

Interview: Ken MacLean (KM)
Interviewer: Rod Mickleburgh (RM)
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Transcription: Pam Moodie

RM [00:00:05] So, Ken, what brought you to Prince Rupert?

KM [00:00:08] I came up here in '66. The plan was to work here a year and then go to Australia.

RM [00:00:16] Where had you been before?

KM [00:00:18] I grew up in Vancouver and I'd been working in London, Ontario.

RM [00:00:23] Oh, that's. That's unusual. Why did you go there?

KM [00:00:28] I had a good job.

RM [00:00:29] What was it? Selling insurance?

KM [00:00:31] No, no, no.

RM [00:00:32] It's the insurance capital of Canada.

KM [00:00:35] I know that. Well, one of the reasons I went there was the girls outnumber the guys eight to one, single women.

RM [00:00:41] Oh, you mean at the university there. Anyway, yeah. Okay, so you were that kind of guy?

KM [00:00:49] No. And I came up here because I got a job at the pulp mill.

RM [00:00:53] Right. And so you came up here, what, '66, did you say?

KM [00:01:00] Yeah.

RM [00:01:01] Okay, then what happened?

KM [00:01:03] Okay. I worked at the pulp mill for five years. I met a girl in Rupert and fell in love, and we got married and had two boys.

RM [00:01:13] Great.

KM [00:01:14] And I got another job at Eurocan in the pulp mill.

RM [00:01:19] Yeah, right.

KM [00:01:20] In '71. We went down there and then I got transferred to Vancouver in '73.

RM [00:01:28] And who transferred you? How did that work? Were you in management or what?

KM [00:01:33] Yeah, I was a traffic coordinator, not a high level job.

RM [00:01:41] You weren't. You weren't in the union?

KM [00:01:43] No.

RM [00:01:44] Okay.

KM [00:01:45] And then I transferred to Vancouver and. Well, one thing I didn't like then and I absolutely hate now is your Vancouver traffic.

RM [00:01:58] You're not alone.

KM [00:01:59] I was living on the North Shore, and I was six and a half miles from work and that one winter, that was the year that everybody wanted to jump off the Lion's Gate Bridge. So, you had to go on the Second Narrows if you wanted to go home. Some people actually rented hotel rooms and let the police and the firemen would talk them down. And anyway, so I decided to come back to Prince Rupert. I got a job in managing a furniture store, Mackenzie Furniture, which is actually Ashley's now. And I did that for about three years. And then, I was talking to a longshoreman, and he said "You know, why don't you get a job in the Hall?" I knew a lot of longshoreman because, when I worked at the mill, I was in the traffic department, and I. One of the things I did was, I covered for the Shipping Foreman, and so. And anyway, when I went in the Hall, uh, the way they got, you got picked, because they didn't want nepotism or anybody hiring their friends. You cut cards.

RM [00:03:35] Oh, they cut cards?

KM [00:03:36] Yeah.

RM [00:03:36] You're kidding?

KM [00:03:37] A deck of cards. You shuffled the deck.

RM [00:03:38] I didn't go to the person that showed up first in the morning or anything.

KM [00:03:42] No.

RM [00:03:43] And when was this, Ken?

KM [00:03:45] Oh, this went on for a long time. '78 or '79.

RM [00:03:49] So that's when you went down to the Hall for the first time and they had cutting cards?

KM [00:03:54] Yes. And sometimes there would be four guys and there'd be five jobs. So you could all get a job without cutting cards. But anyway, I cut a high card and got a job and I've been there, well, I was there for about 25 years. And then, I got in the union in '84. There was 29 guys in the union when I started. And they went up to 43 or 44. They had a sulphur plant where they were taking molten sulphur and making it into pellets. And those

guys were working four shifts, basically five days a week. And, and they were making more than the union members. So they took them all in the union and a couple of older guys that had been hanging around. And they wanted them to get in the union so they'd get a good pension. You know, they were not the most reliable of people.

RM [00:05:08] And this is into the Longshoremen's Union?

KM [00:05:10] Yes. And so when I got in the union, I don't know if it was, it should have been an, uh, electable position. But the Recording Secretary was retiring, or, had enough. And the Professor, Alfred Waxmueler I think that was his name. He was the dispatcher, Secretary Treasurer. And he said, "Ken, you can do this." So anyway, you can't erase anything you put in the minutes and you don't put anything in the minutes, I found out after my first night, that they don't vote on.

RM [00:06:06] Oh!

KM [00:06:07] So you can say there'd been a discussion on something, but

RM [00:06:14] And leave out the fistfight.

KM [00:06:16] No, there was no fistfights.

RM [00:06:17] I was kidding.

KM [00:06:19] A lot of yelling, but. Yeah.

RM [00:06:21] You leave out the yelling.

KM [00:06:22] Yeah. Okay. But anyway, M/S/C means moved, second and carry. M/S/D means moved, second and, you know, not carried.

RM [00:06:33] Defeated.

KM [00:06:33] Yeah. But anyway.

RM [00:06:36] You were a natural at it.

KM [00:06:39] Well, I could, I could spell better than probably most of them anyway.

RM [00:06:44] Why was this guy called the professor?

KM [00:06:46] He, uh. Well, he was another guy that came from Tahsis, and he was a German, and he always said, "I was in North Africa. I was the first guy to put my hands up." And he was like, you'd walk in there. Somebody hadn't been there for three years and he'd say, Ken Mclean two, seven, five, three, four. He had a memory, and there was no computers. Nothing. It was all in his head. And that's why they called him that, Professor. And he he did that for a lot of years. He retired, and him and his wife went back to Germany.

RM [00:07:34] Oh, really?

KM [00:07:35] Yeah. Yeah. And he's passed away, but, but they were very nice people and he was fair, but tough. Yeah.

RM [00:07:48] You know, that's what you want.

KM [00:07:50] Yeah.

RM [00:07:51] And when you went back to the. Well, you started at longshoring as you say you, 29, I don't know how long you worked there. You told me, but I forgot. But I mean, obviously, you took to it. I mean, you liked, what kept you on the job so long?

KM [00:08:07] Well, I like working outside and, the guys. There was always a few comedians and even the toughest jobs. These guys would make a joke. And I can remember one time playing cards at lunchtime and an older fellow, Art, was shuffling the cards and he had, he'd worked in a sawmill and he had some fingers missing. And Don, I forget his last name, but he said, "For Christ's sake, Art, deal the cards, there's moss growing on them." And everybody cracked up. But this was continuous, and, you know, it was fun.

RM [00:08:54] Well, we talked to Glen, and he talked about the camaraderie there used to be.

KM [00:08:58] Oh, yeah.

RM [00:08:59] Because people worked in gangs and stuff.

KM [00:09:01] Yeah. And well, I was in a gang with two guys on our bowling team and Art Ferguson was one of the guys and he was a comedian. Him, everything you said he would twist it around, you know, and it was true. But now, I retired in January the first, I think 2004. No, 2005 probably, because yeah, I've been retired over 14 years, so but I was going to retire at the end of December and at that time they were building the container port and there wasn't a lot of work up here and they were buying guys out. So I phoned the BC MEA and my years as the secretary treasurer/dispatcher, they paid half your wages. It's a union dispatch, but they paid half the expenses of the hall and wages were one of the expenses. So, and he said, "Well, we'll get a package for you Ken," and I got quite a bit of money and he said, "You don't retire December 31st, you retire January the first, because then this package goes on your next year when you're a pensioner and not a year you've worked, which— and I put a lot of it in, topped up my wife's and my RRSP.

RM [00:10:53] Savvy.

KM [00:10:54] Yeah. And that was. I knew that, but I didn't think about January the first.

RM [00:11:01] Right.

KM [00:11:01] So anyway.

RM [00:11:03] So just to get this straight, you became the dispatcher?

KM [00:11:08] Well, I just became the dispatcher in July of '87.

RM [00:11:13] And did you, did you stay as the dispatcher once you got that?

KM [00:11:16] Well, I stayed there maybe 12 years. And then I stepped down and Tommy McDonald took over and he's—

RM [00:11:26] Did you go back on the waterfront?

KM [00:11:28] Yeah.

RM [00:11:29] Why did you step down?

KM [00:11:31] I just got tired of it. And I had enough seniority that I was getting better jobs.

RM [00:11:39] The water boy jobs and making the coffee.

KM [00:11:41] Well, that one. And, you know, some of the other ones were pretty good, too.

RM [00:11:48] So what was dispatching like in those days? Not like today, right?

KM [00:11:51] No, we we dispatched on a blackboard. And sometimes you get six guys on grain. And I think the most I ever dispatched was in '87, we had lumber ships, steady, and logs, and we set all the records for shipping lumber out of Prince Rupert that year. We had 60 million board feet of lumber down at Fairview. And we were loading like 19 million board feet on Cape Grenville.

RM [00:12:28] And how many guys would that take?

KM [00:12:32] Well, you'd, probably a week and, around the clock, 35 guys, something like that.

RM [00:12:38] Wow. Wow.

KM [00:12:40] But. Anyway, I

RM [00:12:49] Was it hard? Is it a hard job to the extent that, you know, guys want you to show favouritism and they're trying to buy you a drink in the bar and that kind of stuff?

KM [00:12:58] Yeah. But the thing is, it goes by seniority and

RM [00:13:03] For the casuals, right?

KM [00:13:05] No, for the union guys, too.

RM [00:13:07] Okay.

KM [00:13:08] See, we've got up to

RM [00:13:09] That's right. There's no guarantee of work just because you're a union guy but you get the job before a casual.

KM [00:13:14] Yeah. And what when it used to be by gang. So the gang with the lowest hours was out first. And if you're going around the clock, they'd get on afternoons and then

graveyard and day shift because graveyard was only six and a half hours of work. Afternoons was, say time and a third. graveyard would be time and a half, and day shift was straight time. The weekends are more, you know, holidays are double time, the ones we work. And then when it got slow, sometimes, we were still dispatching by gangs, but some of the guys in the gangs, say there's four men and six men in a gang. Two of them wouldn't get to work. The two guys with the highest hours in the gang and it, and it was unfair. So we went to individual hours.

RM [00:14:28] So the the gangs were broken up then.

KM [00:14:31] Yeah. And but you'd still, if you and I were topside partners, we'd go together. And by working together, we all mainly have the same gang hours or individual hours.

RM [00:14:49] So, I may have misunderstood this. Are you saying that the guys that had already worked the most hours didn't get called first because they already had so many hours and the guys that had less hours would get priority?

KM [00:15:02] Yeah.

RM [00:15:03] Well, that's very fair.

KM [00:15:05] Well, that's why we changed to individual hours.

RM [00:15:08] Yeah. And did the guys accept that?

KM [00:15:12] Oh, yeah.

RM [00:15:12] What about the guys that had worked all those hours and they had to keep working?

KM [00:15:16] It was. You know what?

RM [00:15:20] So it wasn't by necessarily seniority then, it was by hours.

KM [00:15:25] Well, the senior guy got the best job of the guys that worked.

RM [00:15:30] Right. But he wasn't. You didn't necessarily get called by seniority?

KM [00:15:34] No.

RM [00:15:35] Right. Well, that's. Is it, was that complicated?

KM [00:15:39] It was complicated for the dispatcher.

RM [00:15:40] That's what I mean. Yeah.

KM [00:15:42] Because you had. Say, well, 70 guys, but half of the guys were working down south when, you know, when work was slow up here.

RM [00:15:54] Right.

KM [00:15:55] I worked down, when I, after I finished dispatching, I went down to New West a couple of times.

RM [00:16:02] Yeah. Glen was saying that he did the same thing. A bunch of you guys went down.

KM [00:16:07] Oh, yeah.

RM [00:16:07] Because there was no work up here.

KM [00:16:09] Well, you know, I can remember putting out six guys on grain on day shift and night shift. And that was it. And there'd be 40 union guys or 35 union guys still in town that didn't get to work. Unless there was a ship in. So that's why people went down south.

RM [00:16:35] And you must have seen tremendous change on the waterfront, eh? In the nature of the work.

KM [00:16:41] Well, when I worked at the mill in '67 or '68, they got the, the gear bulk ships in with the shipborne gantrys. And so, the production out there, hand stowing, or forklifts stowing. You do about 50 tons an hour per gang. Overnight, it was 250 gangs, or 250 tons an hour.

RM [00:17:17] Five times. Oh, my goodness.

KM [00:17:21] So the mill had to beef up their, you know, the guys loading the pallet boards are, they're not pallet boards, but they were boards say 20 feet long and this wide. And they put on eight units, which is eight 500 pound bails. And they'd pick up 16 tons at a lift. And so they had, originally, they had lumber carriers like these things that picked up the load like this, straddle carriers or something like that. And then they got trucks. That was in the '60s and in the '80s they were doubling. You know, they'd take 32 tons an hour. And now, well, most of it's containerized. Yeah, there's no pulp mill, but they're shipping pulp out of the containers, shipping everything out of, into containers.

RM [00:18:49] Glen was saying the number of members now is just astronomical. The most ever.

KM [00:18:55] Well, it's 200, and they're talking about more. But they're putting out, I would say 400 guys is a normal day when they got two container ships in. They got grain and they got a ship loading.

RM [00:19:13] They can handle two container ships at once.

KM [00:19:15] Yeah.

RM [00:19:16] Oh yeah. So these are the good times on the waterfront?

KM [00:19:21] Yeah. But it's. It's scary because their automation is gonna—there's a port in Asia, I don't know if it's in Singapore, or Hong Kong or China or so, but, they got nine guys in a room running the whole dock. The cranes are automatic. The cone men on the dock are robots. And the thing you know, but if they do that, robots don't pay any taxes. You know. Nobody's. It'll decimate Rupert. I mean, this is. There's no pulp mill. The fishing is gone. I don't know if it's Jimmy Pattison or the fishing industry, but

RM [00:20:28] Both.

KM [00:20:28] Yeah, but the thing is, forget about selling a truck or a house. You know, it's Vancouver and the Lower Mainland have got a lot of things going on. Rupert right now, this is the only game in town.

RM [00:20:49] And you got LNG coming maybe.

KM [00:20:52] That's not going to hire a lot of people and that's gonna go to Kitimat anyway.

RM [00:20:58] Yeah. Yeah. So that, does that keep you up at night?

KM [00:21:03] No, but I'm concerned about it because I got a lot of friends and I don't know if our pension is going to be any good if there's nobody working.

RM [00:21:17] Yeah, who's gonna pay? Those robots aren't going to be too interested in your pension.

KM [00:21:23] And the thing about the robots. These cone men. They don't need a coffee break.

RM [00:21:32] No. And if it rains. No problem.

KM [00:21:34] And, well, it's no problem now if it rains. We work in the rain.

RM [00:21:41] Yeah, of course, it's Prince Rupert. But, I mean, you still don't like working in the rain.

KM [00:21:45] Well, we get less rain.

RM [00:21:46] What if it snows. What about hail? Come on. Agree with me.

KM [00:21:51] Well, it's. It's miserable, but, you know, guys work in it. But anyway. And supposedly, these robots, they work so many hours and then they go in, they, I don't know how they do it, but somebody will call them in and they grease them up or whatever, and then they go and somebody else, some little thing like that will go out and you know what I mean?

RM [00:22:23] Not much camaraderie there on the docks.

KM [00:22:25] No. And it's it's going to ruin a big thing.

RM [00:22:30] Yeah. When you look back, do you kind of prefer the old days on the docks?

KM [00:22:35] No, I liked it all the time. But, I think, when you had the gangs, you worked with the same guys all the time. And our gang was A-1, as far as you know. Three of us bowled together. And we had Art, was a jokester. I can tell you, after the camera, some of the things they did that I don't want—

RM [00:23:13] Were a little risque?

KM [00:23:14] No, no, no. But it's just.

RM [00:23:17] Makes the union look bad?

KM [00:23:19] Well, it's like maybe some of the superintendents look bad.

RM [00:23:25] Oh. Oh, they're not going to watch this. Can you tell us one?

KM [00:23:30] Well.

RM [00:23:33] Just to get a flavour.

KM [00:23:35] Okay. There was one. I won't mention any names.

RM [00:23:38] No, no, no.

KM [00:23:39] But there was one guy that had a really bad temper. And, he'd go red from his neck up to his forehead, and then he'd get in his car. And he lived about a mile from the dock and he'd roar out of the gate and everybody figured he'd take a couple of shots and, but, they took his picture, his head, and they put a sexy looking mermaid fish and, you know, well-endowed. And said, and the caption was, 10,000 sailors can't be wrong. And they put it in the lunchroom. They put it in the men's room. And the woman in the office that saw this picture sent it to Canadian Stevedoring's office in Vancouver, which she wasn't encouraged to do this, but she was, she said, "this is good," you know, and but anyway, this guy saw this in the lunchroom and he got in his car, and he roared off.

RM [00:25:02] Ha, ha, ha. Oh, you scamps! That sounds like one of John's stories.

KM [00:25:05] Well, it's, I got some better ones, but I'm not going to

RM [00:25:11] Well, you're teasing us then, eh?

KM [00:25:13] No,.

RM [00:25:13] But it was fun, eh?

KM [00:25:14] Shut off the camera and I'll tell you.

RM [00:25:16] It was fun though, right?

KM [00:25:17] Yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. And it was, everybody, you know. You were the butt of a joke. But, you know, with some of the comedians there you just took, it was my turn. You know what I mean?

RM [00:25:35] And we'll get the other guy in there.

KM [00:25:36] Laugh at yourself if you want.

RM [00:25:39] And were there any big controversies that you had to handle when you were dispatching? Were you able to? Did you lose any friends or anything like that?

KM [00:25:49] Well, one guy told me he'd never vote for me again.

RM [00:25:54] Was it an elected position?

KM [00:25:55] Oh, yeah.

RM [00:25:56] Oh, it was.

KM [00:25:57] You got elected every year.

RM [00:25:58] Oh, so. And you got elected how many years?

KM [00:26:03] 12.

RM [00:26:04] So was that because you were so good or is because no one else wanted the job?

KM [00:26:10] No. There would usually be one or two guys or two or three guys running. But the thing is, if you didn't get the dispatcher's job, you need a second and a third relief.

RM [00:26:23] What do you mean?

KM [00:26:24] Well, I was the secretary treasurer, but, dispatcher, you can't work 362 days a year.

RM [00:26:32] Oh, right. Of course, yes.

KM [00:26:33] So you got relief. And usually the guy that got the second most votes would ask to be, you know, second relief and, you know. But anyway, I thought I did a pretty good job and, but I got threatened. Mark Gordienko and I got, he was our President and now he's retired as the President of Canada, and our west coast and this guy threatened to kill us in front of three RCMP officers.

RM [00:27:13] Jesus.

KM [00:27:15] But he was told by a couple of our members that were just as big as him and were tough, that if anything happened to us or our families, he'd be feeding the fish. So, and the RCMP were right there. One woman and two guys.

RM [00:27:39] Did nothing.

KM [00:27:40] And they said, "Oh, he's upset."

RM [00:27:44] Master of the bleeding obvious.

KM [00:27:46] Anyway, this guy later got upset with his girlfriend and he got seven years in jail.

RM [00:27:57] Oh, my God.

KM [00:27:59] And when he got out of jail, his mother phoned up and said that he's going to come back and work. And I said, "No, he's not." And I said, "You can talk to the BCMEA, but he's been de-registered. "Well, what about Vancouver Island?" And I said, "No, he's not going to be a longshoreman anymore." And one of the guys, my relief, he got pulled a knife on him in the hall when he was dispatching, and this guy, he was, I would think crack cocaine or something. He was messed up anyway, and the guys, there was a bunch of guys in the hall, threw him out. And this guy quit. He was a good, he would have made a good, a great dispatcher. And he said, "I don't need this shit."

RM [00:28:58] Exactly.

KM [00:28:59] But, that guy, he went up and tried to break into a drug store, and the police caught him. And after he got out of jail, he came and said, "Oh, can I come back to work?" and I said, "No, the BCMEA is ..." But we told the BCMEA what he'd done, and they said, "Well, that's it. He's finished." But we didn't tell him that we'd told them.

RM [00:29:34] So did you stop the cutting cards?

KM [00:29:37] Oh, yeah. I don't think we ever did when I was there. Now, you have to pass a test. And they'll have, like, they'll hire 50 people at a crack.

RM [00:30:02] Yeah, well.

KM [00:30:03] And it's totally different now.

RM [00:30:06] It's all by sort of computer and stuff, isn't it?

KM [00:30:08] Yeah.

RM [00:30:09] But when you did it, you had to write names on the boards, stuff like that.

KM [00:30:12] Oh yeah.

KM [00:30:13] Was that hard to keep track of everything? Or there weren't that many people, I guess.

KM [00:30:18] Well. What you did is if everything stayed the same and everybody was working, you just changed the date.

RM [00:30:28] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

KM [00:30:30] But when one ship finished or something like that, you'd have to change everything. But it took a while. But you know, you're getting paid nine hours a day. Some days you didn't have an hour's work. There was six guys on grain, they'd do the books or, you know, pay the bills or something.

RM [00:30:50] Go off early to the bar. But did you, did it change while you were still the dispatcher?

KM [00:30:59] No, I was I was still writing on the blackboard when I retired. And that changed when they started the container ships. And that was why I, you know, I got bored and it's harder if everybody hasn't got a job. You know, if you're dispatching six guys,

there's a number of guys that come in there and they don't get a job. And they're upset. So it's easy when everybody gets a good job. But it's, and, uh, it's disheartening when, you know, your friends don't get jobs.

RM [00:31:55] And you know it's not your fault, but.

KM [00:31:58] No, it's nothing you can do about it.

RM [00:32:02] So. And that was at the old longshore building, I guess, it's still the dispatch office. And it's 100 years old?

KM [00:32:10] I don't know if it's 100 years old because the building, the picture of the Christmas party in 1911 or something like that.

RM [00:32:17] Oh yeah, it's a great picture.

KM [00:32:19] But it's got a coal

RM [00:32:21] Well, people are now thinking that might have been the church, the Presbyterian Church, because Donna found something somewhere that said before the hall was built that they used to rent the Presbyterian Church.

KM [00:32:35] Oh, could be. I don't know.

RM [00:32:36] Because then when you start looking at it, you can see, like it's kind of spacious the way a church might be, I don't know. But it was, is the place falling apart? I mean, it's still pretty old, that building.

KM [00:32:51] Well, we've

RM [00:32:54] That was one of John stories, by the way, about fixing the steps.

KM [00:33:00] Well, we had one corner of the hall. The west on First Avenue, that side of the hall, the front of it was going down, and we had some cabinets that we built into the wall. And they were, the doors were pinching. And, you know, they were good. So I went down under the hall and it's, there's rocks in there and, and there was no, that end of the hall, there was nothing. The building was holding itself up. There was no—So anyway, we got Wood and Steel to come in and put a foundation in that corner and, and I think it cost \$20,000. But it was, they did a major amount of work, like they got down eight feet underneath the bottom of the hall. And, but, and they put some crossmembers in and stuff like that. Anyway we started out it was \$15,000 and then they said that's not going to cover it. So anyway we got the money from, most of the money from the BCMEA. But and then we put siding on it and a new roof. We did the siding ourselves because the work was slow and, but the roof, we hired Eby & Sons, a union contractor. And then the carpenters union come down and they said, "What are you hiring these guys for?" And I said, "Well, it's Eby & Sons." And they were double-breasting us or whatever. They hired some guys from Alberta. And I said, "Jesus!" So I phoned Eby and Sons and I gave them shit. And then they got their regular union guys to finish the job. But that was, you know, I explained to the carpenters that they're in the—

RM [00:35:34] Seniority list or whatever it is?

KM [00:35:38] Well, and they were in the Yellow Pages as union employers, you know, because this town's a union town.

RM [00:35:48] Absolutely. Speaking of the union. How involved were you in the union?

KM [00:35:52] Well, I went to every meeting for 25 years.

RM [00:36:00] Wow! What prompted you to be such a strong union supporter?

KM [00:36:04] Well, my dad, he was instrumental in getting the police union going in Vancouver. And he grew up in Cape Breton, where the coal miners were. You know. He never worked in a mine. His brother worked in the mine, and he quit because the horses were, and the donkeys were down there and they'd just die. They were blind because they never saw the light of day. And he loved horses.

RM [00:36:32] Oh, my God.

KM [00:36:34] But he said, if there weren't unions, you'd be making two-bits a day because of these businessmen that are crooks.

RM [00:36:44] Yeah, well, that's the way they make their money by paying as little as possible.

KM [00:36:47] Well, yeah, but you gotta. You know, there's cases in the States way back when, in Flagstaff, Arizona, where two brothers started at a logging and lumber company. And 100 years ago, they had health benefits. They had eight-hour days. They had company picnics. They had paid holidays. And nobody, they thought, everybody thought they were crazy.

RM [00:37:33] Yeah, exactly.

KM [00:37:34] But you know what? They never had to replace employees.

RM [00:37:39] Yeah, cause they just stuck with them.

KM [00:37:41] Because they lived there all, they worked there all their lives.

RM [00:37:43] Penny wise, pound foolish.

KM [00:37:45] Yeah. And they paid, I think, a dollar a month. They had a doctor. They had a hospital, and they had health care. You got that for a dollar a month, and that was like. I was in their house and it's a museum now. And it was unbelievable.

RM [00:38:11] So how's the union been in Prince Rupert? Are you, you know, ups and downs, or has been pretty good or?

KM [00:38:17] Well. We've had some slow spells.

RM [00:38:23] Controversy in the union?

KM [00:38:27] There's always somebody that's got a different opinion.

RM [00:38:32] Longshoremen politics are notorious.

KM [00:38:36] Well, you go down south and go to the caucus meetings or the conventions or something like that, and then you'll see it.

RM [00:38:43] Yeah. Okay. Not up here.

KM [00:38:45] No. Yeah. We've had, I think the time I was there, we had about six presidents. No. Five. Stan Dahlgren, Terry Cheer, Mark Gordienko, and he was, he was excellent. That's why he got to be President in the Canadian area. Wally Robinson and Glen Edwards. Terry Cheer got ulcers. I don't know if it was work related or not, but he stepped aside. Stan Dahlgren was good, but they were all good. And Glen's still there.

RM [00:39:37] I know, that's amazing, eh? I don't know how he stands it. Well, he believes in working, too. Because he thinks the next one will be full-time. He doesn't want to be full-time.

KM [00:39:48] Yeah, well, I can see that happening.

RM [00:39:52] Yeah.

KM [00:39:53] Because it's getting big and, you know, but. That's, I don't want to out-talk John.

RM [00:40:04] What, you worked in the Mill, PPWC?

KM [00:40:09] Yeah, I was in management.

RM [00:40:11] Or you were in, oh, that traffic supervisor. Did you ever have to deal with Angus? Angus McPhee.

KM [00:40:17] I knew. I knew him. I drank with him in the Legion a couple of times.

RM [00:40:20] What was he like?

KM [00:40:22] Uh, he was a good union man, but, uh. Well, the pulp mill like traffic and shipping in the yard were no problems. But the tradesmen, if a millwright picked up a hammer to move it, all the tradesmen were out in the parking lot at lunchtime. Having a screaming match, you know?

RM [00:40:49] Yes. That's the craft unions.

KM [00:40:51] Yeah. You know, everybody was protecting their jobs, but it, to me, it got a little ridiculous. Because it wasn't like he was doing a carpenters job.

RM [00:41:09] Well, those narrow divisions are ridiculous. And that doesn't happen on the waterfront, does it?

KM [00:41:15] Well, I don't think so. But you've got millwrights, mechanics and electricians and, some of the millwrights are electricians as well. You know, they got two trades. But I don't know because the only time I ever went in the garage was to get a lift truck.

RM [00:41:49] So, looking back then, what do you miss most about longshoring? What did you like most about it?

KM [00:41:53] Oh, the camaraderie. Yeah.

RM [00:41:55] Yeah. Not the work itself, necessarily.

KM [00:41:58] Oh, I didn't mind the work. Uh, there's easy ways to do a job, and there's hard ways, and usually the older guys would show you the easy way, if they liked you.

RM [00:42:12] Did you know, any of the old timers?

KM [00:42:15] Oh, yeah.

RM [00:42:17] They tell you any of their stories, like John?

KM [00:42:21] Yeah, well, John. John was the best. Well, one of the older guys, Danny Jurissic . He was, John said he was a prison guard. And he used to slip them extra food. But he was a gentleman and he used to come in when it was busy and he'd make out the dispatch slips for me. We had a little address-o-graph machine and, I saw him one day at 5:30 in the morning, I was driving one of my kids to hockey practice. Then I was going to go back to the hall and he was giving this bum \$50 in front of a—and, Danny, he had one hip operated on and the other one it was shot, but he wouldn't go through the pain of the other, getting the other one fixed. So, he didn't sleep very well and he'd get up and walk around. And I said, "Danny, what did you give that guy?" And he said, "\$50." I said, "He's a bum. You'll never get it back." He said, "I'm banker for those bums. He pays me Welfare Wednesday, I guarantee it." He never charged interest. Any. Guys were losing their houses and losing their cars and whatnot. Danny would find the money.

RM [00:44:05] This was a longshoreman?

KM [00:44:06] Yeah.

RM [00:44:06] Wow.

KM [00:44:08] And he was a bachelor. And he liked to eat. And I put him out on lumber, as a UT, on afternoon shift. He made five buns, like that, three different kind of meat, lettuce, tomatoes and pickles. And he gave one to each of the foremen. And they'd say, "Danny, you got anywhere to go?" "I got to make the slips out." And they'd say, "Go on home." But, if they needed money, he gave it to them. You know, and I don't know if he was that rich, but I think he'd somehow or other accumulated, you know, he lived in a little room. He ate good, but, you know, he wasn't throwing his money around. He was lending it to people that needed it.

RM [00:45:18] OK. A couple more things. So you were on the docks when women started to be part of the workforce, I guess. What's, what kind of a change has that been?

KM [00:45:28] I think it's a good change, but I know, some of the people were against it. See the women, they were first aid attendants, and that was fine. But as soon as they wanted to work, you know, as a longshore person some of the guys— But we had, a couple of women here, and they weren't very big, but they'd out-work the guys.

RM [00:46:13] Yeah, sure.

KM [00:46:14] And I'd say, "You're bitching about her. Get your ass in gear. Work as hard as she does!" you know? But, I don't think it was a problem in Rupert. But I know one guy when they took the 'men' out of 'International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union', oh boy, he was upset. And I said, "Well, it doesn't say anything. It should say longshore people." I said, "Well, what about longshore, ladies?" Oh, (mutter, mutter). It was, it was silly. But, you know, Marilyn Dudoward, was one girl that worked hard. Wherever she worked, she did the job. And Sharon Cameron was the first woman in the union. And then Marilyn would, I would assume, was next. But, they were, they were good girls. And mostly they did First Aid. That was their job of choice. But if there was no first aid jobs, or there was a couple of guys in the union were First Aid, they'd do something else.

RM [00:47:48] So when you were dispatching, were you ever, did you ever feel pressured not to. Were they around then, when you were dispatching? And did you ever feel pressured not to dispatch them?

KM [00:47:58] No.

RM [00:47:59] Okay. And the last question is about the number of First Nations you have working with you guys. I mean, that's pretty positive, isn't it?

KM [00:48:07] Well, it was always about half and half.

RM [00:48:10] Yeah, that's amazing. I just learned that today.

KM [00:48:12] Yeah.

RM [00:48:13] And that's great, diverse workforce.

KM [00:48:15] Yeah, they're good. They were actually two guys that were First Nations, that told this idiot that threatened Mark and my lives. And Mark had a little daughter at the time. And he was worried that this, you know, he was a psychopath I think. But they told the guy, "Anything happens to them, you're feeding the fish." They were, they were big enough and mean enough that they probably—

RM [00:48:57] You'd never, you wouldn't want to test them, that's for sure.

KM [00:49:01] No. And they both said the other brother was tougher than him.

RM [00:49:06] So a good life on the waterfront, eh?

KM [00:49:08] Oh, yeah. I enjoyed it.

RM [00:49:10] Yeah, a lot of memories.

KM [00:49:11] And I still. The golf tournaments and whatever is where, Butch Campbell and I are the only two pensioners that golf and they treat us like royalty. It's embarrassing, really.

RM [00:49:30] Well, a nice place to longshore in Prince Rupert, eh? In spite of the ups and downs.

KM [00:49:34] Oh, yeah. I hope they don't automate us out of work.

RM [00:49:41] Well, on that gloomy note.

KM [00:49:43] Yeah.

RM [00:49:44] Okay, great. Thank you.

KM [00:49:46] Thank you.