

**Narrator:** Doug McMillan (DM)

**Company Affiliations:** Seafarers' International Union (SIU)

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**Interviewer:** Nancy Perozzo (NP)

**Recorder:** Monika McNabb (MM)

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**Summary:** Former sailor and secretary treasurer for the Seafarers' International Union Doug McMillan discusses his career in lake and ocean shipping both on the boats and within union administration. He describes his early interactions with the grain elevators through his father's union work and his first time in the Seafarers' union hall. He details his first sailing job on the *Canadoc*, which involved shovelling grain out of the cargo holds, as well as detailing the hierarchy onboard ships, alcohol use, and discipline for rowdy sailors. McMillan then details his move up from deckhand to oiler and wheelsman, sharing stories of particularly bad storms. He goes on to discuss his move into the union, first as a patrolman, then as a port agent, then vice president of the West Coast, then finally secretary treasurer for all of Canada. He describes the structure of the SIU, the satellite offices across the country, common grievances, contract negotiations, and changes to the industry that had an effect on Great Lakes and ocean seafarers. Other topics discussed include the collapse of UGG Elevator A, the harsh conditions on unregulated foreign vessels, International Transport Workers Federation ship inspections, prostitution aboard ships, incidents of accidents and injuries, and an unsuccessful RCMP investigation into the union.

**Keywords:** Seafarers' International Union; Grain transportation—ships; Labour unions; Seafarers; Sailors; Deckhands; Oilers; Wheelsmen; Able seamen; Lakers; Salties; Ocean-going vessels; Terminal grain elevators—Thunder Bay; Union halls; Great Lakes trade; International trade; *Canadoc*; Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks (BRAC); Ship unloading; Welland Canal; St. Lawrence Seaway; International Transport Workers Federation (ITF); Grievances; Hal C. Banks; Alcohol and drug abuse; Canallers; Tugs; Collective agreements; Contract negotiations; Computerization; Automation; Accidents and injuries; Workplace fatalities; Ship disasters; Ship accidents; East Coast; West Coast; Quebec; Newfoundland; Ontario; Northwest Territories; Florida; Grain elevator disasters; United Grain Growers Elevator A; UGG A Collapse

Time, Speaker, Narrative

NP: It is November 25<sup>th</sup>—a month until Christmas—2014, and this interview is taking place at Nancy Perozzo’s apartment in Thunder Bay. And I’m going to have the interviewee narrator for this evening introduce himself and his connection to grain.

DM: Well, my name is Doug McMillan, and I worked for the Seafarers’ International Union [SIU] for 30 years, and prior to that, worked onboard ships carrying grain for a short period, two years.

NP: I didn’t ask you when we were doing sort of the paperwork at the beginning, but what was your final position with the Seafarers’ Union?

DM: The final position was secretary treasurer. It was a national position. We don’t have locals. We have local offices, but it’s all national positions. So I was the secretary treasurer.

NP: Now, you’re the first person that we have spoken to, as far as I know, who was involved with the Seafarers’ Union, so we will spend some time when we get to that part of your career and have you explain a little bit more about it, because we’re hoping 100 years from now people will be listening to this and just wondering how things were organized. So were you born in Thunder Bay?

DM: Yes. Born and raised here.

NP: When did you first notice elevators?

DM: Oh, my father worked for the grain elevator union.

NP: Oh, did he?

DM: He worked for, at that time, it was BRAC, Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks, Lodge 650. That’s when there was 32 grain elevators in the port of Thunder Bay. My dad was the business agent for that.

NP: Wow.

DM: So from the time I was 13 years old, I’ve been hanging around grain elevators.

NP: What part of Thunder Bay did you grow up in?

DM: College Street between River and the Pit.

NP: Do you remember your first visit to an elevator by any chance?

DM: My first visit into an elevator?

NP: Yeah.

DM: Yeah.

NP: What can you tell us about it?

DM: I was in United Grain Growers [UGG] 15 minutes before it fell over into Port Arthur Shipyards. My father had taken my sister and I down there to see the big cracks in the foundation. We went into the elevator, and we took a look inside. Of course, it wasn't operating at that time because it was condemned. We left there, and we got home, and I'll remember until the day I die my mother was sitting at the kitchen table all white-faced because she knew we were down there. She'd gotten a call that the elevator had gone over. So, like I say, we were there 15 minutes before it went over.

NP: Did you go back down once you heard?

DM: Oh, yeah. Dad took us down there, got as close as we could to it, but not that day, of course. It was later on.

NP: What did it look like? Was it totally submerged, or could you see anything?

DM: No, no. It was laying over on its side, and it took all the water--. It took it all over to the Shipyards, took out half the Shipyards. I believe the library still has pictures of it. Very interesting. That was my first encounter with a grain elevator.

NP: Do you know how your dad got involved? Had he been a grain handler before he joined the union?

DM: Yeah. He worked at United Grain Growers, I guess, all his life when he got out of the Navy after the war. There was a guy by the name of Cecil Hardick who was the business agent, and Cecil Hardick got some position with the Ontario branch of BRAC, and he got my father in there on a part time relieving basis. And then my dad ran for election and subsequently worked there.

NP: Did you get any kind of sense about what your father thought about the job? I mean, often as kids we don't pay much attention. Dad goes out, and he comes home.

DM: No. No, I really didn't. I was gone out of the house at 18, so no, I didn't pay much attention to it at all.

NP: So as a kid then, did you play around the elevators?

DM: No. I remember going in the summertime with my dad. That was before mandatory check off of union dues, and the union official had to go around and take union dues by hand. So in the summer holidays, my dad would say, "Do you want to come with me?" So I would stay in the car, and he would go in and take all the union dues and come back in the hall and back outside and get in the car, and we'd go to the next elevator. A couple of times in the summer of my 14<sup>th</sup> year, I guess, or 15<sup>th</sup> year, I was around all the grain elevators. It was kind of neat for a kid.

NP: Yeah. What did you think about them?

DM: Didn't. Just big buildings. Big buildings. [Laughing] And then when I was, jeez, I guess I was 16 at the time, I got a summer job working for a construction company—I can't remember the construction company—putting the extension on Pool 3. I worked for the summer. That was my construction job for the summer.

**[0:05:13]**

NP: Was that the metal bins or the--?

DM: The concrete bins. They extended it inland by I don't know how many silos it was, but that was when I was 16. Now, that's a long time ago. I'm 65 now. [Laughing] I'm surprised my memory is this good!

NP: It's amazing what will come back.

DM: Yeah.

NP: So what did you do on construction? What were your jobs? Did you have to--.

DM: Oh, I was a kid. I was just a labourer. I went around and cleaned up and worked the shovel. Did whatever I was told.

NP: You didn't have to do any high work?

DM: No, no. Never got into the elevator. It was all outside. [Laughs] It was just do what you were told by the foreman or anybody on the thing. You were summer help. Same as it is now for a kid working summer help.

NP: So you finished school and then decided to go directly into work?

DM: Yeah. Yeah. I knew a guy, Casey Summerville. He was working at the union hall at the time.

NP: Which union hall is this?

DM: That was the hall on Simpson Street, 408 Simpson Street. The SIU was a hiring-hall system where if a shipping company needed a replacement for a ship, they called the union hall, and the union hall dispatched. You had to go in there, and you had to hang around the hall as a new member. Clean the ashtrays and clean the floors at the end of the day, and if you got a job, you got a job.

NP: Why did you decide to even go into the union hall? Was it because of the friend?

DM: Yeah, it was because of the friend. He told me you could make some good money. He says, "It's a good life." He says, "You don't have to work long, and you can get a pocketful of money, and you can get off and have a little vacation. You can have lots of vacations," and I figured that was just the greatest kind of job—little bit of work and lots of vacations. It wasn't so much that. It wasn't true. Wasn't true. [Laughing] You had to work, and you made your own vacations. You quit when you wanted to and went back to work when you wanted to. That was just the way it was at that time. The seafaring industry was a transient industry. Guys were living in hotels. All the hotels on Simpson Street were full of sailors. Simpson Hotel, the West, the Adanac. All those hotels down there.

NP: Where would those sailors have come from?

DM: Newfoundland mostly. Newfoundland, Cape Breton. They come up. Thunder Bay was a bustling port. We had lots of jobs go through the union hall here, and the Lakehead was always a popular spot for Newfoundlanders. So they came up here and shipped out and some of them stayed in these hotels in town.

NP: Can you tell us, just sort of give us a picture of what a day would be like in the union hall? The type of people, the different positions that would be around, the numbers of people that would come in.

DM: It would vary in the spring fit-out time when the ships are all starting. You could have 150 guys in the union hall, guys and girls sitting there waiting for jobs. Not everybody is going to get a job, so there was going to be some leftover having to wait for the first wave of replacements for guys getting fired or guys not showing up. Somebody will miss a ship on the Welland Canal. They'll go ashore and not make it back, and then their replacement is called when the ship gets up here. So job calls were every hour on the hour. You had to be there in order to get a job. You had a registration card. You had to physically fill that in. Sometimes you were competing against ten or 15 guys for a job if it was a good ship. Sometimes if it was a bad ship, you were there all by yourself throwing your card in. [Laughs] You'd go, "Uh-oh. I'm getting myself into something here. Nobody else is throwing in." But that was all part and parcel of being the new guy on the block.

NP: What made the difference between a good ship and a bad ship? What were the ones that--?

DM: Overtime. Money. Accommodations mainly. You get some of the older ships--. Like I remember the old *Royalton*. I put six days on it, and that was one trip from here to Chicago and back. I worked in the engine room, and it was 120 degrees in the engine room, and it was 130 degrees in your room because it was right above the boiler. No air conditioning. So it didn't take me long to get off that boat. And then you get on another one that has air conditioning and there's only two in a room. The *Royalton* there was four in a room. So you sort of sit back and waited for the better jobs.

NP: What was your first ship?

DM: First ship was the *Canadoc*, Paterson. We went with corn from here to Chicago first thing in the spring. April 5<sup>th</sup>, I think, we left.

NP: Were you expecting anything? Like you had never been on a ship before, I take it?

DM: Had no idea what was going to happen. Had no idea. I asked the dispatcher, "What do I take?" So he gave me a list of everything I had to have, went out and got everything I had to have—rubber boots, rain gear, warm weather gear, cold weather gear—put it in a seabag, and went to work.

**[0:10:12]**

NP: So tell us how that day progressed.

DM: Going back to 1970.

NP: As best you can.

DM: Well, I got on, they assigned you to a room, then you went to work. It was spring fit-out, so all the lines were out. You had to take all the lines back in and do what's called singling up, which is just leaving the regular mooring lines in and take all the winter lines in, put them all away. The stores would show up, all the food, so you're taking on food for a long period of time, and that can take upwards of half a day in the spring just to take that onboard and put it away. You helped the galley staff as much as you can.

NP: Who would you have reported to?

DM: Well, there was a hierarchy on the ship. Of course, the captain was the ultimate. You didn't see him down on deck too often, but there was a first mate and a second mate and a third mate, and they each stood a watch. First mate was a 4:00 to 8:00, second mate was a 12:00 to 4:00, and the third mate was the 8:00 to 12:00. So during those times, that's who was your highest ranking superior. Then you had a wheelsman, who was up in the wheelhouse steering the boat, and you had a watchman, who the mate would give the orders too to give to the deckhands. There was huge numbers of people on these ships back then. I mean, it was just-. If you take a look at it and today's manning scales, it was mind boggling how many people were on a boat back then. Upwards of 30.

NP: And now?

DM: Oh, now you've got 17. Let's see. On the *Canadoc*, there was a captain, three mates, four or three wheelsmen—they had seven—three watchmen is ten, six deckhands is 16, four oilers is 20, four in the stewards department, 24, and four engineers, 28, and an electrician, 29.

NP: And a cook, I assume?

DM: That's four in the stewards department.

NP: Oh, okay.

DM: Cook, second cook, porter, and a night cook. Now, you've got in the galley on these big ships that are twice that size, you've got a cook and a second cook. A cook and a porter, pardon me. That's it to feed 17 people. And in some cases, there's not even 17 on these ships. Where there was four people in a department working hard hours, now there's one guy in that department with a computer in front of him. He doesn't even go in the department, just works it all by computer. So things have changed an awful lot since I got on that *Canadoc*, and those ships aren't even around anymore. They've long since gone for scrap.

NP: Was it a good sailing, the first trip you took?

DM: I'd never been going across, I said, to Chicago. We left on a Friday. Friday, we left on, oh jeez, maybe noon on Friday, and I thought, "Oh jeez, we're going to Chicago. That can't be very far." [Laughing] "We're going to be in there for Saturday night?" "Oh, no, no. It takes you longer to get there than that." It took a while to even get a good night's sleep. Like we're leaving, and there's big floes of ice out there. We're hitting this ice. It's a metal ship, and it's reverberated back and forth. You wake up, and the boat's moving. It took a while to get used to that. Took a while to get used to that. I set with a guy from Thunder Bay—he was my roommate—and it was funny. Six deckhands, and in one room it was two guys from Thunder Bay, two days of Isle aux Morts, Newfoundland, and two guys from Sydney Mines, Cape Breton. So they sort of put them all together so you were with somebody from your hometown. [Laughs] That Mcmuldroch fellow, I'd gone out with his daughter. So he sort of took me under his arm and showed me what the score was onboard a ship. Everybody got along, until the drinking started.

NP: Hm. Which was how far out? [Laughing] How far out of the bay?

DM: Actually, it's only when you go ashore. They don't allow any alcohol, even to this day. No alcohol allowed onboard a ship. None whatsoever. Caught with any, there's nothing. You're gone. You're terminated.

NP: Drugs the same thing?

DM: Oh, drugs is even worse. Yeah. The company will lose the ship. If they find drugs on the ship in the US, they impound the ship. So they have random searches. They take it very seriously and so does the union. The union takes it very, very seriously. It's an offence within the union's rules to report to a ship under the influence of alcohol.

NP: So I've taken you across the lake now, and then you would have come to the locks.

DM: Yeah. Sault Ste. Marie.



NP: Was that something you were familiar with, or this was news to you?

DM: No. The only people that see that are tourists that go down the Welland Canal and take a look or people on a ship. There's no other reason for anybody to be anywhere near them. So you go through the locks. Sault Ste. Marie is not a big drop. It's not like the Welland Canal. You don't go up and down very far. You sail through it, and you're in the same area as a river.

**[0:15:21]**

NP: And when did you get your first break?

DM: First break?

NP: Or you were on the ship until you got to Chicago?

DM: Oh, yeah. You're on there for three months. Your first shot, you have to do three months. You don't dare get off that ship until your union dues are paid off, and that takes you three months. After that, you can get off, but before that, if you get off before three months and go back to the union hall and your dues aren't paid up? Goodbye.

NP: So how did this drinking occur then? Like people who were off--.

DM: Well, ashore. You go ashore, and then everybody gets back to the ship as it's ready to leave or back at nighttime, and that's when the trouble starts. Not often, but it does happen.

NP: Trouble?

DM: Fights. Personality conflicts.

NP: Was that something that was foreign to you? Or as a kid you were sort of used to that kind of thing?

DM: Well, not really, no. I wasn't used to that. Jeez, I went there when I was 20, so it was pretty much, besides working at Great Lakes Paper for a brief time, it was pretty much my first job. It was my first time going to sea and being in that type of an environment. So I don't really know.

NP: So how did you react?

DM: Like anybody else. Cool. Keep your nose out of other peoples' business and you're not going to get in trouble. [Laughs] It's very simple.

NP: Get under the bunk?

DM: No, no. [Laughing] No.

NP: Then what happened with discipline? What--?

DM: Discipline was fairly, fairly swift. They didn't fool around. There was so many guys sitting in the union hall, they didn't need any agitators onboard ships. No. Make a wrong move, you're gone. Pack your bags, go.

NP: So the next port they're out?

DM: Next port, they're out. Sometimes you get off just before the port. If you come back to the ship, and it's leaving at midnight, and you're back there 10:00 all gassed up, the captain will pay you off right then and there. "Get off the boat. You're not staying on here." So they didn't fool around with it. They didn't fool around with it. There was a big pool to draw on. There isn't so much today. They get a guy on there, they'll give him maybe a little bit more slack than they would have 30 years ago.

NP: Why do you think there's less competition for the jobs?

DM: Lots of work ashore now. The Newfoundlanders can go out to the tar sands in Alberta, and they work for a couple of weeks, go home for a week, and the company pays all their way. You still have to work three months onboard a ship on the Great Lakes, and then you go home for a month.

NP: Thunder Bay is a maritime city in that it's on a lake, but it doesn't strike me—and this is where you can correct me—that there was a great number of sailors from Thunder Bay. Am I wrong?

DM: No, you're right. That's why we closed the hall here.

NP: Why do you think that is?

DM: There's always been an ample amount of work here in Thunder Bay, really, if you take a look at our history. We had five paper mills, we had 32 grain elevators, lots of construction. The railroad was big here. I think there was a lot of jobs where you didn't have to leave home, and sailors were thought of as a rough and tumble. You've got to be tough in order to go there. Sailors didn't have the best of reputation in the '70s on the waterfront on Simpson Street, so I think a lot of the people from around here shied away from it. Newfoundland on the other hand, and Cape Breton on the other hand, there was nothing there. I mean, there was no jobs down there at all. So they would come up here to ship out. It's the same way they go now to Fort McMurray, to the tar sands, and work up there. But we found they were flying overtop of three union halls to get to Thunder Bay to ship out. Why do we need Thunder Bay when there's nobody from Thunder Bay that lives here? Nobody that lives here. We figured out there was less than 50 people, and we were maintaining a union hall here for it. So we shipped everything to Thorold, our big union hall in the Welland Canal.

NP: When you got to Chicago, what's it like coming into a port for the first time?

DM: It can be kind of interesting, especially a big city if you've never been to something like Chicago. You like to be out on deck and take a look. Unfortunately, deckhands are there to work, and they don't get a chance to stand around and take a look at the skyline. But we had to go up the Chicago River to the southside of Chicago, which is a very narrow river and going under all those bridges in Chicago. It was kind of cool because you got tugs on the forward end, tugs on the after end, and they're making the turns and everything. It was very, very interesting going into Chicago. It was kind of neat.

**[0:20:29]**

NP: And were you told what to expect when you got there as to what your job was going to be or were you just sort of drawn along as--?

DM: As you were instructed to do something, there was always somebody working next to you, you know? They never said, "Open up a hatch," and said to a new guy, "Okay, jump in and start shovelling grain." Shovel it where? So there was a certain amount of instruction.

NP: So did you have to shovel grain?

DM: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

NP: Now, tell us about that.

DM: Well, you get down to the bottom of a cargo hold, and it's a massive, huge cargo hold, and they put huge front-end loaders in down there. They have what's called a leg, and the leg goes in, and it's a continual bucket that unloads grain. But when you get down to the steel deck down at the bottom, then that bucket can't pick anything up. So the front-end loader will grab it out of the corners, drop it. We sweep it up to the pile, and we keep on shovelling it and shovel it so that everything gets taken out on that leg. Oh, yeah. There was lots of shovelling. Lots of shovelling down in the cargo hold.

NP: You shovelled different kinds of grain?

DM: Corn, grain, flax. Anything that's in the cargo hold.

NP: Is there a comparison? Like are there some that are easier to shovel than others?

DM: No, they were all tough. [Laughing] It was all tough. To a kid that's never shovelled, it was, yeah.

NP: You're looking at your hands.

DM: Well, it was, yeah, it was a tough job down there for six to eight hours shovelling.

NP: Blisters?

DM: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Sore muscles for somebody who hasn't done that type of work. It wasn't fun. It wasn't fun. Then once you got all the grain out, and they took the machinery out, as you're going out the river, you're hosing down, because you've got to clean the cargo holds. There can't be any grain left in it for your next cargo. It has to be completely cleaned out. So you just spend a couple of days in the cargo hold with hoses, then you're off in the next port.

NP: Did you stay as a deckhand? Did you move up at all or--?

DM: Yeah, I moved up. I stayed as a deckhand on that ship for the mandatory three months, came back to Thunder Bay, and I went out as an oiler, like I said, on the *Royalton* that went from here to Chicago. I should say Indiana Harbour, which is part of Chicago, I guess. Yes, it's Chicago.

NP: Tell us about the job of an oiler.

DM: Well, you're down in the engine room. And that was an old ship, and it was all manual oiling. There was no automatic oilers, so you went around with a can, and you actually oiled. I wasn't there long enough to even have any good or bad memories of that job.

NP: Would that keep you busy for a whole shift?

DM: Oh, yeah. Four hours. Four hours on, eight hours off. So if you're on the 4:00 to 8:00 watch, you work 4:00 in the morning until 8:00 in the morning, and then you're off until 4:00 in the afternoon. You worked 4:00 until 8:00.

NP: How did you adjust to shiftwork?

DM: Well, I'd done shift work at Great Lakes Paper. So shift work wasn't--. Deckhands worked straight days. They worked 8:00 to 5:00 and overtime if there's anything to be done after that. But the watchkeeper watched who worked the shift work.

NP: And how do you spend your off hours other than the sleeping ones?

DM: Sleeping. [Laughs] Sleeping. Yeah, sleeping, reading. There was a TV. There's a rec room there. They had all kinds of games. But essentially nothing, really. There was nothing else to do. If you were in port and you were off, you could go to shore. So then I went out as an oiler, went back as a deckhand, and then shipped out as an able seaman on the East Coast, and that's the guy that steers the ship. So I guess my last three ships, I was an AB on the last three ships that I had.

NP: And what were your last three ships?

DM: It was the *Thorold*, which was Quebec and Ontario Transportation, and that was a boat that ran from Baie-Comeau to Florida with paper. A week in Baie-Comeau loading, a week in Florida unloading, and then back up. And it was a straight trip, just like a streetcar back and forth. Next one was the *Axel Heiberg*, which was a tanker that ran the East Coast 12 months a year. So we did all around Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and summertime we went up into the Arctic, but I went off for that trip. Then my last one was a boat called the *Prindoc*, Paterson. Yeah, that was my last one.

[0:25:16]

NP: Did you have a preference for one company or another as a sailor?

DM: No, not really because the contract was the same.

NP: Pretty much the same?

DM: Yeah. Contract was the same on all of them. Paterson was very cheap. Their mates were told not to give out overtime unless it's absolutely necessary. So you knew. And they had the bigger crew, so once you had the bigger crew, there is not much overtime. Now the same ship, there's all kinds. The guys are quitting because there's too much overtime because now, they're down to three guys instead of, like, nine.

NP: Now you said the last sailings you were doing what?

DM: Able seaman.

NP: And--.

DM: AB or wheelsman for lack of--.

NP: Wheelsman. So what is a wheelsman?

DM: A wheelsman, he stands up there and steers the ship.

NP: Without practice? [Laughs]

DM: No, no, no. [Laughing] No, no!

NP: You went from shovelling grain to steering ships. I'm a little worried! [Laughs]

DM: Well, on the *Axel Heiberg*, I went up there on my own time. I started there as an ordinary seaman, and I went up on my own time. You go up and ask the captain, "Do you mind if I watch the AB?" Then once you got to know the commands--.

NP: The AB?

DM: The AB, the able seaman.

NP: Okay.

DM: Once you got to know all of the commands, then you say, “Do you mind if I take the wheel, captain?” And if he was a good skipper, he would let you take the wheel because he wants to train the guys coming up. Some of the guys like on the *Canadoc*, he didn’t even allow you in the wheelhouse. “No deckhand in my wheelhouse,” he’d say. But on the East Coast boats, they were all about the training. They didn’t want to call the union hall for a guy who was at the top job. They wanted to call the union hall for the guy that was at the bottom job. So they liked promoting from within. So yeah, you’d get on going down the St. Lawrence River. You’d get there, and he’d given you commands to manoeuvre the ship, and if you did good, if there was a position come available, he promoted you.

NP: Did you ever hit anything?

DM: Nothing!

NP: Darn! [Laughs] There goes a good story!

DM: Well. [Laughing] I did, but it was the captain’s fault. I hit the bay. I hit the dock.

NP: [Laughs] Okay. Do tell us about the mistake the captain made.

DM: I hit the dock in Tampa. We were coming into Tampa, and they’ve got a pilot on. They were bringing it into the dock like this, and then you come around like that, and you just slide up the dock. Well, you have to have thrust on the propeller in order to move the ship with the wheel. There was no thrust on the propeller and I had it cranked over, and it was still going, and it hit the dock. The pilot and the skipper turned around and looked at me and said, “Pardon?” And all I did was point at the telegraph, and the telegraph was on zero. I just pointed at the telegraph, and they turned around and went--. [Laughs]

NP: And what does that mean, “The telegraph is at zero”?

DM: The telegraph is the binnacle that tells the engine room how fast to turn the propeller. So they had it turned off. So they didn’t put the--. So it wasn’t my fault.

NP: Was there much damage?

DM: No, no. They have pretty good bumpers on those. We weren't going that fast anyways. It was just you never liked to bump the ship. ABs take pride in not bumping the ship.

NP: Now, you worked on ships that took grain, paper, and a tanker. Much difference in working on any of those?

DM: Well, it's just the cargo is different. Hatches.

NP: Does the ship handle differently with different cargo?

DM: Well, it's the structure of the ship. The grain ships back then had the after-end housing, the forward-end housing, and all your cargo holds in between. Okay, now they're building it with just the after-end, the after-end. The bow, there's no housing on the front. Same hatch principle on a self-unloader that was built yesterday as it was built 40 years ago. On a tanker, there are no hatches. There's manholes, airtight manhole, to get into the tanks. On the *Prindoc*, those paper boats, it was what was called McGregor hatches. You lowered the boom, and you hook a cable onto it, and all the hatches rolled back and stand up. That opens up the whole big square hatch for getting the product in and out. So yeah, there was a difference. When I got on the *Prindoc*, I'd never seen a McGregor hatch. I had no idea how to open it or to close it. So we had to learn. And they teach you.

NP: Was it a good learning experience? Did you learn something new all the time?

**[0:30:00]**

DM: All the time. All the time. Especially if you were going from ship to ship. You just got to learn all the different ships. If you're up in the wheelhouse, one is pretty much the same as the other for steering.

NP: So what would you say, if you were thinking back on that time as a sailor, what were the biggest challenges?

DM: A lot of it was being away from home, you know? You were gone for, like I say, three months. I was gone, oh, jeez, I guess one time I was gone six months. I was living out of Quebec City at the time, but I was ashore for a lot of that time. But when I was still living in Thunder Bay, yeah, being away from friends and family is difficult. A lot of the guys on the East Coast, that was the



big joke that the only time a Newfie gets a divorce is if he doesn't have a job on a ship. That was because when he was away on the ship, everything was hunky dory.

NP: [Laughs]

DM: Of course, they're always away, the guys from the East Coast. It's either out on a fishing boat or up on the Great Lakes. Boredom. Boredom. Sense of confined space, I guess. Unless you had a bunch of good guys onboard the ship, and you made your own fun.

NP: And it must have been hell if you had a bad group.

DM: Yeah. Yeah. It makes the time go by an awful lot longer. Yeah. If you don't want to associate with who's on the ship with you because they're idiots. And that doesn't happen very often because the crews weed out those guys and get rid of them. So they don't stay long, unless you get the whole ship, and I can't see how it could ever happen. It's never happened to me that the whole ship was a bunch of people that you wouldn't want to be with.

NP: Did you ever consider going on an ocean ship?

DM: I was on ocean ships, yeah. Going down south.

NP: Other than the one going to Florida?

DM: Well, down to South America. The *Prindoc* was going-- Quebec City--. We loaded paper at Quebec City to Santa Marta, Colombia in South America, and then we went to another port in Colombia to get fuel, and then over to Tampa Bay on the inner gulf side of Florida for phosphate for Quebec, for Contrecoeur, Quebec. So a couple of trips on that one winter. But Canada didn't have any foreign-going ships. They didn't have any ships going across the ocean. There was no Canadian--. After the Second World War, Canada had the second largest deep-sea fleet in the world with a Canadian flag on the back of the ships. Right now, they have a non-existent deep-sea fleet. There's none. There's none. There are landlocked countries in Europe that have a bigger fleet than Canada does. [Laughs]

NP: And why do you think that is?

DM: Well, it costs a lot of money to register a ship in Canada. Canada has very stringent safety laws. So if you want to register your ship in Liberia, there's no safety laws there. There's no inspection laws. Nothing. Yeah, it's an awful lot. Register in Bermuda.

NP: So even though they travel into Canadian waters, that doesn't matter because the law applies--.

DM: As long as you meet the basic international standards, and the basic international standards are very, very poor. Very, very poor.

NP: Can you give us an example of one area of legislation which would apply that would illustrate Canada's more stringent and--?

DM: Well, training. Canada and the US is way ahead of some of the other countries in the world as far as training of their unlicensed personnel. There's other countries in the world that they don't have unlicensed personnel. You're on an apprenticeship program to become a captain from the day you walk on that ship as a deck boy. The Scandinavian countries operate under that type of a system. Machinery inspections. You know, the international as opposed to the domestic was more the ITF, the International Transport Workers Federation, of which we're a part of, bailiwick as opposed to ours as the SIU's. We were more concerned just about the Canadian ships. We didn't care about the foreign ships that were coming in. The ITF took care of that.

NP: I'm getting a little confused here, so let me try to clarify something. So if you had a Canadian citizen, a sailor, who booked onto a Liberian ship.

**[0:35:08]**

DM: Yeah. If you can.

NP: If you can, and why couldn't you?

DM: Because a Canadian sailor wants too much money.

NP: Okay. So let's say you decided--.

DM: Yeah. You're not going to get on--. That's something that's not going to happen.

NP: So are you sort of at the mercy of the owners or are you still covered by a union?

DM: Oh, you bet. Oh, heavens, no. You're at the mercy. In fact, Canada Coast Guard, the Canadian Government, recommends right in your discharge book that you do not take those jobs, because you're on your own. Oh, we've heard horror stories of people going out and never coming back. Never seen again. Never seen again. Oh! I could tell you stories about ships coming into Canada that the ITF has to go down and service, and these guys come off scared like, "I'll never go back on that ship again." I mean, it's just rough. When you talk about rough, that's rough, especially out of the Ukraine, out of the eastern bloc countries. They're-- No, you wouldn't. Canadians-- No.

NP: So why would they be going onto the ship, to do repairs?

DM: Which, Canadians?

NP: The ones who came off and said, "Woah, that was scary."

DM: Oh, no. Well, they have to service. You have an ITF collective agreement, which is a basic--.

NP: ITF?

DM: ITF. International Transport Workers Federation. That's the worldwide umbrella for seafarers for signatory countries and companies. When a boat comes into Canada, they have to have what's called a blue certificate in order to get loaded. If they don't have a blue certificate from the ITF, they don't get loaded. And that means--.

NP: And what does the ITF look for?

DM: The ITF looks for payment of wages most of all. We've been involved in numerous ships that have come in here where the crew hasn't been paid in a year. We tie the ship up. Mission to Seamen gets involved, makes sure there's food onboard. A cruise ship was in Montreal for a year and a half abandoned by the company. If it wasn't for the church, those people wouldn't have eaten. They were just abandoned. And they can't--. They're on the ship, so they're foreign citizens. They can't just go ashore and say, "Okay, I'll get a job at the corner store." Can't do that. So they were abandoned in Canada until they finally--. I think the end result on that seizure was the boat was sold and part of the proceeds of the sale of the ship paid the crew, and they repatriated them back to their countries fortunately. But they were here for over a year. Yeah. You know, and until that ship hits a port with an ITF inspector, there's no way they're getting paid. So that's why we don't recommend that any Canadian go on a foreign ship.

NP: Would a lot of those ships, then, just try to plan their contracts so they never hit?

DM: In some cases, yeah. Yeah. In some cases, they choose their cargos very carefully. ITF in Canada, I guess it would have been--. There wasn't much in Canadian waters for ITF inspectors until we got involved in the '80s. So prior to the '80s, a ship would come into Canada and probably get away with anything. We had one inspector out of Montreal that did all of the Canadian waterways. Now there's three, I believe.

NP: A Canadian ship--. Well, I shouldn't say a Canadian ship, but the countries that are under the umbrella of that international group, would that be most countries?

DM: Most countries, yeah. I would say most countries that have a maritime--.

NP: And which ones are notoriously not?

DM: Well, like I say, I wasn't involved in that. I had no dealings with it whatsoever. Our union did, but that wasn't my department. I didn't go anywhere near it.

NP: What else was I going to ask you about that? Anything else that you'd--. Oh, we talked about the challenges. Good answers you have. I can understand that. Any work challenges that were tough? You know, other than the sort of living arrangements.

DM: Just it was hard work. It wasn't easy, and there was no--. Like once you got a cargo all loaded, and then the hatches all battened down, you figure, "What are we going to do?" Well, they've got you painting, or they've got you out with buckets and soogeeing the ship, like scrubbing it down with a Turks head, which is a brush this big. And hosing it down. The ship has to be pure white. I said, "Jesus, there's no breaks here at all, is there?" "No." [Laughs] Not whatsoever! But back then we only worked Monday to Friday. We were off Saturday and Sunday, and if they needed you to work Saturday or Sunday, they paid you this stupid thing called Chinese time. And that's just a long story of what Chinese time was. Now it's all overtime Saturday and Sunday.

**[0:40:34]**

NP: Did you ever have a dangerous situation? Like were you ever in a real bad storm or--?

DM: Oh, Jesus, yeah. Yeah, yeah. We were coming back on the *Prindoc* loaded with phosphate. That trip was--. That was problems going down and back. When we came around Cape Breton, there's a point there called Scatarie on Cape Breton Island, and that's where you make your turn, and you head straight down south, and you end up going between Puerto Rico and the mainland, and you go right into the Caribbean. So when you turn around there, you get out of pack ice, and as soon as we got out of the pack ice, the wind started, and we had--. In the wheelhouse, I would be standing at the wheel from here to that chair away from the windows. The windows would be right up to the ceiling in the wheelhouse. In the swell in front, you'd have to get down like this to see the top of it. It took all the antennas off the top of the wheelhouse. It smashed both lifeboats off the davits. It took both handrails that were that thick steel and just bent them all over the place. In 36 hours, we made 18 miles astern. It pushed us back 18 miles. The only thing you did was steer right into the swell. You don't dare let it go this way. The wheelsman, they put a belt around your waist, and they tied you to the floor so that you didn't fall off the wheel. Because when you get to the top of that swell, and that swell disappears, the boat's now going down the other side of that swell, and the whole front end of the ship was underneath the water. It's in blue water. Or as they call it, green water. Yeah, that was the worst storm I was ever in.

Coming back on that same trip, just at sunrise, the alarms start going off. Bells are ringing and sirens are going. We get up. The ship's not operating. We go outside, and we look. The shore is just right there, and we look. There's this much freeboard. Two inches of freeboard between the deck and the ice. What had happened, all night there was a mist blowing, and it was hitting the ship and coming up onto the boat. The ice was that thick, foot and a half to two feet thick, all over the deck, up the samson posts, and everything. So they couldn't tell because it was dark out, but once the light came up, they could see that they were on the verge of reaching that point of no return. So all he did was he steered for shore, and they have a depth sounder that monitors how far they are away from the bottom, and he put it and stopped it, put the anchor down, and if we did go down, there was enough water there that we wouldn't go all the way down. So came close to--. And it would have been like that, [snaps] had not the sun come up at that point. If it was another two hours, we'd have been gone.

NP: What would have happened? You just would have--.

DM: Just would have gone down like a rock. It would have become--.

NP: Because of the extra--?

DM: Because of the extra weight. It would have been like throwing a rock into the lake. Just gone.

NP: Was that when you decided to take on a different career? [Laughs]

DM: That's when I thought I might want to do something different, but no. [Laughing] No. Those things, they happen, but they don't happen on a regular basis. It just happened to happen to us twice in the same trip, which was a little unnerving. [Laughs] But we sat there for three days getting rid of all that ice. Three days it took us to chip that ice off. Wow. It was unbelievable.

NP: Talking to one person we interviewed who used to inspect ships' holds for the food safety group with the Canadian Government, he talked about the dangers of just having to be on deck when it's iced over.

DM: Oh, yeah. In the wintertime, there's always a little bit of ice there because there's always some sort of a mist coming up. They paint the pathways with a paint, and it's got sand mixed into it. So the sand sticks out of the paint, and it's sort of like a non-skid. But if you get enough ice on there, it just buries it. So yeah, you have to be really careful. Be conscious of--. Now, in times when there's a lot of ice and if you don't have to be on deck--. Like if you're living forward and the galley is back aft, they have tunnels that run to the back, and you use those tunnels in inclement weather to get forward and back. So you go back for your lunch, and you come back up forward. If it's really bad weather, they're not working you. There's nothing for you to do.

**[0:45:19]**

NP: So I think you were '72 to '74, do I have that right?

DM: Yeah. '72 to '74 working onboard the ships. Then came up--.

NP: Anything else? Any other stories that you can think of about that time on the ships?

DM: None that I would want to say, while we're on the tape.

NP: [Laughs] I really am upset about all this. People with the good stories always say, "I'll tell you afterwards." {Laughs}

DM: No, I won't even tell you afterwards because they're--.

NP: Then I have to interview myself. [Laughing]

DM: No, I think we'll pass on those stories. This is a G audience, I think, that's going to be for this.

NP: Oh, no. We're all adults. [Laughing] Well, you know--.

DM: I could tell you the stories, but then I'd have to throw you off the balcony. I'm sorry it's just--. [Laughs]

NP: Well, you know, I'll talk to you about this because--.

DM: You've got a bigger balcony than I've got. How did you get that? [Laughing]

NP: Oh, good things happen to good people. [Laughing] Oh, about a year ago, I was listening to a little radio station out of Grand Marais, and there was a young woman being interviewed who was a student at, I think, either University of Minneapolis or Duluth, and she had done research into prostitution on the ships.

DM: [Laughs]

NP: This I found a little upsetting, actually, because there was--. And she had interviewed several of the women who had been, "Come on, have a party on the ship," and before she knew it, one woman that stuck in my mind ended up—from Duluth—ended up sort of dumped in Thunder Bay. Finally, she, I guess through social services, managed to get back to Duluth. So that's sort of one of the--.

DM: I don't know whether that's going to be entirely true. You can't just dump a sailor in a foreign country.

NP: Not a sailor. The prostitute.

DM: Was she part of the crew? So somebody must have smuggled her onboard then. But you can't just dump people in a foreign country off a ship.

NP: No, and you also cannot bring women onto ships for prostitution, but it happened. Happens.

DM: Well, I inadvertently shipped one out time.

NP: Hm?

DM: I inadvertently shipped one out one time through the union hall. Oh, yeah. Soon as the ship left Thunder Bay, she set up shop. Three days down to the Welland Canal. The captain said, “The only reason why I had to get rid of her was she was making more money than me.” [Laughing]

NP: So she got her union card?

DM: No. I didn’t ship her back out. I said, “Sorry, Viv, I can’t ship you out again. That’s too bad.” [Laughing]

NP: So, not naming any names, but was that common?

DM: No, no. No, not common at all.

NP: So there’s something going on here because also I thought, how do you hide somebody on a ship when you’re going across international--? You know, you’re going from Duluth, US, into Canada, and how does this happen that a person who’s not part of the crew--.

DM: It’s a big ship. They don’t search the ship. I took Mary Hawkins from Newfoundland to New York with me. Customs down there didn’t--. They check the crew’s manifest. If there’s any names come up that is in their book, they come on with it used to be a big book of names this big of people that are not allowed in the US, and they would compare the ship’s manifest’s names to what’s in the book. If there was anybody that matched the name in the book, then they had to post a guard at the gangway. But they didn’t physically go around and check the ship. So. I don’t know what they do now with 9/11. After 9/11 and the new security, the new port state control, that may be different now.

NP: Yes. We had to sign on before we went onto the--. Was it a Ukrainian ship?

MM: Polish.

NP: Polish ship for a tour. We got off immediately, I might add. [Laughing] Anyway. So you then had a change of career. How did that come about?

DM: I was living in Quebec City at the time and had done a couple of things for the union down there.

NP: Such as?



DM: I can't remember what I did, but it was just a couple things that I did, and they thought that I would be a good fit for a job up here. So they asked me if I'd come up, and I said sure. I got a haircut and a shave because I had long hair and a beard and came to Thunder Bay. [Laughs] It was a natural fit because I knew the waterfront. I was from here, and I shipped out of here.

**[0:50:05]**

NP: So what position did you take?

DM: A patrolman. A patrolman. All you did was go around, come in in the morning, grab his briefcase, find out what ships were in port, and go to every ship. Make sure everything was being done by the contract, check the crew, make sure everybody was all paid up, and then if there was any grievances on that ship, settle them with the captain. Then you moved to the next ship, and you do them all.

NP: So that I don't forget, I'll ask the question now because you brought up grievances. So what would be typical grievances that would come up on a regular basis? And what would be the most unusual one you ever had?

DM: Well, there was one kid I remember when I was working in the office in Seven Islands, and he'd come up to me, and he said, "Do I get overtime for feeding the cow? Because the captain won't give it to me." And I said, "For feeding the cow?" He says, "Yeah." He says, "I've got to feed the cow four times a day." "What cow?" [Laughing] He took me over to the hatch, and there was a big pen down in the cargo hold, and there was a cow in there because it was part of the freight they were taking down the river. And he says, "I want to file a grievance because I don't think that should be my job." And I said, "I'm not going to get involved in a grievance about feeding a cow." So that was one of the funnier ones that I had.

But they were mostly--. The substantiated grievances, real grievances, dismissals. You have to really, really take a good look at them, an unbiased look. A guy could be fired off six ships for being drunk on six ships, seventh ship, he was fired by reputation alone. Got to take the grievance. Got to take the grievance based on the information for that particular firing. A lot of time, a lot of money is spent on discipline grievances. Monetary grievances like for overtime, almost nonexistent. They know they got--. They signed a contract. They know they have to abide by it. We had one company that, because he knew that probably 30 percent of his deck crew couldn't read or write—they were from Newfoundland—purposely robbed their overtime. And when we caught him—and I happened to be in Toronto at the time—I took the grievance, and then I got my boss to go over to see the president of the company.

The guy who was in charge of taking the overtime sheets and doing the cheques—at that time, they paid them by cheque manually—he said, “Yeah, it’s my duty to make this company as much money as I can.” He said, “For years, they haven’t paid me anything because I’ve taken it all back from the deckhands.” President of the company fired him right on the spot. Said, “Get out. You don’t have a job here anymore.” He said, “I signed an agreement that said I’m going to pay these guys,” so he had some company come in and do an audit all the way back and pay the guys out everything they owed them, which was really good, which was really nice. But there was some very unscrupulous shipowners out there, but by and large, they were all really good. We didn’t have that many grievances.

NP: Tell me a bit about the union set up. You mentioned there was sort an international body, and then that would be like the--. What would it be? The International Labour Organization [ILO], which is a--.

DM: Well, the ILO is based out of Geneva, Switzerland, and we’re signatory to the ILO, but the structure of our union is, it’s the Seafarers’ International Union of North America out of the US. We’re a direct subsidiary of that. We get our charter from the US union. Back in the ‘60s, we got our own constitution, and we still pay a per capita tax to the US, but we run ourselves completely. We don’t take any direction from them whatsoever.

NP: Was there a reason for the split?

DM: For the--?

NP: Why Canada decided to go on its own rather than just be part of the North American--.

DM: Well, if you know the story of the saga of Hal Banks--.

NP: The name I’ve heard.

DM: [Laughs] There used to be a union here called the Canadian Seamen’s Union, and it was communist controlled. So in the late ‘50s, the Canadian Government went to the US and said, “Is there somebody you can send up here to form another union?” So they sent Hal Banks up, and he formed the Seafarers’ International Union. He got a little carried away after he formed the union. He ended up leaving.

NP: In what way did he get carried--?

DM: I'm not going to get into that. I'm not going to get into that. There's books you can pick up and read. There's a movie that was put out by the film board, National Film Board, called *Canada's Sweetheart: The Saga of Hal Banks*. You can pick that up at any library. You can probably get it online somehow. Great movie. Relatively accurate. Relatively accurate. But he came in and cleaned up that communist union. That was right after the war, eh? After the Korean War, I guess, it was. But that was well before me. I was still in short pants then.

**[0:55:20]**

NP: So did you say a date that the Canadian subsidiary came into being?

DM: It was in the '60s, I believe. Early '60s, late '50s. I'm unsure of those days.

NP: So well underway by the time you--?

DM: Oh, most definitely. There was a couple of Canadian presidents after Hal Banks by the time I come around in '72.

NP: And their head office is--?

DM: Our head office is in Montreal.

NP: And satellite offices?

DM: Thorold, Quebec City, and Vancouver.

NP: That was it?

DM: Well, that's all there is now. But there used to be, jeez, there was Halifax. I had an office in Seven Islands, Quebec. Quebec City, Montreal, Thorold, Thunder Bay, and Vancouver.

NP: The reduction to three came about because of--?

DM: Well, when I started in '74, there was 140 ships on the Great Lakes, and there was 12,000 members in the SIU. Now, they're down to below 50 ships and probably 3,200 members, if that. 2,800 members. Simple economics. Simple economics. You don't

have the money to run all those ports, plus you don't have the people using them. It used to be that the union hall was a place that the sailor could call his own. We had laundry facilities in there for them. We had shower facilities because a lot of these hotels, one common bathroom on the floor, eh? The guys were used to at least a room had its own shower on the ship, or two rooms had one shower. A guy could come in there, get cleaned up, clean his gear, and possibly even get a bite to eat at the union hall. There was a TV there, there was always a big pool table, slate-bottom pool table, and that's where he got his jobs. I went a little bit off tangent now. I can't remember where we were going with this.

NP: Well, I asked why it had been reduced down to--.

DM: Oh, okay. I guess it all goes back to what I said at the very beginning is you worked until you had a pocketful of money. Once that money was gone, you went back to the union hall and shipped out again and got another pocketful of money. There was only two cars in the parking lot, and that was the vice president's and the patrolman's. And then all of a sudden, you saw people with their own apartments, their own houses. We had to buy union halls with parking lots because members were showing up in cars. So the membership of the union started to evolve and change. They were going on ships and not getting off when they got the pocketful of money because they said, "Holy mackerel. If I stay for another couple of months, I can buy myself a new car." So all of a sudden they got materialistic, instead of everything they owned being in a seabag. They were acquiring things. They were acquiring nice apartments. They were getting girlfriends, settling down. So, the turnover of the staff of the Great Lakes boats, we didn't need those halls anymore. We didn't need the size of them. We could get away--. Thunder Bay ended up with one this big because it was just nobody was using it.

NP: And where was that?

DM: In Thunder Bay?

NP: Yeah, the second hall. Same place?

DM: No. It was over on Balmoral Street.

NP: Oh, okay.

DM: Yeah. Down by the Persian Man, that little area there. We had two on Simpson Street, 408 Simpson and 624 Simpson.

NP: So how long did you have the job as a patrolman?

DM: I stayed there until--. I think I was there two years, two years, and then they sent me to Toronto as a patrolman. I went down there, actually, to go to school. They wanted me to go to school on weekends and nights and do the patrolman's job during the day.

NP: So what would you go to school for?

DM: I went to school for labour relations. I took some union-based courses, certificate courses, that took the better part of a year.

NP: Where do you take those from?

DM: A couple of them were through George Brown, another one was through the Toronto and District Labour Council. They used a community college out on Lakeshore. I can't remember the name of the college now. But then when I finished the labour side ones, I went back, and I went back to George Brown, and I took the management ones. I said, "I don't think many union guys go and take management courses." because I found a couple of people in our courses and a few of the programs that I took that weren't union people. They were HR people from companies. I said, "What are you doing here?" He says, "Getting the other side's opinion on things." I said, "That's a pretty smart idea." So I went and did the same thing. And my boss at the time, he would give us any money for training. If we wanted to take Basket Weaving 101, he would fund it for us because he says, "If you retain ten percent out of that program, it's made you a better person." He says, "And that's what I want everybody to do." So I took full advantage of all of that. Full advantage.

**[1:00:34]**

NP: Having taken the union courses and the management courses, what did you gain from that? What part did you take away that made you a better person?

DM: Well, I know now--. Right after that, I didn't get mad at management people anymore because we were both doing exactly the same thing. It was just for diametrically opposing reasons. One was to get as much money as they can for the members, and the other was to get as much money as they can for the company. And they had to. It was just two separate camps trying to do exactly the same thing, but for a different group of people. I said, "That's kind of cool." But yeah, I can understand why they would balk at something that would only cost a nickel. You're trying to put something for a nickel in the agreement. Well, it's a nickel amongst all the guys. It's like 0.00003 percent. But they didn't look at that as being a nickel. They looked at it being \$1.05 15 years down the road. I'm saying, "Okay, fine." So it gave me a different perspective on how they handled themselves.

NP: You moved from a patrol person--.

DM: Patrolman, yeah.

NP: Patrolman into--? After that--.

DM: A patrolman. No, after that was a patrolman again.

NP: A patrolman in Toronto.

DM: Yeah, in Toronto.

NP: And you went into management in the union then after that?

DM: No, no. Then I was transferred back to Thunder Bay as a port agent. So I was the boss of this area.

NP: So what does a port agent do?

DM: A port agent, he doesn't go out. He effectively runs the union hall, does the administration of it. He goes to all the executive board meetings of the union. He's not a board member, but he's a step up from the patrolman. He's the responsible person for the area.

NP: Now, I'm thinking of ship's agents that are in town who have, you know, sort of contact with ships before they're in port.

DM: Yeah.

NP: Is that the same thing?

DM: No.

NP: I know you're not a ship's agent, but do you--?

DM: It's an American term. It came out of the American union. Down there, there were port agents. They were the agent in charge of the port for the union. That's all.

NP: Okay. So you didn't keep track of the members that were floating around the seas?

DM: Oh, most definitely. That's how we knew. We had a huge billing department. We operated on money. We had to make sure--. When automatic check-off came along, that was the best thing that ever happened to a union. But we had to get the guy's name to the company's office in order for them to take it off the cheque. So yeah, we were almost anal about getting the crew lists off those ships.

NP: And who would you deal with at the ship's companies? Payroll departments?

DM: Payroll departments, the human resources guy. We talked more with the payroll departments than any others because somebody would say, "Hey, I was short this--." We never filed grievances until we let the company have an opportunity to settle it. "This guy is short four hours of overtime on such-and-such a date." And he says, "Yeah, I didn't get that sheet. The captain still had it on his desk." He said, "Do you want it on next month's pay, or do you want a cheque now for the four hours?" "Put it on next month's pay." It's just easy. So we'd write that off. Never made the grievance procedure. So mostly, we could pick up the phone. We had such a rapport with these companies, we could pick up the phone and settle almost anything over the phone with them.

NP: Can we take a little bit of a break? Monika, just put us on pause. **[Audio pauses]** Yeah, we'll stop now.

MM: Okay.

NP: We took a bit of a pause, and we started to talk about some questions to ask afterwards, but there are a few things I want to do just to wrap up what we were talking about before we took our break. Which offices did you work in? You gave a list of the offices.

DM: I've worked in all of them.

NP: Is there any difference between offices, did you find? Were there some better than others, some--?

DM: Well, I always thought Thunder Bay was a better one because, of course, I'm a little bit biased about Thunder Bay. But any office where I was the top guy was the best, of course. **[Laughing]** And there was quite a few of those.

[1:05:03]

NP: So what makes a good office, and what made an office not so good?

DM: It depends on the amount of work to be done. You know, my boss, Gralewicz, always sent me to places where he was having problems. Staff problems.

NP: What was his name?

DM: Roman Gralewicz.

NP: How is that spelled?

DM: G-R-A-L-E-W-I-C-Z.

NP: So you were a troubleshooter?

DM: Well, yeah. He sort of sent me places where we were having staff problems. Staff wouldn't do any of their jobs and sort of sitting back, and so he would send me in there. There would be a two-person staff in that office. I'd go in, and all of a sudden, I look around, and I'm the only one working it. That happened more than once. [Laughs] Yeah, that makes it a little difficult when you're all by yourself. But Montreal was a great port to work in. It was the busy one. There was a big staff there, and of course, the French language made it a little difficult. But I guess Vancouver was, I think, the best one that I worked in. It was a little laid back. There was a time difference between headquarters and Vancouver, so we took advantage of that. [Laughs] No, essentially, we had to do all the same work in each office, so it wasn't much of a difference. I couldn't say that one was a far better office to work in than another one.

NP: And the systems were all the same?

DM: Systems were identical. That's what we did because if they moved me out from Montreal to Vancouver, all the filing systems were exactly the same. They were nearer Montreal. Everything was set up in every union hall so that if that one person were to drop dead today, a person could walk in, and we wouldn't lose a beat because if they wanted to find a file, it was in exactly the same spot as the office he'd just left. So he designed those offices very well to be very functional.



NP: Was there any difference between sailors going out of any of those offices other than the obvious French-speaking ones from Quebec?

DM: Not really. Not really. They were all pretty much the same. Well, Montreal it was 50-50. There was half French, half English. Quebec City, of course, was pretty much all French. When I was shipping out of there, I was the token English guy.

NP: So the position you took when you came back here as the agent--.

DM: As the agent.

NP: Where did you go to from there?

DM: From there, I went back to Toronto as an agent. I spent, I guess, two years there, and then out for my first shot in Vancouver.

NP: As an agent again?

DM: As a vice president in Vancouver.

NP: Vice president in charge of--?

DM: I was in charge of the whole West Coast. I was in charge of all the contract negotiations, all grievances out there. We didn't send our grievances to Montreal. We handled them out there. All membership service, all the East Coast and down into a certain part of the US and into Washington state. Northwest Territories. I was responsible for the Northwest Territories. The Western Arctic, as we called it. Eastern Arctic was Hudson's Bay area. Western Arctic was the Mackenzie River Delta right up to Tuktoyaktuk. So that was my territory. I used to do two trips up there every year. Had to negotiate their contracts.

NP: So what ships were operating out of there?

DM: Not ships, tugs.

NP: Tugs. Ah.

DM: Very limited ships. The ships that were operating out of there were one, two--. Two log ships that were self-propelled, and they took full tree lengths sideways across the ship. They had their own cranes for loading. They would load them, and they would hang over by 30 feet on one side and 30 feet on the other side. When they wanted to unload, they would go into a little bay, and they would turn the ship over on its side. Everybody had to be up for what they called “the dump.” So everybody was up, everybody was in their bunk, and they’d just shift ballast, and they’d turn the ship on its side, and all the logs just slide right off. [Laughs] Then they right it up and go. So there’s two of those. There was four roll-on roll-off car and train ferry—[coughs] excuse me—that were self-propelled, and a self-propelled dredge. So there was four, six, seven ships on the whole West Coast. But there was 90 tugboats pulling barges and pulling log tows.

**[1:10:09]**

NP: What was the connection, if anything, to grain handling out there?

DM: Harbour tugs. Harbour tugs were doing the ship berthing and letting go. That’s about all to do with the grain out there. It was all shipped on foreign ships. There was no Canadian ships there at all.

NP: So were you responsible for Churchill then as well?

DM: No. Churchill was an Eastern Arctic. I was responsible for the one tug that worked in Churchill from Northern Transportation Company out of Hay River. That’s the only thing I had to do with because it was under a Western Arctic collective agreement, but the boat was in Churchill. It ran the tanker resupply route out of Churchill into the north and north up to Greenland supplying fuel to these small little towns and general cargo. So it would do a trip up and a trip back down. But I never went there. No, I was never there.

NP: So Prince Rupert and Vancouver?

DM: Prince Rupert, there was--. No. The tugs that were up in Prince Rupert belonged to another union on the West Coast. We had tugs that ran to Prince Rupert, but their home port was Vancouver. But there was tugs in Prince Rupert that that was their home port, and those weren’t ours.

NP: How did people decide to join one union versus another?

DM: There's a lot of nepotism out there. Like it's second generation, third generation coming in. I remember one family that--. Oh. Hm. What's their names now? It'll come to me. The grandfather was there, the father was there, and the son was there. There was three generations working for the same company. Two captains and a deckhand, and the third one is now a captain out there. Yeah, the guy who came into the SIU would have his kids go over to the SIU. The guy that came in through the CBRT would send his kids over to the CBRT to join.

NP: CBRT?

DM: Canadian Brotherhood of Railway and Transportation. I think they're part of the Warehouse Union now or something. Longshore Union.

NP: So your union would cover the BC ferries?

DM: No. That's BC Ferry and Marine. Those were taken away from all the unlicensed unions. The government, many years ago, they were called the, I think, it was the Blue Star Line. Before my time. They were independent. They were an independent ferry system, and they were covered by a collective agreement with the Canadian Merchant Services guild in the SIU. The government said, "No, we're not going to have any of that." They bought the ferry company up and said there's going--. They started a new union called BC Ferry and Marine Workers Union, and it took them away from us without vote, without any hearings. Nothing. So. We've always worked to get them back, but I don't think that's ever going to happen.

NP: After VP in Vancouver, was that where you finished your career?

DM: No. Well, Vancouver was where I finished the career, but then I was brought into Montreal and still maintained my position as VP West Coast. I was still responsible for all the collective agreements. I hired a guy out there to run the hall as a port agent, but I was still responsible for everything that happened out there as well as be secretary treasurer. Then we had problems with that guy out there. I had problems, health problems, so I asked the boss, I said, "Can I go back out there? Because it's a little bit less stress than working here." He says, "Yeah." So I went back out to the West Coast and subsequently the health problems got a little bit worse. My doctor said I couldn't do that anymore or else don't come back and see him because he doesn't want to visit me in the hospital morgue. [Laughs] Jesus! So I said, "Okay, fine." So I checked, and I retired. I retired on Friday, was back here Monday.

NP: What created the stress? What was going on in the Montreal area?

DM: 190 days a year in the air.

NP: Ah.

DM: And my flights weren't small flights. They were from Vancouver to Newfoundland. Yeah, I was doing 120 takeoffs and landings in a year. 190 days in hotels. So you know what that is. It's eating--. Go to Newfoundland, you're having codfish and fish and chips all the time and scrunchions and everything deep fried down there. You were in the bar a lot, far too much because what are you going to do? Sit in a hotel room, look at four walls? I think that's what--. I think it was the food that really did me in, but you get on a plane at 6:30 in the morning in Vancouver, and you don't get into Saint John's, Newfoundland until 1:30 the following day. So it's taking over 24 hours to get there. Almost 24 hours to get there. I remember one time it took me three days to get from Halifax to Saint Johns because of fog and weather. Fly over there, fly up to--. They said, "Okay. We're going to go to the Gander report. Fly up to Gander." In the meantime, the fog's come in. You've got to turn around and go back to Halifax. [Laughs] Yeah, so I got out of there.

**[1:15:59]**

NP: Did computer technology make much difference to sailors? Because you would have been working through sort of that major change.

DM: Yeah, yeah. Jesus, it had its effect on us. Remember, we were guys off ships. Our constitution said you had to work on a ship for X-number of years before you could run for election. So I was right on the borderline at two years, but I was appointed to a position that was a non-elected position. But when the computers came along, three quarters of our officials didn't know how to operate a computer, and some of them had to leave. Well, hey, it's the computer age. Not me. When I was taking all those courses in Toronto, I also took computers. [Laughs] Like I said, any course I could take, I took. The guys on the ships, the companies were putting computers on there for them to be able to send emails. A lot of them use it, but a lot of them have their own laptops and their own cellphones and everything else. The cellphone was actually the biggest thing that affected the sailors on the Great Lakes was a cellphone. Computers not so much.

NP: In what way?

DM: Correspondence with home. Because before cellphones were affordable, they would have to wait until the ship got into port. And it might go through the Welland Canal, hit the Welland Canal at midnight, and be out of the Welland Canal at 8:00 in the morning. Your family is asleep then. The kids are asleep. So he may go a month without being able to call his family. This way,

he's got a cellphone on there, he can call every day if he wants. The roaming fees kill them though. Back then, the roaming fees were huge. But, oh, no. It was the cellphone more than the computer that changed the life aboard the ship.

NP: You had mentioned during the break about changes in routes that occurred over the time of your career. Tell us about that.

DM: Well, if you take a look at the timeline from the mid '70s on, and you've got two ports that really got some real expansion, and one was Churchill, and it was a very controversial expansion at Churchill, as you may know. There was also Prince Rupert. Prince Rupert is in the middle of nowhere. It's up the coast. It's really hard to get to. A lot of freight is even taken up there by tugs because it's too long of a venture to go up there via road to Prince Rupert. They got a huge increase in capacity at Prince Rupert, and all of a sudden, middle of summer, we've got ships lining up for lack of grain at the same time as these two elevators opened up. So a lot of the grain that was normally funneled out the Great Lakes to Europe—and Russia was a big importer of our grain—went through Churchill and Prince Rupert. I remember the allotment of railcars is governed by the amount of track you have at the elevator. So what happened at one elevator in north Vancouver is they bought up some property next to their rail storage area and put in another rail track. It couldn't physically ship anymore grain through that elevator. There was a ship there everyday. They could not physically ship one more bushel, but they got more cars coming in there allotted from the Wheat Board because of their capacity. Not the output capacity, it's the input capacity. So that had a big effect on Great Lakes shipping for quite a few years.

**[1:20:10]**

NP: What impact did that have then on the Seafarers' Union?

DM: Well, of course, everything comes down to the money. The union lost a lot of money when a ship lays up. Of course, we've got the medical plan. We've got the hiring hall fund. There was the Seafarers' Training Institute funds. When a ship is laid up, we don't get paid those. The guys have to pay their dues regardless, whether the ship is running or not. For the crew members onboard the ship, it was great. Ship lays up the beginning of July and doesn't come out until after Labour Day, they're home for the summer and collecting pogy. They loved it. It was great for them. Took a toll on the number of jobs going through the union hall because now they had two months off in the middle of the season. They don't need any more time off. So the jobs in the union hall suffered. So it was a big sort of a snowball effect or domino principle. One thing affects another thing all the way through the system. So now it's not bad. They're down to a small amount of ships, small amount of people, and they continue to work all year round.

NP: Did you keep track? Some of that change would have occurred, though, after you left. The number of union members from the time you started until when you left--.

DM: When I left, there was about 3,200 members left. When I started in '74, there was 12,000.

NP: Wow.

DM: Yeah. Well, there was 140 ships that we--. We were revolving the number of jobs on there, and even small, little ships had big crews. The West Coast was much bigger. The East Coast was huge.

NP: So computerization of the ships take a toll as well?

DM: Automation, yeah. Automation took a big toll on the numbers. We have tunnel men, for example, on a self-unloader. And you'll see the ships coming into Thunder Bay, and they've got a big boom that sticks up and that goes out and over top of the shore and unloads the cargo. Well, down in the cargo hold there's what's called saddlebacks. They're shaped like this, okay? And they run the full length of the ship.

NP: Sort of like a triangle.

DM: Like a triangle. And between the next saddleback, there is a belt that runs there with gates in it. The gates open up, and they're opened up by what's called tunnel men. They're right underneath the cargo holds in wet, dingy sort of like a cavern down there, and they hydraulically open and close these gates and keep the ship on a steady keel. Like, they don't unload everything from back aft so that it sticks up like that and vice versa. They don't unload everything from back aft.

NP: Sort of like grain trimmers in reverse.

DM: Like grain trimmers in reverse. Okay. There was four of them down there: three tunnel men and a head tunnel man doing that job. Then after--. And their maintenance was going 24 hours a day. Huge money being spent. Now, it's one guy at a computer terminal unloads the whole ship. It's sitting in front of him. Pushes a button, the gate opens up. Done. Three jobs gone. So the same thing in the deck department. They used to have guys on those saddlebacks. There was chains hanging down, and you used to go down with a shovel in one hand holding onto the chain with the other hand and going up the big mountains of coal, and you've got the shovel doing this into the mountain of coal, breaking it so that it would fall down onto the belt. We've lost a few people when they let go of the chain and went down to the belt and they were killed. Very dangerous. Very dangerous. Now the companies have built all of their cargo holds with silicone on those saddlebacks, and what they've done is they've made the doors a lot wider and the saddlebacks an awful lot higher, so the cargo just slides right down. You don't have to go down into the cargo hold at all for any reason.

NP: More like a hopper?

DM: Well, it was a hopper before, but they've made it like a wider hopper and put silicone on the sides so that the cargo just slides right down onto the conveyor belts.

NP: Were injuries and deaths frequent?

DM: Deaths not so much. Injuries, yes.

NP: What were common causes of both of those?

DM: I guess stupidity in--. [Laughs] Well, I'm trying to look for a gentle word, but I really can't find one. The one that really stuck out to me was there was a guy riding in the basket that they used to carry on stores, and it had a little wee cable on it. It was on the stern. When he got almost to the deck, the cable snapped, and it went down, and he was killed. He'd landed on the dock and was killed. Stupidity. He shouldn't have been on there. The guy at the top was operating the winch to bring him up, shouldn't have brought him up, and he shouldn't have gotten in there. They were both stupid.

**[1:25:37]**

Another guy goes back to the ship in the Welland Canal drunk. Goes to jump onto the ship, misses, and goes down between the wall and the ship. Dead. I know the guy. Very nice guy. So after we lost one, then they put in--. And he was apparently drinking, but you can't prove it now because there wasn't much left of him. But now ships have got to be stopped up against the wall, and they've got these little platforms that go onboard the ship. But we had to lose a person or two in order for them to do something like that. You always close the gate after the cows run out in the field.

NP: Were you involved at all, then, when there was that accident with the Paterson ship? I guess there would have been seafarers on that--.

DM: It hit the--. I was on the West Coast, yeah. If it wasn't for one of our guys, that accident would have killed many, many, many people because there was another--. The bridge doesn't come out all the way, and there was cars. He was on the wheel, and he could see the bridge coming to the wheelhouse, and he stayed up there when everybody else left and got right down on the floor and held his hand up on that wheel to keep it going straight. It took the whole wheelhouse off right on top of him. And he got out of

there unscathed. [Laughs] You know like the cartoon where the guy goes underneath the transport truck and it takes off the top? You know, the guy was a hero. But no, I was out on the West Coast when that happened, so I wasn't involved with that one. I was involved in all the other big accidents. The fire on the *Cartiercliffe Hall* was out here on Lake Superior. I was involved in all the hearings and--.

NP: What happened there?

DM: Nine people died. *Cartiercliffe Hall*, 19--.

NP: Tell us about that.

DM: 1980. '75, '76, '77, '78, '79, '80. '83 maybe. Google *Cartiercliffe Hall*, and you'll get the whole thing. It caught on fire at nighttime out there. Nine sailors died. They had hearings in--. They took them all to Duluth. Majority of the crew was French out of Quebec City. Ship was totally destroyed.

NP: What was the cause?

DM: Oh, jeez. I forget what the cause was on that. Could have been smoking. I can't really remember.

NP: Is smoking permitted on ships?

DM: Yeah. If you got your own accommodation. I think they allow it if it's your own accommodation, but tankers it's only allowed behind the stack. You have to be behind the stack in order to smoke. Anything in front of the stack is a fire hazard. Companies are trying to get everybody to be nonsmokers, but you know, when you're on a ship, Jesus Murphy, that's--.

NP: Did sailors become more or less fit over time?

DM: Oh, they had to in order to keep their jobs.

NP: Had to--?

DM: To become fit. No more was the overweight, you know, big sailor with the gut and everything else because he cannot physically do the work. There was just no room for somebody who was not physically fit. I still look at the *Canadian Sailor*, which



is a monthly newspaper or quarterly newspaper, and I take a look, and I see the guys that I knew were big men, and you see them now, and they're quite svelte. [Laughs] Yeah. The companies will put exercise equipment aboard the ship. They've made gyms on their new ones that they're building. All single accommodation, air conditioning, got their own bathrooms. It's a far cry from the previous years when, you know, there was four or six in a room, no air conditioning, no bathroom. So a guy's got the opportunity to exercise in his room or in the exercise room onboard the ship.

NP: Going back to the change in grain routes. So really, am I correct in saying that because when there were more ships on the Great Lakes which were taking the product to Europe and Russia, there were Canadian sailors?

**[1:30:20]**

DM: No. They weren't taking the product to Europe and Russia. The Great Lakes system has always been a transshipment--.

NP: Right. To Montreal and--.

DM: With the Montreal, Port Cartier, and Baie-Comeau. They unload there for the big ships because the big ships will load to about 54 feet. All we can load here is 26 feet. That's the maximum draft Seaway draft from Thunder Bay right down past Quebec City.

NP: So with the lakers, then, canallers and lakers, I guess--.

DM: There's no more canallers.

NP: No more, but there were at the time you started?

DM: Canallers were all gone.

NP: Okay.

DM: Canallers were gone when they opened up the current Seaway in--. Hm. '68?

NP: Were there two versions of the Seaway?

DM: Yeah. There was just the small one. The canallers only were like 200 feet long. I mean, there was tons of those boats, the canallers, because the bigger ones would take the grain from here, dump it down in Port Colborne, and then it would be loaded onto the canal boats to take through the canal, the smaller ones. It was like a bunch of bees around a beehive. Ants. Ants taking stuff from the anthill. Yeah.

NP: And then when the grain shipments shifted off to the West Coast, then those are all foreign ships.

DM: That's right.

NP: With non-Canadian crews.

DM: Non-Canadian crews.

NP: So that's a major change.

DM: Yeah. That grain that they ship to Prince Rupert and the grain that they shipped to Churchill had to come out of somebody's pocket. Like it was you've got a pie. There's only so many pieces of that pie. You take two pieces of that pie, and you give one to Prince Rupert and one to Churchill, that means I only have four pieces of pie left.

NP: Yeah. But even more so than that, that if those ships were Canadian ships with Canadian sailors, then the job situation would have been just shifted.

DM: It would have just been shifted. Yeah, yeah.

NP: Hm. Interesting. Any other things that you'd like to comment on from your long and varied interesting career?

DM: I don't know if there's--. You know, there's just tons of things. Over 30 years, you accumulate quite a--.

NP: Well, what are the most memorable occurrences?

DM: Memorable as in--?

NP: What do you remember most? What sort of sticks in your mind?

DM: Oh, jeez, I don't know.

NP: If you had grandkids, you know, what you'd be telling your grandkids. "Oh, yeah--."

DM: I'd be saying, "Don't go to work on a ship. Stay in school." [Laughs] There's nothing really. Well, I guess there's all kinds of things. The people that I worked with. My boss, Roman Gralewicz, and I became very, very close. He was the hardest taskmaster I ever had to work with in my life, but he was fair. He was really fair. When I got to Montreal, Jesus Christ, I was being transferred all over the place, and Toronto wasn't a cheap place to live, nor was Vancouver. I get into Montreal. I didn't have any cash to buy a house or anything. He got me a house on the first hole of a golf course, brand new. It was a model home. Didn't cost me a nickel out of my pocket to get in there because he knew a guy who knew a guy, and I ended up with this house. And I'll never forget that. He was the guy they used to call, and they nicknamed him "Shotgun Gralewicz." Very colourful past, very colourful past, but people didn't know him like I knew him. That's probably what's going to--. I still talk to him every week.

NP: Where does he get the name?

DM: Oh, we won't get into that. We won't talk about that.

NP: [Laughs] Is there a YouTube on it?

DM: Yes, because there was a full double page article on it in the *Globe and Mail* in the '80s. There was an RCMP investigation into the SIU that went on for years. It just never went anywhere.

NP: What were they investigating?

DM: They were investigating--. They said that we prohibited members from--. The charge was conspiracy to prohibit bonified union members from participating in union activities. In other words, a blacklist that if you weren't friends with the union or something, they wouldn't ship you out. If you voted against a contract, you got put on a list, what was called the DNS List, Do Not Ship List. You could pay your dues for 20 years. You're still not getting a job. They took that--. They spent millions. They had an SIU investigation team in Thunder Bay for three weeks investigating, talking to people. They couldn't find one person that had even been denied a job. [Laughs] And it was thrown out of the courts.

[1:35:48]

NP: Who brought it forward?

DM: It was--. Oh, jeez. I can't remember who brought it forward.

NP: Just some members or a company?

DM: It was some members from--. It started, actually, before I started working for the union. So the original part of it--. I was there for, Jesus, the final two years of it because it went on for two years. It cost the taxpayer a tonne of money. A tonne of money.

NP: And then it was just thrown out?

DM: It was just--. "We have no evidence here. We've got nothing." It started in about--. I guess Roman saw what was happening with the industry, and he started hiring a different type of person to work for the union probably around 1978. '78, '76. About '76. He started hiring a person that had a brain and that was capable of negotiating contracts on a level with the company CEO instead of hiring somebody that was just a member off the boat.

NP: What was your experience with negotiating? Because you said you did negotiating.

DM: I did negotiating all over, from east coast to west coast. Some of them tough, tough, tough negotiations.

NP: What made negotiations tough?

DM: Trying to get what you want. It's not just you go in there--.

NP: Depend who was on the other side or was it mainly economics of the--. Like general economics as opposed to--.

DM: It's like I said after I took the management side at George Brown, their job is to spend as little as possible on a collective agreement. It's my job to get as much money out of it as I can. So it's nothing personal. You can't take it personal. It's just the job. You're doing a job. We used to get people—Paterson was famous for it—that it became personal with them. I was friends with Robert Paterson for many years. I took a job with the union, that was it. That was it. There's no friendship there anymore.

NP: I was just thinking because we were just talking to another union person. In this case, it was the grain handlers' union. He was talking about the real downturn here in the grain shipping, and it mirrored, obviously, the sailors. That union worked very hard to try to find solutions in cooperation with grain companies. Was there that kind of sort of joint effort between shipowners and--?

DM: No.

NP: No?

DM: The shipowners weren't--. How do I put this gently? The shipowners really didn't give a crap about their people. They didn't care. They didn't care. They'd sell a ship, give a guy a week's severance pay, and say, "There you go. Goodbye." They didn't worry about where the guy went. Nothing. It was kind of neat when Paterson went out of business, and I saw all those people that I had to deal with on severance issues get nothing in severance from Paterson. It's not fair, but welcome to the real world. Now you see why we were arguing with you to get severance and have it locked in. I saw what they did, what Herbie Daniher had. He had almost a whole school set up in where the bar was at the union hall in there teaching his people that were being displaced computer training, how to get a job training. Of course, their numbers were higher, and the higher the numbers, the Labour Code tells you what you have to do. There's committees that you have to set up. With us, we were always below because lay up a ship, because it was only ship seniority, it wasn't company seniority, the numbers were low. So they didn't have to do a--. What do they call it? That committee that sets up job searches and training programs and everything else for groups that are being phased out or losing their employment. So we were well under those numbers. The companies said, "Well, they can go back to the union hall and get another job." Which a lot of them did. It took them a while to get a steady one.

**[1:40:45]**

NP: Yeah, that would be a big difference between the two unions because they were--. Their seniority was within the company.

DM: Yeah. And they had nowhere else to go. Like there wouldn't be another elevator here hiring 47 people that just lost their job at one elevator. There's not that many jobs behind them in the elevators.

NP: This is sort of a general question, but I ask it anyway, and I also preface it with a comment that Canada became a world leader in grain trading.

DM: Mmhmm.

NP: Can you see the connection between the work that you did and the fact that it was successful, like Canada became a successful grain trading nation? What is it about the work that you did that helped them do that?

DM: Well--. Hm. I guess we worked hard to make sure that the shipping companies had properly trained and qualified seafarers that were going to make their operation run smooth. You run accident free. You run with properly trained, properly certified people, you have less accidents, your insurance rates go down. You get to and from your locations. You unload quicker. You load quicker. We went into big training. We even got a school, Seafarers Training Institute right on the shores of the St. Lawrence just outside Cornwall. The new entrant into the industry would have to go there for 26 weeks to learn how to go in the galley and wash dishes. He was there at the school for 26 weeks. Come out of there with firefighting certificates, everything. We put out our own fires onboard ships. We've been recognized as saving the ship by putting out a fire. So I think that's our part in making, you know, Canadian a successful grain trading country.

But you know, it's funny that you say that because we had--. And part and parcel of the reason that we're not shipping as much grain and our industry has gone down is that, take for example No. 1 Red. The best grain in the world bar none. And the Canadians went to Europe and taught them how to grow it themselves. Now watch the Tour de France. You're not going by vineyards. You're going by grain fields. They're manufacturing their own. Not manufacturing, they're growing their own now. That had a big impact on the grain sales of Canada too. There are countries that are shipping their surplus grain to our customers. But your original question, that's a hard one to answer.

NP: No, I think that's how I would have answered it had I been you. [Laughing] What are you most proud of in the work that you did?

DM: I get proud of going in and organizing a company. The company's out there, and they're running with non-union employees, and they're paying them next to minimum wage, and they're charging the same rates for their freight as the companies that are out there with union contracts. I think that's awfully unfair to the worker. Why should you make all that money on their back? The best feeling I have is when I go in there, and I organize a new company and get a collective agreement and bring those people up to the standards. I did that in Newfoundland with Hibernia. They said, "You will never get Hibernia." The offshore. I went in there. I was in Newfoundland for a month organizing. Got all the tugs, got them all signed up, 100 percent of them. They said it could never be done. I did it. That was a good feeling getting them because they were making nothing. They were being trodden upon by the guy that opened the Canadian portion of the company. It was getting a collective agreement into a position where the guys were proud to work under it. We had Northern Transportation. We had a lot of people that wouldn't stay up there because the contract just wasn't worth being up in the Arctic. I went in there in one year, got that contract up to it. They had zero turnover in one year. Never happened before. Biggest good feeling? I guess when a member would walk up to you and thank you. That's a great feeling. You

know, ten percent of the membership causes you 90 percent of the work. The other 90 percent just go to work, get their paycheque, and go home.

**[1:45:55]**

NP: Yeah. That's a classic management statement. [Laughing] And so true.

DM: Yeah.

NP: I just have one sort of situational question here. I've been noticing a lot of ships sitting in the harbour.

DM: Yeah.

NP: From your knowledge, what's happening out there and what are the implications?

DM: Oh, that's--. Cargo is supposed to be ready for those ships when the ships get here. It's supposed to be in the elevators ready to ship. If it's not, they go to anchor. The government pays them to sit at anchor. It's called demurrage.

NP: The government pays?

DM: Yeah. Our ships don't get demurrage. If a Canadian ship was at anchor out there, he doesn't get paid demurrage, but the foreign ship does.

NP: Why would the companies not be paying it?

DM: Well, because the demurrage is paid by the government under the Canada Wheat Board, I would assume.

NP: No Canada Wheat Board anymore.

DM: I know. But it all comes out of the government coffer, so the government is paying the demurrage.

NP: Interesting to check that.

DM: Yeah, check that out. I don't know if they're still doing it, but that was the common practice. They would pay them their operating expenses for as long as it took to get them alongside that dock and get that cargo on it.

NP: And the sailors, any implications for them?

DM: No. They just sit there and work.

NP: It's part of their contract.

DM: Yeah. And it's hard for them to sit out there and see Thunder Bay sitting there, especially if there's people from Thunder Bay and their families are here. And they're sitting out there, "how long are we going to stay at anchor captain?" "We're going to be here for a week." Oh, that's tough. So we negotiated a launch service in every 12 hours. Bring people in, drop them off, let them go home, then pick them up and take them back.

NP: Speaking of people going off and coming back, any of your work involved in those who--. Foreign sailors who got off and didn't come back?

DM: No.

NP: Somebody else's problem?

DM: Somebody else's problem.

NP: Well, Monika, have I covered the waterfront, or at least the ships in it?

MM: I think so. I do have a question though. What is demurrage?

DM: Demurrage. D-E-M-E-R-A-G-E. [D-E-M-U-R-R-A-G-E].

MM: Demurrage. Demurrage.

NP: [Laughs]



DM: Think of it as a Frenchman saying, “Hey the marriage, the marriage is on the rocks!” [Laughing]

NP: Yeah. Just the cost of waiting around.

DM: Yeah. It’s the cost of waiting around. It covers their expenses.

MM: Oh, okay.

DM: I know at one point it was like \$25,000 day.

NP: Yeah. It’s still very pricey. Well, thank you very much.

DM: You’re welcome.

NP: It’s been a very good interview for somebody who said, “I just don’t know what I’ll have to say.” I’ve learned a lot.

DM: Well, I didn’t say much about the grain industry, but--.

NP: Do you have anything else to say about the grain industry?

DM: No, I think it’s great. [Laughing]

NP: Oh, I should--.

DM: Without the grain industry, we wouldn’t have a shipping industry.

NP: Pretty much.

DM: Yeah, yeah.

NP: Backhaul changed.

DM: Backhaul--. Well, of course, it changed. It used to be you would take grain from Thunder Bay, you would go down, unload it at Baie-Comeau, then you'd go right around the corner to Seven Islands and load iron ore and get it back up to the US. When the Vietnam War ended, they had no need for steel. All the backhauls came to a sudden halt. They didn't have to build Jeeps, they didn't have to build bombs, they didn't have to build airplanes. They didn't need the steel. Then the car industry took a crap, even heard--. Now they take iron ore from down here just down the coast to Detroit for what's left of the car industry, but that's from US port to US port. We've got the biggest iron ore mining operation in Labrador and Quebec that goes down into Sept-Iles. I mean the province of Quebec. So those backhauls have really--. They're not what they used to be.

**[1:50:10]**

NP: And therefore, costs are up?

DM: Well, the costs are up because the backhaul, they used to--. They didn't make a huge amount of money because that iron ore was so heavy, they couldn't carry much. It would only be half a cargo hold full, and that ship was right down to draft. [Laughs] It would pay their expenses to get back up to Thunder Bay. It would take care of all their fuel and all their wages to get back up here. It was kind of neat with that too. We'd load iron ore in Port Cartier or Seven Islands, and by the time we got up to where we unloaded, there was grain growing out of steel this deep, this high. It was so hot in the cargo holds from the iron ore because it was just freshly pelletized, and the heat and the humidity coming up from it, all the dust and the little pieces of grain that we missed when we hosed it out--. Because we only did a cursory hose when we were going for iron ore. It's all going to get burnt in a furnace. And the grain would be two and a half feet high by the time we got up to, say, Toledo or Detroit with it. It was kind of neat to open up the hatches, and it's got all this grain.

MM: A greenhouse.

NP: A greenhouse. Greenhouse effect.

DM: Yes. Yeah.

NP: We are hoping to start a grain industry activity centre in Thunder Bay. Ha-ha. We hope, anyway. And in it we will feature the various aspects of the grain industry, including the shipping. Is there anything that we should be sure to include? A part of the story that--. If you can imagine people who don't know much about shipping and the life of a sailor coming into a centre, what--?

DM: You know, we had--. And I'll see if we can get a copy of it. They might have one in the archives. We did it for was it our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary? Our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary had a lot of pictures and a lot of articles in it that compared the beginnings and where we are now as far as crews go on the ships. At one point there was like six in a room. You brought your own straw to put in the mattress. You would get a bale of straw and bring it on. That would go in. They'd give you the mattress cover, they'd give you the pillowcase, but you would have to stuff it yourself. Four to six people in a room with no air conditioning, no portholes.

NP: That's good. If you can track down one of those for us.

DM: Yeah. And we've got pictures of that, and pictures of the new rooms at that time whenever we did that 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. That would have been, oh, it was in the '80s, I guess. If I can find one, I'll get it for you.

NP: Oh, great. So you have an archives?

DM: Yeah, yeah.

NP: Oh, well that's good too. I mean, most people, that's one change that's come about is the archives just sort of get tossed.

DM: We used to put it on microfiche. Not anymore. We're taking it now and putting it all on disk, I guess.

NP: Well, good, because then electronic transfers--.

DM: Yeah, exactly. And it's always there.

MM: And the archives are where, sorry?

DM: Archives are in Montreal.

NP: Well, thank you.

DM: You're welcome.

NP: Have a good time?

DM: That was relatively painless. [Laughing]

NP: Would you like a drink of something? Would you?

DM: No, thank you.

MM: No, thank you.

DM: No, I'm on the straight and narrow.

NP: Good for you.

DM: Had a little bit of a party on Saturday, so I'm still suffering.

NP: [Laughing]

MM: A temporary straight and narrow.

DM: Yes, a temporary straight and narrow.

MM: I see.

DM: It's--.

NP: Monika would you--? Is this being taped? [Laughs] We don't drink all the time! [Laughing]

**End of interview.**