

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

Interviewee: Patrick Toosey

Interviewer: Nick White

Date: Wednesday 13th January 2016

File Name: PTHB001

[00:35] Outline of career; Description of Mary Kingsley, role as super-numerary clerk, trip to West Africa-Belfast-Liverpool; [00:02:15] Career progression, interview with Elder Dempster (ED); management trainee role; [00:05:00] Honeymoon on the Aureol; West Africa (WA) trip; role as Deputy Log Wharf Superintendent; Takoradi, Ghana – finding logs for the ship – sense of humour of Ghanaian workers; [00:08:00] Running the Accra marathon of Founders Games for Ghanaian Farmers Council; [00:10:15] Port Harcourt posting – Role of Claims Manager; [00:11:20] Return to Liverpool – management jobs; [00:12:20] West Africa – America service – hands-on management – NY York Agents – comparison of management styles – ‘Captain Lunatic’ – having to sack his own uncle – Jewish customers, shipping second-hand clothes to West Africa; [00:15:30] Blue Funnel merger with Barber to create Barber Blue Sea round the world service - journeys to the Philippines, Japan, KL, Singapore; [00:17:25] New destinations – Panama Canal, Christóbal, Jamaica, Miami, West Indies; [00:20:10] MD of Elder Dempster (mid-60s) – joint services with other companies – NEPH – challenges of working with Nigerian Lines and Black Star – different attitudes to schedules and cargo; [00:21:50] Founding of Nigerian National Shipping Line (NNL) – emphasis on ED values; [00:22:50] relationship with Mr Oladitan head of NNsL – pressures of family obligations on Nigerian staff; [00:24:00] Nigerian Airways – anecdote – travelling third-class; [00:25:50] Suicide of first wife, Penny, in 1981 – 1982 summoned to the board and job gone; [00:27:15] Job working for National Shipping Company of Saudi Arabia in 1983; [00:28:15] Pay and Conditions – paid properly at all levels, no bonuses but extra two weeks’ salary in good years; [00:29:30] camaraderie, good humour – social life – football league, tennis tournaments, annual dance; [00:30:40] long working hours but no overtime – third Saturday off – standard 9-5 – similar to all shipping companies in Liverpool; [00:32:20] Relations with management – difference between Blue Funnel and Elder Dempster; [00:34:50] Training at Ed – on-the-job learning; [00:36:50] Anecdote re: Jewish merchant’s claims – learning how to handle difficult customers; [00:38:45] Most challenging job – round the world service – difficulties of unfamiliar places and hands-off management structures – reference to Japanese companies - anecdote of drinking with Japanese MD. [END OF TRACK 1]

File Name: PTHB002

[00:00:23] First Voyage – on Mary Kingsley – conditions aboard – heat; [00:01:45] Cargo – Dining room – social life revolving around the saloon – Freetown ‘Kroo boys’; [00:03:10] conditions for Kroo boys – tents on hatch – toilets and water facilities on board very primitive for the Kroo boys; [00:04:45] Creek ports – loading/unloading cargo – hands-on for officers and crew alike – weather generally good apart from the Bay of Biscay; [00:06:00] Getting your sealegs – daily tot of rum – anecdote of the chief steward’s party with rum siphoned from the crew allocation of rum – good food, especially on cargo passenger ships; [00:07:45] Autonomy on board – captain ruled the roost on deck – chief engineer in charge below deck – dockers’ petty thievery – tally clerks in Africa equally adept at knocking off cargo – challenge of maintaining cargo; [00:10:40] Relationships between nationalities – Sierra Leonian, Nigerian and Ghanaian seafarers – shared purpose and collective spirit of the ship – minimal racial

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tension – tensions with the shore staff; [00:13:10] Social life – at sea, read, play monopoly, social drinking – at port, sports, soccer, hockey, especially in Port Harcourt – seafarers clubs in ports; [00:15:06] Intercompany sports leagues; [00:16:00] No prior knowledge of W.A.– education of travel – warm welcome both commercial and personal; [00:17:20] Impressions of W.A. changed after independence – change of attitudes in W.A. – beginnings of corruption, the ‘dash’ was always there but, post-independence, became pervasive – ED looked after their W.A. staff during colonial times; [00:19:40] tragic invasive corruption [00:20:30] Social changes – pressure to Africanise faster – promotion of African managers – Sierra Leone General Manager Chris Cole, later shot by rebels; [00:21:50] Cargoes – enormous variety – stowage plans and the challenges of managing the cargo [00:24:50] Difficult and unusual cargo – mostly agricultural or material cargo – Presidential Rolls Royce – latex was particularly difficult cargo, requiring waxed and heated tanks; [00:26:10] Containerisation – changes from 8ft containers suitable for surf boats to 20ft containers – eventual unsuitability of the ships; [00:28:50] Dramatic change to shipping industry – impact on cocoa trade – condensation on hessian bags in containers; [00:30:45] Visit to continental European ports – efficiency of Northern European ports – cocoa trade solutions; [00:33:00] Comparison between Northern European and UK and/or West African ports – European ports far more advanced – UK in the old days was quite primitive – containerisation has made it equal – continental ports have railway and hinterland issues sorted out; [00:34:20] Passengers – mostly missionaries, high quality students to and from UK, African ‘high-ups’, Unilever and ED staff, some families – The Aureol had a nursery for families – interracial mix; [00:36:35] Most abiding memory – the West African sense of humour – memories of Ghana – Anecdotes about Ghanaian port mischief as Deputy Log Wharf Superintendent; [00:39:30] Pensioners’ Association – based on father’s [Philip Toosey] experience of Far East Prisoners of War Association – became president in 2012/3 – member since 1997.

Clarifications: [00:42:50] Quarterdeck – naval expression for where the commanding officers resided, with desks of eight or more people. [Context: where directors of Ocean had their desks in India Buildings in Liverpool.]

[00:43:45] Father: Philip Toosey, alia Alec Guinness, Bridge on the River Kwai – later Brigadier, later Sir – Connection with the School of Tropical Medicine in Liverpool, persuaded Prince Philip to be patron of the school – was very helpful for the Far East prisoners for treatment of tropical diseases. [END OF TRACK 2]

ELDER DEMPSTER