

INTERVIEW WITH ALEX MORIN

HAY RIVER - FEBRUARY 9 , 1977

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Ray: We're talking about fishing, Alex is a fisherman. We were talking about when fishing started here, commercial fishing, that was 43 or something like that.

Alex: Yes it was something like 43 when McGuiness started here.

Ray: During the War?

Alex: Yeah, that's right.

Ray: What made them start here was it the pressure for fresh water fish or was it just a sort of a commercial enterprise entirely?

Alex: I don't know, the price in Sask. where I come from. the fish companies started opening up highways in North Sask and it seemed to me that it had started all at that time.

Ray: Had you been fishing in Sask?

Alex: Yeah, that's right.

Ray: Where in Sask?

Alex: Buffalo Narrows, Buffalo Lake all those little lakes.

Joanne: What year was it when you first came up here?

Alex: When I first come up with George Carter from Kakista Lake and then Clark Fisheries in Meadow Lake they come Kakista (Testa) Lake in Great Slave Lake.

In 47 we didn't start til after New Years, they started buying fish from North Saskatchewan in 47, the fall, then when we started in Hay River. We never got here between Xmas and New Years and we built camps and things that was in 48 and we started in the spring. WE only fished for 2 months then ban was on.

Ray: The ban on fishing?

Alex: No, the roads, the road ban was on and then we had to quit fishing that was early in March.

Ray: How were you handling the fish in them days in terms of transportation?

Alex: When they first started in Hay River the biggest trucks were 3 ton truck, that was a big truck.

Ray: And then the highway?

Alex: and the highway was 90 mile bush when we first come up. We come up in Grimshaw I come by bombadeer to Hay River.

Ray: From Grimshaw?

Alex: Yes, from Grimshaw and back again.

Ray: That's a long ride in a bombadeer.

Al: Yeah, 2 days and 1 nite.

Ray: Were you pulling a caboose?

Al: No, there was 9 of us in a bombadeer.

Ray: How old were you then?

Al: I don't know what I would be, 16 or 17.

Ray: And you have been here most of the time since?

A : Well, we've been in here most of the time since 52, we came here in 52 and stayed her~~ea~~ and decided to live here.

Ray: Tell us of the fishing companies that were here you said that commercial fishing - the Lakes must have looked good in order for them to come in.

Al: Well it's pretty hard to rely on them some years were good one year and some tim-s not, I remember 1950 starved out one Lake.

Ray: But there were 9 companies, could you name them off?

Al: Mengies, Bill Mengies that Company, Carter Fisheries, Alaska Fisheries and the n Gateway, then Boner, Bert Bomer I don't know what Company but he was buying. Then Slave Lake and then Clark Fisheries, Pocher and Traffia, then McGuiness. I there was 9 Companies.

Ray: Which were bigger Companies?

Al: They were pretty near the same, big outfits at that time was McGuiness I guess.

Ray: What kind of equipment?

Al: Well it was the same equipment, pretty well. When we first started it was just cotton nets, but now it's nylon. Now we got mostly nylon nets.

Joanne: Did you ever make your own nets?

Al: No.

Jo: You never tried making them?

Al: No, the Post was doing that.

Jo: You never mended them?

Al: No, we just buy them cuz it's pretty hard for me, between seasons it takes a month to get ready and when you're finished winter fishing there's a month to get summer equipment ready.

Ray: You were saying before I got you to list the Companies that 1950 was a pretty bad year.

Al: Yeah, there are bad seasons, years, you run into bad years, there's hardly any fish and there is cold weather and the fish don't move around too much.

We're having a rough time the last 3 seasons, the weather has changed, warm weather and the fish run in deeper water. Yeah, last 3 summers it's warm and windy, the summers and you know we never seen this kind of weather before.

Jo: It makes A LOT OF DIFFERENCE DOES it?

Al: Yeah.

Ray: In a good year, what amount of lbs would you get?

Al: Well I had as many as 15 men working for me in the Fishing Companies and on our own Company we bought George Skader out and we called the Syndicate and I had 15 men working for me and we got 150,000 lbs. Yeah.

Ray: What's the limit you're allowed?

Al: There's a limit of 9,000,000 lbs so they cut it to 4,800,000 and they cut it 1,400,00 lbs so we're just fishing 3,400,000 lbs.

Ray: How many Companies are working now/

Al: Just in fresh water but it has dropped.

Jo: You're still on your own though hey?

A1: Yeah, I'm on my own.

Jo: Who else is on their own?

A1: There's 10 outfits there's about 21 big boats, 4 man boats, there's 21 left.

Jo: Don Bowyer has one?

A1: Yeah, but he quit fishing.

Ray: How many would there have been when the Lake was being fished heavily?

A1: There was 35 to 40 big boats, 4 man boats, between 25-40 with the Fish Co.

but when there was 9 Companies they were fishing heavily in the winter time.

Because evrybody can just move across the Lake and start fishing, there's lots of outfits, just small outfits. Like in the summer you got to have a big boat.

Ray: You say the marketing is thru Winnipeg and they buy the fish on wholesale and they distribute it from there.

A1: I don't know I'm just an operator but I don't know that part but I learned to fish in fresh water in the last 2 or 3 yrs. Fresh water was set up they put out all the Companies.out of business. Fresh water was set up in Hay River.

Ray: Is Fresh Water a Company?

A1: Yeah, but it's not a profitable organization, Gov't, when the Fresh Water was set up it was supposed to make better living than before. They put the Fish Companies out of business.

Ray: And the idea was for you to work for them?

A1: The purpose was to put out all the Fish Companies, the Government put them all out of business. so they took over so they could make better living and now we arehaving a worse time and now I know we made more money with the Fish Companies. You're just stuck with Fresh Water, whatever they feel they don't listen to the fishermen, they just do it, which is the problem.

Ray: You got to market thru Fresh Water?

A1: I can't sell my fish across the border like, so I'm stuck with Fresh Water.

Jo: And the other Company gave you a choice which one you wanted to sell it to the Company that would give you more for your fish.

Al: I wasn't stuck like before if one Company didn't treat you right and then you're happy you know.

Jo: It was more of a bidding like.

Ray: In your operating what was the more difficult thing about it, you say the Lake is difficult to read, what do you mean by that?

Al: You know it's pretty hard to explain what is happening on the lake and I would have hoped that the Metis Assoc would go on the Lake and with the fishermen on there and talk to the people and each fisherman know what's happening and fish in the Fresh Water. If you run a film on the Lake you know what takes place. This is what I was trying to get the Metis Assoc to do and then keep people out on the Lake when fishing it's easy to understand that but it's not that easy to make a living you can go out with new equipment and come back empty handed. It happened to me and every fisherman, a storm can wipe you out, all these things happen. on a lake.

Ray: Have you ever lost a boat on the Lake?

Al: Not a boat, but damn near lost my life a couple times and there's lots of guys that lost their lives.

Ray: How did you almost lose your life?

Al: Well, we got into a storm in 1954, there was a big storm and the ice broke up. I pushed my camp up 1000 yards and then they killed my dogs, I had a dog team then, I couldn't save one dog, one dog went and all my gear, nets.

Jo: You mean the sled went thru?

Al: You know the ice, the big east wind and the ice was just rolling and we just took off and then the ice pushed my camp about 1000 yds. We just stepped off in time.

Ray: Where were you?

Al: Hardisty Island

Ray: You left the camp then did you?

Al: Oh yeah, you couldn't stay, you just got out of it.

Ray: And you couldn't get your dogs out in time?

A1: Yeah, the ice got one of my dogs and I couldn't save them, and then there were 2 dogs that were tied up close to the camp, the other 2 dogs were closer.

Ray: Did they try to get away?

A1: Oh they got away, the 2 dogs.

Ray: And the whole camp was moved 1000 ft?

A1: No, 1000 yds and I lost all my nets I had piled up some of my nets by the camp.

Ray: How much warning did you get of this sudden storm?

A1: Well you can't see, when you're out in the middle of the lake with a little camp like that, you don't know what's coming because you can't see what's coming at night. It was stormy that's all you know.

Jo: You can't hear it.

Ray: Did you leave Hardisty Island in a vehicle or on foot?

A1: On foot, we never found our camp, that was 5:00 in the evening when the ice was breaking.

Jo: Was the ice breaking behind you when you were running or what?

A1: Well you see my ice was sitting here and the ice was breaking from the east and we didn't know it til it was right close and we had just enough time to jump out of the camp. The ice was breaking way ahead of you, cracking up and it was just rolling .

Ray: And you made it to Hardisty Island?

A1: Yeah, we made it.

Ray: How many of you?

A1: There was just the 2 of us but there was quite a few outfits out on the Lake.

Jo: How far did you say it was to Hardisty Island.

A1: It was 2 miles.

Ray: Did anybody not make it?

A1: No

but we lost lots of nets.

Jo: Did it come earlier than expected?

A1: It was between Xmas and New Years, there was about 1 ft and a half that the ice was breaking. That time was the east was opening up 2 miles, east side and then it piled up Hardisty Island, open water 2 miles wide. I don't know what year it was 100 mile wind during New Years struck, I spent 4 days on that storm.

Jo: That wasn't in 63 was it?

A1: Yeah something like that. And that time ice was breaking too in New Years, I never slept for 4 days.

Ray: Where were you then?

A1: On the west shore then but you couldn't move, you're just like you're blind, 100 mph wind, you can't face it.

Ray: How many were there then?

A1: Nobody got killed that storm but there was lots of outfits out on the Lake and there was broadcast on CBC, I'm not sure, but they have radios in camp and they were broadcasting and saying the fishermen not to move. But me I was in a boat travelling and I got caught in that.

Ray: So you had to stay in it?

A1: I had to spend 4 days.

Jo: Were they sending Rscue?

A1: No, just broadcasting to the fishermen not to move.

Ray: So you didn't?

A1: Well I didn't know nothing about it but some guys were listening.

Ray: Did you carry any Insurance for your equipment?

A1: I had for my boats but not for my nets, just probably the boats.

Jo: What's the size of your boats?

A1: I have 2, one is 48 footer and the other 40 ft.

Ray: What's it powered with your 48 ft.?

A1: That you can take more load on it.

Ray: What kind of engine you got it?

A1: Diesel, 253..

Ray: Two or one screw?

A1: One.

Ray: And on the other one the same kind of unit?

A1: Yeah, ther's the same motor on them.

Ray: It's a marine conversion?

A1: Yeah, GM.

Ray: Ever have any fire on board?

A1: I never got it but there was quite a few fires on the boats. When they first started there was no Diesels, Glass Motors, they had lots of fires.

Ray: Yeah, they're a bit more treacherous.

A1: Yeah, them motors they were dangerous, Glass, they had quite a few boats that had fires.

Jo: How do they work when you have a whole fpile of fishermen going out do they just go out and find a place and anchor?

A1: There's a receiving station, there's Marine, ther's one at Old Bay, and one at Simpson Islands. Seems to me that most go to Simpson Island and a group to Marine.

Ray: Could you poach someone's fishing area, like someone else could get on your trap line?

A1: Well you're a fisherman and you can go any place you like.

Ray: So you can't reserve an area, like if you took out your nets and I go out and fish where you been fishing and they couldn't say anything about it.

A1: No, if I see you sitting a half mile away I just sit there an fish, there is no rproblem.

Ray: How often do you clean your nets, every day?

A1: You're supposed to clean them everyday but sometimes you get caught in a storm.

Jo: It must get pretty rough sometimes, have you run into any storms in the summer.

A1: Oh yeah, 50 mph or 60mph

Jo: What do you do?

A1: Well, you try to get into a harbour, there's hardly anyharbour. Sometimes you have 5 or 6 hrs on a storm and sometimes you are 2 or 3 miles away from a harbour and you get there fast.

J : Have you ever got lost in a storm?

A : No, but I know when we used to , I got caught in one storm an I spent 24 hrs in that storm before I could get to the harbour, we just couldn't do nothing. So it's rough, it's not too easy when you get caught.

Ray: How many other would you have working with you, 2 or 3 others?

A1: Well you each, like these stew boats, there's 4 man to a boat and 8 men on the m tow boats.

Ray: What kind of a license do you need on the lake fishing?

A1: Well we all got a license non-residence \$10 they learn from us and then residents it's \$5.

Ray: Do they run some kind of test?

A1: No, no tests you just learn.

Jo: So anyone could go and get a license?

A1: Yes, residents.

Ray: Who inspects your boats for sea worthiness, MOT?

A1: No, all those boats there's only 2 boats they're built, last summer they brought 2 boats and they passed DOT Marine the rest they don't pass.

Jo: They didn't pass the safety test?

A1: No.

Ray: Your boats didn't pass?

A1: They don't pass, if they check DOT Marine, I'm sure I'll have to do lots of work on it.

Ray: What kind of work might you have to do on it, more safety feature, better life saving equip, that kind of thing?

Al: Yeah.

Ray: Are you permitted to carry passengers?

Al: Well they're not strict not passengers but guys that are moving on the Lake there might be a few guys on the boat crossing.

Jo: How far would you go out, the Lake is really big, in comparison to the Lake how far would you go?

Al: Fishing from down here we have quite a problem with the men, they get drunk and they don't show up and that's the reason we move to the receiving stations.

Jo: So they gone up a month or two.

Al: A full season you stay on the receiving stations.

Ray: What do you do with the fish, do you fish from the receiving stations into Hay River to shipping.

Al: They're making 2 trips a week, they got that freighter, Broadven, he goes around 2 a week picking up the fish.

Jo: Do they have any cooling systems?

Al: They have ice makers, cooling systems, they pack our fish on the receiving station, we just deliver it to the station if we fish every day.

Jo: What's the farthest you fished from Hay River?

Al: We don't fish too far in the summer time, in the winter we do. There's one out fit at Hardisty, that's about 90 miles away from Hay River, by water it's 70 miles to Hardisty straight across. But no one get you go around the shore.

SIDE TWO

Jo: When you ...

Ray: We're talking about the bombadeer how far they went to fish. Do you think the fisherman get a raw deal from the Gov't?

A1: I don't know if it's a raw deal, but if I had a chance to go to sell my fish elsewhere I would sure as hell do that, I just don't trust them. What's happening now we want the Territorial Gov't to take over, the money can stay in the Province this way we don't know where the money goes and they can tell you all kinds of deals, Freshwater, I don't know where they spend the money. Freshwater knows how much comes out, if it comes out 2,000,000 or 3,000,000 lbs a season how much money and how much are they selling it for. How much comes back to the Province, this is why we want to hold the money in the Territories, that's why we want the Territories to stay and take over.

Jo: Do you know, when you're with Freshwater, do you know the price and what they sell it for or do you know just what you're getting it for?

A1: Most of the time we know what we're getting, they tell us they're selling the price is 90¢ lb in Winnipeg, the next time, I don't know it's pretty hard.

Jo: So you had no way of checking it out you can be BS'd into anything.

A1: We could be BS'd into anything you know, I don't know what they're selling the Government know what they're selling in YK, they know what they're selling.

Jo: You think they would have something like a stock up exchange where they would show something steadily.

Ray: You were talking about the persons the Gov't has been sending up here have been pretty wet behind the ears, what are these fellows supposed to be doing?

A1: You know these guys control everything they are appointed by a Minister or something in Ottawa, they're appointed. I talking about Dr. Falkner, we lost 1,400,000 just like that, just cut the limit. The limit was cut.

Ray: On the basis of the report of the Gov't or a survey of the Lake and how much fish the Lake could stand to have taken from it.

A1: The reason they cut the limit they cut the size of the mass, they cut it to 5 1/4 if they cut it to 5 that would cut the limit to 3,000,000. And I don't know they cut it to 5 1/4 and cut it to 3,400,000 and it was 4,800,000 and we don't

want to lose that limit because I'm sure there isn't enough limit now.

Ray: The next thing, do you run into any conflict with the many sport fishing there is around the Lake?

Al: No, not too much but what is happening, the Fisheries they cut a big area from the fishermen in the East Arm. Like before it was just for tourists, the old McLeod deal was for tourists and then they close that big area again. So if you take a good look on the map how much closed area there is on the Great Slave Lake itself, we're stuck in the middle you know.

Ray: The East Arm is closed?

Al: Most of the East Arm, is good fishing grounds and it's closed for the sport fishing and in that area they know there's hardly any trout there's just whitefish and they give that to the fishermen. And there's no way to fight back they just don't listen, to get that area you know.

Jo: That's what you want is the trout if you can get it?

Al: Well you got to have some trout.

Jo: That's where the money is.

Al: Yeah.

Jo: Do you have any problems with any pollution, is it noticeable yet?

Al: No, not unless at Pine Point, I don't know what is happening in that area. I know there was lots of fish in that area, what is happening with this Lake now too, it's really important for the Gov't to look into, we just explain over and over. Last year 30 yrs the fishermen they are fishing and all they are taking is the whitefish and trout. All the rough fish they have been thrown overboard and then they are spawning over and over. Seems to me that rough fish is taking over in some areas. We notice on the East shore.

Ray: What do you describe as rough fish?

Al: That's suckers, maries, tonabees. You see all you're taking from the Lake is the cream.

Ray: Why don't you take suckers, they're good dog food?

Al: Well you see you don't get enough price for the fish so they just go overboard. So what will happen in the next 30 yrs, the rough fish goes overboard and you're just taking good fish. In some areas, rough fish is taking over, there is no whitefish, they used to be whitefish areas.

Ray: Where for example Alex?

Al: Like Resolution area, that Resolution Bay, they told me that was whitefish ground now it's just full of suckers in that area.

Jo: What are you proposing the Gov't to do?

Al: Well the only way we can change that as long as Freshwater handles that rough fish we get nothing for it, the fishermen. What I say if the Territorial Gov't takes over, they control everything, they know what to do. I think they did find a market already with the Japanese _____. With the rough fish. But you know if the Freshwater takes over first thing you know the rough fish got to go to Winnipeg they gotta go to Vancouver, the freight will eat up everything. And the way they handle the fish they make it more expensive and everything else, the way they handle it so I don't like to see Freshwater handle it at all, I would like to see the Territorial Gov't take over. What is happening right now the 200 mile limit now they're dropping 10% every year. Fishermen, Japanese people are fishing in that area. Now that 200 mile limit they gonna drop and the population is getting bigger every day so they gotta have fish. Now I was in Vancouver myself and I met those Japanese people they were up here 3 wks ago and they met with the Territorial Gov't and they met fishermen now. What I understand the Japanese people they went back to Japan again, they were up here to come and see what is in store here. So I don't know what's really taking place now.

Jo: I imagine there is a market in Japan but also in Canada.

Ray: Canadians are not fish eaters that Japanese are and look at the millions are in Japan and oddly enough most Canadians won't eat suckers.

Al: Japanese people there is no such thing as rough fish, they make something out

of every fish they cat ch.

Ray: There's an awful lot of dog food made out of fish too.

Al: They make fertilizer and make dog f-od no waste. And I know what they want they want 20,000,000 lbs a year where they deal with Territorial Gov't. I know we can't supply that but they can fill in from the Provinces. Right across the Provinces they are having the same problems with the Lakes they are just taking the good fish and the rough fish is taking over. And then some Lakes they were fishied right out, a few yrs back, Salve Lake there's too many mink ranchers(?) and they can use 3 1/2 " nets you know and they raise hell with them Lakes and I know the North Sask the same thing happened where there was mink ranchers and no more mink ranchers on the Lake and they start to come back again on good fish. But they let them too long til they finished the Lakes and it's hard to come back again, takes time. And the same thing they just sell white fish, good fish and again too many rough fish.

Ray: Did or was your father a fishermen?

Al: No.

Ray: How come you got into the fishing business?

Al: Well I was on my own since I was a kid and I worked on wages and then I started on my own in 1949, 50 in Sask when I come here I started on my own.

Ray: Why did you get into the fishing and how come you came north?

Al: Like, North Sask is strictly trapping and fishing and then this part the same thing, trapping and fishing and all my life I'm stuck with trapping a little.

Ray: Well something must have happened to bring you north, what happened?

Al: Well I guess every one of us travels for a better place where you can make a better living.

Ray: Did you hear of a fishing company that was starting up here?

Al: Yeah, I started with Clark Fisheries and Carter Fisheries didn't start with Clark to contest the Lake.

Ray: He came with you right out of Sask did he?

Al: Yeah, they contest the Lake and I was on that trip.

Ray: You were hired right in Sask hey?

Al; Yeah, to contest the Lake and I moved here after that.

Ray: Did you get married here or in Sask?

Al: No, I got married 1950 in Sask.

Ray: We would just like some personal history too Alex.

Al:Well, Hay Riv er was pretty small when I first come just across the river it's no bigger that old village, that was Hay River.

Jo: Did you get any schooling?

Al: No, that's my problem. I was brought up 3 miles out of town in them days and there was just the Missions and they take only so much.

Ray: RC or Anglican?

Al: Roman Catholic.

Ray: What was your mother's maiden name?

Al: My mom died when I was 6 or 7 yrs old. I t was Daillon (silent l)

Jo: What was her first name?

Al: First name Bessie.

Jo: And your father's name?

Al: Dan Morin.

Jo: HOw many children were there in your family?

Al: There was just the two of us,my sister is up here there was 3 of us but my brother died.

?: But your dad would be remarried and there is 2 more, 2 brothers and a sister.

Al: Ther's 2 half sisters and 2 half-brothers.

Jo: How is John related to you?

Al: I don't know cuz I left all the Morins, they are all related in Green Lake in Sask, they all come from Green Lake, Sask.

Ray: Ther's a lot of Morins, I lived for a long time up in Flin Flon and there were Morins in Sandy Bay and The Pas.

Al: Johnny's dad came from Green Lake and my dad was born in Meadow Lake but it's all the same family but I left who's close or how close you know.

Jo: What about the Clarke's the one's that are up here, they're related to the Morin's aren't they?

Al: No, from Meadow Lake? No.

Jo: ?

Ray: Do you speak Cree?

Al: Yah. All these guys from Sask they all talk Cree, in Hay River they talk Cree, like from Fox area and Edward Plant, they alwa ys talk to me.

Jo: Good people.

Al: Like there was lots from here from Sask to fish.

Ray: From Lake Winnipogosis to Lake Winnipeg?

Al: Yeah, that's right, like that they used to come with the Fish Companies and they bring most of them from Manitoba and Clark and Carter brought lots of guys from Sask so quite a few stayed behind.

Jo: When did Ruth an Percy Moncman, it was after you?

AL: First he used to come here off and on, first he didn't really fish and he was a Captain on the boats and repairing boats most of the time.

Ray: Have you done anything besides fishing?

Al: Yeah, I was on the packers to start with I had the summer boats, I just went to fish just a few yrs. I didn't have a boat. And then I used to work on Fish packers and then I was a Captain for 2 summers for George Carter and then 2 summers ago trapped here.

Jo: Were you ever scared when you were out in the Lake, you must have been at some time or another?

Al: It's pretty rough, anybody would be scared on the Lake, it's rough them little

packers you have to sometimes 600 boxes they're loaded right down and you get caught in the storm and it's rough, you get scared.

Jo: would you be better off in a storm situation would it be better to have a full load or a light load?

Al: In a full load, your boat won't jump around but you're safe with a light boat. It's more rough when it's not loaded but when it is then you ride better. But we went thru some awful storms them fish packers they don't stop they run into any storm they just go back and forth you know. When you're on them packers you run into just about any storm there is.

Ray: Ever nearly have a collision in the fog?

Al: When the morning broke you have these ribs you run into when travelling he fell asleep on his way that's on a bombadeer and you just run into him, 4 of his ribs. He was going and the other guy stopped ahead of him and run into him. There were a few smash ups and when they first started they had a few boats that got caught, smaller boats, McGuiness, 2 man boats, you get caught in little boats, that's rough. You're too small they swamp a few, that's quite a while back.

Ray: Did you have very many friends that drowned in the lake, fishing?

Al: Yeah, some go over board some drown in the bombadeers, that go thru the ice.

Jo: Can you name some of them?

Al: ^{had} Broadvent, JB Johnson

Ray: Broadhead, that wasn't too long ago?

Al; I have pictures of him.

Jo: His first name?

Al: Harold Broadhead, and JB Johnson

Ray: That was on a bombadeer.

Al: I'll show you. This is from Marine area.

Ray: Where is the Marine area?

Al: Marine Point, that's west from here about 55 miles from here but I don't know

what year that was.

Jo: Were they from outside of the Territories?

Al: Yeah, and they drifted out about for 2 1/2 wks on the ice, the ice moved out from Marine Point you know they were setting nets and towards the evening they were going to go ashore and they didn't know they were drifting all this time. They had nets, there were 2 guys, I know this one guy and this Red I was talking about

Ray: And you don't know his other name.

Al: Yeah, they were drifting around for 2 1/2 wks and they drifted to Hay River that's where they picked them up.

Ray: Who spotted them?

Al: Mrs. Putrey.

Ray: Did she spot them from the shore?

Al: From here a mile out from the channel.

Ray: She was looking out and just happened to see them.

Al: It just happened that one guy was dropping and the other guy trying to pick him up and a smaller piece of ice, small chunk and they were jumping to a bigger piece.

Ray: They had nets and a tobagan.

Al: They had nothing when they picked them up but that 2 1/2 wks they had some nets on the tobagan but they burned them.

Jo: To keep alive.

Al: they burned the nets and everything they had so someone would spot them.

Ray: That was undoubtedly it was in the spring of the year.

A : No, it was in the fall, during freeze-up they went out too early and they were setting nets and they drifted out.

Ray" November?

Al: December.

Ray: You couldn't pin a rough date down even if it wasn't an exact one?

Jo: That wasn't too long ago was it?

woman: That a was quite awhile ago, about 20 yrs ago.

Al: In the 50's.

Ray: Can you remember how old the children were at that time.

woman: I was just small then or young 20 yrs ago. I think more people would know about Joe Paboish.

Jo: And this man's name was Red and Bullie or something.

Al: Bullie he was white.

Ray: And what about the other fellow, he died didn't he?

Al: Yeah, they come from outside but they had a cabin at Marine Point.

Ray: The old man got to Hay River alive didn'the?

woman: He died in the hospital.

Ray: Here?

Al: Here, yeah. There was a hospital, a nursing station, no hospital.

Ray: That must have been quite an ordeal for 2 1/2 wks like that.

Al: T ey had to get out from Hay River and go out with a boat to pick them up.

Ray: Who picked them up?

Al: The RCMP and from there on I don't know, somebody.

Ray: You think Joe might remember the date?

Al: Joe or Pierre Simpson.

Jo: Pierre Simpson, who is he?

woman: His name is in the phone book.

Jo: Native?

Al: He's native yeah.

woman: I think they were in Fort Chip quite a while ago. Yeah.

SIDE THREE

SIDE THREE - February 10, 1977

Ray: It's half past ten at night and Alex had a long day and we had a long day but we left a lot of things out last night that he wants to straighten some facts concerning Freshwater and Fishing Companies and one or two incidents that he forgot to talk about. Which order do you want to take it in, the incidents?

Alex was saying when he first came up here that there were 4 guys and the other 3 have died.

Alex: That's right, I started fishing when I was 14 yrs old and I went to the Fishing Companies. I like to make one point clear but the Fish Companies that I know up here we all know something I guess we can't blame them. But there is 95% native fishermen and right across Prov there is mostly natives. I know when we first come up here the wages were pretty low and today the difference to today I know the fish companies the guys there work on the Fish Plants and they pay 75 dollars a month.

Ray: When was this?

Alex: That was in '50 or '49, '51. And I know in '52 big wages was \$125 month but I know some fish companies I know one company started guys with \$75 month and that a wasn't too much money.

Ray: Can I ask you a question about that? Let me imagine a situation for a minute you go out and get say 1000lbs of fish and you come back in and you sell it to the Company or you work for the Company. They are paying you \$125 a month to fish for them?

A1: What I meant was the guys in the Packing Plant, just there.

Ray: OK, you bring in 1000 lbs of fish and you sell it to that Company here and they pay you, what would they have paid you in '47 for whitefish say?

A1: Well when we started up here, some years it was 10¢ lb

Ray: So you got \$100. How much would they sell it for?

A1: Well that's the secret on the Companies they get away with that, I know some Companies, I don't which way to put it but there was a rip-off for the fishermen and if they could have it they would pay you less.

Ray: Did these fish companies make a lot of money out of you guys?

A1: Oh yeah, the Fish Companies they weren't happy when they don't put \$100,000 in the bank in each season, profit.

Ray: So, we're staying with this Freshwater business, and the only reason I'm saying it is I want to be clear that I understand it. So for a period of time when you came up here there were 8 or 9 Companies operating and there were fishermen bringing in fish selling to these different Companies and these Companies were employing people in packing and preparing the fish for transportation outside. Freshwater is a Gov't operation that was designed to protect the fishermen and the Company employee from being draft to the Fish Companies. So the idea from Freshwater is you would get a good price that was fair for your fish and there wouldn't be a huge mark up for this Company merchant.

A1: Yeah what was happening with the Fish Companies the people from the States they gave so much money to the Fish Companies to start up.

Ray: The Jewish people from the States backed the Fishing Companies.

A1: The Fishing Companies made the investment and them days they were pushing for more fish, every second day how many car loads of fish was leaving from Hay River. Each Company they were coming in every second day and the fish was on the road steady to the States market, they were pushing. What I mean with after the Freshwater took over, they put all the companies out of business, I don't know how many companies there were I know in the Territories there were 4 companies that were left, they put them all out of business but for Provinces I don't know how many they put out of business. But in the business there was lots of people mixed up in the Fishing business.

Ray: They were put out of business because Freshwater forced the price of the

immediately sort of line fish up.

Alex: I think the Gov't when they first took over that the people were taken for a ride with the Fish Companies, they were getting so little for their fish and sold for so much from outside and they were making a huge profit. And Freshwater put Fish Companies out of business and set up a non-profitable organization and what was happening I understand that I wasn't supposed to run around I was supposed to make a better living from Freshwater but the first 2 yrs I didn't understand what they were supposed to do but what was happening they got the Gov't gave them too much power and one person can do lots of damage. So, if he doesn't like a guy a fisherman than you're out of business.

Ray: How would he put he you out of business?

A1: How would Freshwater get at you? Well the Manager was in charge, just the one person, if they don't like me then I don't get nothing from Freshwater so I can't keep on fishing cuz there's no help from there.

Ray: What help do they give you if they like you?

A1: Well you can get anything you like, nets, all your supplies.

Ray; How much do you pay for those supplies?

A1: It's pretty high from inflation.

Ray: But it's not as high if you bought from market from outside?

A1: No, I know it's quite a bit less outside.

Ray: Why you buy your supplies from Freshwater and not from elsewhere?

A1: Well they don't get enough money from their fish so to equipt one boat it's 5,000 dollars for the nets, there's 100 nets to a boat and today it's \$5,000.00 and you get very little for \$5,000.00 that's nets you know. You can get a net from \$40 - \$100 for one net with lead line, so nets they're pretty high.

Ray: And you can lose a whole bunch of them in one storm?

A1: Yeah, and you have to start from scratch again if you can get stuff from Freshwater.

Ray: If they come thru and supply you?

Al: Yeah.

Ray: Recapitulation of Freshwater

Al: That's right you know what's happening today, the Fish Companies from before they used to work 10-14 or 15 hrs from morning to bed time and today we're facing the problem of working 8 hrs a day and we had quite a problem of laying the fish plan especially on the week ends they work so many hours a week. That's on a fish plant. And then with the Fish Companies there was never any lying around and now they quit working on Friday and don't work until Monday morning, that's the problem. And as we understood we were promised a Receiving Station at Channel and we got nothing. You know you got to haul the fish back and forth, that's for summer fishing but for winterfishing you can drive up there but it's still that extra drive, all extra cost, everything, it makes it hard for the fishermen.

Ray: Now I am going to deflect Alex to his early days and he's going to tell me about his or how he came here with 3 others and he's the only one left.

Al: Yep that's right, 3 of my friends they died.

Ray: Up here?

Al: Not up here one of them drowned and one got shot and one got sick.

Ray: Where did the one drown?

Al: All from A La Crosse in Sask.

Ray: Was the shooting an accident?

Al: Yeah, accidental.

Ray: Hunting?

Al: He was working on a building, painting, and a kid was fooling around with a 22 and shot him, it was an accident.

Ray: And the other one took sick?

Al: Yeah.

Ray: None of them were very old were they?

A1: Two of them were my age would be 46 by now and one guy was maybe 55 or something. There was two brothers one of Milly Roy's and George Roy and Edward Young.

Ray: What else did you think of last night?

A1: There were so many accidents on this lake and I know I'm going to miss out on some. Like there were some guys there with big outfits that drowned and I forgot to tell you. There was a man from Manitoba and put 10 seasons and had all his equipment on his boat, Gary Johnson, 10 yrs work he lost everything in less than 2 hrs, his boat caught on fire. That was at Marine Point, it was a mile or two miles out from the Marine.

Ray: What was it a gasoline blow?

A1: His motor caught on fire, a gas motor, his tank blew up and couldn't put the fire out. Then I would like to mention 2 more guys, great friends of mine, Hally Einerson and Ronny Einerson, there was 2 cousins, those 2 boys they were big outfits and one guy dropped overboard and couldn't find him and the other guy he was travelling all alone in the skiff and something happened he might have hit a log or something and never did find the body.

Ray: Was it on the Lake?

A1: It was between here and MacKenzie, spring fishing, ice was break up, right after ice break-up, he was coming back from the MacKenzie and he must have hit a lot and swamped his boat and they never did find him.

Ray: They must have found the boat?

A1: Yeah, and there was another 3 boys from Manitoba, they got into YK and I guess they got drunk in YK, and they came up from YK to the station and they found in YK Bay the boat was drifting and found 1/2 gallon of wine on the deck and the guys must have been fighting (3 of them) and went overboard and never did find them.

Ray: When was that roughly?

A1: That was before Freshwater took over so I can't remember.

Ray: When did Freshwater take over?

A1: In 69

Ray: Maybe 67 then?

A1: Maybe or just before.

Ray: What were these guys doing heading out from YK across the Lake.

A1: They were heading out to the camp and they got drunk and pulled out like that drunk.

Ray: What were their names, do you remember?

A1: They were from Manitoba you just meet these guys for awhile.

Ray: Were they white?

A1: Mostly natives. And then one guy, where I got mixed up, telling you some of these stories they happen in the summer and winter and you can pick them up in the tape, summers and winters. So I'm going to miss out lots of those accidents.

Ray: It's the getting the feel of the Lake.

A1: It's no place to fool around with liquor on the lake, you can't win. There's so many accidents with liquor and some guys pull out of here drunk and go over-board or something.

Back again that was winter fishing in December or something like that, a guy from here had a 4 man boat (Hay River) and with a bombadeer. They were fishing at Marine area and then in the morning it's dark and the ice was moving out and they were on their way out to the nets and they were drifting tail wind it was drifting, new ice, it looks the same, they ran into thin ice. By the time the boat went down they were gone about 50 to 100 yds, breaking ice and trying to climb. They went down and then the outfit owner, Orvil from Hay River, I don't remember the last name, anyway he's been here for quite awhile. He just took it cool and just take his clothes right off and he knew he was going to have to swim. And he started swimming this distance back and when he bailed out the boat was going down then and he just started swimming so it's all broken ice behind so he swam back on the strait, he hollered to his partners, his hired man. They got all excited

one guy followed there was 2 guys drowning they fought their way to the ice and til played out they kept trying but the ice was too thin. So they lost two men and never did find them.

Ray: The one that followed him swimming where the ice

Al: They were breaking tthat same line, they went back on their track and got back to the safe ice. The other guys went ahead and couldn't get on the ice it was too thin. They just went down.

Ray: How long would this have happened?

Al: Quite a few yrs back, when the fishing companies were here but there have been quite a few fishermen that lost their life in this Lake. And one Co. Mengers in the summer they drag their boat and ran into a storm a boat was broken down and they were on a tow line and there were 2 guys on the boat and they told them, these guys they put behind a freighter and ran into a storm and swamped that boat. They clost those two guys too.

Ray: They were being towed?

Al: Yeah, and that freighter had a lot of power and they just forced them on the storm til they swamped them about 40 miles from here, they never did find the 2 guys but the freighter kept going they didn't know that they were taking in water. Mengies outfit.

Ray: Local boys?

Al: No, outsiders.

Ray: There must have or be sometimes when you wish you weren't a fisherman.

Al: Yeah, there's no end to fighting.

RAy: Are you right now able to make a good living from fishing?

Al: No,

Ray: What stopping you?

jAl: The Gov't gives too much power to the manager up here can do too much damage to someone if he doesn't like him and put him out of business. And

I don't think they were listening that close to the fishermen and barking steady we were because it wasn't right. About 2 yrs ago they started listening and I'm sure they found quite a few things wrong with Freshwater.

Ray: What would you change if you could?

A1: What I would like to see from my own part is the Territorial Gov't take over from the Federal. They run the show.

Ray: Then what would you want the Territorial Government to do?

A1: Territorial Government they would have to work with the fishermen and it doesn't take long to come from YK to here. If anything goes wrong on the plant you can saddle just in a short time. You know, I'm not a business man and I don't run Freshwater but I know our fish price is too low and the selling price is pretty high outside.

Ray: You think there is a big gap from what you're getting and the price it's sold for?

A1: Yeah. It's too big.

Ray: Would you like to see the cash limits altered?

A1: No, I wouldn't like to see that. That's the part that is alright.

Ray: But you would like to see rough fish caught?

A1: I would like to see one other thing the Territorial Gov't is go after the rough fish they have to have this lake right.

Ray: Have you any idea what tonage of rough fish they could take out of this lake at all?

A1: With the Research with the Fisheries if we take 2,000,000 lbs of fish off this Lake I think we would dump just about the same amount, overboard you know with research. The Fisheries would tell you that.

Ray: So you think you should be getting 2,000,000 lbs of fish in a year?

A1: Well you would go more than that, we don't go after rough fish we try to run away from rough fish. Stay away from rough fish. You know you sit back and you

figure how much fish you throw overboard, that's lots of money if ;you get 10¢ 1b for that.

Ray: Is anything being done about this, you said the Japanese were up here looking it over, is there a possiblity of marketing rough fish or harvesting?

Al: I was in Vancouver they got a market, because they got a few samples of the fish in the Great Slave Lake. I think they ship it to Japan and look at that fish. It's good fish, it's not rough fish to them.

RAY: Why is there no market for that in Canada?

Al: I don't know, Freshwater is supposed to find a market for all species of fish. I don't know if they tried with Japanese, I don't know what exactly they're doing.

SIDE FOUR

Ray: Introduction. And we were taling about Gov't agency, Freshwater and the attempt to market all species of fish. Seems to me that they're doing a poor marketing job if they can't do it.

Al: Yeah. I know the Territorial Gov't sent one, PC Jones came here from Vancouver and it seems to me in a short time they can find a market that Freshwater couldn't do with the Japanese people.

Ray: See, you've been fishing here for the last 30 yrs?

Al: 25yrs.

Ray: In 25 yrs, how many million fish lbs of good fish have been taken out of this Lake?

Al: Well you have to go through the Fisheries I guess they got....

Ray: In all that time you have been taking good fish out of the lake and rough fish have been mulitplying?

al: That's right yeah. You put it a simpler way we're just taking the cream out of this lake, and with the rough fish just throwing it out of the lake.

Ray: I've just asked Alex in his opinion when the Company's were here if the Lake overfished?

Al: No, I don't think so, in each area there is a limit set and I don't, I know there was about 5 or 6 different areas in this Lake. There was Area 1 West, Area 1 East, there's different areas, Area 2, Area 3 and 4 and 5 and 6. So there's a limit set in each area. If you take it a month or 4 months you're not supposed to herd that area if you take it 10 days and then that area if froze for the season.

Ray: Say that area if closed for the season, 4,000,000lbs allowed out of that area. Who's to know that you don't go back there and put your nets back in?

Al: Well, that's poaching and if you're caught you're charged for it. They watch.

Ray: Was there poaching?

Al: I wouldn't say that there wasn't poaching a few sneak in.

Ray: How was it policed?

Al: They got patrol boats, they got radar on their boats, they got some fast boats.

Ray: Was anyone charged for poaching?

Al: I don't know but I know there was charges for undersized nets, you know.

Ray: There were quite a few charges for that. Quite a few Company's did that.

Al: When you buy nets, they're marked 5 1/2 and you use them for one season and then there is a machine that can make a perfect net, 5 1/2 and when you change the parts there is a different size of meshes. And one mesh could be 5 1/4, nets were to be 5 1/2 and if it's too many under they just take your nets, and you're charged for it.

Jo: Are your nets checked regularly?

Al: Yeah, everytime they come around the Fisheries check your nets.

Ray: They check you in the winter too?

Al: That's right yeah.

Ray: How often?

Al: Well, you know they cover a big area and they travel and every chance they have to come out to my outfit they check my nets.

Jo: Were you ever charged?

Al: I was charged quite a few times, but they cost me money and because I had to get a lawyer to fight back and all these stuff. But I'm always a loser because Fisheries they're Gov't people they got nothing to lose. When they take my nets they can hold them for a year. some charges they held my nets a for a yr, they can hold your nets as long as they want. You know you're always the loser, you're the fishermen, you're the loser all the way.

Ray: So while they're holding your nets, can you continue to fish?

Al: If you got other nets, but if they take 10 nets out of you, it's a big loss out for the fishermen.

Ray: and you can't buy more?

Al: Well you can buy but that costs money, that's where you're losing money they can hold your nets for a year, they're not losing money, you're losing the money, you have to buy 10 more nets. And everytime you buy it costs money.

Ray: Were you found guilty or not guilty?

Al: Not guilty.

Ray: and yet that cost you money?

AL: Yeah.

Ray: Did they reimburse you?

Al: No.

Ray: Gee, that's not just.

Al: See what's happening this fall, they cut our limit and they got 1,400,000lbs and then they cut down our nets size to 5 1/4, we were using all the other time 5 1/2 when I was fishing. But you know nylon it's smaller, it goes smaller, it may be loss in the winter. Nylon shrinks.

Ray: What else does it do, sound effects it some way, because cotton shrinks.

A1: Now what is happening now with the Fisheries, we lost 1,400,000lbs. Now we got now 3,400,000 and we used to 4,800,000.

Ray: Tell me something about this limit? Is it a gross catch from the Lake or what each fisherman is allowed to take out?

A1: No, the limit in each area has so much limit, Area 1 East is 500,000.

Ray: And that's a gross amount that say 10 fishermen is from there?

A1: No, they have so many areas in the lake, with Fisheries, Area 2, 1 you know, 3 and 4 and each area has so much limit. If you take it out limit this summer season, if you take it one month you have to move to the next area.

Ray: What I'm trying to say with Area 1, you can take out say 1,000,000 out of that area, supposing 4 fishermen there, they can only take a total of 1,000,000lbs with the 4 of them or can you each take 1,000,000lbs?

A1: Well, area 1 East, it's 500,000 lbs for the whole works of us.

Ray: How do they keep track of that, when you come in your catch is weighed and when the next guy comes in his catch is weighed.

A1: They pick up the waste slips in the fish plant, they weigh your fish, weigh your fish if you come in with a ton of fish they pick up the slips. They keep track.

Ray: You state where these come from?

A1: Ya, it's marked on which area you fish in.

Jo: Is it their obligation to tell you when your limit is up?

A1: Yeah.

Jo: Like if they don't tell you and then you're out there fishing they can't fine you. Right?

A1: No, but they usually tell you about a wk ahead of time when to pull out from that area, that the limit is out. They allow time for that, 2 or 3 days to pull out from that area so you can move out and to another area.

Ray: Have you seen a trend in the kind of catches you are getting does it vary from one year to the next? For example, you said you know one area where there

used to be white fish and now is rough fish.

Al: Yeah, we studied these lakes, the lake the same time when we fish where it's good. You know one year you catching good, and you hit them same areas back again and from here on the East shore to Resolution, there's lots of rough fish that's taking that area over. And it used to be whitefish near Resolution. Now rough fish is taking over. Because I have fish finder on my boat and in some places it's just a dark cloud of rough fish. And we stay away from the rough fish, we're way out and try to get good fish but we still run into heavy on the rough fish.

Ray: How deep do you set your nets in the summer time?

Al: Most of the time you're setting around 50ft or 60 ft of water and sometimes you have to go to 100 ft of water it all depends which way the fish is moving. Like for the last 3 seasons, the summers were warm and the water is changing the Lake too and a few yrs back you couldn't stand this lake an hour if you're lucky and you go overboard. But now same as outside the water is real warm it makes a difference to the fish too you see. They move to deeper and colder water. Some areas we used to catch 60 ft of water and the last few summers we had to move to 80 ft of water to catch fish. You know that same fish they caught it at 60 ft of water. They move to deeper water.

Jo: Do you find that rough fish are closer to the surface than the whitefish?

Al: Yeah, and rough fish they travel like tolabies, they travel in heavy schools. And then they're half-way and you can tell rough fish, rough fish mostly travel half way you know. Whitefish is on the bottom.

ay: Some of your rough fish are bottom feeders though aren't they?

Al: Oh yeah, sometimes they moved up and down and that's when you hit when you hit the rough fish when they're on the bottom. During a storm they move to the bottom I think and you hit fish.

Ray: So there is an advantage for stormy weather if you don't lose your nets.

Al: When you hit rough fish you really hit them, cuz they're swimming all in

schools. And your nets are in the bottom, in a storm they go down and you hit them you really hit em.

Ray: Really a nuisance when you drag up your nets and find them full of rough fish?

A1: Yeah, lots of work.

Ray: Do you toss the jackfish back too?

A1: No, we sell jack fish and we can sell ponies, and whitefish, trout, pickerel. Ther's only 3 types of fish we throw away, suckers, marias, and tolabies. What do they call tolabies down inthe coast.

Ray: What is the fish that is called incawnu?

A1: I don't know.

Ray: It's mentioned by Sir John Franklin and many travellers and explorers and Hudson Bay men. The incawnu means, unknown, but it's a toothless fish. They call it he river of the toot hless fish, that was what YK River was called. You don't know what that fish is hey?

A1: No. Probably just a different name.

Ray: Are there any different fish than what you were catching in Manitoba or Sask?

A1: No, it's pretty well the same fish in Manitoba and Sask and Alta.

Ray: I wasasking you about parasites, are the fish reasonably clean here?

A1: They did lots of survey work they were counting fish in this lake. Some areas they find fish in the East Arm, say, but on the main lake it's good fish. But some areas on the main lake it's warm too.

Ray: What kind of fish get the most parasites?

A1: Most of the time it's caught in the whitefish, so I don't know what the other type of fish they caught but it's whitefish.

Ray: Isn't it the hackfish that carry that parasite?

A1: I m talking about tolabies, that's the most fish with parasites.

Ray: That's rough fish.

A1: That's rough fish right.

Ray: I don't know those fish at all.

Al: Yeah, there's lots of parasite on tolabies.

Ray: Alex was talking about the number of men that were here.

Al: They ended up with 4 Companies were here, Mengies, Alaska, Carter Fisheries, Hoocher and Trafiak. They ended up buying the other Companies out. Alaska Fisheries bought Gateway's out. Hoocher's and Trafiak, they got Clark Fisheries stuff, they got together and there were 4 Companies. But those 4 Companies worked as a team. One guy there was a team to beat the fishermen, when they left this country they were stuffed like turkeys with money.

Ray: What year did they leave?

Al: 69 or 68 they were put out of business. In 69 Freshwater took over. Bill Mengies Outfit, he was a millionaire from fisheries, Clark Fisheries was a millionaire, Wade Fisheries was a millionaire. and Carter Fisheries if it wasn't a millionaire it was pretty close, Hoocher & Trafiak, Alaska Fisheries. You know there were people that were beat, there was nobody to go to there was no lawyer. They had no contracts with fishermen, they done everything they could with the fishermen. They controlled the money and there were some guys left in the strait Hay River, sometimes there was over 100 people here from outside, 100 men here. They were left behind, no money to go home. You know, the fishermen lived there and helped them out and then they start summer season again. But you know, there was lots of guys, they were beat in everything, I know I see myself. There was nothing in writing, they just promised big money to these guys, they end up with no money in the spring. The fish companies promised everything to the fishermen in the port as long as they get you out in the Lake. But they don't want to see you four months. You see, the fishermen stay 4 months out on the lake they got no statements, they hold them back here maybe 2 months a statement. They don't know how they were standing, they don't know what is happening with their fish. When they get their statement, you keep what you sent in. You know everytime you send in fish you miss some weighed. And then you come back in the spring what chance you got to tell it.

You fight back with the Fish companies and they kick you out.

Jo: and you can't keep after the statements so you...

Al: It's too late when you get your statements too, sometimes the fishermen don't get their statements til after season, that's 4 month season. And these things happen, I see it, I lived here long enough to see all kinds of things happening to the fishermen. I see every move the Fish Company was making, they weren't losing money the poor fishermen were suffering.

Ray: You were going to show me later Alex. Yeah.

END