

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

Interviewee: Ian Walker

Interviewer: Nick White

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File Name: IWHB001

[00:40] Description of role as Engineer – propulsion machinery and ancillary equipment, plumbing etc; [1:10] Alternative training scheme for cadets; became 4th engineer eventually; [1:35] Decision to work for ED – applied for other jobs, wanted to work at sea; no seafaring tradition in family; [2:20] pay and conditions – 4 on/8 off watch system; approx. £60 per month as cadet; [3:15] joined pension scheme but cashed in early; [03:45] first voyage – 6 months on voyage to USA and Canada; *Sherbro* – no air-conditioning; weevils in the flour; [5:20] Management relations – not much contact with India Buildings; joining instructions received in post; travel to Rotterdam to meet ship; [6:30] collected pay at India Buildings as cadet staying at Riversdale House; [6:50] Training – OND academic training initially, went to sea for a year then back for stage 3 training at Riversdale; on-the-job training; [7:50] most challenging jobs – responsibility for generators, had to be overhauled and took a few hours; [8:40] managing family life – letters from father delivered by agent in port; [9:30] first voyage first stop at Madeira; anecdote of Port Harcourt, seeing body floating in dock, retrieved by Nigerian police; [10:50] first impressions of West Africa – description of mud huts on banks of the delta; taking lifeboats to beaches; anecdote of giving cold can of orange juice to local boy; [11:50] heat in engine room, 100 degrees constantly, difficulty speaking; [12:30] Life on board ship – mostly African crew; one ship had white Liverpool crew, not successful as lots of drinking; [13:25] Union of Seamen regulations re: hiring white and African crews; African crews didn't drink on board; on shore, African crew drank hooch; [14:10] social life of sleeping, swimming, lots of sun on board; on shore, use of lifeboats to test lifeboat and also take trip; [15:20] description of travel up the creeks in Sierra Leone; monkeys in trees; [15:50] enjoyed Freetown; also Ghana; description of other ports [16:45] Portuguese colony – anecdote re: barge in Guinea Bissau, stevedores under armed scrutiny [17:40] no interaction with new African shipping lines; also no experience with African cadets; [18:10] Cargo – machinery, barrels of oil, cocoa, bags of bones for glue industry, cocoa beans for Fry's in Bristol, groundnut oil; [19:25] difficulty of keeping oil at correct temperature; [20:20] Conditions for bananas; anecdote re: trip from Apapa, trouble with fridge; [21:30] few passengers, mainly civil servants, also students; engineers not really allowed to mix with passengers, had separate mess room; [23:05] Food on board – challenge to eat menu from top to bottom; steak or palm oil chop once a month; [24:30] relations with Senior Officers, varied from individual; not much contact with Masters; [25:20] description of retirement trip on *Fulani*; [25:50] description of final journeys on *Apapa*, quite empty with minimal cargo; [26:30] North American ports – description of Brooklyn; impression of USA compared to Liverpool; [27:50] Baltimore trips with cocoa beans; also Philadelphia; Cape Cod Canal to Montreal; description of meeting fishing boat and eating fresh cod; [29:00] socialising with other shipping companies – Norwegians looking to come aboard as Norwegian ships were dry; [29:35] anecdote re: JFK in Boston – learned of his death upon reaching Dakar; [30:25] European ports – dry dock in Hamburg; description of U-boat pen; description of finding Nazi gas mask; reference to customs charges on purchasing camera; [32:00] destruction in Hamburg after war, as yet not rebuilt; [33:00] Rotterdam – well-organised, good port facilities; didn't visit Eastern Bloc countries; [34:00] *Aureol* – cold winter on board, African crew slept in mailroom [35:00] social life – football matches on the coast; [36:00] left ED in 1968; maintained

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contact with former colleagues; aware of demise of company through magazine subscriptions re: ships going for scrap; [39:05] abiding memory of a good company with good people; well-known as a stewards' company; [41:20] memory of hard physical work.

END OF TRACK

IWHB002 – informal discussion of items including photographs, letters, discharge book.