

This recording is an interview with Nate Stafiej, the Equipment Superintendent for Fraser River Pile & Dredge. The main themes are his responsibilities at work, equipment, social interactions, and the work done by the company as a whole.

Interviewers: Kate Petrusas and Peter Hall

Interview date: Oct. 21st 2014

Date Range: 2005 - 2014

Sound Recording Length: 45:19

Nate Stafiej has worked for Fraser River Pile & Dredge for the past 10 years. He started in 2005 as an apprentice welder, completed his welding ticket and got his Red Seal, and then applied for the position of Equipment Superintendent in 2011. His father-in-law is Phil Anderson, who worked for Fraser River Pile & Dredge, and that is how he found his way into the career. He likes the job because things are different each day, even though he describes the work as “dirty.” He emphasizes the adaptability and intuition required for his work. He also enjoys the social connections that he has made through his work.

Section 00:00 – 02:10

In the first part of the interview, Nate describes his job at Fraser River Pile & Dredge. He is in charge of the Marine & Land Fleet and all related equipment. He mentions the various unions that represent workers at FRPD: Operating Engineers [O.E.’s], which include deckhands, welders, mechanics, and operators; Bridgeman, which work in marine construction, and Teamsters, which include the warehouse workers.

Section 02:11 – 06:11

In this portion of the interview, Nate describes how his father-in-law brought him into the industry when he was studying Geography at university. He had a personal interest in motors and cars, and had done only hobby welding prior to the job. He says that adaptability is key to the job, which can’t always be taught. He describes the difference between repairing and fabricating in terms of mental process.

Section 06:12 – 06:54

In this portion of the interview, Nate describes his childhood and previous work experience. He grew up in Pitt Meadows, B.C.

Section 06:55 – 08:18

In this section of the interview, Nate describes his typical workday, mentioning that things are always changing. He has to coordinate parts, manpower, and equipment. He mentions that repairs and even the tide can impact the day.

Section: 08:19 – 09:50

In this portion of the interview, Nate talks about his favourite part of the job. He says that it is fun meeting as many people as he does, as well as the fact that every day is different.

Section 09:51 – 14:19

In this portion of the interview, Nate describes the different field sites at the present moment. They have equipment in Prince Rupert. He describes the process of driving piles in detail, as well as the various equipment used, such as drop hammers, diesel hammers, “Vibros” [vibrating heads], and even drills.

Section 14:20 – 16:00

In this portion of the interview, Nate talks about how the job has become more technical and detail-oriented over time, which he attributes to an emphasis on safety.

Section 16:01 – 20:07

In this portion of the interview, Nate returns to describing various field sites. Including Queensgate in New Westminster, Richmond, and various other sites. Jobs include pumping sand, dredging, and driving piles. He mentions doing work on the rail bridge when it gets hit by passing boats, as well as the various other bridge foundations, such as the Alex Fraser and Golden Ears bridges.

Section 20:08 – 21:10

In this section, Nate describes what a cofferdam is. It is a temporary dam made of corrugated steel, and is driven into the ground.

Section 21:11 – 23:55

In this portion of the interview, Nate talks about how people prefer certain jobs over another. He says it is all the small jobs that keep you busy between big jobs. He describes how equipment gets to various sites, with the help of towboats, winches, and other equipment.

Section 23:56 – 26:03

In this section, Nate describes how some employees get to know the river really well through experience. They hire towboat companies occasionally to help with jobs.

Section 26:04 – 31:04

In this section of the interview, Nate speaks about people he has met through the job, as well as social interactions and connections at work. He says that a gentleman named Mitch Hughes has had the largest influence on him at work. He says the guys at work are easy going, always joking around. They go for coffee, and guys will often call him outside of work to work on their personal boats. He says that it is a lifelong career for most people, and the company is tight-knit.

Section 31:05 – 35:26

In this section of the interview, Nate talks about other similar companies, which compete for employees. Generally, job turnover is low at FRPD, since they hire through the union halls for a lot of positions. He feels it is relatively important to have the same guys coming back, so that

they are familiar with the equipment. He did not have to go to the hall, as his father-in-law had him personally requested and dispatched.

Section 35:27 – 40:50

In this section of the interview, Nate elaborates on how it is a “dirty job.” He says it requires intuition, in order to repair things out in the field. His responsibilities include preventative maintenance and scheduled repairs.

Section 40:51 – 42:00

In this section, Nate explains how often they will send employees to field sites for repairs. He doesn’t think that they have to send people out as often, because they have gotten better at keeping track of things.

Section 42:01 – 44:00

In this part of the interview, Nate says that while he doesn’t have an attachment to New Westminster, he has pride that he works on the Fraser River at a company that has such a strong history on the waterfront. He describes photos of construction on the waterfront that his wife gave him, which she retrieved from the archives.

Section 44:01 – 45:19

In the last part of the interview. Nate describes the items he considers to be essential to his job. These items include his iPhone, work boots, hard hat, safety glasses, and his pick-up truck.