

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

Interviewee: Barry Groombridge

Interviewer: Patrick Toosey

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File Name: BGHB001

[00:31] Joined ED at 16 years old on 04/03/1950; description of career – seagoing staff as Purser, sailed on *Cochrane*; first journey London – West Africa – United States; nine month voyage in total [3:24] Purser's department in India Buildings; sailed on *Sulima*, account of various crew aboard; illness on homeward bound run [5:30] Description of illness – began in Sapele, taken ill at Takoradi, discharged at Madeira to convent hospital, Xmas spent with nuns in Madeira; repatriated as 'distressed British Seaman' on *City of Canterbury* ship to Southampton; [09:10] 1954 returned to work with EDs, accounts department – description of role, training at night school; qualified at Chartered Institute secretaries and administrators; [11:10] Management audit until 1965, moved to Intermediate Freight Department; looked after coast wires traffic [12:30] Las Palmas – taking on fresh vegetables to West Africa; also responsible for looking after USA trade, partnership with Compagnie Maritime Belge to serve WA; influence of Patrick Toosey on USA trade [17:40 – 18:30 anecdote by Patrick Toosey describing having to fire his uncle Thomas Royden; Brooklyn agent 'Holy Cripes']; [18:35] USA trade with Jewish merchants sending second-hand clothing to West Africa [21:00] Working in New York; [21:50] Angolan Civil War – equipment and machinery for mines in Zambia and Rhodesia; congestion in Lobito, shops waiting in port for up to a month; [23:00] *Dumurra* loaded for Lobito – flew out to meet the ship; rebel leader Savimbi meeting President dos Santos in hotel, accompanied by army and guns; [25:20] dealing with delay of *Dumurra* in port – improvisation and ingenuity; [28:30] return to Liverpool in 1978/79, changes in company, involvement with 'ocean developments'; redundancy in 1980; [30:30] worked in financial sector and consultancy until aged 75; [31:10] enjoyed EDs but experienced lack of support, lack of innovation; reflection with Patrick Toosey on lack of managerial knowledge, corruption and crooks; [34:00] management approach poor, no contact with lower trade levels; [36:15] reflection on joining EDs; lucky to get in to the company [38:00] West Africa pre-/post-independence – good relations with West Africans; preference for Ghanaians rather than Nigerians; Africans more autocratic than Europeans; memories of West Africa [Patrick Toosey recollecting his friend 'Bibi', the UKWAL representative in Lagos]; [42:00] social life and good relationships amongst colleagues; social life post-EDs also; [43:20] end of an era – containerisation; description of plan to take gas tankers from Indonesia to USA; defeated by environmental concerns [46:30] no family tradition of seafaring, parents shocked at decision to join; felt part of a seafaring community upon joining; [48:10] relations with management – description of sideline political career as local councillor for Conservative Party; felt lack of support from company, affected promotion prospects; [52:00] reference to Labour MP Bessie Braddock [comments by Patrick on Bessie's role representing underprivileged minorities]; [53:00] reflection on political circumstances; [56:00] Social life and friendship after retirement – theatrical company with Denis Kelly; [58:00] description of regular day at office; [60:00] recollection of kindness of the company – generosity when wife was ill, free trip to Las Palmas; [Patrick Toosey anecdote re: flight on Nigerian Airways with an African woman]; [1:03:00] Madrid – Tenerife flight [1:04:50] anecdote re: laundry in Lagos; [1:05:00] social life after ED, coffee mornings and keeping in touch.

END OF INTERVIEW