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Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:00:10] Well, yes. Yes. That's in by only opportunities would be through my dad and my family started fishing before I I can remember. I remember my first salmon, but only a brief glimpse. I just remember the moment when I hook the fish and I called my dad. I can I can tell you exactly where he was and where I was. But that's all I remember. I was five.

James Thull [00:00:38] Where were you?

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:00:39] The Big Laxa in Aðaldal. Spinning. And this is actually trickier than fly fishing for kids. That there is a lot of bottom. I prob- probably lost a couple of spoons before I actually caught that fish.

James Thull [00:00:59] I think that's fair. That's certainly happens. And it is this on the river where your family has lease.

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:01:08] Yeah. My, my, my. That was part of the syndicate, at lease the river. And my mom's family had a little cabin on the river. And which in fact, is how my dad got started fishing there, which through my my mom's family and and that little little cabin is is where I did all my my initial fishing, trout fishing and salmon. And there's the there's there's a there's a photograph of my dad on my my first ever fishing trip when I was 10 months old. And he held me in his arms while he caught and landed a a sixteen pound salmon and theres this photograph of me.

James Thull [00:02:03] (unintelligible). So is that how your dad and mom met, is through the connection to the river?

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:02:11] No, no. That was more conventional.

James Thull [00:02:14] OK.

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:02:15] But yeah, I know. But that was very early on in their relationship. They started going there and my mom's from a big family and they they they had to share all the fishing.

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:02:33] Well, about the work. Yeah, the um, but the the NASF, the NASF was was founded in order to counter the high seas fisheries for salmon.

James Thull [00:02:47] And that's the North Atlantic Salmon Fund.

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:02:48] North Atlantic Salmon Fund yeah. And because the feeding grounds, the high seas feeding grounds for for salmon weren't discovered till quite late in the in the late 60s or before then there were complete mystery. Salmon just went out to sea and disappeared. And but then they they all come together, all all the different strains of salmon feed in the same fish feeding grounds. So so the boats were fishing in the mixed where the stocks went in the mixed-up fishery. So and then not only were they being harvested for food, which is up, but it's a waste of resource. It's a much, much more valuable resource to catch on rod. And but also, you can't control which stocks you catch and and the salmon. Each river has their own native genetic strain. And within rivers, there's different strains. And some of them are very, very small, very small populations. So a boat could potentially wipe out a whole genetic strain in a day without knowing. This is a.

This is up in the North Atlantic Salmon Fund was founded in order to buy up these rights. And on a commercial principle, rather than to fight against people's right to harvest, they just use the funds through the angling community to do to fairly compensate. And this this was see, this was this was the reason why it didn't meet any opposition and any real opposition.

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:04:59] And everybody walked away happy. Yeah.

James Thull [00:05:01] And it was quite successful.

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:05:03] Yeah. And that that's all the accolades. It's about that if you make deals where everybody is happy, then that's a good deal.

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:05:14] Oh, it's it's completely instinctive. And like I said before, I could even can even remember I was so young that I instinctively just craved fishing and hunting, just chasing animals, just like some breeds of dog. I just instinctively you can that's the first thing they'll do. They'll go chase after things. And that's just what I wanted to do my dad didn't shoot. And if he had been a hunter rather than a fisherman, I would have been a hunter. And. And and you even back then. I was. I looked at birds and I wanted to catch them. But fishing was our family. And that's what I went and. Yes. And of course, it's a mixture of locals and and the Fljotaa River where I have the full lease is has a very rich, very rich char fishery with a small population of salmon and the char that this is. And of course in the norths the season's very short, very cold springs and winter comes early. So the tail end of the season is usually fished by by by locals who can just go for a day or two while the prime weeks are mainly traveling anglers. Well, we have a little self-service blotch. I can I can organize service, food service or. And of course, guide tip: you want at least somebody's around to who knows what they're doing. Especially if you're traveling from afar and you don't want to spend your first couple of days learning the river, then. Then you have to leave. And yeah, I've I have access to proper experts, local guys who are excellent, excellent guides as well. I've I used to guide a lot myself. I've just I just it. It's too hard for me. I just want to go fishing all the time. And it's hard for me to just to stand there and see somebody else screw it up. And so I do that. I take on the occasional guiding job, but not that much. Oh, absolutely. And then guiding was was sort of them. I was both basically fishing through others. You know, the angler was basically my handicap. And and yeah. And of course, almost almost all of our clients, I mean, they kept them. They're very appreciative. And and and I have no complaints about that. And it is fun to to help somebody who really appreciates it. To catch fish and maybe show off your expertise a little bit.

James Thull [00:08:47] That's always fun.

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:08:56] Well, I mean, there's less fish about that that says a lot fewer fish and. But the biggest change, I'd say, because we are even even even, you know, in my lifetime, the first 20 years of my fishing career, nobody did any catch and release. And it's a system mentality. We are we are a hunted banting nation. And that's our main income. So it's been from fisheries. And and this is what we did and cut into this. I was I was invited to fishing where I was. I I was told that I had to put everything back or maybe just the females. And there was never, never an issue for me. I killed fish because that's just what was done. And even salmon as food has never been that interesting for me. Char is, delicious. But in recent years, there's been a huge, huge change in the mentality and the approach. And certainly with few fish about you really have to appreciate more each one. When I started fishing, we could still find salmon fishing licenses where

you could catch fish and pay fully for your license. And certainly in my dad's early days, that's just what they did. A lot of anglers fished for free by selling their catch. That that's how valuable the the salmon was and how cheap the licenses were. And now with the increased prices to you, you really need to appreciate the actual individual fish. And then then that sport of catching them more. So that's the The ground was set for appreciating catch and release. And that is that is a huge change that I've I've seen. Oh, I will. I would I would always want to take my salmon fishing as far as it can go. I really need to fish the Kola Peninsula in Russia. Big rivers and big fish because Icelandic salmon are relatively small. Of course, the Alta River in Norway, but it's so very hard to get invited all that. But that's that's your best chance for a really huge salmon 50 pounder. That would be there. So those two places for salmon. But then I would want to try something that's just completely different. And, you know, all sorts of saltwater fishing and.

James Thull [00:12:12] Anything in particular intrigue you. GT or Bonefish or?

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:12:18] Bonefish are very similar to Icelandic salmon. So I mean, the fish itself, not the fishing. But like a typical small grilles. So no, I know I would want to get go for larger species. G.T. for sure. And Tarpon and I have I have experience tarpon fishing once and I loved the hunt off of the fishing. Yes. Yes. And with with really, really skilled guides who know the area. And and this was in the Florida Keys. And it was it was it was just it's just fun to see a really good guide doing his job properly. And they know exactly where to go and and and and how to spot the fish and and. Yeah, it's it's it's it's the it's the hunt for those because you're fishing you're you're hunting individuals rather than casting to schools of fish. Well, certainly I. I'd hunt for food. I've never been interested in trophy hunting. So, no, it's right. I don't think there's a species that I'm particularly keen on. I love hunting in Iceland. I love hunting the reindeer. But mainly I like shooting tarmigan in the winter. So. Bird shooting? No, it's it's not.

James Thull [00:14:00] You mentioned Greenland. Maybe.

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:14:03] Greenland would be would be an excellent choice to go for a combination of shooting and fishing, reindeer or musk ox combined with char fishing. That'll be fun.

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:14:21] I have, yes.

James Thull [00:14:22] How is it.

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:14:23] It's it's very coarse meat. I I haven't I haven't had bear. But from what I gather, it's sounds like barely the texture, strong flavor of dark meat. Yeah, of course. I mean, that's. I mean, I mean, we're killing off species like there's no tomorrow. The human race. And and globally, it is a big concern. But if we just look at my own environment with it, with the Icelandic salmon, I'm gonna have to talk about the the threat of the risk of the open pen fish farms, salmon farms. And this they're just big plans of massive increase in that in Iceland, even though we know for a fact from. From the neighboring and from Norway in particular, and then in the UK and Ireland that it will damage wild stocks for sure for for different reasons. You have the polluting that they pollute. They change the ecosystems in the fjords. And and and and destroy crustaceans and such. And. They they are breeding grounds for for sea lice, the parasite that destroy salmon, salmon, returning salmon, adult salmon have to swim through these these sea lice farms. That is not a big problem because they will come. They will end to the rivers again. Most of them will successfully do that, swim through this. And even though they are

covered with lice, they'll die off in the fresh water. But the smolts going out to sea. They also have to swim through the same. And if you cover a smolt with sea lice, it's done. And this is a huge, huge concern. And of course, then there's the genetic contamination. There's always I mean, there's a part of the the the business plans for these farms is that there will be escapes. That's just an accepted thing. Some escapes. And and these can do damage even if they're just a few individuals. But, of course, a huge contamination when there is a proper accident, a big accident and and a lot of salmon because these happen as well.

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:17:19] And they can each single pen can hold as many salmon as the whole wild stock in Iceland. So up a relatively small accident can completely overwhelm stock in a river and just do irreparable damage because once genetic strain is gone, it's never coming back.

James Thull [00:17:47] Yeah, no, I think that's the big the big concern is that something's gone.

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:17:53] And it's gone. That it's so frustrating that we have we have global issues. We have climate change and its. Very hard to do anything about that. And what what what are we going to do about these global issues? But the frustrating thing is that this the salmon farming issue here, that is a local issue. And we can choose we can choose to eliminate that with a single political decision gone. Oh, yes. I mean, if if this is certainly in terms of pens, no, she lives, of course, and any accidents will never end up where it will ever affect any wild stocks, They. Affect the business. But that's where the damage should be.

James Thull [00:18:45] Sure.

Vivvi Vigfus Orrason [00:18:46] And and yeah, it's the operation. The initial cost of a land based farm is far, far greater than the the the old fashioned ocean patterns. But the running cost is just different because you don't have that big cost issues in fish farming is tackling sea lice is talking diseases. It's feed you get you get one hundred percent use usage of the off the feed. There's no spillage. And and the waste becomes a product. The waste doesn't just go away into the sea and disappear. The waste is used. It can be used for fuel, for example, and fertilizers. So. These these these controlled systems are the only truly madam. Of course, then greenhouse gases and such. This can be. These are these are global things. You can you can you can you can you can have carbon emissions here and you can counter act it over there. Of course, it's it's the same atmosphere. So I know that you've heard the same thing. Can you just said so many where to where to begin? I guess I suppose I should take because that's an important part for me. Talked about how catch and release was never a big deal for me. If that's what they wanted me to do, then that's what I did. But we still was killed. I mean, even went fishing with the great conservationist, my dad. That's what we did. And fishing on my favorite river, the Selo that was up there was a limit spectrum's you can kill like 12 summit a day. And we had some pretty good fishing that that year. And and we were easily catching our limit a day. I was sharing a rock with my dad. So one day we finished our quota very early and my dad said. Right. That's it. We're going. Oh, really? Are you are you, Mad? You go home. Leave me here and I'll just put on a little hook. And I fish the way down to the lodge releasing my fish. So I caught two fish top of the beat. Third fish, big one took me. Took me. Took me 40 minutes to the Land him on my own. It was he was he was kind of a tricky spot. And and once I landed, that fish was wasn't huge. It was about 18, 19 pounds. And the fish were so exhausted that I had to spend a lot of time to to revive them. And. And so when I finally let

go, I was knee deep water and let go. The fish didn't realize it was it was it was free just sink to the bottom at my feet and just sat there and I just stood there for like ten minutes just staring at it. And it was just completely mesmerized. That was such that fish free sitting at my feet. And until like not just a little bit. And off it went. And that was the crucial moment. And since then, I wanted to do catch and release only. And that's that's way before anyone else that I know of that that includes my dad. Mm hmm. So so but that was just it was a very, very memorable moment that a crucial part of my fishing career.