

**Wilfred Gries & Gordon Schmidt**

**Bullhead Lake**  
Lake Michigan District  
Manitowoc County  
Brillion, Wisconsin

1 August 1994

transcription of historical interview

Wilfred Gries and Gordon & Lilly Schmidt - DRAFT

Wilfred (Wiff) Gries has been a dedicated and hard-working Self-Help Lake Monitoring Program volunteer since the program's inception in 1986. He monitors Bullhead Lake in Manitowoc county. Bullhead Lake is a 70 acre lake. It is primarily a peaceful fisherman's lake. Wiff is also a member, and past president, of Bullhead Lake Advancement Association.

Wiff introduced me to Gordon and Lilly Schmidt, past residents of Bullhead Lake. I had the pleasure of talking with Wiff, Gordon and Lilly last summer.

Lilly's family lived on Bullhead Lake since the late 1800's. Her grandfather, Gottfried Fischer, practically settled the land. Lilly's father, Leonard Fischer, was born in 1880. The Peshtigo fire burned down their buildings and Gottfried rebuilt across the road. The railroad came through in 1892, when Leonard was 12 years-old.

Lilly lived on Bullhead Lake since 1916. Gordon lived on the lake since 1939. They currently live in the city of Brillion. According to Gordon, Lilly used to row her dad around the lake, while he fished. Lilly says she never fished, "all I did was fry them and eat them.". She used to go out on the lake by herself and play her ukulele! That's what she liked best about being on the lake.

In the 1930's ice was cut from the lake and pulled out by hand. Many people slipped in while performing this magnificent feat! One fellow told Gordon he walked a mile home in stiff overalls. Then he changed clothes and came back. Once August Enneper decided to attach a saw to an old Model-T, the job went much quicker! August went from house to house cutting ice for people.

Gordon likes to fish and doesn't hesitate to dive into enthusiastic fishing tales! "You couldn't troll with a motor and you still can't. I had a wooden boat and I had bait out and rowed and rowed around the lake." In Bullhead Lake there is a tree stump that Gordon knows very well-"There was always a black bass hiding behind that sucker. I went down there and I'd try for that black bass and I never got him into the boat. One night I went real quiet, and with a wooden boat you could do that, and I landed that baby just right and boy I had him! He was a big fella and finally I got him! That was really fun!"

The Schmidts farmed from 1939 through 1978. They owned two farms. He impressed upon me the tremendous amount farm values had increased over the years. Gordon also had a boat rental business from 1939 through 1975. All of his renters were from Milwaukee and they all fished muskies. "They liked to fish Bullhead Lake because they could take a day off during the week, come up and go home again that night. I called them up and they had the boats on reserve." Bullhead Lake was treated with toxaphane in 1957 to rectify a stunted panfish problem. The poisoned fish were removed and the lake was restocked with select species (**see related articles**). Muskie fishing flourished on Bullhead Lake until 1965, when the lake froze-out and caused a big fish-kill. Lilly's father was 96 years-old and had never seen the lake freeze-out before. When the lake froze-out, Gordon called Milwaukee and his boat renters spread the word. Gordon never saw any of those people again.

Bullhead Lake's public landing was built in 1958. One day, when Gordon was fishing, a man stopped by and wanted to take Gordon for a ride. He wanted to show Gordon other lakes where they had established public access. The man took Gordon to Spring Lake and Horseshoe Lake and then he stopped in Clarks Mills. "We'll stop here.", the man said, "my friend just bought a tavern here." Gordon thought he was going to buy him a beer, so he stopped with him. "Oh," the man exclaimed, "I forgot my billfold!" "That son-of-a-gun," says Gordon, "I had to buy him a beer!"

Gordon showed me a picture of huge pine tree stumps. "In the 1850's this area was covered with these trees. The stumps are that old. Then the big lumber companies came through and now they are pretty near all gone. They were all cut by hand, hauled off down to the river and floated to Manitowoc. The whole countryside was full of these big pine trees. Imagine that river and how deep it was that they could float logs on there. You can't float a shingle on there anymore. It isn't deep enough. The

river is filling up from the bottom. There isn't a place for the water to go so it spreads out." Gordon spoke about the damage to farmland, roads and a horse race track due to invasion of the widening river.

Gordon was born on July 29, 1916. His birthday is famous as the hottest day of that year. It was 105 degrees. "The first thing I did was check the thermometer," said Gordon. Lilly was born six months before Gordon.

Lilly's brother, Roland, is 88 years-old. Gordon told me that Roland, knows about everything. "He has more education than most college people have. He reads everything. He never had a wife so he remembers from years ago better than I do. I have a wife and kids...everything gets screwed up!," chuckles Gordon. Lilly and Gordon have two boys and two girls.

The Schmidts have an extensive photo history of Bullhead Lake and generously devised ways to scrape their glued-in photos out of their books to allow me to make copies! Gordon showed me a picture of his last team of horses. "That's what I'm interested in is horses, but we have to keep cats!" (in reference to Lilly's love for cats). To which Lilly challenged, "Well, if you can get a horse in here...!"

Throughout our conversation and Gordon's storytelling, Wiff took the opportunity to teach us a few things about the work of a Self-Help volunteer monitor. He finds volunteering most interesting and enjoys learning and passing his knowledge on to others. Gordon also knows a lot about the lake (and, of course, the fish!) through living on the lake and working with the DNR. I was most thankful to have the opportunity to meet Lilly and Gordon and share in their extensive knowledge of the history of Bullhead Lake.

Wiff used to look across the lake from west to east and dream of building himself a house on the east side. His dream came true. Wiff took me over to the east side of Bullhead Lake to show me his realized dream. Wiff and Marge Gries' house is built on Behnke farm land. They bought the lot in 1967, waited until their youngest son could drive a car and then moved on to the lake in 1975. Wiff and Marge had four children. One son passed-away. They have another son and two daughters. Wiff and Marge like to go fishing. They enjoy the lakeside solitude and don't mind at all if the town gossip reaches them three months late!

Wiff and Marge go to the Annual Lake Convention every year. In 1986 he met Carolyn Rumery-Betz at the convention. She asked Wiff to be one of 32 volunteers to begin volunteering with the new Self-Help Lake Monitoring program. He agreed to volunteer and the rest is history! He started with Secchi monitoring and then began chemistry monitoring in 1991. He gathers data on dissolved oxygen, phosphorous, chlorophyll and lake temperature in addition to Secchi readings.

Wiff and Marge may spot ducks, muskrats, deer, loons and all kinds of other birds on or around the lake. "As a riparian owner," says Wiff, "you become interested in knowing what's happening [with the lake] and how you can help. It's an education for everyone you come in contact with. I usually take someone out along with me every time I monitor." Currently, Wiff tries to rotate lake sampling between four men and next time he is going to take his grandson out with him. The people presently working with Wiff on Self-Help activities are: Don Glaeser, Pete Wierenga, Gregg Peterson and Marge Gries. Through Wiff's volunteer work and efforts to educate others, people may become aware that it is not only riparian owners that contribute to the pollution and demise of lake ecosystems. "It's going to take a long time for this to become an education for everyone. People like these weed-free lawns. It's the excesses that hurt everyone."

One of the main goals of the Self-Help Lake Monitoring program is for people to learn the relationship between land-use and lake ecology. Wiff is learning and passing this knowledge on to other people. He trained a friend to monitor Carsons Lake. He also helped his friend join forces with the Manitowoc County Wisconsin Soil Conservation Service agent, Tom Ward. Wiff's friend worked with Tom Ward to help lessen the amount of agricultural run-off into Carsons Lake.

Wiff is a long-term thinker. His main concern is to establish continuous stewardship for the lake after

he is gone. He tries to get some of the young residents involved in lake monitoring. There are also long-time residents of Bullhead Lake that are interested in contributing. Wiff has taught Bullhead Lake residents how to clean up their part of the beach to prevent nutrient build-up in the lake.

Wiff refers to Secchi monitoring as a good teacher. "Today the reading is being taken after five inches of rain. The lake is different than it was yesterday and unless you do this [take Secchi readings] you would know there is something different, but you wouldn't know why." In June of 1993 Wiff's Secchi test provided documentation of run-off from one resident's gully. He took a Secchi test on Tuesday afternoon. That night they had four inches of rain. Then he took a Secchi test on Thursday afternoon. The secchi reading had dropped from 17' on Tuesday to 3.5' on Thursday. Wiff reported his results and used his documentation as evidence to prevent this from happening again.

Bullhead Lake was treated with alum in 1977 and 1988. Wiff had read an article about a lake in southeastern Wisconsin being treated with alum. He immediately wrote a letter to Tom Wirth, of the WDNR, in hopes that Bullhead Lake would be considered a candidate for alum treatment. Wiff's request was answered. "Tom Wirth's efforts were instrumental in bringing Bullhead Lake's problems to the attention of the DNR's top management., says Wiff, We are grateful for his efforts.". In 1977 the lake was experimentally treated and it did not cost the citizens a dime. By 1985 the algae was starting to return. Another blanket of alum was applied in 1988. This time it had to be done at local cost. The Bullhead Lake Advancement Association raised \$10,000 for the treatment.

Wiff believes in the efforts people put into teaching others about the relationship between land use and lake ecology. He also believes that we will always have people who do not listen. "It's really going to be shocking to people in the city that eventually they will have to treat their storm water run-off supply. We were in New Orleans a few years ago and saw how they pump their surface run-off water into a tank. When the rain disappears they let the water run into a ditch so it doesn't harm anyone. That's why all their gravestones are above the earth...because if they scratch [the coffin] with their toe they get water. That's a joke of ours. They treat their water. They hold it for 48 hours until it settles and then they drain the top off. That's coming [our way] and it will be expensive. It will take people awhile to accept that."

"Every year the lake is different. A great share [of the difference between the years] is due to mother nature and the other share is to human beings. We human beings are pretty good at destroying." I agreed with Wiff, but I also see that through the hard work and dedication of environmental stewards, such as Wiff and other volunteers, great efforts are being made to take care of our natural resources. From partnerships with the DNR, SCS and the Bullhead Lake Advancement Association to educating local residents and his grandson - Wiff Gries is certainly playing his part as a lake steward.

This article is dedicated to the memory of my grandma, Violet Behnke. Grandma made the writing of this story possible by introducing me to Wiff & Marge Gries.

Wilfred Gries: Self-Help Lake Monitor on Bullhead Lake

Gordon Schmidt & Lily Schmidt: Historical interviewees

Cynthia V. Hawkinson: Interviewer

**Please Note:**

This transcription is not verbatim. Some questions are left out to allow for more continuity. This is not only a history of Bullhead Lake, but also a history of the people on Bullhead Lake. Some content included herein is personal and some content is included for humor.

G.S: ...across from the land and they went in there and they poisoned it and people thought northern would come out by the wagon loads and there was only some 20 northerns, but DNR Paul Schultz says a northern will go down to the bottom when he feels that - so cold down there that the air bubble does not expand so he never comes up, but the carp they're close to the top - they came up an hour after they put the stuff in. They hopped that high out of the water. That was in 1957. So then for years it was perfectly clear. That water was just as clear as a bell - there was nothing in there...frogs by the thousands because there was nothing eating the frogs - oh! there was frogs - yea! And then they started planting - they planted 4,000 trout in that winter - they all died because there was still some poison left in there - they were all nice big trout. We carried them all away with pails. The first winter after they poisoned it Paul Schultz put a little bag - he had some bullheads in there and he left that down in the middle of the lake about 15-20' in the ice and he went a week or so later and he checked it and they were all living yet so the water must be clear. From out west - some hatchery - they brought 2 truckloads of trout - nice big trout. We carried them all - there was no public access - we carried them with pails - drove down a ways - it was in spring. Two guys - drilled holes in the ice and dumped them all in about 150' from shore. And like I told you, next spring there were cars all up to the highway - everybody's going to catch trout - they were all dead. You see there was (?) some poison in there apparently and then there was nothing that summer.

I: How long was that after this happened?

G.S: Next year after it was poisoned. That winter was when he put the fish in there and then the next year...and then they left it alone for awhile. Then they started in...so here's what happened in 1965...see how big those muskies..the lake never froze out. Her dad (Gordon's wife) was 96 years old, born in 1880 - never froze out and that winter she froze out. Look at this black bass here. They were all dead. Now isn't that the darndest thing? They claim they tested the water a lot that winter and then it was pretty near March already and Schultz says the water oxygen is okay yet - should be alright. They claim once a lake goes it goes schoomp! The oxygen goes out it goes down that far and then all at once she'll go. That spring when the ice thawed sea gulls-one right next to the other - what the sam hill is going on on that lake down there? All them sea gulls - there were never sea gulls down there - see those fish were all dead - they were eating on them. We found that out afterwards. Those muskies were some beauties-these were the genuine muskies, but then they put in hybrids after that. That kind-of died out then afterwards.

I: The hybrids were a cross between what and what?

G.S: Northern and muskie.

I:-and they don't multiply?

G.S: No, they don't-they're sterile.

I: So after they were gone they were gone.

G.S: They intended to keep planting them. Apparently they can raise them pretty easily, but they died out...caught a lot of black bass and then they had walleyes in there for awhile and I caught bushels of walleyes in there. But the lake started getting dirtier and dirtier and got that green stuff. I used to go out here - I left home after milking - take the boat - go down there about 8:00-9:00 - take - just getting dark. I had a wooden boat. I drove around the outside by the lily pads and you saw open water...you could cast that - there was nothing floating on there. Those babies went for that...and I drove right around the lake usually and all...were just real quiet and they hit that baby...(hand clap). Pretty soon that green stuff came. You threw that out there and you had a big gob on there. Walleyes were just about gone I think.

W.G: I got a couple last winter. This is the graph I make every time I test. This is dissolved oxygen and this is the depth. I start at 3' and the magic line for oxygen is from the 7' area down to 20'.

G.S: Where's the thermocline in there?

W.G: I add about 15'.



G.S: Is that how high? It's that high?

W.G: Thermocline - yea, the thermocline in the summertime. That's pretty normal. Most lakes are that way in this part of the state.

G.S: That's where most of the fish are supposed to be at.

W.G: In that first 15'.

G.S: That's what they say. But you catch them on the bottom sometimes too.

W.G: Well, they go down to feed once-in-a-while, but there's really no oxygen down there once you get past that 20'. I keep a graph of this all the time. I find this most interesting because I...this is one of the reasons why I volunteer to do this...this was taken in '94...this is the temperature in July. It's really quite warm, but once you get to that 20' again it's stays at the same level. This is again the dissolved oxygen - that big curve after you get past 12' feet it really goes down. This is the temperature in June of this year. You can hit a pocket down here where it makes a shift - that's very normal. I've been talking with the DNR as to why...maybe I'm doing something wrong...you get a pocket of rainwater...this is the temperature in May of this year and this is very normal because of the season. It doesn't zigzag.

G.S: That's when the lake turns over.

W.G: This is one in May of '94-the first part of May-where it hasn't turned over yet. Because of the straight line...see that...this is why what I'm doing here is most interesting...one of the reasons why I do it and actually it's a lot of work, but you learn.

G.S: Paul Schultz - he worked for the DNR and he had this area when all this went on. I learned a lot through him. I worked with him a lot about the thermocline, the fish and the hatchery and how they spawn and this and that - and it was really interesting. He retired last year. Harris - he was the head man at Oshkosh. He was the boss around here. He died too. Paul Schultz was...what was he 60...I'm retiring he told me, Harris died, he says...who knows how long I got. He's healthy. Schultz was out of Plymouth and he had Lake Michigan for awhile after he was transferred out of Plymouth. Harris was the final say-so. He was the guy that brought it all together.

W.G: When did Art Schroeder buy his lot and build something out there - what year? He was the first cabin.

G.S: He moved in a little old shack down there. He never built anything. I'll have to look that up in my records.

W.G: As you look through there, find out when the public landing was...

G.S: (Brings out photos and news clippings) This was a muskie I caught in 1963. It was 32". Here's what I caught the next year...look at how they grew. They were really flourishing in there...it was really fun. All my boat business was in Milwaukee. Milwaukee people - they fish muskie...that's all they fish. They like this lake because they can take a day off during the week. They call up for a boat...they'd come up - they could fish and go home again that night. Up north they had to go so darn far they always...and they'd come down here. If they had one or two follow-ups (?) that made their day. They didn't have to have a muskie...just a follow-up (?). Once you're a muskie fisherman that's it. Then all at once...(?)...and I called them up...they had the boats on reserve...

I: This happened the year after that?

G.S: Oh yes. This happened in '65.

I: Do you think this was because of the chemical treatment in '57?

G.S: No. It was because of the freeze out. There was no oxygen left in the lake. I don't know if the fish were too big for the lake or (laugh) what, but it never happened before.

I: If we had data like Wif keeps now, we would know what the dissolved oxygen readings were in that year.

G.S: Paul Schultz took it that winter all the time and it was always good...all at once she just disappeared...just like that she went down the last two or three weeks...he couldn't figure it out either.

W.G: If you want an explanation of dissolved oxygen you have to read this. It's pretty good layman's language. It would be good for your tape.

G.S:...let's see if we can find when that road was put in...too many pictures...too many pictures.

I: Your whole history in these books.

G.S: She (his wife - Lily) likes to take pictures and her brother too...

L.S: I gave up. I hardly ever take a picture. I figure I'm too old.

G.S: Here's...in 1957..that's when it was poisoned...here it shows the carp and that spreader.

I: What are they doing here?

G.S: The guys went out in boats and picked up the dead fish and then they dumped them in to this elevator and I had the manure spreader here...and then I hauled them out in the field

and I plowed them under.

I: Was this hours after...

G.S: This was the next day. They had a boat with a tank on and they dripped that stuff in there and drove around the lake. An hour later the carp were jumping out of the water, but then it took a little longer....So the next day they had the shows...the sportsmen came from all over...Reedsville and Brillion and they (?) picked them up and they brought them out here...DNR elevator...and then they went in the spreader here. There was no public access. This was on my land..where Elaine (?) lives down there - where the opening is down there.

I: It doesn't seem to make sense to put a chemical in to rectify a stunted panfish problem and then you get all of these dead fish.

G.S: There weren't any good fish. There were 19-20 northern...that was all. I had four or five loads of crappies. Then carp came up first and then the crappies. That's as big as they ever got. Nobody would fish there anymore.

W.G: A crappie, normally is a good eatable fish. In this case you have to destroy a few good ones to get rid of the bad ones...there is a pay-off.

G.S: And this really worked good until '65...until that freeze-

up came...it screwed up the whole darn...it fed up (?) the DNR and everybody else. Now why did it freeze out? Nobody ever remembers it ever froze out. The ice was not any thicker that year than it ever was.

I: So that was a winter-kill.

G.S: The shallow lakes do that a lot. This one is 40' deep.

W.G: One of the simple ways of knowing what your oxygen count is on a normal winter is whether the fish are in the bottom. That's where the oxygen is in the winter months and that is a good indication as to the oxygen content. Once they start to come up then it is time to be concerned...because they're looking for oxygen they raise up and up and up....They cure the oxygen now by aeration. Long Lake aerates every year. They put some pumps in there and keep it circulating. I think they do it in Carsen's Lake for that same reason. You wouldn't have to have a fish-kill today if somebody's watching.

G.S: Yea, but it looked good to Schultz...right up to spring almost...he tested it pretty regular...because that was his lake...that was his experiment. And by golly she got away on him the last couple of weeks. He thought she was all set.

W.G: I don't know what he could have done do you?

G.S: No, I said why didn't you say something. I could've scraped

it with the tractor. He says the sunlight gets down in there...you'd almost have to scrape the whole lake because it goes so fast. The sunlight would go in and it gives off oxygen..if you kept all the snow off. You would have had to scrape the whole lake and that would have been an impossible task. When that ice went off and those sea gulls appeared there...he didn't know what to say.

W.G: Part of the oxygen has to do with the weeds. You can cuss at the weeds for getting on your fish hook, but they are a necessity in fish life. That gives off oxygen. So, if the chemical that they used prevented...like he said you could see down almost to the bottom that's an indication that there aren't any weeds...and they probably should've told Paul what he could do about it.

G.S: The lily pads never died from that. The lily pads were always there. There aren't even any there anymore. They used to be all around the lake, but people building up and stuff it what causes it.

W.G: There's a big cabbage patch weed in front of our place.

I: In a lot of ways weeds are good for the lake. Like Wif says, producing oxygen, holding sediment in place and as shelter for the fish.

W.G: The article here says there was between 4-500 pounds of

carp taken out of there.

G.S: I had over 400 pounds in every load. I had four loads of carp and nine loads in all. They said people could take them...wouldn't hurt them. I think one guy took one along...I don't know if he ever ate it or not.

I: How long did you live on the lake...I understand it was your (Lily's) parents' farm?

G.S: I lived there from 1939.

L.S: I lived there from 1916.

G.S: She rowed her dad around the lake. He'd cast and she'd row.

L.S: I know I never fished. I hated to fish. I never cleaned the fish. All I did was fry them and eat them. I used to go by myself all alone and ride.

G.S: You couldn't troll with a motor and you still can't. I had a wooden boat and I rowed...and I had that bait out there on the line and I rowed and rowed around the lake.

I: Do you still have the wooden boats?

G.S: No. I sold them. Then you figured you'd hooked them



weeds...when you're trolling especially and they take hold of that bait so lightly and they just...a little bit...and that must be weeds or something...and all at once you'd jerk a little bit and they was on there...and they usually didn't fight that much until they see the boat. Then these two that I caught on this picture here...these are from casting just from the boat. A lot of them...they follow that and they swim right along side that bait...they just look at it...you'd think they'd take a hold of it and a lot of times when you just pull it out of the water...then they...one time when I caught that one of them...I was fishing on the Behnke's side there...and I didn't look down at all and I pulled...to see where I was gonna cast and when I pulled it out of the water something rattled and here that sucker jumped out and over the water...and flopped back in the water and he headed off toward the woods...I had him...I tell you you had to be careful with those suckers. People that fish muskies they don't fish anything else...and just a follow-up or two...I couldn't believe it...that's the way some of those people are. When it froze out I called Milwaukee and I told them...they spread the word...it's no use...I never seen another one of those guys since. They never came back again.

W.G: It's surprising the number of people from Manitowoc that fish on the lake. I make it a point to ask, if I happen to be by another boat...where are you from and 90% are from Manitowoc.

I: Lily, how long did your family live on the lake?

G.S: Her grandfather almost settled the land there. Her dad was born in 1880 and her grandparents were there...remember when the Peshtigo fire was? Her grandparents...you know where the buildings are now? They used to be across the road. They owned the 40 acres there. And then that Chicago fire...everything burned around here too. And they buried grain and stuff in the ground, but their...buildings...anyway, then he built up across the road.

L.S:-among the indians.

G.S: That was way before 1880...those were her grandparents...he built up there and then he didn't feel good...he sold that 40 acres across the road where he had first settled. He had the 80 where he lived and Bullhead Lake was included in that. So then he wanted that 40 acres back, but that guy living up here wouldn't sell it to him. Then he bought that next one right across from Randy's...that 40 with all the woods...wasn't as much land....so that's why he owned this 40 and her dad owned this 40...it used to be lined up. Now they settled there and they built that up and then...well, I can show you the barn. The barn was shorter and there was a big culvert by Bullhead Lake where they got that crick that's dammed off now...through the bridge...there was a wooden culvert. And her grandpa got those timbers and he built an end on the barn with that.

W.G: When did the railroad come through there?

G.S: When he was 12 years old. So that was 1892. He carried water to the...that's him (picture). This is her (?)...he's the game warden at that time...he's the instigator. This is the year '57 they must have bought this. They're just finishing the gravel in here. This is the public landing. He was...don't go in here!...he was a stinker. That must have been 1957 when they bought that.

I: It was 1958 when they built the public landing?

G.S: Yes.

I: (to Lily) What was your dad's name?

L.S: Leonard Fischer.

G.S: and his dad's name was Godfrey Fischer. He was the oldest in the bunch. He's in here somewhere in these pictures.

W.G: When did you first bump into Sid Herman?

G.S: Around that time here.

I: And that was whom?

W.G: Sid Herman. - that was the guy who writes the articles for the Chronicle. He still writes usually once or twice a

week.

G.S: He and these two guys worked together pretty close.

W.G: He was involved with the Manitowoc fish and game.

G.S: He was paid from the state.

W.G: But the people that bought the land from you were Manitowoc fish and game.

G.S: Yea, right. He worked for the DNR. He was a warden.

W.G: He was very influential. He was very pushy..quite a guy...a character all his own.

G.S: You had to know him...I'll tell ya! Then he moved to Florida.

I: Both of you, what do you like best about being on the lake?

L.S: I played my ukelele on the boat.

I: Do you still play?

L.S: No.

G.S: Did we determine when Art Schroeder built...moved out

there?

G.S: It must have been in the 50's sometime. I could call you on that.

W.G: Reemers is another farm bordering the lake, but in talking to the boy a couple years ago...they never fished.

G.S: We fished it a lot...I did, but mostly evenings after chores.

L.S: I would say this is a sturgeon.

G.S: Yea, that's a sturgeon. We didn't get him out of Bullhead Lake. We got him out of Winnebago. On the farm I didn't get to go very often because I had to be home all the time. The last one I got it must have come out of the mud. Nobody could eat him. He just tasted like mud. The others were good. We cut off the best chunks and gave a lot of it away.

L.S: Made lots of enemies.

G.S: I never went since. Usually they were really delicious.

I: It sounds like what you like best about being on the lake is fishing.

G.S: Oh yea! This is the first one I caught. This is on the

farm yet so this one is smaller.

I: Do you have any childhood stories?

W.G: What's the story on the Behnke farm on the east side where we live? There's a Mrs. Behnke that works as a hygienist for the dentist that I go to and her husband has some connection with that farm.

G.S: That was old man Behnke that lived there. He had four children. These are all older, there was Eddie...you know - Ralph that lives up here...that was his dad...and Richard...he was the oldest...he never married...and there was two daughters...one of them got married and moved to Chicago and the other one stayed around. Ernie Behnke is Dixie's (the hygienist) husband's father. He was the youngest. He was born there. Then he bought Randy Brannis' farm. He was single. He always went home at night and then he went back and farmed. Then he got married to Elsie Behnke. Then they had three kids...Dixie's husband...Wilmer...and then there was that little band player...Billie...he lived up in Two Rivers...they had a farm. He had an orchestra...played in dances. Then they had a daughter she's married to Randy Brandis. Randy Brandis and Dixie are sister-in laws.

W.G: Randy Brandis is town chariman. (To Interviewer): When you follow me - going home now - and we leave JJ...I'll make a left turn and go around the lake...the first house we'll run into is a Dalman...barn burnt down maybe 15-18 years ago...so

there's just the house there. Henry doesn't live there. Then we make a curve and there's just a barn. That's the Behnke farm that we are talking about. The house is gone. Henry Dalman owns the farm now, but he doesn't farm...he rents it out.

I: He's not related to the Behnkes that built the farm?

W.G: No.

I: When was that farm originally built?

G.S: In the 1800's. That's an old place. Behnke had an auction. They sold the farm. Herb (?) stopped by my place that morning. She (Lily) said he's not buying any more farms - I just started in the insurance business! I had bought the Miller farm just west of me. I tell ya, I should've went and bought that...that was sold for \$10,500 that day...can you believe that? It was 160 acres...a lot of it was at the lake. So then Herb Dwart (?) bought it. He lives right over here now. He farmed it for two-three years. He was way out by Maple Grove. Drove down here with tractors and farmed it - cut hay and grain. Then Eddie Neumeyer (?) stopped one day. He says, you think that guy will sell that farm for \$25,000? Oh, I says, I'll bet ya he would. Well, he says, his wife owns half that garage so I think we'll get the money through her. He went over and talked to her and sure enough he bought the farm for 25,000. So Herb had it

2-3 years...made some money. Neumeyer built it into lots and he made money. They could've bought that for \$10,500 at one time.

I: How many farms did you have?

G.S: I just had the two. I farmed the two and that would've been a little much. My uncle was in the insurance business and he talked me into starting up so that's...then I was...I didn't buy that farm. Fellow could've just left it lay.

W.G: I used to drive by JJ. I used to look across the lake from west to east...someday I'm going to build me a house out there. I used to drive by there for years...Someday I'm going to retire on that east side...and my dream come true.

G.S: And for me...living there...I thought...god - who would ever build a house over there...he's gotta be nuts! Neumeyer moved that wausau home in there. That was about the first one. Who lives in there now?

W.G: A guy by the name of Greg Peterson and he has a live-in friend...

G.S: Right down below from that house, to the east, there was a big stump always in there. It was a tree first and then it fell and it was a stump - and there was always a



black bass hiding behind that sucker. I went down there and I'd try for that black bass and I never got him into the boat. One night I went real quiet (and with a wooden boat you could do that) afterwards with aluminum boats you couldn't do that - made too much noise - and I landed that baby just right and, boy I had him! That was just before it froze out. He was big fella...finally I got him! That was really fun. I got stuck first...the water was only about this deep...this close to shore...that's all mud up there. One night...my son went to college way up in Michigan Tech...way up north...and then in the fall he was gonna leave the next day for school...he's a big fisherman. He lives in Indianapolis now. He goes to lake Erie to fish. I go along with him once-in-a-while. He has a big boat...anyhow, the night before he was gonna leave - him and I went down to the Bullhead Lake to fish one more time and he cast it out along the woods there...boy! I got one...and he pulled back...get him in the boat...it was dark - you couldn't see a darn thing. Pulled - all at once the line tore off - boy he got away. So he left that night. That bothered me all night. The next day at noon I took the boat down there - went along shore and looked and here that bait was hooked under a root. So I wrote him a letter - don't feel bad - I got the bait...it was dark - couldn't see nothing.

W.G: There's seven homes on this Behnke farm and there's an example of what's happening. The people next to us - Greg Peterson - he works in Manitowoc and his girlfriend

works in Sheboygan. We're retired. Next door - she works in Sheboygan - he works in Fond du Lac. Next house - he works in Manitowoc and she works in Chilton. The next one he works in Manitowoc and she works in Rightstown (?). The next one was just sold. I don't know who bought that A-frame. The next one - she works in Appleton and he runs a business in Sheboygan. That's how.....

G.S: They travel.

W.G: Then there's a new home on the north end - she works in Appleton - he works in Manitowoc. And the other one is in California and he's having trouble selling his home in California. Homes are not going very well there. Now there's another one - he works in Neenah and she works in Manitowoc.

G.S: Elaine is the only local one - Elaine and you.

W.G: That's why when you go to sell your home or lot...don't go to a local realtor...you gotta go....

G.s: Like Pat Walsh...he bought that lot on my side there...he had to offer some more.

W.G: There's only two lots left that aren't sold.

G.S: If anybody would have had a little foresight...remember farms sold for \$15-16,000...my sister and husband lived right

around the corner from us...sold it for \$14,000...80 acres of nice land...five years later it was worth \$100,000. Neumeyer bought that land...it went up at just the right time. It went up in the 70's. Then farm land started to go crazy. Before that it was....

W.G: We only paid \$3,000 for our lot - 110 foot of frontage. Now they're asking \$25,000. Todd's lot is useless. He has 100 foot of frontage, but not enough room to build. You have to stay back 75' and he doesn't have enough back room. And the town of Rothman (?) has an ordinance that there are no mobile homes. I cut the lot and I use part of it as a garden. It looks nice. It doesn't look as rough.

G.S: Are you catching any fish out there?

W.G: It's slow.

G.S: My daughter wants to start fishing...30 years old...well, dad I gotta go fishing. I said, 5:00 - I'll pick you up and we'll go to Bullhead Lake - I haven't been there in years. I picked her up...we drove over - towards your end...I used to catch a lot of bluegills in there...about 15- ' of water. I get out there and set the weight down...put the worm on there for her...she threw it out there...I think I got something, she says. She pulled it up...she had a bluegill that was a Lake Winnebago bluegill...a big sucker! Boy, I said, we get a half-dozen of those we'll be alright. Now I caught

a black bass...didn't measure and threw him back in. The wind changed to the north and it got windy and we didn't get anything. But that was a beautiful bluegill...so now we have to go back.

W.G: This is the tool they use to sample the water. I drop that down...see here it's open...this is...when it's closed and this is when it's open...and you hook...the trip wire. And when you go down...the rope has foot markings on it...you stop where you want it and you flip it...and there's a thermometer in here. When you drop it down to 3'...or whatever...leave it there for a minute to give the thermometer a chance to work.

G.S: We had a pipe and you'd leave it down at the bottom of the lake - Winnebago - and these flies...red worm...the larvae...you scoop it down in the mud and you pull the lever and if there was a lot of red larva - that's where the sturgeon are hangin' out.

W.G: This sampler - you fill up this bottle and - every 3' - and you take a different sample. You put in eight drops of one chemical and eight drops of another and then you cap it. You have to shake it to mix it and this is where it settles and then you can go back on shore. Then you put in a third kind of chemical that you...

G.S: What does it show you - oxygen?

W.G: Oxygen, yes. This is for phosphorous. You take two samples, One at 3' and one at 3' off the bottom. When you get to shore you put in the sulfuric acid. Then you ship it into the lab in Madison. This tells you how to break the little capsule and you empty it in this phosphorous bottle and you have to keep it refrigerated. These are lab sheets. Off the bottom you take a sample and then you filter it. You can't touch the filter with your fingers. You have to use a tweezers. This is the equipment. This is a little pump. It's like straining the milk - years ago. Here's the container and here's how you measure it. This is the bottle and this is your filter.

G.S: This has something to do with chlorophyll?

W.G: Yes.

G.S: Is there too much or not enough?

W.G: Too much is no good.

G.S: There's too much in there - right? I would think. That green stuff that's floating around in there. That's chlorophyll mostly.

W.G: That's algae. How much water to filter depends on the secchi test. We usually filter 800 mm every time. That

gets recorded - (flipped tape) - when you get to be 70 years old your fingers don't work that fast anymore.

G.S: I've seen all this stuff here on Bullhead Lake. How come I don't see any fish? That's what the lake is there for.

W.G: That's how you ship that filter. Everything's got to be measured.

G.S: I suppose. They have a separate file on Bullhead Lake?

W.G: That's on the computer. This is where you put in some starch and it turns blue then you have to put in some other stuff to make it turn white again.

I: How long does the whole procedure take you?

W.G: Maybe three hours. Here are some of the forms that you use. This is the one for taking the temperature. It's almost 77 degrees and at 30' it's 60. Oxygen - here's that thermocline - goes from a pretty good reading down to nothing at 20'. That's there all the time except in winter time.

G.S: In fall it changes - twice a year. In fall, when it changes - trolling, you can get walleyes right off the bottom.

W.G: It makes a difference - how much rain you get. You

get different pockets. Here's one that goes straight. That's early May - 2 May. That will vary by the year.

G.S: Do you watch it that close in spring? Do you go through the ice too?

W.G: No. That's gonna come some day.

G.S: I would think so.

W.G: The DNR claims they watch it themselves. The DNR has equipment that costs \$1200. They can't give us equipment that costs \$1200 so we do it the slow way. They can drop their instrument down and tell it in two minutes.

G.S: I have to show you something (mounted head of a large buck). I shot him just east of Bullhead Lake. That was in 1956 - something like that. It was an 11 pointer. The first shot went right through the ear. It's a Bullhead Lake native. Here's where I had my (?) where I rented out boats - see I'd tie them up in there. I had twelve boats. People didn't have their own boats back then.

I: How long did you farm?

G.S: Forty years, 1939-1978. This farm I had first and this one I bought about 25 years ago - Miller farm. Can you imagine, I bought that farm for \$9,500 - that was 92

acres - there 80 acres (?) had a house on it. I sold it all in one piece to a guy. He sold it again. He got 90,000 for it - that's how the appreciation of that went up. That was the day we had the auction. This is our place - our farm. Don't look that way anymore. There used to be a (?) barn in Wells - it burnt down - the way they all do. This was this house when we bought it. The trees were pretty small. That's my daughter. She's working on the farm.

I: How many kids do you have?

G.S: Four. Two boys and two girls. One boy is 53, one is 50. Then we didn't have any children for 11 years, then we had these two girls. One is 35-36 and one is 30. She's married about 10 years or so. The year before they were gonna - she was going with the guy she's married to....She stayed with us. She had been to the stores and tried on necklaces and said, they're all too short - is my neck swollen? You seen her everyday - you never noticed that. We went to a doctor - yea, he says, you have a goiter in there - I think the best thing we can do - we can't cure it with medicine - we'll have to operate. They took her to Chilton - he cut from here to here and then he noticed it was cancer - so he quit - he was all blood - we were in the waiting room. She was about 19 years old. He says you can take her to Chicago or Madison - I don't want to do anymore. So he sewed her up and we took her to Madison. They looked at it and it was a lymph node. The doctor says he could



guarantee 95% recovery, but you have to take a treatment. I said, they give those treatments at Appleton. He says then there's no guarantee. So, we had to drive to Madison all the time. She was there all summer. We'd take her there Sunday afternoon and get her home Friday night. She goes once a year for a check-up. Her boyfriend stuck right by her - they got married after that. That's what saved her life. If he'd have left her I think she would have given up. He was a semi driver. He just parked that darn truck and stayed right there.

And once, Mike, the fisherman - we went up to Canada and we caught all them walleye. The oldest son - he lived up north for awhile and worked on the railroad. I bought him a rod and reel for Christmas - he never used it. His name is Gordon Jr. The next one was Mike - he was going to school at Michigan Tech. This is up at Armstrong Crick. We met them there on a Sunday. These boys - his sister owned this tavern - these two boys were from Goodman (?) and they were pals up there. When they came down to Goodman - we drove up on a Sunday afternoon. My daughters names are Jodelle and Gina. These we caught at a lake - by Kato (?) - on highway 10 - west of Reedsville. Northern we caught there - two or three years - boy did we catch northern like crazy out there. I guess everybody found out about it and pretty soon there were less and less. A guy bought it, built a house and dumped a big load of stones in front of the axis and that was it - we couldn't get in anymore. That's the way

it goes. Live long enough - you go through all kinds of things.

These are all black & whites. This is where we farmed years ago. There's her dad - he's going to the mill, I guess. Here they're sawing ice on Bullhead Lake. Here's how they made ice. Farmers had an ice house. First they sawed it all by hand and this guy is pulling it out - the blocks of ice. Many one slipped in when they did that. Then afterwards (?) - he built this old model-T with a saw on. Then it went much quicker.. Then they went down - loaded it on the sleigh with the horses and took it home - put sawdust on and then you had ice all summer. The sawdust was so it didn't freeze together and it kept...and it finally thawed away, but it lasted all summer until fall. You put the milk in there and the butter - and it had the little box shed - little carton in there - you'd pull it out and there you put the little stuff to keep cool. That was the first icebox. Everybody did that. The cities - they used to do that and they hauled the ice around to the people, but it all had to be cut like this. He went from one lake to the other - Zenipere (?) - cutting for people - because that really went fast - compared to this here - this was a miserable job.

I: Did they always get the people out when they slipped in?

G.S: Oh yea. One fellow told me, when he walked home -

his overalls were stiff. He lived a mile - walked home, changed clothes and came back.

I: What year was this?

G.S: In the 30's.

I: Was this when you were living on the farm?

G.S: No. Then we had the refrigerators.

I: What is Wells?

G.S: That's a little town. Here this is Wells. This house is still standing yet. There used to be a blacksmith here. This was the cheese factory. There was the schoolhouse. This was the barn - the (?) barn - that burned down. This shed belonged to this cheese factory here. Then there was a store here and a post office. There's a railroad track by Bullhead Lake and there used to be a platform there years ago. The train would stop and he'd load his cheese on there and the post office here - they had a post there and he'd go and get the mail every day. He'd walk from the railroad track to Wells. This big house here - that's the only one left yet - this one here and this one here. And there's one down here, but that was moved over there on skids - but this is Wells. My farmhouse is right here. This is coming from the north to Bullhead Lake and Wells is back here.

L.S: Gordon, what does Mike do?

G.S: He designs transmissions for General Motors. This is somebody before I knew her (Lily) - LAUGH! This was - these people here - her grandfather - this Gottfried Fischer I told you about...his wife's - they were a Miller - and when they moved - in the early 1800's - to Germany there was a North America and a South America - apparently it was all the same to them. This Maximillian - he was a big German guy - he moved to South America and he sent flyers to Germany - come to South America! So they sailed to South America - they didn't know the difference. There was two of them already in North America - in Wisconsin - so then her grandmother had a vision one night - a dream that somebody came to her with a baby in her arms and gave it to her. And, by golly, if these sisters and her husband and her family - they left for North America - they didn't stay here. And on the way in two old people died. Then somebody brought this baby that was actually their nephew - they adopted him - his name was Henry Schultz - and he lived with the family and he was part of the family, but they always called him Henry Schultz - they didn't name him Fischer - because her maiden name is Fischer. He lived - and he had a brother - he moved to Washington. His brother came out here about two years ago and visited us. This is South America. That's the way they farmed in the 30's. They didn't have any horses. And a lot of snakes there - they had it terrible there. I have

letters in the drawer here - written in German - that she wrote - the old lady - wrote to her sister - that was her (Lily's) grandmother - that she'd sit at night and look at the moon - and wonder is that same moon shining on you - my sister. Imagine the loneliness - never see them again. But they stayed down there. Then the second world war came on and they corresponded - not much, but they did some. Then they were just all nazi. You couldn't say nothing about Germany. That was the last time - that was the end. These people from South America were indoctrinated - they were from Germany too and a lot of the crooks from the nazi (regime) went to South America because these kind of people were there. They hid them and they were....They were held down a little bit there - who farmed with oxen yet, for cryin' out loud! They didn't have anything. One of the boys got killed by a snake - They had poisonous snakes there. It's all in the letters.

Do you ever see these around here? These big pine stumps. In the 1850's this area around here was covered with these kind of trees. Then the big lumber companies came through and these are that old - now they're pretty near all gone - and that was just solid yet - and they cut them that high off the ground because they were big - they were pine trees and why bend over. It was all cut by hand - cross cut. Hauled it off to the river - floated them down to Manitowoc. The whole countryside was full of these big pine trees. That was the virgin....Imagine that river - how deep that

was. They could float those logs on there. You can't float a shingle on there anymore. It isn't deep enough. The river just filled up. The DNR is working on Brillion Crick - to drain that. There's no way they can drain that. There's no place to drain it to. The river - the forks used to be 10' of water - now there's 3-4' - that's all. It just swims in there and it floats in and the bottom comes up and the water goes out and that's it. The crick runs into the Manitowoc River - about three miles west of here. There is nothing here. That's all flat - you can walk through it. This doesn't do any good here. It just fills up with water and that's it. The only way you're going to clean that out is if you drive that submarine from Manitowoc up here (laugh). You know, by the Collins bridge - there's this much water - there's no way. They're trying to drain it because when we have a little bit of rain - it floods the foundry out here. They had to close down last April. They're talking about it now, again - I don't know what they're going to do.

Right down here - behind that brush - we moved here in '78. There was still a (?) here yet. It was all being farmed. You can't even walk there now. It's all water and mud. They closed the road - can't even drive around there anymore. That's because the river is filling up from the bottom and there's no place for the water to go so it spreads out. That's all cattails now. Years ago they fished in here - right back of that barn - here they used to have a race track - race the horses. There was just an article in Brillion News about

that - people owned them - that little grandstand there - now it's all swamp. That was in about 1900.

That's my mother over there with our two daughters. She got to be 95 years old. Her dad got to be 96, but her mother died young - she had cancer. She died when she was 60-some. You wanna talk about history - her brother (Lily's) is 88 years old. He lives in Manitowoc by himself. You wanna talk history - you talk to him - he knows everything about everything. He has more education than most college people have - never went to high school even. He reads everything - he never had a wife so he remembers from years ago better than I do (laugh). I have a wife and kids - everything gets screwed up. Her dad carved this. He was a kind of a carpenter. It's all wood - all one piece. He made a bunch of them and passed them all out to the relatives. Kids all got one or two.

I: When were you born?

G.S: 1916. It was 105 degrees. First thing I did was check the thermometer (laugh). Get me a beer. They just had on the T.V. - the hottest day - and it's always 1916, July 29 - that's always a hot one - that's my birthday.

I: Hey! It just was your birthday! Happy birthday!

G.S: Yea, just last week Friday. Yea, we're getting old.

I: When was your wife born?

G.S: She's six months older than I am. She was born in January.

I: So, you went for an older woman. They know how to take care of you!

G.S: That's right!

I; Could I reprint some of these photos?

G.S: Sure.

I: Does your wife like cats?

G.S: Does my wife like cats! I tell ya, he has more rights than I have! At least I can go fishing. She has company.

I: Today, I'm going to be with Wif, for awhile.

G.S: What are you guys up to?

I: We're going out in the boat - want to come with us?

G.S: When they were trying to buy public access from me - I was fishing one day - "what are ya fishing? You're not going to catch anything in here! There's nothing in here! Come



along. I'll take you for a ride.". He wanted to show me other lakes where they had put public access in. They took me to Spring Lake and Horseshoe Lake and a couple more. Then he stopped in Clarks Mills. Here, he says, a friend mine just got a tavern here - we'll stop here - he says. Well, I thought he was going to buy me a beer - so I stopped. I got up to the door. Oh, I forgot my billfold - he says! That son-of-a-gun...I had to pay for the beer.

I: Are you and Lily all German?

G.S: All German. This is Gina - and that's the biggest muskie I guess I caught out of there. This is the dead one - that's the freeze out.

W.G: In Collins - Didn't Alfred Schroeder's dad have a farm out there?

G.S: Louie Schroeder - yea. He was just north of there. he sold that to the DNR - he could live in the house.

W.G: Where are you from originally? (to Lily)

G.S: Merlin (?) - by Lemke's.

L.S: My mother had cancer - she was gonna die - sold the farm.

G.S: This is her cousin. This is a Behnke - that lived at that farm that Neumeyer bought. This is August Enepper - he owns this rig - and this is her brother. That's on Bullhead Lake (ice fishing picture). The only one living is him (?). There's my last team of horses. That's what I'm interested in is horses, but - no - we gotta keep cats.

L.S: Well, if you can get a horse in here!

G.S: If I'd a known what I didn't know, I'd have bought Richter's (?) farm - and I'd a had a team of horses there. Here's a nice scene of Bullhead Lake - there's that Richard Behnke farm back there. Wil - he lives right over here.

I: I'll tape these all back in for you.

W.G: I think you're in trouble kid!

I: Pretty friendly people here to be scraping their pictures off their photo albums...

G.S: You think we got pictures - you should see her brother! He's got pictures of everything - he used to walk around with two cameras around his neck. Now he quit too. Bullhead Lake - there you are - where the cows come home. Right here is where they had the elevator set up. The public landing is in the woods. Over here is Elaine's house - south - west from here it goes up hill to Elaine's house - so you go down

toward the east and this is that little hole in there - that's where years ago - from the farm - there was no railroad track - chopped a hole in the ice and the cows would go down in winter for water. This is cleared out. There's a clearing. One of the first tractors around there - 1938. My dad died in 1940. Steel wheels - no rubber tires around here - as soon as we got the steel wheels they knew darn well we'd never take the tires off. He still got that H - 1942 - it's still running.

W.G: My dad bought on H in 1940 and it's still running.

G.S: Now with the high speed motor they don't last that long. I bought that big M. You can't use it now - it's not even big enough. I farmed for 40 years - and my nephews payed more for a tractor than I spent all my life on machinery - they're \$60-70-80,000. What did I buy...manure spreader was \$100 and something I bought from Sears-Roebuck - had rubber tires yet. Of course, there was no money. I had a harder time raising money than they do. Little pigs were two dollars a piece. Took them to Reedsville - sometimes you'd come home with more than you had when you left - somebody couldn't get rid of theirs - you'd throw them in your box....

TAPE 2

~TAPE 2: Wilfred Gries & Gordon Schmidt

G.S: ...I noticed when I walked through there there were deer there - a couple years ago. Then they had a tent up there and when you worked that field you always found pieces of dishes (laugh). And right under that hill by (?) house there were two two-by-fours nailed against the tree - the trees were about that far apart and that was the toilet. They had that camp when they built the railroad - 1890. They had camps all the way along. They had a lot of stuff to haul and got it from the quarry. I imagine when they had started once they used the rail cars to haul them to the end. Here they had it all filled up with mules and they had a tent there and they lived and worked and he carried water over here. He often said what he got a day - it wasn't much - a couple cents a day.

W.G: Are you ready (to interviewer)? I got you into this Gordon.

G.S: Armed robbery - I've been robbed! Very good, very good...I hope I see your book some day - article or something.

\*END GORDON SCHMIDT

\*BEGIN WILFRED GRIES  
(...walking out to lake)

W.G: ...the one picture where Gordon was showing the cows that would be beyond this pier. You can see that from across the lake after awhile. Our house is behind the left of that white house you see - that's behind the tree - the weeping willow.

I: There's some algae floating on top of the water.

W.G: Sure, sure and it sank a bit because of the rain otherwise there would be more on there. Now when we go back and make a right turn - see that barn there - that's the Behnke farm that Gordon talked about. There is a curve right there if you want to stop and take a picture. There will be a house on the way that will be the Dalman farm that he talked about a bit, but we didn't get as involved in conversation about it as with the Behnke farm. The Behnke farm is the land that we are built on now.

I: Is this still the farm standing from the Behnke farm and this was all their land?

W.G: Sure, sure. I think it was about 80 acres.

I: Do you know if they were any relation to my grandparents? I don't ever remember them talking about them.

W.G: There are so many Behnkes I have no idea - there must be a clan - a history someplace, but I have no idea. This lady I talked about - Dixie - the hygienist I go to - her husband - and maybe that's the way you could lead your grandpa into a conversation. I have no idea if your grandpa knows about this farm. Wilmer Behnke - and he lives in the back yard from where your grandparents live on the same development.

(drive further)

W.G: That is the Dalman place - it has no connection with what Gordon was telling us.

I: This is the original land of the Behnke family?

W.G: The Behnke family. The house is setting where the power pole is. Dalman owns the farm now. I'm going to go down to my house now.

(drive to house)

I: Do you want your sandwich?

W.G: We have some chili.

I: Oh. Well, I'm a vegetarian.

W.G: Oh, you are? We have a son that's a vegetarian.

I: So you know what it's like.

W.G: Yea. Marge, she's a vegetarian (to his wife). Oh no! Not another one of those! This is the Behnke's granddaughter.

M.G: You look like Violet.

I: I am a lot like her actually. I was trying to warn your husband.

(eat lunch)

W.G: ...and this is the (?) that they used. That's what that picture is. They treat it with alum because of the algae. It lasted about ten years. That's the tree when it was smaller.

I: When did you move on to the lake?

W.G: '75. Here's a sunset.

I: How long have you been a Self-Help volunteer?

W.G: Since 1986.

I: You started out with the secchi and then you moved to the expanded program in '91?

W.G: Yes.

I: Why did you choose to volunteer?

W.G: Well, because we had gone to the Lake Convention in Steven's Point for a number of years - through that - and meeting Carolyn Rumery-Betz - and then in our conversation she asked if I'd be interested. At that time they were looking for 32 lakes to start out in Wisconsin. Because I was willing to do

this we were one of the 32. I always keep a copy of my findings and I have some from 1986. Then the expanded program started in '91. That was just a continuation of - all of the merit that the program has - as a riparian owner is the fact that you become interested in knowing what's happening - and you can help, but it's an education for everyone that you come in contact with. I usually take someone out along with me every time.

I: I read on your survey how you pass this information on to friends and family. How do people in your community view your volunteer work?

W.G: It makes other people aware - in the city - that just because we live on a lake - we are not alone in our pollution efforts. Everyone is a polluter. This is a message that you get across and some of this is being produced by the news media. That just by being on this earth - we are a polluter. "I'm not (referring to people's responses) - I live in the city - I don't live on the lake - I don't spread fertilizer on the land - I don't farm.". But for every pound of fertilizer he spreads on his lawn - some of that fertilizer reaches a body of water somehow. It's going to take a long time for this to become an education to everyone - years and years - people like these weed-free lawns. It's the excess that really hurts everyone.

I: One of the main goals of the Self-Help Program is for people to learn the relationship between land-use and lake ecology. You're learning that and passing it on to other people.

W.G: I think one of the major moves - I got to know a guy that lives on Carson's Lake - which is also in Manitowoc county. In the last year I trained him to monitor his lake. He has many contacts. He is active in the Manitowoc Fish & Game. He's proud of what he's doing. I took him up to meet Tim Rasman and Scott one day - about a year ago - and they were kind-of impressed with him. He's an old timer and he's interested in conservation and water quality. He tells some pretty wild stories. A side-arm story about this - he was telling me a story about having a fight with two farmers that were farming in the area of Carson's Lake - and the run-off you know - and some of the things that they wanted to do - and they got onto a pretty big spat about this and they each had a club. I said - why are you fighting with these farmers - Why aren't you talking with Tom Ward? Tom is the SCS program coordinator. He can talk to these farmers on farm run-off and manure - why aren't you? [He asked] who's Tom Ward? Tom Ward and him have had 20 meetings in the last several years since that time. And now - it is going to a manure-holding facility and he's getting 70% from federal money - and I asked why didn't you do this years ago. This is an accomplishment that I am kind-of proud of even if I did it by accident. Now his lake is in trouble, but that is quite beside the point. I had an idea...

I: Tom Ward is with...

W.G: SCS - Manitowoc County Soil Conservation Service. The young farmers hear about him because he makes a habit of getting to the young farmers before they get established and get their minds set. I work with Tom a little bit around here. He's formed the Manitowoc River Watershed and this is what he works with. He and Tim Rasmun get along pretty good. They seem to see eye-to-eye. Sometimes if you work as a clique things work well. Doug called me Sunday morning. He had taken the test for the first time alone and he called

with some questions. He's on his own now. This thing with Tom Ward and these farmers - I don't know why Doug had never heard of Tom Ward because Doug had contact with the DNR.

I: These farmers that Doug was feuding with - they were involved in practices that were going to harm the lake - fertilizer?

W.G: They had no neutral zone. Some farms have a natural neutral zone so that the run-off doesn't go directly - it settles into a marsh area. This is fine - it has a lot of merit, but when you have high water and the marsh area is flooded it gets washed in any way. Carson Lake has trouble. It's a small lake - about 20-25 (?) or so. He's been living out there for many years.

I: That's a good story. It sounds like you're good at passing information on to people and helping people out and hooking people up with the right people.

W.G: Yea, that's an example and it's one of the better ones that worked out.

I: Yes, that's great! Did you keep data for this lake before the Self-help Program?

W.G: No.

I: and you've been living on this lake since 1975?

W.G: Yes, but we bought the lot in 1967 and come and picnic out here and go fishing. We were waiting for our youngest son to get through high school so in his senior year he could drive a car - so we built out here and sold our home. The last year he drove back or he took the bus.

I: So you used to live in town - in Brillion. Your dream came true.

W.G: You betcha!

I: Basically that's the length of time your family has been visiting the lake. What do you like best about being on the lake?

W.G: We like to go fishing and I'm one of the fortunate few that has a wife that will go along with me and she's a good fisherman. Solitude out here is great. We don't know what is going on in town - the gossip. We're out here and if we here that story three months late - that's okay with me.

I: It is really peaceful out here and you seem peaceful too. I've been wanting to talk with you since I read your survey and because my grandma told me about you. Sometimes do you feel your the keeper of the lake?

W.G: Yea, in an amateur sort-of-way. My concern is if I can have continuity after I'm gone - so I try to get some of the young people. There's two people down here that have been out here many years too that are interested somewhat.

I: Are they young people?

W.G: No. They're older people. Now there is a father and son - and the son has bought a lot out here about a year ago and he's going to build maybe next

year and he has a degree - a masters degree in forestry. That's, perhaps, my inlet to get him - he's not practicing, but he went to school for it - he's knowledgeable in nature sort-of-thing. That's my lead that I can pass this on to someone.

I: That's sounds good. It sounds like a pretty good in. Hopefully he has an ethical approach that will make him want to take this on. That is thinking long-term to make sure it keeps going.

W.G: As long as our health remains as it is we will stay out here, but some day when you no longer want to take care of the lawn - when you're a riparian owner you have to consider your beach as part of the lawn. You know where I'm coming from? I've got some stuff out on the grass that I took out Saturday and I didn't pick it up yet. You clean out the beach. Another thing I've taught people too is to do that. You don't have to destroy it - just clean it up. I don't think we'll live to see the lake as clean as nature intended it to be, but someday I'm sure the water will clean up - with education to the public.

I: What has dirtied the lake - some of these practices of people using fertilizer? What do you know of?

W.G: Well, as an example, last year in June we had a heavy rain - about a 4" of rain of overnight. I took a secchi test on Tuesday afternoon. That Tuesday night we had 4" of rain. In June the grass was not covering everything - there is still some raw earth exposed. There was a farmer on the northwest corner. The owner had a nice 6-8' grass waterway and this gully. When he retired from farming he rented this farm out. Well, the renter could care less. So he has gullies. I could see how brown the water was on Thursday so I took a secchi test. I could see down 17' on Tuesday and 3.5' on Thursday. I have it documented. I got all excited and I called Tim and that started a whole ball - he sent some people down from Green Bay with the DNR - and he got Tom Ward with the SCS. The farmer that rents lives in Calumet county. This is Manitowoc county - so then there's always this crossing the border. Tom Ward can't go and talk to this farmer in Calumet county. He has to go to the Calumet county SCS man and he in turn has to talk to the renter. The town did a dumb thing - this dish was full of silt from the run-off so they had a crane come in and scoop the dirt out and dumped it over across the road into the floodplain area. That caused the Corp of Engineers to get involved. The final outcome isn't settled, but those things work slow. It's going to amount to something eventually. That's an example of how the secchi test has provide documentation - on what it was on Tuesday and what it was on Thursday. All the years of doing it was worth this one test.

I: Do you have any stories about lake history?

W.G: Let me get you the summary.

I: When was the alum treatment done?

W.G: Once in 1977 and again in 1988.

I: Here you wrote to get your lake treated with alum - you wrote as far back as '71.



W.G: Yes. (looking at articles, etc.) This goes as far back as '75. Tom Worth had a news release in the Sunday journal that I read - of them doing an alum treatment in a lake on southeastern Wisconsin. They were talking about the results. I wrote to Tom just from this article [about how] on Bullhead Lake we are owners of some land and are concerned about water quality on Bullhead Lake in Manitowoc county and we read with interest your findings and this alum treatment and I wish you would consider something of this caliber in Bullhead Lake. So Tom answered my letter and he said because of your interest we might just experiment with alum treatment in Bullhead Lake - and he pulled strings and he pushed and pulled - and this is how he got Dick Narf interested in doing this - it was an assignment. In 1977 they treated Bullhead Lake with alum - it was an experiment so it didn't cost us a dime - because of this article. By 1975 (meant 1985?) the lake was beginning to turn back to algae. Alum lays a blanket on the bottom of the lake so the sediment that is there is covered and does not become involved in the lake turnover. This is how it works. From '77 to '86 another blanket had layed of sediment and it was creating algae. This is because - the farming practices - this was before many homes were here at all - there was one home here at that time - was not carried through - so this blanket - this sediment formed again - so then there was enough - this barn had burnt down from this Dalman barn and the Reemer farm - where you see this opening there - he had quit farming and he used to let his cows run in the lake for years - there was enough difference in farming practice that they agreed to lay another blanket of alum on top of the present one. This was ten years later. This time it had to be at a local cost. We raised \$10,000 for this. We hired this sweetwater (?) - and if you read this whole book there you will find correspondence from Narf, from Tim - and you will find lots of correspondence - we had to go out and hire our own contractor to do this. We had it treated the second time in August of '88 at our cost.

I: How did you raise the money - from private funds?

W.G: We got \$3,000 from the Manitowoc Fish & Game; \$1,000 from a local town - town of Rockland (?); and we got \$4,000 from a Peter's Foundation out of Brillion - he used to own the foundry in town - he was a big conservation individual. I guessed I had done him a few favors. He had passed-away, but he had left a foundation - he had enough people there to.... The rest we had ourselves - in our own kitty - our own dues. Is that from Tom Worth? Yea, that's a reply from Tom.

I: These letters started back in '71.

W.G: I still haven't found my summary. I think I gave it to our secretary.

I: So, Roland Behnke lives here now?

W.G: He's a farmer around the bend.

I: Do you have Eurasian Water Milfoil in your lake?

W.G: Yes.

I: Do you know when that started?

W.G: About 1990 or 1991.

I: It looks like you really did well with this treatment.

(continue to look through Wif's records)  
(break)

W.G: ...he's using it for the study of the warming of the earth? That's one of the original letters - keep turning once maybe we'll find it.

I: This is for Lake Winnebago ?

W.G: Yea, that was a different one. We sent him that. We had to accumulate that information from someone living on Lake Winnebago and we sent him that. See the average that we did. Maybe the original letter...we get one twice each year..turn it one more - I think I kept it - that's '89. I guess I don't have the original.

(went out on the lake in the boat and Wif showed me how he does his monitoring)

W.G: The thing that's interesting about this Self-Help that you learn for any layperson - is that we're doing this today after .5" of rain and the lake is different than what it was yesterday - and unless you do this you're not aware - you would know there's something different, but you wouldn't know exactly what it is. This is a good teacher.

I: Do you bring a different person every time with you when you go out on the lake?

W.G: I try to rotate. I have maybe four guys. My problem is that - Saturday is the best day because nobody works, but you have to keep it till Monday to ship it out - and one of the better ways is to do it on Sunday afternoon - we have other ideas of what to do on Sunday afternoon.

(taking secchi reading)

(conversation difficult to hear due to boat motor)

I: Did your wife have a job outside the home too?

W.G: She did for ten years (?). ....

I: How many kids do you have?

W.G: Four.

I: What are their ages and names?

W.G: Jim passed away - he was only 44; Karen 37; Ann is 38; Tom 30 some-odd years.

I: Do you belong to any other organizations?

W.G: I'm a retired fireman; belonged to the Lion's Club for about 35 years....

I: Are you german?

W.G: Yea, all german.

I: and Marge too?

W.G: She's half German and half French.... We like to fish from here on. I caught a 9" bluegill just off this spot last week. (?)

I: What kind of wildlife do you see out here?

W.G: Ducks, muskrats out of the marsh, loons (?)...and our neighbor hit three deer last fall. About once a year we see deer on our lawn - usually fall. That's the outlet.

I: What year were you born?

W.G: '21.

I: What about Marge?

W.G: '26.

I: Were you born in Wisconsin?

W.G: Sure. When I gave my birth certificate for social security - I'm not registered any place. This is a nice area to come in in early evening and shut the motor off and fish. I'm going to shut the motor off and drop anchor.

I: This is a pretty area. The outlet is right over there - what area is the marsh?

W.G: I think Gordon calls that a marsh. I don't call that a marsh - it's foliage. Wherever there's a tree it's not a marsh. Where you see no trees. It's quiet right now. Ordinarily there's a hundred birds of all kinds. See that's the opening there. It's grown up from where the cows were in that picture - to the right of the boat. The area that you see over there it's layed out in lots - I think there's about 12 or 14 lots. They're pretty well sold. A lot of them are young people and they have the same idea that we did. They're waiting for their childern to get out of high school and build out here.

I: I wonder - what is the most effective way to teach people about the relationship between land-use and lake ecology?

W.G: Well, they're trying - like what I did with this one couple that bought this lot out here - but you're always going to have the obnoxious kind of guy that says the hell with it, I'm gonna do what I wanna do. And no matter how your approach is - you're not going to get 100%. This young couple - I have to give them credit because they are receptive. All the rules - up to 1,000' from the lake are more stringent than what you have beyond 1,000'. That's by

design - that's the way it's going to be. There's always the guy who says he's going to fertilize his lawn no matter what. Cedar Lake - south of here 18-20 miles. It's pretty well built up. It's been that way. It's near Kiel and not too far from Sheboygan. They have a weed problem. They have a weed harvester. It's about a 20 acre lake - working 40 hours/week all summer - this is how bad the weeds are. They have tried to educate people on this fertilizer, but there's two women who insist on having a million dollar-looking lawn. And no way can they talk them into- this is not good for the lake. It's like talking to a stone. So you're always gonna have those no matter what. They grumble about it and they don't like it, but they have no control over it at least in that area. It's really going to be shocking to the people in the city - eventually they're going to have to treat their (?). It's growing slowly, but it's being publicized. We were in New Orleans on vacation a few years ago and they have had to pump their surface water - their run-off water into a tank. The water table is so high that there is just no way to dig a hole - lay a pipe - and let the water drain some place - there is no place. They pump it into a big holding tank and when the rain disappears - then they let the water run in the ditch so it doesn't do any harm to anyone. That's why all the gravestones are above earth. All their coffins are above earth because they scratch it with a toe - that's a joke of ours - they scratch it with a toe and you get water. They treat their water - and you don't have to treat it like you do a disposal plant, but you have to hold it for 48 hours until it settles - goes to the bottom and drain the top off.. Even that is going to be expensive. That's coming, but it's going to take awhile for people to accept that - that won't come easy - it's going to be expensive.

(starts up motor)

I: Can I take one more picture? I'm almost out of film.

W.G: That's good (laughs)!

I: I'm sure you take a good photo.

W.G: No I don't. I always say I'm not running for sherrif so I don't need the publicity.

I: I can put that on your caption.

W.G: Okay. As you leave you may want to take a picture of Gordon Schmidt's old farm and that would be by the public landing. You go around a curve and it's the first farm on the left. There's none of the family on the farm anymore - they're from Chicago. It's pretty much intact - there isn't any major change.

I: Is Gordon's old farm on JJ?

W.G: Yea. When you leave here now - you go up to the stop sign and turn left and you cross the railroad tracks and then there's a big curve and on the curve is Gordon's farm - on the left side. Make a u-turn there and once you turn around you'll wind up on PP.

(motor back to shore)

I: What's that little bird - the grey and white one?

W.G: They call that a snipe - that's the nick name.

(motor off)

W.G: One of the advantages of being a riparian owner is you can pump water out into your lawn and garden. That's one of the advantages - there aren't too many.

I: That was nice - going out on the lake.

(Wif shows me how he finishes up his testing once he's on shore)

W.G: The grandson that's going to be a junior in high school next year - I'm going to take him out next time....I really appreciated Dick Narf. He was told by Tom Worth that this was his project - and he was the most congenial guy. We were planning this treatment and he would come up on a Sunday afternoon to meet with us. As a result - I wrote Tom Worth that he (Dick Narf) that he was most helpful-most congenial - and he deserved that because he...at the same time our people didn't have any ax to grind - we listened and did what he recommended and it worked out well. We had no ax to grind with the DNR because of people like Dick Narf and Tim Rasmun. The DNR doesn't get too many letters like that one. That project took three years - from '85 to '88. The guy that owns the equipment to inject the alum - he's always at the convention at Steven's Point. He's moved from Pennsylvania to Minnesota with this equipment.

I: Do you go to the lake convention every year?

W.G: Sure. I went to Madison when it was originally started in Madison. You always learn something. We meet the same people. This Eurasian Milfoil was a big cause for concern because of taking over all the good weeds and dumping out the wanted weeds that you got to have. But this year, I don't know why, the milfoil is almost 90% (?). The DNR says, you people poisoned the lake - you used chemicals. We can't afford - I can remember two years ago when the chemical people were at the convention and really promoting chemicals to kill milfoil. They had a price on a concentrate - 5 gallon pail of that - I can't think of the name - it would cost you a fortune for this size of lake - no way. I'm going to call Tim one of these days and see if he has an answer to why. It just disappeared - it may come back in cycles - every year the lake is different - a great share of it is mother nature and the other share is that we human beings try to destroy whatever - we're pretty good at that - we're pretty good at destroying.

I: That's true. Well, I really appreciate you taking all of this time and hooking us up with Gordon and taking me out on the lake.

W.G: It was pretty interesting - for a rookie to take a rookie out there. My friend Doug on Carson's Lake - I took him out as a rookie - I keep telling him that and he goes (makes a grumbling noise).

I: I really appreciate you taking the time.

W.G: Glad to do it - glad to do it. Even if you're Vi and Paul's granddaughter.

I: I bet that's why you did it!

W.G: I'll forgive them for that.

I: Oh yea! I'll let them know.

W.G: I'm sure you will.

I: If I have any gaps in information can I give you a call?

W.G: Sure. We're going to be gone - the ship I was on in WWII is having a reunion. We'll be gone for about a week to ten days.

END TAPE



**Bullhead Lake Buster** — Conservation Dept. Fish Manager Paul Schultz displays a lively legal Bullhead Lake musky taken during a seine net survey of the Manitowoc County lake Friday. The net turned up enough samples of fat bass and muskies to make angler hopes for the coming season soar. (Press-Gazette Photo)

# Bullhead Lake Musky Survey Promising

By DAVE OTTO

COLLINS (PC)—If area fishermen needed any last-minute push to get their angling pulses throbbing for next Saturday's opening, they could have gotten it Friday morning on the banks of Manitowoc County's Bullhead Lake—the small pond with the big fish.

The Conservation Dept. ran its annual spring seine net survey on Bullhead, which has gained an excellent reputation in the last year or two as a backyard producer of Wisconsin's most prized game fish, the musky.

As the long seine net was slowly worked toward shore, an excited crowd of more than 20 natives who braved an icy drizzle watched as several big fish broke water in a futile at-

tempt to escape the enclosing mesh.

By the time the net had been worked into a small pocket, a total of 15 muskies lay imprisoned and waiting for examination by District Fish Manager Paul Schultz of Plymouth. One after another, Schultz corralled the thrashing tigers, measured them, and held them aloft for the highly appreciative audience.

Last spring, Schultz's crew turned up 25 muskies, but only two were the legal size of 30 inches or more. Friday's catch, however, included five legal-sized fish, with the biggest pushing 33 inches, and will be legal size before the summer ends. This gives promise for more keeper catches than last summer when the majority of the muskies hooked had to be returned to

the rich green waters by disappointed anglers when they fell a shade short of the 30-inch mark.

All the muskies turned up were males, and their scarred bellies indicated they had just completed some rigorous spawning activity. No females were taken, and it was estimated that they may have completed spawning and returned to the deeper portions of the lake. The fact that the legal-sized fish turned up were males is encouraging, for the females are usually larger than the males.

No musky fingerlings turned up in the nets, however, and WCD biologists still are awaiting signs of successful reproduction by the big fish in Bullhead.

In addition to the muskies, plenty of evidence of Bullhead's largemouth

16-inch category, and were unbelievably fat and pugnacious. Bass catching on this small pond has proved unpredictable in the past, but when they are on their feed, these bigmouths offer top rate sport.

The nets also told a simple story why Bullhead Lake's fish are not always easy to catch. Hundreds of tiny one to three inch bluegills were turned up, and some of the voracious muskies tore into the ready fodder even while the nets were closing around them. With such an abundance of feed, Bullhead's residents will require skillful coaxing to take a lure.

And an artificial lure it will have to be, for still another season the use of live fish as bait will be restricted on this backyard pond that has been putting many of its big northern cousins to shame.



**REMOVE FISH** — Several thousand persons visited Bullhead Lake near Wells, Sunday, as the Wisconsin Department, aided by members of nearby conservation clubs, picked up an estimated seven tons of fish killed by toxaphane in an effort to reestablish the water as good fishing grounds. First fish to come up were carp and two full loads were hauled away Saturday morning by farmers. Experts estimate about 10 tons of fish will be hauled away and plowed under before the job is completed. (Photos courtesy Wis. Cons. Dept.)



**FISH ARE SKINNED** — It takes as many as five and six fish to cover the palm of biologist Clint Strand's hand, he demonstrates, one of the main reasons why the decision came about to poison the fish population of Bullhead Lake in Manitowish County. The fish had little flesh and many almost paper thin, according to Conservation Warden Herbert VanDerBloom. Only two black flaves been found so far and the others, which came up were mostly under 16 inches long. They will be restocked next spring with panfish, black bass and muskies.



## Fish Galore But No One Eating



**NOT GOOD TO EAT**—There are some who would contradict us about the edibility of carp, but the above trailer load is one of the first to be removed from Bullhead Lake last Saturday as the Conservation department removed all fish preparatory to planting with selected species. First removals represented carp almost exclusively, they apparently being most susceptible to poison applied to the lake.

Late Saturday other species began to succumb. Statistics are re-counted in another column.

Gordon Schmidt, owner of the frontage upon which the commission crew was working, disposed of the fish. Gordon wasn't particularly interested in the proverbial Indian way of fertilizing corn, however. He simply utilized his manure spreader and plowed them under.

## Chemical Is Put Into Lake

**MANITOWOC** — State fishery crews Friday pumped toxaphene into Bullhead Lake, north of Wisconsin, in the first steps of preparing lake for better fishing.

The chemical began taking effect in the evening and a few carp turned up but by Saturday morning the power of the chemical began to show. Boats manned by conservation department men, eight boatloads of volunteers from the Brillion and Reedsville, Wisconsin, Sportsmen's Clubs were hand to begin netting the dead and towing them to shore where crews waited to haul them for disposal.

"I never saw such poor batches of fish," Conservation Warden Herbert VanderBloemen reported. He said they were thin with little meat on them, perch were small and bullheads were also small. About 400-500 pounds of carp were taken off the lake early in the morning, thousands of crappie, hundred or so small perch and fair-sized northern.

More fish are expected to come up during the day, and the removal process should be in full swing throughout Sunday. Sportsmen with boats are invited to help. Hundreds of spectators visited the lake throughout the day Saturday, watching interest in the procedure.

The lake will be stocked with adult black bass next spring before spawning time and fishmen predict fair fishing next year. A very good bass fishing following year and really good fishing the next year. The lake also expected to be planted with regular reproducing type Wisconsin muskies as an experiment.