Interview: Ken Bauder (KB)
Interviewer: Bailey Garden [BG]
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Transcription: Marie Decaire

BG [00:00:00] OK so it is February 8th 2017. We're here at the BC Labour Heritage Centre. My name is Bailey Garden and I'm interviewing Ken Bauder. Ken Bauder is a volunteer with the BC Labour Heritage Centre on the oral history project and has done a lot of these interviews. So we decided to turn the tables on him and ask some questions about his long history in the labour movement here in BC. So Ken to start us off why don't you tell us about when and where you're born and a little bit about how you were raised.

KB [00:00:31] I was born in Mission British Columbia, soapbox derby town in B.C. My mom was visiting my aunt who lived in Mission and I was born in Mission lived and grew up in Vancouver. My life was good in the 60s in east Vancouver, in an area called The Project and it was an area set aside for war vets to come and have subsidized housing. So The Project was Grandview Road, Boundary 22nd and Rupert and it was an area that had to have or whoever the vet was had to have two kids and they were able to come into that and get subsidized housing from Central Mortgage and Housing Corp., in the 50s. And that's where we grew up and there were tons of kids there. It was fantastic. All I ever remember were kids kids kids. We had a great time there. Grew up in the 60s. That was the era of altered states. And that inference in the 60s should be clearer if anyone's researched the 60s, that we were really searching for another reality because the reality that our parents had provided as their baseline was the best they could, but it wasn't what we were exposed to in the music and the literature and the political activism that was around and unions were part of that process. So we've got an idea of all of those things. In addition to that I grew up with a young fella whose father founded the IWA, or grandfather founded the IWA in that was Dave Pritchett and Harold Pritchett was the founding president of the IWA way back during the McCarthy period and he was shunned by everyone in, who knew of him because he was a communist. So his son was Craig Pritchett who was the liaison officer between Harry Bridges in the San Francisco Longshore International and the Canadian International and Dave, his son, was the person that I went to school with. So there were some influences and thoughts that we were sharing. We spent a lot of time at the B.C. Fed in the action caucus, which is a sideshoot of the main show there that put forward alternate positions and alternate ideas on how the labour movement should move forward. So my history and growing up had a coloured background. My father was a superintendent, a foreman then superintendent for Dawson Construction so I grew up in basically a management household. But I realized when I was a eighteen that I'd had enough of that management point of view facetiously said. So I left Canada and did a trip around the world by myself at the age of 18. So when I came back from that I realized how fortunate we were in North America and even at times now, I have guilt for growing up here because of the poverty and the desperate lives that people in... what, I was in 25 countries, that they have compared to us but sooner or later you gotta kind of back yourself and say well you born here. So big deal. You know you can't fix the whole world. Nice job trying but it was good. So when I came back from that I went in to construction.

KB [00:04:35] My father got me employment and I started off in the Labourers Union and then went into the Operating Engineers Union and worked in construction in the province for or

from when I got out of school in 1968, is when I didn't graduate but I should have... But there were some states of mind that took me away from education and road construction was where I was at. So I travelled the province north south east west and then I did that for about four years. Got married in 1971 still married to the same woman. That's forty-five years this year. Forty-six years this year and we emigrated to New Zealand because we were still kind of searching for a quality of life. New Zealand is fantastic. The economy in those days was stable. They eventually went bankrupt the country went bankrupt in 1980, but we only stayed for five months and toured around and saw another point of view, came back to Vancouver and then went back into construction for a while. And, when I came back I did a season in construction and then my father said, well you know you really need to have a skill. So I went to welding school and got skills as a welder. And did that for a year or two then ended up in Salmon Arm over the winter because I built a cabin up there. So we moved into that for '74 - '75ish and I took the heavy duty mechanics course and got my heavy duty ticket in '76. And then I took my Marine Engineers ticket in '80; third class, part A, and a Millwright's ticket and went into the maritime industry, so Longshore was part of it. That started in 1977. I had worked for the Operating Engineers as a crane mechanic, in the movie industry as an extra in the movie industry and then realized with my ticket I could get into the movie industry as a special effects assistant basically working under a person who knew what they were doing and had great fun in that. Worked on The Fly and Odyssey which was a CBC show as a special effects guy and we blew up phoney walls and stuff. It was kind of cool it's kind of an out of body experience when you see it in television you're going, wow that looks real. It's not real but someone had to set that up. Yeah yeah yeah it was good fun. So then I worked in Longshore when I eventually left construction.

KB [00:07:55] I think my last adventure in construction was working for Commercial Truck and Crane. I was a crane mechanic and I did that while I was longshoring, because I was a part-time person in longshore, you worked for nine years as a casual before you were able to get in the union. So during that period of time I went out and did the movie industry stuff, the crane stuff because we had a couple of kids by then and needed to eat regularly. Did that, went back into longshore and became active as an executive member, a committee chairperson. I was involved in the apprenticeship program for heavy duty mechanics in the province, or in the Province of B.C. and was the representative for B.C. on a panel in Ottawa where we were trying to identify the occupational analysis tasks that make a mechanic and thus, out of that comes training.

KB [00:09:09] So I got to know the people in the Ministry of Labour and they said, well there is an opportunity for you to apply if you want to work here. So I said, yeah okay I'll apply for that. So I applied. I went into the Ministry of Labour in the Apprenticeship Branch and was a program coordinator for six years and a little better than six years. And I did one year as an employment standards officer secondment, so I had to go out and mediate people with no collective agreement just the Employment Standards Act and be between the employer and the employee and find out who was really providing the best evidence that what they were saying was true. And you realize without a collective agreement you're in tough shape. There is no place to go and there's no help there. We were the help and we were limited and restricted in some areas where we could get too deeply involved. But I came to the realization that collective agreements are an awesome event even the shittiest one is still better than none, because the Employment Standards Act doesn't really cut it. That's the answer to that question.

BG [00:10:34] That's a great answer. So that takes us through a little bit of your timeline. So going back to the beginning of your experiencing kind of organized labour. Can you talk a little bit about working in the construction industry and your first job there and how that kind of led to more organized forms of labour?

KB [00:10:54] Yeah it's more happenstance because my father was in the management side I was able to get a job as a labourer and I started out on the Queen Charlotte Islands just after high school in 1967 in the summer, I went up there as a labourer and we worked 14 hour days in Skidegate, again which is just a little east of Queen Charlotte City, and on the way to Port Clements. We were paving that road from Skidegate to Port Clements. And I went up there as the labourer, this really kind of privileged kid, very lucky. Didn't realize it and I had an opportunity I hadn't completed my math exam and I had failed my English exam so I didn't complete that year in high school, so I had an opportunity to go to Prince Rupert fly over and do the exam and do the English exam and I thought I'd make a money, bugger this I'm not going. So I never did complete school that way but I worked there as a labourer, realized that labouring was it's a good job and people undervalue it. But it's important to have people who can do those skills. But I wanted a more technical job so when I came back from in 1967 the summer of '67 it was. I went back to try and pick up my high school at King Ed campus of I think it was Vancouver Community College, it was right where VGH is now on the corner of Oak and 12th.

KB [00:12:43] I started doing that, started to hang around with some guys that were politically active in the social activism side of the riot in Gastown. Yeah all of those alternate lifestyle gang were there, and I'd made so much money up in the Queen Charlottes that was the time that I told my parents... see I was, my birthday is November 27th 1949. Two weeks after that I just turned 18. I told my parents see you later. I've had enough. So all this money that I'd earned in construction which I didn't realize because of the collective agreement, really. And the benefits and everything I had. I took that money and did the trip around the world. So when I came back I realized a couple of things. Three simple words that I picked up which I did not have beforehand. And that was please and thank you. And if you learn that in any language and you're humble, you can travel anywhere in the world because really people are always game to help you. There's always sort of some people who get a little uppity but we're all the same at the very end. So when I came back I went back into that construction and was in a collective agreement for the rest of my life.

KB [00:14:15] So it was a it was good for me to see the benefits. And when you're working in it you don't see it when you're outside of it. You get a better sense for what collective agreements are and organized labour is and how valuable it is. And you have to earn that. And that's the shortfall that we have nowadays I think. People don't earn it. They just get it. So if you join a union you get all of those benefits but you haven't earned it. So if you lose it you don't care. If you earn it or if you are on strike or you're politically active to get that and you lose something to get something. Then it's ownership. You're taking something of mine away but not if something is given to you, that doesn't work.

BG [00:15:09] Great, so can you tell me a little bit about some of your early experiences with organizing or negotiating on behalf of workers. So when you started to get more into the leadership position.

KB [00:15:19] Well we'll go back a little bit to when I was working non-union in Sicamous, a non-union shop. I was working as an apprentice heavy duty mechanic. And the employers had us work a couple of 24 hour shifts. We had to work right around the clock because the equipment had to be ready to bring the logs in, into the log landing and get into the sawmill. And they weren't paying us correctly. So we, there was two of us there. One was the regular guy who was a mechanic and I was the apprentice and in discussion we thought you know they want us to work 24 hours. We have to take a shift off because we're tired they're going to only pay us time and a half for that 24 hour period which we thought was wrong. So we brought the Labour Board in and the Labour Board said no the minimum standards are this this and this. So we ended up getting paid but got laid off. So that's the Employment Standards side of things. You can have a complaint as soon as your employer knows... you're toast, but in a collective agreement you got way more protection. When I got involved in the politics of the Longshore, our issue in Longshore has always been how do we do the best for our members that we can, so benefits, pension, hourly rate. And I didn't realize the depth of the development of that industry through Craig Pritchett. And until I spent a fair bit of time with Dave Pritchett and realized that after the war a lot of the soldiers came out and they were the Longshore and they wouldn't put up with a lot of bullshit. Because they'd been over getting shot at, and now some employer group the Shipping Federation, I think was the first group that was organized before it became the B.C. Maritime Labourers being the B.C. Maritime Employers Association from the Shipping Federation. Their only goal was the bottom line which was dollars so they didn't care about benefits. And you're on your own. But I realized that while there's been a lot of work that had been done we had, we were locked out almost every contract that I recall except for there may have been one. Maybe not. Not even one can't recall. We were out on strike on one of them but the employer forced us out. So it always looked like the Longshore were going out and what happened in the prairies because the grain wasn't moving the farmers thought it was the Longshore that was doing it, but it was actually the employer putting us out on the street. But they blamed us, the farmers. So part of my initiative with Longshore was to develop an educational program to try and get the public to realize that Longshore had a significant and Important role in our society outside of the collective agreement. Community members. Money going to Safeway. Community events based around our industry. So Longshore, as you know from the waterfront project, is pretty rich in New West, Vancouver is the same actually. But there while their Local was the biggest Vancouver, but I think now New West may be bigger, but all of the Longshore has been here again since the war and we've developed into an organization that addresses community, social activism, labour code, we're under the federal labour code. So we have a different mandate that we march to versus provincial and WCB regs were under the labour code. So there was a lot of advocacy that was in place and it was our role to push against that to try and improve things for our members. And that's why I did that on the education committee in our what we call a dispatch committee on the executive for nine years of Longshore, relief business agent, and then started working on the apprenticeship program while I was going through that, and then I had a break from 1995 to 2001 is when I went into the Apprenticeship Branch. So all of that advocacy ended up in the trades which is my trade is heavy duty. So I moved into that on secondment.

BG [00:20:13] So were you still, when you started working for the Ministry, were you still Longshore then. OK so during that time then you just weren't a member of the executive.

KB [00:20:22] Yes. I didn't participate on the executive there I became a shop steward and a chair for the BCGEU. A local chair for the component 2003 which was the technical staff in

the Lower Mainland district which is 03. And I was the local chair, for awhile I was a secretary there and became an advocate for apprenticeship with the GEU support. Tom Kozar was someone who I'd worked with, because I'd done night school as a heavy-duty mechanics instructor and one stint as a day school person so I knew the educational system. When I went into the apprenticeship branch I did training as a provincial instructor and am an accredited provincial instructor so that development of understanding of the steps in any curriculum, which is no different than any plan how to take a brainstorming idea and put it into a platform to advocate for. That was apprenticeship. That was for labour. And yeah it all developed kind of.

BG [00:21:43] Well and so you have worked in a lot of different roles in the labour industry. Is there a commonality that you find between, because that you know between BCGEU, ILWU. These are different industries but they happen to have common labour issues between them.

KB [00:22:02] The skilled trades, the trades are divided off into really public sector and private sector and the public sector is the CUPE gang and the BCGEU and then the private sector are the Longshore and Teamsters and Operating Engineers so there's a divide that's there. And when you're talking office staff versus skilled trades people or people that have an avocation driving truck or driving crane those are all skilled, by the way. It's a different thought process very much. When you're outside in the rain and the snow and it's freezing your ass off. And you have an issue you own that. When you're in an office and the weather is good inside and everything's OK people tend to kind of back off on pushing issues. The organized craft trades I think is the term that they use, were more militant. Mine Mill, Steel, Longshore, Teamsters were all, screw this it's down. Or it didn't happen as often in the teaching, public sector as it had done in crafts. So I found we were more reactive and that's the difference between that and the public sector gang who by and large were regular eight hour a day people. In the craft industry or the trades side we were on a 24-hour shift so we could be on a graveyard an afternoon shift outside in the rain covered in muck from head to toe. There was sort of a chip that you developed because of the environment you're in and that energy when you brought all of the guys to the table it was mostly guys. In all of the stuff that I went through over the years there was a couple of women in there. Kate Braid being one of them. Another woman who was in the apprenticeship branch. She became a heavy-duty mechanic. But not a lot of women who were in the trade side. The women that were in the public sector weren't as militant. Not that they didn't have and I could be proven wrong in that they probably had a lot more going on when they decided that it was over it was over. It's like the telephone operators thing. Right. When women decide that everything's going to stop it's significant. Guys we kind of create the event and then it's gone. We can drill down and we'll go off sometimes to the point of being not too smart in our own processes because where we've had enough. But women are solid. I have always found those to be, once they've decided to be active. You couldn't have a better group. Can't do so because they when they say no it means no.

KB [00:25:23] So do you have any memorable stories from events that you might have participated in such as a strike conference that might have been notable? Can you recall any moments from these events that might have changed the way you thought about labour issues or an event that was kind of just visceral in your memory?

KB [00:25:43] So when I was working in Longshore there were three or four big grain operators in North America. Cargill, I can't remember the names of the other ones but they were a big player and their goal was to get around Longshore and the Grain Workers Union,

who I knew well. So they decided that... The way the way grain is handled here in Canada is the grain is harvested in the prairies goes into an elevator uncleaned or roughly cleaned and then it's taken all the way out to the coast here and we've got elevators that are run by the Grain Workers Union and those people clean the grain there and upgrade the quality of it. Cargill thought that they could start running trains north-south, instead of east-west, in Canada from Thunder Bay and Saskatchewan. All the way out and we'd just bypass all the organized labour which was Longshore and the Grain Workers. We load the ships with the grain, the ship or the grain workers clean it and deliver it to me, and I've got a pipe and I load that ship with that. So they didn't want those two bargaining units involved, so they decided to run it through what they call Brownville Crossing. And they brought a unit train into Brownville, and we went out there as a group of picketers and stopped the train, and we stopped it for like 48 hours. The RCMP ended up coming out and taking photos of everybody and trying to get a sense for who the evil people were. But what we'd done I walked the train with another Longshore foreman, and we decoupled every boxcar in that - every grain car, there was a hundred of them. So every time that they got starting to roll this thing, they would take off and all these cars would be left. So we drove them crazy for 48 hours. It was fantastic, great experience at night, and you're wandering around. But it shows you how we owned it, and how the employer thought it was that important to try and get away and they changed that because they finally got past us, took the grain down to the US, where they don't clean the grain in their elevators, and the rough cleaning that they'd done in the prairies by the time it got to the US it was downgraded in quality so their price was down. So they lost money on it and then they went back to doing that. I'm now Secretary Treasurer of ILWU Canada, from 2004 'til 2010, and during that period of time the President was unable to travel to Europe. And in Europe, in the European Union, Longshore and dock workers were viewed as the problem for movement and the cost of moving commodities. So the German Christian Shipping Federation had brought a motion called 'Ports1 Ports 2'. Ports 1 had come ahead and it was turned down by the European Union, Port 2 was coming up, which was a way to eliminate every collective agreement in Europe in the European Union. Every country from Denmark all the way down to Spain and whoever was in the EU at the time.

KB [00:29:39] And so I flew over there with another Vice President; Local 500 President and myself went over to represent Canada at this march in Strasbourg France. There were 9,000 of us that were there. We started off a march from a park in Strasbourg to the EU second home - like the EU is in Brussels I think - but there is Strasbourg has a place there. So 9,000 of us walked to the EU. It was all peaceful. What we didn't realize were that the French had military dressed guys with guns, rubber bullets, water cannon and all of that on the side. One row back from the street that we're in... And we're all marching down and they seem to be OK. A couple of people got a little goofy and went off looking for these cops because you could see them off in the distance, and the Spaniards who were absolutely looney just took off to start a fight, they wanted to have that. So we get to the EU, and there's 9,000 of us in front and they opened up with a water cannon on the crowd to try and disperse us. Rocks started being thrown - not by any of the Americans, the Australians, the Canadians were off on the side, and we were we were there as a peaceful demonstration, to say no this can't happen. This is this is not right. Destroying collective agreements in all these countries. And the damage was significant. Tear gas came out. We were able to get away out of the crowd and the next day we were interviewed by CNN about our position on the Ports 2 legislation that was coming ahead. And we said we're peaceful demonstrators. We think collective agreements are very important politically for all countries and for the quality of your work

experience. It sets a boundary for the employer and sets a boundary for the employee as well.

KB [00:32:08] So in our mind it was it was good. So we did that. Then we went into the Public Gallery and the vote was turned down. So this 9,000 group from all over the world had come to push back on it. And we were successful in turning around the legislators who could have voted up or down.

KB [00:32:34] It would have been significant if that had gone through...

KB [00:32:38] Some of the European guys are really radical. I mean.

BG [00:32:43] Yeah they have a history of militant unions.

KB [00:32:45] Fire and brimstone, when everything is burnt right down to the ground we're not happy yet, but we're pretty close.

BG [00:32:53] Yes I wouldn't have gone down easily, that's for sure.

KB [00:32:57] Well when you have people rioting, and I think the bill on the EU there was a hundred thousand dollars, and rocks that were fired and broken glass and stuff there,and water cannons and tear gas and these cow catchers in front of these big Hummers like a Hummer with a thing on there everybody's suited up but it was scary. It was very scary. So that's the one time that I realized how mild and meek we are really in North America compared to the other jurisdictions. But their whole livelihood was on the deck and they owned that. The Danes, the Spaniards, those are hard-ass representatives, I tell ya when they say no, it really means no.

BG [00:33:44] So that would have been somewhere between 2004 to 2010. Do you remember what year?

KB [00:33:49] I think it was 2008 would be my guess.

BG [00:33:56] And that train incident that was previous to that?

KB [00:34:00] Yeah yeah that was previous to that. You know that was a Local 500 event and I hadn't made the Area so it was prior to 2004 I think.

KB [00:34:10] Yeah.

BG [00:34:11] Just because those are two great stories, and good examples of that, when people organize they can win. They can have an impact.

KB [00:34:21] If strong and when you're standing there shoulder to shoulder with your brothers and sisters you're going because we live in such a sterile time. You go to work and a lot of the heavy industry now has been broken up where you have one person working. Now when I worked in maintenance, you always worked in teams. So we had three or four guys and we'd always talk about what we were doing and what was right and what was wrong in collective agreements. But the machine operators were single guys so they'd take a machine

he'd be in there all day. He wouldn't know what the hell was going on. So with technology coming ahead and really removing teams... Like on the ships we used to have 13 men gangs. Well there's a little organized group right off the bat. Whatever you're doing drinking and having a good time it's always part of it. But at the same time you were recognizing that you were working with your brother and your brother and sister. We're a value. They were value to you because they were working with you. You're working as a team. That kind of mentality is kind of gone now because the work environment has changed significantly. So it's tough to get people first because the new people that are coming on are getting this stuff, that we not even we you know, the war vets created. And we came in we tried to cooper it up and make the best we can. But the young people now don't own it like we did. And then the gang structure is not there so you don't even have someone to talk to you, if you have coffee. And a lot of the Longshore organizations now have the guys for longshore anyhow...you can skip your coffee and go home early so you never even talk to the guys, if you see something that's health and safety wise, it isn't kosher, but you're going home early so who cares. So there's some of that in the tech change that's come ahead. Yeah. No it's really valuable.

BG [00:36:26] So what are some, kind of on that note, what are some of the big changes that you witnessed in your years of working in the labour industry? What are some of the biggest differences that you think that workers today are going to find when they're trying to organize or negotiate on their behalf?

KB [00:36:44] There's more apathy but it falls more of in the zone of ignorance because people just don't know don't realize what they have until it's gone. And I think that's part of a song someplace that Dylan sang but it's you don't realize what you're lost until it's gone. And so the old timers myself included, were trying to bring education in and develop that. But the education is kind of one dimensional. Strikes are a good thing. They usually, from what I've seen, you don't win but where the win is, is in the membership because you're standing side to side with your brothers and sisters. And now you have a common theme and you know who you can trust and who you can't trust and you gain that but there's not that many strikes anymore. There's a few around but not like in Europe as I was saying in France when they decided to have a strike there's 100,000 people out in the street there the whole country shuts down and the government's afraid of those people. In Canada, it's the other way around. We're afraid of what the business can do to us. So people are a little apprehensive. The Press that we used to have in just in Vancouver here and Rod was part of that... we used to have a labour writer. Three of them actually wrote for The Vancouver Sun, a labour column. They're all gone because the business side of the newspaper said we don't have to report on labour issues. So even understanding or knowing who else is out there. I remember a President of Local 500, when the Ferry Workers went out, Bob Ashton and a couple other Longshoremen. We just, they went out, I didn't go out. They went out and they were in the line-up with those people standing side by side with them and said we're not going to allow you to do this until you sit down and bargain with us. And that's what has to happen. It has to be a line in the sand that everybody can live with. And if you have people you're standing with it's easier than you by yourself. Solidarity is really the gig.

BG [00:39:04] And between unions, not even among union members.

KB [00:39:07] While the union members are more important because we have a common language we have a common workplace. When you start going out into other unions. It's very much like Harold Pritchett was a Communist, and then the other gang who was Jack Munro's

were sort of right wing. So we had left and right camps in a lot of the big unions, years ago. And I always hear of those conflicts between the two sides. But they were unions, right. They were, the idea was that they were to protect their members. Some did it better than others, and some unions who are union in name, are not. And the Seafarers International Union is not really, has proven over its history that it's kind of a... and long jackets kind of gang. So just to back up a bit in the history of Longshore, to show you how and who we were dealing with... in 1960s I think, Diefenbaker was the Prime Minister of Canada and the Seafarers International were on strike. No.. they weren't on strike. The Canadian Seaman's Union was on the West Coast here and they were the guys that went out on the ships that sailed the Pacific and all over the place. It was a sort of a Communist based union from my recollection so Diefenbaker said he'd been through the McCarthy period. He didn't want any Communist unions so he brought Hal Banks up from the United States, who was a thug for the SIU, gave him an office in Ottawa and gave directions to guys out here in British Columbia to break the Canadian Seaman's Union because they were a Commie organization and one of their organizers was a guy by the name of Norm Cunningham, who was a thug himself. And I actually worked with his son. I'll tell you that story here in a second. So we worked with his... Norm Cunningham would go down to the ships, to the Canadian Seaman's Union guys who were on those ships, and say you're out of here. And if the guys didn't move he would pull out a bicycle chain and he'd beat on guys and then you know terrorize them and the term that they used was DNS 'do not ship'. Don't allow that guy to go out on the vessel and they strong-armed the employers that by and large, had the support of the employers and they destroyed that union. Well Norm Cunningham, this thug, became the President of the B.C. Maritime Employers Association, and that's who we dealt with when I first came into Longshore in '77.

KB [00:42:18] I'm pretty sure he was still there, but he was the head organizer for a union who are not a union. It's actually blasphemy to say that and he became the employer's representative to break the Longshore. Well they never broke Longshore and we've had all sorts of people that have come in with the idea that they can break Longshore and they haven't done that yet. The little side story on Norm Cunningham and his son, I'm sitting having lunch in the B.C. Maritime Labour Centre with Steve Cunningham. That's his son. And one of the retirees; Longshore, is a Canadian Seaman's Union guy by the name of Mike Marinos. He comes over and he sits down with us. And I said, "Mike, you know Steve, and I think you knew his dad". And he said yes, "I'll sit here with you, because the sins of the father can't be levied on the son". So we sat and talked about them and Steve talked about that, or Mike Marinos talked about the DNS and how that whole part of his life before he came into Longshore, how it was for him. The reality of what Norm Cunningham had done and how that history morphed over the years.

KB [00:43:45] So it's funny when you see people who were really organized labour then they become management or Presidents of organizations and there's sort of... whether anybody likes it or not, you need the two entities because you need to focus and move ahead with something, if it's scattered and you have no head, they can't talk to anyone to make change. So those are the things that hopefully are still in place. I don't know what's going to happen with organized labour. I see the numbers are dropping significantly in the U.S. right now and will with the Trump and company in there they hate anyone who is organized except themselves and they're totally on our guys. Which is kind of a joke but they have the power. And politically, the only time things will change is when you get whacked. As we said earlier something's got to be taken away before people say well enough of this. So and that's even

our provincial election coming up. Hopefully everyone remembers in May that we need a change.

BG [00:45:02] Yes absolutely. Well so bringing us a little bit more into the present then you made it your mission to help to educate folks on the value of union members and workers in general. Yeah and that kind of tied into working on different projects that have come into being, one of which was the Reclaiming the New Westminster Waterfront project. That was a joint partnership between Simon Fraser University, the New Westminster museum and archives and the ILWU Retirees Association. And you are one of the ones that kind of spearheaded the creation of that. Yeah. So do you. Do you want to talk a little bit about why you felt that was so important.

KB [00:45:47] Well it goes back to that discussion that we were having about the grain farmers saying that basically Longshore were thieves, they were holding us up and you know when you're significant in organized labour in your community, you put your money in your community you participate in events, you support charitable organizations and you're not recognized for what you do outside of your workplace and the workplace is a generator of big bucks. So it was always these Longshore they're just painful or painful. I wanted to change that attitude. And the only way I could do it... How it originally started the Waterfront Project I went up to the it's called ABC. Association of Business Communicators up at the communications department at SFU, because ... Phoebe Snow, I think was the name of the person that was in that department. And I said to her, how do I change the attitude of people about Longshore. And she said well really adults are very difficult to change their attitude, but if you get to the kids and change their behaviour and understanding of what Longshore are, then then you've got an opportunity for real change.

KB [00:47:13] So the story was we were going to try and get badges for the Scouts. Cub Scouts that were Longshore, knot-tying, just some of the things that we do. I took that back to my Executive in Local 500 and said we need to kind of reach out to young people to try and give them a sense for who we are. And everybody you know everybody's busy. They all have full-time things going on so that died when I went to, I was successful in my election in 2004 and became the Secretary Treasurer of ILWU Canada. I'd always had that in the back of my mind. We were in the basement of the Maritime Labour Centre and we're... the space wasn't working for us at the same time we had a huge archive there of tons of material that nobody really knew was there. So I took that on and hired a student from Simon Fraser - not from Simon Fraser, from Douglas College of the Print Futures Program at Douglas. And she was an alumni she came in and she started organizing all of the history. Now Dave Lomas and Frank Kennedy and a couple of the other old timers had done a worksheet showing from 18 something to current. What our history was and that had fallen by the side. So I brought that back up and I brought in Lomas and Kennedy and had them re-craft it and had the support staff to put that back in order. And we sorted out a bunch of boxes, threw out what was not important, kept it and made the move upstairs. So when we were upstairs because history was so important, I was able to get a resolution on the deck at our Convention that we would collect a dollar from every member in Longshore each year just for funding history.

KB [00:49:19] And while that's all going on and we were successful in getting that resolution in place, I had started the discussion with Peter Hall on how do we... And I actually went down there, with Tom Dufresne; Tom Dufresne and myself went down and met with Mark Leier and Peter Hall and said, What have we got? Is there any way we can access public funds to get

this going? And they said well based on... it wasn't a SSHRC grant it was another grant. Starts with a 'C'. I can't remember what the name, and what the acronym stood for, but that wouldn't work. So then, I'm punted out of office in 2010, in 2011 Peter Hall contacts me and says I think we've got a chance now. We'll go with a SSHRC grant and we'll use instead of all Longshore, I think was our first presentation. Tom had left the topic. I continued with Peter and so we focused in on the Longshore retirees in New West because Peter was in New West it was a better fit for him. So Peter said well we really need people to contribute here. Who should we contact?

KB [00:50:42] Actually no, we applied in 2011 were turned down, applied in 2012 and were accepted. There were two.... one was turned down and we had to re-craft a little bit of the grant because we were close, but not close enough for the grant body. I think 2012 was when we started and he said well we need partners in this who we're gonna get. So I phoned up Lomas because he's got some history. He was the next officer of ILWU Canada. I got a hold of Pat and Sue Dyer who are friends of mine and school teachers in New West. There was one other person. There was a bunch of people involved and Peter pulled that together and started on the grant. We wrote the grant, I proofed the grant with Peter. Those guys understand the language required for grants right. Which was fantastic as I could never have done it. Peter did it. Peter and Pam actually we sat in the pub in New West and went over topic and crafted it, had a great time and were successful in getting that. So now we're off and running and my schtick had always been, I want to get education in the school system to show organized labour - and at this point it was just Longshore - what value we are. What do we do in a community, where does our money go? And who do we support and why are we here? So that out of that grant came a fantastic history. Pulling together of people from across the world. Just awesome. And some training regimes that can be used anywhere, with O'Neill. What was her first name? PhD.

BG [00:52:42] She could have been Susan wasn't she?

KB [00:52:48] Yeah. I can't remember her name now but anyhow she was the PhD in the Education Department that Ken Novakowski actually met. We had him come in and have a discussion with her about teaching and so. So I think it came off as a pretty good return on investment; we didn't invest anything just our time. And the government kicked in 220 K. And we have something that has a life as you said earlier it's still living. It's still moving and that's really all you can hope is that we have an opportunity to explain. Or get people involved in who we are in oral history as we well know it is important. So we're here now. The two of us have segued over to this place, the Labour Heritage Centre, and have added huge value. I mean you can't even measure what's been done especially your part here. Becoming the manager of this is just sweet just absolutely fantastic in this will be for forever. I mean you don't get better than forever. We don't even live that long right.

BG [00:54:00] Exactly. So obviously you think it's valuable for us to capture these sorts of things that goes without saying but why, why do you think it's important that we do these types of interviews that we do these projects that captured all these sorts of things?

KB [00:54:16] Well what happens to working people is we're basically invisible and nobody cares. We don't know how the food gets on the table or how that bread gets to the table. But there's so many people in our world that make that happen that are invisible. So those people need to be recognized; it's not the labour leaders per se, it's the ordinary working person who

has a story to tell because they're part of a family, and they've got a mother, father and brother, sister, wife you know kids all of that. Those are the people that are of value. And their story is more valuable than the union story. Because it is a union, a social union, a family. That's really what this is all about. And if you can't capture that and if you don't see the value in that. I think we're at a loss already. Those things are so important and they've never been recognized. So we we kind of leap from here to here to here and now we have an opportunity to collect those thoughts. And again it's the labour history and all history is subjective. So we all have our own opinion on it but we do have a theme going through that that it's important to be together in the workplace to have a way to bargain, to deal with grievances, health and safety issues, and then to be politically active and those things need to be... need to go on. In the march that I was in in Strasbourg really gave me a sense of pride when I was standing in the crowd as there were two of us from Canada and there were 9,000 other people there. I mean it's way bigger than us and we don't realize it. That said, you go home and you talk to your kids about it and you tell them what it is. And my son fortunately is the crane trainer for all of British Columbia, now. The only crane trainer for the Operating Engineers. My daughter is a Grade 7-8-9 middle school teacher in Poco. She's in the teacher's union and he's in the Operating Engineers. So my wife worked at Douglas College. She was in the BCGEU component there. So our life has been union and that's afforded us the opportunity to be able to sit and take time and tell our story and stories are... I don't know if you've seen that show, 'Hello Goodbye'. This is a longer version of the same thing. And really we were so visual in our society here that we can stereotype people just by how they look. You know we got a tattoo. There's a weird guy but when you talk to them you realize that they're just people that it's a fashion statement. It's not a political statement. So understanding where people come from is the bottom line of all of this shit, we need to know that people understand who we are as organized labour. And in there I think there's some fear for people because of the stories of past years, when organized labour was Mafia run - or appeared that way. And you can always find, you can always find dirt if you're looking for it. But by and large 95 percent of the movement is awesome. It needs to be stronger and we need to educate people about why we're here. We're here as people and as a union, it's cool. I'm an advocate.

BG [00:58:06] So is there anything else that you want to share any other stories that have come to mind as we've been talking or...

KB [00:58:19] I think the other area that people in unions should really focus on is the health and safety. And I was a health and safety officer in Longshore in the workplace for years and years. There are so many unknowns in every workplace that can cause you health issues that we don't know about. And I'll use one as an example in Longshore. They used to spray in the elevator they would spray malathion on the grain. And malathion is an organophosphate and it would stop any bugs from growing in the grain. So the grain would go on the ship, it would be sealed off and it would be sent to Egypt or Saudi Arabia and it would sit at anchorage until they needed it to make bread or whatever they were making with it. So that exposure by itself, was not a problem... well it is a problem. But you go home and you Diazinon the roses. You Round-Up the weeds in your yard. So what I realized in consultation with the Grain Workers Union; we did a study on the exposure of malathion to grain workers and ourselves. So malathion is on everything that you eat unless you're buying organic and then it's supposedly clean. But there's two terms that they use, 'potentiation' and 'synergy' in the evaluation of toxicity for pesticides, insecticides and herbicides. So the farmers put herbicides on in the Prairies and insecticides and then we spray out here so we could have three sides insecticide, herbicide and pesticide all on that. The studies for the toxicity are only done on

one. If that had a rating of one, and Diazinon had a rating on one, you would think it would be two exposure. But it could potentiate, could be a toxicity of 10. But there's never been any research done on that. So we go home and we do our roses and all of a sudden now everybody's coming down with forms of cancer and nobody is checking because nobody cares right. I just use some of that on the roses that I sprayed some Round-Up on the weeds in and it's all in our workplace. And then we become ill. And that's like stealing a life to me because we're not doing enough to protect ourselves and in the Longshore industry we actually work to try and set up cleaning stations which the employer pushed against better health and safety. Personal hygiene stuff. And we got some of that in place. But health and safety, the unknowns. You have ozone coming off the printer over here and you have fibres coming off the rug. Everything is a potential and it's all risk based assessment.

KB [01:01:42] So. That's what health and safety should do and should be a significant part of every bargaining unit to evaluate and make sure that at the end of the day you go home and you live, not that you give your life away to that job. So health and safety is the other area that I'm a bear on when it comes to anyone exposing themselves for anything. Even the pulp mills, which you know chlorine gases and all sorts of stuff. The potential there...

BG [01:02:13] Do you think that we've improved over the years, like we've become more aware of these health and safety issues or is it still an issue that you think...

KB [01:02:22] I think it's very much like the reporting of crime when I grew up. You didn't hear a lot. It was in the newspaper. Now the media has brought all of the things that were happening then and made them right in your face. So it looks like there's a lot more whether it's actually drilling down to the people on the work floor. Those are the ones that are exposed right. And those are the ones we need to protect. So we have the big story and you watch the news at night and all of that stuff. But have we really protected the workers?

BG [01:02:57] Well that's a fair point. Like the asbestos case that's coming up right now it's relevant and there's still workers that are being exposed to this even though it has been made illegal. So that's a great example of the situation where maybe it appears to be improving but whether that's actually happening.

KB [01:03:12] Yeah. Just there's just more noise out there but it has to happen on the shop floor. As a mechanic what I would do, and I can still remember doing this, most of the is asbestos gaskets and brake linings or most of the gaskets and brake lines were made out of asbestos just because it's a high heat issue. So we would take those things off the vehicle and I'd take an exhaust manifold and I would wire-wheel it off and clean all that off, and you would split the asbestos into small particles, and you just kind of turn your head away so you weren't breathing that in. 20 years later you find out you have cancer from that and I fully expect one day somebody is going to knock on my shoulder and say guess what you've been exposed right. So it's funny they buried that stuff. It's very much like the example of Nestle's who had baby formula that was absolute shit here. So they sent it to Africa and sold it in Africa. So I mean advocacy has got to be around the world. When I did the research on malathion I got a hold of the ILO and they sent me out packages of stuff on that and it's available, but do we know how to get to it. We trained our young up-and-coming men and women to understand that there's always a risk and you need to understand the risk and then prevent it. You can't always protect yourself 100 percent but you at least need to be thinking about it. So that's the goal. Education again is so crucial. Get it early and then build it up their

whole life. That would... that's the secret. And health and safety is there. I think your dad's into that too right. He knows all that stuff.

BG [01:05:14] All right. Well I think we've covered a lot of ground. You've got a lot of background and we could easily go on for another hour I'm sure if we wanted to, but I want to say thank you for sitting down and doing an interview. It's great that we finally got this on tape because you've done so much great work for the BC Labour Heritage Centre here, and we hope that that continues.

BG [01:05:35] Yeah so do I, awesome. Thank you very much.