

This interview is with retired ILWU Local 502 longshoreman Eugene Dutour. The major themes discussed in this interview are handling cargo, technology changes, and the ILWU.

Interviewer: Dean Johnson

Interview Date: 12 June 2013

Date Range: 1950s - 2006

Sound Recording Length: 39:01

Eugene Dutour is a retired French-Canadian International Longshore & Warehouse Union (ILWU) local 502 longshoreman. At 18 years old, while hitchhiking with his brother-in-law from Cloverdale to New Westminster, a longshoreman picked them up and asked them if they were looking for work, and they said “yes”. On January 7th 1961, the next day, they went to the dispatch hall and got their first jobs. It took Dutour approx. 4.5 years to become an ILWU member in 1965. During his career he received his locomotive ticket, which was only good for the waterfront. He often worked at Neptune Terminals, Vancouver wharfs, and at Fraser Surrey Docks. During the last 28 years of his career he worked at Westshore Terminals. He enjoyed the variety of jobs longshoring, which he explains is why he worked as a longshoreman for 45 years. He is proud to be a longshoreman because the job gave him the means to take care of his family.

Section 0:00 – 2:54

- In this section of the interview Dutour describes about he first experiences as a longshoreman. At the longshore hall he stood around and waited for the dispatcher to call his name if there was a job available. After being called to work, the dispatcher would register you and give you a dispatch sheet, and away you went to the job site. His first job was moving fertilizer in bulk at Pacific Coast Terminals (PCT), and describes the process of moving sacks of fertilizer.

Section 2:55 – 6:58

- In this section of the interview Detour describes the types of jobs he did starting out as a longshoreman and the machines he used to help load the cargo onto the ships. All of it was break bulk work: loading all sizes of lumber, fertilizer, sacks, lead, zinc, and timbers. At work he got on-site training from the more experienced longshoremen. In the 1960s, he does not recall any dress code or safety equipment, but he remembers using an apron made out of leather that “saved your pants”. He disliked working with fertilizer sacks because they were 112 pounds and if you worked on those for a month “you would get raw on your wrist from the sacks”.

Section 6:59 – 10:30

- In this section of the interview Dutour describes his typical day at work, and handling materials. He worked in Bailey’s gang for years. He also describes the work shifts

longshoremen worked. Sometimes the longshoremen had to work split shifts, where they would get paid time-and-a-half for the first part of the shift. After payday he and other longshoremen would go to King Edward for a beer. He did that for 15-16 years until he transferred to Westshore Terminals.

Section 10:31 – 17:50

- In this section of the interview Dutour discusses how technology made the work of longshoring easier but the gang size decreased. In particular he talks about how unloading car ships has changed. He also describes in-depth the processes of loading zinc and lead bars, rice, and logs. He mentions that working with sulphur was also another job he disliked because his clothes would smell even after washing them.

Section 17:51 – 19:48

- In this section of the interview Dutour believes there are a lot of women longshoring, he estimates that there are around 20-30 women currently working. As a longshoreman he thought the pay and benefits were good, making \$2.56/hour. He talks briefly about the ILWU stating, “if it wasn’t for the unions, they probably would be stepping all over you, probably be making \$1/hour”.

Section 19:49 – 24:48

- In this section of the interview Dutour and the interviewer talk more about the changes in work technology. Dutour mentions how working on train ships was a good job. On Thursdays the train ships would come from Whittier, Alaska, with empty containers. The longshoremen would unload the containers and load the train with full ones. On train ships, he started off as a switchman, then a fireman’s helper, who sat on the opposite side of the engineer. He passed the locomotive exam, and got his locomotive ticket which was only good for the waterfront.

Section 24:49 – 33:56

- In this section of the interview Dutour discusses his involvement with the ILWU Local 502. He remembers going on strike and wearing a sign that said “ILWU on Strike”. Furthermore, he believes that the berths in New Westminster brought economic benefit and supported the city, and that it is sad that industries are gone. He describes why he decided to work at Westshore Terminals. He tried working there and said “it wasn’t as bad as they all made it out”.

Section 33:57 – 39:01

- In this section of the interview Dutour discusses the process of gaining membership into the ILWU, and he and the interviewer talk about some notable longshoremen they worked with.