Interview: Nick Carr (NC)
Interviewer: Sean Griffin (SG)
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Transcription: Jane Player

SG [00:00:02] So first of all, Nick, can you give me your full name?

NC [00:00:06] My full name is Nicholas John Paul Carr.

SG [00:00:11] And the last name is spelled?

NC [00:00:13] The last name is spelled in Anglicized C- A-R-R.

SG [00:00:19] Okay, so that's a name of originally of Croatian origin, is it?

NC [00:00:25] Yes. Yes.

SG [00:00:26] That's where you're from? What would it have been in Croatian?

NC [00:00:29] It would be C-A-R surname, just one R.

SG [00:00:34] Oh, I see.

NC [00:00:34] When I got here into school, at Seymour School, they signed me in as C-A-R. The person that took me there because there was none of the family could speak English, it was a friend. He said, 'Oh no, you can't put C-A-R. That's automobile. You got to have two Rs in there.' So, she said, 'Okay, two Rs.' And ever since then,1938,I kept C-A double R.

SG [00:01:01] Just because some some teacher decided that you had to have two Rs.

NC [00:01:06] That's right. Exactly.

SG [00:01:06] Isn't that typical?

NC [00:01:07] Yeah.

SG [00:01:07] So where are you from in Croatia? What part of Croatia actually?

NC [00:01:11] Northern part, actually, on the coast close to the Italian border, on the Adriatic. The name of the town is (unclear) It's quite a well-known town. There's four, or five, six towns within seven, eight, ten miles that are right on the coast, and they cater to tourists—bed and breakfast mainly, now especially, but even before. So yeah, that's where I—I was fairly young. I was like 12, 13 years old when I first came over and came to Canada, but that's where we were. It was quite a—I had no mother or father over there. I lived with one grandmother, the other grandmother, uncle and aunt. Wherever I was, I stayed and ate there—if they would let me. If I did something wrong— and that was 99 times out of 100 every day that I did something wrong—they would kick me out and I would go someplace else.

SG [00:02:28] Were you orphaned or had your parents?

NC [00:02:30] My father was here. My mother died over there and left me with my grandfather and grandmother. As kids over there, we were urchins. We go any place you can get something and, in my part, I was attached to nobody in particular that had to look after me. If I wasn't there, they would think I was someplace, some other relations, and nobody cared. So I went all over. It was comical because there's one fellow here, they're still living here. Him and I and two other fellows left town and went up into the mountains. The mountains, with views. They were no higher than Burnaby Mountain, but we went there and stayed there four days, you know. We dug potatoes out of the ground, cleaned them up and ate them like that, or went into some places there was any fruit, at all. We'd go and steal the fruit and eat that, and we survived. When we came back to town, to home, the three fellows that were with me, their mother and father beat the shit out of them. They really beat them up because they couldn't find them. For me, nobody knew that I was gone. I was happy as a pig and lark. No, nobody cared. And so I would—I knew almost everybody, and everybody knew me.

SG [00:04:02] Isn't that incredible, though? When you came to this country, then to Canada, how did that come about, if you had to know—

NC [00:04:10] Well, my sister (oldest sister) she got married and in 1932, 1933, and her husband was already over here fishing. He went back there and married her and brought her over. Four or five years later, the war was imminent, was starting out. My sister got my father into sending for me before the war started. That's how she induced my father to—and what the bad part of it was at that time that my father had to have $3,000 in the bank before he could apply to bring me over so I wouldn't be on relief. It took almost two years for him to accumulate that kind of money. I would have been here two or three years earlier, but I was, I think, second or third last trip from Europe over to Canada before the war started. Before I think (unclear) was the last trip that she came over from the old country after the borders were closed. They wouldn't let anybody out and, or, Canada couldn't take anybody.

SG [00:05:37] So, in fact, you got out just before the border closed down.

NC [00:05:39] Just before. In fact, what it was, Austria was taken over in February 1938 and I came over in May 1938. We were travelling on the train. You could see every 50, 60 feet there was a soldier on the train with a rifle, her leg standing guard.

SG [00:06:00] So your father, in earning his money, was he fishing here this time?

NC [00:06:04] Yes, he was.

SG [00:06:05] He was working here as a fisherman?

NC [00:06:05] Yeah, he came over in 1927, just not even two years after my mother died and left me over there. Well, left the other three girls too, not just me, but I was the youngest.

SG [00:06:21] What did your mother die from at an early age?

NC [00:06:23] I'm pretty sure, I think it was TB.

SG [00:06:28] Oh, really? Which would have been common at the time.

NC [00:06:31] That's right. Common at the time. In fact, I always test positive TB.

SG [00:06:39] Really?

NC [00:06:40] Yup. Always test positive, but, in fact, when I had my—What was it? I had to have—oh, that pacemaker, and they tested me. No. I had pleurisy and they tested me and they found that I tested positive on TB. They got all my daughters and my wife and everybody do go for a test. I told them, I says, 'In the old country where I come from 90 percent of the people would test positive because they were either in contact or part of the family that had TB. That was quite common at that time.

SG [00:07:24] Yeah. So that wouldn't be unusual. A lot of your generation tested positive for that now. If your dad was a fisherman here was the town you came from was it sort of a fishing community?

NC [00:07:35] Oh, yes. Yes, mainly, either a stonemason or a fisherman.

SG [00:07:40] Oh, I see.

NC [00:07:41] As long as there was nice weather, they were all fishing. Nine times out of ten that—a lot of people couldn't go fishing in the wintertime because it was bad weather. Those that were young enough and they were smart enough, that could do the stonework. Everything in the old country was made out of stone, hardly any wood at all in building homes. What it was also, my grandfather's brother, which is my father's uncle, he had a business of building homes and people that knew him or related to him and they would be the first ones to hire when needed any kind of worker. It's mainly labour; it's not trades people. It was all mainly labour and that's where my father used to work two or three months in the wintertime they weren't fishing. He started fishing and he did have—and comical part of that is that when he wanted to go to Canada, he had to go as a farm labour, and he had to go and work on the farm. They were, oh half a dozen of them I think, if not more. They were brought from (unclear) from the former Yugoslavia, into Canada and worked outside of Winnipeg on the farms. What they heard up there, they knew that there was good on the West Coast. There was fishing people. They were all fishermen that were there. Would you believe it—the day or two or three months after they got here in early April, then they took off, left the farm and walked all the way to Vancouver.

SG [00:09:36] From Winnipeg?

NC [00:09:36] From Winnipeg.

SG [00:09:37] Holy smoke!

NC [00:09:37] Yes.

[00:09:38] That's quite some walk.

NC [00:09:39] That's some walk; a lot of people don't believe it. How did they walk? They followed the train tracks and through the mountains and everything else on through following the train tracks. I think my father told me that it took them almost four months to get to because they had to stop, sleep and eat and that, whatever they could.

SG [00:10:06] They basically came as a group, leaving the farm work, to try to go fishing on the West Coast? What would the fishing technology have been where you came from? What were they fishing? Was it seining or longline?

NC [00:10:17] Mainly seining. Mainly seining. I don't know if there was any gillnetting at all at that time. There must have been but they were seine boat fishermen pulled by hand. Some of them, in fact, my father was one of the few that knew how to mend nets, and that's one reason that he got hired a little bit faster than the others, because there's always repairs on the nets when you're working.

SG [00:10:49] This would have been a natural sort of source of fishing industry workers and fishermen from places.

NC [00:10:54] Oh, yeah.

SG [00:10:56] Which is why there's so many Croatians in the fleet.

NC [00:10:58] That's right. That's right. A lot of the people like even after the war, but before the war too, a lot of them was brought over by somebody that was either related to them or a parent that was already over here and brought people from over there—and just for for fishing.

NC [00:11:17] Right. When you came here, you went to school, to—

NC [00:11:22] Yup, I went to school. I must have been a week in Vancouver on Woodland Drive, 820 Woodland Drive—never forget that address. It was because my sister (excuse me) and my father and my brother-in-law and two other relations of mine that my sister took over like as boarders because they had no place to live. She looked after them (and they were fishermen) and looked after their clothes, washing them and everything. And he slept with them. The house, whole house, it had a basement, but no furnace. It was no furnace in the house. The basement was ground; it was not cement. It was just ordinary ground.

SG [00:12:11] Dirt floor and whatnot.

NC [00:12:12] A dirt floor. Yes. And quite cold in the wintertime. The price of the house was $13 a month. Never forget it. Whole house. And there were six of us living there.

SG [00:12:27] Some slept in the basement, this dirt floor basement, I guess?

NC [00:12:30] They had an upstairs. They had three bedrooms upstairs—two bedrooms upstairs in the bathroom. Yeah. Everybody slept double up in the same room and the house is still standing. Every once in a while I go by and take a look at the house on Woodland Drive.

SG [00:12:48] I'll be darned, eh.

NC [00:12:49] Just north of Venables.

SG [00:12:51] I presume you had no English at this time? You had to come straight from Croatia to—

NC [00:12:54] No nothing at all.

SG [00:12:58] How did that work out in the schools? No, I mean, there were no ESL programs at this time?

NC [00:13:03] Yes, there was. We had a special class in Seymour school and Japanese, Chinese, Italians, Ukrainians. There was all different languages that were in the same room trying to—what they called a special class—trying to learn English language in Seymour School. I think someplace here in the house, they used to show us a picture and we had to say, 'oh, I see a cup in the cupboard there' and they would say 'Nick sees a cup in the cupboard'. They would write sentences like that so we would learn. After just a little bit—a week—I was a month—yeah—about not even a month in school here when the summer holidays came. At that time my sister and brother-in-law where they lived on Woodland Drive, they bought a house at 641 Slocan Street. The house is still standing there.

SG [00:14:15] Another one eh.

NC [00:14:16] Yeah. They bought it and we moved there and next year I went to Seymour School from Slocan. I had to walk, oh actually run most of the time in the morning. When it's lunchtime, I used to run like hell because we had less than an hour from Seymour School to Slocan and had lunch and run like hell back in time to go back to school. When the teacher found out that that's what I was doing, he says, 'No, you should have lunch. For five or 10 cents for lunch you can get a bowl of soup and a piece of bread.' I told my sister and my sister she, 'Oh, whose gonna to give you 10 cents every day. No, no, no, no.' So I did run. Then, oh about six months down the road, maybe more, a little bit more, I was smart enough in that I picked up the language (but not very good), but as far as the work, arithmetic and that, I had all that in Europe before I came over here. It was just a question of learning the language and the teacher thought I had enough of a command in English language that they said they'd transfer me to Hastings School here in, on 24-2500 block Pender—Pandora. Started there and all the kids used to laugh at me when I used to try and speak. I knew the arithmetic and that, I beat the shit out of them as far as the knowledge of—we even had geometry in the old country before I came over here. I started trigonometry as well. The teacher, after three or four months at Hastings School, he says I was I was too smart, you know in everything except language and they put me in Grade 6 instead of Grade 5. When I was there in Grade 6, four, three months later, they thought I had enough knowledge except the language, they put me in Grade 7 in Seymour School at Templeton.

SG [00:16:47] Right.

NC [00:16:48] When I was there for two months, they put me in Grade 8.

SG [00:16:52] You were just running up the grades here.

SG [00:16:53] That's right. I went to four or five different grades and inside of a year and a half. And that's— (laughter) The comical thing of that was to the Croation language if you learnt the alphabet, you learn the alphabet, you can pronounce, read and write any word because every letter is pronounced and every letter is written. There's no phonetics at all in there. Whenever I used to write anything at all, I used to say it in Croatian language inside and write it. I would write and the teacher in Grade 7 said, 'Nick how the hell can

you write a word in English and you can't spell it?' I said, 'What? Why do it like that?' 'But how?' I couldn't explain to him that I used to say it phonetically in my mind and then write it. I would pronounce every letter that was in the word. That's what it was, but to think in my mind, oh, that business of, "I" before "E" except after "C", and it's not even correct, but I could never fathom that.

SG [00:18:14] I think everybody as a newcomer has trouble with English spelling.

NC [00:18:18] That's right.

SG [00:18:19] You have so many strange parts of the language.

NC [00:18:21] That's right.

SG [00:18:22] At what point did you start working and where?

NC [00:18:26] Well, in 1942, Sean, as a youngster (I didn't tell you) but as a youngster in the old country, my. Mother's sister (my mother was gone) but my sister, her husband and family had fishing—they had a couple of skiffs and they had a couple of nets, they gillnet with an even small seine boat. In the summer when they weren't fishing, what it was closed or it was bad weather, I used to go and ask them if they would let me have their skiff to roll [unclear] and I learnt to roll in the old country. I really enjoyed it. Most of the time a roll of boat in the old country was sittin' down, but here to roll a skiff is standing up. So when in 1942 when I was in Grade 7, Grade 8, actually— wait a minute—no, it was even later. That was Grade 9 already. It was in the late summer. One of my second cousins was here—Silvo Carr—needed a skiff man. They were going to Fraser River to fish and he had no skiff man. He asked me, 'Can you roll?' I said, 'Oh, yeah, I can roll.' 'Oh, okay, do you want a come out for a week or two with me?' I said, 'Sure.' I went to my sister and 'Can I go fishing with the [unclear] Silvo?' 'Oh sure. If you want to go. You make a couple of hundred dollars.' I went and we fished for almost three weeks, two and a half weeks in the river.

SG [00:20:32] You were seining in the river?

NC [00:20:34] Yes, they were seining in the river at that time. I was rolling, but mainly sitting down, rolling back. He said, 'No, no, you got to do it standing up so you see where you're going.' Okay, so I learnt that quite—just the idea of different position. We made almost $450 while I was out there. I said, 'Shit, that's what, I'm going to do, I'm going to be a fisherman.' (laughter) 'Oh Jesus. That short of time, less than three weeks and I got $400.

SG [00:21:04] That would have been big money in those days, eh?

NC [00:21:06] Jesus Christ, was it ever! Oh, my father was happy as pig in shit. My sister too. They went and thanked him and I didn't even get half a share, you know. It wasn't a full share. I found out later it was less. They could give me anything that they wanted. It was just over two weeks. That's how, when I finished Grade 9 and went to Grade 10 at Tech, for a half a year, and what was I going to do? Oh, I'll look for a place to go fishing. In 1943, I went fishing on Daisy Bee; she passed away in 1952—sunk, lost and all the crew was lost on it. That was the same guy that gave me the job, first time, Silvo Carr. He died on it as well. We went fishing in 1943 and I didn't even make for a full season as much money as I did the year before on the Fraser River for two and a half weeks. Three

hundred and fifty dollars for a whole year; that's what we made. Then I went fishing in the winter time, one towing off on the same boat that I was seining salmon, Daisy Bee. We went towing off for Canadian Fishing Company Anglo-British Columbia, they used to call them, and got a job there. They were still was on the boat, towing off a person, towing off a boat. When they make us set, we would tow them out of the net instead of we had [unclear] afterwards. When they were seining herring, somebody had to pull the boat that had a seine in the water to keep it from going into the net and they could pick up the net and the fish. That was the style. It still is the same style but now the only thing is they got drums now, but they never used to have them.

SG [00:23:30] There weren't even power blocks on seiners at that point.

NC [00:23:33] No. The power blocks came in 1954. We were one of the first ones. BC Packers on the company boat to order it from Jack McEachern was the one that was copied the—what was the guy's name from Seattle?

SG [00:24:01] The puretic block you mean?

NC [00:24:03] Puretic block. He'd copied it and was making his own. He was making one or two a week in the in the shop out of pieces of fender. The bend to the fender was so the net wouldn't catch on there. He sold quite a few of them. Then he was sued by Puretic and lost a case. He copied—it was a patent on that block. In the meantime, he got enough money and bought a big Cadillac— not Cadillac—Buick car. Jack McEachern, never forget it, because he was also one of the guys that we built the herring hopper for Orphans Fund.

SG [00:24:55] Oh, they used for the herring sales?

NC [00:24:56] That's right. Yeah. That's when it was 1954, we started getting—and we didn't have it hydraulic driven. We had it rope driven. He made it; it was a rope from the power block to the winch on the boat. We wrapped around the winch and the winch would turn the power block. A lot of the boats, by that time, they started getting hydraulics and it was quite easy just with the hoses put on there. But 1954 was the, I think the big influx of power blocks came in in 1954. There was one or two or three before that, one or two years but until people saw how they worked, how well they worked they started buying them.

SG [00:25:48] That would have reduced the number of crew on the boat as well, when those blocks came in eh?

NC [00:25:52] Yes, eventually they did, but to start with, they had the same crews. They had seven and it was in the contract with the companies that seven men on the seine boat, regardless. A lot of times the seine boats were so small that they only had four or five bunks so they had people sleeping in the galleys. I remember one guy, one boat that we had a man sleeping in the galley because we didn't we didn't have enough bunks. We only had five bunks.

SG [00:26:30] Right. You're fishing then in '42 and '43, I guess?

NC [00:26:35] In '43 I went as a full season fishing and I started on herring and then the army called me.

SG [00:26:47] Had you encountered the Fishermen's Union at this point?

NC [00:26:51] Yes. As soon as I went fishing in 1942, my father at that time, they weren't that enthused about unions and that but he says that was a must, that you joined the union before you go fishing. I went and joined the union in 1942 when I went fishing just for the two and a half weeks in the river.

SG [00:27:18] So was this the United Fisherman's Federal Union or the Salmon Purse Seiners Union?

NC [00:27:25] Trying to think. Just Salmon Purse Seiners Union, yes.

SG [00:27:32] And they hadn't yet merged, I guess, with United Fishermen Federal Union?

NC [00:27:36] That's right. That was two or three years later. In 1943, the army grabbed me. By the time I came out of the army at the end of 1946, because I had a job to go to, anybody that had a job to go to in the army at that time you could get discharged right away. If you didn't have a job to go to, then you take your turn getting discharged. I got one of my second cousins, actually was a brother of the guy that I started fishing with Silvo Carr, Slavko Carr. He said, 'Well, I'll give him a job for two or three weeks in the fall. He can come out.' When I got out of the army soon, sooner than most people—and I went fishing for that.

SG [00:28:35] You kind of skipped over your army service here. You were in the army then, I guess for two years then?

NC [00:28:41] Well, almost. Altogether close to three years.

SG [00:28:43] Close to three. Presumably you went overseas and—

NC [00:28:47] Yes. Yes, I went overseas. What it was, also, the army grabbed me and they wanted me to join the army. I said, 'No, I don't want to join the army,' but I was forced to. They had what they call N-R-M-A—National Reserve Mobilization Act, passed in 1941 or '42 that they can call anybody of age into the army. That's how I got called in. They asked me, 'You wanna—' I said, 'No, I don't want to join.' 'What do you want to do then?' I says, 'Nothing. I don't want to join the army.' My sister—I wanted to but my sister and my brother-in-law and my father, 'Don't you go. You go in the army, you get killed.' So I wouldn't—I listened to them, I wouldn't join. I went and got my physical. No—before the army grabbed me, I went and tried. I was of the fisherman until I tried to join the navy. I went and joined the navy. Passed my physical and everything else and they said, 'Well, now where were you born?' I says, 'I was born in Yugoslavia.' 'Oh, oh, oh,' the guy said three times. 'Are you a naturalized citizen of Canada?' I says, 'No, why? I don't know, I'm too young to be naturalized.' 'Oh, you can be naturalized [unclear]. Oh, no. Well, you can't join the navy then, if you're not Canadian.' I says, 'What?' 'No. You can't join the navy if you're not Canadian, you're a foreigner.' The army grabbed me then and wanted me to join the army. I said, 'No. I tried to join the navy and they told me I was a foreigner. They didn't want me. How come you want me?' 'Well, you gotta go.' 'Okay. So I gotta go. I got no choice.' When I passed my physical, there was a man there from the air force and he wanted me to join the air force. 'You could be a wireless air gunner.' I said, 'What the hell is a wireless air gunner?' I don't know, [unclear]. The guy that was with us there, same time he says, 'Wireless gunners, those are the ones that have the guns outside the plane and they shoot anybody that's coming at 'em and they're the first ones to get knocked off. That's why they're always short of wireless air gunners.' I said, 'I don't want to join the wireless air gunners! (laughter) No, no bloody way!' Then I went into the army and went

back East. They asked me what I wanted. I said, 'Gee, I don't know. I guess I would like those big guns that you fire at planes.' 'Oh, you want to be an ack-ack gunner?' I said, 'Yeah, sure.' That's why we went in Halifax and actually across Halifax to Dartmouth. That's where they had the training place for—a basic training to learn anything about the orders of the army and then advanced training that you can work on the guns. That's what I got, four months there, finished my basic and advanced training and they shipped us to, some of us—no, before they shipped us out. All the ones that were considered little brighter and younger (because it was less than two years that I was still in school) and they asked me if I want to take training, radar training. I said, 'What's radar training?' 'Oh, well, in radar training you have this thing that you look around and you can see planes or anything coming at you.' 'Oh, that would be good.' I went six weeks, radar training. I finished my course, knew how to operate—that's all we were operators of it. We didn't know anything at all; we weren't technicians. We were just radar operators. As soon as we finished that, the course and that, I got corporal stripes, I was a corporal. I said, 'What's a corporal?' Twenty cents a day, more pay than a private, 20 cents a day. I was there and 1943, '44, when the second front opened up, they didn't need any more heavy ack-ack batteries and radar training or anything else. Anybody that was A-1 at that time, they were put into the infantry and that's where I went. They put me in the infantry; took my training in, just outside Vernon, Coldstream Harbour there. They had a nice obstacle course where you learn how to run like hell, like a deer and pack a gun. They trained us there and as soon as we finished training there, they sending us overseas. I wasn't a volunteer, but they needed 25,000 reinforcements, so they took 25,000 reinforcement people that were not volunteers, NRMAs that they called them. We went overseas and then after a couple of months, some training in England, they sent us up to—we were just outside last couple of days in France and into Germany. When the war ended there, they wanted volunteers for, to fight to go back to Canada and fight against Japanese. Japanese war was still on. When they—I volunteered to go there. I said, 'You know, the war ended in Europe. It won't take very long before the war ends in Japan. If I volunteer there, I'm gonna get shipped to Canada fast and I'm going to be in Canada, probably the war will be over by then.' As it was, it wasn't like that but they shipped—they were going to ship us over and they looked at me, looked at my record. They says, 'Oh, you can't join. You can't go back as a volunteer because you're not a volunteer. You're NRMA.' I said, 'Well, all the guys that I was with, they're going.' He said, 'Yeah, but they're all volunteers.' I said, 'Well, I'll volunteer.' 'No, you gotta be a volunteer in the air.' So, I joined the army, [unclear] as a volunteer, signed the papers and that, and I wasn't NRMA anymore. I was shipped back to Canada, and we were, we got a month's leave, I think it was—disembarkation leave what they called, and $120—$100 from the Canadian government and $20 from the Queen that we got for serving over there. So when we got back here they shipped us to Camp Shilo, just outside of Winnipeg. What am I doing all this giving you my life history on and not fishing?

SG [00:37:19] Well, because it's related to your life and how you led it.

NC [00:37:23] Oh, shit.

SG [00:37:24] No, that's fine.

NC [00:37:26] I never thought of that.

SG [00:37:26] We'll bring it back to the fishing industry. Don't worry.

NC [00:37:30] When we went to Camp Shilo, we were taken, I think, for six weeks, American arms training. Then we finished that and we went to Fort Worth, Texas. By the time we got to Fort Worth, the war was over in Japan and we were all shipped back to Camp Shilo. Then that started—whoever had a job to go to, they were discharged right away. That's how—

SG [00:38:03] Your gamble that if you signed up for the Japanese war—

NC [00:38:07] That's right.

SG [00:38:07] You would probably get back here and—

NC [00:38:09] Exactly. You know, that's what I thought. I don't know how smart I was then at that time, but that's what I figured.

SG [00:38:16] Sounded like it worked out.

NC [00:38:17] Yeah, all the effort would be put on Japanese side, the war and that would—so I never thought of what I didn't know afterwards. Like during the war we were in Germany, I believe what it was to, what it came to, that Winston Churchill wanted to get back at Germany of all the devastation the Germans caused with the doodle bugs and everything. During the war in England, he bombed the shit out of Germany and he kept on going and they knew the war was just about over. There was hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of planes steady 24 hours a day going to bomb Germany. Just to retaliation of what the Germans did to the to England. Same token—uh, what the heck was this president's name? Retaliate at Japanese of all the atrocities that Japanese caused in the Philippines and that's why he dropped two atomic bombs over Japan.

SG [00:39:28] Hmm. Yeah. Right.

NC [00:39:28] In retaliation. That fueled the American [unclear].

SG [00:39:32] When you were discharged, you went back into the fishing industry—

NC [00:39:35] Right away. Fishing business. Yup.

SG [00:39:37] And took it up from there?

NC [00:39:39] Yeah. Fished salmon and herring. At that time we were fishing eight, nine, ten months out of the year for salmon. At that time, too, salmon we were fishing four and five days every week. We didn't have two or three days at those years. Then on herring—and as soon as we finished herring I tried and got—I was fortunate enough to get a job working on the nets. And in the meantime—

SG [00:40:12] Mending heading nets and so on.

NC [00:40:13] Mending nets and that for, oh, four or five years.

SG [00:40:17] So you would learn this in the process of—

NC [00:40:20] Oh yeah, when we were fishing, we always have something to do on repair in the net. I was lucky enough that the person that I fished with was willing to teach me. I

asked my brother-in-law and my father to teach me how to mend the net. They wouldn't teach me. 'See you got lots of time to learn. Don't bother me. And we don't wanna.' I wanted to learn right off the bat and that's how I did. What it was too that they were amazed when I went into work into the net loft in that how much I knew about mending nets and that because the older people were doing the mending nets. We were—all we did was pull and prepare stuff for them, not mending nets.

SG [00:41:08] What was your sort of official job in the boat? You were skiff men?.

NC [00:41:11] Skiff men mainly.

SG [00:41:12] Mainly as skiff men.

NC [00:41:14] Mainly skiff men, yup.

SG [00:41:15] Those guys would also dry up and so on a set I presume, eh?

NC [00:41:20] Oh, yes. Oh yes. Oh yes. We were always part—and what it was too as a youngster, especially with Croatians or former Yugoslavians, whatever it was the young fellow, regardless how much you knew or how much you didn't know, he had to do all the dirty work. Whatever it was, it doesn't matter.

SG [00:41:42] Right. Pretty much the same in any job, that way isn't it?

NC [00:41:43] Yeah. They could—what it was like they were working on the nets and there was a—you had to fill up needles for them to work with. If the needles were right there, the guy could grab the fine. If he couldn't, if they weren't there, he say, 'Get me a needle.' So you run like hell, whatever it is, 10, 15 steps and get a needle and bring it to him. That was the style. In fact, I remember him telling me as a youngster in the old country, a lot of people smoked a pipe, but they didn't have matches and they always had a bit of a fire going. A person, one of the fishermen, older fishermen, would try and light the pipe and he says, 'Get me a coal,' and he used to grab a coal with his bare hands and bring it to 'em to light the pipe. That's how the system was at that time. Yeah.

SG [00:42:42] Were there boat delegates and whatnot for the union on vessels at that time?

NC [00:42:49] In 1942 and 1943? No. There was always somebody from the union that would come on the board and sign up people or they themselves would go into the union. They would tell them, you go in the union hall; it was on Cordova and sign up. After, I believe was late forties—yeah, late forties—they started getting the boat delegates, if I remember correctly.

SG [00:43:23] So this is after the UFAWU (United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union) was founded?

NC [00:43:25] Yes, in 1945. They the amalgamated with the gillnetters, shore workers and that. They became the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union.

SG [00:43:39] And so that meant you had a system then of boat delegates actually on the boat?

NC [00:43:42] That's right. Yeah.

SG [00:43:44] What was your introduction to the union beyond being just a member where you—

NC [00:43:49] There's a couple of the fellows that were namely Martin Car and Joe Miharia; they were already involved. We had a fellow Croatian, actually Yugoslavian Croatian, Mike Canic. That was in 1940—1950—1952. I think we had a strike and they got, yeah, they got Mike Canic as a fisherman, but they talked him into working for the union. He liked that; he was that type of person, like talking and that. He knew an awful lot of Croatians, Yugoslavians that he would go and talk to and make them join the union if they weren't in the union already. That's where Mike got the job and he worked for the union. He worked for seven, eight years. He got me interested in two different—being on different committees. That's how I got interested in, on different committees that I be participating. I wasn't very active in it, but I liked the idea. I had, as a youngster in the old country when they taught us how to be a soldier and give orders. I used to talk to the Croatians and talked to them, well, do this and do that. We should do with the companies and negotiations and all that. They listened; they didn't argue at all. They listened. They wouldn't—you had to talk them into doing things as far as trade union movement is concerned. But you had a hellava—and I tried and I really liked doing it. When Mike Canic used to give me directions, do this and go and talk to this and that and I used to like it. He always commended me that I was doing a good job and that made more for me to do even better. Then I got married and, holy mackerel, I said I was not wasting I was doing a lot of work in the union even if I wasn't doing any work. I used to go down to the union hall and listen to what's going on and that. In the meantime, I think over a period of time it was a bit of a mistake because I could have been working in the net loft for pay, but this—I was doing nothing. A lot of my friends, they told me, the guys my age and that, they told me I was nuts in doing it. I should have been working. Anyhow, I enjoyed doing that back in the fifties and sixties. In 1963, they had Mike Canic sent to Ocean Falls. We had a strike. They sent him to Ocean Falls to look after all the seine fleet. We had, oh hell, we had over 100 seine boats living or working in the north, especially central area.

SG [00:47:30] That was a big tie up spot for them.

NC [00:47:32] That's right. What it was, Ocean Falls had something for two—the boys would have two or three days a weekend and they would go to the store, and even the poolroom and the swimming pool there in Ocean Falls, and also good groceries rather than moor someplace else. Small company stores that they had stuff that was from the last winter yet. Mike was working there and one guy—who was it? I think it was somebody in Rupert that had to be—oh, Ted Ford was in Rupert. He was being sent out and Mike Canic was being sent from Ocean Falls to Rupert to take his place. Either Carl Liden or Ted Ford—I think it was Carl Liden now. They needed somebody in Ocean Falls to take place of Mike and Homer says to me, 'You're it, you're goin.' I said, 'Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. What am I going?' 'Well, look after seine fleet. You can do it.' During that strike, the first place I went from Ocean Falls, they needed somebody in Bella Bella to hold the strike vote—second strike vote. 'Nick, you got to go to Ocean Falls.' I said, 'What for?' 'To hold a strike vote.' I went and held the first meeting in Bella Bella, as the seine fleet most of them of them were seine boat fishermen in Bella Bella at that time. That's where I had a strike vote. To this day, it was one strike vote that we had there was 100 percent for rejection.

SG [00:49:32] I was just looking a day or so ago. This is the letter that they sent to Homer Stevens—you gave me this letter before.

NC [00:49:40] That's right.

SG [00:49:40] In which they said that they were really pleased with the Ocean Falls vote maintaining as it did or 100% favourable voting record today.

NC [00:49:50] And next meeting we had was in Ocean Falls and there was over 100 people at the meeting and we had a 100 percent strike vote.

SG [00:50:00] That was your initiation as the strike organizer?

NC [00:50:03] That's correct.

NC [00:50:04] And from then on, things got better.

SG [00:50:08] So obviously, this was something you had a real knack for, eh, that you were you were a good organizer. You know how to talk to guys.

NC [00:50:15] I didn't I didn't tell you this, but as a youngster in back in my hometown in Yugoslavia, they had people, what we would call now working class people that had it—not an organization—but working class people would get together and have demonstrations because the big business had control of everything. They were always and there was a guy named Mutchic in Zagreb that tried, that started a new party, Croatian Fraternal Union Party, that wanted to be for the workers. As it turned out, the bastard turned tail and joined the hierarchy. In any case (and I like the idea of being against something that wasn't any good) so as a youngster, I saw that (I was only six, seven, eight years old at that time) and that's where I got started motivated into business of—to help out somebody that needed helping.

SG [00:51:31] So you were even at that age an advocate for working people.

NC [00:51:34] That's right. Socialistic type. Yeah.

SG [00:51:38] That's interesting. And you brought it here and —.

NC [00:51:40] Yes. I would even in sports, when we had at Hastings School or even 1Temp, the coach and I would say, or in the gym, coach says, 'No, no, I don't like that. I don't think that's right.' He said, 'That's nothing to do with you. We're going to do it.' So I would talk to the guys, said 'Let's not listen to what he says. It's not right.' The guys would go along with me and we'd be in shit all the time because it would be opposing the administration.

SG [00:52:17] You obviously had an attraction for people in terms of organizing.

NC [00:52:20] So that's what I—I honestly believe that that had to have come from my father or my grandfather and that. As I remember in the old country, they used to be talking about being, having changes made in pay and everything else. I remember them doing that night kind of—maybe that was an inkling for me to get into it. That's what I did. I enjoy doing it.

SG [00:52:48] Well, I remember years ago you made a speech at a local one meeting and you said the two most important things to you and your life were your family and your union.

NC [00:52:56] That's right.

SG [00:52:57] Did you ever find that somehow there were ever tensions between that, that your work for the union kind of took away from your family? Or were you able to kind of put it all together?

NC [00:53:06] Oh, yes. They especially, even the wife now, they were opposed to it. What the reason they were opposed to it is because I was spending so much time for the union. All my friends, all the ones that I grew up with, my age, they were at home, especially during the strike, 1963 strike. I was up in Ocean Falls for almost three weeks and all my friends, they were in town and they were going to beaches with the family, with the kids, and they really enjoyed themselves. My wife couldn't do that. My wife was staying home, looking after the kids in the garden, so she was opposed to it, but I enjoyed it. That's one of the reasons it wasn't sitting well with—finally the kids and everybody got accustomed to me and sort of took it as a matter of fact, that I was part of the union and enjoy doing it. They didn't mind, they didn't object to it as much as they did at first.

SG [00:54:11] What was your sense of the sort of the labour movement around you? Because the labour movement in the forties and fifties was quite active.

NC [00:54:19] Yes, yes.

SG [00:54:19] In fishing industry and mining and so on. Did you have a sense of being part of that larger movement?

NC [00:54:25] Yes, yes. Always, always, always. I used to try and participate different demonstrations—any time there was a demonstration. In fact, there was a couple of times I know they asked for volunteers from the union that could support the pickets in Westminster on the waterfront when they were building trades. They were on strike and there was a lot of scabs working there. We used to go and parade back and forth as opposing them and call them scabs at that time and I enjoyed doing it. I enjoyed doing it.

SG [00:55:09] So that was just part of who you were.

NC [00:55:12] That's right.

SG [00:55:15] One of the things that's always struck me about the fishermen's union and fishing is that unlike other industries where you had a checkoff and basically people signed up in the union, we always had to go out and sign up members every year in order to get them in the union, get them signed up for that year. Did you find that, at any time, that just became really onerous, that it was an incredibly difficult task to do that? Or were most members at that time pretty much onboard.

NC [00:55:41] No, at that time we accepted it as part of life. That's the way it was done. We never thought of doing something better, I think, or easier. We thought that was it. You have to do it. That was done last year. That was the bad part of us at that time. We weren't thinking ahead. We were just whatever it is today, we keep on doing the same thing today. Try and get it better but not thinking at all of making something better and easier.

SG [00:56:16] So when circumstances change, sometimes the old ways of doing things didn't work as well?

NC [00:56:20] No, that's true. Yes, that's correct.

SG [00:56:23] And the other thing about about fishing was they, you know, a lot of fishing organizations around the world have basically just accepted that the price will be posted by the company and that's what they'll get paid. Whereas we here have always taken a very strong position in establishing a minimum price agreement.

NC [00:56:41] Yes.

SG [00:56:42] What did you find the significance of that?

NC [00:56:45] That came late in the forties and even in the fifties. I think I remember when years later, in the mid-fifties, late fifties but before that, there was instances where there was the people that fish that were older than me and that fished in the late thirties and forties. They were—every night you'd go to a packer to unload what you caught on the seine boat. I remember one of my relations, actually, he was my father's cousin, so my second cousin, he told me they were on one side of the packer unloading chum salmon for one cent a piece. On the other side of the packer, there was a boat that was unloading for a cent and a half a piece. Same packers, same company and everything. It was just the way that it was done. A lot of people would grumble and never—but they wouldn't—they needed somebody to lead them. They just by grumbling and complaining and that and not doing anything about it, it didn't take—it didn't go very far. That's how I used to see that. Why should it be that somebody would get more for the same product than I got and that. That's one of the reasons also that I wanted to change, have a participation in changing it.

SG [00:58:29] So when did those minimum price agreements—I mean some of them were signed with the Salmon Purse Seiners Union back in the late thirties.

NC [00:58:37] No.

SG [00:58:38] But it wasn't it wasn't common eh?

NC [00:58:39] There was no, that I know of, there was no signed agreements on payment at all. It was all verbal.

SG [00:58:46] Ah, I see.

NC [00:58:47] It was all verbal. Depending who the skipper was, depending who the boat owner was, and depending what kind of agreement he had, or personal agreement. Because the vessel owner or the skipper would have—I neglected to tell you that there was in the thirties and even some of the forties—but the person that had a job on the seine boat, indeed, that same person would go and work either cleaning the back yard, digging the backyard, or painting the houses of the skipper to keep his job.

SG [00:59:32] Really?

NC [00:59:32] Yes. It was done. It was done and not only that, but you'd have to bring a present to the skipper, boat owner or to the life or skipper or boat owner at Christmastime, to keep in good books of the of the skipper or vessel owner. Yes it was.

SG [00:59:56] Did that change when the union became more established in the industry?

NC [01:00:01] It changed somewhat, but it was still done under Q.T. It was not publicized, but it was still done. The skipper would say, 'Well, I need a hand. Can you give me a hand? One or two hours to paint the boat or repair something?' 'Oh, yeah,' and he worked there for two or three weeks.

SG [01:00:23] Yeah. But that was how you got your job the next summer.

NC [01:00:27] That's right. Exactly right.

SG [01:00:29] So, when did—what's your recollection of when the first minimum price agreement came into effect in the industry?

NC [01:00:36] As far as I know, the late ones that we came late—it was late fifties, late fifties to early sixties. We had a strike in 1963 and a court case. I think it was '63 that the minimum price was three and a half cents a pound for pinks. The people were complaining on the weights; that's where they started again. If you had 5-6,000 pinks and five or six or ten boats ahead of you, and you gonna weigh each one so the company [unclear] said, 'Well, we'll just measure a couple of scales and give you the average.' Just at that time, people, well, they get a good couple of hours sleep longer if you finish unloading faster. So they agreed to it. That was also fixed in my opinion. It was the weights weren't done properly, they weren't administered and if anybody of the crew would complain, the company would try and get rid of them. That was the style. I mean, I can't blame any company or any manager, but they were that way that whatever was best for the company and that's the way it went.

SG [01:02:19] Those minimum price agreements, when they came into effect, or began to come into effect, did they end some of those practizes, did it bring guys together a bit more?

NC [01:02:29] You changed quite a bit. Oh, yes. It was less skulduggery going on that even on the off season to work on the boats and the nets. They got into the agreement also that the owner, whether it's the company or a private vessel owner, would have to pay the crew to work on them. We had in the agreement, I believe for two weeks after the season is over, the crew was required to clean up the boat and repair the nets to the working condition that it was when they first started. That was also in the—I think it still is in the agreement, or you can find where it says that I think for two weeks, if I remember correctly, or ten working days that you were forced to look after the boat and and the net to clean it up.

SG [01:03:38] Right. Having that agreement also meant that you—it seemed like the union was practically going on strike every year in order to maintain, you know, the rights and conditions.

NC [01:03:50] It seemed like it, but it it wasn't so. It was exaggerated itself. We did have to threaten the strike and have strike votes and that, and never took a strike. Never had a strike because the company would agree or we would agree with the companies.

SG [01:04:16] You get a last minute settlement before you went out. But there certainly were a lot of strikes that the union had to conduct over the years.

NC [01:04:24] Yes, there was but not as many as you thought of—but there was not as many.

SG [01:04:31] You didn't feel like it was too many or anything like that?

NC [01:04:35] Like a lot of times we'd have called a strike and a fishing season wouldn't even start yet.

SG [01:04:40] Right.

NC [01:04:42] We just wouldn't prepare the nets or the boats or anything like that. Then we would agree on it regardless. Most of the time we would agree with lesser than what we demanded and the company would always improve to what they offered at the start. That was done that way, just a matter of fact. A lot of times we were in fishing and, oh gee, fishermen, they're always on strike. It wasn't so; they were just exaggeration like that. People, because we talked an awful lot about a strike and that, there wasn't that many strikes, or if I remember correctly, either over those two or three complete seasons that we lost through the strike in all the years that I fished—and I fished over 50 years.

SG [01:05:41] So really, only a few of those years were the whole season. Yeah, that was unusual. You might lose a few a few days.

NC [01:05:49] That's right. Exactly.

SG [01:05:52] Certainly the sense you get is that it was all hands on deck during the strike. They would have strike salmon sales and all kinds of things to mobilize support for the union and the membership.

NC [01:06:01] Yeah, to pay off—yes, we had a few strike sales and that also was a lot of times exaggerated, was misused and abused, and that on handling the sales. It wasn't done exactly like businessmen would and that everything would be wrote down, write down. It was done might say even haphazardly at times, but it was done. We had a strike sale in 1963, in Ocean Falls, and we raised $150. In Ocean Falls [unclear] three or four. I think, if I remember correctly, Tony Mutko was one of them fisherman that went fishing and brought the pinks and chums. Everybody wanted chums because they were bigger fish and heavier fish. We used to give— not chums but pumps—and we used to give [unclear] pumps for free to people in Ocean Falls.

SG [01:07:21] Just because they were considered a cheap fish at the time.

NC [01:07:23] That's right. Yeah. Not only that, but we couldn't get people to come and buy them. There was only a small settlement in Ocean Falls that there'd be maybe two or 300 people at the time working in Ocean Falls.

SG [01:07:40] Is there any particular strike that you participated in that sort of stands out in your mind as one that was particularly distinct?

NC [01:07:49] Well, I would say the first one that would be distinctive would be the first one was 1952. I was sent to go on picket duty in Port Kells. At that time, I had a car, and I also drove three other fishermen with me, and they happened to be friends of mine. We went to Port Kells and the first and foremost guy that I thought I met in gillnet section, I think his name was Peter Cordoni. Does that ring a bell?

SG [01:08:34] Yeah.

NC [01:08:34] Yeah, yeah. He was the first guy that I met in Port Kells. He said, 'You fellows want a cup of coffee?' I said, 'Gee, I would love a cup of coffee.' He says, 'Okay.' He had the stove on his gillnetter going. He grabbed this pot, dipped it in through Fraser River, pulled the water out and made a cup of coffee. First time I had look from the Fraser River we had a cup of coffee. That was the really the thing that stood out for me. As it was, I can't recall now how many, but I guess 10, 15 years ago Peter Cordoni came to one of our conventions and I went over there, shook hands with him and hugged him and told him that I still remember him making a first cup of coffee for me during the strike.

SG [01:09:31] This was this an industry wide strike, [unclear] all sections, everybody?

NC [01:09:36] Everybody. Everybody was at that time yeah.

SG [01:09:39] What was the outcome of it, do you recall?

NC [01:09:41] As far as I know, we took a beating. We lost because we lost the season or most of the season. What we did was gain in the future; we gained the following year and the year after that. I used to always argue with the guys and he says, 'What's the point of using—of going on strike for two or three cents and you lose so much in the season?' I said, 'Why are you still [unclear]?' Yes, but one year, two years, five years down the road, that's what you would gain. That's what you gain. You've got to consider that as a gain for taking a beating that one or two or three or four years before and because you build up the strike or build up the conditions and payment per pound on fish.

SG [01:10:42] You were able to sort of strengthen the unity around the issues at the time and that carried forward in the future years.

NC [01:10:48] That's right.

SG [01:10:51] Well, that would, you know, obviously would be. Did that work as an argument for—

NC [01:10:54] Oh, yes. A lot of people, if you stop and think, a lot, you could see that they weren't as adamant arguing, after you talk to them like that. You know, you gain two cents this year and it carries on the next year. Yeah, but you lost so much now. No, but say, four years down the road, you'll gain that back what you fought for four years prior. Then you could see that wheels were turning in their mind, that they are realizing what it is. A lot of them still, you get an odd one but I've got one track mind you lost so much now, you never gain it back. Yes, you do gain it back one, five, ten years down the road if you stay in the industry.

SG [01:11:45] The union always did face difficulties from the whole because the union was perceived to be what it was. You had, there was a target from other, like the Pacific

Gillnetters Association and other groups like that. The Combines Investigation Branch went after the union, the employers. It was always a battle.

NC [01:12:05] Oh, yes. What it was, too, I remember trying to organize the trawlers. Their argument was our fish is steak compared to the hamburger you guys catch. I says yes but we always argue, too, if we don't fight and get what we want and you always get a little bit better if you don't fight, yours would go back too. But because you didn't want to join the union, the companies didn't want you to join our union because then they always give you a little bit more price higher than what we get in the contract. They couldn't see it and I couldn't find anybody that would agree with that. That's the thought that was in the back of my mind.

SG [01:13:04] So some trawlers were in the union, but by and large they didn't join the union?

NC [01:13:08] That's right; they did not join the union.

SG [01:13:09] They never did, eh?

NC [01:13:10] Because they always, always had a little bit better price. I think they had that over the company's heads. If you don't give me the price, I'll join the union.

SG [01:13:22] Oh, I see. So they worked it to their own advantage.

NC [01:13:24] That's right.

SG [01:13:26] What about the 1967 strike? The one that seemed to be such a, you know, a bitter strike and actually union leaders went to jail at that time.

NC [01:13:36] Yeah, actually, it was not so much in the seine fleet. No, it was it was a dry fleet—trawlers. They wanted a certain price and we were involved in it and we took a real beating on it. What it was too, the companies were not prepared to pay so much per pound on bottom fish. The argument up north was that co-op was paying a little bit more than the company seine boats. I think a lot of it was done with individuals in the companies. They didn't want a union to get strong at all by getting the draggers or trawlers into the union. That's what it was; it was opposed to that. The strike that was on there, I couldn't see the government—I think we always thought that it was the companies forcing the government and the courts to agree with them and go against the union. The companies wanted the president and administration of the union to take a vote of what they offered. We made agreement that we wouldn't take a vote on every offer that the company gave us. As we know from the past that we had at that time, the more time to take the vote on the offers of the company, the vote gets weaker and weaker and weaker. That was the reason. Then I think we were called a combine; we were setting the prices and that and they took us to court [unclear] saying delay time. It's one of those things that you take as it comes and you fight like hell to make your ends meet; and 99 times out of 100 you're right, too, but it's after the fact.

SG [01:16:21] Yeah, right. Well, I mean, obviously over the years, the Fishermen's Union was always called a communist-led union, a radical union run by communists and whatnot. How did that affect individual members?

NC [01:16:37] Individuals—I'm glad to say there was very few individuals that thought that because they were communist then—actually Homer Stevens was. I never liked he did, but Alex Gordon did it in the same way. (unclear names) and Homer. Homer would come out and say, 'I'm a communist and I believe in communism,' all the time. Every once in a while he would repeat that and a lot of the fishermen resented that. The company's liked that because they would talk to the fishermen, 'See you're being led by a communist.' Alex Gordon, although he was as good, if not even better than Homer, but he never publicized the fact and Homer did. He was proud of the fact that he was a communist and he believed in that. The only thing was you remember when Russian tanks went to Budapest and Homer spoke up against them and they kicked them out of the organization. Do you remember that at all?

SG [01:17:48] I believe it was over Czechoslovakia, not Hungary.

NC [01:17:51] That's right. Czechoslovakia, yeah. Budapest. Yeah. Well, it's one of those things that we can reminisce all we want. Some places we made mistakes.

SG [01:18:06] Right. But it certainly, I mean, it never seemed to diminish the members support of the union.

NC [01:18:11] No, it did not. A lot of the conversation wize in town and gathering social evenings and that would come into conversation that you're led by a bunch of communists. They couldn't see that it was the right thing to do, even though it came from a communist. Doesn't matter who it comes from as long as you believe it's the right thing to do.

SG [01:18:41] Right. Your own political background was as I understand you're a longtime CCF-NDP member.

NC [01:18:47] That's right.

SG [01:18:48] You didn't find that it was, in terms of your trade unionism, it didn't make a difference?

NC [01:18:54] Not at all whatsoever. My theory and my thought in my mind was I always thought we were doing the right thing for working people, regardless what political party they belong to. That was my thought. A lot of people—not a lot, but few my friends, the ones that I grew up with—they believe because you're on the communistic sides and communists and that you're wrong. You go, 'How am I wrong by demanding a certain thing for working man? How could that be wrong?' That was the argument we had, and they had no answer to it. See, that's the bloody thing. A lot of times in my wife would tell me that because you proved them wrong, you're not being liked as much as you should be liked, and they hold it against you. Even though you're right, they still hold it against you by proving them wrong.

SG [01:19:56] Right. That's often the case. That's true. The Croatian community was a pretty big factor in the fishing industry, but it also included a lot of vessel owners and so on and skippers. Did you ever find there was a tension between your position as an advocate of working people and them being vessel owners and working with companies closely?

NC [01:20:17] Well, an odd time, you could see that they're not very happy to see you. That's the thing and socially in that, we were never that close except relation. If we were

relative and he had a whistle and that because you blood relation, you were close but politically or trade-union-minded and that, there was no love lost between.

SG [01:20:49] Or you just didn't talk about those things, sort of I guess, when you got together for a family wedding or something.

NC [01:20:54] That's right.

SG [01:20:55] It's the way everyone deals with it.

NC [01:20:57] That's one of the reasons, off the record, I didn't belong to the Croatian church because they always had a dogmatic one way of thinking, that's all. There's no two ways at all. There's always only one. You're a communist. You're a communist. You're a communist. No, I'm a socialist, not a communist. That was the reason.

SG [01:21:24] That's the Croatian Catholic Church. Had you been a member of the church in the old country?

NC [01:21:32] No. We were all Catholics. There was no there was no other factions.

SG [01:21:37] It's like being Italian or something like that. But you weren't an active member of the church here when—for that reason.

NC [01:21:45] No. I liked it. A number of times that we went to social evenings from the church and that and the fight would start. We'd have actually a physical fight and arguments. My wife and I both agreed, we don't need it.

SG [01:22:05] No. It's no point in participating in that, that's for sure. One of the biggest things that has always sort of been a factor of the Fishermen's Union is the campaigns that it's led. It's led campaigns against the Moran Dam on the Fraser River and all kinds of things. But one of the biggest things is the campaign for fisherman's workers' compensation. What do you remember about those campaigns to get workers compensation for fishermen?

NC [01:22:34] Oh, Jesus. We had quite a few battles there. The thing that we agreed on or got somebody, even the companies, I believe and I'm trying to think of the years where it was that we got compensation for herring fishermen. Trying to think what we used to call it; it wasn't compensation. That first trip in the year in January when we used to go on herring—

SG [01:23:17] This is reduction herring?

NC [01:23:19] Reduction herring. We used to go on herring and because, I think if I remember correctly, the law was you had to go three miles out into the ocean, away from land that you could join and have—not compensation—Sick Mariners. That was the name of it—Sick Mariners. If you got hurt or anything that you would be compensated by compensation under name of Sick Mariners. That's how we got it on for the herring fishermen. As long as you joined first trip you got out of town in the year.

SG [01:24:07] Oh, I see.

NC [01:24:08] I think, if I remember correctly, that was that was a stipulation. It would have to be the first year and you would had to go out three miles from shore. We naturally, even going to Charlotte, you will go three miles offshore. We used to get—yeah, I think was the called Sick Mariners and then it came into compensation into the salmon seine fleet afterwards.

SG [01:24:37] That was certainly a big feature of Fishermen's Union conventions, too, was there, you know, no more widows and orphans without compensation, that kind of thing. Did you also not have lobbies to the legislature and so on, on the issue?

NC [01:24:52] Oh, yes, not so much the legislature but to Ottawa. The legislature was in number, I guess maybe five or six of all the years. We had small committees going more often than that, but—or was it when we had Carl Liden, member of the legislature, and we were going all to Victoria or some doggone thing, I can't recall what it was. Carl said, You going the wrong place. You shouldn't be going to Victoria, you should be going to Ottawa.' I said, 'Well, we want Victoria on our side and Victoria is not.' That was when he was CCF. I think he was only for one or two terms.

SG [01:25:39] Yeah, he was elected during the Barrett government, wasn't he? .

NC [01:25:42] Yeah. I think if I remember correctly, we call him Landslide. Whoa, I think he won by two votes.

SG [01:25:53] When Barrett was defeated, I think he got back in didn't he by maybe one vote or something?

NC [01:25:59] I think it was. Yeah. Something like that. You know, Sean, I don't mind telling you as the time goes by and that memory fades like hell.

SG [01:26:12] Mm hmm. Yeah. No, it's often hard to remember dates and so on.

NC [01:26:16] What the problem is, you don't talk about it often enough that it just goes, fades and fades and fades. At one time, we were always talking about things like that. It kept fresh in our memories. Now I'm thinking of the places that I fished in central area, all those different bays and that, and the places where you dig clams and that. Holy mackerel. Holy fate.

SG [01:26:42] Yeah. You can't remember the names of many of them now. One of the things I'm sure you do remembers you've been a long time president of local one of the of the UFAWU too.

NC [01:26:53] Oh yes.

SG [01:26:54] When did you first get elected to office in that local?

NC [01:26:59] The first time—actually the second time that Steve Stavenes talked me into running, I believe.

SG [01:27:09] Steve Stavenes was president of the union at that time?

NC [01:27:11] That's right. I believe it was in 1956. Wait a minute, I think—yeah—1956. Cliff Cook was the president for three or four years before that in the role. Steve Stavenes

got me (coughing) to run against him. I told him, I says, 'I'd really just as soon stay on the executive with the local rather than the president of the local then.' He says, 'No, Cliff is not doing a very good job. He's not active enough. He's not participating enough. He's not advocate and hardheaded like you.' (coughing) (Excuse me.) He talked me into running against Cliff and I beat Cliff. I think it was by 32 votes if I remember correctly, I beat him. (coughing)

SG [01:28:28] A glass of water Nick?

NC [01:28:29] Yes, please. Oh, wait a minute—another got a cup of coffee, Sean, please.

SG [01:28:38] I'll just put this on pause for a minute then.

NC [01:28:40] All right.

SG [01:28:43] You were first elected in 1956. You thought as [unclear].

NC [01:28:46] I think I think it was 1956. Yeah.

SG [01:28:49] You held that position for a number of years.

NC [01:28:51] Ever since.

SG [01:28:54] When did you finally step down as president?

NC [01:28:58] Never.

SG [01:28:58] Oh, you're still president of Local 1?

NC [01:28:59] Nobody else wants it.

SG [01:29:01] Oh, I see. Well.

NC [01:29:03] Yeah. Years ago, I think when Jack Nichol had—we had a meeting or commemoration or when Jack Nichol retired, I think. Oh, Gordie Larkin got up and said a few words, 'We have sitting here, Nick Carr, President of the Vancouver Fisherman's Local for Life.'

SG [01:29:40] (Laughter) Well, I guess in effect, it's true. The locals have also become, in the later years when they joined the CAW and Unifor, the locals all kind of got rolled into the whole thing so they're not in the same position they were then.

NC [01:29:56] That's right. All Local 1, yeah.

SG [01:29:57] When in the years when the local was, it was kind of the big local and of the union wasn't it?

NC [01:30:03] Oh yeah. We had close to 2,000 members. If I remember correctly, I think was 18-1,900 at one time. When the gillnetters—that's when the gillnetters were in full force joined, we had something like, oh hell, I would say close to a thousand gillnetters in the local.

SG [01:30:28] It included the gillnet section, the same section? And drag section and trawlers?

[01:30:35] Trawlers, yes. And even networkers, because yeah, a lot of the net workers were part time and they were fishermen part time. Like same thing with me. I always called myself a fisherman, but we were paying dues. Also, we had to ask to get reimbursed by—while, you were working in net loft you were a check off and yet you're fishing. You pay for a full year, even if you only fish salmon, but you go work in the net loft. You still get paying dues—a monthly dues.

SG [01:31:17] Oh, I see.

NC [01:31:18] If you wanted and I never done. If you wanted, you could get reimbursed by those deductions that you had during the months that you work on the net loft.

SG [01:31:30] If you'd paid as a fisherman?

NC [01:31:32] Yeah, that's right.

SG [01:31:33] But you never accepted that you just let the dues go?

NC [01:31:36] That's right. Yeah. In fact, for what it's worth, Gary's the one that knows there. Nobody else does. Since I've been a lifetime member of the union for—now was there five years or six years after—I kept paying full dues. $375.

SG [01:31:56] Even though you're a lifetime member?

NC [01:31:57] That's right. Yeah, I did that, in fact, Nancy says, 'Why?' I said, 'Well, it doesn't hurt me and I'm helping the union.' After a while when my wife found out about it, then I got shit (laughter). Really, yeah. It wasn't 300, it was 250, if I remember correctly then.

SG [01:32:21] Well, you know, obviously you've been a trade unionist, you know, with a solid lineage going back many, many years. It sounds like occasionally in your life people ridiculed you for that eh?

NC [01:32:34] Many times. Oh, many, many, many times. Not so many times to face, but behind the scenes. My wife finding out about it, and she complained afterwards, like to me, this guy said so-and-so and you're a so-and-so and that. I says, 'I don't mind at all. They can criticize and do what they want. As long as I'm thinking mine thinking that unless you can prove me wrong, I keep thinking the same way.'

SG [01:33:11] You're continued to be an advocate of working people. You've also been a member of delegations to the BC Federation of Labour and the Vancouver District Labour Council and so on as well, eh?

NC [01:33:22] Oh yes. In fact, now—I was going to tell you before, you see, we had a little bit of money in the local and we got three signing officers in the local purse and Kim, last year or the year before, when Katnich, Joe—oh, what was his name?

SG [01:33:55] John Kavnich?

NC [01:33:57] No. President of the tendermen's local. I think his name was Kavnich. Glen. Glen Kavnich. Glen Kavnich's, grandmother was the sister of a woman that was godmother to my—he lived next door in the old country. Anyhow, we were talking about purses. Glen Kavnich said he's going to give the, what they got, a few hundred dollars, into an account to the headquarters. I said, 'Yeah, well, I was thinking the same thing, Kim.' That was two years ago, I think. Kim, seems like as long as he can get money, doesn't matter where or how, he can spend it, but he doesn't want to put the effort into raising money, into organising. That's what I'm against, what Kim is doing. So he said Nick is going to give their account into—remember I was telling you, I think two or three years ago I was thinking and you wanted some part for the fisherman's paper? I said, 'Well, Jesus, if I give this to Kim, Kim's going to find a way using.' When they decided to sell the last part of the Maritime Labour Centre, I was opposed to it. I don't like—it was the stupid bitch in Victoria is doing selling off all the B.C. assets to it just so she doesn't have to raize taxes. They said, 'Look, you're not raising any taxes at all,' but she's getting rid of all—the same thing what we are doing now, what we try to do anything now, we're talking about Fishermen's Hall in Rupert of getting rid of it selling it because we don't. You sell the assets, once you spend the money, what have you got? There's nothing.

SG [01:36:19] That's true.

NC [01:36:19] I was thinking of handing it to the headquarters the money that we had when—no, we got, we've 10, 15, 20,000 dollars. I changed my mind. I told Bill, Mike Ames, I told Bruce Nolan, I says, 'I don't wanna. If we give it to Kim, he's going to find a way of spending it. And we won't have any.'

SG [01:36:36] You want to see it put to organizing in some form.

NC [01:36:38] That's right. Now, I go to BC Fed convention. I volunteered to go because they can't get anybody else. I get, we get the Vancouver local paying my due, not the headquarters paying my membership, or the—what they heck they call it.

SG [01:36:59] Registration for the—

NC [01:37:01] Registration. Yes, that's right. For the convention. I've been doing that now for two or three times now. We haven't had any last year. This year we're going to have one convention BC Fed. Last year, we was after the change that over two years.

SG [01:37:19] Right. I want to ask you about one other thing that you were a pioneer in. That's in the establishment of the—well, first of all, the benefit fund, and secondly, the UFAWU-CKNW herring sale.

NC [01:37:33] Oh, yeah.

SG [01:37:34] First of all, the benefit fund. That was an innovation in the industry too. When did that come about?

NC [01:37:39] Yes, in 1947. We thought that we should be able to get, in case a person gets hurt or misses work or dies, that we can pay something to the member's family, or even him that renumeration for loss of earnings in the fishermen while he's not fishing. It was a thought that I was going to say, oh—then, I think we had it for four or five years, maybe even more, '47, maybe close to ten years before people—salmon fishermen only. Well, we were all salmon fishermen to the hearing fishermen, but they wanted to establish

a fund in salmon fishing. We did agree so much a case of—yeah, I think it was a case—using as a measurement, case into the benefit fund from the salmon fishermen. It was such a low thing and there were so many fishermen in the salmon fleet that did not fish herring that they used to run it first one or two or three years dry because they would draw anything out that was in there. If they got sick or something, they would draw on it and—what other ways there was—but they were always dry and they said, 'Well, we'll amalgamate the two funds together, the Salmon Benefit Fund and Pilchard and Herring. That was the name.

SG [01:39:52] Oh, they were two separate funds. I see.

NC [01:39:53] Yeah, and we argued those numbers was. Alf Larson and I can [unclear] think of one who else was. We argued like hell, 'No, no, no, no. We're not amalgamating until they can establish themselves that they can stand up on their own rather than using our funds into it. And that's what.' Then they raized it high enough, I think, in the three or four years, five years time from the Salmon Benefit Fund, Salmon Welfare Fund, as they used to call it, into the Herring Welfare Fund together because they were on—they stood up on their own two feet as far as the expense was concerned. But what it was, Vince Viamingo, I don't know whether you know him or not. His father died in January, early January. There was another man and Vince father was only salmon fisherman. He wasn't herring fisherman. And we had Matt Alexich—what's the Alexich's name, his father? He was a herring fisherman and salmon fisherman. He died in December and because he died in December, he was covered by the Salmon Benefit Fund and the Herring Benefit Fund, which he came to. Salmon fund paid $500 and Herring Benefit Fund paid $1,000. Matt got $1,500 from two funds, whereas Vince Viamingo's father died—the father died in January—he was only covered by one fund, $500. When they found out, Vince Viamingo's mother, God rest her soul, where she was we went to church together. We used to see each other, church, Our Lady of Sorrows. I was coming out, a beautiful day like this, coming out of church and I see her standing on the sidewalk. She came up to me. How come I got $500 for my husband and Matt got $1,500. What is my husband a dog? I said, 'Well, that's the way, the time limit. He died in December and your husband died in January. It was a new year. We couldn't pay him for that. At the end of the year, that was it. He was covered for that year, but he wasn't fishing yet, so he wasn't covered.'

SG [01:43:02] Oh, I see.

NC [01:43:03] I couldn't explain that to her, but she was quite adamant, not only adamant, but also loud and people walking by seeing this woman giving shit to the man, a young fellow like that. It was Vince Viamingo's mother, and she was opposed to it. I couldn't explain to her that if he had died a month earlier, he would have got the same thing, but because he died in the new year.

SG [01:43:30] When would he have had to qualify in the new year to be in both funds—after hearing started?

NC [01:43:36] That's right.

SG [01:43:37] So like in in the spring?

NC [01:43:38] That's right. I couldn't explain to her and then he says, 'Well, why in the hell didn't you make it six months after the year?' I said, 'Well, all right, you same thing. We can make it to six months, six, say June paying. Somebody is going to die in July and he's

still going to be the same thing, one month after the deadline. And you can't forsee it all and you have to live with it. You got to take the good with the bad. I couldn't explain to her and I tried and, in fact, I went to see her at home and tried to talk to her rationally, and she couldn't understand it. She understood what I was saying, but she couldn't believe that it would be like that.

SG [01:44:29] But the fund eventually did amalgamate?

NC [01:44:31] Oh, yes.

SG [01:44:33] But that came several years later?

NC [01:44:35] Right. But you see, if you were fishing only salmon, you got paid for that year to the end of the year.

SG [01:44:44] Right.

NC [01:44:45] If you were fishing herring, you get salmon and herring for the end of the year. If you only fish salmon, you only get from one fund, you can't get it from both funds. Whereas salmon and herring fishermen can get it from both funds. That's why we changed that a few years later. It was hard to explain to the woman that because you only fish, salmon, not herring, he can't get fund even in January or February, it has to be fishing for both funds to be covered by both funds.

SG [01:45:25] The union was the only sort of group in the industry that even offered a fund. Then later on, I presume extended benefits and dental was added?

NC [01:45:36] Oh, yes. Bert Ogden changed, helped change that. In fact, I think it was a bit to the detriment of the fund, because when we got to dental in it, it was quite a bit of money going out. In fact, it was too doggone much going out until we changed the length of time that is being covered.

SG [01:46:06] Oh, I see.

NC [01:46:07] We lost well over $150,000 one time because human beings, such as it is, you give them a good thing, they'll find a way of abusing it. We had that if you got sick or hurt on the boat, you get covered till you go fishing next year, unless you recuperated then you can go back to work or anything. What it was, there was an awful lot—and I hate like hell to say it—an awful lot of Yugoslavian Croatians that got hurt or got sick one or two weeks before the end of the season. They all went on the benefit fund for 39 weeks. Like I tried to tell you, it was over $150,000, spent—no, what am I talking about—$750,000 spent in one one year. Finally, we caught on. We cut a deadline; 39 weeks after you get hurt or sick that you were covered for 39 weeks only—after that you're off. Because of that, but because we took a—remember people saying 2,400 block Hastings you go over there to a cafe there and they're all talking, 'Well this guy got on a benefit fund, this guy got on, we'll go on the benefit fund.' Like I said, two or three weeks before the fishing season ended, everybody was falling into the hole, got hurt, and that. Then, you know that we had a son of a bitch of a doctor, like you could have walked into his office and said, 'Look, Doctor, I've got two broken arms and two broken legs. Will you sign me a slip?' He signed the slip for them for 25, 30 dollars. He'd go on the benefit fund and there was nothing wrong with them at all. They got the doctors to give 'em a bloody slip, that they got hurt or they're sick,

they can't go to work, and they collect. We lost it an awful lot. Homer The whole was still in the union at that time.

SG [01:48:35] But still, I would presume that a lot of that by and large, the membership really benefited from this benefit fund despite, you know, the abuse that, you know, and everything that happens.

NC [01:48:45] Oh, definitely. Oh, yes. At one time, we had a benefit fund that if a person dies, you get $20,000 death benefit if you fish herring, but if you fish salmon only, you don't get it.

SG [01:49:02] Oh, I see.

NC [01:49:03] See, so that's another thing that we had to change. What it was that the fund was being with the salmon fishermen into it a larger amount of people were covered at salmon and the benefit fund was going broke. Then we cut the benefit fund, the death benefit fund, to $5,000 instead of $20,000.

SG [01:49:30] I see.

NC [01:49:31] What it was it for one or two years, I think, it was $5,000 from the salmon and $5,000 from the herring. Then we put them all together and it was only $5,000.

SG [01:49:45] You continue to be a trustee of the benefit fund, even to this day?

NC [01:49:49] Yes. Oh, hell, Jack, not Jack, Glen McEachern got me, when he was running the benefit, got me to join the trustee there and become a signing officer.

SG [01:50:07] When was that?

NC [01:50:09] President of the Board of Trustees of the benefits fund.

SG [01:50:14] When was that roughly?

NC [01:50:15] Oh hell, got to be over 40 years ago. Yeah, it had to be, when Glen was still in existence. Yeah, it had to be in the late eighties, I think. Or early eighties, I'm trying to think. Yeah.

SG [01:50:47] I think Glen McEachern was gone by the eighties.

NC [01:50:50] Yeah, so must have been the seventies, in the and late seventies then when he got me. It was the same as my president of the Vancouver Fisherman's local. Nobody wants to take it.

SG [01:51:05] So you're trustee for life, too? (laughter)

NC [01:51:07] That's right. You're trying to get somebody. We had a hell of a time last convention that we had two years ago. We had a hell of a time coercing people to go as board of trustees. 'I can't. I gotta work.' We changed it that we tried to get at the meetings are on Saturday and Sunday so people are busy working we don't have to pay lost time because the money isn't there anymore. Now we're changing it, too, because a lot of people don't want to go come on Saturday or Sunday, they like during the week. Yet still

there's a lot of people that still work and during the week and they can't, they they don't want to make it. I try to say it for an exceptional cases that we should pay the lost wages, but then if you do it for one, you going to do it for all.

SG [01:52:07] Right. Yeah, that's a problem. One of the things I want to talk to you about, though, is the UFAWU herring sale. That was a real achievement and you were one of those who originated the the sale when it began.

NC [01:52:21] Yeah, pretty well, it wasn't me. It was a guy name Howard Nelson. I think he's still alive. He was fishing with Charlie Clark. If I remember correctly, there was Norman Gunderson and Charlie Clark. We were in negotiations. I don't know whether you're aware of how it was established.

SG [01:52:54] No.

NC [01:52:55] We were in negotiations with the companies. They, if I remember correctly, they wouldn't pay $8 a ton for reduction herring. We were in negotiations in an argument, there was no herring. I think Charlie Clark, Norman Gunderson and one of the Good lads got together and they say, 'Why don't we go and catch a load of herring and bring it to the dock in Westminster and we sell it to the public for 25 cents bucket.' They agreed on it and they did. Then Howard Nelson was—I believe his name was Howard Nelson—we can check on it easy enough. He was told, you got to get us some men because we're not going to get the crew that caught the fish to go and—what we did was put the brailer with the handle and all into the hole and three men or four men going with shovels and fill up that brailer full of herring and bring it on the dock. On the dock, we had three boxes, two, three box boxes upside down of the 200 pound boxes of what they used to have salmon in, upside down and one box on top. We used to put the brailer of fish into it. We used to dip the bucket into it, fill it up and then give it to—people had to bring their own containers at that time (we didn't have herring) and that's how it started. I believe it was 1945 or 1946. That's when he started. Howard Nelson had to, at that time I was already quite active in the local and Howard Nelson says, 'Hey Nick, how about giving me a chance. Can you come and give us a hand to sell herring?' I said, 'I'll be glad to.' I came and I said, 'Well, how long are we gonna go?' 'Until we sell out.' I said, 'Holy shit.'

SG [01:55:20] Where was the money going from this sale?

NC [01:55:23] This money was going into the—they decided whatever they raized, they're going to give it to the CKNW Orphans Fund.

SG [01:55:34] Well, that was right at the beginning eh.

NC [01:55:35] That's right. That's what they decided. They said, all right, they all agreed. I'm trying to think now what it was. I'm not sure; $250 rings a bell in my mind. Howard Nelson talked me into going and even gettin' two or three of my friends, Yugoslavian Croatian friends to come and work. You know, a lot of them I talked to, they didn't have the cars to get to Westminster. How do you get to Westminster there? We finally did manage. From then on, it was CKNW supplied the advertising of the herring sale, Orphans Fund herring sale. Then we sold out fairly fast and next from then on, that's where we started. I'm glad to say I think there was maybe two or three that I missed because I was fishing—that I couldn't participate in because it was always done in November, October, November, December, mainly October and November. We were still fishing salmon at that time.

SG [01:57:08] Howard Nelson was a union member?

NC [01:57:10] Yes. Well, yes, he was a fisherman, I believe, with Charlie Clark, if I'm not mistaken.

SG [01:57:15] So why did the idea come up of doing a charity event? What was the—

NC [01:57:20] Well, after we were successful the first year and we went, they went—no, I didn't participate in that at all. I didn't know what was going on. I know it from history now. They went to the CKNW to advertise the fact and they would give the money to the Orphans Fund at CKNW.

SG [01:57:45] They just chose them because they could do advertising.

NC [01:57:48] That's right. Exactly. After, oh hell's bells, after three or four years, if I remember correctly—yeah, it would be after three or four years—those successful herring sales that we had Homer Stevens said they wanted Vancouver Aquarium. It wasn't Newman then. Who was it? They wanted a room built for study centre for all the school kids that would come and look at the fish and even cut the fish up, dissect the fish. They would have the union outside of the Herring Orphans Fund once took upon themselves $20,000 to pay for the room or help pay for the room at the Aquarium for children's study centre. I think the plaque is still on the the door. Homer Stevens got the bright idea that since we got the herring Orphans Fund sale because we participated now fully in the sale itself we got, the union would organize all the workers to sell the herring. They would also get the seine boats to go as volunteers, no pay at all and get that herring sale going. Half of it would go to the CKNW Orphans Fund and half would go to the union and that half of it went to the union and it was like two or three or four or $5,000 a year. It would go to pay for the study centre at the aquarium and that's how it started. Afterwards our share would go to any agency that we would be—after a while when we paid for the aquarium study centre, we gave it all to the Orphans Fund.

SG [02:00:26] Well and then the T Buck Suzuki Foundation was added later.

NC [02:00:30] That's right. Then on it came because we were getting 20, 25, 30, $40,000 a year that we decided that instead of giving it all to the Orphans Fund, we'd go to T Buck for for half of it.

SG [02:00:55] One of the things that's really been a big part of the union's ability to organize over the years was the boat clearance program where you basically cleared your boat before you went fishing, and that seems to have been kind of broken in the 1989 strike, which was kind of a—sounds like a real watershed point for the union. What can you tell me about that, what happened in the 1989 strike that the boat clearance stopped working?

NC [02:01:30] Well, like everything else, at one time we had the policy of the union that when we had herring negotiations, you had to attend a meeting. You had to attend 50 percent of the meetings that were being held. If you did not attend the herring meetings during negotiations, each crew member was on the boat, was fined $10. Homer Stevens, God rest his soul wherever he is, he said, 'Yeah, it was good.' And it was. Some fishermen never attended any meetings and we had as much as 12 meetings. So that's $120. It was too god damn much money to take off a person to go fishing, but whatever reason he had for missing, whether he was working or didn't want to or was out of town or

what. So they cut it into half. From then on, unless you had a valid and good enough reason, anybody that did not attend the herring meeting during negotiations was fined on clearance, $10 each. A lot of times, the guys were three or four or five or six meetings and they had no excuse for it at all and they were being fined. That's where we got the people— and that's the education part where we got the people to attend the meetings. We used to have—at one time we hired twice, two or three times—what's that auditorium on—

SG [02:03:42] We used to have meetings at the PNE forum.

NC [02:03:44] Yes, we did but before that we had—there was—where they have all the shows. The theatre— not the theatre under the stars, but legitimate theatre on the—

SG [02:03:58] Queen Elizabeth Playhouse?

NC [02:04:00] Queen Elizabeth's Playhouse. We had a meeting there.

SG [02:04:02] Or theatre, I guess it would have been.

NC [02:04:03] We had a meeting there because we had up to 700, 800 members at a meeting. Then we finally found the Pacific National Exhibition there. They had a good auditorium. What was the name of it? It was not the playhouse.

SG [02:04:25] The PNE Forum, wasn't it?.

NC [02:04:27] No, it wasn't the Forum. It was the other one next to it, below. We used to have 6-700 people there at the meeting, and that was because of education and the fines they used to turn out real good. We always had, not only good meetings, but good negotiations. We had a lot of people there, mainly from the Lower Mainland, that were the fishermen on herring; there was very few up north or any place else. The companies we lorded it over the companies to get the better. We got them to—

SG [02:05:06] And this is Roe herring now, we're not talking about reduction?

NC [02:05:09] No reduction.

SG [02:05:11] Oh, it was reduction herring. I see.

NC [02:05:11] Reduction herring. We got companies to pay or the boat owners to pay for working on nets, repairing nets, building herring brailers, repairing anything at all. For two weeks before we went out if they if they had to work on the boat they got paid for it.

SG [02:05:36] So I guess that program began to break down in '67 when the fishery was closed on reduction herring.

NC [02:05:43] That's right.

SG [02:05:44] And so it was never—you didn't ever get fined on salmon or anything like that eh?

NC [02:05:47] No. We never have. The people didn't want it. We weren't forceful, we were stable, and we had enough money coming in that we were well organized and that they

didn't bother trying to educate people. We were getting good turnouts to meetings and that was one of the reasons. It's too bad we we did it that way, but that's all behind.

SG [02:06:19] In '89 it seemed like for the first time a significant number of seiners, as well as gillnetters for that matter, went out fishing during the strike in defiance of the clearance program, eh?

NC [02:06:34] Yeah. It wasn't independent [unclear] and defined a clearance program. It was in defiance of getting money and vessel owners and even the companies. They were getting the upper hand on getting the boys to go out. What are you going to do to me today? Even today, I don't like if I know a man scabbed during the strike. I like nothing to do with 'em at all. Everybody says you should forget. But I can't. I can't forget that while we were fighting like hell that they went out. Some of them made good money, you know, for a week or two, the guys make four or $5,000 fishing while the strike was on. In fact, one Savage Fisher went out and he brought us the slip—$4,200 for one week's fishing. Two days fishing.

SG [02:07:41] During the strike?

NC [02:07:41] During the strike. He showed us the slip. That's what the checks got, the crew members that went on there. To me, I could never see it. I'd have to be—my family would have to be starving pretty goddamn bad before I could go and break a strike.

SG [02:08:01] What do you think about what what's happened to the strength of the union?

NC [02:08:07] I think what it is, Sean, the main thing is that we were so strong in the fifties, in the sixties, in the seventies that we build up a pretty goddamn strong union and that anybody that was coming into the union, everything was done for them. They didn't have to fight for it. The ones that were still in there, that fought for them and that, they got not tired but lax, and they didn't care. The incentive wasn't there, the fight wasn't there. As one fellow said, we should resurrect Homers demons and bring them out and get the fishing industry organized again. That's what it was. When you get things that are done for you, you just take it as one or two, three, four, five years. As a matter of fact, it's always been like that. It's all—it's easy. What the use? We don't have to do anything. It's all done for us. That's the main part that we never kept on organizing and keeping because we all got lax, because everything was done. We didn't have to do anything. It was slowly, slowly, slowly eroding. The trade-union-minded people weren't there anymore to argue like hell. That's what it was. I think that's the main thing that—especially with younger people. A number of people say, 'Well, what am I gonna go to the union? What can the union do for me?' You tell them well, 'What do you think these things that you got now, how was it established?' It was trade unionism, but they can't see it. It's done. It's now. I don't care.

SG [02:10:06] Well, it's also difficult too, I guess, because you don't have young people coming into the industry much anymore. It's still very much a trade and industry that's dominated by older people.

NC [02:10:16] That's right.

SG [02:10:18] You began fishing then, not not counting what you did in the old country, but you began fishing here in 1942?

NC [02:10:27] Yes, but I was still going to school.

SG [02:10:31] When did you finally wrap up? When did you finally say, okay, that's it, I'm done with going out in a boat?

NC [02:10:37] Oh, uh.

SG [02:10:40] So you were fishing in the Baleno still into the nineties, weren't you?

NC [02:10:44] Oh, yes. Well into the nineties. The thing is that my kids, especially the two younger ones, the twins, they talked the older one into, 'Dad, you're getting old. You're over 70. (laughter) Shouldn't you quit?' Look, if it's a problem financially, they offered me $200 each a month to keep us going. That's $600 a month I could have got if we needed it to quit fishing. Finally I said, 'Well, gee.' In fact, one of them started crying. She said, 'Dad, you're too old. We feel sorry for you. You shouldn't be doing that.' They talked me into it. What helped an awful lot, you can see I had an operation. My fingers were curling like this, especially this one here. I had to have an operation—and that's another story—to get them straightened out. My sister in Australia had it. My father here had it and one of his brothers in the old country had it. It's hereditary. My father was still fishing and they were loading the net from the net loft onto the boat and his fingers were caught like that and he was helping the net to go so it's not rubbing against the side of the building, so it wouldn't tear anything. He was helping to go and he got his fingers caught and he couldn't get them undone and the net was going on. Finally, he started hollering like hell, but the way the engines and winches and everything was making noise, nobody heard him. He pulled his finger off. So when it happened to me like that, they were curling and the kids crying like that, I said, 'Okay, that's enough.' That's why. I went to get an operation to straighten them and I wanted to go back fishing and they just about clobbered me at home. What are you talking about fishing, but I had them straightened out. Both hands were operated on.

SG [02:13:18] Do you remember the year of your last fishery then? That you were on the boat? Because come to think of that, it seems to me it was in 2004 you were you were still on the boat.

NC [02:13:32] What I was going to do is I got to fix my income tax papers now and I'm going to go see when the last the income tax that I had to claim it was but I would say about 14 years ago.

SG [02:13:50] So 2002?

SG [02:13:51] Something like that.

SG [02:13:52] Yeah. Okay.

SG [02:13:54] That's where it was. Something like that.

SG [02:13:56] That's 60 years on the water then; it's quite a career.

SG [02:14:00] I think I counted it, 56 all told, 56 years. The operation that I had done, you'd never guess what the name of the doctor, what the heck do they call them? What's the specialist in skin?

SG [02:14:26] A dermatologist?

SG [02:14:27] No, no. Oh, shit. Anyhow, he's a specialist in—oh, they really just do the face.

SG [02:14:39] Like plastic surgery?

SG [02:14:40] Plastic surgery. Plastic surgeon. What his name was?

SG [02:14:44] No.

SG [02:14:48] When I first went to get the first operation in UBC. When I came in with my wife, he says, 'Well, you're the guy that gave us all the trouble.' I said, 'What did I do?' You know what? We tried to get the name of the doctor that's doing the operation. He sent us the doctor's name, Nick Carr, and we sent, faxed it back to him. 'We know who the patient is, but we'd like to know who the doctor is.' So they sent it back to him—Nick Carr. Again, they send it back, 'We know who the patient is, but tell us the doctor's name.' And it was four times like that, they said. Nick Carr. That's the doctor's name.

SG [02:15:46] That was the doctor's name. Isn't that incredible. Well, I think at that point, we're going to wrap it Nick.

SG [02:15:50] Well, wait a minute. I got to tell you little funny stories in that. Who the doctor is, Nick Carr, in 1965, I think, or 1964. My daughter was working for the BC Tel at—what's that building where there's a big port and restaurant or restaurants there and be—oh shit—the name of the centre. BC Tel building that was there was only a small building, but the offices were there. One guy came in; my daughter was behind the counter and one guy came in. 'I want to take my name off the phone book.' She said, 'Yes, sir, fine. If I may, would you tell me the reason why you would want your name off?' 'Because some asshole's got the same name as me, and they're calling me 2:00, 3:00 o'clock in the morning to go and pick a duty. And I want it off.' She said, 'What's your name, sir?' 'Nick Carr.' (laughter). My daughter got a smile upon her face. 'It's not a bloody laughing matter. He jumped on her.

SG [02:17:22] (laughter) So you got taken off the phone list or your name was.

SG [02:17:30] I told him that after the second operation, he said, 'I remember that, too.' Yup.

SG [02:17:37] Well, isn't that something? Okay. Thanks again, Nick, for agreeing to do this. That's been a great story.