's a really beautiful little town and they're giving away real estate. Maybe we can pick something up—,” famous last words, “—for our retirement, because it's really fun.” And my husband, you know Heidemann, not surprisingly he's pretty German, and the Vogelheims were pretty German, and little did I know that half the town was German, and the other half was Polish. So there was a certain cultural affinity, shall we say. So I did my work and there weren't any insurmountable problems, so my husband came up with me when the firm and myself presented the report to the city council. And while I'm

presenting, he's standing in the back of the room chatting with the Vogelheims. (both laugh) And they're having a good old time, and we got to know that family right away. Well, that was a Thursday night as I recall, and we decided—we had our kids who were high school-age at the time, and junior high, we had them stashed with a relative and we were just going to stay for the weekend and explore around because as I said we were not familiar with the area. So talking with John Vogelheim—all these Vogelheims have passed away since then—but John said, “Oh. If you're going to stay the weekend, you should drop by the high school on Friday night. We're having the home and garden show and our store, the hardware store's going to have a booth.” So we said, “Oh, that's interesting.” So, we went back to the hotel room, and it was slightly after five, and my husband pulled out the phonebook, and I said, “What are you doing, Karl?” Well at the time he worked for Metropolitan Life Insurance down in Southfield, and he said, “Oh, I'm just looking to see if Metropolitan Life had an office here.” And he said, “Looks like nothing in Rogers City but they have an office down in Alpena. Well that's too bad that it's after five and I can't talk to them.” And I thought, *What do you have in your mind?* So, we freshened up and went over to the high school to the home and garden show—and I should back up a little ways, that was Friday, and we had spent Friday morning, after the presentation, tooting around town. And my husband and I, used to urban areas, we were always looking for urban concerns. So where are the slums? Where are the good neighborhoods? The bad neighborhoods? Well there were no slums. Everything was absolutely—I'm not talking about wealthy homes, but everything was neat as a pin. So, when he had been standing with the Vogelheims back at the back of the city council room, they had a big aerial photo of the town with maps, you know, street names

impressed on it. And my husband spells Karl with a *K*. You know, the American would be *C*, of course. But Karl Vogelheim to whom he was speaking was also Karl with a *K*, so that was another bonding thing amongst Germans. So my husband's looking at the map and he sees Karl Street, and he said to Karl Vogelheim, "Oh, is that named after you?" He said, "No, that's my son Karl. And here's my daughter Veronica and my—and son John—," you know, all—his whole family were street names there in a subdivision on the north side. It turned out it was not developed, but we found that out because as we were exploring around town my husband sees a signpost that says Karl Street. Well, we had also been up and down Lake Street here and saw a couple houses for sale. And we saw a for sale sign on a house that's a half a block there, that of course isn't on the water but it's on the park, and has incredible views across to the water. [Heidemann clarification: half a block from the Lakeside Park interview location] And you've got the beach, absolutely gorgeous. So he says, "Mary Ann, write down that name of that realty company." So I'm beginning to get worried now because I was a professional woman with a good job at a major corporation and he seemed to me to be going nuts. So alright, we're driving around and he sees this Karl sign. He says, "Oh look, there's Karl Street, let's see where it goes." And it was a dirt road, not a developed street whatsoever. And as we proceeded, it was sandy and ruddy, the vegetation kept getting closer and closer to the point where we couldn't turn around. So we were going forward, there's no way you could get out of there and we didn't know where we were. So finally I see some traffic down there, and it looks like it's US-23. And I said, "Well maybe we can get through." But to get out to the road we had to drive across somebody's backyard. Now, they had a hole in the back of the fence which is a little bit strange, so you could get into the yard

and out their driveway and out to the road. So, you don't like to get arrested in a town where you're working but what could we do? So we're kind of creeping through the yard, and we look to the side, and here it is that home was used also for a commercial purpose, it was a real estate office, and they had their sign out. And my husband said, "Mary Ann, isn't that the name of the real estate company that had this house listed?" And I said, "Yeah, I guess it is." And so he pulled us in, (Prichard laughs) and we go into the real estate firm and look for the house listings. And here on a bulletin board they have all the listings, in money order. So the bottom row is listings in the ten thousands, and the next row is the twenty thousands, and the third row is really expensive houses—thirty and up. And the house we had seen was in the top row so really really expensive, right? It was unbelievable. So pretty soon the agent sees my husband's interest, and he [Karl Heidemann] said, "Oh yeah, we saw this house. [We'd] be interested in knowing about it." So she pulls out a stack of photos of the inside—now mind you I said he worked for Metropolitan Life Insurance. He was an attorney for Metropolitan Life, and he handled the higher-end assets and investments and so forth, and the financial insurance tools. So, now the lady's showing him the inside: this is a bedroom, here's the kitchen, living room—and here is the office. And, "Mr. Heidemann, what is your profession?" And he said, "Well, I'm an attorney." And she said, "That's interesting because there's a full law office in the house. The gentleman who lived there was an attorney and saw his clients in the home. Didn't you notice there's two front doors?" Well we just noticed the back side. The front side on First Street has one door to the office and one to the house. Well, my husband is now totally in fantasy land, and he's now got a dream, and he's pursuing it, so hence his looking for Metropolitan Life offices. So I said, "Oh, that's too bad, Karl.

That's really too bad. Well, let's go up to the home and garden show." So we go up to the high school gym, which is where it was, and we go up to the entry door, and who should be standing at the entry door but John Vogelheim, our old friend from yesterday. And he's like hail fellow well met with my husband and they're chitchatting, and he says, "Well, go on in. We have our booth right here. What have you been doing today?" And Karl tells him about seeing the house. And of course John asks him, "Well, what are they asking for the place?" And Karl tells him and he says, "*Oh*, that's way too much! (Prichard laughs) Yeah, when that guy died his kids didn't want the place, so their uncle bought it. But the uncle's got health problems and he's got a place in Florida. He's got too much real estate. They just really want to unload it. You know, bring your offer down." And so my husband's nodding, thinking about that. So we go into the gym, and we go down the aisle past the hardware booth, turn the corner, and here's a Metropolitan Life booth, and the regional manager of the company is there, and so my husband and he are now exchanging cards and discussing the possibility of Karl coming up and working out of the Alpena office of Metropolitan Life. So I'm seeing my entire (Prichard laughs) professional career going—and I brought him up here. (laughs) So, alright, we had a great time. We went down to Presque Isle, we met more people. I mean, we just had a fabulous weekend. So then we go back home and reality comes back. And since we had gone up together—you know lawyers don't have to go to work early, but planners do. Engineers, by god they start at eight, were going to be there. So we had shared a ride, and I had left my car at my office and he'd picked me up, so now he had to take me at seven in the morning on Telegraph Road downriver to Taylor, a scene he had never seen. And of course—what do they call it? Bloody Road, or I don't know. It was horrible then, it

probably still is. People cutting you off and road rage and, you know, terrible traffic jams and just awful, because it's not that far but it takes a good hour in traffic to get there. And he says, "Mary Ann, is it always like this?" I said, "Yeah, it's pretty much like this." He says, "I don't know what we're doing down here. We should make an offer on that house in Rogers City." (laughs) I said, "Sure, Karl." (laughs) So he does. He makes an offer ridiculously low, twenty grand less than they were asking. And the real estate agent said, "Oh, I can't present that to the client. That's way too low, they're never going to accept that." And Karl says, "Present it anyway. See what they say." Well they accepted the offer. (Prichard: Really?) And a month later (Prichard laughs) we are living here in Rogers City, *because of the salmon*.

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HEIDEMANN: Now, meanwhile the project, there was a harbor to build. The Vogelheims are wonderful people, but they really were tough negotiators, and they could not come to terms with the city about purchasing their property. And that was frustrating for all concerned, because the idea had been that the hardware store would move out to the highway and then the condominium development would be here but they couldn't find a developer who was willing to work with the Vogelheims as active participants in the project, not just as selling the thing. So that dragged on for years, literally, and finally came to nothing. So then the whole plans had to be redone without the condominiums, and instead of expanding north it had to expand south. So it just took forever. And sad to say, by the time the harbor was actually finished, the fishing had peaked and was already kind of on the downslope. It wasn't bad, but it wasn't like it had been. And once the harbor was finished—of course it was frustrating for me as a planner because we had

worked so hard to put the deal together and it came to nothing, but eventually time goes on and the harbor was built and it got lots of State [of Michigan] support, and they got it from Department of Natural Resources and from Michigan Waterways Commission, because Waterways has a series of harbors up and down the lakes and they want a harbor every so often for safety's sake, harbor of refuge, which this also was. So a lot of public money went into the harbor and it was fantastic. It's a wonderful harbor. But it more than doubled the size. And once it got built, my husband and I, who now lived half a block from here, would walk over in the evenings and walk up and down the docks and count the boats because we wanted the harbor to fill. (laughs) And it really—it would fill on Fourth of July weekend and it would fill for the salmon tournament and for the nautical tournament [ed. note: presumably Heidemann meant to say "Nautical Festival"], but as a regular matter it wasn't *full* full. That becomes really important later because it wasn't all grants, it was a lot of loans. The city had to put up a lot of money and finance it. And without boat slips being rented, and gas being sold, you can't make your payments. (Prichard: Yeah.) And that became a millstone around the city's neck. And the payments—it's not paid off yet. That's a real problem, because then the city literally borrowed from other organizations like the Downtown Development Authority, because the idea was you'd be connecting this harbor with the downtown, and it would be good for both entities, which of course it is. So Downtown Development money went into the harbor, which limited then what the Downtown Development Authority could do downtown. So the people got mad and things were not great because of—financially stressed. (Prichard: Yeah.) Really a problem. And there were other issues, too, with the blockheaded approach the State took to charter fishing, because if you were a charter

fisherman and you wanted to put your boat in the harbor (dog barks and Heidemann interjects, “That’s why we didn’t want to be in there.”) you had to pay double dockage.

PRICHARD: Yeah, I heard that from Bruce Grant.

HEIDEMANN: And that was really on some different reality than what worked here because the fishing season is a couple-three months at the most, and so that couldn’t be your only job (Prichard: Right.) so these charter guys were part-timers, and—

PRICHARD: Was that a DNR [Department of Natural Resources] or a Waterways Commission thing?

HEIDEMANN: Waterways. (Prichard: Yeah.) And I think that’s different now, but for all the time it mattered it was a real obstacle. So, what you had is guys that just launched their boat here, and pick up their clients on the dock. So there was a lot of cheating going on—everybody knew it, but that was the only way they could make it work. So that was kind of a—you know, you go to a lot of fishing ports in Florida or something and there’s charter guys up and down, and it’s a major business. But, five hours from Detroit, it’s a long way to go to catch a fish. So that was always an issue. And, [there are still] one or two people that do chartering, but I have no idea what the current regs are; I’m pretty sure they’re not the same. But that was very shortsighted. The idea was public money shouldn’t be used to support a private business. Well the concept sounds like it makes sense, but again, this is not a going concern. This is a guy who’s got a boat that picks up some charters on the side. (Prichard: Yeah.) And it could never be worth it to that kind of a situation. There goes all your profit, if you ever—and, you know, the weather doesn’t

always cooperate. (laughs) [Heidemann clarification: with paying double dockage fees, chartering would never be worth it, economically]

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HEIDEMANN: So, anyway, my husband came to town, worked for Metropolitan Life for three or four years while he built a law practice (Prichard: Yeah.) in the law office that was in our home. And I was up a creek without a paddle because I had nobody here that would hire a planner. This was not something that was a well-known profession in the area. So I had to start my own business, which is something I would *never* have done. *Never*. I was a wage slave, that was fine with me. I liked working for firms. But there was nobody up here to work for. And it's kind of funny because that law office in the basement, we split it—he had one room and I had the other, and I was finishing up my doctorate at the time. So, the first year I did my doctorate in my office and I was running back and forth between the University of Wisconsin-Madison and here, with my [doctoral dissertation] committee to finish that up. Which was fine. But meanwhile, having started this business in name only, I had made a nice brochure, and I got the catalog for all the municipalities within a two-hour drive—bunch of small towns that don't have planning staff for heaven sakes, and would have to go all the way downstate to hire somebody because there's nobody around—and I figured I could underprice the big firms—of course I could, having just worked for one. So I started going around giving free speeches about planning and environment, and this that and that. So, I had gone to Madison, roughly a year in, to defend my thesis, and that had gone well, and then I came back to this slovenly office with papers all over the place, and tidied it up, put everything away, and *whew*, and the phone rings and it's my first client, little village of

Hillman, with nine hundred people or something, that wanted their masterplan updated, so I was off and running. So my husband and I started two new businesses in Rogers City, again, because of the fish, (Prichard: Yeah.) which I think is kind of interesting. (Prichard: Yeah.) Really interesting.

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HEIDEMANN: But I want to talk some more about planning, and the faults in planning, which again gets personal. The thing about small towns—mind you, we're adjusting because we're still urban people kind of coming to grips with small-town life. And our daughter couldn't stand it because we yanked her out of high school at age sixteen in the start of her junior year and she wouldn't speak to us for several months. And our son who was in junior high just loved it here. Now later on they absolutely reversed and the daughter loved it and the son hated it, but there were a lot of family adjustments, too, because they were not used to rural schools. It was a totally different environment for them, too, so it was kind of bad parenting on our part, to yank them out and bring them here, but oh well, here we are. So meanwhile, before the harbor got enlarged, and before that project really was going full-tilt, people were catching a lot of fish, and they needed a place to clean them. Okay? So now the idea is—did anybody else talk to you about the fish cleaning station?

PRICHARD: Ken Rasche, (Heidemann: Okay.) and I asked Rob Kortman about it, too, (Heidemann: Okay.) at the wastewater treatment plant because, well because the—

HEIDEMANN: Wait wait wait—

PRICHARD: Okay, yeah.

HEIDEMANN: —they may have had a different point of view, (Prichard: Okay.) but on the other hand they're very informed gentlemen. But I have a particular axe to grind. Speaking of grinding, (Prichard laughs) you know, the location where the fish cleaning station is was previously the city bandshell. (Prichard: Oh, yeah, okay.) They didn't tell you that.

PRICHARD: No. I read about the tearing down of the bandshell—I read back through the newspapers—but I didn't know that that's where that was. Yeah.

HEIDEMANN: The fish cleaning station is why the bandshell fell down, so rather than fix it, they just tore it down, and built a state of the art, *beautiful* fish cleaning station, with pulldown nozzles and all stainless steel, big grinders, and all of the top of the top—. The only problem is, which I'm sure they did tell you, when the salmon season got going, the fish harvest that was cleaned in the station was the biological oxygen equivalent to a town of ten thousand, and it made the sewage treatment plant violate its permit. So nobody had thought about that. So, the beauty of it was, as soon as people started catching fish and wanting to clean them, they locked the fish cleaning station. And what they built as a substitute was a couple of wooden tables out behind the station where people would clean their fish surrounded by scenic fencing, chain-link fence—how lovely is that?—and buckets to throw the guts in. So it would be hot, and they would clean lots of fish, and the buckets would sit around reeking. I mean reeking. And of course it was right by the basketball courts. Now the young guys didn't seem to care one way or the other. But to replace the bandshell, the city had purchased a used, what was

fondly referred to by band members, Tin Can. It was like a travel trailer with a side that opened up and you could fold out the flat floor and set up your chairs. But you can imagine the acoustics compared to this beautiful, semi-circular, vintage bandshell that they were accustomed to. So needless to say the band people weren't too thrilled about that. Furthermore, you'd have the fish cleaners going on, and when there'd be a band concert the aroma of fish guts would envelop the audience and it was not the best experience. Now, you say, "Oh well, it's a band," but this town has had a band for 120 years. And the band is supported by a tax millage—a quarter mil. And you've got to understand the cultural thing, that bands are really just part of the German heritage, the Oompah bands, so people were deeply invested. Initially it was all men, but by the time we got here it was gender-mixed, age-mixed, you have guys in their nineties, you have kids in high school. It really brought the whole community together and every Thursday night you'd have a free concert in the park, in the Tin Can. Well, eventually my daughter was very interested in music and she was in the band when she was in high school, in the summers, and she went to music school, and when she came back in summers, and after college, she became the band director. And by that time the Tin Can was really bad. It was leaking, it was dangerous because there was no railing or anything, people—it's very crowded. They have a big band and people were literally close to falling off the edge. So she went to city council with the proposal to start a fund to replace the Tin Can with a real bandshell. And ultimately, my firm wrote a pro bono grant application, and my husband who was in a barbershop quartet locally ran around singing songs and getting donations that way, and we ended up building the beautiful bandshell that's there now. So the bandshell's there because of the fish. (Prichard laughs) It's really interesting how

things work out in a small town. There's so many interconnections. And I have to say that I had to call people, and again, we aren't from here, and we were still relatively new at this time, but you had a facility and a history of band interaction, participation, that was very deep in this town, so it was the easiest fundraising I ever did. You'd call somebody and you'd find out, Oh, my uncle was in the band, or, My grandkid's in the band. And the money just poured in. So we had no problem making the match for that because it was so important to the community. And now, of course, (laughs) the circle comes round, they use the bandshell for the weigh-station for all the fish tournaments. (laughs; Prichard: Yeah. (laughs)) It's not just music. (Prichard laughs) Which is a great location. And there's all kind of events. And actually when my daughter got married, she got married in the bandshell because it meant so much to her. So that was a lot of fun. I think it was absolutely the first wedding in the bandshell. (laughs) Oh, wow.

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HEIDEMANN: So, I wanted to talk a little bit about the salmon tournaments, (Prichard: Okay, yeah.) themselves, because again we were coming into—might as well have landed on Mars (Prichard laughs) as far as we were concerned. Local festivals were something new to us. And the salmon tournament certainly took on all the aspects of a local festival. And it's really unbelievable how much fun people had at the tournament, and it was kind of a whole weeklong thing, because fishermen would come in and it was—the fishing itself was Friday-Saturday-Sunday, and Friday and Saturday were all day and Sunday you had to bring them in earlier to wrap it up, award their prizes. But Thursday night was the captains meeting where all the rules were laid out and all the registration was confirmed. And this town was just overrun with people. And you can

understand that there is not a single business here that runs all night, (Prichard: Right.) but during the salmon tournament they did. So they had special hours, especially the restaurants, they'd have breakfast at whatever, but down here in the park they had a food tent, and the food tent ran 24/7 from Thursday on. And the food tent was staffed by a couple—local sausage shop, Nowicki's, had a booth in there. But, again, here's a German tradition, all the Lutheran churches tend to fight with each other, and the biggest Lutheran church here in town, Peace—pardon me, St. John's Lutheran Church, had a pastor who was very opinionated, and had problems with women's participating in services.

[Heidemann note: this is back when the big salmon tournaments were running] And so he laid down a bunch of rules which some people thought went against Lutheran theology and organizational principles. So long story short—and I didn't belong to that church—but that was a huge congregation and it split in half. So half the people left to start a new church, and the ones that left needed money to build a church, so they had a food booth at the salmon festival. [Heidemann clarification: the food "booth" was a actually a big tent, not a "booth," per se] And they would cook fantastic meals, all day, all night, and drinks, and all the fixings, you name it, you know, breakfast, lunch, dinner. And they were able to pay off their mortgage with the tent proceeds at the salmon tournament. (laughs)

PRICHARD: That's interesting, yeah.

HEIDEMANN: Really funny. So that was the shortest (Prichard laughs) time period to burning the mortgage known to man. And in fact they got the mortgage paid off before the fish stopped biting, (laughs) so that was good for them. But the tournament brought a lot of cash into town. Now you have to remember that the tournament is not an economy, so the town didn't rely, for all its daily bread, on the tournament, but it was a huge boost

to local businesses. Meanwhile, there were lots of other economic problems in this community. You know that we have the largest limestone mine in the world, but it had been, when we moved, just sold by its longtime owner of US Steel. And US Steel was quite a sugar daddy. They were very generous to the town. The wages were phenomenal. All kind of benefits, for instance—well I guess it relates to fishing, too—the woods and waters of the quarry property could be used by employees, so a lot of guys deer hunted—

PRICHARD: Oh, I didn't know that.

HEIDEMANN: —on the quarry property. That stopped at some point after they sold it, but it really meant a lot to people here. And also, the quarry company built housing for its employees because when they started, there really wasn't much here as a town. So if you wanted to have a guy come up, a mining engineer or something, and bring his family, they needed some place to live, so the firm built a lot of housing and that housing stayed owned by the quarry company until well into the sixties. And then it was sold—if the people who were living in it wanted to buy it they could, otherwise it went on the market. So, a good third of the housing stock here is left from that heritage. So, why am I even bringing this up? At the time when the salmon was a big deal, the town was really afraid because US Steel had just dumped them, and they had no idea what would happen in the future and whether there would be jobs, or there would be an economy. So in a lot of ways they were grabbing at the salmon straw as something that could bring a future. Now what happened—and I don't pretend to know all the details, but five or six local investors ended up buying the quarry, which is kind of amazing—the largest limestone (Prichard: Yeah.) mine in the world to be bought by local parties—but they did it just to kind of be a bridge. And so it wasn't too long, they might have owned it three years or four at the

most, and then they sold it to another mining company. But in turn that mining company sold it to another mining company so you had a ten- or fifteen-year period where the management kept changing, and the conditions of work kept changing, and the future for the town was very much in question. Well meanwhile, you have all the issues about the ups and downs of the salmon fishing, you have bovine TB [tuberculosis] show up. Because hunting was a huge deal, and hunting season was a huge deal. Also, it didn't make the economy, but it was important culturally because so many people had hunting camps for their family and their friends, and it was a huge end of the year boost for all the businesses. And now you have bovine TB and all of a sudden you can't feed deer. And the people coming to camp don't know how to hunt in the old way. If they can't shoot over a pile of beets what are they going to do? So you have crisis after crisis after crisis and it was really unsettling for people. So I don't know how that factors in, but they had so much hope for the fisheries, and not enough confidence in just building a regular town from the ground up. Everybody's looking for that silver bullet, and the salmon fishery never was—couldn't be. But people just hoped against hope that something would turn up to save the town. Well meanwhile, this town is three thousand people or whatever, it used to be a couple thousand more. But the quarry that used to employ a thousand people is now run by a hundred. (Prichard: Right.) The freighters used to harbor here, and all winter long the skilled trades would be there updating and improving and maintaining those boats. Well the boats were sold out of town and that wasn't available anymore. And the heart went out of the town when those things happened. So I think the whole fisheries thing has to be seen in context. So the community didn't know what it wanted to be when it grew up. And there are all kinds of economic—I was the county's economic

development director for a while, and the city manager wanted to put up some new signage at the main entrances to town. So the entrance from the south, coming past the quarry, he had, “Rogers City: Limestone Capital.”

PRICHARD: It still says that, doesn't it?

HEIDEMANN: Right. (Prichard: Yeah.) And the sign coming from the west side of the State coming in, now it says, “Rogers City: The Nautical City.” (Prichard: Yeah.) And the sign on the north side by the state park and all the public parks says, “Rogers City: City of Parks and Trails.” So now, which of those (Prichard laughs) identities do you want? And he got heck for not keeping the limestone thing, or just not having the nautical thing. So people would be fighting about what the town was and what it should be and what they wanted it to be. So it was kind of an identity crisis.

[00:41:42]

PRICHARD: Frank [Krist] said at one point the sign coming into the city—and I don't know which one—said “Salmon Capital of Michigan,” or something.

HEIDEMANN: Mm-hm. I don't know what happened to that—I'd love to know. But yes, absolutely. And it had kind of a ribbon on the top, and it was an arch, and yes, it said—so I don't know if the nautical city replaced that, or not. Because the other big festival besides the salmon tournament was the Nautical Festival, and that used to be the Limestone Festival.

PRICHARD: Oh, I didn't know that.

HEIDEMANN: Yeah. I mean that's going back way before our time. So then they got the idea of nautical wasn't just the fishing, it wasn't just the freighters, but it was all things nautical—well, phenomenal waterfront here. So, I ended up being on a parks commission at some point when the city was thinking about doing what was called at the time Park Linkage Trail, because you had seven or eight waterfront parks in city ownership, but a lot of them were underutilized and nobody would go to them and they didn't have any equipment and benches or anything else. I don't know if you—is this going to be an issue? (referring to the commotion in the pavilion)

PRICHARD: I'll be able to hear it on here, (Heidemann: Okay.) but I don't think it'll be too bad of an issue.

HEIDEMANN: Because we can move down a couple tables but it's so echo-y, (Prichard: Yeah.) might not make any difference.

PRICHARD: I think we're okay.

HEIDEMANN: Okay. Well—where were we?

PRICHARD: You were on a parks and rec—

HEIDEMANN: Oh yeah. So, when I was chair of the parks commission we were actually able to get money from the DNR trust fund to build this Park Linkage Trail for bicycles and pedestrians. And it was built in three phases—the first connected the parks in the city, the second went out to the state park, which is about five miles north of town, (Prichard: Yeah.) and the third phase went from the state park to the lighthouse, another two miles. And there's a branch of the trail that goes to Herman Vogler Conservation

Area. So that has been super popular, and really utilized a lot, not only by the local people but also by the people at the state park, so they can come into town and, you know, it's a phenomenal resource. So, even the recreation base has diversified since the salmon tournament (Prichard: Yeah.) days.

[00:44:18]

HEIDEMANN: But, the return of the lake trout is kind of an interesting part to the story because the lake trout are doing pretty well, and that's the native species. And isn't it nice that they're rebounding? But there's so many different challenges in terms of invasive species out there that you can't say that it's a balanced ecology because it really isn't, it's a totally disrupted ecosystem. And you know the role of the Hammond Bay Biological [Station] lab. (Prichard: Yes.) It's interesting that it's here, that it was established here in Presque Isle County, and they do phenomenal work. And they just got a huge grant from the fisheries commission and other people to expand the laboratory. (Prichard: Okay.) And I don't know if you've been out there but it's worth a trip.

PRICHARD: I haven't actually been out there.

HEIDEMANN: You can take a tour—they had to shut that down during the Covid thing, but I would think that this year it'd open up again. But they do high-end experiments out there. (Prichard: Yeah.) And they have broadened their mission not to be just lamprey, but to look at some of the broader ecosystem issues, (Prichard: Okay.) and there's a lot of grad students doing their doctoral and post-doc (Prichard: Yeah.) work there.

PRICHARD: Yeah. I did my Masters at Michigan State [University]. I know a lot of people who have worked there. (Heidemann: Oh yeah.) Yeah.

HEIDEMANN: And some of those—you know, the salmon fishing prompted not just me and my husband to come here, but a lot of people came and saw Rogers City [for the] first time because they came here to fish, and a surprising number of them moved here either seasonally or permanently. So it was a really great calling card for the community, it brought a lot of nice people on board. (Prichard: Yeah.) And I would say the same about their bike trail, and about the parks. So anything that gets people here to open their eyes and see what's out here is all to the good. So that was a more long-lived aspect of the salmon thing, and it's still paying dividends today. But of course the crowds and all the thrill and all that stuff—you know there's still several fishing tournaments through the year, but nothing that begins to compare with the craziness (Prichard: Right.) of that tournament.

[00:46:52]

HEIDEMANN: So I don't know what else—. I'm sure that you know more than I do about some of the fishery issues in terms of regulations because, well we were talking about bovine TB and the quarry and stuff, another big concern was the treaty negotiations with the tribes, (Prichard: Yeah.) and that was very contentious and took a long time to resolve and it's not a permanent resolution. And you know this from Frank [Krist]. So there was a treaty that was established during the big salmon—fiesta, I would have to say—and that's since expired and then it was rewritten in 2000 to run twenty years and it's supposed to expire. (Prichard: Yeah.) You know, it gets extended and extended. But

that adds yet another level of uncertainty. (Prichard: Yeah.) But I will say that the tribal participation has forced people to look more long-term beyond just this year's salmon catch, (Prichard: Yeah.) because the tribe has the history of the relationship to the resources and in a sense they bring a longer-term view. But again, it hasn't been fun. And of course Frank's group, the Hammond Bay [Area] Anglers [Association], were created to defend the local interests in the fishery. But, if the fishery's bad everybody loses out. (Prichard: Yeah.) And if the argument is over splitting the catch, you have to have a catch to split. And there was booms and busts, and this year it's the zebra mussels and, you know, what next? Because the water's more clear—this has always been a high water quality area because you don't have polluting industries nearby, but there's no food if the clams use up all the plankton and then there's no baitfish. (Prichard: Yeah.) Neither the trout nor—I guess the trout—

PRICHARD: They're eating gobies now.

HEIDEMANN: Yeah, they're eating some of the invasives. They've got a better idea.

(laughs) Maybe this is not such a great thing. (referring to the commotion in the pavilion)

PRICHARD: Oh. That's okay.

|00:49:30|

PRICHARD: One of the things I was curious about your perspective on is—you moved here in '88 and you saw the salmon craze—did you ever question the sustainability of the salmon fishery? Or, seeing how big and popular it was, did you have feelings like, How big is this going to get? Or, This can't last forever. Any types of thoughts like that?

HEIDEMANN: Well, I had my hands full with my business. And I will say that I was not invited to the table. I was an outsider. I had a gender issue. And so the big boys were going to duke it out, and it was, as far as I was concerned, I did not have a role to play, and I had other things that I could do. And so you work where you can work. So I was a passive observer to that, and I was a resident, but it was not feasible for me to be a player in that, (Prichard: Okay.) so I didn't try. So—you know, I don't know if Frank [Krist] would be offended hearing that. His wife Theresa's been pretty active in the group. But, those are my feelings. And no, I had no—now, I'd had enough ecology that I could see the boom and bust of it all, and think, You people, you're fighting about the wrong things. That thought certainly occurred to me. But I wasn't in a position to lecture people about it, or to offer a good solution. And I know a little bit about ecology and water quality, but I'm no fisheries expert. I don't know—later on when my mother came to town after my dad passed away, and my husband's mother came to town after his dad passed away, we had two elderly relatives that we were basically taking care of, so I had to quit consulting because it was too demanding. It took me all over the State, and I was just too busy. So I quit that, cut my pay in half, and took a job with MSU [Michigan State University] Extension. So then I became an extension educator, and it was in economic development here, but I got acquainted with the people in Sea Grant, and—have you talked to Brandon Schroeder? (Prichard: Mm-hm.) Oh yeah. Well he's a great guy. So I got to work with Brandon and, you know, those people are much more qualified to work that aspect of a project. Brandon and his group is well aware of the community impacts, and they're very diplomatic, and they've forged great relationships with all the parties, and it's really great to watch them work. (Prichard: Yeah.) So, I didn't feel bad about—

you can't be everywhere, you can't do everything. It wasn't something I wanted to pursue, or really was in a good position to pursue.

PRICHARD: Okay.

|00:53:07|

PRICHARD: So, when the marina wasn't able to expand north, in the meantime—and then the marina expansion happened in 1996, here—

HEIDEMANN: Finally. Yeah.

PRICHARD: —in the meantime, a big project happened at Presque Isle Harbor where they, I guess, renovated that marina there. And did you have any perspectives on the impact of that to Rogers City?

HEIDEMANN: Well of course in many senses it was a competitor, and drained away a certain amount of traffic. And you have to understand that the harbor here is city-owned, and the city here has a lot to do with its future. But that's a state harbor down there, so the State's going to do what the State's going to do. And there is a tremendous summer community in and around Presque Isle, and they're quite demanding, (laughs) and so they were very happy to have a revived harbor. But again, we'd be down there all the time, my husband and I, and that thing was never full. It was never, it is never, it's still not. And so, what is wrong with Waterways that they overbuild? It's a waste of public dollars. And when you have competing facilities in a small community, are you kidding me? There's not enough boats to fill one of them much less two. And then you've got Hammond Bay Harbor of Refuge. And that's got lots of slips and it's hardly ever used. So when the

salmon tournament was going you could launch off of any (Prichard: Yeah. Yeah.) of those harbors, depending on where your favorite fishing hole was. But, what a waste. What a waste. (Prichard: Yeah.) And you're not even allowed to have a seasonal dock up at Hammond Bay. (Prichard: Okay.) That's transient only. (Prichard: Okay.) If you go out there you might see three boats. (Prichard laughs) It's incredible. (laughs)

PRICHARD: Well because who's going to go there to go to Drummond Island or Canada if they're coming up from the south, right? They're either going to go to Presque Isle or here and head there.

HEIDEMANN: Well, again, it was a harbor of refuge because—a safety issue (Prichard: Okay.) because it's a long stretch between Rogers City and Cheboygan.

PRICHARD: And Cheboygan, yeah.

HEIDEMANN: That's what the State was looking at. (Prichard: Okay.) So the safety issue's there, but how much do you really need for safety? That's an interesting question. Now, you know you reach a point where, especially with the high water, that these places are really beat up, and somebody's got to fix them. And, you know, you have a city-owned facility, the city's stuck with it. You have the state-owned facility—and the state is a bunch of idiots. You know there was a restaurant down there that—maybe you'd never been there when it was open. It was Portage Restaurant, right at the harbor.

(Prichard: Okay.) Have you seen it? (Prichard: Unh-uh.) There's a building there—it's empty right now. It used to be a thriving restaurant. (Prichard: Okay) So when they redid that harbor, the DNR's idea was to tear the restaurant down, and it was only the public outcry down there—because that was a key social hub for the summer people. And it was

very good food. The Vogelheims were involved. (laughs; Prichard: Okay.) They were part-owners. So we were down there a lot. So they had a concession agreement with the State and that ran for many years, and two years ago they pulled the concession agreement out, and they advertised to replace—you know, they advertised—so the person that was running the restaurant had to compete to keep their job. And nobody else bid. And so now you've got nothing. And we still have nothing. I think, in a lot of ways some of the officials in charge at the large state agencies, they're thinking about Traverse City, or they're thinking about Mackinac Island, or they're thinking about Grosse Ile or something, where you have tremendous numbers of urban population and wealthy people with boats, and they haven't got their heads around places like Harrisville—because you could say the same thing about Harrisville Harbor. Underutilized. (Prichard: Yeah.) You come right up the shore—it's great to have these things, but to some extent it's like a millstone around the community's neck, because somebody has to take care of it. So that's very impractical. But all of the designs and all of the number crunching about how big something should be and size of the slips and rates and all that, the community has very little control because all of that has to be approved. It's silly. It's just not practical. And yet here they are, still paying off the debt. (Prichard: Yeah.) Taking a huge chunk—so, again, a city with 1,500 fewer people than when the harbor was built, but the debt doesn't disappear. (Prichard: Yeah.)

PRICHARD: I talked with Joe Hefele—

HEIDEMANN: Yeah, city manager.

PRICHARD: —and I think, I *think* what he said is it's on track this year to finally be able to be paid off. I think that's what he told me.

HEIDEMANN: I'd like to go to that party when that mortgage is burned. (Prichard laughs) Yeah. Yeah. So these communities run on a shoestring. They're very fiscally modest. And they have to be. The tax rates here are pretty low, nobody wants them higher, so there's no public support for anything more. And, I mean you read the statistics, this is not a wealthy community. And it's loosened up a lot since we first came, in terms of, Are you from here or not? And richer versus poorer. It's a little bit more open and welcoming than it had been. But I wouldn't say the economy has gotten any better.

This is getting loud. (referring to the commotion in the pavilion; Prichard laughs) Kids are all sugared up with the ice cream. (laughs)

|01:00:17|

PRICHARD: Well a couple of the things you covered I was real interested in asking you about, anyway, and really trying to place the importance of the fishery to the local, kind of, culture and economy in perspective with the other big factors, the major employers and—. So, one of the things I wanted to ask you is, if you reflected back on the fishery through the eighties and nineties, and compare that to what it is now, having gone away or collapsed, is it reflected on more like something like, That was a really cool thing for the community to have experienced? Versus, more like mourning a loss of something that would like to be replaced if you could, but feeling like not being able to replace it.

HEIDEMANN: Well, first off when you use the [word] crash, I don't think that's how it really happened. (Prichard: Okay.) So it was a slow decline. And you never know if that's a seasonal thing. There was always a hope, you know, well maybe it'll get better next year. So there was never a community acknowledgement of a crash. (Prichard: Okay.) But, sometimes you have a good year and a bad year and a good year, but then you just have a bad year and a worse year and a worse yet year. So you're on the downhill slide but you kind of don't know until you're down a ways. So I would be careful about using the word crash. Now, all the time there are other species that can be caught, and there's other forms of water recreation. You know a lot of people don't bother with the fishing, they're just taking their cruiser boat out. So, I don't think it's so dire. But if you just look at salmon fishing, and you just are a salmon fisherman, okay, it's like you were on a six- or eight-year drunk and now you're sobering up. Again, I think people had more hopes than reality in the ideas about becoming a salmon community or salmon capital—what does that really mean? (Prichard: Yeah.) And the people here are pretty practical. They're not a bunch of nutcases. And they're used to living pretty close to the nub, and being pretty frugal, so it wasn't quite like the gold rush. So I wouldn't want to exaggerate the idea of boom and bust. (Prichard: Okay.) If you look at the fisheries—I'm old enough to remember the rotting fish on the shore of Lake Erie, when the alewives died off, and that's really what brought the salmon fishery in, was it [Howard] Tanner or whatever, DNR, who proposed the idea. And something had to be done about the alewives. But once again, I don't think it was good ecology from the get-go, but what are you going to do? The ecosystem was disrupted. And years ago, I mean years ago, before I was married, let's see, when would it be? In the seventies, I worked in Green Bay, and was

very active in some water quality groups because Green Bay was really polluted—paper mills on the Fox River. And we had lots of scientists working on different aspects and, you know, I was on the planning side of things, and they had conferences every year and presented their papers. So they once had—all the involved researchers, they surveyed them about what, in their professional opinion, was really the most threatening problem for the Great Lakes. And I was really involved—my dissertation was involved in regulations—state, local, and federal regulations on toxic chemicals in the lakes. So I was really focused on the Clean Water Act, and the new permit requirements, and industrial waste and all that stuff. So that was one of the options as a threat, toxic discharges was certainly on the list, and the biological oxygen demand, and temperature concerns, and invasive species. So we had a whole laundry list of problems that the lakes were facing, and at the time the knowledgeable researchers put invasive species at the top. And I was flabbergasted by that because I was focused on a different aspect of water quality. But one thing I have reflected on over the years is by gosh, they were right. They were right, and it only got worse. And it's still getting worse. (Prichard: Yeah.) So what do you do? You can't get rid of them. I mean what, really, do you do? How do you manage a disrupted ecosystem? And I don't think people know. They have not figured it out. And, you're right, the communities take it on the chin. But the communities don't know, and so there's no clear path, and then there's no clear path—you cannot unite the communities in a direction because you can't give them any directions. And that has not changed. And I think the experience with Waterways and overbuilding and with the salmon hopes and dreams just shows that the leaders in Lansing don't know any more than the local people do. And that question, that's not just a question for Rogers City,

that's a global question, that is a global—and sometimes I think about, you know, there's so many concerns with immigration and the migration of peoples disrupting cultural systems, which is certainly happening everywhere with terrible repercussions. And it's going to be really—I'll be dead before this is figured out, but what is going to happen? What will the future look like? You can say for all the world diversity is great, but it's really a difficult thing to manage when you're not dealing with native species, because these species aren't evolved to—there's no balance. And Tanner was right and needed to deal with the alewives, but single-factor thinking is a killer, and that was a terrific example of single-factor thinking.

PRICHARD: Yeah. It gives you something to focus on, though, and you can put blinders on.

HEIDEMANN: Well, and you can be successful. And it was, for a while, but it's not for the long-term. (Prichard: Right.) And it's really—and then you get punch drunk because—and you might say the thing with bovine TB is not a very different problem because there you've got the cattle mixing with the wild species that's causing the issue. So I don't pretend to have the solution to that, but I can certainly see the problems.

PRICHARD: Yeah. And now we have chronic wasting disease.

HEIDEMANN: Oh, man, I mean just, it goes on and on. And you can go to the plant communities with the various insects and fungi (Prichard: Oh yeah.) and so forth that are destroying entire ranges of plant species. Man. So, I thought Frank [Krist] would have this all figured out. (Prichard laughs)

PRICHARD: I'm just looking over my notes here.

|01:09:16|

HEIDEMANN: So, you know about the underwater sanctuary, right?

PRICHARD: Yes.

HEIDEMANN: So that's yet another lake-related factor that is not going to be a silver bullet, but has been received as a very suitable, fitting emphasis because of the shipping history of this area. (Prichard: Right.) And when that sanctuary started it was super controversial. Super controversial because, again, people were worried about its impact on the fishery, whether they would still be allowed to fish if there were regulations protecting the shipwrecks. So could I have my downrigger—? I'm not having the State tell me when and where I can fish, and so forth and so on. So it was all about the fishery potential conflict with regulations on the sanctuary. So they had some—a good friend of mine, Carol Shafto, was a planner, who was Mayor of Alpena at the time, and was able to really really help guide the community into looking at those questions and bringing the scientists to bear and really talking about what the facility could mean, and having a more balanced viewpoint, so she was able to have Alpena try it. And it was not until ten years later, after the success of the effort in Alpena, that Presque Isle County on the north and Alcona County on the south were added to the underwater preserve. (Prichard: Okay.) So not only did they add the north-south boundaries, but they went all the way to the state boundary in the middle of the lake, so the huge area was brought in. And that's, you know, the fishermen and the sanctuary people don't fight anymore, but that certainly was a potential and it did divide the community quite a lot.

Lot of issues. I don't know if there's anything else. That's probably gotten most of the things on my list.

|01:11:41|

PRICHARD: I see you have the word legacy there. That's kind of a word I've been using, or asking about. If you had—

HEIDEMANN: Well it came from your questions, so—

PRICHARD: Oh, okay.

HEIDEMANN: —I thought some of the legacy items was that the salmon fishery brought in outsiders, like my family, and some stayed. And that was to the good. I also think it put the city and this whole region on the State's radar for grant assistance, (Prichard: Okay.) and it helped the State take our area seriously, which it had not been. It [Rogers City] was a very internal, kind of—you know it didn't need any help when you had the sugar daddy US Steel taking care of everything. But when that [disappears], you're left high and dry. Now you've got to learn how to write a grant, and build a relationship with the state agencies, which the fisheries really did help do. It highlighted the community as a lake-based economy, but not necessarily just about fish, you know, about resorts, about bike trails and parks, about the underwater sanctuary. It expanded the identity of the community rather than changing it, which I think was good. And it helped change the character of the place from just being a quarry town to something bigger. Again, it never took over the identity, and I think it was crazy, people that thought it would or could or should. It led to, I think, other types of recreation being considered as positives, and not

either-or but both. So it kind of built a more complex community character. And it really forced a recognition of a disrupted and complex lake ecosystem (Prichard: Yeah.) that hasn't been resolved and may never be resolved, but at least people faced the facts. And Brandon [Schroeder] still does his annual summary of the fisheries and those meetings are extremely well attended, and people really pay attention. And he doesn't pull any punches, he tells it like it is. (Prichard: Yeah.) So he's doing an excellent job with community education. But he doesn't come in with all the answers because he hasn't got them. (Prichard: Right.) So, it's not any one thing but it's all those things. (Prichard: Yeah.) Nice town.

PRICHARD: Yeah—oh, it's beautiful. (laughs) Every time I come up here—I mean I started coming up here when there was snow, you know, so it really is beautiful. I talked to Bruce Grant, and seeing his resort there—

HEIDEMANN: Well I certainly never dreamed that I would be so happy and satisfied in such an environment, but the interesting thing that I learned about small towns, when you're in a big place, and you want something done, you're always saying to someone else, "Go do it for me. You do it." In a small town, if you want something done you've got to get off your seat (Prichard: Yeah.) and do it yourself. And that allows for a lot of personal growth. So when you see small business people, and you see family accomplishments, you can be more multifaceted in a small place because you have to be. You absolutely have to be. But then that's pretty good because you're learning a lot. So, we never looked back.

PRICHARD: And you still live here in the same—?

HEIDEMANN: Yeah, we sold our house a couple years ago, and we bought a place by 40 Mile Point lighthouse. (Prichard: Okay.) So we're just two properties up from the lighthouse. (Prichard: Okay.) We're still on the lake.

PRICHARD: So that's where I came from after I talked (Heidemann: Oh yeah?) with Ken [Partyka] because he lived off of (Heidemann: Okay.)—well not quite that far north, but off of 40 Mile Point Avenue (Heidemann: Road.) and then [40 Mile Point] Road, yeah.

HEIDEMANN: Yeah. Yeah. And we're still involved. After my husband ran his law practice for fifteen years or so—again, he was really into music as his daughter was. Again, there's a Vogelheim connection—another Vogelheim owned the downtown movie theater, and was up in his seventies if not eighties—seventies, I guess—he was going to shut it down, and that was the only winter entertainment here, and my husband's a movie freak, too. So he convinced Vogelheim to sell the movie theater to him. And he put in a live stage, so he can alternate between movies and live performances. And he started a theater group. They had a great theater teacher at the high school, (unclear) youth group, but they did a 501(c)(3) incorporation and had a board and all that jazz.¹ And so eventually he quit his law practice in favor of the (laughs; Prichard: Oh, wow.) movies and theater. So he had a second career, or would it be a third or a fourth? I don't know, (Prichard laughs) we've lost count. (laughs) And that has been a fantastic thing. (Prichard: That's cool.) So, you know, we feel—like, you know, I was somewhat involved in the harbor, I was extremely involved in getting the trail built, our family

¹Heidemann clarification: The high school had a great drama teacher who established a theater program, but my husband incorporated the theater group as a 501(c)(3), and built a solid non-profit board and budget to keep it going community-wide not, just at the school.

helped get the bandshell built, he did the theater thing. You would never be able to do that in a big city. (Prichard: Right, right.) Never. A private family owning a theater, are you kidding me? (Prichard laughs) But not only could we buy it, slowly, but fix it up, you know, because we knew how to write grants. (laughs) So, just as a person, it pushes you to another level but you think, Oh okay, that was good for me. And by the way it's good for the town. (Prichard: Yeah.) So we've—again, you're in Ann Arbor, or Madison, or Detroit or whatever, people like us are a dime a dozen. But here we have certain skills that are more rare and we can put them to use. Gives you a good feeling. (Prichard: Yeah.) He [Karl Heidemann] was on city council for a while and I was on the county board, drain commissioner. You know, you take different offices and learn something new about that, and get mad, (Prichard laughs) and quit and do something else. Or the people get mad at you (Prichard: Right.) and kick you out and you do something else. (laughs) However that works.

|01:19:12|

PRICHARD: Well, yeah I really appreciate you taking the time to talk with me and hearing your story. Yeah.

HEIDEMANN: Yeah. Well, you have to save in perpetuity the story of the fish cleaning station. Now you can tell me, did they tell you a different story about the fish cleaning station?

PRICHARD: Well, I knew from Rob [Kortman] that fairly early in the salmon fishing season they had to stop putting fish waste through the grinders. And I learned about the agreement that they had with the quarry where early in the year they would dig trenches

out there and then twice a day—DPW [Department of Public Works] had a truck—and they would take the fish waste and bury it in the quarry. (Heidemann laughs) And one thing I learned from Ken Rasche was that after they built the—people started fishing out of Presque Isle and there's no fish cleaning station there, so they would, people that fished there would come up here (Heidemann laughs) to use the fish cleaning station. And Ken was like—we wouldn't have had ten boats go out all day, but the person cleaning fish is telling us our dumpsters are full. And so they tried to do a thing where they charged a daily use fee (Heidemann laughs) and that created a nightmare.

HEIDEMANN: Hellacious mess.

PRICHARD: Yeah. So those are kind of the things I heard about the fish cleaning station.

HEIDEMANN: Now you know the cultural connection. (laughs)

PRICHARD: Yeah. Yeah.

HEIDEMANN: Well, you know, Ken was the harbormaster for a long time.

PRICHARD: Seventeen years. Yeah.

HEIDEMANN: Did a great job with [the harbor]—yeah.

PRICHARD: And everything I've heard about Wayne [Saile], the current (Heidemann: Oh yeah.) harbormaster has just been—

HEIDEMANN: Very competent. (Prichard: Yeah.) Absolutely. And so, small towns are lucky to have that skill level and commitment. I guess that was Ken's second or third or fourth career.

PRICHARD: Yeah. Yeah he had already retired, (both laugh) and came back.

HEIDEMANN: Well anyway, I'm glad you're doing it. (Prichard: Yeah.) But this thing about the crash, I think you have to be careful not to overdo it. [Heidemann clarification: "it" refers to the history of the salmon frenzy]

PRICHARD: Yeah. Well that's another thing I've learned about Rogers City is that— well, and something I suspected going into this project is that not every coastal community experienced the changes on Lake Huron the same. And Rogers City has been different than other places, *a* because lake trout rebounded in Lake Huron, and I've learned that the lake trout heart of reproduction is, (Heidemann: Right here.) is right here. I didn't know that, going into this that the Swan River stocking site—

HEIDEMANN: Oh, the [fish] planting. Yeah.

PRICHARD: —has been—has helped keep Rogers City more resilient, especially with respect to the later fall salmon fishing, than everything south of Alpena. (Heidemann: Right.) And they still stock 300,000 fish, and the studies have shown that even now those fish that are planted there in Swan River find their way and contribute to Lake Michigan fishing in June-July, and then they come back here (Heidemann: Yeah.) and create a fishery in the fall. So, yeah—

HEIDEMANN: It's a fuller story. (Prichard: Yeah.) It's not—

PRICHARD: But along with that is, you know, when the fishery, especially alewife and salmon in Lake Huron is kind of collectively described as a crash, when that's not exactly what happened in Rogers City. A lot of the publicity and media that would help to

maintain recreational fishery-based tourism here left, and has shifted its focus on Lake Michigan, that's really negatively impacted the charter fishing, the resort owners, when there still is salmon fishing, there's extremely good lake trout fishing. So that's another component of the story that I've learned that, you know, it would be—and my goal is to expand this—I'm focused on Rogers City right now—but to expand it to other coastal communities around Lake Huron and compare what I learn or hear from people in Rogers City to what was the experience in Oscoda, Harrisville, Lexington, Port Sanilac, and just kind of the rest of Lake Huron.

HEIDEMANN: You've got a lifetime of work ahead of you.

PRICHARD: Well, yeah. And so many of the people that I've talked to have been like, Well I wish you could speak to so-and-so—

HEIDEMANN: But he's dead. (Prichard: Yep.) Right. Exactly right. (laughs) I'm not any spring chicken myself. (laughs)

PRICHARD: Yeah. So—.

HEIDEMANN: Well, good. And, you know, you've been doing your homework, and looking at the newspapers and stuff, too. (Prichard: Yeah.) So, at least that's here.

PRICHARD: Yeah. Alright, well thank you—I'll turn this off now.

HEIDEMANN: Yeah, sure.

*end of interview*²

²Email to Carson Prichard, July 18, 2021:

Dear Carson:

Thanks for sending the transcript of our interview. It was done extremely well, considering all the background noise. I have attached a typed page of interview edits. I typed it because my scribbled notes on the lined sheets you sent were difficult even for me to read. If you have further questions about these edits, feel free to call me.

I have a couple names to suggest for further interviews. Jan Dullack and her husband Tom are founding members of Peace Lutheran Church, and Jan worked long and hard in the salmon tournament food tent that paid off the Peace Church mortgage. I spoke with her today and she is willing to be contacted. Jan's phone number XXX-XXX-XXXX.

You may wish to consider talking to one of the Plath boys at Plath's Meat Market in Rogers City (XXX-XXX-XXXX). Their dad, Mo, has passed away, but the boys worked in the shop during the salmon tournaments. Plath's does its own meat smoking on site, and would take in salmon from local fishermen to smoke them. Heavenly! If you are interested, I bet the Plaths could also comment on the surge of retail business at their shop during the salmon era, and especially the salmon tournament. Some of the older staff at Kortman's Restaurant could also discuss the surge. Cliff Kortman has passed away, and the business re-sold, but there is at least one long-long-term waitress who might speak with you.

Back in the Salmon Frenzy days, every dinner party or reception you went to here had a smoked salmon laid out a yard long, and you could stuff yourself on what was, anywhere else, a rare and expensive luxury. During that period, our niece from California sent us a pack of smoked salmon for Christmas, for which I'm sure she paid dearly, but the piece she sent was only about two inches wide. It was all dried up too, not juicy and rich like the locally smoked version. We thanked her kindly, but that amount was what we'd put on two or three crackers in Rogers City.

Anybody in town who was any good at fishing had a freezer full of salmon in those days. Some folks froze them whole, and some cut out fillets. We had a very good friend (now deceased), Gene Modrzynski, who would give us whole salmon frozen from the prior year's fishing, once the new catch started coming in. Gene actually preferred to eat lake trout, but we sure didn't mind taking his salmon castoffs! He also canned salmon and gave us some of that. We were absolutely spoiled! Gene took my husband out fishing several times, but my husband gets sea sick, so that hobby didn't stick. Even I caught a salmon once with Gene and had it smoked at Plath's for our son's wedding reception. Gene also made custom salmon and trout fishing rods that were quite sought-after. Gene was an expert, but you didn't need to be an expert to have fun. My dad, quite a good inland lakes fisherman, came up from North Carolina to visit and we got him a salmon charter with Bruce Grant. Dad only caught one fish, but it was the biggest catch of his life and he was thrilled.

As others may have told you, the salmon tournament was organized as a non-profit, with proceeds (beyond fishing prizes) going into local civic improvements and as grants [toward] other local charitable organizations. But as has happened several times in this community, nobody was minding the till, and there were issues of embezzlement. There was a legal proceeding and a conviction. Should you want to follow up, Bill Zinke was a local police officer at the time and still lives in the area. Don McLennan was prosecuting attorney then, and he also still live[s] in town, retired from a long stint as probate judge. Or Frank Krist likely knows everything about it.

That's it for me. I'm sending the printed text and disks back in the envelope you provided. If you want to add the information in this letter to the interview file, that's fine. I agree to having it covered under the earlier signed release and donation forms.

All best,
Mary Ann [signed]
Dr. Mary Ann Heidemann, FAICP