

HOMeward BOUND – A LIVERPOOL-WEST AFRICA MARITIME HERITAGE INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: James Forsey

Interviewer: Patrick Toosey

Date: 21/03/2016

File Name: JFHB001

[00:35] Outline of Career, started as teacher, wanted to go to sea; contact with Fr John O'Connor at Atlantic House; interview with Bruce Glasier [03:00] description of early jobs in various departments and on the docks; role as Tally Clerk, anecdote re: fruit cakes in overcoats; [4:40] Time in Pursers Dept, first voyage with John Tunstall; [6:30] Voyage on *Katha*, a Henderson's boat, dealing with cargo only; crude compared to ED ships; Burmese crew – curry for every meal; third voyage on *Ibani*, double header with Eric Thompson; [08:00] Maiden voyage on the *Egori*; also voyages on the three mailboats for experience as staff purser; didn't enjoy mailboats; [09:00] voyages with Duncan Campbell as master; [09:40] discussion of cargo vs mailboats, no time to oneself on mailboats; [10:40] Reason for choosing ED - good company, salary, pensions; [11:50] Variety of experience – management; [13:00] Salary and Pensions, well looked after; [13:30] Relations with management – not a lot to do with management other than at end of each voyage; different personalities of Directors; [14:40] good communication between departments; [15:20] Training – grounding in what the company did in various depts; worked holiday reliefs, meant more time at home; [16:30] West Africa – description of docks; anecdote re: Dakar, bottles of whiskey down legs of trousers; [17:50] Claims dept. – lots of 'fiddles', culture ended by containerisation; [19:00] Management relations – working with JR Robertson, Head of Department, increased workload including telexes, cost of freight, cost effectiveness; [21:40] West Africa before/after independence – sort of improvement, sense that locals would wish for British back in charge; Anecdote re corruption post-independence, firing of a steward illustrating influence of militia; [24:00] Involvement with Biafran War – effect on cargo in tween-decks, stowed in lower hold and sealed; carrying arms and ammunition to Biafra; [24:50] Anecdote: description of hundreds of troops and police on deck, going over the Oron Crossing fired on, sped right up to Calabar; supposed to have escort from naval ship but too dangerous; ship completely blacked out; [28:20] Post Independence fragmentation in Africa – reference to Angola and involvement of Cuba; threat of limpet mines; [29:20] trip ashore - shops boarded up, pavements of mosaic ripped up by tanks [30:00] US ports, long journeys, double- and single-headers; reference to Halifax and Newfoundland; [31:00] Unusual cargoes – locomotives and carriages; *Ebani* – anecdote re: barge moved by a cadet; [33:15] variety of cargoes – prize bull on deck; also West African cattle moved from Lagos to Takoradi, anecdote re: cow lifted by horns, fell and had to be put down; also pigs on deck, chewed the ropes; [35:30] surf ports – hazardous journeys; reference to surf boats and workers terms and conditions; [38:40] Dry dock in Ghana - petrol shortage, anecdote re: fuel to transport coffin; [40:00] End of Elders – company generosity, final voyage allowed on *Sokoto*, good send-off; [43:35] Several voyages with Palm Line; also Lloyd Australia from Rio-East Africa-Australia, one month at sea; ten years at Andrew Bell, wife Jo accompanied for two voyages, also daughter accompanied; discussion with interviewer re: Andrew Bell [47:00] discussion of loneliness of working of containerisation; [49:00] Anecdote re: ED coast staff member working in Port Harcourt and gin party [50:40] social life – soccer injury, attended to by doctor on *Tamele* [51:30] Anecdote re: Igbo wine waiter and Irish priest; [52:30] Passengers on mailboats – anecdote re: priests and nuns, Holy Ghost Fathers; [58:00] Family history of seafaring – grandfather had been to sea [58:45] Family life – letters; wife speaking about difficulty of family life, husband away for six months; discussion about leave;

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reference to numbered letters, in case of letters getting delayed [1:02:30] Impressions of West Africa - Dakar, hot; Freetown, 'Kroo boys' – description of conditions on the hatches, jobs of conducting maintenance on ships; [1:04] role as purser, giving subs to 'Kroo boys' at Freetown before wives got wages; [1:05] 'Kroo boys' allowances of tea and sugar, saved up to take home; anecdote re: 'Kroo boy' boxes; sudden death of one 'Kroo boy', sewn up in white canvas with irons and body buried at sea; claims on the box afterward; [1:07:20] Race relations – Nigerian ethnic groups, anecdote re: onboard tribal conflict between Igbo and Yoruba crew; [1:08:50] Social life – smoke room for officers, bar on board; [1:10:10] outstanding memory – anecdote re: experience in Monrovia pursued by customs officer.

[1:11 – 1:23 Discussion of miscellaneous items]

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