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Company Affiliations: Port Arthur Shipbuilding Company Ltd. (Port Arthur Shipyards), United Steelworkers Union (USW)

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Summary: The third interview with retired shipbuilder and former president of the local United Steelworkers Union Tom Chauvin. Chauvin describes the step-by-step process of replacing rivets on older ships and the gradual change from fully riveted to fully welded vessels. He also details ship inspections and issues that arose when speed of repairs grew in importance. Other topics discussed include operations in the shipyard foundry, the management structure of the shipyard, negotiating contracts between the union and the company, and occasional infighting in the union departments. Chauvin ends with the story of how he turned his life around through alcohol rehabilitation, which allowed him to be the local union's president for 33 years.

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Content Warning: *This interview contains graphic descriptions of the effects of alcohol abuse that some readers may find disturbing.*

Time, Speaker, Narrative
EE: Right. Why don't we start this third interview that we've done with you, Tom, by identifying yourself again and--. What else were the other questions? So your full name is--? TC: My full name is Thomas Lewis Chauvin. EE: And you were born in--? TC: I was born in Port Arthur in the St. Joe's Hospital on November 11, 1946, 9:20 PM.

EE: Great. Thank you for the further detail. That pins it down. And this is the third time we've talked with you, or the third time you've been our narrator. The first narration was fairly standard as per the questionnaire, the second one took us into the history of Port Ship, and we broke off. So we're getting into riveting. And you wanted to pick up from there in this third interview, or this second, on the operations in the yard. So go to it.

TC: Yeah. I'd like to because I think you'd find it very interesting in that you don't see it around anymore, and I was right there right near the end of it, so I know exactly what they did. Anyway, the last time I was talking, I said that we were replacing the finished frames. Like the frames were large channels that had been rolled in a cold press, which was a machine run by a big flywheel and electric motor. They were bent into shape there and then they were punched in the punches, and then they were brought out onto the ship and put in place to the right--. Set to the right outside depth.

Then the shell plater came out with a large template made out of basswood. Now, that basswood template had a piece of basswood that would run right down each frame that was put back in, and it was also run down the inside edge of both butts of the plate—which is the front and back end of the plate—and the top and bottom of the plate. It would be an inch all the way around away from the edge of the plate. No, pardon me. It would be lapped onto where the holes were. Lapped onto where the holes were on the plate. But on the ends, there would just be a space there. But on the top and the bottom, it would be lapped over the holes. It was maybe about eight inch wide at the top and the bottom. The frames would maybe be about a four-inch-wide piece of basswood coming down. They're all connected with nails. It's one big, large sheet of basswood.

EE: As you were saying last time, the plate might be, what, 18 feet long or something?

TC: Could be 10 feet by 30 feet long some of them.

EE: By 30 feet!

TC: That would be the longest.

EE: So this basswood frame would be the same length then, would it?

TC: Yeah.

EE: But it's just a frame. It isn't solid.

TC: It's called a pattern or a set or a template. It was a template. So anyway, the big ones used to have to take about ten guys to carry it out of the shop so it wouldn't break. They used to stick their head through the holes and carry it out to the ship, and then they tied a couple ropes on it, and then a couple guys went up on deck and hauled it up. Maybe about four guys up on the deck hauled it up, up the thing, and then they slid it down in between the staging—which was up against the ship—in between the staging and over the hole. Then the shell plater would go out there with a couple of guys, a couple of helpers, and they had these things called hairpins. They were almost like a bobby pin, but very big. And he would go out there and stick these pins so that they clamped onto the frames. They clamped the pattern onto the frames, and he'd also stick them in the sides to keep it there, and he stuck it up at the top so it held that pattern in place and they would take the ropes off.

He would mark all the holes from the inside. All the holes were marked on the inside onto that pattern in reverse. Then he would mark—he would go outside—we'd mark the front part of the plate with what they used to call a space-stick to get the right edge of it, and they used to do the same thing on the back end of the plate. Then he'd put "fore" and "aft" on it and then "top" and thing, and "starboard". Whatever side it was, he had to mark all that on that plate, on the pattern. Then he'd take the template back to the shop. He'd take the template back to the shop, he'd put it on a large plate, and wherever he'd marked the holes, he had a centre punch or a prick punch, and he'd put it right in the centre of that hole and he'd mark it with the prick punch all the way around the whole plate. Then he also marked the edges that he'd marked there with the--. So he knew where the edges of the plate were, he marked all that on the plate with soapstone. Then he marked the top, bottom, fore, and aft so he knew which end was everything so when they took the template off, they wouldn't get mixed up. You've got to remember, the plate was upside down. That's the way it was marked, so he had to make sure he marked it properly.

[0:05:30]

EE: Sort of from the inside, I guess?

TC: Yeah, from the inside. Yeah. So then somebody would have to go around with a hammer that had a large centre punch on the end of it—was welded on the end of a hammer—and the other guy had a sledgehammer, and they'd have to re-mark all of those things so that there's a very, very large centre punch marks in that plate.

EE: So you wouldn't miss. You knew exactly what--.

TC: That's right. Yeah. So then after that, the welder would cut the plate to size, and then they'd lift it up with an eight-tonne gantry crane, shop gantry crane. They'd bring it over to this large punch that was set up, and the punch had a carriage with a lot of wheels on it, cast iron wheels. It was quite long. It was probably about, oh, well, it was about 30 feet long, I guess.

EE: Size of this room or more.

TC: Yeah, yeah. It was run by a large flywheel that was run by a large electric motor too. There was two controls for it—actually three controls. There was two large handles that had—what the heck would you call them?—clasps, and when you squeezed the clasp, a pin would go down into a hole that was connected to a gear, and that gear would turn some other gears so that the whole carriage with all those wheels would move back and forth or in and out. So the plate was under it, and that's how the guy ran it with these two things. He'd move it this way a little bit or that way a little bit by clasping with the handle and moving, using the pin to move the gears.

EE: So the actual punch that would make the hole was a single, and then the plate had to be moved under that punch?

TC: Yeah. Under that punch, yeah. Then on top of those rollers, on top of those wheels. He used to watch. That's why we had to make the punches so deep because he used to watch because the punch was set up so that it floated, and when it popped into a punch hole, then he would just push. There was an electric thing under his foot. He would push that and it would punch the hole. Then it would pop up and then he had to do the whole thing, line another hole up. So once all the holes were done--.

EE: We might just--. The plate would be, what, half an inch? Three-quarters of an inch?

TC: Well, usually about three-quarters, five-eighths. Side tanks about three-quarters, I guess.

EE: And so the strength that that punch had to—in one slam—to drive through, how did the punch work? Did it cut to the size?

TC: No. It just come down. *Boom!*

EE: It was just through the middle of it and--?

TC: Yeah. Straight down. *Boom!*

EE: It stretched the steel.

TC: It was a punch that fit into a hole that was the same size as the punch. It was maybe about a thousandth of an inch bigger than the actual punch. That punched in there, and then it popped up and then, like I said, the guy proceeded to find another.

EE: How large were the holes that were being punched?

TC: Well, it depended on what size rivets they were going to use. Some of them were three quarters, some of them were seven-eighths. The biggest--. I've seen quite large holes on different areas of the plates.

EE: So the holes were as large as the plate was thick quite possibly?

TC: Well, sometimes yeah.

EE: Or even larger.

TC: Yeah. And then so what they would do then, once they got that done, they would take that plate off there, they would turn the plate over in the shop with the crane, and then they'd lift it up, and they used to put it on this large wooden table. And the large wooden table had this long, real extra heavy drill on it that was run by electricity. It had a long, real long handle on it—maybe about, oh, six, seven feet long. And after they turned the plate over, they put it on that table, and there would be one or two guys that would push a chamfering tool into the holes to chamfer the holes. So all the holes had to be chamfered, you see. Then that was done.

EE: That means, basically, what? Cleaning them?

TC: That means putting a bevel on the outside of the hole.

EE: Ok, ok.

TC: See, the plate was the right side up now, so they had to bevel it, put a large bevel on it. So they put a large bevel on the hole, and then--.

EE: This would mean that a rivet—well, maybe you're going to describe the rivet later on—would fit into there and end up with a watertight seal?

[0:10:12]

TC: Well, once the rivet was placed from the behind, then the other part would go in there. Because the rivets were made a little bit longer than what they--. To adjust this, they knew exactly how long, what size rivet they need for each hole and what thickness.

EE: Sure. You got them three inches long or whatever in your hands then. Sure.

TC: Yeah. Whatever he needed. Whatever he needed for that particular hole, the chamfer, everything, was taken into consideration. So when they riveted it, when the rivet was red-hot—and actually it was bigger than it should be, they had to force it into the hole—when they riveted it, all the extra metal went into the chamfer and then on the outside of the hole was a cap after it was finished.

OM: Stainless steel rivets?

TC: No, no. Just ordinary. Well, they were--. I don't know. They used iron rod, just ordinary iron rod to make them. Then anyway, before they put the plate up, they had to take the plate back out. And then, well I was--. My job at that time, I was an assembler, what they called an assembler. They lifted the plate up with the crane, with the two—what the heck do you call those things now?—shackles, and then they slid it down so it was reasonably in place, and then myself and another guy, my helper, had to go out there. There'd be some guys on the inside—maybe two or three guys on the inside—and two or three guys on the outside.

So we used to get this drift pins that were the same size as the hole, and we'd put them in certain areas and hammer them in with a sledgehammer so the plate would line up properly. Then we'd put about six bolts from the inside to the outside, and those were spaced in such a way along the top that they zig-zagged.

EE: Mmhmm. The arrangement of them or the pattern of them.

TC: Yeah. Then once we got the bolts in--. And we had some on the frames too. So we had a couple on the frames, about halfway down the frames, and we'd tighten the frames first, and we'd take the crane off and tighten the top so the plate would stay in place. Then after that, we had to put the rest of the bolts in. It was every--. You'd skip one hole, eh? So it was one open hole and then there'd be a bolt, skip another and there'd be a bolt.

EE: A bolt or a rivet?

TC: Bolt. The bolts were the same way along the top and the bottom. They were in a zigzag pattern along the top and the bottom, except on the ends where it was--. And the same thing down below. So then all the bolts were in, then we had to tighten them up with this big air pneumatic machine—weighed about 40 pounds—tighten them up as tight as possible. And then as we went along, we had to check them all because sometimes you'd tighten up one frame and another one loosened up, so you had to make sure everything was perfectly tight. After that was done, we had to go back to the shop and get another machine that weighed about 50 pounds, and this was a pneumatic drill. It was a two-man operation. It was a handle on one side for the helper, and then there was a lever on the other side that you had to twist to open the air to get in there for the guy actually operating it. This had a reamer in it. So we had to ream all the holes that were open with that reamer to the right size because sometimes the plate wouldn't line exactly up with the frame, so you had to make sure you had a straight hole going right through.

EE: This is the--.

TC: The correct size rivet.

EE: This is, after all, steel you're working with. [Laughs] It has its own mind almost.

TC: Yeah. So once that was done, we'd bring that machine back and then the riveters would come out. Depending on how big the job was--. They actually had electric machines for heating rivets. They used that on the smaller jobs, but on a big job like that—it was a 30-foot plate—they'd have a couple of pots out there too. They were just cast-iron pots that had coke in them, and there'd be a couple of rivet heaters heating them. Once the rivets got to a certain heat--. Well, they had to be a certain--.

EE: Colour, I guess.

TC: Colour, yeah. They were just about white-hot. Just about.

EE: Wow.

TC: They would put it into a pneumatic tube that shot the rivet inside behind the plate, and there would be a guy in there that had a sort of like a catching pot. He would take the rivet out with a pair of tongs, stick it in the hole, and then they had a bucker-up with a machine that weighed about 50 pounds come up there. He'd put the machine up against the rivet, he'd press a lever, and an extension would come out the back of the machine and hit a frame. So the machine would be right tight against the rivet and a frame behind it. Then he'd push this button, which caused it to start to hammer, and he held that button so it hammered the head of

the rivet. Once he started doing that, the riveter outside knew it was his--. He had to start riveting. The rivet would start moving a little bit outside, he'd start pushing in. He'd go straight on the rivet at first, and then when it got maybe about—the rivet had squashed—to about an eighth of an inch away from the plate, he started going in a circular motion to put a crown on the rivet. Once he started hitting the hard metal, then he stopped because he knew that was it. It was finished. And that's how they did it.

[0:15:25]

EE: So the rivet—those of us who haven't worked with rivets are having to visualize this—so the fastening of the plate to the ship involved a one-piece rivet, which had a head on the inside?

TC: Yeah.

EE: And it was flattened, pushed back, filled into the hole on the outside?

TC: That's right.

EE: There wasn't anything put on it?

TC: No.

EE: It was the rivet—that one piece of steel—at each of those joins.

TC: That's all, yeah. But I should mention that—I left one thing out—before they put the plate up there, they used to get red lead and paint that on all the frames along the seams at the top and the bottom and the inside of the plate too. Wherever the frames were going to be, they had to put red lead in there. So they knew how wide--. Maybe it was about six inches wide along where the frames--. That acted as a seal or a gasket after. So anyway, once the first round of rivets was done, the riveters backed off, and then I had to take over again. I had to go and take the rest of the bolts out.

EE: Yeah, you'd have to.

TC: Yeah.

EE: And that involved some muscle or machine?

TC: Oh, we had to get the 40-pound machine out, and there would be guys on the inside taking the bolts out. Then had to get the reamer back in there after we got the bolts out, ream all the holes again, bring that machine back, and then the riveters took over and finished it off. They used to let it cool over, it had to be--. Well, once it was done it was cold. That was it. You didn't have to worry about it anymore. But that's how they did it.

EE: Now, how many plates would a laker have?

TC: Oh, that's pretty hard to say. You've got to realize that these plates were lapped onto each other, too. You lapped on the top and the bottom. On the sides--.

EE: And by lapped you mean overlapping?

TC: That's right, for the rivets. Then they just welded the sides up. In the old days, they never had the welding, but when I got there, they were just welding the sides up. Welding the butts up with weld, with rod.

EE: You're repairing, aren't you?

TC: Yeah.

EE: When that ship first came to be, every one of those plates was fastened this way in the shipyard?

TC: Yeah. It was all riveted. Even the seams, and the seams had a double plate there. So there was, like, on the--. There would be a butt on a--. Where it was normally welded on a newer plate, there would be a plate that went down that had rivets on each side of the plate so that that would rivet the seams together. It's hard to say how many plates were on those things because they're all different lengths and sizes. It's impossible to give even a guess of how many plates would be on there. You'd have to get a drawing to--.

EE: I have a little storage of pictures in my mind of things. The *Great Eastern*, for example, and the--. What was Isambard Brunel, was it, who built the *Great Eastern* in about 1850 give or take? So I think it's through the 1840s probably that iron ship construction really takes hold.

TC: Yeah. Well, the first ones were built during the Civil War. Americans built the first ones, yeah.

EE: Well, some of the--. The English were building, I think, before in the 1860s--.

TC: That could very well be, yeah.

EE: But that's right. It's the same era of 50s and 60s.

TC: Yeah, well, the built the--. Because the Confederates built an ironclad and then the Yankees built the *Monitor*, and then it really took off. They started building steel hulls after that. But the English—you're probably right—the English probably did start it, I think.

EE: One can understand, I suppose, the fact that wooden ship construction continued for quite a while through the end of the century, but it was particular kinds of ships that were iron and then they became steel as well. Passenger liners and that sort of thing.

TC: Well, the wood ships, it was probably cheaper and less costly to build the wood ships at the time. That's why they continued. Even the schooners, they were quite fast with the sails, eh? The sail was a pretty good ship. As long as you had the right shape of hull and everything, they could go quite quickly.

EE: In time they started doing some sailing with iron vessels. By the 1930s there was the grain trade or the guano trade from South America to Europe. Bird dung that was being used as fertilizer was being carried on these iron ships driven by wind.

TC: Yeah. Most people don't know that the first self-unloaders were manufactured in Canada.

EE: The which?

TC: Self-unloading ships were made in Canada. Self-unloading lakers. I think the first one was built in the 30s in Canada. I can't remember the name of it, but they were invented by Canadians.

[0:20:10]

EE: Canada Steamship Lines [CSL] I suppose?

TC: I don't know. I don't know what company.

EE: No.

TC: But that was the first ones. But anyway, that was the riveting. And I'd like to give you a little insight into the foundry there and we'll go onto something else.

EE: Let's just pursue this one step further. Now, what you were describing went on until when? When were you involved with the riveting?

TC: What, the riveting?

EE: Yes.

TC: Well, when I got there, they were still riveting. It was all repair work.

EE: So, this is the late 60s? 1960--?

TC: It was 1966. And that went on for a few years because there was still boats out there that had a lot of rivets.

EE: And you had no choice but to repair them as riveted vessels?

TC: Yeah. Well, we had to take whatever came. Over the years what happened was that they realized that they could—during the Second World War—they realized that they could get away with more welding on vessels.

EE: The vessels stood up in war service.

TC: Yeah. That's right. Yeah. There was lots--. They started using quite a bit of welding in the war vessels, so they realized they could--. So they started experimenting, and eventually what happened was that the only thing that was riveted--. Well, they started the changeover in the 50s and 60s. Eventually what happened is they switched to welding except for the bottom seams on the--.

EE: On the hull down there?

TC: On the lakers. And then after a while it went it was all welded down there except for the deck, and the deck was still riveted, and they had riveted sides. Then after a while, it was all welded. It was just a slow change over the years.

EE: Owen?

OM: Just a quick question. You mentioned the plate, 30-foot plate, with the riveting and everything else that's associated with it. How long would that take?

TC: Well, that was--. You can just imagine that it would take quite a while. Like from the start of--. Because somebody had to go out there, you had to have someone burn all the rivets out, then knock the rivets out, then you had to have somebody take the plate off and take all the old frames out. Something like that would probably take a week to do. Maybe. It's hard to say how long, how much, how intensive it was. It would just depend on--. Just for one plate, it would probably take about a week.

OM: And you said basswood, where would they pick that up from?

TC: Well, I don't know where they got it from, but I think they ordered. They ordered tonnes of it. There was tonnes of it, and they used to keep it up in the mold loft that they called above the punch shed. That was where they made all the patterns for the boat.

OM: Patterns were made out of basswood?

TC: That's right.

EE: Is basswood a very, more stable kind of wood?

TC: Well, it's extremely light.

EE: Ok.

TC: Extremely light and it's--.

EE: One can understand the value of that. And yet strong?

TC: And you can bend it quite a bit before it snaps. That's why they wanted it.

OM: I have a basswood pattern at home from the shipyards. It's beautifully constructed. It's a piece of art! It's wonderful.

TC: Well, it was designed--. See, the patterns they made were designed to be the exact—when they were making a boat—designed to be the exact shape of whatever part they wanted to put in there.

EE: Sure. So the carpentry shop would be making these?

TC: No. Not the carpenters, no. No.

EE: No?

TC: No. It's made in the pattern shop in the mold loft above the punch shed.

EE: Right.

TC: Were made by steelworkers.

EE: I see.

TC: Carpenters never went near that stuff. [EE laughs] No, no. That was not done in the carpenter's shop. It was done in the punch shed.

EE: These are union distinctions. You're working with wood, but you're steelworkers working with wood.

TC: Yeah, but it was considered a pattern. It wasn't considered--. See we weren't fabricating anything that was permanent. This was something that was thrown away after or left on the wall until another ship came in.

EE: If it fit it.

TC: It wasn't an article of furniture, it wasn't anything like that, see. So it wasn't carpentry at all.

EE: It wasn't that.

TC: Everything was held together with different sized tacks.

EE: So the construction on those corvettes, I suppose—it will have been during the Second World War—began to justify using welding, but it's taking 20 years and more after the war before that's really taken over in the construction of ships.

TC: Well, they were kind of leery about using them on lakers because lakers were quite long.

EE: And corvettes were more compact.

TC: The lakers carried quite a load, not like a corvette. A corvette was made for war and had to be fast and was lightweight, but a laker was quite heavy. When a laker is on the lake—you ask anybody that's ever worked on one and has been down inside the cargo hold or in the tunnels—the boat twists back and forth. It goes up and down, both ends will go up and down. It's constantly moving. You can hear the steel moving around, and so that's why they were kind of leery of jumping to welding right off the bat because welding, if you don't do it right, it can become very brittle. So I guess they experimented during the Second World War, and they found out what worked and then they stuck with that.

EE: Then they gradually--.

[0:25:00]

TC: Yeah, they gradually moved away from riveting onto welding on the lakers.

EE: It would be faster. I have no doubt.

TC: Oh, way faster. Yeah. It's way faster to weld something than it is to rivet it. But I'll tell you, the riveted boasts lasted longer. They were designed to last about 90 years, but the technology--. What happened was that the hull would hold up for 90 years, but the technology was run out fast, so they couldn't get the parts they needed for the internal structures of the ships.

EE: Engines and whatnot?

TC: Engines, stuff like that. So that's another reason riveting went away because there was--. You needed a lot of guys to do it, it cost a lot of money, and it was slower than welding.

EE: I've seen photographs but not any kind of movie-action of shipbreaking, which takes place around India and other places where the old ships are driven ashore, and they begin taking them apart. I guess the ones that are riveted would be easier to take apart in a way, I suppose, than the ones that have been welded because you'd have to cut those apart.

TC: Well, we did some shipbreaking down at the yard. But they had to bring one ship in that was burnt and we had to refurbish it. We did quite a bit of extensive work on it, took a lot of stuff out. Even on the--. When you're scrapping something, you don't have to worry. It's just as fast to scrap a riveted boat as it is to scrap one that's been welded.

EE: Mmhmm. Yeah. I can imagine it might be conceivably even a bit faster because--.

TC: Well, it's hard to say about that I don't know. Because you've got connections with rivets, so sometimes--.

EE: Would you cut them with an acetylene torch?

TC: Yeah, they'd all be cut up with big—really big—oxygen-acetylene torches. Then I guess they'd hang a crane on it. Well, over there I don't know what--. They'd just cut, and they jump out over the road over there. Over here they'd hang a crane on it so it was safe.

EE: Sure. Now the welding that took place that gradually replaced it, it would be electric welding on the plates, I guess, would it?

TC: Yeah. That's right, yeah. They used that--.

EE: Instead of melting the steel, weld it with the flux in the rod. Melting it together.

TC: They mainly used two types of steel rods, electrodes, on the ships. There was 6011, which was a basic rod that was used for tacking the steel up. They could use that in a lot of cases on the ship, but 7018 was the stronger rod. It was more tensile, had more tensile strength and everything. So 7018 was usually used on watertight places where they had to be strong and leak-proof and stuff like that.

EE: A seal.

TC: Yeah, so that just depended on what size rod you needed for what size job and everything else. But when I was there, they had the cream of the crop, so the standard was one-eighth of an inch gap for everything. That was the standard, and you had to try to strive towards that gap on all welding. Everything else where frames were concerned had to be dead tight because you didn't want--. See, when you're welding something, you don't want a gap.

EE: No, you wouldn't.

TC: Because what happens is you can have a weld there, but there will be a gap underneath it, and if water ever gets in there, it snaps the weld or it's a very weak thing. It's not a complete fusion of the two metals, so that makes it weak there.

EE: So where were you allowed the one-eighth gap?

TC: Any place where you had to join plates together. If you had to join the plates together for the welding on a butt or a seam, had to be, at that time, one-eighth was allowed.

EE: That was the area that would then be welded shut? You got it that narrow?

TC: A plate or even on a frame, like two frames butting together. It should be one-eighth. Well, when I started there, they used to have, when something was welded on the frames or watertight bulkheads, the riveters used to go out there and the bucker-ups used to go out there with chipping guns and they used to V out one side that had been welded to clean it all out. Then they'd re-weld it. That's the way it was done, but after the years went by, everybody started looking the other way and they weren't doing it anymore. Even the frames were done like that! I know as I watched them do it. I was right there. But it started getting a little sloppy after a while. It got sloppy. As the years went by, it got sloppier and sloppier and sloppier. The inspectors looked the other way. They pretended they didn't see things, you know? All watertight stuff was supposed to be gouged out—one side had to be gouged out after it was welded—and you weren't even seeing that. The company was deliberately rushing it. They'd tell the guy. "Weld it up. Never mind gouging it out."

[0:30:01]

But I squealed on them a couple of times. I told the inspectors, I says, "That's watertight and they're not even gouging it out." I says, "You better go after them." "What do you mean?" I says, "Come here, I'll show you." So I showed him the other side and I says, "Look!" They didn't finish off their nastiness and he caught it because he could see it wasn't gouged out, but they'd started welding it. So I says, "Look." I says, "The other--. All the stuff." So he made them gouge it all out. I had to squeal on them a

couple of times and they quit doing that. Because that's bad because it creates a dangerous situation for the crew and anybody that's got to be on that boat after.

EE: Were there inspectors--. This would be from Transport Canada, I suppose?

TC: There was three inspectors usually. There was one from Transport Canada, there was one from the shipowner, and there was one from the insurance company. And those three inspectors, I went around with them quite a bit. They used to send one of us with them. We'd go around to all the areas where the--. When the ship came in, we'd go around to check everything under the double bottoms, the side tanks, everything. Looked for cracks and extreme warpage and snaps and stuff like that, and we'd mark it all down in a book.

EE: Maybe making lists of each of them?

TC: Yeah.

EE: Would they be together, or--?

TC: We'd all be together, yeah.

EE: Yeah, the three different inspectors.

TC: And so then, well, I used to look for everything I could find. We all had flashlights and chipping hammers, so it was--. You had to go through the whole double bottoms. That was a long way to go. You had to go through all the side tanks.

EE: You're between the two hulls at that point?

TC: That's right, yeah. So you had a lot of crawling to do. You had to crawl through dirty, filthy hulls. Sometimes I had to use something to dig it out so I could see if there was a crack there or not, or chip it, chip the rust away to see if there was a crack because it was very--. After a while, you became an expert at it. It was just a second nature. You knew if where was a crack or not.

EE: You could spot things.

TC: Yeah, sometimes you had to chip the rust away to be sure.

EE: So these were not inspectors in ties and jackets, I don't suppose?

TC: No, no. They all had overalls. They, you know, got filthy under there and they knew what it was like.

EE: What kind of qualifications would they have as a rule?

TC: I can't be sure now. I guess they'd have to have some kind of engineering qualifications. I can't be sure.

EE: Because they came into the city from elsewhere?

TC: Well, I don't know how that worked, but I do know that the shipowner would want to make sure that it was done properly.

EE: Absolutely. And so would the insurance company.

TC: Same thing with the insurance company. Then you had the other guy there, but--.

EE: I mean, if the shipowners' inspector--. If the first two inspectors are really thorough, the Transport Canada guy could sort of stand back and just watch them.

TC: Well, the Transport Canada sometimes, well, they were supposed to be thorough too, but I saw some bad things coming out of those places. Paterson ships were the worst, they had those freighters. They were the worst. Some of them come in there--. I came in there one day, and I was walking through the side tank. On top of the side tanks, they call it the tunnel, the working tunnel. It's like a tunnel between the shell and the side tank wall, and you walk along the top of it and down below, that's the side tank. There was manhole covers along the top so you can get down into the side tank. I was walking along there, and I just looked. There was a guy welding, and he was trying to weld up this metals that was just about as thick as a piece of paper, and it was just burning right through it. I says, "What's going on here?" He says, "Well, I was told to weld that up." I says, "Well, you can't weld that up. That should have been taken out." He says, "Well, nobody--. There was no marks or anything to take it out."

So I went back and I told the inspectors about it. I said, "How come this is being done? How come you didn't see this?" I went after them all the time because they were just going like this, walking by it because they were afraid of Paterson or something. I don't know. Maybe Paterson gave them a case of scotch or something, I don't know, but that's what was going on. [EE laughs] Then I went down into the side tanks because I was with those guys. Well, I had to go down there beforehand because I had to open all the

manholes before they went down there, see? So I got all the manhole covers open. I went down there with the guy that was giving me a hand, and I said, "Holy Jesus Christ! Look at this!" And there was frames that were on the cargo hold side of the ship, they had rotted out from the top to the bottom. There was six inches of rotted right out from top to bottom.

And I don't know who let them get away with it, but somebody put little steel patches about every three feet that were welded from the back side of the frame to the side tank wall. That's all there was for--. Maybe every three or four feet, that's all. Just patches welded. Because the heel of the frame was still good, but it was all rotted out in the middle. There was nothing connecting anything to the wall. So that's somebody let them get away with that. So I said, "This--. Holy Christ." So I went down and I went--. As soon as I saw that, I brought a camera down there. I took pictures of it. I took pictures of it because I didn't want them to get away with that again. I took pictures of all that stuff.

[0:35:00]

I went up, and I went into the engine room, and I was looking for the engineer. I finally found him. I banged on his door. I told him who I was, and I says, "I want to tell you something." I says, "This thing's a floating death trap." He says, "You don't have to tell me." I says, "Well, look at this." I'd taken a small piece of plate that I'd found. It was just like paper. You could tear it with your hands. I said, "This is what your side tank things are like." I says, "It's like that down below on the frames." He said, "I know. Here, I want to show you something." He opened the file cabinet, there was a piece of rotten metal there that was just like paper. He said, "That came out of one of the webs." He says, "We can hear those webs flapping there all the time when we're moving around." He says, "I told them and told them and told them, but nobody would do anything." I says, "Well, somebody's going to do something now."

So I went back. I had to hide everything. Went back--. And that was that same time they had that task force. That was when Sinclair was in at the time. He was Minister of Transportation or something. Sinclair.

EE: Mmhmm, Minister of Transport.

TC: Yeah. So there was a big meeting down east in the House of Commons, and I had to do--. I guess the shipyards were lobbying for more money and all that kind of stuff, and the unions were all there. They were all there from all the shipyards. I got on a plane. I brought all the stuff on a suitcase. I had the thickness of the old metal, thickness of what was there, I had pictures of everything. So they started talking about this and talking about that. I said, "Well, I want to show you something." Sinclair Stevens, that was his name.

EE: Oh, Sinclair Stevens. Right.

TC: Yeah, he was the boy. So he was sitting there, he had an attendant there beside him. I said, "I want to show you something." I opened the thing up, said, "Here. Look at this. This is what your inspectors are letting go." I says, "Your inspectors. They're federal." I says, "Look at this." I says, "This is what was there." I says, "This is the actual thickness it's supposed to be. It's supposed to be half inch." I says, "Take a look at that." I says, "They're letting this go." I says, "I know." He says, "How do you know that?" I says, "Well, here's all the pictures," and I showed him all the pictures. I says, "I'm keeping the negatives, but you can look at these if you want." I gave him all the--. I says, "That's what's been going on." I says, "Your inspectors have been looking the other way." I says, "What are you going to do about it?" I says, "You want a ship to go down?" Oh, I went after him.

What's his name from the SIU [Special Investigations Unit] was there. What the heck was that guy's name? He was the head of the SIU. I can't think of his name. He was a crooked son of a gun, but he was there. He was standing--. He looked at all that. The meeting was for full--. He saw that, and he left, and he never come back after that. He didn't say a thing. He knew what was going on too. Somebody must have told him.

EE: This is the fellow from the SIU?

TC: Yeah. Head. Head chief, head honcho. He must've known. Somebody must've told him, but he didn't do anything about it. He never said a thing because they didn't know! When I showed him, he said, "Holy!" He says, "Yeah. Can we keep it?" I says, "That's why I brought it. I want you to keep it." I says, "But don't think you can throw that away because I got more," I said. "And I'm keeping the negatives," I says. "You're not getting them." I said, "I want something done about this." I said, "I want those inspectors to do something. Because if it isn't," I says, "I'm going to go to the newspapers. I've got the photographs, everything." As soon as I said that his eyes went like this, eh? After that, the inspectors were more careful, eh? [Laughs]

EE: As they should be.

TC: Well, yeah. I mean you're--. The way I looked at it, I didn't care about the load. I was thinking about the guys on the ship.

EE: Yeah, of course.

TC: Because you--. See, what can happen on those things is--. People don't understand what can happen. It can happen so quickly you don't have a chance. If you get a crack in a side tank wall or in the bulkhead--. Say, just for example, say it's just in the

watertight bulkhead that's at the end of one of the holds, cargo holds. The watertight bulkhead is normally inside the side tank. Now if you get a crack in there—it just breaks and snaps—what happens is the water from one tank will flow into the other one. So that upsets the balance of the boat. If you have a large load on there, it's going to make it shift. So then you've got to start pumping like crazy to keep it--. You've got use your pumps, and if that doesn't work, it's either going to capsize on that side or one end's going to go down.

EE: Were there any losses of ships on the lakes that you would relate to poor repair? Or did they get away with it, in a sense?

TC: Well, after that, they were pretty stringent. The federal inspectors were pretty stringent. I got to know a couple of them, and--.

EE: Sinclair Stevens would have been Minister in the Mulroney Government in the 80s.

TC: That's right. That's when it happened.

EE: To pin it down in time.

TC: That's when I went down there. I couldn't take it. I had to show them. I didn't care. Well, I'll tell you a little aside to that, when--. After I took those pictures and everything and I had the metal, I had my briefcase, which I always carried. It was full of paper with union stuff and letters from the company and all that stuff and contracts. I had my bag that had my lunch bag, sort of about two or three plastic bags I used to keep my lunch and whatever in there—thermos and stuff like that. So I figured now--. So what I did, I put the stuff in the lunch bag and I put the thing over top, and I walked out to the gate. Somebody must have saw me out there doing that. Somebody squealed because they stopped me at the gate. They said, "I want to look in your briefcase." I said, "Go ahead. I don't care." Put the lunch bag down, looked in the briefcase, couldn't find anything. I said, "Satisfied?" I said, "What were you looking for?" "Oh, well, somebody said--." And then he told me the name and I knew who it was. So I says, "Well, I didn't--." I says, "I'm not taking anything out of there." I says, "You know me better than that." So I walked out of there with the stuff, [laughs] got on the plane. About a week later, I went down there with it. But I had to do a lot of that kind of stuff.

[0:4047]

EE: Yeah. What was the company's attitude to this? Because the--.

TC: Well, if they would have caught me, that was company property.

EE: The more--. Well, yes, as far as that's concerned, yes. But the--.

TC: Even if it was scrap, it was company property.

EE: The more careful the work is, the more thorough the inspectors are, the more work there is to be done in the yard.

TC: That's right.

EE: So they have an interest in thorough--?

TC: Well, I hate to say this, but most of the time they didn't care. When I first started there, they did care, but then after the managers changed a few times and then we got into the 80s, they didn't care anymore. Like I said, they used to chip out the frames, and they used to make sure they chipped out all watertight things. They started sliding away from that. They were just in a big hurry to get it out of there so they could get another ship in. That's the way they were thinking, and that's what happened.

EE: You wouldn't know very much, I suppose, about the billing for--. What they were paid for this work?

TC: No, no. Well, they were always trying to make the customer happy by getting it out of there as fast as possible. See, they had a contract to get it done by a certain period of time. Now if they didn't get it done by a certain period of time, then they started having to pay penalties on that. That's why they did--. That's why they were going this way. They weren't as careful as they were. They were too greedy. They were trying to as many boats as possible without doing a proper job. They got greedy, and at the same time they're trying to make the customer happy, and that's a combination of all of that.

EE: And they probably had contracted sort of a set price to do a ship?

TC: That's right, yeah.

EE: Rather than the amount of time actually required, so bill the bill could grow.

TC: Yeah. That's right. That's the way it was done. So like I said, there would be a penalty if they went over a certain period of time. They would have to pay a penalty.

EE: So, you've mentioned Paterson Steamships. You'd be doing Canada Steamship Line [CSL] vessels as well. Did you do others? Upper Lakes or--?

TC: Oh, we did every ship you could think of. We had some American boats in there too. A lot of--. There was a couple of American riveted boats that came up. They were in beautiful shape. They used to keep their ships in beautiful shape, even the riveted ones. You wouldn't know--. You'd walk in there and you'd think it was brand new when you walked inside. The hull would be old and everything, but the Americans didn't fool around when it came to that. They used to regularly paint everything so that the metal would hold together longer and wouldn't leak as much. Because even the paint, if you paint over rivets, it's going to act like a seal, and it'll protect the rivets, keep things from rotting.

EE: I imagine it would.

TC: Oh, yeah. They didn't fool around. They've still got riveted ships down there.

EE: These American vessels, were they in the grain trade as well?

TC: Yeah, yeah.

EE: They weren't the iron ore carriers?

TC: Well, they carried grain, iron ore, whatever they could carry.

EE: Not the taconite business necessarily. Because I guess Canadian ships would often be carrying grain down the system, and then iron ore, say, from Quebec or Labrador back to--. In fact, we've had an interview that focused on some of that with the business being done in Cleveland where--.

TC: Well, they carried that. They also carried--. Well, they carried lots of stuff. What the heck do you call that stuff? Not phosphorus, but--.

EE: Potash?

TC: Potash, yeah. They carried that potash and a lot of different things. You know, beans and--. There's all kinds of things they carried besides iron ore and grain.

EE: Yeah. Anyway, that's all very interesting. You had another part of the operation that you wanted to describe for us?

TC: Yeah, I was going to talk a little bit about the foundry so you can get an idea of what was going on in there.

EE: Sure. Nothing like a foundry for dramatic stuff.

TC: [Laughs] Well, it's--.

EE: I visited the Woodside foundry once when they were pouring into the molds. That was very interesting to see.

TC: Yeah, well this was very interesting too. And, uh--. Anyway, away we go. I worked at the foundry on the last big job they had. They had to cast two large cast iron rolls—they called them back beams—and machine grooves into them for a fabric mill down east. A large steel core for the two rolls was made of wood and was placed on end in a long, deep pit at the end of the shop. It was quite deep. I believe the whole rolls were about 40 feet long. Anyway, tonnes and tonnes of coke, scrap iron, scraps of metal steel were assembled outside at the back of the foundry.

[0:45:28]

One bin of each was hoisted into the back door on the second storey of the building behind the cupolas. There were two huge, riveted cupolas that were lined with firebrick and had pipes for air and fuel oil along their bases and sides. There were two large doors at the bottom of the cupolas for admitting molten metal and for cleanout. There were two swinging doors on each cupola at the top second floor with latches on them at about waist-level. When it was time to start, wood and paper were placed in the bottom of the cupolas. This was lit—the pile—and filled with fuel oil and air. At the appropriate time, coke was shovelled into the steel bins from the top. And the coke was shovelled in there, the fire and heat.

When it was time, a specific weight of cast iron pieces on wooden dollies were wheeled in front of the swinging doors on the second floor and thrown in by hand by two men to a cupola, and four others behind them were piling cast iron scrap steel on dollies and swinging in another bin of coke when it was needed. Scrap steel was thrown on top of the cast iron at a specific weight, and there was some other kind of hardening steel. A few bars of that were thrown in. Then a certain amount of coke was shovelled on on top of that. When the mixture turned molten, the procedure was repeated until the cupolas were filled to the proper depth with molten metal. A combination of fuel oil, air, and heat helped cause the materials to mix and combine amongst themselves.

It was extremely hot on the second level. It was about 90 to 110 degrees, extremely smoky and dusty. It had all the windows behind us and the doorway constantly open, and it had about eight 24-inch diameter fans pouring fresh air from outside towards the men. The smoke, heat, and dust, of course, was blown around the cupolas into the shop, but four large roof fans expelled the majority of it. So there was black smoke pouring out of the roof all day. The company put two large containers full of electrolyte juice—it was lime flavoured, I think—on the second floor and one on the bottom. We also had about eight fire extinguishers on the top level in case of accidents, and pails of water, also six sections of fire blanket just in case. We had face masks on only. We could not use respirators because of the extreme heat and sweat pouring out of us. We had to move quickly and make sure nothing was underfoot.

We took turns shovelling and throwing metal into the cupolas and bringing more material in. We had to go quickly and do it right. There were breaks after each piling of material inside the cupolas when we closed the doors for about 15 minutes so it could go molten. It continued for the whole eight hours. Pouring was done by opening the gate at the bottom and allowing the molten metal to go into a large pot lined with firebrick, suspended by a 40-tonne shop crane.

[*… page flipping*]

Anyway. They started pouring as soon as they had molten metal. This went on all day. Then they finished after eight hours and they'd filled one core up. Then they had to let it cool, get cold. So that was a break for everybody. We had a couple of days off. Then they took the core apart, and they released the molten cast iron thing that they had there, took it out, brought it over to the machine shop, and started machining it over there. Then they put the core back together again. We had to get ready to do it over again. So we made two of them. That was the last time they did anything like that there and that was the first time I had ever been involved in that. It wasn't too far much removed from working on the slab with all that heat.

[0:50:31]

EE: Yeah. I can well imagine.

TC: Oh!

EE: So you were saying you were making rollers that were, what, 40 feet long?

TC: Well, they called them back beams. They were long cast iron round beams that had to have--. They were quite wide in diameter. They must have been, hm, six to seven feet in diameter.

EE: Oh, I see.

TC: Yeah. They had to have grooves rolled in them. Then they were sent down to the mills. I don't know how the heck they worked, but I guess somehow or another, the material went around that stuff. I don't know how it worked.

EE: So a textile mill in, what, in Cornwall perhaps?

TC: Yeah, textile mills. I couldn't tell you where they went. I can't--.

EE: There's a number of places where there are textile mills, of course.

TC: They were heavy things anyway. They were very heavy. It was a mixture of cast iron, there was scrap metal steel, and then they had some other stuff in there that they put in there to make it more tensile or stronger or something.

EE: So it wasn't--.

TC: They all had to be weighed before it was placed on the dollies. We were throwing motor blocks in there! [Laughs] Just for an example.

EE: Yeah, well, that's a useful piece kind of steel.

TC: Oh, yeah. Oh, it is. You can just imagine. You're up there, it's 110 degrees, and you're trying to throw a motor block into this thing that's got flames pouring out of it. [Laughs]

EE: Yeah, it's much, much larger.

TC: Well, yeah. That fire, didn't it jump back! Once you got enough--. Once the dolly was emptied in, you could slam the door shut and go back. *Uh, uh!* For a breather, right? You have a couple shots of lime juice. I wish there was vodka in there, I'm telling you. [Laughing]

EE: The Woodside foundry was much more modest by comparison.

TC: Yeah. I bet you it was.

EE: They had something like a locomotive—steam locomotive—boiler, I think it was, outside of it set up on end. And I didn't watch the loading up and the heating and so on and so forth, but I did see the pouring, the ladle that was being guided by the two men hanging from the ceiling, and they had the various lines. The thing that was really interesting there—the equivalent of the mold, of course, that you were describing—was that sitting on the floor were various structures, wooden outsides if you will, and perhaps a foot to a side, or more or less, with a kind of wet sand inside. And pressed into the wet sand, of course, had been the wooden mold, which was the pattern of what they wanted to get. So the sand held the shape, and then when the cast iron, the liquid iron, was poured into each of these molds, it, of course, immediately took the shape for it. The mold might be, for example, a sewer cover for the city streets. And you can see them out there, and probably many of them come from the Woodside foundry.

TC: Oh, yeah. They made lots. The shipyard made lots of them too.

EE: Did they?

TC: Oh, yeah. You still see a few of them around with "Port Arthur Shipbuilding Company" on them.

EE: Sure.

TC: They used to make those caps for those valves running into your house too. They made those, they made--.

EE: But that's modest work compared to something that is seven or eight feet wide.

TC: Oh, yeah. But still it was money. It was money. You know, they made money on that stuff, so when they money, they did it. But they used to--. They had one electric furnace in there that could pour about one tonne of metal, but that was the only one I saw. No, they had two. They had a smaller one too that was--. But if they would have had bigger ones like that, they could've kept it going, but they couldn't keep on going the way they were doing it because there was too much pollution coming out of there. It was just black smoke. Oh my God!

EE: I can imagine, yes. Speak of the black country of England. [Laughs]

TC: Oh, jeez. You couldn't--. There was no way you could breathe that stuff. When it was coming out of the stacks, it'd kill you in about one--. Half a minute and you'd be dead. You can just imagine what was coming out of there—all the poison from the metal

and the coke. Ugh! But that was it after that. Chris Hibbard decided that was the end of it, so they slowly sort of disappeared after that.

EE: He just didn't accept contracts and that sort any longer?

TC: That was the end of it, yeah. Yeah. They shut it down after a period of time because most of the guys were pretty old in there anyway. They were just about ready to retire. So what they did, they shifted. Some guys did retire, and a couple other guys were shifted into different shops, and that was the end of it.

EE: Sure.

[0:55:00]

TC: But that was an extremely hazardous and dangerous place. Well, it was--.

EE: You've mentioned one person. What was the management structure at Port Ship over the years? First of all, how many people were there?

TC: Well, there was a foreman for each department.

EE: And then working your way up above the foremen?

TC: There was a foreman for each department, and then--. There was quite a few departments. Holy jeez.

EE: Yeah, you were giving us some sense of that last time, a dozen or more different departments. Fifteen, twenty?

TC: Oh, it was over. Probably about 15. Maybe more. What they used to do, the foremen would meet every morning in the superintendent's office, and they'd discuss what they had to do that day. Then they'd tell each other, "Well, I'm going to do this, so you get ready to do that," and whatever. Everything was coordinated in that superintendent's office every morning just before the whistle blew.

EE: This is the yard superintendent?

TC: Yeah, yeah. And then sometimes the manager would be involved too because he'd want to throw his two cents in there or something he had to tell you about.

EE: The superintendent's position is quite technical in the sense he's immediately superior to all the foremen in certain terms of managing the work.

TC: That's right, yeah. He's their boss. He's their boss. He's sort of like a boss of the yard, and then you get the manager and the manager's his boss. So the manager would sometimes be in on these meetings because he'd want to add his force to the meeting too to make sure the--.

EE: Because the manager would have concerns, human resources for example, I presume. Would there be other--? There's obviously his office in terms of contracts and whatnot.

TC: Yeah. Well, normally, there--. In that superintendent's office, there would just be the manager and superintendent would be--. They had other people working in that office, but they were sort of like office workers in that office.

EE: I imagine the payroll people, the hiring people.

TC: Yeah. Well, all the hiring and everything was done up at the main office. The superintendent's office was right down in the yard. It was attached to the warehouse. So you could walk right--. Well, they had a washroom and everything in there, in the superintendent's office. It was quite an area. It was like walking back into a building back--. All the office buildings was like walking back into a building back in 1925. All the insides were all panelled and wood. It was quite an experience. It was like walking into an old speakeasy or something.

EE: Maybe even older than '25 some of these because it went back before the Great War, wasn't it, when they--.

TC: Well, yeah. I guess they--. Oh, yeah. But there was a few little perks here and there. Even the old washrooms, they had these large urinals that looked like bathtubs and it was all fancy shiny brass. Everything was fancy shiny brass. There was brass handrails all over the place, everything. It was really something to look at. So it was quite a thing. It was like walking into the past.

EE: How long did the superintendents, for example, serve? Did you have a lot of them? Was there much turnover?

TC: Well, when I was there, they had a few of them, but they did--. They were 65. They usually got out at 65. The management had a pretty good plan there. They had a pretty good pension plan there and they had a good sick plan compared to us. See, they were guaranteed a minimum of $500 a month when I first started there, as a foreman. That's the minimum they got for their pension.

EE: Back in the 60s.

TC: Then--. That was the 60s. Minimum $500, and then it went up, of course. I don't know what it went up to, but I knew about that because I managed to get some information about it. But after that, I don't know what it was, but I imagine it was pretty good. Their sick benefit plan was like a Rolls Royce plan compared to ours. They had everything. They had foot care, this care, that care. If you sneezed, you had care for that. You had somebody to scratch your back for this. That's the way it was.

EE: When the people who really needed it were you guys!

TC: Well. [Laughs] If you got 52 weeks, they'd kick you out the gate! But they had--. Their plan was such that--. And I know because I saw it. They didn't know I found it, but I found it. Their plan was such that if—and I know a couple of them were on it—if they got seriously ill or injured, didn't matter if it was on the job or not, they got 75 percent of their wages until they were 65. I saw it right there in black and white. And I saw one guy, I know one guy for sure that did it, that was on it. Because he got in a car accident and he went on that, and he was on it. After that he started a jewelry business, he was still getting that money. Seventy-five percent, oh yeah.

[1:00:04]

EE: And he hadn't been injured at the yard?

TC: No, he got in a car accident outside. He has a cast. He had this thing wrapped around his neck for quite a while. I think it was a come-on, myself. I don't think it was--. He just banged his head on the back of the seat or something, but--. [Laughs] But he got paid for it!

EE: And how long would Chris Hibbard have served as superintendent would you say?

TC: He was there for quite a while. He started in the 70s, I think, and he was there quite a while. He hung on as long as he could, and then he couldn't handle it anymore. Well, when they downsized, they wanted to get rid of him and the superintendent outside. Well, not the superintendent, but the supervisor outside. The superintendent was above the supervisor. The supervisor was sort of

like a crew boss. They wanted to get rid of him. And then they said, "No, maybe we'll shift them. We'll get rid of Hibbard, and we'll shift the other guy down to Port Weller or whatever." And finally--.

EE: Or Collingwood?

TC: Yeah, or whatever. And then finally they reversed that decision because--. They downsized that place at that time, see. They were trying to get rid of some people. They kept Hibbard because he was knowledgeable. He knew. He had all the books and everything.

EE: What was Hibbard's experience? Where did he come from?

TC: Well. [Laughs] I'll tell you a little aside about that. The guy, he used to work at Canada Car at one time a long time ago.

EE: Hibbard did?

TC: Yeah. Oh, yeah. He was like a regular worker there. The guys tell me they used to sneak over the fence and everything like that. [Laughs] Sneak out for a beer, they'd just sneak back. But anyway, I don't know where he got his training from, but he got his labour training someplace, so they hired him as the personnel officer. So he could handle all the grievances and figure out who was good for this job and all that. And he did all the hiring and everything, eh? But eventually what happened was that his authority started getting eaten away by the supervisor. The manager sort of let the supervisor do the hiring. The guy was hiring all his friends. It was starting to get into nepotism. And there's nothing I could do about it because I didn't do the hiring. I was in the union shop. In the union shop, you don't hire. You just wait until the guy comes in, you charge him his dues, and then that's it. So I had no choice over who they hired or whatever.

But then that started sliding away. So more and more of Hibbard's power started sliding away from him. Actually, he was pretty--. A few times the supervisor didn't come in. Hibbard came down into the yard and acted as the supervisor. He made an excellent supervisor. He didn't fool around. You needed something, he went and got it right away. The other guy would diddle around. "Oh, I don't know about this. Uh." Scratch his head for half an hour. "Maybe I can get it cheaper here. Maybe I can get it cheaper there." Hibbard went out and got the best stuff he could find. Didn't fool around. He got the best tools, everything. So he was good at that, but he didn't like doing it. He hated it because he had to deal with these guys all the time, and he didn't like dealing with people all the time. Just when he had to. But he did it, and I'd probably say he did a better job than the supervisor.

He did his other job well too, I'll tell you that. Because I had a constant battle with him all the time about health and safety and this and that, grievances and everything else. I don't know whether--. Sort of like a compliment, I found out afterwards when I left there—this was after he'd left, maybe about six years after he left—he was talking to somebody that used to work there. The guy says, "That Chauvin was a thorn in my side every day I was there." So I must have did a good job! [Laughing]

EE: What was the union organization? In the previous interview—or your narration—you were describing the array of unions, the variety of them that was there, but the Steelworkers made up a large part of the workforce and that was your union. You know about that firsthand. Can you tell us about you experiences in the union? Your rise in it and so on.

TC: Well, the Steelworkers was actually formed in 1956.

EE: At Port Ship?

TC: That's when they brought them in there, yeah, because they were having so much trouble trying to negotiate all the time. There was so many different unions that when they went in to bargain with the company, the company just laughed at them because they were arguing amongst themselves who was going to get what. They wanted this, they wanted that, so nobody could agree on anything. So they just laughed. The company was laughing at them all the time, so all they got was nickels and dimes all the time. So the guys were smart enough to realize that this couldn't go on. So they brought the Steelworkers in, and they took over quite a few different departments, and that did make a big change. There was just the Steelworkers, the pipe fitters, the operating engineers, the carpenters and joiners, and the pipe fitters. I think there was only five or six unions after that that bargained with the company.

EE: Yes.

[1:05:05]

TC: Now, I went on sick pay for about a year and a half. That's another story.

EE: You were mentioning that, about '75, '76, was it?

TC: Yeah, '75. That's another story. But anyway, I came back in '77, and I suddenly realized what was going on there. I didn't see this before because of my past experience. But I said, "This has got to change. This is so terribly dangerous here and everything. This has got to stop." So I got in on the health and safety committee, and then I got in as a steward because I wanted to do

something. I wanted to get something done, you know? These other guys were just pushing paper around and pretending they were doing something. I wanted to get things fired up. So I got in there.

EE: Were the stewards in each of the departments? Or were you one steward for the whole--?

TC: Just for my department. There was a steward in each department at that time. There was quite a few stewards.

EE: Yeah. And which department were you in at the time?

TC: I was in what they called the shipyard department. There was a bunch of different trades in that department. There was my trade, which was a ship fitter, there was the riggers, there was the scaffold builders, there was the electricians, and boiler makers, and the machine shop. There was a bunch of different trades in that union.

EE: In that department.

TC: But I didn't represent all those other trades, I just represented the shipyard department. But there was representatives from each one of those departments there. They were fairly well organized, but they had a hard time trying to do anything because there was stumbling blocks. So I tried to show them how to get around the stumbling blocks. That was a real--. Well, I turned into a fireball there for a while because I didn't like what was going on. I was angry. That's what made me do this because I knew what was going on. Then finally, the president of the union died in '78. So I ran for president, and I got in there.

EE: That's a vote of confidence from the other guys!

TC: Eh?

EE: That's a vote of confidence for the other--.

TC: Well, yeah. Well, there was three guys running for president, and--. I don't want to get into personalities or anything. One of them was called "Beer Brain". [Laughs]

EE: We won't ask for any designation.

TC: No, no. One of them was called Beer Brain. The other guy was, well, he was a heavy doper. And I thought, "You can't have guys like that running a union."

EE: Second one was into drugs?

TC: Yeah. He was a heavy doper. Smoker.

EE: I mean, they're both substance abusers then, you'd say?

TC: Yeah. So I figured you can't have people like that running a union. It's bad enough as it is. The last guy we had, well, he was going up to the company. The last guy we had—I won't mention his name because I don't want to make him look bad—but he used to go up there at 4:00 every day, up to the--. He'd just stop and walk up to the office 4:00 every day, and what he was doing up there, I don't know. Nobody knew. He was talking to them or something. Nobody told him to go up there. Nobody gave him authority to do so.

EE: Cozying up to the manager?

TC: Well, who knows what he was doing. So anyway, I got in. Right after I got in, I tried to get all of his paper and everything. He had a cupboard there that was locked up in a certain place there with all this stuff in there. When I got there, somebody had broken into it. Half the stuff was gone, but I managed to save some of the stuff. So I knew what was going on. I see that he was solely trying to sell us out. So I kept that information to myself. I had it in the briefcase. There was one of his briefcases there they didn't know about. I found that. That had some stuff in it, and then there was one of his lockers that had stuff in it. They didn't know I found all that. But the other stuff was gone. I couldn't tell. Somebody from management must have got in there because the lock was broken on that cabinet. It was like one of those old plywood desks they had for kids back in the 50s. It was like that. It had a top that lifted up, the kid could take all his stuff out, crayons and all. It was one of those. They'd ripped that open. But I did catch some of the stuff, and I knew what was going on, so I was bound and determined they weren't going to sink us.

I did everything I could, and I had a lot of people fighting me because of their mental states and the way they were thinking. When I took over, each shop was like a little castle, like a little kingdom. Each department. And that's the way they were thinking. They weren't thinking together, you know? I tried to change all that. I used to go around to different departments at noon and everything and talk to all the guys. I wouldn't avoid them like the other guy did. He just stayed in his own department, and that's what happened, you see, when you do that. So I went to all the departments and started talking to the guys. Lots of them hated me at first, and then they saw I was actually on their side. I was trying to help that department get something. I says, "You can't get

anything if you're fighting me." I says, "I'm going to try to help you. Well, you want to fight me. Why do you hate me? I'm trying to help you."

[1:10:10]

So I finally convinced them that I was on their side. One of the hardest battles I had was one of the guys that worked in that shop because he had a run for president, and he didn't get in. He went up as vice-president, and I had to put up with it. I had people like that behind me, steady behind me circling around like wolves trying to attack me for this or that. Not just from the management, but also from the union. But I had a rough background, so I just shrugged it off. I didn't let it bother me. I figured, well, I don't care what they do. I'm just going to keep on punching through and then finally they're going to give up and they're going to see I'm not fighting them. I'm trying to help them. Finally, they did. Took me a long time. But--.

EE: You remained president for--?

TC: Well, I got in in '78, and I retired in 2011. I was still president.

EE: Yeah, that's 33 years.

TC: Thirty-three. That's a long haul. I wouldn't wish that on my worst enemy. But anyway--.

EE: If the Steelworkers came in in '56 and you became president in '78, that's 22 years. And then you were the president for 33 years. [Laughs] That's pretty impressive, Tom!

TC: Yeah. Well, it was rough. There's lots of things I could tell you that were going on there. I don't want to make anybody look bad. I could probably write a book about it, and someday I probably will.

EE: Where would your meetings take place? At the union--?

TC: Union Hall. We used to go down to the Labour Centre.

EE: To the Labour Centre.

TC: We actually had a--. We didn't really have an office in there. It was Henry Gerow and Andy Lavoie had an office in there. They had two rooms for their office. They had all kinds of, oh, all kinds of cabinets in there for paper. It was just full of paper, eh? We had like a little closet. It was like a closet in there with more paper and more cabinets, and that's where we kept our stuff in there. We didn't have an office, as I say, at that time.

EE: And how long did Henry serve as the--?

TC: Oh, I don't know. I can't be sure. He was in there for quite a while.

EE: And then did Moe Shepherd succeed him directly?

TC: Well, there was a changeover a couple of times there. There was Andy Lavoie and Henry Gerow in that office. They were tag-team managing there for a while because the mines, there were so many mines going on that they had to have one guy in the office, one guy running around to the mines.

EE: Sure.

TC: They had one secretary, and it was pretty busy. But then after a while, the mines started dying off and they started shifting things around. Moe Shepherd got in there, and there was--. I'm trying to think. They sent a temporary guy down. He was pretty good.

EE: I didn't get to know Henry very well, but I certainly got to know Moe over the years. So that makes me think that Moe was in there by sometime in the 80s.

TC: Yeah. Yeah. I can't be sure now.

EE: Henry had heart trouble, didn't he?

TC: Yeah, he was--.

EE: Had a heart transplant, I think?

TC: Yeah, I think he did. Yeah. Oh, I know why too. But anyway, that's another story. But I never got along with Henry. I'll just tell you that right now.

EE: Well, Henry was still there into the 90s.

TC: I don't know. He used to go to the Labour Centre meetings. I know that.

EE: Yeah. Was Henry not still there in the--. Remember the English-only resolution and of that about 1990?

TC: Well, he was--. Yeah. I don't know what he was doing, but he was--.

EE: It seems to me Henry was still in the Labour Council at the time.

TC: He was involved in a lot of different things. But I couldn't get along with him or Lavoie. I won't get into that, but that's another story. Because there was--.

EE: Got along better with Moses?

TC: Eh?

EE: You got along better with Moses?

TC: Well. [Laughs] I can't say that I did. I get along with him now, but not when I was involved in that. Because it's kind of a funny thing, you know? Even though you're in the union, you're all supposed to be going together, sometimes other people think they know better than you. And they think they're trying to take care of your best interests, but they're not because they don't have to work there. I do. They don't. So they're trying to tell me what--. And I couldn't. I says, "No, no, no, no, no." So that's why I couldn't get along with them.

EE: Yes. And what--? Well, I suppose--.

TC: Because I had to work there, and they didn't.

EE: Sure. Of course not. Your contracts would be, what, two- or three-year contracts?

TC: They had, when they first started it, I think they had a year contract.

EE: Annually?

TC: And then they started skipping ahead to two years, and then sometimes they'd have a year and a half. Because the guys weren't stupid. They know that if they went for three years, then they had less chance of getting a raise. When I was there, I think we had one-year, one-and-a-half-year contract, but most of them were three years because the company wanted some stability. So we tried to hit them as hard as we could when they did that. We said, "Ok, we'll go along with them, but we this, this, this. You know, you've got to give us something. We're lagging behind. You can't keep up."

EE: What kind of negotiating committee would you have most times?

TC: Well, there used to be five guys on our negotiating committee at first. There was--.

[1:15:02]

EE: Yourself, I suppose, and then--.

TC: There was the president of the union and four other people.

EE: From different departments, I suppose?

TC: That's right. Yeah. We had to amalgamate the representative for--. We'd get a bunch of--. You had to vote for four guys, that's all they could--. So whoever. It didn't matter whether he was an electrician or machinist, he had to vote for somebody. If it was a machinist that was running, well--. They were all voted on democratically, so whoever. I guess the guy with the biggest mouth and the biggest promises got in, I don't know. [Laughing]

EE: Who spoke for the union at the table, did the president?

TC: Well--.

EE: Or did you share the talking?

TC: Well, I--. When we were--. During negotiations, you mean?

EE: Yes, during negotiations

TC: Well, during negotiations, we were supposed to tell the representative what we want, and if we had any advice, we were supposed to write in on a piece of paper and--.

EE: Chief negotiator, then, was the Steelworkers rep?

TC: Yeah. He was supposed to be.

EE: Say, Henry or Moses?

TC: He was supposed to be, yeah. And if we had any advice or questions or were angry about something, we'd write it on a piece of paper and pass it to him. Saying, "No, that's no good," or "This is no good." That's the way it was done.

EE: But keep your mouth shut?

TC: Yeah. We didn't say anything. We let him do the talking, but we also made sure that he did what we wanted by passing these notes to him.

EE: Sure, sure.

TC: So he had to go after the company for what we wanted because we were the negotiating committee. We couldn't just sit there and watch him yap because he never had to work there.

EE: And you knew the issues.

TC: Yeah. And we wanted to make sure we got what we wanted out of it. So we did keep--. Because you have to have one guy talking. You can't have ten guys, five guys talking at the same time.

EE: Yeah. Well, I'd wondered if the national reps from the Steelworkers would be the ones actually doing that work.

TC: Well, it was the representatives there that did it. Yeah. But there was one time when we got locked out that one time. Well, I might as well tell you the truth. There's no sense--. Like I said, I never got along with any of the reps because they were always trying to tell me how to run that local. And I says, "You don't work there." I says, "Don't try to tell me or any of these guys down here how to run our union down there. You're supposed to do what we want." That's what I told them flat-out. So after a while, they didn't like me because I wouldn't tow their line. But anyway, they did their job because they had to, but I had some infighting there. Moe Shepherd didn't like me. He did some things to try to get me out of there, but the guys wanted me because I never--. I couldn't be bought off.

EE: And you were--.

TC: I'm not perfect, but I couldn't be bought off by the company. I couldn't be bought off by the union.

EE: And you were cold sober.

TC: That's right. Cold sober and I had God on my side too. But most people didn't know that. If it wasn't for God, I wouldn't have got through any of that. It was God that got me through the whole thing.

EE: Yeah.

TC: All of it. He was guiding me through all of it. So I tried to do the same and do the right thing all the time to get people on my side. That's how--.

EE: The union executive would include a secretary, a treasurer, and so on?

TC: There was--. Union executive was composed of--.

EE: The local executive.

TC: Yeah, the local was composed of the president, the vice president, there was a secretary, recording secretary, there was a treasurer, and there was a financial officer. There was six of us.

EE: Now why would there be a treasurer and a financial officer?

TC: Because when we signed cheques, there had to be three people signing those cheques.

EE: Ok. Three people?

TC: That's right. Make sure nothing was crooked.

EE: It took three. Owen?

OM: How would your position in the union affect your day-to-day work as an employee? It would be a bit of a stretch for--.

TC: Well, that's-. Oh, it was like being in a warzone because I had to do my own work, plus I had all these people coming at me every day. "Do this, do that. Get this done. This is wrong. That's wrong. This is wrong and it's not safe here. Not safe there." Eventually, I had to tell them and say, "Look, I'm not the safety officer. You're supposed to tell the foreman something's wrong. Don't come running to me with it. Tell the foreman. If they don't fix it up, then you come to me. Don't come running to me all the time." I says, "You've got to stand up for yourself. Don't be a coward. What are you afraid of him for? He can't do anything to you. He can't fire you. The only guy that can fire you is Chris Hibbard." I says, "You've got to go through a lot of stuff before they can fire you."

EE: Did you and Chris start about the same time? You mentioned that he started sometime in the 70s as superintendent.

TC: Yeah, he did.

EE: Would it have been about the same time?

TC: Uh, no.

EE: Or a little earlier?

TC: He came after. Because I was dealing with a different personnel officer at that time. Bob Hughes was the personnel officer when I was there. I don't know if you knew Bob Hughes or not?

EE: No.

OM: Did he just pass away?

TC: Eh?

OM: Did he just pass?

TC: He just passed away a little while ago, yeah.

OM: I knew him.

TC: He was a veteran. Christ, he must have had about 20 medals.

OM: He was Navy, wasn't he?

TC: Yeah. He must've had about 20 medals on one side of his chest there. I knew him well. But he saved my life, let's put it that way. I'll just give you a little aside. When I first started, well, he used to--. I told him, I says--. I saw him after when he got out of there. It's different when you're not there, when you're not working with somebody and then when they're not there. You don't have to work there anymore, so he was completely different then. Like I got along with him, but when I worked there I didn't. Just an aside. When I first got in there, about two days after I got in there, I had to see somebody in the boiler shop. So I told my foreman, I said, "Look, I've got to see somebody in the boiler shop about this union stuff. I'll just be a minute." He said, "Ok." So I took off. I walked in there, and I started talking to the guy in there. Well, somebody spotted me in there, and they phoned the office. And I got reprimanded. I got sent home for a day because I didn't tell the foreman in that department that I was there on union business. Yeah. They tried showing me who the boss was right off the bat, see?

[1:20:39]

EE: Yeah. This was in '78?

TC: Yeah. Not only that, but--. Well, I guess then 1980 came along. We had a new contract, and I was there at the negotiating table and everything. I was there negotiating with them and everything, but my name was not in that book. They didn't put my name in there. They were trying like piss on me sort of thing. But I knew what they--. That didn't bother me. They couldn't pull that on me, you know? And always, they were always trying to do something to get me in trouble there. Always. But I knew what was going on

and they couldn't pull that on me. Eventually, I got some people on my side, even though I had--. It was the guys themselves, the guys that I worked with, that were on my side. I won't say the executive of the union was because they were always infighting themselves. That's the way it was. It was one department against the other. See they all came from different departments, that was the hard part of it.

Finally, lots of them retired and then it started changing. I got a better executive in there. The guys realized we all had to pull together. You couldn't--. There's no sense fighting me. I'm not against you. I'm trying to keep the thing together. What are you attacking me? There's no sense attacking me. I'm not doing nothing wrong. I was voted in. They wanted me in for a reason, not--.

EE: What were your terms? Annually or--?

TC: They were three-year terms.

EE: Two or three?

TC: Three.

EE: Three-year terms.

TC: Yeah.

EE: '78, '81, '84.

TC: Yeah. They pretty well coincided with the contract.

EE: Sure.

OM: So, I just wanted to finish off.

EE: By all means.

OM: So you said Bob Hughes saved your life. Is that something that you wanted to talk about?

TC: Well, I could give you a little aside about it. He was responsible for sending me home that one day. [Laughs] He got a chuckle out of that. I talked to him after, I says, "How could you stand being a tyrant like that?" So he says, "It was lots of fun," he says. [Laughing]

EE: That's the words of management. Those sorts of things are fun.

TC: Yeah, he was personnel--.

EE: That's why they make such good Conservatives to my mind.

TC: We used to call him the "personnel mangler". [Laughing] But that's what he told me. But anyway, he did save my life, and I'll tell you what happened. See, like I used to be--. I wasn't exactly Mr. Perfect. I wasn't a nice guy. I came out of a rough background, and I used to drink heavy and stuff like that. That place I worked in was bad. Like I told you, half the guys there had a bottle in their locker.

EE: You were mentioning--.

TC: Then dope started coming in there. They were growing dope on top of the punch shed. They were growing it out behind the fence. It got bad, eh? So, I was in on that crew and the kind of guys that were doing that. I was smoking dope and stuff like that. Then one day, like I was--. I must have been valuable to them because there was no crane operator, and they asked me to run the crane and stuff like that. I knew how to do it. I didn't like it, but I did it. So they kept on getting me to move around and doing these things. So one night I was on the crane, and it was wintertime. It was right after we'd launched the *Wolfe Islander* ferry. It was 1975 like this. It was wintertime and I was on the shop crane at midnight shift. That was a terrible shift. I had a bad hangover every night, and I caught a bad cold. My job was to run the shop crane, flip these things over for the welders, and then go outside into the drydock where they had these heaters down below up the ship. They had the coal-oil fuelled heaters. They call them salamanders. The fumes coming off would kill you if you stayed in there. But I had to go down there and refuel those things when I wasn't running the crane.

I had a bad cold, and I was half-corked. I had had a couple of shots before I got in the crane. I had a couple of shots when I come down at coffee time. That's the way it was going. So finally, Christmas holidays came along, and I was just about ready to drop dead. So the holidays came, and I never went back to work. Just kept on drinking. One morning I got up, well, I had the rattlers. I was just shaking. You've never seen anybody that had the rattlers? That's from not eating properly. I couldn't keep anything down except for booze. I'd have to have a couple of shots in the morning to get going. Stumble over to the nearest hotel, have a couple of

beers, couple of shots, buy another bottle. Then finally one morning I got up--. Well, I couldn't even--. My legs went. I couldn't even walk. I had to crawl to get to the washroom. I was just shaking all the time. I looked in the mirror and I started cursing and swearing at myself, and I think that was God cursing and swearing at me to tell you the truth. And I told myself, "You're going to be dead in two weeks if you don't stop."

[1:25:14]

So I went to St. Joe's Hospital and I told them. They says, "Well, we don't deal with drinking problems here." But they checked me over and said, "You've got mononucleosis. Your lungs are full of fluid." But they said, "You go down the street there that Lewkin Centre. Go in there. They can help you out." So I went in there, and I managed to get into the LPH [Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital]. And I phoned Bob Hughes from there and I told him what happened. I said, "Bob," I said, "I guess you're wondering where I've been for two months." He said, "Yeah. We were going to get out a search party looking for you. We didn't know where you went." He said, "We need you down here." I said, "Well, I was on a bad drunk." I said, "I don't know what to do. I've got no money." He said, "Don't worry about that." He says, "We'll put you on the sick pay. Sick benefits." So he saved my life.

So I got, at that time, it was $42 a week. [Laughs] So I stayed on that. I went to a halfway. I went in the LPH. I tell you, that's another story. I don't know if you've got time to listen to it or not. It's part of the story. It is part--.

EE: Part of your life.

TC: It's part of the story. It's part of the shipyard and everything. Anyway, I was in that **[Luken]** Centre there, that was sort of like a place where you go in, you come off the juice, and then they kick you out the next day after they give you a meal. There was about four or five people there at that time.

EE: Is this at the LPH?

TC: No, no. This is down not too far from the On Deck Hotel. It was just down the street, up the street from there.

EE: Yeah. Salvation Army?

TC: No. AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] ran it.

EE: AA, I see.

TC: AA ran it. AA ran it. So I went in there first after I left the St. Joe's hospital.

EE: Yeah. So, you'd sober up, and then they'd have you on the street?

TC: Well, it didn't work like that. I went in there. I straightened out. I wasn't shaking anymore. Then the manager one day—it was a Saturday—he says, "Can you watch over the place while I'm gone?" I says, "I guess so." He says, "Well--." I was in there about a week. I says, "Well, I don't know what to do." He says, "Well, if something happened, you just phone the cops, the fire department, whatever." There was just two of us in there. It was an older guy and myself, and the older guy wasn't in very good shape. Anyway, I was watching TV, and the older guy went into the washroom. I heard a loud clang in there. I thought, "What the hell is going on in there?" He never came out of there, so I went back. Just luckily, he never locked the door. So I pushed the door open, here he had went into an alcoholic seizure. It looks like an epileptic seizure. I don't know if you've ever seen that?

EE: No, I haven't.

TC: He had banged his head on the bathtub there and it was cracked open. Blood all over the place. I almost crapped in my pants, pardon my language. So I phoned the fire department, I phoned the ambulance, I phoned the cops, everybody. They all came. *Errr!* "What's going on here? What the hell?" They all stood outside arguing who was going to go in the door. I didn't know what to do, you know? I didn't know what to do! So they come in there, and they thought I did it. I says, "I didn't touch him." I says, "He went in there, and I opened the door, and I saw him on the floor." I says, "I didn't touch him."

EE: That's the problem. Don't call the cops, they want to arrest you! Call the EMS. [Laughing]

TC: Yeah, well, I shouldn't have called them, but I did! Yeah, I did. They wanted to charge me with beating him up or something. I said, "I didn't do a thing!" So finally, the manager came there, and he says, "No, no." He says, "That guy's had an alcoholic seizure." At least that's what the trouble was. He banged his head there. So they brought him up to the hospital. I don't know if I helped to save his life or not, but I might have did something. So after that, that tripped me up. I was bound and determined after that to quit drinking.

So I asked him what was going on and he said, "We've got two programs." He says, "You can either enter the one at the LPH or the one at Smith Clinic." I said, "Well, what have you got to do at the Smith Clinic?" He says, "Well, you've got to do a lot of writing." I said, "Oh, I couldn't do that." I said, "My brain's just--." I said, "What's the other one?" He says, "The other one's--." He says, "The one at the Smith Clinic is four weeks. The one at the LPH is five weeks." I says, "Five weeks? How come?" "Well,"

he says, “it’s a different kind of system.” He says, “They have group sessions there and you talk about how you started drinking and what you think caused it.” He said, “It’s probably the better of the two,” he said, “because they show you films and things like that.” So I said, “Ok. I’ll try that.”

So I got on that. I was on the sick pay. So I went up there. I got in there, and about a week after I got there--. George Goldie was running it at that time. It was a hospital set-up, eh? Like there was an area for the women, there was an area for the men, and they had a bed there that had a curtain around it, and you had a table.

EE: You were in there in residence day and night?

TC: Yeah. Yeah. So that was--. After the first week, we went out to get--. We used to go up to the counter before we went down to the basement to have breakfast. They used to have these little ketchup cups there with pills in them, you know? They’re supposed to be vitamins, see. We used to take that with some water before we went down. I took mine down, I turned around, and this guy had flipped out. He went into an alcoholic seizure, banged his head against the wall. He was down on the floor. *Euh, euh, euh*, like this, eh? So I said, “Holy Jesus Christ!”

[1:30:20]

EE: That would--.

TC: That was the second time I saw that.

EE: Intensify your resolve.

TC: Oh, Jesus Christ! When I saw that--. So they took him away. They brought him across to the General. It was just lucky it was across the street. Brought him across to the General. So about a week later after that—I was still smoking at the time—they used to allow us to go down to the corner store that was down the street. They called that part of the property, eh, to go down and buy cigarettes whatever you wanted. But you weren’t allowed to go anywhere--.

EE: Beyond that.

TC: Beyond that. You had to stay there to keep you away from everybody you knew and all that kind of stuff, eh? About the second or third week—I can't remember for sure now—I got up one morning and I couldn't button my shirt up. The left side of my face was all numb.

EE: Not a good sign.

TC: Left arm was all numb, couldn't feel anything. So I went up to the desk, next thing I knew, I woke up in McKellar Hospital.

EE: At McKeller? Because you'd had a stroke?

TC: No.

EE: No?

TC: Didn't have a stroke, no. See there?

OM: Mmhmm.

TC: There's one here. See that there?

OM: Yeah.

TC: I had what they called sublateral hematoma. Two veins blew up in my head.

OM: Boy, oh, boy.

EE: Well, that's--. Yeah.

TC: So, they brought me over there, and that's where--.

EE: Cerebral hemorrhage, eh?

TC: Yeah. So they brought me over there. Doctor Hiscox was the surgeon, which was lucky. He was one of the best surgeons in town for brain injuries. So they fixed me up. I looked at myself. They had shaved all my hair off. I saw the stitches. I figured, "Oh, jeez. That's it. I'm kaputski." I looked, and I was in the ward with these two other guys. One guy was a Native guy, had his leg up in the air. He had a compound fracture. His leg was broken in about three or four places. They had it up in the air in a cast. The other guy was down a little bit further from us. They had a curtain around there all the time. I saw him when I come in there. He was laying in the bed like this, eh? I was talking to him there for about ten, fifteen minutes. You know, it seemed like there was nothing the matter with him. I was trying to figure what was the matter with him. I was talking to the other guy, I said, "What's supposed to be the matter with him?" "He's supposed to have pneumonia," he said. I said, "Eh, it doesn't look like it." He wasn't coughing or nothing. He was just laying there.

I used to talk to him everyday, and I talked to the other guy too. It was time for me to go. I wanted to go back to the LPH and finish off that thing. I was only in there a week. So, last day, I went to say goodbye to that guy at the end there. I says, "Where's so-and-so?" He says, "Well, he's dead." "He's dead?" He says, "Yeah. He died last night." I said, "How could he die?" He says, "Well, he's dead. He just died overnight." Just like that. *Snap.* So anyway, that kind of shocked me again.

EE: Yeah, sobering indeed.

TC: So I went back to the LPH, and I'll tell you this whether you believe it or not, but it's the absolute truth. I went in there—and I got in there I think it was a Saturday or Sunday—and I just about had it. I was just about to give up. So anyway, I never believed there was a God before this because of what I saw going on in the world, and I saw these evil churches with evil people in them telling all kinds of lies. I thought it was just all a bunch of baloney. Finally, something happened. It was about 2:00 in the morning. I got up out of bed, and I went into the area where we used to have our group sessions. I got down on my knees. I begged God to help me. I started bawling my eyes out. Then a gentle rain started falling for about half an hour. I got up and I went back to bed.

Next morning, it was Sunday. I went into the little coffee room there, and I sat down. There was a black and white TV there. I turned it on. Rex Humbard was on. He started talking on there. I was sitting there. There was another guy sitting there. All of a sudden, the TV set went up about ten times louder. Rex Humbard said, "You have to get out of there!" And I almost fell out of the seat because it just went up ten times louder. And he said, "You have to get out of there!" I went "Ah!" like this. You know? "What the hell's going on?" So I kept on. Nobody else seemed to notice anything, just me. So this happened about three or four more times. I'd be watching TV in the dayroom or something like that, and all of sudden somebody would say something on the TV, or something would be happening on TV that corresponded with what I was thinking about or something like that. The guy would say, "Blah-blah-blah," and it would just come right out like that.

EE: Moved right through to you, eh?

TC: Yeah, right at me. Nobody else. I thought I was going crazy! So stupid me, I told the guy at the desk. So they sent me to the nut doctor. And I told him all this, eh? [Laughs] I have to tell you all this. I told him. So I says, "Well, I'm sitting there, and all of a sudden, the TV set goes ten times louder and this voice just booms out at me and gives me a message." And I says, "Nobody else seems to notice." I says, "It's talking to me. The TV set's talking to me." He says, "Oh, we'll fix that up. We'll increase your medication." [Laughing] I didn't know I was getting medication! I thought I was getting vitamin pills. Here they were giving me phenobarbital, Dilantin, and valium. I didn't know. Yeah. Oh, yeah. So I was just like a zombie after that.

[1:35:40]

But anyway, so then I talked to the Goldie and them guys, and I said, "So what's the next step after this?" And he says, "Well, you go in a safe environment until you can get back to work." So I found out about this halfway house over at Hogarth Hospital.

EE: Which house was it?

OM: Crossroads or--?

TC: Crossroads, yeah.

EE: Oh, out--.

TC: Crossroads. It was over where the Hogarth Hospital was at that time, was on Lily Street at that time.

OM: Lily Street.

TC: There was a nurse's barracks there that they used to use. So I went over there. Anyway, while I was sitting there one day, I couldn't remember what happened the day before. That's that stuff they were giving me. They told me I had to have it, that I had to take it to keep me calm, cool, and collected, they told me. So you don't get excited. "We don't want you to get excited." So I was just looking. Like I said, something was guiding me after I did that thing on my knees in that room. Something. There was a Holy Spirit that was guiding me. God. So anyway, I just looked over at this--. I was in the telephone room. It was no bigger than--. It was just not very big. Maybe about from there to there long and wide about that much. Sitting in there beside the telephone.

EE: 20 by 20 or whatever.

TC: Yeah. And I looked over there, and there was a bookshelf there. There was a book on there, and I just, something, “Pick it up,” in my head. I picked it up and looked. Everything I wanted to know was in that book. It told me about all the stuff I was taking. It told me what the effects of the stuff was.

EE: This was a pharmacological reference book then about drugs?

TC: Yeah. Yeah. It told me about phenobarbital, valium, and Dilantin. It said that it wasn’t physically addicting, but your mind got addicted to it after. Your mind thought you had to have it. Then it told me the symptoms, and that’s why I couldn’t remember anything from the day before. So I just threw everything away and didn’t tell anybody. Well, I came down, and I started acting normally, like I normally did before I quit drinking. That’s not to say I was a nice guy or anything, but you know, I got along with everybody. But if somebody said the wrong thing to me or tried to bug me or something, I told him off. Well, they thought I was drinking again. So they told the manager.

EE: This was you’re back at Port Ship now?

TC: No, no, still at the halfway house.

EE: Ok.

TC: I was at the halfway house when this happened. So anyway, I threw the stuff away while I was there. Anyway, I had to go to see the manager of the place. Sat in the office. He says, “Well, people are complaining about you.” I says, “Why?” He says, “Because you’re saying things you shouldn’t say.” I says, “What do you mean?” He says, “You said this to this guy, and you said that to that guy.” I said, “I said that to that guy because he was bugging me. He was getting on my nerves. I told him to get off my back.” I says, “I don’t have to put up with that.” I says, “I’m paying rent here.” I says, “I don’t need that guy bugging me like that.” I says, “If he doesn’t want me to say that, he shouldn’t bug me!” These people were deliberately bugging certain people in there because the manager wanted to get rid of them. He wanted them to get drinking again so he could kick them out and get some of his buddies in there. I knew this was going on because I wasn’t taking their drugs anymore. I knew it was going on because I watched them do it. They were coming after me because they thought, “Oh, this is a guy with a hole in his head We’re going to get him out here too.”

So I didn't say anything to him. He says, "Are you taking your medication?" I said, "No." I said, "I threw it away because I want to be normal. I don't want to be a zombie." He said, "Well, you have to take your medication, or you can't stay here." I says, "Who says that?" He said, "I'm going to phone the docto, and we're going to see about this." I said, "Well, go ahead." So he phoned McKellar, and there's some guy, I guess, one of his buddies there or something. He said, "You have to see Doctor so-and-so." He says, "An ambulance is going to come for you, and you've got to go with them. And you better talk to him and do what he says." I said, "Sure. Ok." Got in the ambulance. And they said, "You better come with us." I said, "I'm not arguing with you." They had a straitjacket there, oh yeah, they were getting ready to tie me up. Yeah.

So I got in the ambulance. There was two of them. Got in the ambulance. They brought me to the--. I guess, I don't know what the manager told them. So I got in the ambulance, went over there. Because I left the office after he was talking to the doctor, you see? So I got there, they show me this--. Went to the doctor's office. He said, "You're blah-blah?" And I say, "Yeah." Blah-blah-blah. He says, "You're supposed to be taking this medication and you're not taking it?" And I says, "Well, I don't want it." I says, "I can't remember anything after." I says, "My memory goes. I can't remember what happened the day before." I said, "I don't want to be a zombie." He says, "Well, they don't want you in there unless you're taking that medication." I said, "Well, I'm not taking it." I said, "You take it!" He says, "It's not prescribed for me." He says, "I don't need it." "Well," I said, "neither do I!" So he didn't know what to say. They figured they were going to slap me around or something, but I wasn't doped up anymore. I never used to take shit from anybody whether I was drinking or not because, like I said, I had kind of a rough background.

[1:40:30]

EE: You could handle yourself.

TC: So he was trying to push me around, and he's seeing he couldn't do it. So I says, "I'm not taking that stuff." He says, "Well, the manager says you can't stay there unless you do." I says, "Well, you tell him that if he tries to kick me out of there," I says, "I'm going to tell the cops and I'm going to tell the newspapers and everybody about what's been going on in that place. You tell him that." He says, "I will." I said, "Go ahead!" So he phoned him up and he told him right on the phone. Then he said, "I think we'll just try it. Maybe he doesn't need his medication." Because he was getting scared too, see?

EE: Yeah.

TC: Because he knew that if I was going [inaudible], I would put his name in there and it would have been in the headlines too. So anyway, [laughs] I convinced the guy. I went back there. They never bothered me again after that until I left. And I didn't overstay my welcome or anything like that. But it was some bad stuff going on there, Ernie, I'm telling you. Not just the manoeuvring of

people out of there that they felt they didn't want. But I have to tell you this. I told Goldie this–George Goldie–I had to tell him. There was a witch in there. I don't know if you ever believed in witches or not, but there was. She was the cook there. She used to come over from the women's residence and cook over there. And I was watching these guys that were walking around, whatever she said, they did. They just jumped. What's going on here? Well, she was reading their fortunes and everything, doing all this kind of stuff like this.

So I told Goldie. I said, "There's something funny." I had an appointment with him. I went right to him. I didn't know exactly what it was, but she was trying to get chummy with me. I said, "No, I don't want any of this stuff. I don't want anything to do with that." So I went up and saw Goldie. I got an appointment with him. I told him. I said, "There's something funny going on with that woman." I says, "These people are jumping around like they're slaves." I said, "There's something wrong." I says, "You better look into it." I said, "There's something rotten in Denmark." I didn't tell him about any of this other stuff that was going on. I just told him about that because it was bothering me. These guys were, they were almost kissing her feet! It was getting ridiculous, you know? So anyway, they went into her room. She had upside down crosses on the walls, candles, pentagrams, all that kind of--. Oh, yeah. Right in her room.

EE: And she was serious about that?

TC: She was serious. She was doing it. That's why I think funny things were happening there. I couldn't figure it out because funny things were happening.

EE: Yeah.

TC: She had summoned demons or something and they were operating in that place. But anyway, I got out of there back in '77. Well, what I did was I got a place over here. I had bought a ten-speed bicycle prior to this, and I was using it every day. Every day I used it.

EE: Good exercise.

TC: Oh, I went miles and miles and miles. I went up to Sears and back and all over the place with it. So I got the guy from work to haul my stuff over there—which wasn't very much, it was a bicycle, some clothes—and I got an apartment over here. Then I started using that back and forth to work there too when I could when I could. Whenever I could. Then I got in as president of the union after.

OM: Well, that sounds--.

TC: Interesting, eh?

OM: Interesting, yeah.

TC: Yeah. Well, it actually happened to me. I've got no reason to lie about it.

EE: No.

TC: I've got the Holy Spirit guiding me all the time now. It's kind of a constant companion so to speak.

EE: Well, there are curious experiences people have.

TC: Oh, yeah. Sometimes you've got to go right down.

EE: When they straighten you out so you can be a union president for 33 years, it's pretty convincing evidence.

TC: Well, if it wasn't for God, I wouldn't have been there. I know that. I would have killed myself or something before that. I couldn't tell you all the things I had to go through there. I could I guess, but there would be a lot of people embarrassed if I did. It was horrendous, and if it wasn't for God, I wouldn't have made it through there. It was God.

EE: You've honoured us by your candor, I must say.

TC: I had to tell you that because it's part of the story.

EE: It is. It certainly is. I can sympathize, empathize, in a number of different ways I don't have to go into in terms of--.

TC: Oh, boy. I tell you.

EE: Not the drinking. I haven't got into that. Been spared drugs as well, but other ways.

TC: Ever since that point in time, like back from 1980 onwards, I was bound and determined to keep myself as healthy as I could and tried to help other people do the same thing. That was part of it. Whenever I wasn't doing union stuff, I was doing that too.

EE: Kind of a mission you shouldered.

TC: Yeah. Well, that's sort of like paying back God for what He did to help me. He helped me, so I tried to pay Him back by doing that. I'm sort of like--. I'm not Mr. Perfect or nothing. I never was, but we're all--. I look at it this way. There's not very many really good people in the world—and I don't count myself as somebody that's really good—I'm just trying to do what I feel Jesus Christ and His apostles would do in this modern world. That's all I'm trying to do. And I'm trying to do it without being holy or "Hallelujah" or any of that stuff.

[1:45:31]

EE: Well, if I might wax theological for a moment, God doesn't expect us to be good. He knows we can't be, so--.

TC: No, no. I'm not going to use a "Hallelujah" or all that stuff because that seems phony to me. I just believe in telling the truth, trying to help people find out what the truth is about God and Jesus Christ, and health and stuff like that. I don't believe in going through all that other histrionic stuff. It seems phony to me.

EE: It's not our goodness, but God's grace that counts, doesn't it?

TC: Yeah, yeah.

EE: Anything else you want to say about the Port Ship? We're running towards the end of this two-hour card.

TC: Well, there is a little bit about--. I told you about the ships being built there, and there was--.

EE: Yeah, Owen is needing to break away shortly. So.

OM: May have to do another interview, Ernie.

EE: [Laughs] We may have to. It allows for only three.

TC: They made their own tug down there, you know. Did I tell you that? They had their own tug.

EE: Yeah, I think you did mention that.

TC: Well, I can't be sure. They had their own tug. They had a bubbling system there—I think I told you about that.

EE: Mmhmm.

TC: They also converted a lot of ships down there into self-unloaders over the years.

EE: Sure.

TC: That was quite a thing too.

EE: Maybe what we should do is wrap it up this afternoon, and maybe we can sit down with those pictures one of these evenings. I need to do a little checking on exactly where they came from to see if I can make the connection again and so on and so forth. And then perhaps we could maybe with the recorder on or not to spend some time looking at pictures. There's quite an array of them. A lot of them back to construction of a ship in 1918, successive pictures of this. Now I don't know what ship that was, but dates on the back, it's through the months of 1918.

TC: It's a crying shame, it's a crying shame that they didn't keep all the records here because they sent a lot of them to Kingston. Page did that.

EE: Yeah, to the Marine Museum there.

TC: Oh, they had films! They had films! All that stuff went to Kingston. There was one, they had a film—it's still in existence, I've seen it—a picture of them taking a plate out of the shop at the punch shed with the crane. It's still in existence. I've seen it somewhere. I can't be sure whether it was at--. That thing that used to be on TV there. That thing from Thunder Bay Television they used to have. Visionettes or something. I think it was in there.

EE: Oh, yes, those vignettes.

TC: I think it was in there.

EE: It probably is. I've got the series of, what, five different tapes. I must say, I've never sat down to watch them, but I should take a look at them sometime.

TC: Yeah. Yeah. I think it might be in there. I've seen it. I've seen it. There was a short cut showing them. You can see these guys hanging onto the edge of it and it's rocking back and forth like this as they're taking it out of the shop with the crane.

EE: Sure, sure.

TC: That was back in the '20s or '30s.

EE: Yeah.

TC: But there was a lot of bad stuff happened down there.

EE: Well, should we wrap it up for this afternoon then? Thanks very much again, Tom, for narrating.

TC: Yeah, ok. Yeah.

EE: Push the button, Owen.

End of Interview.