

This recording is an interview with Captain Ed Taylor, who worked for a variety of companies on the Fraser River, and was with Gulf of Georgia Towing for 30 years. The major themes in the interview are job security, the details around boats and companies he has worked for, and the Canadian Merchant Service Guild.

Interviewer: Mark McKenzie

Interview date: 13 December 2012

Date Range: 1930s – 2013

Sound Recording Length: 2:28:23

Captain Ed Taylor worked on the water or on the waterfront since he was 16 years old and started out as a deckhand for Bill Hughes' Husky Towboats. He attended Vancouver Technical Secondary School and was originally a mechanic. He became a tugboat captain, and later also worked in the office for Gulf of Georgia Towing and as a negotiator for the Canadian Merchant Service Guild. He was with Gulf of Georgia for over 30 years, and saw the introduction of navigation tools and radars, as well as the shift from wooden to steel barges.

Companies that he mentions he has worked for are: Vancouver Tugboats, the Canadian Pacific Railway, Department of Public Works, Bill Damages Harbour Towing, McKenzie Barge and Derrick, Vancouver Board of Trade, Westminster Tugboats and New Westminster Pile & Dredge.

Section 00:00 – 04:13

Taylor talks about how he will always think of New Westminster as a residential city, and discusses various plans for future industrial and residential development across the city.

Section 04:14 – 08:24

In this portion of the interview, Taylor talks about longshoremen strikes in Vancouver and New Westminster. During strikes, longshoremen were laid off and replaced by what Taylor refers to as "scabs".

Section 08:25– 12:54

Talks about how he started working for Bill Hughes' Husky Towboats as a deckhand at the age of 16 and he describes the daily work. At the time, it was only Bill Hughes and Taylor who worked for the company. He made \$2 for every call-out that he completed, regardless of whether the job took 4 or 14 hours.

Section 12:55 – 16:43

In this portion of the interview, Taylor talks about towing oil barges for Husky Towboats. At the time, diesel was 5 cents per gallon and gasoline was 2 cents per gallon when they would fill up at Coal Harbour. He describes how he would drag his jeans from the back of the boat when they were dirty from working in the engine. Husky paid him 60 dollars a month, as well as room and board.

Section 16:44 – 22:43

In this portion of the interview, Taylor talks about how he left Husky for Captain Granhom, as Granhom got more work. He describes the duties of a deckhand and the necessary knowledge of mechanics that were required for the job. He describes being on the *Tusler*, and how he reacted when the boat exploded. Taylor then went to work for Vancouver Tugboats, and he describes his first day in 1935.

Section 22:44 – 34:18

In this portion of the interview, Taylor talks about his time on the *Kingsway*, a typical journey with the boat and the various tasks. The boat towed barges from Ladysmith past New Westminster to Fraser Mills before returning to Sapperton. He discusses “Fast Water Boats” on the Fraser River and describes the system of coast pilots and river pilots.

Section 34:19 – 40:17

The captain talks about his time with the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR, later Canadian Pacific Steamships Ocean Services Ltd.). His first assignment was on the *Princess Charlotte*, which left for a summer cruise to Skagway, Alaska. With CPR, Taylor would have every 6th week off with compensation, and when returning to work he would be placed on another ship. As a result of this, Taylor describes the various boats and multiple places along the coast that he worked.

Section 40:18 – 46:14

In this portion of the interview, Taylor talks about how he went on to work for both Bill Domages Harbour Towing and Gulf of Georgia Towing. They would deliver logs to the Canadian White Pine Mill and he talks about a friend who switched companies multiple times during the war. Taylor and the interviewer look at pictures of the Fraser River grain elevator towards the end of this portion.

Section 46:15 – 52:05

Taylor talks about his time with Department of Public Works (DPW) in New Westminster, and how he was required to get a “Minor Water Passenger Masters Ticket.” In the beginning he worked on the *Point Pelly*, and later on the *King Edward*. He describes the boats, and his shell-shocked junior deckhands who had returned from WWII.

Section 52:06 – 1:02:35

Describes a full day as a tug captain for the *Point Pelly* and the work with the *King Edward*. He described the technical features of the *King Edward*, and tells a story of going up the Harrison River with *King Edward* to dredge above the auto bridge. The *Point Pelly* had sleeping accommodation, but his wages were 20% lower than other West Coast wages.

Section 1:02:36 – 1:13:45

In this portion of the interview, Taylor talks about how he left DPW and started with McKenzie Barge and Derrick. They had their own fleet of tugs, and he worked for them for one year, but he did not like the working conditions. He asked for help from the Canadian Merchant Service Guild, but was laid off. He spent a year working for Capitol Hill Plumbing, before he started at Gulf of Georgia Towing.

1:13:46 – 1:23:38

Taylor talks about the “sweatshop conditions” of working on the water with limited holidays, harsh conditions and long hours. One example was the 24-hour shifts at the Gulf of Georgia Towing. He was paid \$1500 a month at the time, but still said the worst hours were from 3AM to 7AM, and this is when accidents would happen. He states that the guild at the time was not a union, but merely a hiring hall.

Section 1:23:39 – 1:28:23

Deckhands were on monthly wages. When he was with the Gulf Of Georgia Towing, and completed 24-hour shifts, the crew would meet up at the grocery store to load up cardboard boxes of food for the upcoming shift.

Section 1:28:24 – 1:32:27

In this portion of the interview, Taylor talks about the challenges of handling lumber scows without assist tugs. He later worked as a dispatcher on dock, and he describes the challenges of working either day or evening shift. If you worked the evening shift you would bring the phone with you. At the time, Gulf of Georgia Towing had 300 barges and 14 tugboats.

Section 1:32:28 – 1:35:36

Taylor talks about his time in the navy during the Second World War. He was in charge of naval motor transport, organization and handling skills. He set up an entire operation, and states how useful this was for his future career on the water.

Section 1:35:37 – 1:40:17

In this portion of the interview, Taylor talks about maintenance of shipping channels by DPW, and how he would dredge sand from the river onto the Marpole property. He describes the various dimensions of tugboats and barges, and the process of the moving river basin, and the tide fluctuations affecting their work.

Section 1:40:18 – 1:46:09

In this portion of the interview, Taylor talks about the changes in navigation aids throughout his time. He talks about how he hauled rocks from the Indian River to the North Arm jetty while at McKenzie. He returns to talking about the guild, how he joined and the how it became stronger in the late 1950s. Lastly, he tells a story about the skipper who did not want to go on strike.

Section 1:46:10 – 1:52:52

Taylor talks about how ice affected his work, as everything was made out of wood (before the first steel tug in 1952). The shift to steel barges was a result of increased competition from the trucking industry. East Indian Trucking Company, in particular, offered service 24/7 and therefore relieved the mills of inventory. Gulf of Georgia Towing lost most of their lumber hauling contracts because of this.

Section 1:52:53 – 1:59:00

In this portion of the interview, Taylor talks about how Gulf of Georgia Towing accumulated 300 barges, and the difference between lumber and steel barges. He tells the story about how they competed with Vancouver Tugboats for a large wood chip transport contract.

Section 1:59:01 – 2:04:56

Taylor talks about the *Kingsway*. He tells the story about how he broke his wrists at White Pine Mill, but finished the tow. He got compensation for 6 weeks, but later found out that they had replaced him. He worked with the Vancouver Board of trade for 15 years, and talks about the feelings around mergers, and what happened when he worked in Montreal for 10 years.

Section 2:04:57 – 2:13:35

In this portion of the interview, Taylor talks about his time in the office at Gulf of Georgia Towing. He talks about the biggest contract he bid for together against Vancouver Tugboats and how contract cost were estimated. He would make ten cold-calls each day, but would never bid for something he could not complete himself. He tells a story about Hooker Chemicals in Tacoma, Washington.

Section 2:13:36 – 2:20:52

Taylor returns to the 1960s and how trucking took business away from lumber scows. At the time tugboats and CPR ships were on strike, but people from the office still had to go on the boats. He describe being uncomfortable crossing the picket lines, but he had no choice if he wanted to keep the company's contract with CNR. For the last four years at Gulf of Georgia Towing he was a negotiator for the guild.

Section 2:20:53 – 2:24:57

Taylor talks about why CNR left marine operations. He describes how the rail was moved to Tilbury Island and the first time he met "Tugboat Titan" Lucille Johnstone. She started out as a dispatcher at the age of 16 and later worked in the office with Taylor. Lastly, he talks about the merger between Gulf of Georgia Towing and Seaspan Marine.

Section 2:24:58 – 2:28:23

The collapse of the Mission Bridge in 1952.