

Interview: Irvin Figg (IF)
Interviewer: Sean Griffin (SG)
Date: May 27, 2026
Location: Burnaby, B.C.
Transcription: Jane Player

SG [00:00:05] Backing up for a minute here. Going back to 1988, that was like our first—

IF [00:00:11] Okay. Yeah. We should—

SG [00:00:12] First round of, you know, what was basically a trade war with the U.S.

IF [00:00:17] Yes, it was.

SG [00:00:17] What was called the General Agreement on Tariff and Trades [GATT], where we got our regulations that had been in place for years, that anything caught in B.C. waters had to be processed in B.C. got thrown out. Which came down like a hammer in the fishing industry.

IF [00:00:33] Yes, it did.

SG [00:00:35] Because it meant that a lot of these jobs could simply go elsewhere. Even before that ruling went into effect, BC Packers tried to use that in bargaining.

IF [00:00:48] Oh, yes.

SG [00:00:50] You know, saying that this is gonna happen, you gotta take concessions now.

IF [00:00:53] It went to the 11th hour in '88, and they only got a one-year deal, okay? Fishermen got a good deal because there wasn't any sockeye. They always give you a good price if there's no fish to catch, to speak of. Right, you know.

SG [00:01:05] The prices for fish went up?

IF [00:01:06] Oh, huge, hugely in '88. And then that set the stage for '89 with the GATT ruling. It was the first year ever that the companies called early. I mean, it was like March, and we're all at that hotel on—oh, right by the freeway there, I can't remember the name of it, now it used to be a—

SG [00:01:31] The Chateau Villa or something?

IF [00:01:33] Yeah, it's a casino hotel now, Delta runs it. Anyways, that was unusual, what are they gonna do here? Well, of course they came in, they slapped down a collective agreement that reflected wage levels in Alaska, right? Which were significantly lower, it would mean a 35 to 40 percent cut for every shore worker we had, right. Now of course, they didn't want to cut the trades, because they don't work, wheels don't turn, right? But that didn't matter because there were so many hours spent every year, right. And UFAW had done a remarkably good job of bargaining extra money and cents per pound for this or for that or for, you know. And I think I said something to you about the west coast salmon gutters, which were machines, and each machine took the place of about, I'd say, I think

six women. Because it wasn't guys. The year I started there was the first year after they quit making pink and blue seniority lists. Wow! I think in 77? What is this? This is neanderthal. Anyways. So, we got money in that every year and we always tried to raise it. We always raised—got a few cents raised in our benefit fund, right? For short-term disability for shore workers, tendermen, and various other benefits. You can see the company's position if from a management point of view and from an accountant's point of view that if we didn't have all of this stuff and this stuff, and this stuff, maybe we could compete. But they didn't want to go after our benefits, and they didn't want to go after their productivity gain share fund, which started out at 10 cents for every straight time hour work at BC Packers. And it all went into a fund, which was called the productivity gain share.

SG [00:03:29] When did that start, do you know?

IF [00:03:32] The year after the fish washers came in and that was probably—and I'm guessing—Burma would know for sure—I think it's about 1980.

SG [00:03:42] Hmm. So it had been around for a few years by that time?

IF [00:03:43] Oh yeah—some serious money in there, because we kept raising it every year, right? They would only agree to straight time hours, but so what? That's significant, you know, when you've got that many people working for three months. Crazy. Anyways. That bargaining, you know, I mean we just looked at that and it was it was a short meeting, okay. Jack Nichol didn't—he didn't bat an eye. He just rolled an eye, you know. 'My god, you guys are doing this stuff,' and 'We'll get back to you,' right. So, we went back to the hall, had a meeting. People are freaking out all over the place. 'Don't worry that's not gonna happen,' you know, 'We're not gonna let this happen. This union won't let it happen.' So, we tried again a couple more times closer to fish running. No dice. They weren't budging, not at all. And finally, we had the big meeting on deciding when to pull the pin, right?

SG [00:04:36] They also put the lockout threat on the table.

IF [00:04:38] Oh yeah, once we took a strike vote they put the lockout threat on, they always did. If we took strike vote, they put that threat out. For a lot of people that was, you know, that's a lot money in the year, what you earned at the fish plant, right? Carry you through the winter. Same thing in the north, right. Anyhow, it boiled down to an argument between two people about which day we should go and which day shouldn't and when the run would get there, what was it? It was a horse fly run, yeah. And one fisherman said one thing, one fisherman said the other thing, a couple shore workers, particularly in Steveston, because we watched the fleet going out every day, you know. We know when people fish. But they were late this year, and it turned out we went one week too early. If we'd waited a week, I think we got a quicker resolution. But it turned to be a 17-day strike, which was—no one ever thought it would be that long, and it took the union turning the fleet loose—seine fleet loose, right—because there was a ton of pinks running in the north and a lot of the union seines went out, caught the pink salmon, loaded up the boats, sailed back to Rupert, tied up and sat there in the sun. And it started to smell after a while, and the company freaked, right.

IF [00:06:05] Do you remember that?

SG [00:06:08] It was jammed and plugged—

IF [00:06:08] No, that was 1992.

SG [00:06:10] Oh, that was later.

IF [00:06:10] That was that was '92. This was '89 and—

SG [00:06:14] But it was the same principle as—

IF [00:06:15] Absolutely.

SG [00:06:16] That they weren't going to process the fish. It was going to sit there.

IF [00:06:20] Yeah. I remember seeing Darlene sitting with her umbrella on deck, you know, on her gill netter, you know. With a hatch full of pink salmon. Reading a book just like she did at the beach. (laughter) They were a wonderful couple, those two. Anyways, then we had a couple more meetings weren't going anywhere. Got the company to agree to a mediator. They got Vince Ready in. He mediated for a while; nothing was happening, very little. And finally he just came to us and said, 'If I can get the company agree, here's what we do. Pare down your demands.' We already did. I said, 'You guys get serious.' 'Okay, we're serious.' And I'm telling them the same thing. And once that's done, it's official, and we'll start, get an industrial inquiry commission. I think his name was McCormick. He came from Mac and Bloe [MacMillan Bloedel Limited] and I know—so, everybody went back to work.

SG [00:07:20] So, what was the time elapsed?

IF [00:07:22] 17 days was the length of the strike.

SG [00:07:24] When the fish were caught and sitting there at the dock?

IF [00:07:26] I think it was three days.

SG [00:07:27] Oh, that was three days?

IF [00:07:28] Two or three days, yeah.

SG [00:07:29] And then it was processed?

IF [00:07:30] I'm not sure what happened to it, because I wasn't in Rupert. At any rate, all I remember is what was on CBC, eh? You know, the media loved it, you know? They loved that strike. Look, there's one thing the companies never thought the union would do, was turn the fleet loose. Because we didn't have a majority of all the fleet. I mean, we had a good segment back then. But even the guys who didn't like the union, when we called a tie-up, they tied up. Because it was in their best interest. Because we were the only ones that could ever get companies to talk about paying more, right? You know, individually, the gillnet managers, seine managers would say, 'Okay, okay. Your Christmas card will be full this year.' You know. 'We'll show you.'

SG [00:08:18] But there was the sense that there was some loss of support in the fleet as the run went by.

IF [00:08:24] Yeah. And fortunately, I think we probably captured two-thirds of that run. But really, the other third, you know, that's your mad money. That's your crazy money. That's you're, I'm going to get an engine rebuilt this year. That's that money, right?

SG [00:08:38] So, what were the issues that went on the IIC [Industrial Inquiry Commission]?

IF [00:08:41] Now pretty much it was wages. Of course, I argued for leaving it on, and we did, but always before, we always had a pension demand, and the companies would not listen to it, we will never give you guys a pension, blah, blah, blah. Smart thing that the vice-president, Jim Sinclair, did the year before, right when they were at the last seconds of signing that agreement, the last thing he negotiated and I'm pretty sure it was last, very close, was a change of the name from the Productivity Gainshare Fund to the pension fund, right? It did not give you a pension. It just changed the name. And it said, this much per— actually it had on the bottom of it, the company put in some lines, for purposes of studying the viability of an independent pension plan, something like that. Because the company already had one. But if their investment made more than one and a quarter percent a year, the company never contributed a dime. You contributed everything, right. How fair is that? That's perfect. Anyways. Anyways, he did that, so we went away, and then myself and Peter Barone from Canadian Fish [Canadian Fishing Company], and what's his name? From McMillan's [J.S McMillan Fisheries Ltd.] that put his shoe on the table that day at negotiations, was always in deep doo-doo. He was the chief shop steward there for quite some time, I don't know why I can't remember his name. Anyways, it doesn't matter. So, there was the three of us guys, and then the company. And you know, one break we had down there, Eddie, from Ocean, what's his last name?—the family, Eddie.

SG [00:10:27] Not Eddie Petersen?

IF [00:10:28] Oh no, the management, the owner of Ocean Fish, Eddie, ah, I don't know why I can't remember. Sign off a misspent youth, I guess. But he said to Barone and the other fellow, he said, 'You know, we're all about the same age, aren't we?' 'Yep.' He said, 'We all grew up here in East Van, didn't we?' 'Yep.' 'We all swam there in Campbell Avenue, didn't we?' Oh yeah, yeah, we didn't care, you're all this, you know I'm just like you, I'm like you. (laughter) 'No, you are not. We don't drive a Mercedes, for one. We don't have a condo in Hawaii. Don't have season tickets for the Canucks. All those things.' At any rate, we met down there. We all sat there and gave our views to Mr. McCormick, and then the company gave theirs. And he asked a whole lot of questions. We answered them all, and he went away. And then when he came back and wrote it out, I tell you, we all almost fell off our chairs because we didn't have wage cuts, you know? It was basically a three-year deal, retroactive. We got a bonus when we went back after the strike anyhow. I never lost a dime, and I was off for 17 days. The bonus covered it. Almost everybody's did. Anyways, so the wages hadn't really been all the issue for us. It was just that we didn't want to go down to \$9 an hour. Took us a long time to get to 14, you know what I mean? So—

SG [00:11:58] So, basically it was taking concessions that were asked for initially off the table.

IF [00:12:02] They're all off the table and what you got already, you still got with some minor increases in the second and third year. But the kicker was, he saw that pension fund, which I'm pretty sure had around \$500 and some odd thousand dollars in it by then, maybe six. He saw that and he went, 'Oh, this is money the company already owes the

union, so we should do with it.' So, he just mandated that will become the pension plan for shore workers and tendermen. I don't know how the tendermen get—nah, no, he didn't mandate tendermen, I can't remember how they got in, but they were wage earners too, so what the hell. Anyways, he mandated that the company pay three and a half percent of our gross income and the employee contributed three and half percent every year into a defined purchase plan. And that was '90—we started it in '92. They started making deductions. I'm pretty sure it was '92 because Sandra was shore organizer—Gerch—for a year or so, and then she got tapped to be administrator of our pension plan.

SG [00:13:16] Didn't it—the actual report—didn't come down for a couple of years?

IF [00:13:18] That was a year, I think.

SG [00:13:19] Yeah, because it's dated 1991.

IF [00:13:22] Yeah, and '89, well it was almost the end of the year, we were striking. So '90, '91, yep, that's about right. Ninety was when we were having those useless meetings, what we thought were useless meetings. Right?

SG [00:13:33] Oh, so you were meeting all this time?

IF [00:13:35] Not all the time. Just every now and then, you know, McCormick would want to ask more questions, and three of us would go in. And yeah, that's about how long it took. So, it was '92 when we actually got it set up and got the computer program done because he stipulated in that pension plan that, that money, whatever hundreds of thousand it was we had, had to be used for senior employees who were not likely to accumulate enough to do any appreciable difference before retirement age. And a lot of, he also said the things that you hear nowadays, occasionally, not often enough. People in jobs like that, their bodies aren't meant to go to 70, 75, you know, not in those kind of jobs. Human beings are not made for that, most of us. And I thought it was a great point, which led to part two of our pension, which we steadily, every bargaining, we increased it again and again and again. It was for anybody over 55. If you're over 55, you worked out to a unit value, and the unit value was applied. So, we ate up all that money the very first year for those people's accounts, which was the right thing to do, and I tell you, boy, the shore workers respected him and respected the bargaining committee for hanging on to the pension for the first time since anyone could remember. (laughter)

SG [00:14:57] Yeah, it had been a bargaining issue, but—

IF [00:14:59] Oh, yeah, it's always one of the first things off the table, right? You know, fishermen and my wife was—Wendy is—she retired after 42 years in a union hotel, right, in the kitchen. They never had, I mean, her pension now is \$316 a month, 42 years. However, they're just like shore workers. They go in young. 'I'm not working in here the rest of my life. It's awful, you know, greasy, it's hot, I don't want to. I'm gonna work'. Before you know it, 20 years has gone by and you got seniority. And my wife's case, 12 years went by, and she had four weeks paid vacation. And so did I. It was great. Anyways, same as shore workers. 'I'm not working in a stinky old fish plant the rest of my live, I'm smarter than that.' But the money was good. So, they kept coming back, kept coming right. 'Don't need a pension. I'm gonna be out of here. Yeah, I've been here 10 years, that's enough. I'm going to go anyways. Nah, I don't want that.' You know, that's people, right?

SG [00:16:00] That must have really changed the character of things when all of a sudden you recognize that people were spending a lot of time, and now they were getting recompensed for it.

IF [00:16:09] That's right, there was. Yes. I think, I still this day think our pension plan was admired by most of our workers. It was. But some of them didn't want to be—I mean when he solved it like that, there was bitching. Yeah, I'd rather have that three and a half percent in my pocket. You know, my three and half percent, plus the company's three and one half percent in my pockets. I got a mortgage. I got three kids.' So what, you know, you're not unlike most of the people in here, buddy.

SG [00:16:36] You mentioned to me an interesting thing that when you were—during these negotiations, you sat down with the UFCW [United Food and Commercial Workers International Union] bargaining guy and they were just dealing with Safeway over concessions and so on.

IF [00:16:50] Same as us.

SG [00:16:51] You said that two different directions that—

IF [00:16:52] Oh yeah.

SG [00:16:53] Tell me about that.

IF [00:16:54] Yeah, it was a bad year. This is when we had—we were under mediation, and we were at the Richmond Inn and Vince had said, 'Well, you know—.' He came in to see us, and we told him about where we were at, and he said, 'The company wants about a couple hours here. I'm not sure when they're going to be back to you, but I'd advise you to stay,' because that was the night that we ended up signing for the IIC, I believe. So, I said, 'Hey, nuts to this. I'm tired of sitting around and looking at you guys.' So, I just got up and went downstairs to the bar. Have a beer, right? And I'm sitting next to a guy who's staring at his beer. (laughter) And we started chatting, and he was bargaining committee for UFCW at Safeway. And so, we commiserated about what companies were trying to do to both of us, you know? And he told me all about the two tier that the company wanted with Safeway and with their union and all their grocery establishments because it was just too expensive. So, you know, you have your red circle. A bunch at the top. They get to keep their rates. They get the same rates everybody else does percentage-wise each year. And when they're all gone, everybody will be working at the bottom two level.

IF [00:18:10] I said, 'Well, how do you get to the top tier?' 'Well, you can't.' You know, once those people are gone, it's the rest of the union member's job to get that bottom tier rate way back up where it was, which never has happened, in my estimation. And most of the people in my Safeway that are in the protected category are ready to pull the pin in a year or two, right? They're all of that age. And they're making really good money. And they had their 40 hours guaranteed, too, right. So, that was the way they went. They went that way, the union did. But to the UFAW's credit, we weren't going that way. It didn't matter. No way in hell were we going to go that way. So, the story is that sometimes you need to really stick to your guns, and it's unfortunate, but you have to eat your losses, right? It happens. My father was a coal miner in Indiana, and this is when people got shot, killed, beat to death with sticks and stuff like that, right, in organizing campaigns and in bargaining sessions. So, he came up the hard way in the union, right, my grandfather. And my dad was there, so he knew, in the 30s. He told me one day, he told me, my father told

me on day he said, 'You know son, while you're—now you're old enough to drink, and you go up to that tavern,' he says, 'don't listen to those old guys at the end. They all talk about the good old days. Listen, there were no good old day. We were all hungry.' And they were, you know. So, I mean, my parents both knew that.

SG [00:19:48] No MAGA there, eh?

IF [00:19:49] No MAGA there—but now that area, it's Indiana. Solid Republican MAGA idiot sticks. Amazing.

SG [00:20:01] Nonetheless, we did establish that agreement, but the 1988 regulations definitely had a huge effect—

IF [00:20:14] Oh, a huge effect, yeah.

SG [00:20:15] And the plant ended up finally closing down and turning into condos.

IF [00:20:22] Yes, and it's ugly.

SG [00:20:23] How did things go at that—when that announcement came down?

IF [00:20:27] Well, John came and got me and said, 'Irv, we're going out to Imperial.' I said, 'What for?' 'Well, we've got to make the announcement that this is the last, '96 is the last season for processing,' you know, and it was like in August, and it wasn't even a good year. But, nonetheless, there was enough people there that we could stand out and talk to them all, you now, and yeah, it was pretty depressing. Since it wasn't that good a year, most people there were relatively senior, you know. Like you take Judy Close, right? She raised all five of her kids by herself, right? Because when she started at BC packers, a teenager before she got married, she stayed there. And the women were way smarter than the men. When she was like 18 or 19, just married, the women decided this is really stupid to be on a seniority list in the labeling warehouse or in the fresh fish and not be able to go over here when there's work or over there when there is work. Why should we divide it all up? That's silly. We want some people to make a living. So, they voted and they passed it. So, she could work in any—God bless her, she was the best shop steward we ever had, I'll tell you. Her and Burma. Raised all five of her kids on that job. The personnel manager could be mean, however, she'd been my friend since I lived in Steveston, you know, it's a small town. I know lots of people that were management or non-union fishermen and all that. And she did a lot of remarkable things for members, but no one knows any of it because, you know, it's all confidential. And I don't know anyone that's mentioned what she did for them, but I know what she'd did for so many people to make sure they could get out from under alcoholism or get extra, more work, you know, through the collective agreement, through job postings, through taking classified jobs, right? It worked. Yeah, she was mean. She had a mean streak, she did. (laughter) I've seen it, face to face.

SG [00:22:30] When the Imperial plants closed, then there had to be a merger, a [unclear] seniority list.

IF [00:22:36] Canadian Fish—

SG [00:22:37] Canadian Fish took over.

IF [00:22:39] The Canadian Fish merge took over, and so for the processing side they invented another company. What was it called?

SG [00:22:47] Well, at one point, they had Allied Pacific processing.

IF [00:22:51] That's it. APC, Allied Pacific, they named it, yeah. And it was a big conscientious thing within the union because you put two groups of people together, how do you meld the seniority list, who gets the work? And since it was that Canadian Fish was still standing, those people thought they should get all the jobs and the BC Packer people should come in after, yada, yada yada. Well, there is a labour board in BC and there are some rules here. And frankly, the union did not want to get in the middle of it, you know? I was only—I'd been an organizer for three years when the merger happened, right? Since I was from BC packers, you know, well, downtown, the office is not filled after work with people from Steveston. It's peoples from Local 5, right? Yeah, yeah. You're a BC Packer guy.

SG [00:23:41] Oh, Local 5 was whom?

IF [00:23:43] Pardon me?

SG [00:23:44] What did Local 5 encompass?

IF [00:23:46] Oh yeah, sorry. Canadian Fish, BC Ice, which was turned to Versicold, JS McMillan, Prince Rupert Fisherman's Co-op, Great Northern Packing, right? That was Local 5.

SG [00:24:03] All the Vancouver plants.

IF [00:24:04] All the men, mostly clustered on Commissioner Drive and then Great Northern, just across the bridge, the Ironworkers Memorial. It was controversial to say the least. I had three cases against me at the board, right, because the union decided in its infinite wisdom that instead of getting in the middle of this and creating all these enemies and everything, what we're going to do is we're gonna give the negotiating committee or the committee supported by the shop stewards and the plant \$16,000. So, we gave each one of those groups \$16,000 for some legal fees, right? They went away and talked with each other about it, and so the Labour Board got them back together again, both sides, and see if they could somehow come to an agreement on anything, you know, and it appeared that it wasn't, and the board was gonna end up ordering something, right? Now every—at least once a week, Grant Blatter would come up to the office, and I would hand him a fresh stock of cases, similar to this, right. The BC Packer people out in Steveston, they spent their money wisely on a good labour lawyer, Gina. What the hell was her last name? She's retired now. You guys—

SG [00:25:28] Fiorillo?

IF [00:25:30] Yeah. Wonderful woman. The only lawyer I ever used after I met her. Anyways, and the other company went with a bloody expensive company union. Spent all their money on a case to fight the fact that it was a succession, right? They said, 'No, it's not. It's not.' Well, a trained chimp can read the practice binder at the labour board and tell you it is, right. They're the successor to the contract and the people from BC Packers because they're the ones that bought it. There's only one case in B.C. that went different and the circumstances are totally different. So, but you know, those guys, they wouldn't

buy it. Be back the next week, 'oh no, you can't' because of this. 'Our lawyer says,' because they're just feeding it to their lawyer, right? You know, and he's letting some flunky in the office look at it because—or maybe not, you know. He already got his \$16,000, you now, by the time they spent their money, they were nowhere. Because Jim and I flatly told him, 'You're going to lose this. You know, you'll never win that. You're not a successor. So, you guys got your choice; you either make a deal with each other or you let the board rule.'

IF [00:26:44] Now, at the time that the board had set a date to merge them, to stop and go away and write a ruling, right at that time we couldn't get them to do anything together and Jim was convinced as was I and many on the BC Packers group that if we let the board write the rule we'd be the winner. BC Packers would, because they had so much more seniority than Canadian Fish. They had such a huge seniority list, so many people that worked year-round, whereas down there only a handful of people worked year-round. They didn't have very many senior people, you know. We had seniors because you could make a living out of it, but you could never make a living at Canadian Fish until you got your 20 years in. So, there weren't very many that did. Anyhow, didn't matter. Jim came to me that day, finally got back to the hall, and he says, 'Well, what am I going to do? What am I gonna do?' I said, 'What do you mean, what are you gonna do?' He said, 'Well I've been working on this proposal,' and he'd talked to me about it, you know, and 'I don't know if it'll fly, you know, BC Packer's guys probably aren't gonna like this.' And I said, 'Well, maybe they won't, but Jim, don't you think it's a union's duty to offer a compromise in good faith? That's probably what we should do.' I said, 'It makes no difference to me personally because carpenter's seniority didn't transfer anyways. I was gone. Simple. So we did, he did. He went down there. I didn't go with him. He said, 'No, no. Better off you're not there, you know, because Canadian Fish people, you're—' [muttering sounds] And by God, they bought it. I can't believe it. Even the BC Packers people sucked it up and said, 'All right, yeah, we don't wanna screw all of them.'

SG [00:28:33] What was the compromise?

IF [00:28:34] The compromise was that you'd redline a certain number of people to go one for one, right? Like, let's see, in Cold Storage had—I think theirs was six and six, eight and eight, something like that. Cannery was similar, only bigger, you know, maybe a dozen to 15, maybe even 20, I can't remember that, were interleaved like that. After that it was date of hire. So, after that was all BC Packers people, right? Mostly. Until you got down to seven or eight years of seniority, right? But BC Packers had a huge amount of people that stayed forever. That had been there since—well, I look at, the high-watermark was '70, '74, I think, for so many people in 1974, and 90 percent of them are Indo-Canadians from Africa, Uganda, etcetera, right, yeah. I mean, if you remember, the government said, we'll pay half their wage for the first year. Well, every fish plant said, 'Hey! [rubs his hands together] 'We just need somebody to wash a fish, what the hell.' That's the way it went. So, they had a ton of ladies in there. Now, I use the term ladies. I'm sorry, but that's from—you know, I'd go into the lunch room, and if I called it brothers and sisters, you'd get hooted out of there right. And if you went in the women's lounge room and said sisters—'we're ladies'—they're all screaming at me. 'We're ladies.' Right. Helen always called them ladies, so I did too.

SG [00:30:08] They also never wanted to change fishermen to anything else.

IF [00:30:11] That's right. Women that fished — Helen Hing will tell you tomorrow that she's a retired fisherman. She never accepted the stupid changes that people wanted us to do. Yeah, well, yeah, we were a little bit backward on that, on several different issues.

SG [00:30:30] But nonetheless, that compromise agreement, it flew.

IF [00:30:34] It flew. It flew! The only part of it that didn't flew that caused me all the trouble in the board was the severance packages.

SG [00:30:44] Yeah, I see.

IF [00:30:45] Because the companies recognized that one article in the collective agreement says that—and it's for trades persons only—that in the event of a plant closure, sale, etcetera, etcetera, discussions will be held with trades persons around items such as retraining, severance, (and I can't remember what the other one was), additional work opportunities or something like that. The active verbs are 'will be discussed,' okay? That's all that counts in that sentence. Sorry.

SG [00:31:24] It's actually a passive voice.

IF [00:31:26] That's right, that's all that—yeah, it is passive, right, you're right, but that's all that counts in there. I don't care how much you put on the end of it. However, they knew that, you know, they'd have to spend a load of money litigating, right? Perhaps with individual members. You never know. And plus, you never know about a labour board either. Sometimes they might give them something. So, we sat down with the trade guys in town and out in Steveston, and my guys in Steveston, oh, geez, you know, they did the opposite. They'd be bringing me cases every bloody week showing that this chef at that hotel got three years' pay and he'd only been there for five years, you know? This person here got—yeah, but I said, 'None of that counts. You know, that's individual, civic action that's not under the labour law. It won't work under the Labor Code here.' 'Well, yeah, you can get that all for us.' And we went back and forth. I don't know how many times. And so, guys, trades guys at BC Packers, and we had swept in five or six security guys, too. And all the guys in the reduction plant, which is about eight guys, right? So, it was like 14, I think. We had 52 tradesmen at the time. Now some of those jobs transferred. Don't get me wrong. Anyways, we're only looking at—at BC Packers, we were looking at probably 30-some, 35-so retirees, right? And, boy, they weren't having anything. They weren't bending. They wanted two weeks was their bottom line. You know, two weeks of severance for every year of service. And we went round and round about it. And at the end of the day, sitting in the office with Jim Sinclair in his office, right, and Richard Gregory phoned up. And so Jim put him on speakerphone, and we're talking, talking.

SG [00:33:15] BC Packers, right?

IF [00:33:18] Yeah. And he says, 'Okay Jim, what's this gonna take?' Right, because they'd come up to offering us two days per year of service, right? Anyways, which, you know, a lot of 30-year guys there didn't have a job, so that was 60 days pay. Anyways, doesn't matter. Oh yeah, he says, 'What's it gonna take to solve this? Give me a number, how many days? You guys are not getting two weeks out of it. I'll guarantee you.' And okay, Jim says, 'Just a minute Richard, I'm going to put us on mute.' So, I push the mute button. 'What's the number, what's the number, what's fair, what can we sell, what can we sell?' I said, 'We can't sell anything short of two weeks, Jim, but you and I can decide. Who's the union? The workers are the union. Who runs it? Who has the authority on

collective agreements? Headquarters of the union. I'm sorry but that's just the way it works.' And he says, 'Oh yeah, I forgot about that. I go, 'Okay.' He says, All right, we'll tell him. And then you get the fateful words, 'But you'll have to sell it to the boys out there.' I said, 'Well, you have to come with me. [laughter] So, I got Richard back and said 'a week.' He says, 'I'll get back to you.' He called back the very next day said, 'You got a deal, okay?' So, we made the deal over the phone. You know, back in the days when you could trust certain people in their head offices, not very many, but certain ones.

IF [00:34:50] So, we went to—told the people out in Steveston, went out there that night, little house there, had the meeting. Couldn't see across the room, there was so much cigarette smoke, but I was a smoker too. It was killing Jim. So, we went round and round about it, you know, round and around about it. And Jim didn't want to say that we could just arbitrarily say this is the deal. And they kept yelling at me, 'You can't do anything until you have a vote. You've got to vote.' And Jim said, 'Okay, we'll take a vote.' I looked at him, glared at him. You know, what the hell do you think you're doing? And I got one last kick at the can. I said, 'You know, guys, if we don't take this, and the board rules in a hearing there, those guys that aren't really tradesmen under the terms of the collective agreement aren't going to be counted at all. They're not going to get a dime'. They looked around and they're in there, some of them, right? So, that made it a little more difficult. But one guy in particular, two of them kept yelling, 'Take a vote, take a vote.' And I wouldn't do it. And they finally did it themselves, 'All in favor, raise your hand.' Said, yeah, more people raise their hands to tell me to pound sand, right. So, that's when I just said, 'I'm sorry, guys, but Jim and I have already agreed to it. We have every right to. And you guys would never get more than that anyways. You probably wouldn't get it.' That put me through another year and a half of going back and forth to the labour board to save my bloody reputation and the union's. It sucked, you know. And I never had a problem with the board. They threw them all out, you know.

SG [00:36:42] Well, in other words, there were objections to that raised.

IF [00:36:44] Oh God, yes. Oh yeah, you can't make a deal like that. 'You're costing me a week's pay for every year of service.' Guys I'd known since I came to Steveston they wouldn't even talk to me, you know. But oh well, their loss, I always thought. But once you get older, they do get over stuff, that's true. People get over stuff when they get older and they find out. It's like the merge, you know, people hated it, hated it going out to the big red barn in Vancouver and, oh man, and then finally, a couple years later, they started saying to me when I go out there, 'You know, we never knew how good we had it in Imperial Plant.'

SG [00:37:23] For sure.

IF [00:37:24] And they didn't.

SG [00:37:25] So, you yourself, at this point, actually came to work on union staff after the plant closed, too, eh?

IF [00:37:31] Yeah, well, I went before the plant closed. Like I was saying, in '93, I knew that shore worker organizer job was opening up. And the only one I knew was going to go for it was illogical. And, that's okay. Like I said before, I've never been elected to anything just acclaimed. And like I said, the body was showing signs of needing surgical attendance, and I wasn't into that either. And so, I just threw my hat in the ring and the

General Executive Board hired me by a vote of 13 to 12. Landslide. It was a landslide. [laughter] Or, as some politicians would say, I had a mandate.

SG [00:38:22] And so, that was what, '94?

IF [00:38:24] '93. Spring of '93. March, yeah. I go to work. I work for one lousy week and it's spring break. Everybody splits. There's a pile of grievances on my desk, meeting dates already there that Lila had already made those dates. She was my partner then, right? She'd already made those dates knowing that she wouldn't be there and Sandra wouldn't even be there.

SG [00:38:49] Yeah.

IF [00:38:50] Oh yeah, everybody that worked at the hall had kids. Get out of here. Okay, fine. So, I mean, I saved two jobs that week and people I didn't even know, they're gonna be fired. I got them all back to work for various and sundry deals, but not losing money and not losing their jobs, right?

SG [00:39:11] So, how was it as, I mean, this was a time that the beginnings are there of closures elsewhere as well. That must have been a pretty tough gig as a shore worker organizer.

IF [00:39:26] It sucked. I know, I went—seeing as how I cut the deal for severance, for trades and everything, I got called up to Prince Rupert when they chopped half of their trades down because nobody up there wanted to deal with it. And smaller town type atmosphere. And, but I mean, here's what it is. And I went up there and got these—you know, the company was unbending. We're not settling for any more than what we've settled with people at Imperial Plant. You're going to get a week and that's that. And the only thing I could do was with one or two guys I got kept on for X amount of months per year because I convinced the plant that they did need them. Don't buy these guys out yet, you still need them. Which down the line would have meant for a bigger payout, so that was good. They were happy with that. You know, when that one closed—I can't remember who was the first closure we had, aside from BC Packers.

SG [00:40:24] Probably Prince Rupert Fisherman's Co-op.

IF [00:40:26] I think it was a co-op.

SG [00:40:29] But they just closed the plant in Vancouver, as I recall.

IF [00:40:32] That's right. And then Seafoods came into that plant. Seafoods was only in Port Hardy at the time. We had that plant in Port Hardy. And somehow or other, Seafoods bought the plant on Commissioner Street in Vancouver. But shortly after that, they were going belly up. So, the company bought them out. I can't remember the name of the company, but they decided that they were going to make a go of it. And we did some pretty good, negotiated some pretty good deals to get extra work in for people because the guy at the time that was the head dude was a value-added type guy, right? You know he wasn't from the fish business but he was a value-added guy and yeah, we did get a considerable amount of extra work. However, it didn't matter. They still closed that down too because the company that bought them bought a package. They didn't know there was two fish—I mean the two fish plants in there weren't exactly what they were buying it for, okay. Not even close. They didn't want to have anything to do with it, right? So, the one in

Vancouver closed, the one at Port Hardy downsized. And spent time up there with Dennis Brown and myself, and, oh, crimey, I don't even remember who, working out a deal there, because they kept operating. I got a severance, a decent severance package for everybody in that plant. Not decent by, you know, thousands and thousands of dollars, but given the collective agreement is here [moves his hand up and down] (what you get), and it's right next to what the labour board allows for in non-union jobs, which is not good. We'd get them about here, you know? And what they did was they cut a deal with, I can't remember his name now, a drag boat guy. What the hell was his name? He had the first—the second big factory ship. Nope, can't recall. Doesn't matter. Anyhow, and several other local people and the workers that wanted to work took their money and put it in the pot. Kept the place running. Mickey—you might remember Mickey. He was a chief shop steward. He was a trades guy there. Cool guy. He still runs the place.

SG [00:42:43] And they opened his Celtic ship, er—

IF [00:42:46] Celtic Seafoods, yeah, and he still runs that place. They don't get a lot of work, but I mean, I was just talking to a guy that knows him personally, and he says, 'Yeah Mickey's done well, you know, they get more work all the time.' I don't believe it, but he scrounges a lot of work from major processors, because we don't have processors, as you know, in B.C. any longer, to speak of. That was a big one and after that was, oh my god, I don't remember.

SG [00:43:14] So in '96, the UFAW merged with CAW [Canadian Auto Workers'] too.

IF [00:43:19] That's another highlight, yeah, smartest thing we ever did.

SG [00:43:23] So, what happened with organizing there? Did that put an end to it?

IF [00:43:27] Oh, CAW actually kicked some money at us for an organizing campaign. Remember that's when we hired Murray Gore. And Danny, you know Danny, the blonde-hair, seine boater young guy.

SG [00:43:43] Danny Kruk.

IF [00:43:44] That'll be him. We had him on a little bit after Murray got on somewhere else. And I mean, you know, Murray retired as a Canadian Auto Workers organizer just two years ago. I think it was. And he was a good organizer, hard-working guy. He got us one plant, and it was a farm fish plant in Campbell River, remember? Don't recall the name right now, but—AgriMarine, you're right. The guy that ran the newspaper back then remembers all this, right? Anyways, we did well with them for some time, you know?

SG [00:44:21] So, how long did they run? Do you recall?

IF [00:44:23] At least five years.

SG [00:44:25] Oh, so it was —

IF [00:44:26] And the company ran a wild decert campaign up there, which I just barely beat off, you know. It was touch and go. But the vote was close, but we survived. And then shortly after that, they closed. And let's see. Who organized it after that? Well, J.S. McMillan shut down one of our year-round salmon, herring, bottom fish, you know, everything plants. Which had a hardcore crew of about, oh, 50, I guess, 50 to 60, and

when they were busy, there'd be 150 in there, right, you know? That closed, I don't recall the year, tell you the truth.

SG [00:45:09] So, did you have a sense at that time that you could make headway or was this the feeling of—

IF [00:45:14] I had a feeling of impending doom. However, there were occasional bright spots, you know. I took the job because I liked what I did. And the best thing about getting hired in a fish plant in the first place was I met the most wonderful bunch of people anywhere, and that's the commercial fishing industry. I don't care if you fish pack or put fish in a bag, you know what I mean?

SG [00:45:37] Oh, what's wonderful about it?

IF [00:45:39] Wonderful people. It's just salt of the earth, normal, you know. And I don't have any of the highfalutin words for that, but it works for me. I consider myself normal, and they're similar to me, they're normal.

SG [00:45:49] You've lived in that fishing community in Steveston for a couple of years.

IF [00:45:53] Since 1978. Yeah, I bought the house here in 1978.

SG [00:46:00] It's the devil for punishment after John Radosevich stepped down as president and you stepped in.

IF [00:46:04] Yeah. I never got elected to that either. They just—

SG [00:46:10] [unclear] So, it's okay.

IF [00:46:10] Yeah, well, they made me Vice President when Sinc [Jim Sinclair] left, no. Yeah. You sure Sinc went in '90?

SG [00:46:21] He was elected to the BC Federation of Labour in 1999 and went in 2000 to take up the post. Did you take it over in the next year following?

IF [00:46:29] Yeah, okay. So, where was Dennis Brown?

SG [00:46:34] Something like that.

IF [00:46:36] Where was Dennis then?

SG [00:46:37] But he had gone to the—

IF [00:46:38] The government, I know.

SG [00:46:39] The provincial government as an advisor to Clark.

IF [00:46:39] I know. And how long? Okay, so yeah, so they got kicked out in 2000. I don't recall him coming back to the union, yeah.

SG [00:46:52] No, he didn't come back.

IF [00:46:56] So, I was made Vice President one of those times, and then when Sinclair left, of course, I took over his positions, all the things, irons that he had in the fire. And John was the president, and I was his vice—the daring duo, my foot. And I give John so much credit. He worked so hard trying to find a way out of that mess, you know, because it was a mess. You can't do every single year lower revenues. It's not like the staff was getting raises or anything, you know. There's just less money to go around and the amount of money you need to spend on fisheries and oceans, government, Ottawa, province, etcetera, it just goes up every year. And all the bloody stupid alphabet meetings you have to go to all the time goes up every year. So, what do you do with that mess, you know? In that time, we did organize the pig processing plant in Port Alberni. And they had—who organized it? Murray Gore and vice-president, second vice-president, Garth Mirau.

SG [00:48:09] Garth Mirau

IF [00:48:13] They had like 150 employees there, but I mean, and they killed a lot of hogs. They made best bacon ever and good sausage, all of that stuff. They had fresh fish line of pork products that were sold around Alberni, but the rest of it was making bacon and making pepperonis and making this, that, and the other thing, you know? And of course they hated the union, and they always played favorites with the working staff, and oh geez, it was a mess when we got in there, you know, it really was. And so, I bargained with CAW Western Director before Sue. What was her name? Came from the airline.

SG [00:48:55] Oh, uh, Davidson, Anne Davidson. Yeah.

IF [00:48:59] That's right. She negotiated the first agreement there, right?

SG [00:49:01] At the pig processing plant?

IF [00:49:03] Yeah, at the pig processing plant, yeah. It lacked one particular component that made it difficult to administer, so the following, and it was only a year deal, so the following year I went in and got that changed. And then shortly thereafter, Johnson's quit shivin' 'em hogs, right? And there's no hog productions, no hog farms on the Island, right. There are none for commercial. You know, there's a few farmers that work in local places, you know, to butcher and sell to the supermarkets or whatever, smaller operations, but nobody that could handle the amount of hogs they needed to cut. So, they said, 'Nope, not doing that anymore.' Johnston said over here, I don't know if it was an inside deal or whatever. Well, there goes our kill floor, right? From then on all he did was ship halves over. They were already slaughtered, eviscerated and cut into halves I believe, and they shipped them. So, we lost about a third of the crew right there.

IF [00:50:11] And it just went downhill from there because the union wasn't there often enough. I was the only one that ever went over there. Garth was still around, and he went there before me, but after that—actually this is fast-forwarding a bit too much because he was my vice-president. I was already president then, and we couldn't afford him anymore, full-time job for a vice-president, we just couldn't afford it. So, that's when we had, who was it? Nick Stevens. He became the vice-president. Because, you know, he went herring fishing. He went salmon fishing, right? And in the interim, he'd be my guy. And whenever he's working for the union, we'd pay him for the day, whatever. Nick didn't mind, of course. Homer Stevens' son, he understood. So, we ended up losing that place, and I think we got de-certed. Close vote, still didn't make it. I cannot believe it, but I guess I can. I mean, we had to campaign. All over town there, you know. And then, of course, there was the big

mad cow disease. We had three plants, a total of maybe a good 150 to 200 workers in Ucluelet, all making that paste. Can't remember what it's called already.

SG [00:51:49] Surimi

IF [00:51:50] You got 'er. Surimi that they make the fake crab out of and everything. Huge market in Korea. That's where 90 percent of it went. And then the mad cow scare happened. And to make surimi, they were using beef blood plasma. From a supplier in Arizona. Now, the only mad cow ever seen or recognized in Canada I believe was somewhere way up north and nothing ever became of it, right?

SG [00:52:23] Right.

IF [00:52:24] And, but you could not convince those buyers that our plasma was safe because it was from Arizona. Anyways, they all canceled their orders like that, you know, and we lost two plants.

SG [00:52:37] Yeah, they lost three, and two of them were union, as I recall. Well, that seems to be one of the fundamental problems of the industry these days, is that a lot of what had been sort of communities that were solid and supportive of their local plants and unionized workers became much more remote. They were not—didn't have the populations. And every time you organize something—we organized fish farms, as I recall. Bob Grant, organized fish farms, but after a few months went by, they were decertified because—

IF [00:53:13] Yeah. They're so far out there, and the boss has 24-7 of their attention, right? Because he lives there. You know what I mean? It's a tough road, oh, I'll tell you. So, we lost those two plants there, and we almost got back in the one that was, what's his name, Paul Burke. Remember him? Ex-troller, ran the plant in Ucluelet that was owned by a U.S. company.

SG [00:53:47] There was CSP and USP.

IF [00:53:47] Those were ours. Trident.

SG [00:53:51] Trident Seafoods.

IF [00:53:52] Trident Seafoods. And I think it was Paul, yeah. And he had worked at, was he a PCP, or, I can't remember which one he was at. I think he was a USP. Anyways, I went out there when he fired a guy. I stopped and interviewed the guy on the way because he lived, he lived basically in Nanoose Bay, right? So, I stopped there and had a whole chat with him. He didn't want to come with me, afraid of the boss, jeez. And so, I drove out there, and I met him, and I can't remember who was his assistant, but no problem. They were misinterpreting the agreement. Now, I don't have a legal leg to stand on when they have been misinterpreting it and the unions never called them on it. You've got to give them notice, six months to a year, right? Estoppel notice, or else you will never be able to rely on that section. So, I don't have a leg to stand on, but they out there, they're not spending money on lawyers, so you just tell them this is the way it is. 'Can't you read that?' Plain reading is what collective agreement interpretation is about, right? 'I don't care about your interpretation, it's the plain reading.' And I got the kid's job back, and he stayed there as long as I knew him, as long they were open. But yeah, he ended up back at Trident, and then I forget who bought that, oh yeah you do, what's his name, the big guy in the

U.S. Diamond, old man Diamond, Pacific group. Yeah, Pacific Group bought them finally, and that is now, Ucluelet Harbor Seafoods, right? That's what it's called now. What's left of it.

SG [00:55:42] Was it typical of what was happening to a lot of unions that simply weren't able to hold on to these smaller plants and provide organizing and so on? Or was it a decline in the whole union culture in a lot these?

IF [00:55:55] I'm not sure about that. I mean, fishing decline for our union, a lot of that was related to the resource and the federal government's total mismanagement of it on the west coast, right? Total mismanagment. Why do we have to go to all those committee meetings, you know? We could even get the guys we don't like on our side, within harvest groups, get a bunch of harvest groups together and get them to agree on something. Forward that to the minister, it'd be 'No.' It'd be 'No.'" It was so annoying, and I recall the year that the federal government split the money evenly. This much to aquaculture, this much to wild fish. I knew when that happened, we were in trouble.

IF [00:56:51] So, I'm not sure if it was, you know, the culture giving up on unions. I've been union since I was 16, management for two and a half years. I've had my own business for two more years, and then I'm back in the union for the rest of my life, you know. So, I know the attitudes in those places. And I just don't get it, you know. My principle complaint has always been, how much money is enough? Company-wise, individual-wise. I get so sick of it, you know, I just, yeah. My mom and dad always told me, never forget you are your brother's keeper, right? And so, you gotta, okay? And that's why, that's partly why I took the job. I didn't have any children with either one of my wives, and that's only by design, because that was what originally we wanted, and that was fine. I don't have no regrets. However, I was starting to feel like I was a waste of air. So, I thought, I love Boy Scouts so much, I did. Because it got me a chance to camp from the time I was 10. I spent a minimum of 30 days on the ground growing up, every single year. And I still worked, you know, on the farm. But, I thought maybe I'll do that. Pretty active Scouts program in Richmond in Steveston. And I started investigating what kind of opportunities they had for the kids and everything. And then of course '88 happened and Doc just said, go run for chief shop steward, don't be silly. So, I did. And so, I always figured that, you know—I almost had a second degree, but I ran out of money. But I was going for a Bachelor of Arts in criminology. So, management, labour, criminology, am I a fit for this job or what? (laughter)

SG [00:58:50] So, you finally decided to pull the pin in, what year was it, 2013?

IF [00:58:56] Yeah, 2013. When I turned 60, I said to the board, I said, 'Look, I can retire.' I talked to my financial advisor, set up the plan to make me broke when I'm 90. Ha, good luck with that—Irv, you're not living to 90. But anyways, 'You guys got to find somebody to take my job.' Nobody wanted it, right? Nobody wanted—poor John, he stayed on two years longer than he wanted because nobody would take it. And I just wasn't cracked about it and finally, I just couldn't stand him moping around all the time. But then that year after the board meeting, the Gulf failed, you know, the Herring Gulf failed. I mean, failed. And nobody got work, you, know, it was just pathetic. Revenue dropped like a rock. I couldn't leave like that, you know, it just, it upset me that, and besides, my wife is seven and a half years younger than I am. She wasn't ready to retire. I don't know why—42 years in the kitchen. Yikes. [laughter] So, I stayed around, I stayed around, I stayed around, and then finally in 2013 I knew I had the contract with Canadian Fish to negotiate shore, which I'd do up in Rupert, and I knew that I had to get that done. And that was the last big-ticket

item that was not done, and that somebody else couldn't do for me. And I had no staff at that time. There was me. I'm the president, chief cook, and bottle washer. Had Nancy at the front desk, you know, as receptionist. Frankly, my major domo, God bless her. Oh, she was wonderful. Came from Sointula, right? So, she knows fish since she was a kid. You know her brother, probably. Andy Anderson. Probably heard of him.

SG [01:00:48] Oh, right.

IF [01:00:49] Yeah, Sointula. Who else worked for us? Oh, Gary ran the benefit fund. Sandra ran the pension plan. Benefit fund had one office staff, Joanne, and that was it, you know, didn't even have an organizer for down south there. Any organizing happening, it was Irv. But I mean, the last two years I worked was the only time that I really didn't want to get up in the morning and go because I was just like spinning my wheels everywhere, you know. There was no wins, except 2013 in Prince Rupert. And it was a hard-fought one, I tell ya. We got 'em.

SG [01:01:35] You got an agreement?

IF [01:01:35] Yeah, a good one too. Rob Morley swore up and down at me for 10, 15 years. 'You will never get a guarantee out of me for anything, Irvin.' Well, we did. You know, on the percentage of fish that came out of a certain area; I don't recall what it is, but it was limited to the North, because their point was always, fish in the North or we process in the North, right? That was their point forever. And yeah, got a deal with him and he had a guarantee. And they were all happy, it sold no problem. Members were happy with it. Of course, now they're all gone too. I retired, man. BCI shut down. Canadian Fish is still working but not very bloody much, you know. All they do is freeze a bit of herring and process fresh salmon when they get it. And what else do they do? That's about it. You know, it's still going and I don't know why. I think it's because, you know, New England Seafood built that place. I don't know when the hell it was, way back when, right? Jimmy Pattison got it for a song when they went bankrupt, so, from what I understand. And of course, when BC Packers closed, we were all just shocked. Because we always—BC Packers was the flagship of the industry, if you remember. Volume-wise, service-wise. All those things, you know? Ownership in the fleet. My God, they owned a lot of seine boats and a lot of gill nets. So, we never thought they'd go down, but the plan was in the works to turn those 26 acres into condos and homes.

SG [01:03:15] For which they probably made a fortune.

IF [01:03:18] Oh, I'm sure they did. The last employee was Richard Gregory, God rest him. Just died.

SG [01:03:25] So, when you—after your retirement you continue to keep your hand in—

IF [01:03:32] Yeah, I re—Well—

SG [01:03:33] Or the chair of the board?

IF [01:03:35] Oh yeah, I'm chair of the trustees there, but after I retired, I stayed on. I volunteered to run the Rigby for a year and a half, for free, right, because—

SG [01:03:45] The [Bill] Rigby Manor?

IF [01:03:46] Manor, where we had the seniors, for seniors, low-income seniors, which we raised money for. We opened it in 1988 in Steveston. It's beautiful. It's sittin' on millions of dollars worth of land, right? Well, we made a mistake. I made a mistake. I didn't pay enough attention to them. I used to always let them pretty much run themselves, you know, because they had a board out there and everything. The woman that ripped us off and left the country, who was the administrator, had worked with Burma [Lockett]. She recommended her to me, and I interviewed her, and I interviewed several others, and I said, 'Yeah, she's the one to get.' And she was good. I think, you know, she straightened out our books, was wonderful until about a year before she left, and then things started going south, right? And then finally, all of a sudden, you couldn't find her. You couldn't call her or anything. [sighs] And I called up and I looked and said, what's the problem now? 'Well, she didn't pay the taxes this year.' What? Property tax to the city of Richmond. Oh my God. And the fines—it's a thousand dollars every time, right? And there was no extra money in that because you're working with BC Housing, right, you know? You have a budget. You have to work to that budget, all those things. Anyhow.

SG [01:05:07] She absconded with—

IF [01:05:09] She absconded. I believe it because when Burma and I got in there, there was so much paperwork missing, it was incredible. And the bank account was in the hole. We had like—it's pretty funny because Wendy and I—it was right when we were going to go on our camping trip every year, our fall camping trip, and I'd just retired, you know? Yippee! I don't have to come back to work. And no, it was a year later. Yeah, before 2014. So, I got the—they had a committee down there. Helen was one of them, you know, and I forget the other one's name, but I worked with her, BC Packers. So, they came with me to City Hall, and went to the credit union first, to find out about the accounts and how they were doing all that. I said, 'Don't worry.' Anyways, I transferred \$10,000 out of my wife's account. Didn't even phone and ask, just did it. Ooh, probably never should have, but that's okay. After the fact, she didn't mind. Because what I did was the 10 grand was all they were shy to pay the fine and the rest of the property tax.

SG [01:06:25] I just want to say, Irv, I mean, your commitment to the industry that you launched back in 1977 continues, but it's been a lifetime for you too, eh?

IF [01:06:34] It has, that's been a lifetime for me, you know. I swung a hammer for 22 years. Then I got another—how many—oh my god—since '77, you know, it's a long time, '77 to '13.

SG [01:06:48] So, thanks very much for coming in and doing this interview Irv.

IF [01:06:50] Oh, you're welcome. No problem.