

HOMeward BOUND  
A LIVERPOOL – WEST AFRICA  
MARITIME HERITAGE

INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Ray Donker

Interviewer: Mike Ingham

Date: 31/10/2016

File Name: Homeward Bound Interview Ray Donker 20161031

[00:50] Joined EDL 1952 as an Apprentice after attending Outward Bound Sea School; [01:30] outline of ranks held with EDL; [02:15] differences in rank titles for navigating officers; [02:35] subsequent service as Operations Manager in Liverpool Head Office after coming ashore; [03:00] other experience with ED Agencies in West Africa; [03:55] few changes to cargo handling and navigation over time; [04:40] route to joining EDL from Trinity House School; [05:12] family background in trawlers in home town of Hull; [05:58] sea service prior to EDL on trawlers; [05:35] working conditions for EDL Apprentices and experience gained; [07:18] initial pay £45 for first six months, and for the last year £145; [07:58] promotion to 4<sup>th</sup> Mate and then 3<sup>rd</sup> Mate at £30 per month; [08:36] not aware of company pension scheme; [08:50] worked for the hours required, no overtime; [09:29] training ashore; [09:56] crewing of cadet ships; [10:30] EDL Cadet Department; [11:05] relations between management and ships; [13:26] recalling operational challenges as a Mate; [16:40] leave as an Apprentice between voyages; [17:16] leave issues after marriage and promotion; [18:52] long voyages and short voyages; [19:52] recollections of first voyages; [22:32] the effect of the movement of different ships; [23:44] autonomy of the ship, and trust placed in the ship's officers; [25:26] comparisons with changes more recently as a result of improvements in communications; [25:48] good organization of EDL and efficiency of ED Agencies in West Africa; [26:38] crewing of different nationalities, recruiting local personnel in West Africa; [28:46] necessary skills in the lingua franca of Pidgin English; [29:42] social activities when off duty at sea, and the libraries provided by the Seafarers Education Service; [33:22] social activities when in port, cultural visits and sports by cadet ships; [36:08] limited knowledge of West Africa before joining EDL; [36:45] first impressions of West Africa; [38:50] growing knowledge of West Africa, Angola favourite country visited; [40:38] changes taking place in countries after gaining independence (although ED Agencies remaining the same); [44:05] outward and homeward cargoes; [45:26] difficulties and differences with handling particular cargoes; [49:01] introduction of containerisation; [52:06] passengers on the EDL liners, and differences from cargo ships for the officers; [55:07] differences in the ports of the USA compared with Europe; [57:48] experiences of EDL's only bulk carrier trading from South America, and chartered ships from West Africa to Canada; [1:01:34] left EDL in 1977, Port Manager in Freetown, Sierra Leone (including time of task force sailing to the Falklands in 1982), and then to Saudi Arabia Ports Authority; [1:04:10] thoughts on the end of EDL and the changes to the Merchant Navy; [1:06:42] most abiding memory of having enjoyed time with EDL; [1:08:15] keeping in touch with former colleagues.

END OF INTERVIEW