

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

Interviewee: Mike Ingham

Interviewer: Nick White

Date: 06/04/2016

File Name: MIHB001/ MIHB002

TRACK ONE: MIHB001

[00:40] Description of role of purser; changes in role of purser; specific duties on ED ships; [02:40] Decision to work for EDs; desire to work in Merchant Navy; father worked in Liverpool; family history of mother working in the Wrens; [5:30] Pay and conditions – cadet purser wage £24 per month; description of various duties including newspaper, loading summaries for cargo ships; office based in cabin on board; [08:20] Leave arrangements – post-voyage conference in India Buildings, leave until next ship arrived; [09:00] Not involved in pension scheme; [09:40] relations with management ; India Buildings known as ‘The Kremlin’ or ‘The House of Mirth’; [10:45] communications while at sea via telex or radio; self-sufficiency on board ship; [11:40] Training – attendance at commercial college; 2-3 weeks spent on docks; [13:30] role of tally clerk; [14:00] Anecdote re: sacks of salt and mismatching paperwork; [16:00] Challenging jobs – cargo ships as solo purser; sense of responsibility; [17:30] challenge of family life – impact on parents; engagement to future wife – managing leave; wife’s experience in Ghana, coming from expatriate family; duration of journeys lasting 3 months; [19:40] first voyage; experience of end of empire on passenger ships; [21:10] new vocabulary on board ship; [21:30] impressions of Africa – heat and smells; [22:10] Sealegs immediately despite weather; [22:50] Tensions between ethnicities and nationalities; cooperation at work between all staff; regular ED employees amongst the African crew; [24:10] experience of racism from South African engineer, later sacked; [24:40] Social life – library provided by Seafarers Education Service; swapped books and movies with other ships; also board games; [26:30] sightseeing in port; Crossing the Line ceremony; [28:00] Prior knowledge of West Africa – father had been to Nigeria and Ghana; grandfather had lived in Gambia; changing impressions; awareness of subtle differences between countries; [29:45] post independence WA; EDs as part of scenery of WA; formation of Nigerian National Lines, painted funnels in NNL colours; [31:00] Ghana favourite country – friendly, lively, good music, changing seasons; [31:50] Cargoes – finished goods out, raw products in; [33:10] problematic cargoes – sawn timber, description of challenges; anecdote re: managing logs as cargo; [37:30] Containerisation – brief experience with African Container Express (ACE); [39:50] Interactions with passengers part of purser’s role; Outward bound mostly colonial staff, also Africans studying in UK; [41:40] traditional style on board – beef tea in the afternoon; children’s nurse on board; [43:00] pursers dined in main dining room; social activities with passengers – horse races, dog race, bingo; [45:40] Continental ports - comparison with Liverpool; wives joining ships; lots of sightseeing in Europe; [47:50] Bunkering in Las Palmas; customs and tax-free allowances. [END OF TRACK MIHB001]

TRACK TWO: MIHB002

[00:25] Health and Safety on board – description of conditions; ship as a dangerous environment; [03:00] experience of West Africa pre- and post-independence; reflections on West African politics; [05:10] British and Russian involvement in West Africa; comparison of Britain with other colonial countries; Britain as relatively benign colonial master; Anecdote re: experience in a Congolese port, encounter with armed soldiers; [08:20] Insulated from political situation on board ship; change of

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government didn't affect trade; [10:10] Anecdote re: Ghana visit and political interference; [11:30] Social life on shore – football matches with other crews; pitches on loan from local sports clubs; [12:25] Anecdote re: match with all players wearing the same colours; [13:45] End of career w/EDs in 1967 – end of pursers on ships; worked with Canadian Pacific for short stint; [15:25] followed fortunes of ED until demise; also interested in post-colonial Africa; established the Elder Dempster website [<http://www.elderdempster.org/>] to illustrate the way of life; [16:55] Reflection on seafaring as integral to Liverpool, UK and WA economy; sadness at end of ED; Liverpool reorienting itself toward the sea; influence of music and the Cunard passengers; tradition of playing recording of Royal Marines Band while leaving Pier Head; [21:30] Sense of pride in retrospect at what was achieved, sense of being part of a team. [END OF TRACK MIHB002]

END OF INTERVIEW