

9-29-1977

McLean, E J Oral History Interview: Class Projects

Jack Near

Bill Langejans

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INTERVIEWEE: E.J. McLean (the ships captain)

INTERVIEWERS: Jack Near, Bill Langejans

DATE: Sept. 29, 1977 TIME: 5:00 P.M.

PLACE: Brewers City Coal Docks

INTERVIEW: #1

OF TAPE SIDES: Less than 1 side

BRIEF SUMMARY OF TOPICS

- Life on the Great Lakes
- Various things about the ship
- Weather conditions on the lakes

Bill Langejans: How long have you been on the sea?

E.J. McLean: I have been on the sea for 36 seasons. [While interviewing, the captain was eating a bowl of ice cream.] That's Charlie the first mate, Jim the engineer, Jack the steward, all these men have been on the ship the longest. Many of the other men have only been on the ship for about six weeks, and some as little as twenty days.

Jack Near: Do the young guys have a problem with the big waves?

E.J. Not too much.

B.L. Does the ship take a lot of water?

E.J. It's the fall season and up around Lake Huron it gets pretty rough. It's a big sea you know.

B.L. Where do you pick up things, this is a commercial ship is'nt it?

E.J. This ship carries mainly stone from Rogers City Michigan. They also have a quarry in the U.P. by Cedarville. Rogers City has high calcium stone and Cedarville is dol^oomite. This is dol^oomite, (pointed to dol^oomite that was being unloaded).

J.N. Where do you head after this is unloaded?

E.J. Cedarville, Michigan. Then take a load to Rogers City. Cedarville is twenty-five miles northeast of mackinaw island. After all this we are going to a port in Lake Erie.

B.L. Do you have a hard time getting through Lake Michigan?

E.J. Not too bad, no. You get your bad weather especially in the fall when your ah, your ah, water and air get to be the same temperature. In the spring it is just the opp^oosite.

What for?

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E.J. Last winter of course we were in ice when the wind never blew less than twenty m.p.h.

J.N. When the wind blows hard does the ship toss around alot?

E.J. It depends on the wind direction. The size don't have no bearing. When you get in a good sea you get tossed around alot.

B.L. Are there lots of ships on the Great Lakes?

E.J. Well its going down, I think there is only 156 American and 200 Candian. After the war there was probably about 500.

J.N. Do you have a hard time getting through Lake Mac?

E.J. We can't fill up the boat because the lake is shallow. The bottom would scrape if it was full.

J.N. Do you like living on the Great Lakes or on the ocean?

E.J. I was on the ocean during the war but I never worked on the ocean. It beats alot of other jobs like construction or factory work. In my case I worked on construction for about a year then on the farm and that's about it. I don't think I would like to work in a factory, especially on a production line where you do the same thing every day. You get a change of scenery and you get a variety of things.

B.L. Do you ever think about that Fitzgerald ship that went down in Lake Superior?

E.J. It doesn't really bother me because we try not to sail when the weather is really bad.

J.N. What do you do in your past time?

E.J. Read mostly I think. Sometimes I watch a little football. We come into port quite often so I really don't have that much spare time on the boat.

pastime

E.J. McLean
Jack Near
Bill Langejans
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B.L. Where is the engine in the ship?

E.J. Down below. Come on, I will show you.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW IN THE ENGINE ROOM(recording was not possible)

Facts about the engine from E.J. were given. Introduction to the men who ran them and some conversation occurred. Then the tour of the area began, but still too noisy for recording.

After a tour of the ship, we took photos, thanked him for his time and then departed.