Interview: Joy Thorkelson (JT)
Interviewer: Rod Mickleburgh (RM) and Donna Sacuta (DS)
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Transcription: Pam Moodie

RM [00:00:15] Joy, first of all, how did you end up in Prince Rupert?

JT [00:00:21] Well, it was in the day of the LIP (Local Initiatives Program) grants, and I had a choice. Come to Prince Rupert with a friend I'd met in college, and make piles of money or work on a LIP with one of the health units drawing posters. And since my drawing skills extended to the stick person, (laughter) that was my skill set.

RM [00:00:49] Where were you at the time?

JT [00:00:50] I was living in Vancouver, so I was 19 and I took off with this friend I met at school, and she brought me up here.

RM [00:01:03] Was she from here?

JT [00:01:04] No, but she had a brother who lived here and so she'd been here for quite a few years in the summers. I came up with her to work in a cannery and I got up here and my first job was actually lifeguarding and teaching swimming at the local swimming pool because I was a lifeguard/swimming instructor as well.

RM [00:01:27] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JT [00:01:28] That's not what I wanted to do. I could have done that in Vancouver. Finally, I got hired in one of the fish plants and I worked in—not on salmon—I was hired by Canadian Fish into Atlin Fish Plant, which was a groundfish plant. The men and women's seniority lists were separate and the men looked after the salmon and the women filleted the groundfish. I was on the women's side and filleted the groundfish and the men's side unloaded the groundfish and did the heavy work, but they also did all the salmon. I never really saw a salmon until five years later.

RM [00:02:02] Really?

JT [00:02:03] Yeah.

RM [00:02:04] Was there a difference in pay too?

JT [00:02:06] Yeah, when I first started work it was. The union had gone on strike in 1973 and I started in 1974. In 1973, Jack Nichol said it was really the first shoreworker-instigated strike. It wasn't a fishermen-instigated strike. It was a strike by shoreworkers for equal pay. What happened is that men had higher rates everywhere, and this one men and women's rates became equal over a period of—they won that 1993—so 1994 or 1995. For over a two-year collective agreement, the wages between men and women were made equal.

RM [00:02:45] Wait a minute. Did you say 1994?

JT [00:02:47] Sorry? Thank you. 1974 to 1975

JT [00:02:53] that two-year collective agreement made women's wages equal with men. By 1975, women in the cannery had the same wages as men, and in fresh fish. Women and men who had 400 hours of work, had equal wages but then in fresh fish, men got an extra 65 cents an hour increase that nobody in the cannery got—whether they're men or women—and nobody, no women in fresh fish got and so that it was called a 1,000-hour rate, so there was a fresh fish 1,000-hour rate that only applied to fresh fish men, it didn't apply to fresh fish women and it didn't apply—

RM [00:03:36] That's in spite of the strike?

RM [00:03:38] That's in spite of the strike. The strike was to make wages equal in the cannery and equal between men and women in fresh fish under 400 hours.

RM [00:03:46] Oh, so there was actually still a division.

JT [00:03:48] There was still a division. After you got to 1,000 hours, then men in fresh fish got more, but they also got more than men in the cannery too.

RM [00:03:58] So they were discriminating against everybody?

JT [00:04:02] Yeah, the men in fresh fish just got it—they had that—and it was a big difference, 65 cents.

RM [00:04:11] Only men did that and women weren't allowed to do that or what?

JT [00:04:13] Women actually got a raise similar to that, and I think it ended up being the same as we negotiated collective agreements when they filleted. If a qualified filleter got equal to a man with 1,000 hours, but a man just got the 1,000-hour rate. Fresh fish man just got 1,000-hour rate just because he worked 1,000 hours, whereas a woman had to become a qualified filleter before she got that rate and she got that rate only while she was filleting.

RM [00:04:43] So what's a qualified filleter?

JT [00:04:46] There was how many pounds per hour you could do.

RM [00:04:50] Really!

JT [00:04:50] So you had a time, you had a probationary period or a trial period of so many hours, and after so many hours, you had to cut at a semi-qualified rate, which was piecework in the contract (unclear). Then you got—I think it was 35 cents more—and then you got the rest of your 65 cents once you became a qualified filletter.

RM [00:05:11] And were you?

JT [00:05:12] Yeah, I was. I became a qualified filleter.

RM [00:05:14] And how long did you stay in that plant?

JT [00:05:16] I worked for five years at that plant. Some of those years I went back to university and some of those years I stayed. Then in 1970—1978, I decided that I didn't want to go back to university. I had tried some law school courses and I found out that it wasn't for me. I also wanted to run a boat, and so when I came back to Prince Rupert after school ended in 1978, I had no intentions of going back to university. What I did is I talked one of the plant managers into promising to lease me a rental boat for the following summer. I went back to work in the fish plant with a promise that the following summer I'd be able to rent a boat, that the company used to have all these rental gillnets, so I got one of the Canadian Fish managers to agree to put me on as the first—I think there was somebody at B.C. Packers who was a woman who was already running a gillnetter—but I would be the first woman that they would lease a gillnetter to at Canadian Fish. He said, 'but you'd have to take some courses.' So I took net mending courses and I took some navigational course offered by the Coast Guard at the college. This guy had some people lined up to tell me how to fish—one guy one week and another guy—who all summer these guys were supposed to come on my boat and show me how to fish and where to fish and everything and I was all excited. Then I got a call in, I don't know, January, February saying, probably in January, saying 'do you want to work for the UFAWU?'

RM [00:07:19] Who called you?

JT [00:07:21] It was actually Mike Darnell who called me and—

RM [00:07:24] I was going to wonder when Mike Darnell's name was going to come up. The legendary Mike Darnell.

JT [00:07:30] Absolutely. Mike called me and asked me and I couldn't believe it. That was always in the back of my mind that someday I'd be able to be an organizer for the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union, and that was like my lifelong goal. Never mind being a lawyer. I wanted to work for the Fishermen's Union.

RM [00:07:50] Oh my God!

JT [00:07:52] It was the most marvellous thing I could think of. The stories of Homer Stevens and Jack Nichol.

RM [00:07:57] Bill Procopation.

JT [00:07:58] (unclear) strike. Well, those people weren't legends yet because they were still working for the union, but all of the legends of all the people that had worked for the union—or had not worked for it— but like the guys, Reg Payne, all of the guys who had worked for the union I'd heard all the miraculous stories about. Plus the people that I thought were wonderful that worked for the union, I thought it would, maybe 20 years of experience would give me the experience that I needed to go work. But Mike phoned, asked me if I wanted to work for the union so I went down, got interviewed, and they put me on and I'm sure Jack Nichol tore his hair out the first year. I was young—

RM [00:08:39] What was your job? What was your position called?

JT [00:08:42] I was called Northern Organizer.

RM [00:08:42] What was Mike Darnell then?

JT [00:08:44] Northern Representative.

RM [00:08:46] But he was up here, right?

JT [00:08:47] Yeah, he was here. This used to be a big office, (unclear) big fleet, big constituency. I'm sure Jack pulled his hair out because Mike was young too, so between the two of us, we weren't afraid of anything. Nothing. Jack was so nice. Every time we got into trouble, he backed us up. He would give us shit privately, but never with the companies. He would always back us up. Try to figure a way out of the mess that we created, but he'd always back us up in front of the companies. He was like the best president, best person I've ever worked for was Jack.

RM [00:09:28] Isn't that nice?

JT [00:09:29] Yeah, I learnt a lot from Jack and even though he could give you big shit—

RM [00:09:35] Yeah.

JT [00:09:36] He was always, always—if he knew your heart was there, and you just made some stupid mistakes—he could live with that. What he couldn't live with is, he didn't like people who tried to cut deals behind his back or sell out the working-class or whatever. Jack was a great believer in the working-class. If you were fighting for the working-class, that's all he cared about, and he was a great person to learn under.

RM [00:10:00] Isn't that nice? I'm shocked—not shocked—but imagine your dream to work for the UFAWU. Like why? What kind of a dream is that?

JT [00:10:11] I didn't know anything. I didn't know anything about unions.

RM [00:10:13] Yeah.

JT [00:10:14] When I was a middle-class kid from Vancouver, wet behind the ears, came and called everybody 'Mrs.' I'd never called an adult woman, or an adult man, by their first name, ever, until I went in the fish plants, and then I could barely say anybody's name because, they were all, it was all first-name basis, even the boss, that just frightened me. The first day that I started working, the women—who I was totally afraid of—told me to get up in the lunchroom, so I went up to the lunchroom. They sat me down, and they gave me the card and they gave me an initiation card and a pen, and said, 'sign there. You're signing the UFAWU and don't you ever, as a student, think that you can undercut what those of us who are regular workers are earning here. You have to vote and support the union all the time.'

RM [00:11:10] (laughter)

JT [00:11:11] 'Okay!' Those are just (unclear) workers, that's right, so I just signed the paper. I thought, 'holy shit, this is really cool.' I believed in the working-class. I was taking political science and I believed in the working-class. I had some—

RM [00:11:24] Turbulent times.

JT [00:11:25] Read Marx and Lenin and everything in school. Then, I met Georgette Desautels. You had to take a biffy break, and a biffy break was timed by half of a cigarette. When you were on the line, between coffee break and lunch break—between a meal break and coffee break—you had a biffy break and it used to start— If you started work at eight, first biffy break a woman would go for a biffy break was at five to nine. The biffy break was about five minutes, but it was measured by half a cigarette, because we all smoked. You would go and you'd sit in the bathrooms but nobody went to the bathroom. If you wanted to go to the bathroom you had to wait till your coffee break.

RM [00:12:08] Yeah.

JT [00:12:09] You sat in the bathroom and you had your smoke and it was actually really good for people who were filleting because it was an extra—any kind of repetitive stuff—it was a good five-minute break.

RM [00:12:20] Yeah. Yeah.

JT [00:12:21] We would go, and you'd go in this group, and you could tell what time it was exactly by who was missing—because they would be in the biffy—so those people who were 20 after, whenever, and so we were a bunch of students. We were kind of at the end of the—and this is just women—the men did whatever they did. This was the women, and so, we went in with Georgette. We were at the end and Georgette Desautels always used to go at the end and it was always by herself. Georgette was a Huguenot. She wasn't Quebecois. She told us that, but she had this great accent and she was—anyway, so Georgie would get herself so excited telling us about Homer Stevens. He was her hero and she was a shop steward in the plant and she's little, and she wore a French braid on top of her head underneath her kerchief—we wore in those days—and Georgette lectured all of us young girls—there would be, maybe four of us would take off at that time to go on the biffy break with Georgette—and she would tell us stories and lecture us about trade unionism and how you stuck together and how everything that people had gotten. The plant had become, they hadn't been given it on a silver platter. They'd had to fight for every single thing that they had, especially women. 'Didn't we know that women didn't get used to paying, didn't get the same rate? Now, over this two-year contract, next year, women and men are going to get the same rate (except for the 1,000 hour rate) but at the same rate of pay?' Up to 1,000 hours anyway and it was a big win for the union. She was so excited. Homer Stevens, she loved Homer Stevens. Georgette had been going to many, many conventions before that time and I guess Homer— But Homer, I knew everything Homer did from Georgette. That was her hero. Then I read the books and stuff. I read Silver Don Cameron wrote a book about a big strike in Nova Scotia, so I read that. I didn't realise that Con Mills had been part of that. It was all very exciting to me and then of course, we went on strike in□—-I started in '74, in '75 we went on strike—and I, of course, got involved in that strike. I stood on picket lines—

RM [00:15:04] That was a tough strike.

JT [00:15:05] That was a tough strike but I didn't know that at that time. I was just—

RM [00:15:09] Whoa!

JT [00:15:10] I knew nothing, except this room was a strike headquarters and Bill Rumley and Silver Odsen and, oh, I can't remember. There was a big Cree contingent in the local and they were the leadership of the local for a long time and the Boudreau's and I'm trying

to remember names of all those guys, they were really wonderful, wonderful people. I don't know what we did on the strike committee. I volunteered to the strike committee and I think I hung around here all the time. They probably so glad to see me go home. I always wanted to know why, 'why this, why that, why this, why that,' so anyway I went out on picket lines and it was totally organized. I mean we had 24-hour picket lines and there's picket captains and the picket captain would phone the crew for the next day, and then you had the sandwich people, and coffee and doughnut people and they would go out to the picket lines and deliver sandwiches and coffee and doughnuts. We had, I think your picket duty was six hours or something like that—wasn't too long or too short—but we had to go round the clock and make sure that big men were on the midnight shift. Because everybody's always worried about crossing a picket line, though I don't really know of anybody actually who did cross—

RM [00:16:46] I was going to ask you why did you need so many pickets when there was no attempt to really scab the strike?

JT [00:16:53] No, but it was just what we did.

RM [00:16:54] Yeah. No, exactly.

JT [00:16:54] And so we had round-the-clock pickets at all the plants and there are lots of plants in those days.

RM [00:17:01] Of course the Co-op was still fishing, right?

JT [00:17:03] Co-op still fished, but they were just a bunch of scabs.

RM [00:17:06] Yeah.

JT [00:17:07] The fishermen called them, there is no love lost between Co-op fishermen and the UFAWU fishermen, and the Native Brotherhood fishermen.

RM [00:17:11] Yeah, yeah. I know.

JT [00:17:16] Yeah, so that was 1975 and then—

RM [00:17:20] Yeah, people look back on that strike as a big mistake by Homer.

JT [00:17:25] To tell you the truth, I have no reason—I don't know why I was—I was a shoreworker, and then 1978 was also another bitter strike. I was obviously involved in that one, too, but I was a little bit more knowledgeable about that one. That one—oh fuck, we had so much in-fighting, excuse my language—so much in-fighting that time. What we used to do—if you can believe—this is how democratic this union was.

RM [00:17:53] Yes, it was.

JT [00:17:54] We would vote on a strike deadline.

RM [00:17:56] Yeah.

JT [00:17:57] So it wasn't just like the strike committee would decide—or the negotiating committee would decide—they'd actually have a vote on when we were going to go on

strike, so we couldn't decide whether they wanted to go on strike. One contingent wanted to go on strike early and the other contingent wanted to go on strike later.

RM [00:18:19] Well a lot depended on when the salmon ran, right?

JT [00:18:21] Well, it was also the northern people always had the contention that the strike was always settled on the back of the Skeena run.

RM [00:18:29] Oh, yes.

JT [00:18:29] Because by the time that the Fraser run came, all the guys couldn't stand to see that Fraser sockeye go by without fishing, so the run was settled on the back of the northern fishermen and many of the northern fishermen could go south, but there was a bunch of northern fishermen, especially the rental boat guys.

RM [00:18:46] Yes.

JT [00:18:46] Whose boats weren't seaworthy enough to go south, and so it was always considered—there's always a legend—if you actually look at the date of the strikes, they are probably correct.

RM [00:18:55] Yeah. That's interesting.

JT [00:18:58] Those strikes are settled on the backs of the northern fishermen.

RM [00:19:00] Yeah. Yeah.

JT [00:19:01] Of course. Like I say, most of those northern fishermen also fish south, but there was a handful of resident people up here—

RM [00:19:08] Well, Bill Smith was one. He said he never fished south because he's got an old wooden boat.

JT [00:19:12] Yeah, lots of guys never fish south, but you know, the majority of them did, so they would just settle up here and then follow the fish down there.

RM [00:19:21] Was there a strike in '78?

JT [00:19:23] Strike in '78 was a very bitter strike, again, because we were not as—

RM [00:19:32] United?

JT [00:19:33] Well not as united. That's right and it was a fishermen strike —what I call a fishermen strike. I remember being upstairs—we used to, just with shoreworkers—we could have packed the union hall standing with all the chairs out and there would be standing room only, and people would be squashed in all around the hall because, we had so many shoreworkers and so many plants, almost everybody was in. There was this thing that, if we went on strike sometime, the students would vote. The other thing was that in those days, there was stupid rules. There was a government-supervised strike vote and you had to give the government—the companies had to give the government, I suppose the union had to agree—a list of employees that had worked during a time period. You had to agree that it was, I don't know, two or three months—I can't remember how long the

time period was—but Jack used to try to get it between herring and the beginning of salmon so that there were as few students, because he was always convinced that students were going to vote against the strike.

RM [00:20:47] To keep their summer jobs.

JT [00:20:47] Because they just had summer jobs, but most students didn't vote that way because it was exciting to go on strike, so most students didn't vote that way. Most students were related to their parents—so there was a handful, but there's a handful of people who weren't students that voted that way—so I mean, we always had 90 percent strike votes up here, even if all the students—and then of course people that were all enthusiastic—I think of all the time there was only one student that I ever knew who voted not to strike.

RM [00:21:22] Yeah.

JT [00:21:23] All of the other students voted for the strike. It was an exciting time and you knew that you're fighting for workers' rights and you were fighting for something better for everybody in the future besides what you wanted. You're fighting for solidarity. Those fishermen needed to get enough money to run their boats. That strike was another one that was long. I actually left that strike, after a couple of weeks in order to go back to university because all I was doing was spending money on rent here, so I left to go back. I think we were just renting a room in somebody's house. Talk about no room. When we came to town, there was no room. Everybody, all the students that came from university if they didn't have a relative here, just rented a room in a house, and so we had just rented a room in a house and we went back to Vancouver. I remember we took the bus to Prince George and we took the train, the B.C. Rail down from Prince George.

RM [00:22:39] Prince-George-Eventually.

JT [00:22:40] Down through Lillooet and Lytton—

RM [00:22:44] Oh, I've done that trip. It's amazing actually. Oh, absolutely. Sad they don't have it anymore.

JT [00:22:51] Beautiful scenery, anyway, we went to Vancouver and I think the strike was settled about a couple of days after we left. We had—I had anyway—stayed here pretty much non-stop so I didn't feel—they gave me permission to leave—like I had to get permission to leave.

RM [00:23:12] Yeah. Yeah.

JT [00:23:13] In fact, if you went on strike and you were a fisherman, and you went on strike in Rupert, you couldn't go home without getting a travel leave form. The strike committee had to give you a form so that you could leave Rupert so you had a travel permit to go back home.

RM [00:23:25] Yeah. Yeah.

JT [00:23:25] I had a travel permit to go back home. I was on that committee and we went to Vancouver, as part to talk to shoreworkers in Vancouver. Jack brought—we had money in those days—we brought Jack down. Jack brought a group of us down to Vancouver to

talk to the Vancouver shoreworkers because they wanted a different strike date than the Rupert shoreworkers wanted and so we had to go to Vancouver to talk to them. I remember I had—I don't know why—I had gone down there and had my best suit on. It was a wool friggin' suit. Why I had even had brought it to Rupert, I don't know. Or maybe I went home to my mom's place in Vancouver and got it, but I had a wool suit. It was a baking hot—well, it was the only suit I had—and why I thought I had to wear a suit to go and see a bunch of other shoreworkers in a fish plant, I have no idea, but anyway, I remember walking there and a seagull shat right on my shoulder of my suit. That's what I remember when we went into the home plant. Dark, dreary home plant, low ceiling—

RM [00:24:28] Where was that? Not the one, not on Campbell Street?

JT [00:24:31] It's on the foot of Gore. So it's right next to, just almost next door to the Heliport, so it's like five minutes' walk from the Skytrain station, called the Big Red Barn. The address used to be the foot of Gore and now it's—

RM [00:24:46] Yeah. yeah.

JT [00:24:46] They've got an address on the actual street it's on, cause taxis can't get through the foot of Gore. There's a railway there and used to be able to I guess get out. Used to be a little restaurant there. Used to get out at the restaurant, hop the track and get to Canadian Fish but that's a long time ago.

RM [00:25:02] Yeah. Is that is that famous restaurant, right up on the second floor and gave a great clam chowder and everything. What was it called?

JT [00:25:09] I can't remember what it was called.

RM [00:25:11] But there was one restaurant there. Cafe, really?

JT [00:25:13] It was right across the street—

RM [00:25:15] It was legendary.

JT [00:25:16] from Canadian Fish. Yeah so we used to—Jack used to when he walked the plant—he'd walk Canadian Fish right up Gore.

RM [00:25:22] Yeah.

JT [00:25:23] And then right down Hastings to the union hall which was on Cordova.

RM [00:25:27] So how did your wool suit go over?

JT [00:25:29] Well that was, who knows? I can't remember the rest of that but I do remember that so well. Then going to that plant was more like a port, the old Port Ed Cannery. Low ceilings, classic cannery. Low ceilings, it's still the same now. It's no different.

RM [00:25:48] Then you went back to the Union?

JT [00:25:50] Then I went back, I just kept going. I went back the next year, '79. That's when I—

RM [00:26:00] Is that when Darnell called you?

JT [00:26:04] Let's see. Okay, started in '74. That was the '78 strike. Yeah I went back, that's right. I had gone back and yeah, I guess so. I guess '74, '75 was a strike, '76, '78 was another big strike. It would have been 1979 that I started working for the union. Yeah, it had to be '79 because '80, '81, '82 and then '83, and then I stopped working in '84 because I went back to the fish plant because I held my seniority at the fish plant and I went back and by that time, B.C. Packers had bought Canadian Fish.

RM [00:27:07] Yeah.

JT [00:27:08] I went back and worked in the cannery, in the fresh fish plant—but we actually worked on salmon and groundfish—until from the summer of 1984. My son was born in the summer of 1984 and I worked til 1989 and then I went back to work for the union in 1989.

RM [00:27:42] Was that because you were a mum now? Is that why you went back?

JT [00:27:45] Yeah, I went back to the plant. I didn't want to have the, I wanted to have the winter off with my kids or whatever, like not have a full-time kind of work. And it was a lot of travelling. We used to do a lot of travelling. I mean we travelled, we had a plant in Masset, plus we had a fisherman's local in Masset. We had a fisherman's local in Skidegate. We had a fisherman's local in Lax Kw'alaams, we had a fisherman's local in Kitkatla, we had a fisherman's local in, called the Upper Skeena local, which was a Gitxskan local, and we had a local in the Nass, we called the Nass local, and so in the winter, plus in Rupert. And so, in the wintertime it was you had you go out and to all of those locals and elect somebody for the BC Fed, which was in November. Then you had to go out in all locals December and elect people in December, nominate people in December and elect people in January. So you had to go twice for our own convention, which was always held at the end of January. And then we had to go back and and do fishermen and shoreworker wage demands, which was done in February. At the end of February, we would have a shoreworkers wage conference of shoreworkers from all over and we'd go to Vancouver for a wage conference. It's usually a month after the end of the convention, and then we'd have to do the same thing for the fishermen. I'd travel all over the fish locals and get the fishermen to decide their fish prices. Then we'd have a fish price convention or conference in Vancouver, usually in April. And then we'd meet with the companies at the end of April, beginning of May.

RM [00:29:20] As you say, the union had a lot of money then.

JT [00:29:22] We had a lot of money then and we were democratic, like, two guys from every local would go to Vancouver except for the bigger locals. I think there's four people from Rupert and shoreworkers we used to send 14 people down from Rupert to the wage conference. We sent 16 or 18 to the convention.

RM [00:29:40] But you liked organizing?

JT [00:29:42] Oh. I loved it.

RM [00:29:43] What did you like about it? What did you love about it?

JT [00:29:47] Well, the the summertime work, and most of the wintertime work, because we had we had lots of, we still had, fillet plants working. So the summertime work and, and then the handful of people up got to work in the wintertime, and then herring season. Right? So that was always battling with the companies, right, over grievances and the firings and stuff like that. So that satisfied the lawyering side of my soul, right? And then there was the, you know, the walk-offs. And in those days, I mean, when I, the first, my first stint working for the union, that was like it was heaven for trade unions. Right? And so what we would do is, if we had a big issue, you know, not on every issue.

RM [00:30:40] Yeah.

JT [00:30:41] But if we had a big issue, we would walk the plants. And what happened is that by the time the process at the Labour Board, it would take two or three days. Right? And so the companies would have two or three days of interrupted production.

RM [00:31:01] Yeah.

JT [00:31:02] And so they hated that.

RM [00:31:04] Of course.

JT [00:31:05] So if you walked you usually got into the Labour Board doing this kind of a mediated-arbitrated settlement.

RM [00:31:12] Yeah, that's what the Labour board did. Yeah.

JT [00:31:13] And really quickly, right.

RM [00:31:16] Yeah, no, it was great.

JT [00:31:17] So you didn't have to wait for an arbitration for six months. I never did an arbitration at first (unclear) because you just walked the plant.

RM [00:31:24] Yeah. And get before the Labour Board.

JT [00:31:27] And get before the Labour Board and they would make a decision and there's no penalty to pay, no arbitration, you pay nothing. And then when, I guess it was Vander Zalm's government came in and changed the law and then after that you could no longer walk the plants without paying a penalty. So then you went to the court and they could get an injunction.

RM [00:31:52] Yeah. Yeah.

JT [00:31:52] And you'd get injuncted back to work and you have to be, I mean, it still took a little while, but they could, they could charge you damages. And there's a couple of pulp mills who have really paid the price.

RM [00:32:01] Yeah, no, that's right. Yeah. PPWC got hit a couple of times. Harmac really got hammered.

JT [00:32:06] Yeah. And so, you know, so but those were in those days I mean, and we used it judiciously. But I remember that, I remember in 1979, that was still in the big

herring years, there was two big, big herring years. That was a big, second big herring year where guys were getting, you know, millions of dollars.

RM [00:32:25] One set (unclear).

JT [00:32:26] Yeah. And so I remember. What happened was all the companies, but particularly Canadian Fish. Or no, maybe it was, maybe it was B.C. Packers by that time. But anyway, it doesn't matter. It was the Oceanside plant and we had, but all the plants were doing it. But this particular incident happened at the Oceanside plant and, but all the companies had been doing it. What they'd been doing is using Japanese nationals.

RM [00:32:59] Yeah.

JT [00:33:00] To grade. And so the union had put a kibosh to that in earlier years. You can't have anybody who's not Canadian and not on the seniority list, grading herring roe. That has to be done by our workers. And so the company, of course, said, well, you don't know how, they don't know how to do it. And so we said, okay, we're going to have so many in to train. So these guys came in to Canada on a training permit and because it was, all of the roe was just sold to the Japanese market, the company would have, the company would make a contract, didn't matter which company it was, but they'd make a contract with a couple of, or one. Or a couple depending. So like if it was Cassiar it would just be one because they were owned by Marubeni so all of their herring eggs had a go to Marubeni, right? So the Canadian Fish and B.C. Packers did, you know we used to have a couple of companies that would buy their eggs and, so they would always supply trainers and this one year they decided to just bring in they must have known that something was going to happen.

RM [00:34:08] Yeah.

JT [00:34:08] But they decided to bring in a whole bunch of nationals to do grading instead of training our people, who'd been doing it for years, who don't really need any training and so to lay them off, or move them back to popping roe and, you know, grading was more, even though was paid the same, it was considered to be an easier job and it was a more prestigious job than just popping roe. And, so anyway, and it lasted longer during the season, right? Like so you got more employment if you were, if you were grading.

RM [00:34:39] Yeah.

JT [00:34:40] So anyway we organized. I bet you I hadn't been on the job for more than a month. And Mike told me, and I just did what he told me to do, and we went in and we organized every single plant to have this problem. They're all going to walk off the job at the same time. So they all did, they all walked off the job at the same time. But I was assigned for some reason to Oceanside Plant and Mike maybe he was looking after Port Ed or something. But anyhow, I was looking after Oceanside Plant and I remember one of the vessel owners coming to me. It was dark, right? It was dark. It's, you know, wintertime in herring season. And it was dark. And I remember standing just outside the doors by the dock and this fisherman coming to me, and I had no idea who he was. And he was just screaming at me. "I've got a million dollars worth of herring tied up at this dock and you guys, for a handful of cents, or a handful of jobs are holding me up. You get that plant running and get that fish off my dock, off my boat!" Right?

RM [00:35:47] Yeah.

JT [00:35:47] And I said, oh yeah, right. "A million dollars, are you kidding me?" And I just laughed him off, and away I went.

RM [00:35:59] But of course.

JT [00:36:00] But of course he did have a million dollars' worth of herring tied up on his vessel.

RM [00:36:02] Ha, ha, ha.

JT [00:36:04] But I had no idea. That's how green I was.

RM [00:36:06] It was insane, it was insane.

JT [00:36:07] Yeah. I mean, I knew how important those 20 jobs were in the plant, to those 20 workers. And I just said I remember saying back at him that after I said, 'all right, yeah, right $1,000,000.' But I said, 'if you have $1,000,000 aboard your boat, then maybe you should go tell Canadian Fish that the 20 jobs that they've just taken away from the shoreworkers, that they should put 'em back on, because if your herring is worth $1,000,000 and those shoreworkers.'

RM [00:36:33] And I guess he was a union fisherman, right?

JT [00:36:36] At that time. Yeah, he was a vessel owner, so he probably wasn't. But his vessel, his fishermen on board that vessel would be union.

RM [00:36:43] Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

JT [00:36:44] But yeah, I remember that. And I think to this day, you know, why he didn't just punch me in the nose after my

RM [00:36:50] Well, he's not going to punch a woman!

JT [00:36:52] Well, I don't know. But anyway, so that was my—and that's why it was exciting, right—and we got workers their rights

RM [00:37:05] Helping people.

JT [00:37:08] Helping people,and then getting out and organizing and getting people to talk to each other and agree to something and to proceed with that agreement. You know. During my career, we had lots of times, because there was so many mergers and amalgamations, we had to merge workforces. And that was really hard. That was really hard.

RM [00:37:31] What is it about the fishing industry, though, that you also took to? I mean, it's not just, or you could have gone into a pulp mill and organized, or whatever.

JT [00:37:39] No. I was political. Everything was political in the fishing industry. But in those days, it wasn't as political. In those days, it was mostly against the company, it was fishermen for fish prices

RM [00:37:52] You liked the class, the class aspect of it?

JT [00:37:53] I love the class aspect, of it. Yeah. For sure. And, it was exciting as fishermen, it was lots of money coming into town, you know, and lots of excitement. Real short time period, real people like. And as I got to know the shoreworkers better and better and more and more, you know it is dominated by by women.

RM [00:38:16] Yeah.

JT [00:38:17] So I really like that. And it was dominated by strong women. The shop stewards were strong women. Most of them were First Nations, and, I was so lucky to have people like Emily Brown and Thelma Peterson, who took me under their their wings and we had lots of fun together. And it was just, you know, they'd tell me stories. And as I got to know them better, you know, they would tell me more and more stories and stuff. And then on the fishing side, you know, there was people like Henry van der Wiel and Leonard Reece, who's passed away now and Herb Hughan and Glen Doane and Frank Miskenak and Jimmy Atkins who explained things to me and it was this, dangerous thing of going out to sea and fishing and how it went on their boats. They drew me pictures and took me down to their boats and showed me things and it was just this fascinating life of fishermen who would go out to sea and battle the elements and bring a valuable food source back. And then I was one of the people who was responsible to make sure that they got a good enough price that they made a living for themselves and their families. I mean, what a responsibility for a 20-year-old kid, right?

RM [00:39:36] But you were older than 20.

JT [00:39:38] Well, I was 22 when I started.

RM [00:39:39] Really? Wow. Not as an organizer.

JT [00:39:43] Oh, yeah.

RM [00:39:43] Really? Yeah. Oh, my God.

JT [00:39:45] 22 - 23. Yeah.

RM [00:39:47] That's unbelievable. And you weren't a communist?

JT [00:39:49] Oh, I might have become one later.

RM [00:39:51] Yeah, but.

JT [00:39:52] That time, no, I was a wet behind the ears kid who was really interested though in workers' rights. And, I was interested. I mean, I always bought the philosophy. I think that was my mom and dad, you know, certainly wouldn't talk about communism. But my parents always brought me up to believe that you should walk in somebody else's shoes before you made a decision, that we're only as strong as the weakest person in society. And so you have to fight for those who have less than you. And that's what you, that's what you're, that's what you should be doing, which is, of course, what my interest in law was. It was not to become a big corporate lawyer. It was Harry Rankin was who I wanted to be. Then I read Rankin's Law and saw he got up at four in the morning and ran around Stanley Park before he attended a 12-hour legal day. And that's when he got to

spend 4 hours back at sleep again. I thought like, there's no way I can work that hard, but that was before I started working for the union. So other than the running, I think I work just as hard as Harry, but.

RM [00:40:56] So you gave up on your dream of having your own boat?

JT [00:40:59] I did. I gave up my dream of having my own boat after net-mending courses. I was not a very good net-mender anyway. And navigation courses. Yeah. No, I gave up the idea of having my own boat.

RM [00:41:13] What was it like going back in the plant? After being a union organizer?

JT [00:41:17] It was, it was easy. The workers were good and they know is not an issue with workers. Management really tried to grind me down a couple of times. And they fired me. But I was.

RM [00:41:32] They fired you?

JT [00:41:32] Well, yeah, but they terminated me, but right before a strike. And so I think I was terminated for like one hour or something like that.

RM [00:41:40] Just agitating on the job?

JT [00:41:42] I can't even remember. I think, I think I left my shoreworking position to go tell the boss that he couldn't do what he was going to do. And they'd had enough of me telling them that. When I was employed by the union and they weren't going to put up with that when I was employed by them. I think.

RM [00:42:02] So you were at the good news, bad news for the company. Good news, she's no longer going to be an organizer. Bad news. She's going to work in our plant.

JT [00:42:12] But I was always a hard worker. So they could never—I was always a hard worker.

RM [00:42:16] Did you like working in the fish plant?

JT [00:42:17] Oh yeah. I didn't mind working fish plant.

RM [00:42:18] Tough work, isn't it?

JT [00:42:19] Yeah, but the women, the people that you worked with, the women you worked with were just. And the men too, I mean, you know, there was just more women, but that it was fun. Like we used to make it fun. Like when we worked on herring, we chose the graveyard shift because management would come in at midnight and make sure you were all organized and they'd come in at seven in the morning to make sure you'd done your job. But the rest of the time was just us.

RM [00:42:43] Oh, I know, night shifts, great!.

JT [00:42:44] And yeah. And, and we used to work really, really hard. Nobody would believe how hard we worked. Like we'd be sweating, all of us, and we all worked together as this collective to get this job done. And then what we did (laughs) we were all young on

that shift. We organized, we organized to get, you would have to supply dinner, but it couldn't just be any dinner. You'd have to bring a dinner. So every one of us took turns doing it. Bringing a dinner. And it had to be ethnic.

RM [00:43:16] Yeah.

JT [00:43:16] So if you were Portuguese, you had to bring something that was Portuguese and if you were First Nations, you had to bring something that was First Nations and if you were Ukrainian and so you had to give back, right? So, you know, like if there was two Italians, you couldn't both bring the same Italian food, right? You had to bring this Italian, and so we would weigh ourselves, we'd make all the men take off. We'd take off everything but our uniforms and we'd weigh ourselves at the beginning of herring. And then four weeks later, and this wasn't popping roe. This was unloading and freezing roe, it was tough work. Four weeks later we'd weigh ourselves again after the end of herring. And we'd all weigh the same. But we'd eaten like mountains and mountains of food, but we'd also worked so hard that we worked off all of the mountains of food that we'd eaten on graveyards. But, we used to, I mean, it was fun, right? You had to work. It was really physically hard work. But we looked after each other.

RM [00:44:10] Yeah. How many ethnic nationalities were there?

JT [00:44:14] Well, the majority of workers in all of the plants were First Nations workers, but they're from all over. Right. We say First Nations as though that's a group. But, you know, there were you know, there were Tahltan, there was Haidas, there was Gitxsan. And there was Wet'suwet'en, there was, you know, Haidas. There was Heiltsuks, a few, from down south and, you know, certainly the Haisla from Kitimat and then all the Tsimshian villages. Right. And so it was like this melting pot of First Nations. And so, you know, there wasn't just one First Nation, right? It was all these First Nations. And so you made friends with different First Nations and found out that things were a bit different, right? And then there was the, certainly, we had lots of Italians when I started working there. There may have been lots of Icelanders and Norwegians before that, but I think they were mostly fishermen, mostly ethnic, I would say would be Italian, quite a few Italian workers, and Portuguese, Italian and Portuguese, and then, later on, Indo-Canadians. So when I first started working, you know, that was the influx of Indo-Canadians, around the time that I first started working for the union, that's when they came. And then, they were probably the last group, lots in the fleet, it was the Vietnamese were the next people. But we never had many Vietnamese in the salmon plants. Certainly they were. There's lots of Vietnamese women that were involved in the unloading side and the offloading side and the business side of the crab business, which is where most of the Vietnamese guys were into the crab meat, in Rupert went into the crab business.

RM [00:46:06] Yup, yup, yup.

RM [00:46:08] You didn't represent the crab fishermen, right?

JT [00:46:11] No, we didn't. We used to, when there was one license we represented the fishermen in all fishings, right. But we didn't, we never had a crab agreement. I tried to negotiate one. The original crabbers were all out of Masset. And there were just a handful out of Rupert work in the plant, and so if, you know, before you start working for the union, I was working in the plant and the job I had was to, at that time, was to take all the baskets from the filleters and weigh the baskets and write down which filleter had, how much poundage they had in each one of their baskets. So you had to wait until their baskets get

filled. At the beginning of the day, they're empty, right? And so there would always be like 10 or 15 minutes before filleter got her, 10 minutes before filleter got her basket full. So this quality control guy who is staff, he wasn't union.

RM [00:47:15] Yeah.

JT [00:47:15] But he was low staff. He was probably the lowest guy on staff. So anyways, a friend of mine, we used to party all the time. That was the other thing I liked about Rupert and so David and I got these crabs that were live. Right? And, they were cooking them in different—nothing to do with fresh fish. But somebody brought these crabs in and David said, come on, come look. So we took out crabs and we lined them up on the floor. I mean, I had nothing to do. I could just go stand over there. I could race crabs with David. But we got them all lined up on the floor. And he's got his pencil, right, because he is quality control and he's lining them up with his pencil and then he takes his pencil off and we're watching them race down. Of course you have to kind of, you know, get them to go in one direction, scuttle in one direction. See who was fast came down.

RM [00:48:09] Did he get fired?

JT [00:48:10] No, neither of us got fired, but they gave us complete shit. They probably went and had a howl, I mean, you know, we were young kids, right? They probably went and had a howl upstairs after you know.

RM [00:48:20] Yeah, I know. You'll never guess what these kids are doing today. Listen, I'm going to — We can't finish, Joy, so I'm suggesting. We, like, she's still, you know, fantastic so

JT [00:48:35] Oh fantastic!

RM [00:48:35] No, but we're, you know, she's going to be down and you come down to the

JT [00:48:41] I'm going to stay down there for 11 days. And then—I'm coming, then I'm going—taking two weeks holidays.

RM [00:48:51] Okay. After all that, when you first met Homer, what did you think?

JT [00:48:57] Well, I went to my first convention was just after I was hired.

RM [00:49:05] Right.

JT [00:49:06] And so that was the 1979 convention. And I'm not sure if that's the convention where Jack, I think that was the convention where Jack became President.

RM [00:49:19] Because, because he wore the 1978 strike, I seem to recall.

JT [00:49:23] Yeah. So so I think. I'm pretty sure that was 1979. That's what I think.

RM [00:49:27] I think you might be right.

JT [00:49:28] And, um. So I just, I mean, I was in awe of everybody. Right? But I'm certainly in awe of Homer. And Homer would stand up at the mic and speak. Of course, he was at the front. But, you know,

RM [00:49:39] With that ridiculous haircut.

JT [00:49:42] You know, I had already you know, Georgette had already made you know, had done her job.

RM [00:49:47] Yeah.

JT [00:49:47] Five years earlier, making me just worship Homer anyway. And I'd seen Homer during the strikes and, you know, make speeches and stuff and I certainly read A Ripple A Wave and so when I saw Homer at that convention, I probably didn't even get to do more than shake his hand and admire him from afar. But what I remember, Homer mostly was fishing.

RM [00:50:16] Yes.

JT [00:50:16] Because Homer went back to be a fisherman and he delivered to the plant that I worked at and, and he'd come up and he wasn't afraid to come out and talk to workers on the line and I remember mostly Homer from, you know, doing this, being an organizer and getting into the strikes and being from, and it was like a flip, right? This young kid is now the union representative.

RM [00:50:48] And there's Homer.

JT [00:50:49] And there's Homer, with all these acres and years of experience. And but, you know, if Homer disagreed with something, he let you know. Right? And you had better be pretty sure of what your position was, or what the union's position was, because most of those kinds of things, I had no position. I, and completely honestly, I was just relaying the position of the general executive board and of the union.

RM [00:51:15] Yeah.

JT [00:51:15] And I wasn't even at the General Executive Board because staff didn't go to the General Executive Board

RM [00:51:19] Oh, that's right.

JT [00:51:20] Unless you're the Northern Representative, then, that was a quasi-officer's position because you were pretty much on your own up here. So, like, Mike would generally be there, but I wouldn't and so I'd never really had an opinion on anything. And so but I sure, you know, when Homer came up, I sure had to make sure that I knew why the General Executive were, and the officers of the union were leading the union this way and not that way. And I could answer all those questions. And so, I mean, I had nothing but admiration for Homer, but I also had a healthy fear of Homer just because his intellect was always so sharp. And you had better know what you were doing. And, and there's many a time, I have to say, that I would just lock him in my office on the telephone and let him argue with Jack and George and Bill Procopation about, whatever they wanted to argue about, because there is no, you know, it was like getting in the middle between this huge power of the people who are my bosses, but who I also thought the world of right? Like Jack and Bill Procopation and George who was, you know, really the political leader of

RM [00:52:40] And was from Prince Rupert.

JT [00:52:42] Well, he wasn't originally from Prince Rupert but he'd been sent up here wet behind the ears.

RM [00:52:47] By the party, probably.

JT [00:52:49] Well, he'd come up here. No, he'd come here by, he was sent up here by the union. But he was young. I think he had his twins up here. His wife had twins up here. And, of course, you know, having been young and having twins and this community with, you know, that group of wonderful shoreworkers must have been just something. I bet you his wife never got to handle that baby. That would have just been

RM [00:53:18] So you retained your respect for Homer?

JT [00:53:21] That's where I grew my respect for Homer.

RM [00:53:23] Yes. Well said.

JT [00:53:23] It was really I mean, I had this admiration of this, idea. And but then when I got to know Homer, it was knowing the man. It was, like I said, his sharp intellect and, you know, his ability to see clearly. And, boy, like I say, you had to know your Ps and Qs.

RM [00:53:44] And because he was always thinking two or three steps ahead.

JT [00:53:47] So yeah, there's no way I could compete with him. And, so that's why I say I locked him lots of times, you know, you just go, argue with the officers and the negotiation committee because I don't know what you got. Now you're talking way above me.

RM [00:54:02] Oh, oh, Homer's outside.

JT [00:54:04] Well, and then there's times too, you know, like, you know, I remember he got mad and and I remember Mike, and Mike and I was thinking that he was being unreasonable. And there was one year when the fish came back so big, and I don't remember which one it was, it was in the early '80s. And there's so much sockeye that they let them fish non-stop for ten days. The fleet, the gillnet fleet. And fishermen were, a handful of fishermen, led by Homer, were demanding and, he was really right. Now that I think of it, he was probably right but it was not the popular thing to do. And Mike and I could not see the union doing it. He wanted us to demand that the department shut the fishery down so that people could get some sleep. Because in those days we were fishing 24-hours a day.

RM [00:54:58] It was dangerous.

JT [00:54:58] So these guys were fishing ten days in a row. Well, we didn't know how long because they just kept extending it and extending it and extending it and so, you know, what Homer was saying was somebody's going to drown.

RM [00:55:13] Yeah.

JT [00:55:13] You know, this is just pure greed. Let's close the fishery down, for 24 hours. Let the guys get 24 hours of sleep and then reopen it. And, I remember Michael and I

looking at ourselves and looking at each other and going. Okay, Homer, you just go right ahead. You just go tell the fleet that they have to stop fishing now, right? This is you're correct. You're correct, probably

RM [00:55:39] Pretty hard to give, to give that up.

JT [00:55:43] But we're not going to tell them, you know, like the practicality of that, you know, we're not going to go tell them, you know, like, you know, some 25-year old kid by that time and I think Mike was 26 or 27, and they go shut down the whole fleet because you might be tired.

RM [00:56:00] Yeah.

JT [00:56:00] Tell people that and they'd say 'hey, he's fucking tired, tell him to tie up himself, I'm not tying up, no, I'm not tired!' Clunk, ha, ha. So. But nobody died of a heart attack so I think that. And that's the last time.

RM [00:56:15] Yeah. And, of course, Prince Rupert. Did he ever talk about the '67 strike?

JT [00:56:20] Oh, yeah. We have Ray Gardiner was the organizer here.

RM [00:56:29] Do you know that's her father-in-law?

JT [00:56:31] And so I talked to Ray about it, but Ray and Margit didn't want to talk much about it, right? That was such a bitter strike they never really want to talk about. So, you know, I read about it. I talked to a handful of people, but they never saw the overview of the strike. They just saw their individual parts in the strike. So some of them were bitter about this. Some of them were bitter about that. And so, really all I knew about the '67 strike was it created bitter divisions between people.

RM [00:57:04] Yes, it did.

JT [00:57:04] And, even supporters of the union were bitter about, you know, like the Co-op break, right? I mean, you know, that was our contract, right?

RM [00:57:15] Yeah. Yeah.

JT [00:57:16] And so it was bitterness between the CLC and the union.

RM [00:57:19] Yes, absolutely.

JT [00:57:21] So it was, you know, I have to say that the '67 strike was a watershed and it was fought. And, my guess is that it was fought on principle, because I don't think that any of those leaders did anything that wasn't principled.

RM [00:57:42] Right.

JT [00:57:43] But I think that sometimes you can take a principle too far and then you end up just dividing. And I think, I think that strike did not give me anything other than intellectual. You know, it's sort of a back of the mind of, I mean, I wasn't involved in it. I was only 13 when it happened. And so, you know, I was never, I was living in Vancouver like I didn't know about it. And so, but I thought about it lots because it was such a,

something that impacted so many people, and it was, even when I started working, which is, I mean, you know, that's 1979, that's a long time away from the strike. And people were

RM [00:58:31] They hadn't forgotten.

JT [00:58:33] They hadn't forgotten. There was still, you know. Oh, he's a scab.

RM [00:58:36] Yeah, exactly.

JT [00:58:37] Scab from when?

RM [00:58:38] Well, Henry says there's still people he doesn't talk to.

JT [00:58:40] Yeah. Yeah. And, so that really divided the community. And I've tried I mean, certainly sometimes I've, you know, had to stand on a principle because you have these workers that are behind you. But I've always tried to think about how to try to draw people together so that you're—and then once you try it, you know there's always going to be a handful of people you are going to piss off. And that's, but, you know, not a whole plant or not a whole, right, and you have to really try and, you know, I think that was that '67 strike, like I've read lots about it. We've got files upstairs. We've got organizers files still from the '67 strike and, you know, I think, you know, I'm afraid to throw them out because, because they, I don't know where to put them, you know.

RM [00:59:34] Well don't, please. Labour Heritage, I'm serious.

JT [00:59:35] Yeah.

RM [00:59:36] Donna was, was just talking about. Not if you guys have to move here?

JT [00:59:40] Yeah.

RM [00:59:41] Don't throw stuff out.

JT [00:59:42] We have an attic full of stuff and there and they're like, I've never gone. Well, I've gone through to read them but I've put them back. Right? And I filed lots of my stuff. But these are just raw organizer's files.

DS [00:59:56] We do have an archiving project where we—rather than see stuff be thrown out, we, you know, we'll take it and get, you know, archivists to decide.

JT [01:00:06] Well, it really needs to be done. I mean, I haven't thrown it out and I've been worried about what we're going to do with it. And because, you know, and there's people, people's writing, you know, I look in there and I can see, Oh, well, that's Con Mill's writing. Oh, that's Florence Greenwood's writing. I mean, I started working for this union when we still Gestetnered. Like people don't even know what Gestetners are, right?

RM [01:00:28] I do. Mimeograph machines.

JT [01:00:29] But, yeah. And you know, Florence and I used to Gestetner stuff so we hardly put out. It had to be really, really, really important. So like a strike, we might put out like two strike bulletins, and then we got, I remember when we got the photocopier and it photocopied on that expensive treated paper that fades, right?. And so I remember, you

know, putting out more bulletins on that, but it was so expensive you didn't want. You might put stuff out for the shop stewards committee to share, you know, and one for each table. And now, I mean, there's billions of trees cut down for the number of bulletins that we put out. And, you know, that's, you know, another 500 pieces. Right? And, I mean, we had, you know, for a long, long time, the working population, the number of members stayed the same, but we had a huge shrinkage. And then the number of members stayed the same, but they just worked less. But we still have the same issues. On herring, we would put out a couple of bulletins, and on salmon and we'd put up, and then during the wintertime we didn't have contact with our members. So then we would mail, we'd do two mailings a year, right that the local paid for with just 'stuff'. Right? Just to keep in contact with your members. And, but then, I mean, now we have nothing in the way of shoreworkers.

RM [01:01:56] I have one more so the UFAWU lost its certification at the Co-op.

JT [01:02:02] Yeah.

RM [01:02:03] And was it a company union that came up?

JT [01:02:06] What happened was

RM [01:02:06] The CLC union or something?

JT [01:02:07] It was a CLC union. What happened was, I really don't know, you know, that would be.

RM [01:02:14] But your sense is?

JT [01:02:16] Right? Like, a Ray Gardiner, or a Florence Greenwood who are both gone, right? Like that would be, you know, you know, maybe.

RM [01:02:25] But you were around when that

JT [01:02:26] maybe Margit would remember.

RM [01:02:28] But you were around when it was still functioning.

JT [01:02:30] Yeah. And so what, so I don't know the how. What I do know is that the CLC had a time period where they had created a bunch of CLC unions.

RM [01:02:43] Right.

JT [01:02:44] And so, and I don't know what the policy was and why it was. And so they created this union called PRASCU, Prince Rupert Amalgamated Shoreworkers and Clerks Union.

RM [01:02:50] Ah, right.

JT [01:02:51] And PRASCU was a 'me too' union. So whatever our contract would be, they would get that and a little bit more. And it was the CLC who, who used to negotiate for them, and so they would send their reps to negotiate and that was a real, that process was — we hated them, right? Yeah, we hated those guys.

RM [01:03:24] All right. Free riders.

JT [01:03:25] We're right. Yeah. Well, not the workers, because we tried to work with the workers. Right? So we worked with the executive over many things, like GATT, the 1989, '87, '88 GATT herring thing and salmon thing. We worked with them very closely and I remember they went on strike and I think it was, it must have been in the early eighties, they went on strike. You know who would know that story probably more than anybody else is, because I think she's involved in it. Is she lives in Lax-Kw'alaams now. Sonia Enochson. Sally Enochson worked for the union. Her name wasn't Sally Enochson, it was Sally Doman and she became Sally—

RM [01:04:22] It doesn't matter.

JT [01:04:23] Doesn't matter.

RM [01:04:24] Anyways, I was just curious as to how, like in 1985 how you regarded them and stuff.

JT [01:04:29] Well, we tried not to because they were just shoreworkers. We tried to just talk to them as brothers and sisters and then, like in the eighties they had a, remember. Or maybe. It must have been the very early eighties cause I remember George Hewison very distinctly, talk about helping them. And then we were helping them organize. It could have been in the late seventies, early eighties, and they went on a big strike and, it could even have been '78, you know, as '77, '78. Anyway, they went on a big strike, a shore strike, and, because they didn't have fishermen in their union, just shoreworkers and, I remember us trying to help them. And George was very bitter because the union gave them advice that they didn't take. And I really don't know the details of that strike. But I do know that was in my early career or just before my career with the union. So, in my mind, I got the good old days which are before the '89 strike, like, before I came back to work in the second period. So that was, you know, late seventies, early eighties.

RM [01:05:40] In the tough times.

JT [01:05:41] Those, those were the fun times, really fun times. When you had money to spend. And we had almost all the fishermen belonged to the union, and the A-licenses so the fishermen could go do a whole bunch of things. And we weren't worried about access. When I came back in, came back to work, it wasn't like I said during that first period, what that was all about was fighting the companies. Fighting the companies. That's all it was about for fishermen, tendermen and shoreworkers it was always a fight against the companies. Right? And then after Mifflin, post-Mifflin, the fight became with the federal government. And it was about access. It was with the Fisheries Department about access. And so nobody, everybody cared about the prices that were paid, the shit prices, but nobody would go on strike because nobody would negotiate. Nobody would go on strike because you can't be working so hard to finally get an opening and then go on strike. And that one opening in the year, two openings in the year

RM [01:06:41] And yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

JT [01:06:42] So, after Mifflin and after DFO began their slow movement towards—Mifflin split the fleet, and then, and then DFO started changing their management policies to weak-stock management. And once they started doing weak-stock management in the

salmon fleet, the salmon fleet was split and, and you couldn't do anything as a whole anymore. They split the advisory committees, all of the; they created new advisory committees. That was Garnet Jones' last hurrah was working for the Department and created all these, these advisory committees that replaced every advisory group that had grown up organically within the fishing fleet. The Northern Gillnetters, the Pacific Gillnetters Association, Pacific Trollers Association, Northern Trollers Association, all those groups that were not our friends but were actual organic, fishermen-driven organizations. They disappeared. And just the Union and Brotherhood are left from that era and, look how weak we are, right? And so, they created all these advisory groups that are DFO advisory groups. DFO won't give anybody the membership lists, under freedom, you can't get them. They won't tell you people's addresses. they won't tell you people's phone numbers. And yet you are supposed to represent them. So what they do is they send out, they send out to all of the license holders, not the fishermen. They send out to the license holders, um, nominations and people get nominated. And they can't, for the most part, even fill all of the positions on the Advisory Committee. People get nominated to the advisory committee, and then the license holders vote on them. And so, but nobody knows who you're representing. So you're representing a group but you don't know who they are. And so, it is just ridiculous. And so that's what's replaced. So, they created alphabet soup, cut off all of the, cut the A-license into a billion little licenses and then took the A-license, which was salmon-only license, divided it up into a zillion, created these advisory groups, split the fleet up and then created the Anderson bullshit Coho crisis, which never was a Coho crisis. And the Americans said it wasn't a Coho crisis, and absolutely right, and but anyway that was created. And, then after that it was access, it was access, access, access, access. And the seine fleet became dominated, became quota-ized. So you know, that was, you know, the growth of the corporate control in the seine fleet also made it very difficult for the union to make any organizational strides in there. So, the DFO really succeeded in splitting this whole coast into a bunch of tiny little groups and there has been, nobody is successful in trying to bring them back together. And that's, what I'm trying to do with my last few years.

RM [01:10:17] Your last hurrah.

JT [01:10:18] Is trying to just, trying to go and say to these guys, you know, have you had enough? Like, have you frigging had enough?

RM [01:10:26] Yeah.

JT [01:10:27] And if you've had enough, then maybe you want to come back. And here's this really empty vessel.

RM [01:10:33] Yeah.

JT [01:10:34] It's there. It's got a constitution. It's got a Daddy in UNIFOR, right, that will back you up. And, but you're basically on your own, like UNIFOR doesn't tell you what to do. They'll just back you if you ask them for help and just go for it. Like fill it up, make your policies, have your fights, but do it together. And so I'm getting more interest. I don't know if I'll get enough interest to save the Union or not, or save the industry. I mean, I think it's, and I think salmon fishermen are now convinced it's less of saving the individual salmon fisher as even just saving the industry, even just saving a commercial marine industry here.

RM [01:11:15] All right.

JT [01:11:19] Things. Six untruths that we need to attack in this document. And so I wrote them and we had a all-day conference and we discussed the six lies that were in that document. And then we divided ourselves up into six groups and we wrote down in big like 18 font so they could all read it. Because fishermen either don't like to have their glasses or never have their glasses, so if you write anything for fishermen, that you aren't going to give them, but you want them to you got to write it in 18 font. So, anyway. So it was all written up, in huge font so they could actually stand up and read it. And it was a question. And then you were allowed to say what your arguments were. So we went to Terrace and we dominated it and we made them take back. We made them produce an addendum to their. And you see, with, DFO never used to care, right? We couldn't believe who made these scientists believe, believe. Like we made these scientists back up. Right. Because DFO, they couldn't give a shit, they just put cotton in their ears and they don't care what you say. They don't care how good your arguments are. But these scientists care, like they were actually from university and they actually listened to what we had to say and then issued an addendum where we won three of our six points.

RM [01:12:35] Wow.

JT [01:12:36] And, but nobody has the addendum, I think, but me. I mean, it's published online. But if you try to go find it, good luck, right. It's never published with the report. The report is never published with the addendum. And one of the things was is that they accused us of, they said that they didn't accuse us. They said DFO has been allowing overfishing.

RM [01:12:54] Yeah.

JT [01:12:54] And of course that's

RM [01:12:56] And I've only been hearing that for 45 years.

JT [01:12:58] Well that's. And then they said in their document that overfishing, at the beginning of the document meant that they were fishing, we were fishing below MSY. And that's the definition of overfishing. And so we demanded that they take the word overfishing out and use, just say we've been fishing below Maximum Sustainable Yield for some stocks. And, so what they did in the addendum is they had this big explanation of what overfishing was and said we are not saying that overfishing is creating any conservation problems in the Skeena. We're saying overfishing is fishing below MSY. But of course, nobody cares. So, all you do is you know, if you're an environmental group that wants to shut us down, you just pick that overfishing out and you just splash in everywhere.

RM [01:13:43] Yeah, I know.

DS [01:13:44] I know Rod you are anxious to get on. Could I just ask Joy to do one quick segment about her time on Prince Rupert City Council. Why did you run for Council? How long were you on and what did you feel you accomplished?

JT [01:14:00] Well, I started and, I ran in 2005 and I ran on, on two issues. One was the issue of truth around Port expansion. And the second one was just on what was going on in the commercial fishing industry, because we needed representation on there, on Council. But what had happened was that the Port, and the Chamber of Commerce and

the City Hall had decided that, with the expansion of the port, that there'd be a massive influx of people into town and that all of these changes would occur. And what it did is it drove prices of housing up. And so our members, the shoreworkers and fishermen that were living in houses, needed then, were pushed out of houses and they had to go back into BC Housing. The same time, B.C. Housing had torn down lots of units. So these people now, it was beginning of the housing crisis in Prince Rupert, had nowhere to stay and people from, and people like to blame Albertans but I don't think it was very many Albertans. It was mostly Rupert people bought up a number of houses because they were cheap and they saw the price going up so they thought, this is great, and the mill workers and everybody else who were trying to sell their houses, to them it was also a great thing because they could finally get rid of their house. And then they wanted to do some other things that, to me, were, if they had occurred, would have destroyed the face of Prince Rupert. And, one was they wanted to put a mall out the highway and invite Walmart and Canadian Tire. They were going to be the two big tenants and we'd put a mall out where BC Hydro is out the highway, called the BC Hydro site. So, I ran opposing that, and the only other person that ran opposing it was, ran against Herb Pond for Mayor and I can't remember her name right now. She's on the board of the Unemployment Action Centre. She worked at the Credit Union. Anyway, she ran and she got roundly defeated on that because everybody wanted a Walmart. Everybody in town thought we had to have a Wal Mart to move forward. We had to have a Walmart and a Canadian Tire. Well, of course. Why anybody? Of course, when they actually looked at that property, they found out that you could never, ever, ever, ever build on anything in Rupert and make a lot of money in the short term because it's all muskeg or rock. And so they decided that they couldn't do that. So it fell through. And, but I stood in opposition to that and we'd had a terrible fishing season that year. So I was asking for them, for the City Council, for help, with the commercial fishery. And so. So basically, I tried to run on a labour program. What I said was, with me, you know what you got with me. I'll bring some balance to City Council, I'll fight for workers, I'll fight for unemployed people. And that's where I stand. And, you know, I'm going to tell the truth. I'm going to say how I feel about things. And people have been around long enough to know that my perspective thing, my perspective on things. And so that's why I ran and, and, and I went through a number of Councils. I was on Council for that term.

RM [01:17:57] You have someone to see you. Taylor.

JT [01:17:59] Oh, okay. It's 5:00 after five. Oh shit. Okay. I'll be right there.

RM [01:18:03] Because we're going to do, we're going to do it again. We need another session.

JT [01:18:07] Well, so I can just finish. I mean, my Council career was, you know, I don't think I was the best Councillor in the world. And certainly people kept electing me, I had high election numbers because people knew what they got with me, and that, you know, I represented the interests of the working-class, no matter who it was or which union it was, or which bunch of workers it was, or which bunch of unemployed people it was, or which bunch of homeless people there were. And as this, as things went on, it became, the gap between, in town, between the people who were able to make a living and people who weren't became larger and larger. And, it was our members who are always at the bottom, the UFAWU members were always at the bottom of the social pile and of the economic pile. And I, it just angered me. And that's why I spent my time on Council, trying to fight for things that would make life better for all people in the City, but particularly for those people who were economically and socially disadvantaged.

DS [01:19:20] Ok, thank you Joy. End of Part One.